

Migrants and Roads

Reporting in the Wake of Disasters and Migration

Media Workshop
Kolkata, 28 July 2023

organised by

Calcutta Research Group

in collaboration with

Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna

South Asian Women in Media (SAWM)

DW Akademie

SAN-CDM

Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata

A REPORT



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Preface

The State of India's Environment Report 2022 (Down To Earth, 2022) predicted that nearly 143 million people, a little more than the population of Maharashtra, will be displaced due to the massive climate disasters in the next thirty years. The displacement from homeland to some other place make a deep impact on the social and psychological life of a migrant. Difference in the socio-economic status makes it more complicated. The journey from their homeland, violation of welfare policies, reaction from the host state make the situation adverse for the rural poor and increase the level of vulnerability. Reporting on these issues is a challenging task for media practitioners; additionally, journalists from marginal and border regions face technical and infrastructural challenges during reporting on migrants. It is all the more difficult to report on climate change given the fact that it becomes difficult for the general viewers and readers to understand the rigors of scientific and technical data.

Incidences of climate related disasters are on the rise and so do cases of migration and displacement which manifest in either shock displacement or gradual outmigration. In case of the latter, people move out of their native places leaving behind their traditional occupations. Agrarian communities, fishing communities, riverine and coastal communities, people living in mountainous terrains, etc., are the worst affected in such cases. Reporting such cases becomes all the more difficult because of the chain of events that precedes the process of displacement.

The primary challenge while reporting climate change and climate induced displacement is basically 'getting the message across' to the general public. This necessitates the need to engage in conversations about reporting climate change and related migration. The Media Workshop aims to bring together media practitioners from diverse backgrounds, so that they can discuss and throw light on how they report on such intense issues, the difficulties they face and the ingenious ways they adopt in order to get the reportage done. This Workshop is being organised in congruence with CRG's previous endeavours on media studies and practices and is a part of the institute's continued focus on migration studies.

The Media Workshop 'Migrants and Roads: Reporting in the Wake of Disasters and Migration,' was organised by the Calcutta Research Group in collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata, South Asian Women in Media (SAWM), Deutsche Welle (DW) Akademie, and South Asia Network for Communication, Displacement and Migration (SAN-CDM), hosted at the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata, on 28 July 2023, in Kolkata, followed by the media training workshop 'Reporting Migration: Values, Structures, Linkages,' organised by the Calcutta Research Group in collaboration with the DW Akademie and SAN-CDM, on 29 July 2023, in Sojourn, Kolkata.

The report is divided into segments with the programme schedule, participant profile, research briefs and the segment on the workshop sessions has the detailed reports on each of the panel presentations of the workshop, followed by a report on the media training workshop 'Reporting Migration: Values, Structures, Linkages,' and the list of participants.

Programme Schedule

Media Workshop, 28 July 2023

Venue: Conference Hall, Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata

- 9:30 am - 9:45 am: **Registration**
- 9:45 am - 10:45 am: **Inaugural Session**
Chair: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, *Honorary Director, CRG, & Professor, Rabindra Bharati University*
- 9:45 am - 9:55 am: **Welcome Address**
Sharmistha Sarker, *Programme Officer, Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata*
Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury
- 9:55 am - 10:10 am: **Introducing the Workshop**
Bharat Bhushan, *Associate Editor, 360info, CRG, & SAN-CDM*
- 10:10 am - 10:45 am: **Inaugural Lecture: Reporting in the Wake of Disasters and Migration**
Speaker: Patricia Mukhim, *Editor, The Shillong Times, & SAWM*
- 10:45 am - 11:15 am: **Tea Break**
- 11:15 am - 11:30 am: **Online Session: Reporting Migrants on the Road**
Lachlan Gusselli, *Commissioning Editor, Asia Pacific, 360info Sydney*
Shahirah Hamid, *Commissioning Editor, Asia Pacific, 360info Kuala Lumpur*
Ria Ernunsari, *Senior Commissioning Editor, Asia Pacific, 360info Bandung*
- 11:30 am - 12:30 pm: **Panel I: Reporting on the Complex Life of Migrant Labour**
Chair: Swati Bhattacharjee, *Senior Assistant Editor, ABP, & SAWM*
Panellists:
1. Ritwika Mitra, *CRG-IWM Media Fellow 2023*
2. Farhana Ahmed, *CRG-IWM Media Fellow 2023, & District Correspondent, Assam Tribune, & Northeast Now*
3. Barasha Das, *Independent Journalist, & SAWM*
- 12:30 pm - 1:20 pm: **Panel II: New Migrants, New Refugees in South Asia**
Chair: Rajat Roy, *Senior Journalist, & CRG*
Panellists:
1. Riya Singh Rathore, *CRG-IWM Media Fellow 2023, & Editorial Manager, Social Policy Research Foundation (SPRF)*
2. Anup Ojha, *Senior Sub-Editor, The Kathmandu Post, & SAN-CDM*
3. Ayesha Chaturangi, *SAN-CDM*
- 1:20 pm - 2:10 pm: **Lunch Break**
- 2:10 pm - 3:00 pm: **Panel III: Climate Calamities: Reporting on Displacements due to Climate Disasters**
Chair: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury
Panellists:
1. Poulami Chatterjee, *Senior Sub-Editor, ABP*
2. Shadab Farooq, *Independent Journalist, & SAN-CDM*
3. Sangeeta Aparajita, *Filmmaker, & SAN-CDM*

- 3:00 pm - 3:30 pm: Tea Break**
- 3:30 pm - 4:15 pm: Panel IV: New Routes, New Techniques: South Asian Scenario**
Chair: Jayanta Roy Chowdhury, *Regional Bureau Chief, PTI*
Panellists:
1. **Tina Kuriakose Jakob, *National Senior Lead, Research, International Justice Mission (IJM)***
2. **Devika Pradhan, *Journalist, Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBSCL), & SAN-CDM***
- 4:15 pm - 5:15 pm: Panel V: Gendered Vulnerabilities**
Chair: Bharat Bhushan
Panellists:
1. **Coreena Enet Soares, *Editor, NewsMeter, & SAWM***
2. **Samata Biswas, *Assistant Professor, The Sanskrit College and University, CRG, & SAN-CDM***
3. **Roshan Pokharel, *Constitutional Lawyer's Forum Nepal, Media Practitioner, & SAN-CDM***
- 5:15 pm - 5:20 pm: Vote of Thanks**
Shatabdi Das, *Researcher, CRG*

Participant Profile



Barasha Das is a journalist based out of Guwahati, Assam, specialising in story-telling about people and places ranging from humanitarian issues, the environment, climate concerns, history, and culture. Her present area of work as an independent journalist includes narratives about the causes of climate disasters, and mitigation measures alongside the impacts on various aspects ranging from agriculture and livelihood to traditions and beliefs. Barasha's work on the environment focuses on the issues of legacy waste and man-animal conflict, alongside other environmental destructions. Apart from her stint as a journalist, he is associated as an independent research writer with the OnePointFive Tribe, a platform working for a Net-Zero Carbon Future.

