

North Eastern Social Research Centre Guwahati

Annual Report April 2015 to March 2016

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North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati

Annual Report

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1. INTRODUCTION:

We are glad to present to you the Annual Report of North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati, for 2015-16. During the year, NESRC organised two national level seminars, three state level interfaces, one workshop and one peace activists' meeting. The seminars and workshops brought together scholars, students, activists, government officials and civil society leaders on a common platform to engage with issues especially concerning those sections of society who are at the margins. Most seminars and workshops were held in collaboration with academic institutions or civil society organisations.

We published seven books and three booklets. Two of the seven books are on development-induced-displacement in Sikkim and Meghalaya. Two more books dealt with the plight of children in conflict zones of Manipur and Tripura. A monograph titled *Life and Dignity* captured the courageous testimonies of women in the militarised context of Dimapur, Nagaland. An edited book explored the possibilities of moral theology for tribal communities of Northeast India. Another edited book put together the religious resources for peace work. Three booklets containing the findings of the study on budget for children in Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya were published.

One of the highlights of the year was the extension of the study of budget for children, which had Assam as its focus, to three more states, namely, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura. As part of this study, we organised interfaces in Guwahati, Shillong and Agartala to share the findings. In all the states we studied, we made conscious efforts to meet the personnel of concerned government departments in a bid to persuade them to increase the budget for children.

The national seminar on *Media, Conflict & Peace Building in North East India* was another high point of the year. The seminar marked the culmination of a study undertaken by NESRC on the same theme as that of the seminar. Apart from sharing the findings of the study, the seminar provided a forum for journalists and media scholars to discuss and deliberate on the role of the media in conflict situations.

The pages below provide information on the various activities organised by NESRC during 2015-16. It is with great delight that we submit this Annual Report for your perusal. We want to assure you that NESRC remains committed to the building of an inclusive society where everyone feels counted, included, and wanted, and provided with a voice in shaping their own destiny.

2. STUDIES:

A. STUDIES COMPLETED

1. **Melvil Pereira and Bhaswati Borgohain:** The Role of the Media in Conflict Resolution. This study was done in partnership with following partners: Peace Channel, Dimapur; Diocesan Social Service Society, Manipur, and JUST, Agartala.
2. **Melvil Pereira and R P Athparia:** Independent Monitoring and Hand Holding Support on WIFS in Dibrugarh District of Assam. *This study was commissioned by UNICEF, Assam.*
3. **Melvil Pereira, Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, Kanu Kanta Sen and Farhana Yashmin:** The Share of Children in the State Budget of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland 2015-16. *This study was done in collaboration with HAQ, New Delhi.*
4. **Walter Fernandes, George Thadathil and Bitopi Dutta:** Development-Induced Displacement in Sikkim 1975-2010. *This study was done in collaboration with Salesian College, Siliguri.*
5. **Walter Fernandes, Veronica Pala, Gita Bharali and Bitopi Dutta:** Development-Induced Displacement in Meghalaya. 1975-2010.

B. ONGOING STUDIES

1. **Melvil Pereira, R P Athparia and Sunumi Changmi:** The Impact of the Customary Tribal Law and Its Modernisation on Women in North Eastern India: A Comparative Study of Fourteen Tribes in Seven States.
2. **Melvil Pereira, Madhusmita Chowdhury and Farhana Yashmin:** Financial Tracking and Implementation Status of the Integrated Child Development Scheme, Meghalaya. (This study is jointly done by NESRC and HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, Delhi).
3. **Melvil Pereira and Angshuman Sarma:** Causes and Extent of Health Vulnerability: A Study of Health Status of Women and Children in Tea Gardens of Assam
4. **Walter Fernandes and Bhaswati Borgohain:** Understanding Autonomy, Self-Determination and Sovereignty as Tools for Peace.
5. **Walter Fernandes, Chishi Mughavi, Medonuo Pienyu, Alibo Achumi & Mhonthung Yanthan:** *Development-Induced Displacement in Nagaland 1947-2010.*
6. **Walter Fernandes and Gita Bharali:** *Development-Induced Displacement in Mizoram, 1947-2010.*

