

Annual Report of North Eastern Social Research Centre 2006-2007

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Started on March 1, 2000 with the mandate of combining serious research with involvement in the field and encouraging other organisations to do research on issues of relevance to the Northeast. Staff of NESRC on 31st March 2007: Director: Dr Walter Fernandes; Associate Director: Dr Alphonsus D'Souza (Phesama, Nagaland), Administrator and Research Associate: Dr Sleeva Allam Reddy. Research Associates: Ms Gita Bharali, Pranami Garg and Marline Pinto. Secretary: Ms Anamika Deka; Temporary Staff: Ms Nirmali Chakravorty and Pranati Patowary.

Research, the mainstay of NESRC received importance during 2006-07. Two studies were completed and the finishing point was reached in four others. More than 500 volumes, mostly on the Northeast were added to the library, so were three journals and more documentation. A peace initiative programme was launched during the year and a process of rethinking the mandate of NESRC was initiated. During it the present thrust was endorsed but modifications were suggested for greater success.

Research

NESRC is involved in several studies. At the request of ICIMOD it did an assessment of the UN Indigenous Decade, continued the studies on development-induced displacement and began one on the cost-benefit analysis of people-displacing projects. After assisting others to study the national and Assam budgets from a tribal viewpoint NESRC launched, in cooperation with HAQ-Child Rights Centre, New Delhi, a study of the Assam budget from children's perspective. It assisted others to do displacement studies in Eastern India and to complete the one of Gujarat 1947-2004.

Completed Studies

1. Walter Fernandes, Gita Bharali and Vemedo Kezo. 2006. *An Assessment of the United Nations Indigenous Decade 1995-2004*. (August 2006).

The UN declared 1995-2004 a decade of the Indigenous Peoples. A second decade began in 2005. At the request of ICIMOD that was entrusted with the task of evaluating the first decade, NESRC did the assessment in the Northeast. The report was based on interviews with a cross section of people from five tribes, 30 prominent leaders of 3 tribes, discussion with officials and 12 group meetings. Also the national and Assam budgets and policies of the Northeast and Assam were analysed from a tribal perspective. Based on the study suggestions were made to its main sponsor International Fund for Agricultural Development. Its culmination meeting was held at Kathmandu November 27-29, 2006.

2. Sleeva Allam Reddy and Pranami Garg. *Assam Budgets from the Point of View of Children* (2007).

The allocation for children and the areas on which it is spent give an idea of State policies. The analysis has been completed from 2004 to 2006. That of the two following years is in progress. It shows that while the amount allocated for children is low, it is lower for areas such as their protection and development. There is also an imbalance between money spent on salaries and for implementation.

Ongoing Studies

3. Walter Fernandes and Pranami Garg:

1. *Development-Induced Displacement in Meghalaya 1947-2000.*
2. *Development-Induced Displacement in Mizoram 1947-2000.*
3. *Development-Induced Displacement in Tripura 1947-2000.*

The studies in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura that were interrupted because of paucity of funds, were resumed in October 2006. They are done in three phases. The first is a study of the Gazette notifications on land acquisitions 1947-2000. The second is a look at all the official files, research reports and documentation in order to get data on the extent and type of land used and people displaced or deprived by development projects. The third phase is interviews with a representative set of families affected by the projects in order to understand their impact by caste-tribe, gender and age group. These studies will be completed in August 2007 and new ones launched after it in the remaining States.

4. *Walter Fernandes and Gita Bharali: Cost-Benefit Analysis of People-Displacing Projects.*

The Planning Commission sanctions development projects on the basis of a 1:1.5 cost-benefit ratio but rise in their cost during construction is rarely questioned. For example, most major dams have had a five-year time overrun and 500% cost overrun. The higher cost is sanctioned but an effort is made to keep the project cost down by paying the displaced persons a low compensation and by not rehabilitating them. The social cost of their impoverishment and marginalisation is not counted. Other losses are underestimated. This study to be completed in September 2007 attempts to quantify such cost.