Barasha is also a fellow of the ongoing QoC-CANSA Fellowship and a Fellow of the Net Zero Fellowship 2023 of the School of Policy and Governance.



Coreena Enet Soares has been working in Television and Print for nearly 10 years now. She began her career as an 'English news anchor' in 2011 and a year later joined Deccan Chronicle- a South India -based leading English daily. Coreena's reportage of the 2013 twin-bomb-blasts in Hyderabad was cited as an example in newsrooms across India. She is one of the 'youngest' Metro Editor with Deccan Chronicle and headed the newsroom of 22 journalists. She was selected by the 'US Department of State' for the prestigious 'Edward R. Murrow Program' for investigative journalism. In 2022, I was among 16 senior journalists selected for Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) training conducted by SKUP Institute, Norway. Currently, as an editor of NewsMeter, an

English news portal based in Hyderabad, Coreena leads a team of 12 journalists including certified fact-checkers.



Riya Singh Rathore is a political science enthusiast passionate about gender, refugee rights, and decolonisation. She works with the Social Policy Research Foundation as the Editorial Manager in New Delhi, India. Her best-known research covered the series of mysterious fires in Rohingya refugee camps. In the process of covering the incidents, she became involved in volunteering with refugees and advocating for them. Consequently, her topic of study with the Calcutta Research Group investigated how to make refugee-host community relationships better. Previously, she worked as a research intern at the Irish Parliament and with Amnesty International. Her coverage and research have been published in Economic and Political Weekly, The Diplomat, The

Wire, The Mint, Hindu Business Line, and Business Insider.



Ritwika Mitra is an independent journalist. She works at the intersection of climate crisis, gender, caste and human rights. Her bylines have appeared in The Fuller Project, Foreign Policy, Waging Nonviolence, Open Democracy, The Polis Project, The Wire, Fifty Two, Article 14 and Behan Box. Previous to her freelance career, she has worked with The Indian Express, The New Indian Express, Deccan Herald and BBC. She received grants from the MSF, the Columbia Journalism School's Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma and the Pulitzer Crisis Centre. She is a recipient of the Lorenzo Natali 2022 prize for her story on climate crisis in the Sundarbans and its link with increased trafficking. She was awarded the Chevening Scholarship in 2016 to pursue a

master's degree in International Relations at the University of Birmingham.



Shadab Farooq, born and brought up in Jammu and Kashmir, is an independent journalist, filmmaker and a performance artist currently based out of New Delhi, India. He primarily works on Religion and Politics, Environment and Refugee Crisis, and every other story that needs to be heard or said out loud. He was one of the finalists in the Human Rights and Religious Freedom Journalism Awards (HRRFJ) 2022, for his photo-story on the Farmers' Protest. His documentary "The Edge of the Sunshine" based on the theme of migration was also nominated and screened during the 28th Kolkata International Film

Festival in 2022.



Poulami Chatterjee hails from the city of Kolkata. She has a Masters in History from the University of Calcutta. Currently, she is the Deputy Chief sub editor, Anandabazar Patrika (Edit Pages). She has been working with Anandabazar Patrika for 14 years now, with her main areas of interest having been environment, women and child issues.



Patricia Mukhim is Editor, The Shillong Times published since 1945 from Meghalaya's capital of Shillong. She has been a long-standing columnist having written articles since 1987 on issues of India's North East - a region comprising seven states which is very little understood outside of itself. Before taking on the mantle of editorship in 2008, Patricia has been a gender activist and authored a book – Waiting for an Equal World, which looks at gender relations in India's North East. Patricia demystifies the myth that women enjoy a charmed life in matrilineal Meghalaya - a much romanticised notion. Amongst the many

awards she has been conferred are the Chameli Devi Jain Award for outstanding women media person in 1996 and the Padmashri in 2000.



Ria Ernunsari is Senior Commissioning Editor (Indonesia), 360info, and is based at Monash Indonesia's campus in Jakarta. She was formerly a reporter in Liputan6 SCTV and producer in Trans TV Indonesia and joined international organisations like Free Press Unlimited the Netherlands, Hivos Southeast Asia, Save the Children (UK) and GIZ (Germany). Ria holds a Master's Degree in TV Documentary Production, Salford University Greater Manchester UK and Bachelor's Degree in International Relations from Parahyangan Catholic University, Bandung. She was a lecturer in University of Indonesia and Paramadina University for Documentary, TV Production and News Script-writing.



Tina Kuriakose Jacob is an alumnus of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and has a PhD in International Law. She was the first Yale Fox International Fellow from India in 2005-06. She has over a decade of policy and research-related experience and served as Head of Research at the India Centre for Migration (ICM). At ICM, Dr Jacob provided strategic and actionable research to improve the migration experience of Indians abroad. In International Justice Mission (IJM), she has led efforts to provide solutions to external government and non-government agencies based on IJM's expertise and experience towards regulatory and enforcement measures against human trafficking, addressing

migrant worker vulnerabilities in inter-state cases and strengthening rehabilitation for trafficked survivors. She has certified training in budget advocacy, labour migration, gender and trade and ESG framework and metrics from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Training Centre, Turin, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), New Delhi and the CII, New Delhi.

Research Briefs

Reporting on the Complex Life of Migrant Labour

Barasha Das

I have not done any direct reporting on migrant workers. However, while reporting on the various beats, especially on COVID-19 and climate change, ‘migrant workers’ make an inevitable presence. It is during the lockdown that we got an actual picture of the gamut of migrant workers in the country- and got to witness their struggles and plight firsthand. We have been seeing manual labourers around us since childhood; especially those engaged in loading and unloading heavy loads from trucks and in pulling manual carts. In Assam, we have thousands of them from eastern and northern India- from Bihar, UP, and Haryana especially. Theirs is hard manual work. They work for hours throughout the day at minimal daily wages, irrespective of weather conditions. Their women and children are engaged in selling goods from door-to-door, or at footpath hawkers. The sight of mothers selling balloons, toys, plastic products by the roadside in scorching heat or taking shelter under flyovers in the rain, while their children play or nap in the dust and dirt of the polluted roads are a common sight. While migrant workers are an integral part of the cities, they are an important ‘component’ to ensure the smooth running of the cities. But do they have access to even the basic human needs? Drinking water? Toilet? Shelters to rest amid work? Unfortunately, they are just at the mercy of the shops or warehouse owners they work for on any given day. Some may be fortunate to get a seat under the fan or be offered a cool glass of water as temperatures rise. Labourers- women and men sitting by the roadside, the heads covered with their sari *pallu* or a small piece of cotton cloth respectively; the women trying to protect their babies on their lap, in the shade of their saris are common sights. Struggling through the day, these migrant labourers also lack basic housing facilities. In cities like Guwahati, make-shift rentals are a booming business. Small rooms made of makeshift bamboo walls are constructed on building floors. Each floor could have 6-10 rooms (each being rented to separate families; or 2-3 workers), and surprisingly with 1 common bathroom and a common toilet. And with the influx of more and more migrant labourers, with the loss of cultivable land due to flood, siltation, and other climate manifestations, this rental strategy is now a remunerative business. Of course, there is no consideration for hygiene and proper ventilation. During the pandemic, these cluttered housings became the hotspots. And the biggest challenges in reporting on migrant labourers I believe have always been the same. Most do not have proper documents, children are under age to be working- hence they cannot demand even basic human needs, suffer in silence and choose to be quiet even when questioned. While the businessmen earn from their compulsion, they languish just to survive.