7. **Walter Fernandes, Savio Abreu, Niraj Naik and Simon Fernandes:** *Development-Induced Displacement in Goa 1965-2010.*
8. **Walter Fernandes, Nafisa Goga D'Souza, Palla Trinadh Rao, Arundhuti Roy Chaudhury, M. Gopinath Reddy and Mohammed Asif:** *Displacement and Marginalisation in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana 1947-2010.*
9. **Walter Fernandes and Bitopi Dutta:** *Development-Induced Displacement in Arunachal Pradesh 1947-2010.*

3. SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND INTERFACES

1. **National Seminar in Guwahati:** A national seminar on *Media, Conflict & Peace Building in North East India:* The seminar was jointly organized by NESRC, Guwahati, and Department of Mass Communications, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. It was held at Don Bosco Institute, Joypur, Guwahati, on 23-24 July, 2015. More than 20 papers were presented by journalists, media scholars and social activists. The seminar focused on the proactive role media can play in working for peace before, during and after conflict situations develop. A critical issue it discussed and debated was the conventional approach of objective reporting. Many papers stressed on the need to go beyond objective reporting to engaged reporting, aimed at building an inclusive society.
2. **Regional Workshop in Dibrugarh:** The objective of the workshop was to review the implementation of WIFS (Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplement) in Dibrugarh District. It was part of the study *Independent Monitoring Hand Holding Support on WIFS* commissioned by UNICEF. The workshop provided forum for a joint review cum convergence meeting for district officials of Department of Health, Education and Social Welfare (especially the ICDS). It was held on 17th November 2015 at Deputy Commissioner's Office conference hall, Dibrugarh, and was chaired by Mr. A. Chaliha, ADC. During the meeting, plans for strengthening the supply chain and recording mechanisms were discussed elaborately. It also requested the officials of the three departments viz. of Health, Education and Social Welfare (ICDS branch) to work together to fulfil the objectives of the WIFS programme in Dibrugarh.
3. **Peace Activists' Meet:** It was held on 22-23 June 2015 at Social Forum, Guwahati. As many as 50 peace activists from all over Northeast India were present for the meet. The Meet began with the key note address delivered by Dr Walter Fernandes. The objective of the Meet was to listen to the success stories and challenges faced by peace activists in Northeast India. While some shared their stories of playing the peace-maker, others gave vent to their frustrations at not making progress in resolving conflicts. The Meet ended with a suggestion among others that more of such forums for sharing struggles and challenges should be held periodically.

4. **National Seminar on *Search for a Tribal Moral Theology for Northeast India***: The seminar was jointly organized by NESRC, Guwahati, and Tribal Study Centre, Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, with participation from many theology colleges of Northeast India. It was held at Don Bosco Institute, Joypur, Guwahati, on 28-29 May, 2015. Over 60 delegates took part in the seminar and more than 20 papers were presented.
5. **Interface on *Budget for Children in Meghalaya and Release of Budget for Children 2015-16 Handout***: The interface was organised by NESRC in collaboration with HAQ, New Delhi on 30 November 2015 at Asian Confluence, Shillong. The occasion was to share the findings of the report on Budget for Children in Meghalaya. The interface brought together many officials from various departments of the Government of Meghalaya that deal with child related issues.
6. **Interface on *Budget for Children in Assam and Release of Budget for Children 2015-16 Handout***: The interface was organized by NESRC in collaboration with HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi at the Conference Hall, Jagriti, Christian Basti, Guwahati, on 25 February 2016. It was meant to share the findings of the study on Budget for Children in Assam. There was a good response to the findings that highlighted the abysmally low share in the Assam State budget allotted for children. Ms. Runumi Gogoi, Chairperson, Assam Commission for the Protection of Child Rights released the handout that contained the findings of the study.
7. **Interface on *Budget for Children in Tripura and Release of Budget for Children 2015-16 Handout***: With JUST, Agartala, as the local partner, the interface was organised by NESRC in collaboration with HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi, on 23 February 2016. The Deputy Speaker of the Tripura State Legislative Assembly was the Chief Guest and released the handout.

