

# **North Eastern Social Research Centre Guwahati**

## **Annual Report April 2014 to March 2015**

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# North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati

## Annual Report

### April 2014-March 2015

#### INTRODUCTION

It is with great delight and immense gratitude that I present the Annual Report of North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati, for the year 2014-15. The mandate of NESRC is to combine serious intellectual pursuits with involvement with persons and groups active in the field of social change in the region. NESRC has striven to realize this mandate through various studies, research, workshops, seminars, interfaces, advocacy efforts and publications.

During the year, NESRC organized three national level seminars, 11 state level workshops, three colloquiums, one consultation and one interface. It published two books and two booklets. Of the ongoing studies, five have been completed and six are in progress. The past year saw Dr Melvil Pereira being appointed as a member of the Assam State Backward Class Commission for a three year term. Similarly, Dr Rajendra Prasad Athparia was appointed a member of the Juvenile Justice Board (JJC), Kamrup Rural District.

The findings of the studies were disseminated through seminars organized by NESRC. The seminars and workshops brought together scholars, students, activists, government officials and civil society leaders on a common platform to engage with issues and matters of importance especially to those sections of society who are at the margins. Most seminars and workshops were held in collaboration with academic institutions or civil society organizations. Similarly, various studies undertaken by NESRC were in partnership with academic institutions or like-minded NGOs. We place on record our gratitude to those who collaborated with us in various studies, seminars and workshops

One of the highlights of the year was the national seminar on *Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law in North East India*. The seminar marked the culmination of a major study undertaken by NESRC with the same theme as that of the seminar. The seminar was preceded by 14 state level workshops to validate the findings of the study. The workshops generated fruitful debate and discussion on the rights of women in the tribal communities chosen for the study. Apart from being interactive, engaging and enlightening, the workshops generated new inputs which were incorporated in the final report of the study.

There is a steady stream of scholars, students, journalists and activists who visit NESRC library. The titles in the library on themes specific to North East India are appreciated by the users. NESRC remains grateful to DKA, Austria and Jesuitenmission, Nurnberg, for generously supporting the library from its very inception.

What follows is a list of the seminars organized, books published, and papers presented, and conferences attended by the faculty of North Eastern Social Research Centre during 2014-15. While submitting this for your perusal, we would like to assure you that we remain committed to the vision of working for an inclusive society where everyone feels counted, included, and wanted, and provided with a voice in shaping their own destiny.

## STUDIES

### A. STUDIES COMPLETED

1. **Melvil Pereira and Jyotikona Chetia:** Safeguarding Commons for Next Generation: A Study of Common Property Resources. This study was commissioned by Seva Mandir, Udaipur.
2. **Melvil Pereira, Ankita Gupta & Shaunna Rodrigues:** *Psycho-Social Care of Children in Conflict Zones: The Case of North East India*. The partners involved in this study are Peace Channel in Nagaland, Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) in Tripura, and Diocesan Social Service Society in Manipur.
3. **Walter Fernandes, Veronica Pala, Gita Bharali and Bitopi Dutta:** Development-Induced Displacement in Meghalaya 1947-2010.
4. **Walter Fernandes, Bokali Chisi, Medonuo Pienyu, Alibo Achumi and Mhonthang:** Development-Induced Displacement in Nagaland 1947-2010. This study was done in partnership with Peace Channel, Dimapur.
5. **Walter Fernandes, George Thadathil and Bitopi Dutta.** Development-Induced Displacement in Sikkim 1975-2010. This study was done in collaboration with Salesian College, Siliguri.

### B. ONGOING STUDIES

1. **Melvil Pereira, R P Athparia, Sunumi Changmi and Kankana Bora:** 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 and Kanu Kanta Sen:** The Share of Children in the State Budget of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland. This study is done in collaboration with HAQ, New Delhi.
3. **Melvil Pereira and Bhaswati Borgohain:** The Role of Media in Conflict Resolution. This study is done in partnership with following partners: Peace Channel, Dimapur; Diocesan Social Service Society, Manipur.
4. **Walter Fernandes, Nafisa Goga D'Souza et al:** Development-Induced Displacement in Andhra Pradesh 1947-2010. In collaboration with Laya, Visakhapatnam.
5. **Walter Fernandes and Bitopi Dutta:** Development-Induced Displacement in Arunachal Pradesh 1947-2010.
6. **Walter Fernandes, Gita Bharali and Lawrence Kennedy:** Development-Induced Displacement in Mizoram 1947-2010. This study is done in collaboration with Diocesan Social Service Society in Mizoram.
7. **Walter Fernandes and Gita Bharali:** Development-Induced Displacement in Tripura 1947-2010.