Peace Initiatives

Many persons are involved in peace initiatives in the Northeast. The objective of the project on peace initiatives launched in October 2006 is to provide them an umbrella for sharing experiences, networking, dialogue and possible common understanding and action for peace in the region. The staff visited persons involved in such initiatives in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and parts of Assam. The second step is workshops to bring them together. A one-day *Consultation on Peace Studies in the Universities* held on 30th January 2007 was attended by persons from Manipur, Martin Luther, (Shillong) and Gauhati Universities and some civil society groups. They discussed possible common action. Seminars during the next year will bring together civil society groups, community based, students', women's and religious organisations involved in peace initiatives. The third step is to prepare reading material for students and teachers on peace-related issues. Work on it has started.

Publications

Knowledge produced by research is of little use if it does not spread. NESRC tries to do it through its own publications and articles in professional journals and newspapers. The following books were published during the year. More have been got ready for publication during the next year.

1. U. A. Shimray. 2006. *Tribal Land Alienation in Northeast India: Laws and Land Relations*. Pp. 70. NPG. Published jointly with the Indigenous Women's Forum of Northeast India. The English version of this summary of the case studies on tribal land alienation and of papers presented at the conference of March 2006, published in 2006 was translated into Assamese, Boro, Dimasa, Garo, Khasi and Mizo.
2. Gita Bharali and Walter Fernandes. *Ummayan Banam Sthanatharor 1947-2000*. 2007. pp. 000 Rs 150. This is the Assamese translation of the study "Development-Induced Displacement in Assam" that showed

that 19 lakh persons were deprived of livelihood from 14 lakh acres 1947-2000 when official files spoke of only 3.4 lakh persons affected by 3.9 lakh acres. Its English version is being got ready.

2. Walter Fernandes and Nafisa Goga D'Souza (eds). *Climate Change and Tribal Sustainable Living: Responses from the Northeast*. 2001, reprint 2005. pp. 150, Rs 100, \$10.

Professional Articles

Gita, Bharali

2006 "Tussle Between the Management and Labourers of Tea Gardens of Assam," in Jayanta Madhav Datta (ed). *Seuj Silpar Sandhanat: Asomor Cha Udyogor Oitihasik, Rajanaitik, Arthanaitik aru Samajik Disamuh*. Jorhat: Assam Chah Karmachari Sandha, pp. 251-264.

2006. "Development Threat to Tribal Childhood," *Journal of the Assam Institute for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, December.

Walter Fernandes

2006. "Globalisation, Culture and Fundamentalism: Impact on North Eastern India," in Sakaram Somayaji and Ganesh Somayaji (eds). *Sociology of Globalisation: Perspective from India*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, pp. 51-68.

2006. "Shortages, Ethnic Conflicts and Economic Development in North Eastern India," In Joshua Thomas (ed). *Engagement and Development: India's Northeast and Neighbouring Countries*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, pp. 45-71.

2006. "The Church and Peace with Justice in Northeast India," in Thomas Manjaly, Koriakose Poovathumjudy and Peter Haokip (eds). *In the Service of Mission: Studies in Honour of Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil*. Shillong: Oriens Publications, pp. 230-243.

2006. "Development-Induced Displacement: Impact on Tribals," *Adivasi* 46 (n. 2, December), pp. 90-98.

2007. "Singur and the Displacement Scenario." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (n. 3, Jan. 20-26, pp. 203-206.

2007. "Internally Displaced Persons: Challenge to Human Dignity," *Vidyajyoti JTR*, 71 (n. 1, January), pp. 43-51.

Pranami Garg. 2006. "Women in Electoral Process of India –Under Representation in Decision Making Process," *Journal of the Dept of Political Science, Tezpur College*, 3, pp. 24-27

Newspaper Articles

Gita Bharali

"Unnayan Banam Ussed," *Dainik Janambhumi*, February 2, 2007.