4. PUBLICATION: BOOKS

For effective advocacy in support of the marginalized, the findings of the studies and deliberations of the seminars/workshops must be circulated and made available in the form of professional and popular publications. NESRC published following books/booklets during the year:

1. **Dolly Kikon. 2015: *Life and Dignity: Women's Testimonies of Sexual Violence in Dimapur (Nagaland)***. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre. ISBN-978-81-926062-5-5
2. **Pangernungba Kechu, Melvil Pereira & Atungo Shitri (Eds). 2016: *Religious Resources for Peace Work***. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, Foundation

for Church and Society, Oriental Theological Seminary, Nagaland and Justice & Peace Department, CBCNEI, Guwahati. ISBN-978-81-926062-6-2.

3. **Melvil Pereira, Shaunna Rodrigues and Ankita Gupta. 2016:** *Growing Up In A Conflict Zone: Children Surviving Conflict in Tripura*. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN-978-81-926062-8-6.
4. **Alphonsus D'Souza, R. Sashikaba Kechutzar & H. Lalrinthanga Rina (Eds). 2016:** *Tribal Cultural Resources for Christian Life and Ethics in North East India*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre. ISBN-978-81-926062-7-9
5. **Walter Fernandes, George Thadathil and Bitopi Dutta. 2016:** *The Teesta on the Run: Development-Induced-Displacement in Sikkim 1975-2010*. Guwahati/Siliguri: NESRC & Salesian College (Pp.x+364). ISBN 978-93-82216-13-1.
6. **Walter Fernandes, Veronica Pala, Gita Bharali and Bitopi Dutta. 2016.** *The Development Dilemma: Displacement in Meghalaya 1947-2010*. Pp. x+432,
7. **Melvil Pereira, Ankita Gupta and Shaunna Rodrigues. 2016:** *Growing Up In A Conflict Zone: Children Surviving Conflict in Manipur*. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN-978-81-926062-9-3.
8. **K. K. Sen & Farhana Yashmin. 2016:** Budget for Children in Assam. Guwahati/ Delhi: NESRC & HAQ: Centre for Child Rights (handout).
9. **K. K. Sen & Farhana Yashmin. 2015:** Budget for Children in Meghalaya. Guwahati/Delhi: NESRC & HAQ: Centre for Child Rights (handout).
10. **K. K. Sen & Farhana Yashmin. 2016:** Budget for Children in Tripura. Guwahati/ Delhi: NESRC & HAQ: Centre for Child Rights (handout).

5. PROFESSIONAL ARTICLES:

Apart from our own publications, the faculty of NESRC share their findings also through professional journals, edited books and newspapers. They published the following articles this year:

Melvil Pereira

“Tribal Land Laws with State Laws: Implications for Tribal Forest Conservation”, in Sarthak Sengupta (Ed), *Explorations in Anthropology of North East India* (pp. 91-112). New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House (2015).

“Impact of Modern Nation-State Land Tenure System on Indigenous Lands”, in R. Sashikaba Kechutzar & Zulunungsang Lemtur (Eds), *Doing Theology with Indigenous People's*

Spirituality: An Asian Contribution to Theology of Creation and Wider Ecumenism (pp. 2-13). Jointly Published by Tribal study centre, ETC, Jorhat, Clark Centre for Peace Research & Action, CTC, Mokokchung & SCEPTRE, Kolkata (2016).