8. **Walter Fernandes, Niraj Naik, Savio Abreu and Simon Fernandes:** Development-Induced Displacement in Goa 1965-2010. This study is done in collaboration with Xavier Centre of Historical Research, Goa.
9. **Walter Fernandes and Bitopi Dutta.** Development-Induced Displacement in Manipur 1947-2010.

## SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND COLLOQUIUMS

1. **National Seminar on *Conflict Resolution Systems in Tribal Societies of North East India, Legal Pluralism and Indian Democracy*:** held at INSPIRATION, Joypur, Guwahati, on 5-6 June, 2014. The objective of the seminar was to assess the role of traditional methods of conflict resolution in bringing about peace in North East India.
2. **National Seminar on *Family and Clan in Tribal Societies of Northeast India*:** The seminar was jointly organized by NESRC, Guwahati, and Tribal Study Centre, Eastern Theological College (ETC), Jorhat. It was held at INSPIRATION, Joypur, Guwahati, on 26-27 June, 2014. The aim of the seminar was to examine the changes that are taking place in the family, clan and social organization of the tribal communities of North East India and to respond to the challenges thrown up by the changes.
3. **National Seminar on *Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law in North East India*:** The seminar was organized in collaboration with Cotton College State University, Guwahati, and Tata Institute of Social Science, Guwahati, on 20-21 March 2015 at NIPCCD, Khanapara, Guwahati.. The occasion of the seminar was the completion of 14 regional workshops conducted to validate the findings of a major study of NESRC on the status of women in tribal customary law across 14 communities of North East India. Apart from presenting the findings of the study, over 25 papers were presented around the theme of the seminar.
4. **10 Workshops on *Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law*:** These workshops were organized to validate the findings of a major study undertaken by NESRC during 2012-13 on gender implications of tribal customary law in North East India. The participants of the workshops included village elders, politicians, teachers, pastors, women leaders, student leaders and other members from various tribal communities. The workshops provided a platform for NESRC to present the findings of the study and for participants an opportunity either to endorse the findings or to suggest changes. Mentioned below are ten workshops organized during the year.
  - a) *Gender Implications of Customary Law: The Case of the Jaintia People* on 11 July 2014. The workshop was organized in collaboration with Thomas Jones Synod College, Jowai, Meghalaya.
  - b) *Lyngngam Customary Law and the Status of Women* on 12 July 2015 at the District Hall, Nongstoin, Meghalaya.

- c) *Gender Implications of Nyishi Customary Law* on 13 September 2014 in collaboration with Don Bosco College, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.
  - d) *Gender Implications of Customary Law of the Khampati of Arunachal Pradesh* was held on 23 October 2014 at EAC Office Hall, Chongkham village, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh.
  - e) *Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Case of the Zou People* on 2 February 2015. The workshop was organized in collaboration with Don Bosco Higher Secondary School, Churachandpur, Manipur.
  - f) *Status of Women in Poumai Customary Law* on 4 February 2015 at Don Bosco High School, Senapati, Manipur.
  - g) *Gender Implications of Reang Customary Law* was held on 22 February 2015 in Gandhacherra, Tripura.
  - h) *Gender Implications of Halam Customary Law* was organized on 21 February 2015 in Kamaranga, Tripura.
  - i) *Gender Implications of Mizo Customary Law* on 10 March 2015 at I & P R Conference Hall, Aizawl, Mizoram.
  - j) *Gender Implications of Mara Customary Law* on 12 March 2015 at Seminar Hall of Mara Autonomous District Council, Saiha, Mizoram.
5. **Media Workshop in Kokrajhar:** Given the volatile situation in Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD), a media workshop was held in Kokrajhar on 21-22 August. The theme of the workshop was *Media as an Effective Tool for Peace Building in Conflict Situations*. This workshop was organized in collaboration with the Department of Media and Mass Communication, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. Over 50 participants – mostly correspondents or staff reporters of local dailies in Kokrajhar and some members from NGOs and CSOs – attended the workshop. Three senior journalists from *The Telegraph*, *The Statesman* and *The Imphal Free Press* were resource persons.
6. **Interface on Budget for Children in Assam 2014-15:** The interface was organized by NESRC in collaboration with HAQ, New Delhi at the Conference Hall, Jagriti, Christian Basti, Guwahati, on 28 February 2015. The occasion was to share the findings of the report on Budget for Children in Assam. The interface brought together many officials from various departments of the Government of Assam that deal with child related issues. The NGO sector was also well represented at the interface. There was a good response to the findings that highlighted the abysmally low share in the Assam State budget allotted for children.
7. **Regional Consultation on the Role of Women in Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution:** The consultation was organized by Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI), New Delhi, in collaboration with NESRC on 16 February 2015 at Jagriti, Guwahati. The participants, numbering over 50, mostly women leaders from North East India, took part in the workshop. The workshop discussed the United Nations Security

Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 which underscores the pivotal role women play in conflict management, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace.