Walter Fernandes

“St Xavier and the Tradition of Social Service,” *The Assam Tribune*, April 7, 2006.

“Are Reservations Justified?” *The Sentinel*, May 10, 2006.

“Development and Displacement in Asom,” *The Assam Tribune*, May 11, 2006.

“It’s Different: The Rehabilitation Policy,” *Down to Earth*, July 15, 2006, p. 49

“Why Impose Nationalism?” *The Assam Tribune*, September 26, 2006.

“Not a People’s State,” *The Times of India*, December 12, 2006.

“Displacement and Investor’s Need” *The Sentinel*, December 19, 2006.

“Human Trafficking Growing in the NE,” *The Morung Express*, December 28, 2006.

“Going Round in Circles,” *The Telegraph*, January 26, 2007.

“Hawks Descend on Assam.” *Himal Southasian*, February 1, 2007.

Conferences and Seminars

Organising our own conferences and seminars and presenting papers at those organised by others is a way of forming alliances for a common cause. During 2006-07 NESRC organised only the meetings required for its research and other programmes. Its staff attended many other seminars.

1. Twelve meetings of village and other leaders of ten tribes were organised from May to July 2006 as part of the assessment of the UN Indigenous Decade. Much knowledge about the Decade was transferred to the leaders during them. Though some tribal civil society leaders had attended UN conferences, very few persons at the grassroots level knew about the Decade. Thus more than an assessment of the first decade they became planning sessions for the second.
2. The Consultation on Peace Studies, January 30, 2007 brought together representatives of the peace studies divisions of Manipur, Martin Luther and Gauhati universities as well as persons from civil society organisations. They shared their plans, aspirations and problems and discussed possibilities of sharing each other’s resources and working together on this issue.
3. As part of the advocacy effort, a press conference was organised at the Press Club, Guwahati, with the support of Panos Southasia to release the report of the study “Development-Induced Displacement in Assam 1947-2000.” The state of displacement was reported widely in most newspapers. Most Assamese language newspapers gave it first page coverage.

Gita Bharali and Walter Fernandes attended

The Preparatory Meeting on the Social Development Report, 2008. New Delhi: Council for Social Development, November 19, 2006.

The Culmination Conference on An Assessment of the UN Indigenous Decade. Kathmandu: ICIMOD, November 27-29, 2006.

Gita Bharali presented the following Papers:

“Development-Induced Displacement and Human Security in Assam,” *Seminar on Human Security*, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, November 17-18, 2006.

“Development and Displacement in Assam,” New Delhi: *India Social Forum*, November 11, 2006.

“Education of Plantation Labourers’ Children,” *Workshop on Unorganised Labour*, Guwahati: NED Social Forum, February 13, 2007.

“Development, Displacement and Tribal Livelihood: A Case Study,” *Seminar on Ecology*. Department of History, Dibrugarh University, March 27-28, 2007.

Walter Fernandes and Gita Bharali presented a paper:

“Customary Law-Formal Law Interface: Impact on Tribal culture.” Paper presented at the *National Seminar on Cultural Change among the Tribes of Northeast India*. North Eastern Hill University and Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures. Shillong: Oct. 26-28, 2006.

Walter Fernandes attended

The Expert Committee Meeting of the National Commission for Women in the Northeast, as its member, August 22, 2006.

Meeting on Northeast-Southeast Asia Trade Relations. Guwahati. Centre for Northeast Studies, November 23, 2006.

Coordinated the Panel on the Northeast at the Tehelka Summit of the Powerless, New Delhi: November 20-21, 2006.

Was a resource person at:

Training Workshop for Practitioners of Rehabilitation. New Delhi: Council for Social Development, June 20-23.

International Workshop on Forced Migration. New Delhi: Jamia Millia Islamia, September 18-22, 2006.

Regional Meeting on Displacement. Ranchi: October 16-17, 2006.

Social Analysis for Deacons. Oriens Theological College, Shillong, October 30-31, 2006.