Inclusive Reporting

Coreena Enet Soares

The most important aspect that journalists should inculcate is empathy, inclusivity and sensitivity towards a diverse set of voices that are sidelined from the mainstream narratives. While reporting, journalists must respect the privacy, safety and consent of the marginalised members of the groups. Whether it is personal stories or day-to-day news updates, reporters should actively seek inputs from the grassroots representatives of the communities such as academics and activists to ensure their reporting is nuanced and accurate. Informed and balanced reporting only comes when the reporters use the right terminology, such as right pronouns when it comes to the LGBTQ community, and not report stereotypes and promote misinformation. It is also important to provide historical and social contexts while reporting on marginalised groups to fully understand the root cause of inequalities and exclusion faced by women and transgender persons. It is important to see their struggles as an intersection of many factors such as caste, class, religion, and language, especially when it comes to migrants in a diverse nation such as India. Apart from their struggles, individual and group stories that drive positive narratives such as stories of achievement and contributions that overcame the aforementioned challenges must be reported. These can include government and community programmes that promote social inclusion and bring about a holistic understanding of women and transgender migrants among the other

sections of society. A long-time commitment of the issues by a media house is important so that each incident is not sensationalised for the duration of a news cycle but is constantly followed up and related to the larger intersectional systemic issues that threaten the survival and way of life of women and transgender migrants.

The Many Crises Unfolding Under the Debris of a Disaster

Shadab Farooq

As one of the panellists, discussing the topic of reporting on displacements caused by climate disasters, it is imperative to address the profound impact of climate change on vulnerable communities. This abstract, aims to highlight the key points of the discussion. The session will begin by acknowledging the alarming increase in climate-related disasters, such as land sinking, floods, wildfires, and droughts, earthquakes. These events have led to widespread displacements, forcing people to abandon their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. I will be emphasising the urgent need for accurate and comprehensive reporting on these displacements to raise awareness, drive action, and introspection on how the affected communities receive the assistance they require. The discussion will also delve into the challenges faced by journalists and media professionals when reporting on climate calamities and displacements. It will explore the ethical considerations of reporting on personal tragedies and the importance of providing a voice to those directly affected. I will share my experiences and insights of covering the Joshimath tragedy and the disastrous effects of the climate change in Jammu and Kashmir and New Delhi, focusing on storytelling techniques that capture the human aspect of these disasters while maintaining journalistic integrity. Furthermore, I will emphasise on the role of the media in shaping public perception and driving policy changes. It will discuss the responsibility of journalists to hold governments and institutions accountable for their actions or lack thereof in addressing climate-related displacements. I will also emphasise the need for accurate data, reliable sources, and collaborative efforts between media organisations, humanitarian agencies, and local communities to provide a holistic understanding of the challenges faced, with examples from my reporting experience. The focus of my discussion will be to elaborate how when a disaster happens there are many small crises that start to develop and take shape into larger and enormous crises like displacement, mass migrations, mental health, haunting memories and overall traces that stay for a lifetime to the affected community.

The Changing Road of Migrant Workers from Nepal

Anup Ojha

In this panel discussion, I will share my childhood experience of migrant workers in my remote village and how the paradigm has evolved over time. In the past, nearly three decades ago, only male family members would seek work in Kolkata or Mumbai, India as labour workers. Most of them would work as security guards, and some others in Restaurants. Nowadays, people prefer Gulf countries including Malaysia for better earning opportunities, despite the associated challenges and risks. Illustrating this shift, I will highlight a powerful example from my storytelling song that was released in 2019, ‘Sansari Baimani’ that translates corrupt world (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojBbFmUrv04>) showing a few visual clips from the song (I won't be screening the full video because it's six minutes long). The song narrates the poignant tale of a gullible village boy aspiring to work abroad. The music video shows how the boy falls victim to a fraudulent agent, mortgaging his land certificate, only to be deceived by both the agent and a landlord, trapping him in a cycle of exploitation. This represents the overall scenario of working-class people with low economic status. Additionally, the presentation will also discuss the current scenario of migrant workers and their significant contribution to Nepal's GDP. According to the Department of Foreign Employment under the Nepal government number of outgoing migrant workers are around 800,000, excluding those going to India. In the past one and half a decade 12,000 Nepalis have died, and the highest death is reported in Malaysia.

Loss of Lives and Properties in Recent Memory of the Country Bhutan

Devika Pradhan

A flash flood in Lhuenste, one of the eastern districts in the country last week washed away the entire campsite along with 23 people. While only eight bodies have been recovered, the search is ongoing. While the people are still struggling to process it, I would like to share our country's recent experience with everyone and discuss the way forward.

Climate Crisis Can Never Be Gender Neutral

Poulami Chatterjee

In 2020, the super cyclonic storm Amphan had left more than five lakh people homeless in the Sundarbans area. Jobs were lost, particularly as farming became nearly impossible. After Amphan, tropical cyclones like Yaas and Bulbul also caused severe damage to the coastal areas of West Bengal. This is an indication of how climate change can pose a serious threat to life and livelihood. Experts have already warned that, the Earth's rising temperature will significantly increase the number of natural disasters like severe cyclonic storms, floods and droughts. As the climate crisis intensifies, more women will face a higher rate of displacement, and suffer from various forms of violence and deprivation. The crisis affects the women mainly in two ways. Firstly, the loss of home compels them to live the life of refugees. According to UN environment data, 80 percent of people displaced by climate change are women. The more women are away from the safe perimeters of their homes, the more are the chances of getting sexually abused. Since people gather in these camps in large numbers, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain security and safety of the women. The number of child marriages, and of girls forced into prostitution, increases after these natural disasters. Secondly, an ill-effect of climate change is that the household work time of women gets lengthier. In developing countries like India, the responsibility of a household rest almost entirely on the women. Due to erratic weather, if production of food grains gets affected, then it is likely to affect the agricultural employment of these women. Loss of forestlands will affect the daily supply of fuel for cooking. Due to temperature rise when the water bodies in the localities dry up, these women will have to fetch water from places far away from their homes. That's why climate crisis can never be conceived as Gender-Neutral. In a society where gender discrimination is already deep rooted, the climate crisis is likely to intensify it. Hence the policies for addressing the impacts of climate change must be gender sensitive.