#### **8. Three Colloquiums held at the Conference Hall, NESRC, Guwahati:**

- a) Prof Valerian Rodrigues, Faculty, Centre for Political Studies, JNU, Delhi, on the topic *Ambedkar and the Idea of Radical Democracy* on 20 October 2014.
- b) Dr Rudolf Heredia, Resident Scholar, Champion High School, Mumbai, on the topic *A Secular State in a Religious Society: The Constitutional Vision and its Challenge* on 31 October 2014.
- c) Dr Walter Fernandes, Research Director, Animation and Research Centre, Yangon, Myanmar, on the topic *Myanmar in Transition: Implications for India* on 5 December 2014.

### **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. **Alphonsus D'Souza, Lalnghakthuami & Pangernungba Kechu (eds).** *Family and Clan in North East India: Reflections by Christian Scholars*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre. ISBN 978-81-926062-2-4
2. **Kanu Kanta Sen and Farhana Yasmin.** Handout on *Budget for Children in Assam 2014-15*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre and New Delhi: HAQ, Centre for Child Rights. ISBN 978-81-926062-4-8
3. **Walter Fernandes, Tiken Das, Zaw Goan, Than Naing Lin & Furzee Kashyap et al.** *Relations Across Borders: Communities Separated by the Indo-Myanmar Border*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, and Yangon: Animation and Research Centre. ISBN 978-81-926062-3-1
4. **Melvil Pereira, R P Athparia, Sunumi Changmi & Jyotikona Chetia.** Handout on *Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre. ISBN 978-81-926062-5-5

### **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**

“Development-induced-Displacement and Impoverishment”, In J. John (ed) *Poverty, Livelihood Rights and the Small Tea Growers in the Northeast*. New Delhi: Centre for Education and Communication, pp. 28-34.

“Sociological Considerations on Socio-Cultural Dynamics in the Alcohol Use Behaviours of College Students”, *InterViews: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Social Sciences*. Vol. 1, No. 1, 64-80. (2014: with K S Joseph)

### **Rajendra Prasad Athparia**

“Indigenous Natural Resource Management and Environmental Issues of North East India: A case study of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong, Assam”, in Gautam Kumar Bera & K. Jose (eds). *Tribal India's Traditional Wisdom and Indigenous Resource Management*. New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications (2014), 124-130.

“The Livelihood Pattern of the Noctes, Arunachal Pradesh: Continuity and Change”, In Manis Kumar Raha (ed) *North East India: The Human Landscape*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd. (2014)

“Chieftainship, Vaisnavism and New Political System among the Noctes of Arunachal Pradesh” in N.K.Das (ed) *Exclusion, Discrimination and Stratification: Tribes in Contemporary India*. Jaipur: Rawat Publication (2014), 99-125.

### **Bhaswati Borgohain**

“Assam-Nagaland Border Dispute and the Media” in Soni Jalarajan Raj and R C Pattnaik (eds). *Media's Role in Facilitating Peace in Conflict Situation in Northeast India and Neighbouring Countries*. The Conference Proceedings published by *Media Watch*, New Delhi, (2014), 100-108.

## **NEWSPAPER ARTICLES**

**Melvil Pereira, R. P. Athparia & Kankona Borah:** “Customary Law and Gender Equality in Nagaland” in *The Nagaland Post* on 12 March 2014.

**Melvil Pereira:** “A festival of Joy”, in *The Assam Tribune* on 20 December 2014

**Jyotikona Chetia:** “Diminishing Commons of Northeast”, in *The Assam Tribune* on 2 August 2014

**Jyotikona Chetia:** “Dwindling Commons of Nagaland”, in *The Nagaland Post* on 19 July 2014

**Kanu Kanta Sen:** “Protection and Child Care”, in *The Assam Tribune* on 27 February 2015.

## **PRESENTED PAPERS**

### **Melvil Pereira**

“Resilience of Indigenous Conflict Resolution Systems of North East India” paper presented during the National Seminar on *Conflict Resolution Systems in Tribal Societies of North East India, Legal Pluralism and Indian Democracy* held at INSPIRATION, Joypur, Guwahati, on 5-6 June, 2014.

