

North Eastern Social Research Centre, Annual Report March 10-April 11

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NESRC began on March 1, 2000 with a mandate to combine serious research with support to action by civil society groups working for human rights and social transformation using non-violent means. It is to do research on issues of relevance to the Northeast and encourage other organisations and individuals to do the same. During the last eleven years NESRC has tried to live up to this mandate through research, library, documentation and networking with human rights and peace activists, civil society groups and others who are active among the marginalised or are involved in processes aimed at policy changes in favour of the poor. Its publications and professional and newspaper articles have been other tools of supporting the marginalised.

Library

The library is meant for scholars, social activists, students and others who want to meet and consult each other on issues of relevance to the region. The library has more than 5,500 volumes, about 40 percent of them on the Northeast. Around 500 new titles are added to it every year. The books are supplemented by documentation that is organised by state and theme and includes newspaper cuttings from Assam and other states, conference papers and other material. NESRC also receives around 40 journals, some of them not easily available in the Northeast. The library has been computerised. In order to make it more accessible to its users the catalogue will soon be uploaded onto its website. Paper cuttings too will soon be scanned in order to make soft copies available to users. The cuttings will hopefully be replaced within a year by material downloaded from the internet.

Staff of NESRC on March 31, 2011: Dr Walter Fernandes, Director. Prof. Alphonsus D'Souza, Associate Director. Dr Gita Bharali, Director of Research. Dr Melvil Pereira, Administrator and Research Associate. Dr Rajendra Prasad Athparia, Senior Fellow. Ms Sujata Hati Baruah and Mr Arabinda Rabha, Research Associates. Ms Tribeni Gogoi, Accounts and Library Assistant. Besides, Dr Debotpal Goswami, an ICSSR Research Fellow is based at NESRC.

Research

Research is the mainstay of NESRC. Its staff members were involved in many studies either by themselves or in guiding peace activists who studied conflicts and peace initiatives in their region. The staff of NESRC guided them in order to build their analytical skills. Two studies were completed by the staff of NESRC during the year and two others are in progress. Importance was accorded to development-induced displacement and to conflicts and peace. The following studies were completed:

Walter Fernandes and Gita Bharali. *Development-Induced Displacement in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura 1947-2010.*

Paromita Shastri, Madhumita Purkayastha, Indarilin Dkhar and Daisy Nath. *Budget for Children in Assam 2004-05 to 2008-09.*

Leban Serto. *Teaching for Peace: Conflicts and Peace in the Text Books of Manipur.*

Padmini Lannghasa. *Traditional Methods of Conflict Management among the Dimasa.*

Sunil Terang Dili. *The Karbi Community and Conflicts.*

Yanthan Ezung. *Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution Adopted by the Lotha Naga Tribe.*

N. T. Pamei and Namloy Remmei. *A Report of the Conflict in a Tamenglong Village.*

Michael and Lotus Hrankhaul. *Conflict-Induced Displacement of the Bru from Mizoram to Tripura.*

Liberalisation involves more land acquisition than in the past. That shows the need for a strong database on land acquisition and loss of livelihood. Studies of all displacement 1947-2000 have been completed in five states outside the Northeast and with this study four states of the region have been studied. The rest will be completed during 2011-12. The study on the child budget is a part of an all India advocacy effort on behalf of children coordinated by HAQ Centre for Child Rights New Delhi. Most work among children is based on the assumption that education is the only component in their life. Issues such as child protection and development are ignored. The studies look at the share of children in the budget of each component and the manner in which schemes meant for them are implemented. The study on the child budget and child rights was guided by Dr Melvil Pereira.

The studies of peace and conflicts were done by peace activists guided by Sujata Hati Baruah, Walter Fernandes or Alphonsus D'Souza. Some who did the studies have themselves experienced violence. The first is on the role of text books in the processes around peace or conflicts. Those on the traditional methods of conflict resolution were done by persons from the communities in conflict with the hope of updating them as tools of peace for today. Pamei and Remmei dealt with their village in Tamenglong in Manipur that has been split by a conflict since 1916 when a young man was expelled for immoral conduct. In 1956 when the village was reunited, its leaders received an order from a Naga militant outfit on the issue of its chieftainship but the Government of Manipur imposed the Manipur Municipality Act on Tamenglong in 1978. These moves caused a split mainly around land ownership that continues. In an effort to use research as a tool of peace, the two persons from two factions prepared separate reports with the hope of presenting them to the whole village and slowly reaching a common understanding. They have not succeeded in it but the effort is continuing. The last study is of displacement caused by the Mizo-Bru conflict in the 1990s. More than 12,000 Bru tribals continue to live in refugee camps in Tripura. Neither Mizoram nor Tripura is interested in their fate because they are not a vote bank. The peace activists who studied the situation tried to get involved in their repatriation. The negotiations are continuing but communal harmony and ethnic peace are distant.