Reporting in the Wake of Migration and Disasters

Patricia Mukhim

This workshop could not have come at a better time. For those of us living in any one of the states in India's North East, the communal conflict in Manipur has been the most devastating human tragedy. It has claimed over 145 lives and disrupted the even tenor of life for at least about 50,000 people from the hills of Manipur who are internally displaced and are taking shelter in Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Assam to escape death. The bloody conflict that started on May 3 last continues to this day with the Indian Prime Minister remaining a silent spectator. Then we have the floods in Himachal Pradesh and adjoining areas where some from the mainstream media (electronic) have been giving a blow-by-blow account of things as they play out. The first casualty of the Manipur conflict is the internet which is indispensable for journalists to file their stories. Besides that, journalists, especially those from the regional and national media were not allowed to go to the hills in Churachandpur where the mayhem began after a supposed peace march and to report from there. Some journalists had to retract their stories because they did not suit the narrative of the people being reported about. So, in a sense reporting conflict which is a disaster that leads to forced migration is a huge challenge which I am hopeful we will get answers to as we deliberate on the theme during the course of the workshop.

India on the Move: Understanding Contemporary Patterns and Trends in Labour Migration and Vulnerabilities in the Unorganised Sector

Tina Kuriakose Jacob

The mass exodus of migrant workers during the COVID19 lockdown in India is still fresh in our memories. The numbers were astounding; the distress compelled many into action. Since then, many noteworthy government and civil society initiatives are underway to improve the welfare of migrant workers. However, policy and practical interventions need to be evidence-based. Research and reporting on migration in the Indian context require the coming together of various stakeholders to address gaps and challenges in understanding the scale, the nature of people on the move, the vulnerabilities exacerbated by differences in caste and class, multiple information asymmetries, access to social networks, language barriers and the ‘administrative distance’ experienced by migrant workers in accessing welfare benefits and justice. While migration as ‘an informed choice’ can significantly improve the lives of migrant workers and their families, migration under distress conditions and false promises heighten the vulnerability to exploitation, forms of forced labour and trafficking. The presentation will explore the intersections between unsafe migration and trafficking, and the challenges in identifying and reporting these cases.

Workshop Sessions

Inaugural Session

The Media Workshop was introduced by **Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**, **Sharmistha Sarker** and **Bharat Bhushan**. The Workshop on reporting in the wake of disasters and migration was a platform to discuss the new challenges and responsibilities for all media personnel in reporting migration. The media plays a crucial role in informing the public, raising awareness and facilitating assistance and support during critical challenges. It is also essential to approach reporting with sensitivity, accuracy and ethical considerations. Accurate media reporting on migration stories can be challenging due to various factors like accessibility, security concerns, fear of retribution of protagonists, dealing with trauma, vulnerability, scarcity of resources, language barrier and much more. Ultimately responsible reporting on disasters and migration can help to have a deeper understanding of the human impact on such events. Media has a critical role to play in providing accurate and compassionate coverage that respects the dignity and experiences of those affected. The Media Workshop with practitioners from diverse areas of media, shared their experiences and discussed on how one can report on the intense issue of migration in the wake of disasters. The discussion steered around the difficulties that one can face and the ways one adapts to get the reportage done. The chief question raised was: Does media reports matter? and, how do they matter? It is an unquestionable position that media reports matter in framing policy discourses on migrants whether it's a story on a migrant or images of migrants or radiobroadcasts; media shapes how people act and feel toward migrants. Media impacts how migrants see themselves and how they take positions in discourses. As a media practitioner, one needs to choose the terminologies and the narrative style and describe the story of migrants/migration sensitively. Each adjective used to describe situations have implications on visualising the migrants and often than not voluntarily or unconsciously step into the pitfalls of dehumanising the migrants that undermines the conditionality of their mobility through descriptions. Thus, it is the responsibility of the media to question situations creating mobility, and important to not position migrants on the axes generating negative empathy and put them in a light beyond the usual victim lens. This autonomy requires recognition while reporting. The media reports require contextualisation, whether regional or global, in order to put forth an evidence based journalistic report within the framework of justice, protection of human rights, and the participatory role on sharing the burden of the welfare of people on the move. It is essential to make a difference between message design i.e., how we write a story and the framework of production process, within which media reports create and pass on messages, like whether an occurrence is climate-induced, or partially man-made, and so on.



Inaugural Session of the Workshop

Reporting in the Wake of Disasters and Migration

The **inaugural lecture** was delivered by **Patricia Mukhim**, and the session was chaired by **Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**. According to Mukhim, media is about sharing different perspectives on the stories and realities that one wants to narrate. Instead of looking at stories as narratives of one nation, it is important to remember that there are also instances of multiple belief systems, ideologies and diversity within a nation and the fracture lines remain deep not only at varied political foregrounding but also in the systems of thinking and living entrenched in the social customs, ways of life, ethnic-racial foregrounding and certainly geo-political locations that create the identity of the people. In such an essence, as a diverse country, India is many nations. The northeastern region of India has remained obscure in the mainland politics and even less known globally. The northeast had remained culturally exclusive with the rest of India only connected through the Siliguri corridor while 99 per cent of the international borders are with Myanmar, Bhutan, China, Nepal and Bangladesh. The present crisis in Manipur that have made somewhat northeast a global headline is because of migration from Myanmar after the violent coup that people are just leaving their place and fleeing persecution. Migration is not a new phenomenon in India's northeast. Amidst this population flux, the conflict lies in identifying the right to space based on tenure of stay and claims over land often limiting the boundaries of identity by making the other, who are late in this tenure of migration, as alien. The usage of specific term reflects on the image of a migrant as poor decrepit people migrating to "our" lands to consume "our" resources. However, the informal labour force supply channels thrive on these migrant population. In the coalfields of Meghalaya it is the young migrant labourers from Nepal and Bangladesh who risk their lives to extract coal through rathole mining. As borders amidst India and its neighbouring countries are tenuous, it is easy for people to crossover to flee persecution and become migrants/aliens/refugees. The decolonial geographies at many instances have failed to erase the shared history of the region, especially manifested during the 1947 Partition of India and 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. Regions surrounded by borders are also regions of conflict and the claims of indigeneity problematises the migrant position. One may ask the question: How long does one have to live in a place before being recognised as a citizen and stop being an outsider. This insider-outsider conundrum feeds into the political system sharpening polarisation of othering whereby one fails to see the migrant any longer as human; and the entire system survives as a way of vote bank politics. One needs to report the migrant scenario, especially the cause of fleeing, with empathy and sensitivity instead of fuelling or aggravating the vulnerability of migrants. With the coup in Myanmar, regions that share free corridor space with India, people are crossing over as they have bare resources even to meet their daily needs and not to mention the constant lingering fear of persecution. It is the responsibility of the media to ethically report the migrant situation as factually correct, with sensitivity in cases of opposition or retaliation. So, for media doing migrant stories it is important to see: How the report narratives are told? It is also important for the journalists and media practitioners to see and understand where they locate themselves amidst any crisis reporting, as part of a community or as an outsider, as it changes the partisan politics and objectivity of the narrative that one writes. It is important for reporters to overcome the community belongingness. Mukhim calls this as the burden of ethnicity, and it is difficult to overcome this dilemma of belongingness as one still has to feel to be accepted to live and work amidst the community from which the media practitioner comes. One can thus question: Is it a more acceptable narrative of a conflict if the reportage is done by someone from outside the community? Does such non-communitarian identity of the reporter produce a more genuine take or an unbiased view of the conflict? Local groups and community identity vanguards at times work as pressure groups monitoring what is being written and published about a conflict situation and going to the lengths of compromising the safety of journalists, especially in vernacular press, to upkeep the monologue of conflict that tries to erase the imbroglio of who is a migrant or a refugee or an asylum seeker or a trafficked person; labels such as the dangerous other and reporting becomes especially difficult in countries that do not have a definitive refugee policy. However, it is often the empathetical propensity of media practitioners that they can solve the problems of migrants/refugees. Rather it is the duty of the media persons to bring issues to the fore for governments and civil society organisations to take action.