“Internal Minorities within Cultural Communities: The Case of Women in Tribal Communities of North East India”, in Mukesh Srivastava (Ed), *Women Empowerment in Northeast India: Interdisciplinary Standpoint* (pp. 43-78). New Delhi: Lakshi Publishers & Distributors (2016). (co-authored with Shaunna Rodrigues)

“Roman Catholic Missions in North-East India: Strategies, Tensions and Challenges”, In Marina Ngursangzeli and Michael Biehl (Eds), *Witnessing to Christ in North East India* (197-207). Oxford: Regnum Books International.

Walter Fernandes

“The Land Acquisition Act 2013 and Livelihood Losers”, in Varsha Bhagat-Ganguly (Ed), *Land Rights in India: Policies, Movements and Challenges* (pp.179-194). New Delhi: Routledge. (2016)

R P Athparia

“Tribal Law, Property Rights and Gender Issues of North East India”, in Sarthak Sengupta (Ed), *Explorations in Anthropology of North East India* (pp.79-90). New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House. (2015)

“Women Power Structure in Matrilineal Jaintia Society”, in Mukesh Srivastava (Ed), *Women Empowerment in Northeast India: Interdisciplinary Standpoint* (pp.10-39). New Delhi: Lakshi Publishers & Distributors. (2016)

“Cultural Affinity of Different Linguistic Groups of North East India”, in Gautam Kumar Bera, K. Jose, G. Lazar & M. Antony (Eds), *Endangered Cultures and Languages in North East India* (pp.103-117). Guwahati: Spectrum Publication. (2016)

“Perspective in Sattriya Music and Dance in Assam”, in Gautam Kumar Bera (Ed), *Religious and Cultural Legacy of Sankardeva* (pp. 80-98). Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. (2016)

“Interface of Local Self-Government and Modern Formal Law in North East India: An Analysis”, *Anthropos India*, 2(1): 204-232. (2015)

Angshuman Sarma

“Impact of Informalisation and Role of Trade Union on Tea Tribe Workers of Assam”, in K Sarap and V Motkuri (Eds), *Adivasis in India: Resources Livelihood and Institution* (Pp 101-118). Hyderabad: Bloomsbury Publication. (2016)

“Social Security as a Productive Factor for Informal Workers in Tea Gardens”, *Assam Economic Review*, 9: 54-71. (2016)

6. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

Melvil Pereira:

“How Protected Are Our Children in Assam”, in *Eastern Chronicle* on 4 March 2016.

“Preventing and Combating trafficking of girls in Northeast India”, in *The GirlsCount* news bulletin, January-March 2016.

Walter Fernandes

“Challenges to Values of Freedom,” *The Assam Tribune*, November 2, 2015.

“Indo-Myanmar Relations: Looking from the Border,” *The Eastern Mirror*, January 27, 2016.

“Some Challenges in My Life,” *The Assam Tribune Youth Page*, February 4, 2016.

“Democracy, Nationalism and Nazism,” *The Shillong Times*, March 2, 2016.

Madhusmita Chowdhury

“Development and ICDS in Meghalaya”, in *The Shillong Times* on 19 February 2016.

“Assam budget and welfare of children”, in *The Sentinel* on 21 March 2016.

Bhaswati Borgohain

“Dissent, Nationalism and Democracy”, in *The Sentinel* on 28 February 2016.

Binita Kakati

“Tribal Customary Laws and Women’s Equality”, in *The Morung Express* on 8 March 2016.

7. PRESENTED PAPERS:

Melvil Pereira

“Development-Induced Displacement and Children’s Vulnerability” paper presented during the Seminar on *Conflict, Displacement and Children’s Vulnerability*, organized by Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Bodoland University and NERSWN on 27-28 November, 2015 in Conference Hall, CIT, Kokrajhar.

“Impact of Conflict and Internal Displacement on Girls Right”, paper presented during the Seminar on *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Building a Collective Response*, organized by Strengthening Civil Society Engagement and Community Action, held at Don Bosco Institute, Kharguli, Guwahati on 3-4 December, 2015.