Ongoing Studies

Also the ongoing studies are on development-induced displacement, child rights and peace. The first two on displacement will be completed in early 2012 the third in May 2011. The one on children is to be completed in late 2011 and those on conflicts and peace in July 2011.

Development-Induced Displacement and Deprivation in Arunachal Pradesh 1947-2008.

Development-Induced Displacement and Deprivation in Manipur 1949-2009.

Development-Induced Displacement in Nagaland 1947-2008 and Sikkim 1975-2008.

Melvil Pereira and Tribeni Gogoi. *The Share of Children in the Assam Budget and Juvenile Justice.*

Akham Gonmei. *The Background of the Economic Blockade in Manipur 2010.*

Mercy Rongpipi. *Conflict Induced Displacement in Karbi Anglong*

Cynthia Shimoni. *The Status and Impact of tribal youth migration to the urban areas in Nagaland*

Michael and Lotus Hrankhaul. *Reasons and Impact of Tribal Youth Migration to Agartala.*

Publications

Research remains idle if it is not put in the public domain at the disposal of institutions and individuals who can use its findings. NESRC does it through books, booklets, professional and newspaper articles and through discussion in the media. It brings out low-priced publications, most of them paperbacks in order to share knowledge with the people from whom it is gathered and junior researchers since commercial publications are beyond their reach.

1. Paromita Shastri, Madhumita Puryakastha, Indarilin Dkhar and Daisy Nath. 2010. *Budget for Children in Assam 2004-05 to 2008-09*. New Delhi: HAQ Centre for Child Rights and Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre. Pp. 8+71 Rs 60.00.
2. Gita Bharali, Daisy Nath, Ankur Tamuli Phukan, Paromita Shastri, Madhumita Purkayastha and Indarilin Dkhar. 2010. *Axomot Xorboxikhya Rupayon*. (An evaluation of the fund flow for Sarba Shikshya Abhijyan in Assam). NESRC and HAQ. 2010. Rs 25.
3. Gita Bharali, Daisy Nath, Paromita Shastri, Madhumita Purykayastha & Indarnilin Dhkar. 2010. *Axomot Budgetor Xixhu Ankhya* (Share of children in the Assam budget). Rs 25. NESRC & HAQ.
4. Alphonsus D'Souza (ed). 2011. *Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution in Three Tribal Societies of North Eastern India*. Pp. 95, Rs 75.00.
5. Leban Serto. 2011. *Teaching for Peace and Peace Curriculum in Manipur*. Pp. 95. Rs 75.00.
6. L. Jeyaseelan. 2011 (ed). *Conflict Mapping and Peace Processes in Northeast India*. Pages 276. Price Rs 200, USD 20, Euro 18). It brings together case studies of conflicts and peace efforts from Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya. (Reprint 2011)
7. Walter Fernandes and Gita Bharali. 2011. *Uprooted for Whose Benefit? Development-Induced Displacement in Assam 1947-2000* (744, Paperback Rs 350, Hard cover Rs 800, USD 70, Euro 60.
8. Gita Bharali. 2011 (ed Sujata Hati Baruah). *Unnayon Banan Sthanantoron*. Pp. 70, Rs 40.00.

The first three are from the study on children. The three that follow are studies done by peace activists. The English version of development-induced displacement in Assam 1947-2000 is the first in a series published by NESRC and the last is its Assamese summary. It shows that 19 lakh persons were displaced from 14 lakh acres 1947-2000 but official files mention only 4.2 lakhs from 3.9 lakh acres. The study on West Bengal where around 70 lakh persons were affected in the same period will be published in October 2011. The Goa, Jharkhand, Orissa and Andhra studies will follow in 2012.

Publications outside NESRC

Apart from the low-priced publications the NESRC staff members also publish professional and news paper articles in other books and journals. The following is the list of 2010-11.

1. **Walter Fernandes, Melvil Pereira and Gita Bharali**. 2011. "Common Resources, Community Management and the Tribal Customary Law in Northeast India. In *Vocabulary of Commons*. Anand and Bangalore: Foundation of Ecological Security, pp. 83-105.