Patricia Mukhim (left) and Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury during the Inaugural Lecture

Online Session

The hybrid/video session joined by reporters and editors from 360info focused their discussion on the role of the field in reporting migrants and disasters. **Lachlan Gusselli** commented that there is no such thing as black or white of simple narrative in media reporting and it is important to focus on the human in themselves as the media practitioner reports the migrant crisis through a vulnerability and humanitarian right lens. One can find that motive behind the actions and labouring forms taken up by a migrant is to stay safe and protect their families and just merely attempt to exist. Another pitfall is to look onto the refugees as suffering masses; rather, one should understand that the refugees are individuals belonging to the entire spectrum of the society. They should be looked upon as victims of circumstances. A real cultural issue with journalism is epitome of the journalist entering the scene who is trying to fix the woes of migrants-should refrain from creating a false illusion of reality. The main problem of journalism, especially of the Western journalism, is to infantilise the ability of migrants navigating through their precarious situations. It is important for journalists to realise the gravity of the situation they are in and being witnesses to something greater than any individual existence, take the instances ahead to a larger audience. It is not about imprinting the story in the name of the first reportages, rather it is the story of the people who are existing in that moment, who are trying to survive and it is the role of the reporter to reflect amongst their reader that this situation can happen in any corner of the world, if the dice was rolled differently-the people who are going through it could be anyone and reports do not remain limited to only reporters.

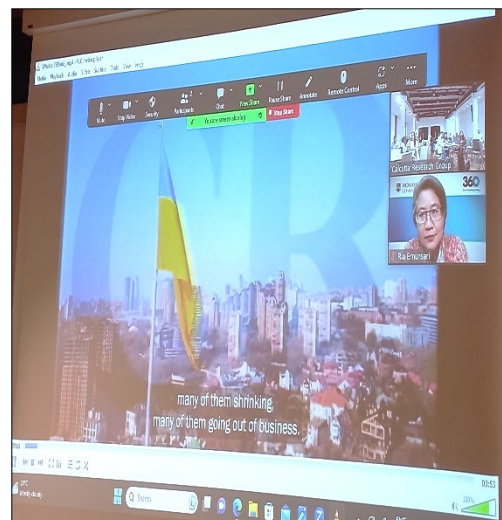
Shahirah Hamid explained how journalists play a crucial role in destigmatisation of migrants and refugees, and it is necessary to avoid reporting any disinformation and discrimination of migrants and refugees. To encourage ethical issues in reporting migrants and refugees it is important to follow the best practices recommended by UNHCR. Journalists must refrain from victimising the other and avoid publishing content that will ignore the bigger picture and responsibly publish facts and not bias, through the publication of reports based on accurate, impartial and inclusive facts. It is important to know the law of the country and use correct definitions and terms and designate the migrant in the narratives and avoid using jargons that might dehumanise and criminalise the migrants. It is essential to create a functional community involving journalists, NGOs, media and universities to support activities on ethical representations of migrants and refugees.

Ria Ernunsari shared her experiences reporting climate disasters in the wake of 2004 Tsunami in Aceh, volcanic eruptions in Yogyakarta, and earthquake and liquefactions in and tsunami in central Sulawesi in 2018 in Indonesia. Before the 2004 tsunami, Indonesia did not have any disaster risk management policy, it only became operative in 2007, and the National Agency for Disaster Risk Management in 2008. In situations of any disaster, the headlines for months would focus on the event and its aftermath; people are highly interested to

receive detailed information on the occurrences of disasters and their consequences. The readers were interested to know about the transparency and accountability of how the government spent money from development aid to reconstruct and rehabilitate what happened in the disaster hit areas. During the volcanic eruptions in Yogyakarta, the newsrooms coined the new term 'disaster tourism'. Yogyakarta being located in central Java had better connectivity and people came to witness what happened. But these flowing populations were not helping the people residing in the disaster hit areas. The people of Yogyakarta were not happy about it and they started calling them as 'disaster tourists.' As a caution for journalists reporting disaster, one should not attempt to dramatise the event and write stories based on the idea that bad news is good news.



Ria Ernunsari speaking in the Online Session



Discussion in the Online Session

Panel I: Reporting on the Complex Life of Migrant Labour

The panel discussion was initiated by the chair of the session **Swati Bhattacharjee** with a brief description of the complexity of the lives of migrant labourers in India. She said that the lives of the migrant labourers came into focus during COVID19; however, these people's lives have been more complex since the beginning, and called upon the speakers in the session to throw light on some of the problems.

