

# North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati



## Annual Report *April 2018 to March 2019*

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## INTRODUCTION

I am happy to present to you the annual report of NESRC for the year 2018-19. NESRC began on March 1, 2000. Its mandate is to combine serious research with involvement in the field and encourage other organisations and individuals to do research on issues of relevance to the Northeast. During the past years, NESRC has tried to live up to this mandate through, research, library, documentation and networking with peace activists and civil society groups 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.

The study of development-induced-displacement in Northeast India, started in 2005, should come to a close by July 2020. We have already published the reports of the study on Assam, Sikkim, Meghalaya and Nagaland. The remaining states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura, will be covered latest by July 2020.

Likewise, the multi-year gender impact of customary law study is inching closer to completion. This study looked at the customary law of two tribal communities each of seven Northeastern States from the angle of the rights of women. With three publications of the 14-volume series still remaining to be published, it is hoped that we will bring closure to this study latest by March 2020.

The peace and conflict resolution project organised two seminars. The first seminar focussed on the role of the media in the context of decreasing space for dissent in a democratic India. The second seminar examined the role of women in the resolution of conflicts. During the year, we published one book under this project titled *Living with Conflicts: Possibilities of Peace-Making in the North East*.

During the year, we also completed the study of traditional land management system. Born of this study is a book titled *Ownership, Management and Alienation: Tribal Land in Northeast India*. This book was jointly published by North Eastern Social Research Centre and Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, the sponsor of this study.

As I present this annual report. I want to place on record the contribution made by Late Prof Alphonsus D'Souza, the associate director for over a decade, the

librarian and a senior research fellow of NESRC who passed away on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 2019. Prof. D'Souza's contribution to NESRC is immense. Initially, he was the associate director from 2000 to 2009. Since 2009, he was the librarian and senior fellow at NESRC. He guided many studies some of which have been published. He toiled hard to organise the tribal theology seminars which resulted in the publication of five volumes of edited books. He closely followed the customary law study and guided it right from the start. He was the proof reader of most books published by NESRC. He was also the doctoral guide at Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, and Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahti. Dozens of doctoral students have benefited from his advice. His passing away is a huge loss for NESRC. May his soul rest in peace.

The pages below provide more information on the various activities organised by NESRC during 2018-19. It is with great joy that we present 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.

## STUDIES

### A. STUDIES COMPLETED

1. Melvil Pereira, Meenal Tula and Vizokhole Ltu. Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Konyaks of Nagaland
2. Melvil Pereira, Meenal Tula and Vizokhole Ltu. Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Sumis of Nagaland
3. Walter Fernandes, Joydeep Baruah and Augustin Millik. *Traditional Land Management, Recent Changes and Types of Alienation among the North Eastern Tribes.*
4. Walter Fernandes and Asojjini Rachel Kashena. The Role of Women in Peace Processes in North Eastern India
5. Melvil Pereira, Meenal Tula and Anuprova Ghose. Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Poumais of Manipur
6. Melvil Pereira and Meenal Tula. Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Mizos of Mizoram
7. Walter Fernandes, et al. Development-Induced- Displacement in Andhra Pradesh 1947-2015.

### B. ONGOING STUDIES

1. Melvil Pereira and Meenal Tula. Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Lyngngams of Meghalaya
2. Melvil Pereira and Meenal Tula. Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Jaintias of Meghalaya
3. Walter Fernandes, et al. Development-Induced- Displacement in Manipur 1947-2015.
4. Walter Fernandes, et al. Development-Induced- Displacement in Arunachal Pradesh 1947-2015.
5. Walter Fernandes, et al. Development-Induced- Displacement in Mizoram 1947-2015.
6. Walter Fernandes, et al. Development-Induced- Displacement in Tripura, 1947-2015.
7. Walter Fernandes and Kusumika Ghosh. The Role of Religion in Conflicts and Peace.

### SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND COLLOQUIUMS

1. **National Seminar on “Centralisation, Democracy and Dissent: The Role of the Media in Contestation and Reconciliation”** was organised by the North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC) on the 28th and 29th of May 2018 at DBI, Joypur, Guwahati. This seminar brought together media persons, researchers and peace activists involved in a search for alternatives to conflicts emanating from mainstream ideologies today. The invitees presented papers on a gamut of contemporary issues ranging from conflicts in the Northeast to Naxalism or the situation in Jammu & Kashmir, while a few of them looked at the world from the lens of the rural poor, Dalits and Tribals. Some tried to understand the issues that result in nationalist struggles or ethnic conflicts. The objective of the seminar was to provide a platform for the youth and peace activists of the Northeast to know more about the thinking of such persons and to encourage activism in favour of peace and pluralism in the Northeast as well as in other conflict regions of India.
2. **National Seminar on the “Role of Women in Peace Processes”** was organised by North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2018 at Jagriti, Christian Basti, Guwahati. This seminar tried to examine the dual themes of the impact of conflicts on women in the Northeast and elsewhere in India and their role, forms of intervention, capacities and limitations in peace building. Northeast was the point of reference in this seminar. There were participants from different organisations of the Northeast who shared their

experiences keeping in mind the traditional knowledge of the communities that women appropriate to organise peace strategies.