Walter Fernandes.

2. 2010. "Forests, Deforestation and Tribal Identity in Northeast India," *Social Action* 60 (Apr-June), pp. 121-136.

3. 2010. "Regionalism, Globalisation and Constraints to Research in the Northeast," *Man and Society, A Journal of Northeast Studies*. 7 (Summer), pp. 22-39.
4. 2010. "Colonialism and Indian Christian Philosophy," *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Bangalore: ACPI and Asian Trading Corporation, Volume 1, pp. 285-288.
6. 2010. "Globalisation and Indian Christian Philosophy" *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Bangalore: ACPI and Asian Trading Corporation, Volume 1, pp. 565-568.
7. **Melvil Pereira**. 2010. "Indigenous Peoples and the UN Human Rights Mechanism," *Social Action* 60 (n. 4, Oct-Dec), pp. 339-353.

Newspaper Articles

Gita Bharali.

"Karbi Paharot Adin" (One Day in the Karbi Hills) *Dainik Janambhumi*, 7th and 8th June, 2010.

"Kalyankami Rastra aru Manuahr Sangram" (Welfare State and People's Struggle), *Dainik Janambhumi*, 23rd November 2010.

Walter Fernandes

"Mother Teresa," *The Assam Tribune*. August 29, 2010.

"Attacks on Northeast Women and Equality," *The New Leader*, Sept. 16-29, 2010.

Melvil Pereira.

"Customary Laws: Recognition or Codification?" *The Nagaland Post*, August 17, 2010

"Customary Law: To Codify or Document?" *The Shillong Times*, November 5, 2010

Seminars and Conferences

Conferences and seminars are one more way of sharing knowledge generated by research and of learning from other researchers and social activists. NESRC organised seminars on issues such as peace and development. Its staff were resource persons or paper presenters elsewhere.

Seminars around Peace Issues

1. An important initiative was to *facilitate a dialogue between the leaders of the Kuki, Meitei and Naga communities of Manipur* after the blockade of April-May 2010. When the state government organised elections to the Autonomous District Councils in the hill areas without granting a Sixth Schedule, the Naga leadership declared a highway blockade. In an effort to break the deadlock, some persons from the three communities came together during the national seminar on conflicts and peace organised at the NED Social Forum jointly by many agencies, including NESRC. These leaders wanted the process to continue with a facilitator not belonging to any community involved in the conflict. The scene shifted to Manipur and Walter Fernandes went to Imphal once in two months together with Melvil Pereira or Sujata Hati Baruah to facilitate the dialogue. The process has met with some success but has also run into problems. So it is being reviewed in order to revive it.

2. NESRC joined many civil society groups to organise a *National seminar on Conflicts and Peace in Northeast India*. The seminar held on May 21-22, 2010 at NED Social Forum had more than 100 participants from all over India. Its high point was the presentation on the conflict in Manipur by persons who had come together a day before it for a possible dialogue. Because of this live issue people from the rest of India were able to get some understanding of the situation in the Northeast.

3. *Meeting on the Border Issue* was held on June 26, 2010 together with some researchers and journalists. Its objective was to look at the possibility of the civil society making some contribution to the solution of various border conflicts between Assam and the neighbouring states because they have been turning violent and innocent people are suffering. No definite steps could be taken in this direction but efforts are being made to bring people together for a dialogue.

Seminars on Development Issues

4. Another major area of reflection was based on the studies on development-induced displacement and lack of development. Two seminars were held on this issue. The first of them was “*What Type of Development for the Northeast*” organised on May 4-5, 2010. It brought together 35 persons from the region to reflect on the destruction caused by conflicts, development-induced displacement and natural disasters many of which are human-made. Its follow up too was planned.

5. The seminar on *Development Issues in the Electoral Agenda, 2011: Challenge to Political Parties* held on 12th and 13th of March 2011 was organised jointly by NESRC and B. Borooah College with Sujata Hati Baruah as its main organiser. She also wrote its final report in English and Assamese. The seminar was based on the study on development-induced displacement in Assam 1947-2000 that showed that development has caused much destruction of people’s communities and has also resulted in conflicts. So the 150 participants that included student, civil society and political leaders and research scholars reflected on the type of development that the new legislators should work for. After the seminar the summary of the study on displacement was circulated to all the colleges in Assam.