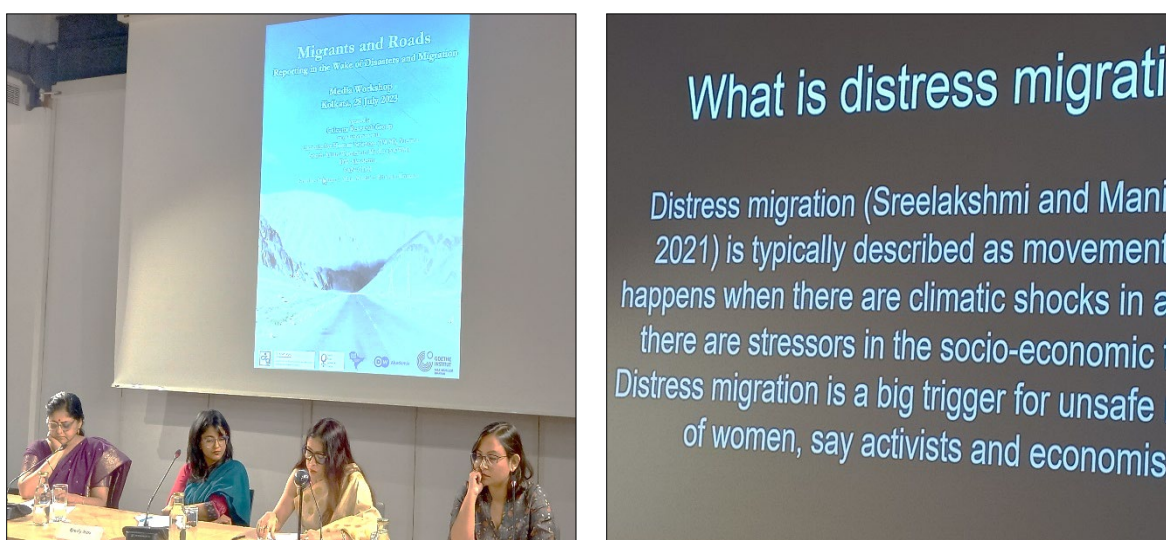
Ritwika Mitra's talk was based on the women migrant workers from Rajasthan to Gujarat who were bound to migrate due to distress. According to Ritwika, distress migration occurs due to shock, climate change, development projects, conflict, socio-economic factors, etc. Mitra's presentation based on her fieldwork at Kushalgarh in Banswara district, Rajasthan, focused on migrant workers mostly from the SC and ST communities, largely engaged in work at the garment factories in Ahmedabad and Surat in Gujarat. Showing photographs taken during her fieldwork, the speaker explained that the significant compulsion for the distress migration was lack of government facilities. She said that these women migrant workers did not get government facilities like National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (or MNREGA) and other welfare schemes. Mitra also talked about migration patterns and mentioned that in most cases, women were found to have been moving with their family, but there were also women who moved alone for different reasons. Regarding multiple rights violations, Ritwika Mitra said that violation of rights began in the transit routes. Six-seven women were compelled to accommodate themselves in one seat during their bus journeys from Kushalgarh to Ahmedabad. The condition of migrant women in the night shelters was inhuman - women faced sexual harassment and violence from male co-migrants. No access to clean water or toilets, made the migrant women more vulnerable. They did not get food for their regular living, also facing discrimination in terms of wages. The contractors and sub-contractors took the share most of the time. They did not get any medical facilities in their workplace. Most of the women, whom Mitra had interviewed, wanted to go back to their villages. Ritwika Mitra also talked about women who migrated due to a sense of autonomy. She found them happy living in the city, even as migrant worker. But the lives of most of the migrant workers were full of distress, and women were suffering most of it – a large part due to climate change which was a significant reason behind the migration, in addition to lack of social security policies.

Farhana Ahmed talked about how the people were bound to migrate from Assam due to unemployment. She referred to the torture and assault faced by the Assamese migrant workers while crossing the inter-state border. She referred to the recent assault of 19 Assamese migrant workers in Arunachal Pradesh who were compelled to work in remote areas and became captive by the contractors for at least three years. Due to the physical and psychological harassment, they fled from their workplace and tried returning to Assam by walking through the forests. Fourteen of them died, and five were rescued by the Indian Air Force. Despite this incident, most unemployed youth were determined to migrate to improve their socio-economic condition. According to recent statistics, the number of unemployed people has increased yearly. The current poverty rate has increased to 31.98 per cent, much higher than the national poverty rate. The problem also persisted among the educated youth. As a result, they moved to small businesses and agrarian activities. Some of them, who did not manage to arrange initial capital for small businesses, were bound to migrate to other states as unskilled labourers. The lack of initiative to promote vocational training was one of them. According to Farhana Ahmed, the people who took conventional education were minimally skilled as they did not get any technical education apart from basic knowledge of computers. As a result, they were forced to do unskilled jobs where they could earn more money. Climate change and continuous floods in the Brahmaputra valley are significant reasons for migration, while river erosion made the situation more critical, especially in the char areas of Assam. Both repeated floods and erosion destroyed the prospects of agriculture, and the government's attitude towards the distressed people made them more vulnerable. New developmental and administrative policies were one of the causes behind the large scale of unskilled labour migration. Farhana Ahmed gave examples of the Garukhuti village of Darrang District in Assam, where people were evicted because they captured government land. Most of these evicted people were daily wage workers who had to migrate due to new eviction policies of the government. Similar incidents happened in Naogaon and other districts. Citing Article 12 of the Indian Constitution, which ensures the protection of life and livelihood of citizens in a particular state, Farhana Ahmed said that the right of labour,

mainly migrant labour, should be ensured, and the states should be aware of this fact while drafting policies or acts in the name of development.

Barasha Das's presentation was based on the role of media persons towards migrants and migrant labourers. She shared her experience regarding interviewing migrant labourers about their food and shelter, as well as her experiences with North Indians (mainly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh). These migrant workers were living in inhuman conditions. 20-25 people were living in small shelters in Guwahati, most of which lacked ventilation, and had no proper sites for resting. Journalists in a way failed to project the crisis in its right might, as the sufferings only came into focus during the pandemic. The business of bamboo-built makeshift houses for migrants became one of the significant trends in Guwahati in the last few years where six to ten migrant worker families were accommodated. The houses were built in the lowland areas, and the government did not prepare any sanitation planning at such sites. As a result, people suffered the most during rain. The waterlogging problem persisted most of the time for a year because of lack of planning and people also suffered during the pandemic. The government forced them to take experimental medicines and were showered with sanitisers, though the news never made it to mainstream media. Barasha Das ended the discussion in hope that the insensitive attitude of the media towards the migrants, will see change in time.

In the question-answer session concerns were raised about the socio-political effect of the recent welfare policies taken by the Rajasthan government. Subir Bhaumik and Patricia Mukhim highlighted the changing pattern in the agricultural sector and corporate intervention in most of the North-Eastern states. All three panellists discussed the aspects raised by the audience.



Speakers in Panel I: Reporting on the Complex Life of Migrant Labour

Panel II: New Migrants, New Refugees in South Asia

Riya Singh Rathore while discussing issues on refugees also drew focus on host communities mentioning that when refugee issues are addressed, the media operates through certain lenses. The objective of Singh's research was to explore the factors that affect perceptions and the binaries through an exploratory study in Delhi and among the findings that surfaced were how refugee host interactions and perceptions are affected by a number of factors such as – firstly, political factors like regime, nationality, age, gender, colour, ethnicity, religion, can sometimes alter host perception. Secondly, administrative factor like documents of identification such as passports, language, etc. Finally positive representation of refugees in media narratives changes the perceptions of hosts. Misreporting, misinformation, careful selection of information for contribution to broadcasts is

crucial. Refugees are mostly photographed in groups and reported as representing hordes, thus indicating how use of visuals, languages, and incidents shapes the perceptions of refugees. The role and responsibility of media in giving stories to migrants moving into a city from rural areas for receiving monetary aid from welfare organisations, facilities for residence and support to their families and send back part of their remunerations home. Often people reporting on migrants' life are affected by their own discernments that affect reporting in turn and the reporting require first person narratives to foster connectedness and portrayals of aspirations of refugees and migrants and combating ideas, and norms and responsible use of terminologies to close the gaps that incite discriminations. Ensuring access to education and civic amenities to improve the lives of migrants in their contribution to economy and improve first hand contact with refugees through inter-personal interactions.

Anup Ojha spoke on the changing road of migrant workers from Nepal, a country from which most people go to the Gulf countries and USA, and also to South East Asian countries facing unique problems and the ways in which migrants deal with the problems of an uncertain migrant life constituted his presentation. In 2018, he had composed a song on a common man and the hassles he faces while making ends meet as a migrant. In his presentation he discussed a song composed by him, titled 'Sansari Baimani (Dishonest world): A story that represents a migrant labourer who is cheated everywhere.' Ojha referred to the song composed by him and the protagonist – a migrant in search of employment being hackled and exploited by the mean interests and greed of a dishonest society. Elaborating his points with a few clips from the video of the song, the composer spoke of the issues that common man deals with in their journey as a migrant. He mentioned how such stories of people on the move are entangled with hopes that fall trap to promises of monetary help, leaving migrants falling for scams and into further debt traps.