“Tribal Customary Law in North East India and Uniform Civil Code: Some Considerations”, at the *National Seminar on Negotiating Spaces: Uniform Civil Code... Inclusions and Exclusions*, on 8-9 November at Hotel West End, Mumbai, organized by MAJLIS.

“Status of Tribal Communities in North East India” Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on *National Tribal Human Development Report*, 14-15 November 2014, Hotel Kiranshree, Guwahati, Assam. Organized by UNDP, Planning Commission of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

“Impact of Modern Nation/State on Land Tenure System on Indigenous Land”, *Sub-Regional Consultation* jointly organized by SCEPTRE, Clark Centre for Peace Research & Action, Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, 18-21 November 2014.

“Jesuit Presence among Tribal Communities of North East India”, International Seminar on *Jesuit Contribution to Nation Building in South Asia: From the Nineteenth Century till Today*, organized by Jesuit South Asian Assistency, Nov 27-29, 2014, in Jnana Deep Vidyapeeth, PG Block Seminar Hall, Pune.

### **Rajendra Prasad Athparia**

“Customary Law and Conflict Resolution system in the Tribal Communities in North East India”, paper presented during the Multi-stakeholder Consultation on *National Tribal Human Development Report* on 14 th-15<sup>th</sup> November, 2014, in Guwahati, Assam organized by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Planning Commission and United Nation Development Programme (UNDP).

“Interface of Local Self-Government Laws and Modern Laws: An Analysis” paper presented during the National Seminar on *Conflict Resolution Systems in Tribal Societies of North East India, Legal Pluralism and Indian Democracy* held at INSPIRATION, Joypur, Guwahati, on 5-6 June, 2014.

“Common Property Management in North East India” paper presented during the seminar on *Society, Communities and Contemporary Trends of Culture: Local and Global Perspectives* on 4-5 November, 2014 organized by Women Cell , Jawaharlal Nehru College, Boko, Assam sponsored by ICSSR-NERC, Shillong.

“Interface of Local Self-Government and Modern Formal Law in North East India :An analysis”, paper presented during the National Seminar on *Verrier Elwin: Contributions To Contemporary Anthropology and Ethnology* on 15-16 November, 2014 organized by Sanskriti-North Eastern Institute of Cultural Research, Guwahati sponsored by Anthropological Survey of India, Shillong.

### **Melvil Pereira & Rajendra Prasad Athparia**

“Overlapping Jurisdiction of Land Administration: The Case of the Garos of Meghalaya”, National Workshop on *Codification of Land Related Customary Laws: Challenges and Prospects*, organized by Centre for Rural Studies, LBS National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie on 19-20 February 2015 at AASC, Guwahati.

### **Bitopi Dutta**

“Traditional method of conflict resolution among the Angami Nagas of Nagaland”, paper presented during the National Seminar on *Conflict Resolution Systems in Tribal Societies of North East India, Legal Pluralism and Indian Democracy* held at INSPIRATION, Joypur, Guwahati, on 5-6 June, 2014.



“Development Induced Displacement: A case study of Meghalaya” paper presented at the National Seminar on *National Security Issues: North East India Perspectives* on 8-9 November 2014 organized by Bir Bikram Memorial College, Agartala, Tripura.

“Development Induced Displacement and Women in the North East”, paper presented at the National Seminar on *Gender and Displacement in North East India* organised by Dept of Women's Studies, Gauhati University in collaboration with Indian Association for Women's Studies on 17-18 March 2015.

### **Sunumi Changmi**

“Gender Implication of Muklom Matrimonial Laws: Change and Continuity”, National Seminar on *Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law* organized by NESRC in collaboration with CCSU and TISS at NIPCCD, Khanapara, Guwahati, on March 20-21, 2015.

### **Jyotikona Chetia**

"Food and Health Security in North East India" paper presented at the National Seminar on *National Security Issues: North East India Perspectives* on 8-9 November 2014 organized by Bir Bikram Memorial College, Agartala, Tripura.

## **RESOURCE PERSON**

### **Melvil Pereira**

Key Note Speaker: National Seminar on *Prospects of and Challenges in Bridging the Gender Divide*, 2-3 May 2014. Organized by National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam

Key Note Speaker: Workshop on *Obligations of Labour Commission* on 2 May 2014 organized by North East Region Diocesan Labour Commission at NEDSF, Guwahati.

Talk on *Customary law and its significance to tribal communities and its gender implications*, on 7 May 2014, for the staff and faculty of Foundation for Social Transformation, Jorpukri, Guwahati.

Resource person for an ICSSR sponsored workshop on “Capacity Building Programme for young Faculty in Social Sciences” on Research Methodology on 26 August 2014 organized by Department of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University Sikkim University, Gangtok.