Adivasi Partners’ Meeting. Dibrugarh, November 2-4, 2006.

Objective Setting Workshop, CRS, Guwahati, December 5-6, 2006.

Presented the following papers:

“Development-Induced Displacement in the Northeast,” *Seminar on Internally Displaced Persons* Kohima: Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, August 25-27, 2006.

“The State of Displacement in India,” *Training Programme on Internal Displacement in India*. Guwahati: Panos South Asia, September 1-3, 2006.

“The State of the Forests in the Northeast and the Forest Policy” *Regional Meeting on Forests in the Northeast*. Kaziranga: September 11-12, 2006.

“Prospects of Peace in the Northeast,” New Delhi: *India Social Forum*, November 11, 2006.

“Rights of the Tribals in India,” New Delhi: *India Social Forum*, November 12, 2006.

“Displacement in India,” New Delhi: *India Social Forum*, November 13, 2006.

“The Displacement Scenario and the Right to Life with Dignity” Keynote address, *National Seminar on Internally Displaced Persons in the Northeast*, Silchar: Assam University, Silchar, Feb. 8-9, 2007.

“Globalisation, Land Laws and Land Reforms in North Eastern India,” *Workshop on Land and Contract Farming in the Context of Globalisation*. Mussoorie: Centre for Rural Studies, Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy of Administration, March 15-16, 2007.

“Customary Laws and Tribal Identity in North Eastern India,” *Seminar on Ethnic Identity, Social Formation and Nation Building with Special Reference to North Eastern India*. Dibrugarh: Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University, March 26-27, 2007.

“Environmental Impact of Development-Induced Displacement,” *Seminar on Ecolog.*, Dibrugarh: Department of History, Dibrugarh University, March 27-28, 2007.

Pranami Garg attended

Disaster Management Awareness Camp. Aizawl: Zoram Entu Pawl, December 16, 2006.

Presented the following papers

“Lengpui Airport: The Veiled and the Real Victims,” *National Seminar on Internally Displaced Persons in the Northeast*, Silchar: Assam University, February 8-9, 2007.

“Aspiration for an Ethnic Identity: Evolved or Created? A Question Asked in the Context of Assam,” *Seminar on Ethnic Identity, Social Formation and Nation Building with special reference to North East India*. Dibrugarh: Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University, March 26-27, 2007.

Marline Pinto attended

Peace Initiatives. Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati, October 3-5, 2006.

Workshop on Peace Initiatives, Omeo Kumar Das Institute, Guwahati, January 27, 2007.

National Seminar on Peace: Reflections on North East.” Guwahati: IIT, February 1-2, 2007.

National Seminar, Problems of displacement in Northeast of India. Silchar: Assam University, February 8-9, 2007.

Consultation on Peace Education. Shillong: Martin Luther Christian University, March 6, 2007.

Paper Presented: "Impact of Education in Defining the Role of the Youth in Changing Societies: Whither Education!!" *at the National seminar on Youth in the Context of Changing Societies in North East India.* Guwahati: Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, March 20-22, 2007.

Allam Sleeva Reddy attended

Seminar on children. New Delhi: *India Social Forum*, November 11, 2006.

Allam Sleeva Reddy and Pranami Garg attended

Consultation on Child Budget Analysis. New Delhi: HAQ Centre for Child Rights.

Looking to the Future

After six years of its existence, NESRC felt the need to take a new look at its performance according to its mandate to combine serious research with involvement in the field. During the reflection on this issue, there was overall satisfaction with its work but it was felt that more can be done. Much research has been done by a small group of persons, the library has grown well and a network has been established with professional and activist groups. NESRC staff members are involved in work around displacement and the customary law but they felt the need for more structured involvement on issues of relevance in the region. They also felt the need to do more on the gender issue. This reflection will continue during the next year and will become a tool of making NESRC more effective.

Guwahati, North Eastern Social Research Centre
30th June, 2007

Dr Walter Fernandes
Director