Ayesha Chathurangi while discussing the background of new migrants and new refugees focusing on the Sri Lankan context, spoke about her concerns that though it is a known fact that rising sea level and melting ice cover in future could probably result into the submergence of island countries such as Sri Lanka surrounded by the seas, such statements on facts and research findings have neither intensified panic in the minds of the people, nor pushed people to migrate in unexpected large scale. The elders in society are sometimes seen at the forefront of putting in efforts to prepare for safeguarding families and resettle on safer ground in case incidences of climate-induced displacement occur. In the face of snail-paced development of the country, unstable macro-economy which has triggered mass-scale hardships for the population of the country, and unpopular politics, migrants in search of better living conditions and employment could be recognised as part of distinct categories such as, a) young and middle-aged professionals, b) young students enrolled in western universities with intentions of settling down in the countries of work, c) skilled and unskilled male and female artisans who migrate to Middle-Eastern Countries for long-term employment, and d) illegal migrants indulging in assurance of safe passage to developed countries like Australia, Italy, Japan, Canada, USA, UK, etc. Tamils living in Jaffna and other metropolitan cities of Sri Lanka prefer migrating to low-salaried companies in Canada, especially to escape conflicts of LTTE. Most illegal migrants try to reach Australia by travelling in large fishing boats, taking the facilities provided by organised, unauthorised network providing facilitating passage to migrants who pay hefty amounts by selling properties for the services. The migrants arrested by Australian Coast guard are deported back to Sri Lanka, thrust into misery in their homelands, without options of earning livelihood; many that do venture into foreign land often fall prey in the hands of human traffickers, especially women in the hands of sex vendors, are also victims of untouchability and ethnic discrimination. Direct and indirect solutions through collaborations between countries of South Asia on addressing such issues with training for aspiring migrants to find work in their own country for sustainable economic engagements.

The chair for the session **Rajat Roy** pointed out that migrants play important role in the economy of the host country and mainstream media takes cognizance of it while dealing with the struggles of migrant life for more than half a decade now post-independence. The lacunas or deficits in reporting sensitive issues in built in the lack of trust, with important suggestions on correcting the course of narratives in media reporting, as flagged by the presentations in the session, along with the role of the migrants in the economy of the host countries. CRG has been discussing these significant issues that would probably help steer transitions in the discourses. Participants opined that it is important to enquire into the role that ethnicity plays as a factor affecting reception of refugees by host communities; political climate also affects the cooperation levels of host community and is divisive at times in determining certain terms used to brand refugees.



Speakers in Panel II: New Migrants, New Refugees in South Asia



Glimpses from the presentations in Panel II

Panel III: Climate Calamities: Reporting on Displacements due to Climate Disasters

Poulami Chatterjee spoke about her field visit to Dhemaji district of Assam in December 2022 which she undertook as part of a UNESCO mission of an all women team of journalists to report on the women and children of one of the worst affected places as a result of climate change. She focused on how climate change and related calamities have affected the fragile ecosystem of Dhemaji which is geographically located in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas. Exigencies of climate change has had the worst effect on Dhemaji which is surrounded by rivers all around. These rivers frequently change their courses. The Jia Bharali River has changed its course four times in the last five years. In fact, the district has a history of being flood affected always owing to its geographical location. As a result, the inhabitants of the district belonging to the tribes of Missing, Moran, Hajong, etc., build a special type of house with a raised platform called the *saangghar*. The upper deck of these houses is inhabited by humans whereas the domestic animals rest in the lower deck. This system ensured that both humans and non-humans remain safe. But frequent and untimely incidences of flood have now disrupted this age-old practice and often times, the situation becomes such that humans and non-humans end up sharing the same space for survival. Such a shift has proven fatal for women and children—especially pregnant and nursing mothers and newborn babies. There is always risk of infection. Lack of infrastructure makes it difficult for woman to access proper birthing facilities. As a result, mortality rates among mothers and newborns are on the rise. Frequent floods lead to the closing of schools. As a result, the education of the children has been suffering consistently as most children don't find any interest in studies. Also, floods dent the economic stability of many families and children of such families are left with no choice but to contribute to their family income by leaving behind their studies. Women, who often contributed significantly to their family income by weaving clothes, baskets, etc., are no longer able to engage in such activities due to multiple floodings in a single year. The age-old economic set up of these tribes has crumbled down significantly in the past few years as a result of climate induced calamities.

Shadab Farooq also presented about his field experience in Joshimath, Uttarakhand at the wake of the unprecedented ground sinking in January 2023. He narrated the story of one of his interviewees there, Arun. Arun used to be a driver in Joshimath and earned a decent living. He focused on how a person with a relatively stable life and income can be thrown into abject misery as a result of climate induced calamities. Arun's home was marked as dangerous property, yet he continued to live there because he had nowhere else to go. But eventually he had to leave his home because the authorities didn't let him stay anymore. This shock of displacement has now rendered Arun's wife mentally fragile as they moved to a nearby town where he now works in fits and starts. In his conversation with the speaker, Arun spoke about how he wanted to cling to his home in Joshimath because it was the place where he and his wife had started their lives together. The loss of it is huge to sustain for his wife whose entire existence revolved around the home. In his presentation, Farooq basically focused on the impact of climate change and related displacement on the mental well-being of the ones who suffer as due to it. He also touched upon the displacement of the inhabitants of Doda town, present day Kashmir who were forced to leave their homes as a result of the Baglihar Dam Project.

Sangeeta Aparajita presented a short film which she made. The films had as its subject matter, forced displacement in and around Dhaka as a result of developmental project and river erosion at the same time. The respondents in the films complained about how they were given meagre compensation. The upcoming development project led to the erosion of the river bank nearby leading to the permanent loss of property and income of one of the respondents who has lost a mango orchard which contributed significantly to his family's income. Another respondent spoke of how her entire family has now been disintegrated because the other members had to move away to other places in search of livelihood. Her short film basically showed how climate change can become a threat multiplier in today's times if development projects are not thought upon on the lines of a sustainable future.

The chair for the session **Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury** flagged a few important points while discussing the role of the mainstream media (Delhi Media Houses) towards the coverage of climate change related stories. The rampant sensationalising of climate change stories, playing the same story over and over again thus

significantly missing out on covering the nuances of such tragic events were identified as some of the hindrances towards a poignant and empathetic coverage of climate change stories.