“Village Development Board and Communitisation in Nagaland: The Role of Social Capital”, paper presented during the International Conference on *Rural Development*, sponsored by Campion School- Bhopal, NABARD- Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development

Corporation Ltd, XAMI- Jamshedpur and Core Carbon X- Hyderabad & Indian Oil Corporation, held at XIDAS, Jabalpur, India on 4-5 February, 2016.

“Climate Change and Food Security: A Case of Brahmaputra Basin of Assam” paper presented during the 1st International Conference on *Climate Science*, organized by ICRC Cotton College, CSEAS Kyoto University and ICEDS Kagawa University on 7&8 March, 2016 at Cotton College State University, Guwahati.

Walter Fernandes

“Look (Act) East Policy: With or Through the Northeast?”, *Conference on Look East Policy, ASEAN and Northeast India*. Guwahati: Omeo Kukar Das Institute for Social and Economic Development, September 25-26, 2015

“Indo-Myanmar Relations: Corporate Trade or People-Centred?”, *Conference on Indo-Myanmar Relations*, New Delhi: Burma Group, September 28-29.

“Dissent and Contestation in South Asia as a Social Process”, Inaugural Address, *Winter Research Course*, Guwahati: Tata Institute of Social Sciences, January 4, 2016.

“Community Resources and People in Northeast India”, Keynote Address, *Consultation on Natural Resource Management in Northeast India*. Guwahati: Human Rights Law Network, January 9.

“Present Day Challenges before Tripura’s Indigenous Communities”, *Aitorma Maharaja Bir Bikram Memorial Lecture*, Agartala: Don Bosco Peace Centre, 26th January 2016.

“Land Laws in Assam,” *Workshop on Land in the Northeast*. Guwahati: Action Aid India, January 22-23, 2016.

“Challenges of Assam Adivasis”, Tezpur: *Adivasi Convention*, February 25, 2016.

“AFSPA and Human Rights in Northeast India”, *Course on Human Rights*, Centre for Juridical Sciences and Departments of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, March 15, 2016.

Rajendra Prasad Athparia

“Syncretism in Religious and Cultural Dimensions: A Study of the Jaintias of Meghalaya”, paper presented during the 9th National Seminar on *Syncretism in India: Cultural and Religious Dimensions* on 21-22 November, 2015 organised by Sanskriti- North Eastern Institute of Cultural Research (NEICR), Guwahati in collaboration with Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal.

“Indigenous Knowledge System and Role of Dormitory among the Wanchos of Arunachal Pradesh” during the seminar on *Indigenous Knowledge System for Sustainable Rural Development* organized by NIRDPR-NERC, on January 18-19, 2016 at its premises in Jawaharnagar in Guwahati, Assam.

“Anthropological Research on Indigenous People of North east India: Issues and Challenges” during the National Seminar on *Anthropological Research in North east India: Tradition and Transition* organized by the Department of Anthropology at Dibrugarh University on March 18-19, 2016.

Sunumi Changmi

“Culture, Religious Change and Identity: A Case Study of Muklom (Tangsa)”, paper presented during the 9th National Seminar on *Syncretism in India: Cultural and Religious Dimensions* on 21-22 November, 2015 organised by Sanskriti- North Eastern Institute of Cultural Research (NEICR), Guwahati in collaboration with Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal.

Binita Kakati

“The Need for Policy Formulation and Inclusive Growth in Rural Northeast India”, paper presented during the Seminar on *Make in India and Rural Northeast: The Challenges* on 25-26 February 2016 at NIRD&PR-NERC, Guwahati .

Angshuman Sarma

“The Crisis in Tea Industry”, paper presented during the Seminar on *Make in India and Rural Northeast: The Challenges* on 25-26 February 2016 at NIRD&PR-NERC, Guwahati .

8. RESOURCE PERSON:

Melvil Pereira & Walter Fernandes

Two credit course on *Forced Migration and Internal Displacement* to students of M.A Programme, *Peace and Conflict Studies* at Tata Institute of Social Science Research, Guwahati.

Melvil Pereira

One credit course on *Social Analysis* to students of B.Th Programme at Oriens College, Shillong.