### 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 during the year:

1. Walter Fernandes, Asojiini Rachel Kashena, Anindita Datta, Grace Kamei, Jasmine Mushahary and Ratna Misha Reang. 2018: *Living with Conflicts: Possibilities of Peace-Making in the North East*. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-933761-9-5.
2. Melvil Pereira, Anuprova Ghose, Stephen Poukho and S. Monica Kaothala. 2018. *Preserving Heritage, Exploring Change: The Poumais of Manipur*, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-938785-2-1.
3. Michael R. Kolb. 2018: *Out of the Hills: Young Dimasas and Traditional Religion*. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-938785-0-7.
4. Melvil Pereira, Meenal Tula, Lalnghakthuami and H. Lalrinthanga. 2019, *In Transition: The Mizos of Mizoram*, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-938785-1-4.
5. Walter Fernandes, Nafisa Goga D'Souza, PallaTrinadha Rao, Arundhuti Roy Chaudhury, Mohammed Asif and M. Gopinath Reddy. 2019. *Displacement and Marginalisation in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana 1951-2010*. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati and Laya Resource Centre, Vishakapatnam. ISBN: 978-81-938785-3-8.
6. Melvil Pereira, Vizokhole Ltu, A. Husca and TovikaliYepthomi. 2019. *Documenting Voices, Understanding Realities: The Sumis of Nagaland*, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: "978-81-938785-5-2.
7. Walter Fernandes, Joydeep Baruah and Augustin Millik. 2019. *Ownership, Management and Alienation: Tribal Land in Northeast India*. North Eastern Social Research Centre and Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-938785-4-5.

8. Melvil Pereira, Vizokhole Ltu, Shogna Konyak and KonangBangmei, 2019. *Documenting past practices seeking new directions The Konyaks of Nagaland*, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: "978-81-938785-6-9

## PROFESSIONAL ARTICLES

Apart from our own publications, the faculty of NESRC disseminate the finds of their studies by publishing their papers in journals, periodicals, edited volumes and newspapers. They published the following articles during this year:

### **Meenal Tula and Jyotikona Chetia**

2018. "Enduring Inequalities: Women, Inheritance and Empowerment," *Journal of the Law Research Institute*. 1 (1): 62-71

### **Melvil Pereira**

"Uniform Civil Code: The Constitution of India and the Ground Realities in Northeast India," *Journal of Law Research Institute*. 1 (1): 37-45

"Jesuits among the Northeast India Tribes: Conscious Inputs, Unintended Results," in Leonard Fernando (ed). *Jesuit Contribution to Nation Building in South Asia from the Nineteenth Century till Today*. Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash. 2019. Pp. 202-231.

### **Walter Fernandes**

"Asian Tribes and the Search for an Indigenous Identity," in David Arnold Kharchandy (ed). *Understanding the Tribes of Asia: Tradition, Roots, Identity, Belief, Environment & Security*. Shillong: Synod College and New Delhi: Lakshi Publishers & Distributors, 2018. Pp. 25-36.

"Developmentalism and Consequences: Displacement and Marginalisation in India's Northeast," in Rakhee Bhattacharya (ed). *Developmentalism as Strategy: Post-Colonial Narratives of India's Northeast*. New Delhi: Sage, 2019, pp. 91-116.

## NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

### **Walter Fernandes**

"How to Deal with the NRC?" *The Morung Express*, August 4, 2018.

“Fear Mongering by Media, Politicians of Assam’s National Register of Citizens Needs to Stop,” Scroll.in August 5, 2018.

“Samp Mare Lati Na Tute,” *Dainik Jagran*, August 5, 2018.

“Dissent, Democracy and Civil Society,” *JIVAN* August 2018.

“Sabarimala: Law Alone Cannot Transform the Social Order,” *The Citizen*, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2018.

