

## Seminar, Climate Change & Climate Justice, December 7-8: Concept Note

**Organised jointly by:**

**North Eastern Social Research Centre, (NESRC) Guwahati**

**Foundation for Social Transformation: Enabling North East India (FST) Guwahati**

**Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) Regional office, Guwahati.**

**Dates: December 7, 2009 9 a.m. to December 8, 1 p.m.**

**Venue: Bosco Reachout, B. K. Kakoti Road, Bholanath Mandir Byelane, Ullubari, Guwahati  
781007**

1. Climate Change is increasingly being recognised as a development issue. At a macro level it questions the fossil fuel based development model that the world has been pursuing since the industrial revolution. This model is threatening the earth's sustainability. Its consequences can be irreparable. At the micro-level it affects the most vulnerable and marginalised groups.
2. That turns climate change into a justice issue. Around 70 percent of India's population sustains itself on climate sensitive sectors like agriculture. As a result, climate change implications are enormous for the nature-dependent groups in general and for the poorest among them in particular. Women will be particularly vulnerable to the climate phenomenon.
3. It is crucial to the Northeast where people's livelihoods and identity are founded ethnic and biological diversity. All of them are under threat because of climate change. There is also a proposal, not mentioned explicitly but brought up as a suggestion every now and then, to turn this biodiversity region into a carbon sink to protect Europe. That can mean turning it into a series of commercial forests that may be considered clean development mechanisms but will destroy the biodiversity and livelihood of the people.
4. The rural communities, especially women being the victims of climate change, should form the base for understanding and providing the perspective on its impacts to plan a new development paradigm to mitigate climate change. The national action plan should begin with an understanding of:
  - The life and livelihoods of rural communities, especially those who are economically and socially disadvantaged since climate change is impacting these communities the most. Amongst such communities, economically and socially marginalised women bear the brunt of climate change.
  - The present development path has in many ways contributed to the crisis. So it should be used as an opportunity to adopt a new development paradigm.

5. There is ample evidence that water resources are increasingly being threatened by climate change. Water is the core of development for rural communities dependent on agriculture and hence the need to focus on water security. In India already safe water availability even for domestic and livestock needs has reached a crisis situation. When resources are scarce, it is the historically marginalised who face the burden the most. Women who shoulder the responsibility of meeting domestic water needs face even more challenges in meeting them. Given the basic requirement of safe drinking water and sanitation for health and overall socioeconomic development, this lack of availability amounts to a violation of human rights. Water security is crucial for livelihoods in the Northeast but that is not being attended to.
6. The key issue then is not merely reduction in emissions. The real challenge is to integrate the development needs of the poor with a reduction of levels of emissions in the atmosphere. This implies that unless we adopt a model of development that takes into consideration the carrying capacity of the Earth we will not be able to address the climate issue. One can find a technical solution but not one that is socially acceptable.
7. While it is true that the developed countries are the cause of climate change because of historical emissions, it is also true that developing nations are going to be the future large emitters because they need to respond to the development needs of their populations. This calls upon a country like India to play a leadership role in advocating a fair global climate agenda that recognises the issues of equity at the international and national levels. It is all the more important for Copenhagen where the post Kyoto scenario is to be decided.
8. India's coastal, mountainous, forest, arid and semi-arid rural communities are low in carbon intensity and are efficient energy users. While their lives may not be desirable under the current development model, they are the reason for India's low carbon footprint that is being used as an argument for making developed countries to commit emission reduction. They are the protectors of the environment. Rural women have developed and adopted practices meant to deal with the impact of climate change for sustaining their lives. Yet, their voices have not been heard in national and international negotiations. We believe that a climate change neutral template for development they provide must be recognised and adopted. Neither uncontrolled growth nor the government-promoted intensive technologies holds solutions to long-term sustainability. The search for a solution has to be in the direction of environmentally and socially conducive technologies and lifestyles.
9. Climate change related employment loss and livelihood destruction as well as non-involvement of workers in production processes are matters of concern. Workers in sectors like mining or manufacturing may inadvertently contribute to climate change but they are not responsible for it as they do not control the means of production. Workers have the right to be informed about the production process and to be allowed to bargain for low carbon process. Loss of access to work will be high in the Northeast where more than 70 percent of the population depends on the primary sector that is being destroyed by climate change.

10. *The Clean Development Mechanism*, among the three flexible mechanisms finalised at Kyoto, needs to be re-examined. The practice and implementation of this mechanism defeats the very limited purposes for which it was proposed. The ethical aspect of this instrument can be questioned because the polluters can continue to pollute provided they buy their way out. As a market mechanism CDM in India has benefitted the industrial elite allowing very little space for low carbon consuming communities to enter the market on their terms.
11. The technology and market driven response of the government needs to be questioned. The communities, whose livelihoods are linked to climate dependent resources, need to be placed at the centre of the responses. The right to resources of communities marginalized by identity, work and descent, in particular women from such communities, need to be recognized and upheld in evolving a development paradigm for adaptation and mitigation of climate change.
12. *Differentiated responsibilities of non-Annexe 1 countries* call upon countries like India to pursue a path to development that does not follow the same perilous path of Annexe 1 countries. A low-carbon pathway to development is a desirable and achievable end and India can and must be obliged to play a critical role in innovating such a development paradigm.
13. While India is rightly pursuing an ethical position based on equity and the right to development of its large majority, this position needs to be translated into its domestic policies on energy, infrastructure and public services. In practice there is a disconnect between its international stance on equity and inclusive development, and the policies and practices it promotes at the domestic level. Hence the National Action Plan on Climate Change must reflect measures that adapt and lead us to a low-carbon path to development.

## **Draft Programme**

### **December 7:**

09-09.30: Registration

#### **9.30-11.00: Presentation of Background Papers**

9.30-09.35: *A word of Welcome: Ketaki Bardalai, FST*

09.35-09.55: *Climate Change in the Northeast: Prof. Dulal C. Goswami*

09.55-10.10: *Cultural Impacts of Climate Change: Dr Jayanta Sarma, Nagaon*

10.10-10.25: *The present state of international negotiations: to be decided*

10.25-10.40: *A critique of the Climate Action Plan: to be decided*

10.40-11.00: *Comments and discussion*

**11.00-11.30: Tea**

**11.30-13.00: Two official position papers from the NEC and Assam Government**

12.00-13.00: Feedback from two media persons

**13.00-14.00: Lunch**

**14.00-15.30: Sharing on Climate Change from the Participants**

Arunachal, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur. Assam, Tripura

**15.30-16.00: Tea**

**16.00-17.30: Sharing continued – rounding up, identifying issues.**

**December 8**

**09.30-11.00: Summary of Day 1, Discussion on main issues and follow up.**

**11.00-11.30: Tea break**

**11.30-12.50: Discussion on follow up and finalisation of the plan**

**12.50-13.00: Farewell message and vote of thanks: Mangneo Lhungdim, IGSSS and Gita Bharali, NESRC**

**13.00: Lunch and departure**