6. *The Child Budget and Development*. A one-day seminar was held on December 20, 2010 both to train the field workers to collect data on the mid-day meal scheme and to release the book on the Assam Budget and the share of Children 2004-05 to 2008-09.

Seminars on Livelihood Issues

7. *Reflections on a Tribal Theology for Northeast India*. Modernisation has caused a cultural and ideological conflict among the tribes of the Northeast. The search for a new ideology and worldview requires also a religious dimension. This seminar held on April 27-29 brought together 50 religious and social thinkers from all seven states of the Northeast. The participants also planned its follow up.

8. *Awareness Building on Climate Change*. NESRC sponsored four one-day seminars in Nagaland March 7-12 for teachers and students of schools in four towns of Nagaland.

Participation in Other Seminars

Apart from organising our own seminars the staff members of NESRC also attend seminars, training programmes and conferences elsewhere. They present papers, act as resource persons or are active participants in them. During the year, Dr R. P. Athparia, Dr Gita Bharali, Prof. Alphonsus D’Souza, Sujata Hatii Baruah, Dr Melvil Pereira and Dr Walter Fernandes took part in seminars.

Walter Fernandes, Gita Bharali and Melvil Pereira. “Common Resources, Community Management and Tribal Administration in Northeast India” *International Conference, Association of the Study of Commons*. Organised by Foundation for Ecological Security. Hyderabad: January 10-14, 2011.

Dr Gita Bharali was convener and Dr Walter Fernandes was co-chair (with Dr Ilina Sen as chair) of the section on “People’s Movements, Dalits, Tribals, Women and the Poor” at the *National Convention of the Indian Academy of Social Sciences*, Gauhati University, December 27-31, 2010.

Dr R. P. Athparia presented the following papers

“Ethno-cultural and ethno-religious scenario of the people of Assam” St Arnold Janssen SVD Foundation Lecture at the *Seminar on Concept of God and Religion: Traditional Thought and Contemporary Society*, organised by Sanskriti. Agartala: November 19-20, 2010/

“Child Health Care System among the Tribals of Assam” *Seminar on Health Care System among the Tribal People of Assam*. Guwahati: Assam Institute of Tribal Research, November 9-10, 2010.

Participated in the following meetings

26th Grants-in-Aid Committee Meeting at Central Institute of Indian Languages Mysore, as Language Expert of Northeast India, October 13-14, 2010 to select books for bulk purchase or publication of manuscripts, decision on maintenance for voluntary organizations and little magazines.

Seminar on **12th Five Year Plan Projects of the NGOs in Northeast India** organised by North East Net Work, Shiilong: January 11, 2011.

Dr Gita Bharali Presented the following papers

1. “Conflicts around Land” *National Seminar Peace and Conflicts*, NED Social Forum, May 21-22..
2. “Women and Water Resources in the Context of the Water Policy of Assam” *Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Indo-Global Social Service Society*, New Delhi, 18th August 2010.
3. “Politics of Dispossession in North East India” *International Seminar on Shared History and Contested Space in South East Asia*, Department of History, Dibrugarh University, November 29-30.
4. “Common Land and the Law in the Northeast,” *Regional Workshop on Land Administration in Northeast India*. Organised by Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy. Guwahati: December 14-15, 2010.
5. “Development in Assam,” at the *Seminar on Development Issues in the Electoral Agenda, 2011: Challenge to Political Parties* organised by NESRC D. Borooah. College, March 12-13, 2011.
6. Participated in a Northeast Regional Consultation on ‘*Matters related to Climate Change: implications for the North-eastern and Lower Himalayan region of India*’ organised by Centre for Legislative Research and Advocacy. Guwahati: July 5-6, 2010.
7. Was a Resource Person at the seminar on *Human Rights and Women in Northeast India*, Barbhag College, November 12-13, 2010.

Sujata Hati Baruah presented the paper:

1. “Traditional Water Preservation Systems in North-east India: A Need Based Approach,” *National Seminar on Environmental Issues: Contemporary Development Paradigm and People’s Movements*. Dept. of Anthropology and Political Science, Dhakuakhana College, Dhakuakhana, Feb. 11-12, 2011.
2. Was the main organiser of the Workshop *Development Issues in the Electoral Agenda, 2011: Challenge to Political Parties* organised by NESRC and D. B. College, March 12-13, 2011.

Prof. Alphonsus D'Souza presented the paper "Tribal Theology in the Northeast: Some Questions from Sociology," *Seminar Reflections on a Tribal Theology for the Northeast*, April 27-29, 2010.