Member, Assessment of Indian Social Institute, New Delhi from February to October 2014

One day session on *Enhancement of Religious Life* on 7 September 2014 organized by North Eastern Conference of Religious in India at NEDSF, Guwahati.

Presentation at a consultation on *Marginal Lands? The Commodification and Re-appreciation of Upland Agriculture in the Borderland of Northeast India*, 21-22 November 2014, Tata Institute of Social Science, Guwahati

Respondent to a presentation on “25 Years of Service to the People of NE India”, North East Diocesan Social Service Society, 21 November 2014, NEDSSS, Joypur, Guwahati

As an expert did a presentation at a consultation on “Synergising *Customary Law with State Laws*” on 3 November 2014 to Parliamentary Standing Committee with the members of different Govt. and non Government bodies to chalk out personal and public grievances on law and justice in North East India.

Resource person for the Refresher Course for Lecturers, Administrative Staff College, Gauhati University, on 16 March 2015 and lectured on the topic *Displacement and Women in North East India*.

### **Alphonsus D’Souza**

Resource Person at three workshops between October to December 2014 on *Examinations and Evaluation at Undergraduate Level* organized by the Examination Brach of North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, Meghalaya.

### **Rajendra Prasad Athparia**

Delivered a special lecture cum talk on “*Doing research with Indigenous Communities: Issues and Challenges*” on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2014 at Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Govt. of Assam at Jawaharnagar, Guwahati- 22.

Delivered a special lecture cum talk on “*Common Property Resources and Community Management in North East India*” on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014 at Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Govt. of Assam at Jawaharnagar, Guwahati-22.

## **PARTICIPATED IN SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES**

### **Melvil Pereira**

Seminar on *Anthropology of Religion and Minorities* organized by Cotton College State University, Guwahati, on 11 September 2014

### **Rajendra Prasad Athparia**

Summit on *Inclusive Growth for Women in the Agenda of North East India* organised by Confederation of Indian Industry on 3 June 2014

Seminar cum talk on *Policies, Programmes and Strategies for Tribal Development* on 25 September 2014 at Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati, Government of Assam.

Orientation Workshop of Juvenile Justice Board, organised by NIPCCD, Guwahati on 3-4 March 2015

Discussion with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Grievances, Law and Justice on 3 November, 2014 at Brahmaputra Hotel, Guwahati

Workshop on *Marginal Lands: The Co modification and Re-application of Upland Agriculture in the Border lands of Northeast India* organised by Tata Institute of Social Sciences , Guwahati, and University of Leiden, Netherland, on 21-22 November, 2014.

Colloquium on *Indigenous Technology in a Globalised World* by Prof. Deshdeep Sahdev organised by Cotton College State University, Guwahati on 13 February, 2015

Colloquium on *Public Policy, Challenges and Opportunities in North East India* by Prof Rajeiv Malhotra on 14 February 2015 organised by Cotton State University, Guwahati

**Bitopi Dutta, Sunumi Changmi, Jyotikona Chetia & Bhaswati Borgohain**

Colloquium on *Public Policy, Challenges & Opportunities in North East India* by Prof Rajeiv Malhotra on 14 February 2015 organised by Cotton State University, Guwahati.

Talk by Dr Arkotong Longkumer on the theme “It has made us lighter: Religion and belonging in Northeast India” organized by Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati and Cotton College State University, Guwahati on 15 December 2014.

Talk by Prof. Bengt Karlsson on the theme “Bonnie Guest House: Fieldwork and friendship across borders”, organized by Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati and Cotton College State University, Guwahati on 4 December 2014.

## CONCLUSION

NESRC has made some contribution to the people of the Northeast thanks to the commitment of the members of its staff and faculty. It has been possible because of the generosity of others who have provided financial and other assistance to our work. Among those who have supported us financially and with solidarity are DKA/KFO - Austria, Jesuitenmission - Switzerland, Misereor – Germany, Missio Aachen and Munich – Germany, Referrat - Germany, Jesuitenmission-Germany, IWGIA - Denmark, CHPE of Creighton University – Omaha, HAQ - New Delhi, NED Social Forum - Guwahati, LCHR – Guwahati, Laya - Vishakhapatnam, Peace Channel – Dimapur, JUST - Agartala, DSSS – Imphal, ASHA-Agartala, Department of Mass Media of Rajiv Gandhi University – Itanagar, Cotton College State University – Guwahati, Tata Institute of Social Sciences - Guwahati and many others. Some of our seminars and workshops were funded by Indian Council Social Science Research - Shillong, Anthropological Survey of India- Shillong and Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal 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 2015

Dr Melvil Pereira  
Director