“Attack on Agnes Kharshiing: Attempt to Gag Dissenting Voices,” *Ne.Now* November 15, 2018.

“DharmNahin, Is CharanAkrosh Ka MarmKuchAur Hai,” *Dainik Jagran* January 20, 2019.

“Does the Northeast Even Count in the Regime’s Cynical Push to the Citizenship Bill?” *Sabrangindia* January 21, 2019.

“Displacement Studies and Social Research,” *JIVAN* February 2019.

## PRESENTED PAPERS

### **Augustin Millik**

“*Celebrating the Karbi Youth Festival: Reimagining Identity*” paper presented in Roots to Bridges: Workshop on Ethnography organised by collective initiatives on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 at North Eastern Diocesan Social Service Society (NEDSSS), Guwahati.

### **Kusumika Ghosh**

‘*Negotiating with Militarism in the Northeast: Women, Peace and Security in the 21st Century*’ paper presented in Jadavpur University Women's Conclave on 7th March, 2019.

### **Vizokhole Ltu**

“*Women, Property and the Customary law*” paper presented at the Roots to Bridges: Workshop on Ethnography organised by collective initiatives on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 at North Eastern Diocesan Social Service Society (NEDSSS), Guwahati.

### **Walter Fernandes**

“Liberalisation, Land Laws and Displacement in India,” *Workshop on Development and Land Policy in Developing Societies of Asia*. Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University, USA, May 2, 2018.

“Conditions for Peace in the Northeast,” Keynote address, *Workshop on Peace Processes in the Northeast* organised by Indo-Global Social Service Society, Guwahati: July 5, 2018.

“The Northeast in Transition: Challenges for the Youth,” Keynote address, YMCA General Body, July 27, 2018.

“Customary Land Laws and Women’s Rights,” *Workshop cum Awareness on Land Laws in Arunachal Pradesh and Tribal Indigenous Rights*, organised by Arunachal Legal Services Division and Arunachal Commission for Women, September 1, 2018.

“The Sixth Schedule in Northeast India,” *Seminar on the Fifth and Sixth Schedules*, New Delhi: National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and Centre for Policy Research, September 11, 2018.

“Possibilities of Peace in the Northeast,” *Workshop on Peace in the Northeast* organised by Indo-Global Social Service Society, Guwahati: September 29, 2018.

“Conflicts & Peace: Understanding the Issues in Western Assam,” Keynote address. *Inter-Denominational Convention on Peace* organised by the Lutheran World Federation, India Chapter, Bongaigaon: December 11, 2018.

“The Northeast in Transition and Challenges,” *Diocesan Convention*, Diphu, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2019.

## RESOURCE PERSON

### **Melvil Pereira**

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

Guided the doctoral study of Varghese Vellikakamat Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati.



### **Walter Fernandes**

“Formulating A Research Proposal, Choosing a Theme and Understanding Issues,”  
*Refresher Course for Assistant Professors from the Northeast.* Guwahati: Assam Don  
Bosco University, July 10-11, 2018.

“Formulating a Research Proposal and Writing Professional Papers,” *One Day  
Seminar for the Staff of Don Bosco College, Itanagar,* February 11, 2019.

## **PARTICIPATED IN SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES**

### **Meenal Tula**

Workshop on: *Gender Equity and Inclusion: Transformative Pathways in Higher Education'* organised by WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) in collaboration with Cotton University, Guwahati as part of its project 'HAMSA: Campus Equity Initiative'. The project is supported by the Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, New Delhi at Cotton University, Guwahati on 11-14 March 2019.

### **Meenal Tula and Jyotikona Chetia**

Workshop on Feminist Interventions and Methodologies: Custom, Law, Resistance.  
Organiser: Humanities across Borders (HaB) Methodologies Workshop at Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam (India), 2-4 April 2018.

### **Kusumika Ghosh**

Attended a 'Partner Training on Conflict Sensitivity' organised by Miserior-DPS India in Mumbai, 20th - 22nd November, 2018.

### **Anuprova Ghose**

Consultative Workshop on *“Forest Rights & Gender”* organised by North East Network supported by Rights Resources Institute, Washington on 4-5 October 2018 at DBI, Kharguli, Guwahati.

## **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– Germany, Jesuitenmission-Germany, NED Social Forum - Guwahati, LCHR – Guwahati, Laya - Vishakhapatnam, Peace Channel – Dimapur, JUST - Agartala, DSSS – Imphal, ASHA-Agartala, OKD-Guwahati and many others. 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.

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019

**Place:** Guwahati

Director  
Dr Hector D'Souza