Gave some sessions on Northeast India, at Satya Nilayam, Chennai, November 2010.

Facilitated some sessions of pastoral planning in Diphu diocese during 2010-2011.

Dr Walter Fernandes gave the following lectures

1. "The Politics of Tribal Land, Identity and Nationalism in Northeast India," *Dr U. A. Shimray Memorial Lecture*, organised by Naga Students' Association, JNU, New Delhi, May 14, 2010.

2. "School Education in a Changing India," Valedictory Address at the AINACS National Conference. Guwahati: October 17, 2010.

3. WMI Endowment Lectures, Dept. of Christian Studies, Madras University, March 1, 2011

A. The Indian Churches amid the Challenge of Globalisation.

B. The Churches and Social Change in Northeast India.

4. Human Rights Course, Dept. of Anthropology, Calcutta University, March 29 and 30, 2011.

A. Displacement, Deprivation and the Pattern of Development.

B. West Bengal: Displacement 1947-2000: Search for Alternatives as a Human Right

Presented the following papers

1. "Development and Peace in the Northeast," *Keynote Address at the Workshop on Conflicts and Peace in the Northeast*. Guwahati: NED Social Forum, May 21-22, 2010.

2. "The Indian Church and the Challenge of Globalisation" *National Seminar, Church in India Tomorrow*. Rajkot: *The Third Millennium*, September 6-10, 2010.

3. "Tribal Languages and Relevant Education" *Education among the Indigenous Peoples: Addressing Issues of Content, Access and Structures*. Bangalore: National Inst. of Advanced Studies. Sept. 28-29.

4. "Challenges of Land Management in Northeast India," Keynote Address at the *Regional Workshop on Land Administration in Northeast India*. Organised by Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy of Administration, Mussorie. Guwahati: December 14-15, 2010.

5. "Indigenous Peoples and History in Northeast India," *National Seminar on Ethnicity, Regionalism, Polity and Economy of Eastern India since Independence*. Acharya B. N. Seal College, Cooch Behar, December 20-21, 2010.

6. "Conditions for Peace with Justice," *National Colloquium, Indian Pluralism and Solidarity for a More Just Humanity*. Pune: Ishvani Kendra, January 6-8, 2011.

7. "Ecology, Modernisation and People's Movements in India," Keynote Address, *National Seminar Environmental Issues: Contemporary Development Paradigm and Peoples' Movement*. Dept. of Anthropology and Political Science, Dhakuakhana College, Dhakuakhana, February 11-12, 2011.

8. "Displacement, Deprivation and the Pattern of Development," Keynote Address. Bhopal: *Forum for Religious*, February 17-20, 2011

9. "History in Conflicts and Peace: A Tribute to Dr Robert Tiba," Valedictory Address, *Seminar on History and Culture of Northeast India*. Assam University, Diphu Campus, February 24-26, 2011.

10. "Partition and the Northeast: Refugees, Land and Identity" *Seminar on the Partition and Northeast India*. Department of History, Assam University, Silchar, March 26-27, 2011.

Participated in the North Eastern Regional Consultation, National Policy for Children. Guwahati: NIPPCCD Regional Centre, 12th October 2010.

Dr Melvil Pereira Presented a paper on "Changing Land Relations among the Garo of Meghalaya" at the *Regional Workshop on Land Administration in Northeast India*. Guwahati: December 14-15.

Was a Resource Person at

Consultative Workshop on Customary Law. Guwahati: NEW Net and Wing Net, May 13-14, 2010.

Workshop on Data Collection. Guwahati: Caritas Northeast, September 21-22, 2010.

A word of Thanks.

This report marks eleven years of NESRC. The report of 2011-12 will be written by the new director who will take charge in early 2012. Before closing I take this opportunity to thank all those who have accompanied NESRC during the last eleven years of its service to the Northeast. All the staff members of NESRC join me in thanking the research, funding, social action and other agencies that have been our partners during these years. Among them are Actionaid, Broederlijk Delen, Cordaid, CRS, ICHR, ICSSR, ISRO, HAQ, IGSSS, KFB-DKA, Laya, Ministries of Rural Development and Tribal Affairs, Misereor, Missio, National Commission for Women, Sarba Shikshya Abhijyan and a host of others in India and abroad. To all of them a BIG THANK YOU.

Guwahati
27th July 2011

Dr Walter Fernandes
Director