Member, Assessment Team, Indian Social Institute, Bangalore from September 2015 to February 2016.

Chaired a session during the seminar on *Indigenous Knowledge System for Sustainable Rural Development* organized by NIRDPR-NERC, on January 18-19, 2016 at its premises in Jawaharnagar in Guwahati, Assam.

Talk on *Land and Governance: Challenges in Manipur*. During the training of staff of partner organisations of ActionAid, Guwahati, on 9 February 2016 at CBCNEI, Pan Bazar, Guwahati.

9. PARTICIPATED IN SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES:

Sunumi Changmi, Bhaswati Borgohain & Walter Fernandes

Talk by B.N Shrikrishna on the topic “*Multi-faiths of India and their interrelationship*” organised by Cotton College State University, Guwahati on 10 September 2015.

Talk by Sanjib Barua on the topic “*The Nation and its Northeast*” organised by Cotton College State University and Tata Institute of Social Science, Guwahati on 13 October 2015.

Talk by Rowena Robinson on the topic “*Fire, Water, Earth and Air the four architectures of the Indian Constitution*” at KBR Hall, Cotton Campus on 31 October 2015.

Melvil Pereira and Rajendra Prasad Athparia

Discussion with Hon’ble Members of National Commission for Women on 23 November, 2015 at the Conference Hall, Assam State Commission for Women, Guwahati on the Project “*Violence Free Home*”

Rajendra Prasad Athparia and Madhusmita Chowdhury

Workshop on “*Mapping of Children affected by violence in Assam*” organized by TISS, Guwahati in partnership with UNICEF on 15 February, 2016 at Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS), Guwahati.

Binita Kakati and Anindita Das

Consultation Programme organised by the Centre for Peace and Development Studies on 16 February, 2016 at the Gateway Grandeur Hotel. The topic of the consultation was "Tribal Women's Rights in Northeast India: Access to Representation and Justice".

Melvil Pereira, Walter Fernandes and Bhaswati Borgohain

“Multitude and Democracy Experiences from Northeast India and Myanmar”, an International Conference organised by Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD) in collaboration with Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), on 19-20 February, 2016-02-28

Melvil Pereira, Angshuman and Madhusmita

Workshop to share the findings of a recently concluded pilot study, titled, *An Exploratory Study to Identify Water, Sanitation and Waste Management Issues in Guwahati City with a Specific Focus on Two Wards*”, organised by National Foundation for India (NFI) in collaboration with sSTEP (Society for Social Transformation and Environment Protection), on 20th February 2016, Saturday, at Pragati Manor, Christian Basti, G.S. Road, Guwahati.

Binita Kakati and Madhusmita Chowdhury

Release of the Assamese version of two publications. The event also included a panel discussion on different aspects related to violence against women organised by Lawyers Collective and NEN on 19 March 2016 at Vivekananda Kendra, Uzan Bazar.

10. CONCLUSION:

As can be seen in the report, the year 2015-16 was packed with seminars, workshops, studies, publications and advocacy efforts. All this was possible because of the generosity of many who stood by us through financial and moral support. Among those who have supported us are DKA/KFO - Austria, Jesuitenmission - Switzerland, Misereor – Germany, Missio Aachen and Munich – Germany, Referrat - Germany, Jesuitenmission-Germany, IWGIA - Denmark, HAQ - New Delhi, NED Social Forum - Guwahati, LCHR – Guwahati, Laya - Vishakhapatnam, Peace Channel – Dimapur, JUST - Agartala, DSSS – Imphal, Department of Mass Media of Rajiv Gandhi University – Itanagar, UNICEF-Assam, and many others. One of our seminars was part-funded by the Indian Council Social Science Research, Shillong, to whom we remain grateful. I also wish to appreciate the generosity of individual donors who have helped build the corpus fund of NESRC. We place on record our immense gratitude to all of them.

Guwahati
31 August 2016

Melvil Pereira
Director