Speakers in Panel III-Climate Calamities: Reporting on Displacements due to Climate Disasters

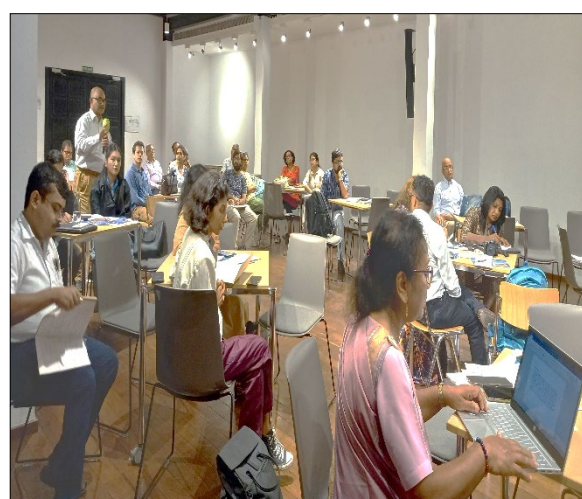
Panel IV: New Routes, New Techniques: South Asian Scenario

Tina Kuriakose presented her research on cases of identification of human trafficking, especially the push and pull factors, and cases of government rescues. Manual labour, vulnerability of children and women, internal migration, and disaster related push factors. with experts estimating with at least 200 million people migrating in India, both inter-state and intra-state. Seasonal, temporary migration in India, prone to informal labour arrangements in case of informal contracts resulting from agricultural distress in rural areas, because of lack of employment in many such cases; identification and assessment of such cases shows that social engineering or introduction of alternate methods in such cases have not given effective results in countless such occasions. Lack of contemporary data across India on migration, last basis for data being Census of 2011, and much having changed in a decade, makes it difficult to understand the factors affecting migration and mapping the movements of migrants. Significant push factors that are the dominant causes of distress migration work in interconnectedness with numerous causes. Voluntary, informed, and planned migration ensures that migrants are safe and not affected by poverty and magnified difficulties due to lack of entitlements. Thus, understanding caste dimensions, fractured data points, disaster-prone areas, structural barriers, policy inefficiencies and social vulnerabilities are important while documenting the stories of migrants. Advocating for policy changes should bind human stories and data together, correlating multiple data sources, qualitative aspects and collaborations for bringing about changes.

Devika Pradhan while speaking on disasters in the India-Bhutan border region discussed the tragedy of floods in Bhutan with losses of lives and properties due to hydro-meteorological hazards such as floods. Flood in 2023 in Lhuenste, one of the eastern districts in Bhutan, destroyed work sites of the Druk Green Power Corporation – a hydropower plant along with the lives of workers. The destruction and losses came as shock to local people, struggling to prepare themselves for disasters. Pradhan shared how the incident shook people in the localities and their experiences of struggles and recovery. A few people suffering injuries were declared in stable condition. A section of the Yungichhu Hydro Power Project was reportedly damaged. Disaster rescue teams along with local officials, Desuups, Druk Green Power Corporation, disaster management volunteers had been working at the site of flood, with additional manpower trained in search and rescue from various hydropower plants deployed to assist with disaster management. With heavy rains, mud and rock flow washing away a part of campsites near the hydro power project, people questioned the benefits of the projects that at times of climate disasters aggravated vulnerability of the region to damages such as collapse of bridges, rail networks,

roadways, blocking passage into and out of the affected areas due to debris flows. Hazardous driving conditions and inundated rail tracks led to delays and cancellations of freight and passenger train movement and disruptions in routes in the low-lying areas overflowing with rain water and waterlogged. The requirements for combating weather hazards with forecast and official broadcasts of weather data and other related information becomes essential to recover from the damages to infrastructure and amenities. This unpredictable and sudden calamity called for assessment of the balance between reaping the benefits of infrastructural development and the damages to environment, especially in areas prone to landslides, earthquakes and flooding.

The Chair for the session **Jayanta Roy Chowdhury** stressed on the incidences of migrants at times being considered as invisible in policy formulations. Participants reflected on the points and processes through which migrant workers become bonded labourers. References were drawn to a few laws in India that referred to the circumstances in which advances or minimal wages not paid, with restrictions on freedom of movement or freedom of work, amounts to labour bondage. Understanding data and responsibly generating data is important. Data sharing and loopholes of bureaucracy that delay the reception of information should be addressed.



Speakers and Participants interacting during the session ‘Panel IV-New Routes, New Techniques: South Asian Scenario’

Panel V: Gendered Vulnerabilities

Women face a disproportionate burden of migration and are often more vulnerable to discrimination as migrants. Gender is the common denominator of discrimination and distinctive challenges that women migrants face exacerbating their vulnerability in terms of labour market inclusion, rights and availability of decent work. While one attempts to map the vulnerability of women in migration, one has to take into consideration the fact that the very being of womanhood encompasses the vulnerability of women and not just at the beginning or end of migration. Women play a crucial role in sustaining and rebuilding their families, communities and they are more prone to save and send a proportion of their earnings to their families in villages.

Correna Enet Suarez talked about the gendered vulnerabilities and reporting on challenges faced by transgender migrants in Telangana. Although transgender people by law have the right to identify their gender beyond the normative duality of male and female, yet majority of them are still not included in the service industry in India and live off either on alms or depend on sex work. Transgender people migrate on a daily basis either as short term migrants or as long term migrants from city to city, district to district, from one state to another in search of a living and most of them travel by trains. According to Coreena, the vulnerability of the transgender people can be categorised into four inter-related areas: Firstly, as a migrant travels on a daily

basis from origin to destination, that particular person at times is faced with questions of identity, identifying with their homes or residences and addresses. Secondly, a high number leaving home at a very young age are barely able to complete their basic education. Left out of the channels of formal education these migrants do not possess any educational degree that they can use to get white collar jobs. Thirdly, following the previous two impediments such transgender people fail to get transgender certificate. In Telangana, the government distributes 2BHK to transgender people and non-possession of these certificates deprives them of any government schemes specifically designed for transgender people. According to the last census, Telangana has 59,000 transgender people. Despite these statistical numbers, the government had failed to further sub-categorise the group, for example, into *kinnars*, *hijras*, etc., and thus, the identity groups have failed to voice for themselves within the category of transgender people. Without the transgender certificates many are left without ration cards, pushing the transgender migrants into dark world of informalisation and poverty that ends up in sex work. This cumulatively leads up to securitising the unspoken territorial jurisdiction of work and habitat of transgender groups often leading to intra-territorial fights. Fourthly, Karnataka is the only state that has allowed 1 per cent horizontal reservations for the transgender community. In Telangana, the community is fighting for a similar kind of reservation. Increasing number of transgender people are working in corporate sector and demanding equal rights and opportunities.

Samata Biswas took forward the discussion focusing on the trans women, and citing the statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau between 2019 and 2021, whereby 1.6 million women and 2.5 million girls had been recorded to have disappeared, with the highest numbers in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bengal. She posed the question: What does it mean to be/have disappeared? What per cent of the disappearing people are trans-person both trans man and trans women? And, what per cent of these missing persons are queer people in same-gender relationships including cis-men, cis-women etc., and what is the likelihood of ‘them’ disappearing? Trans women constitute the absolute invisible part of the trans community. In order to have been disappeared, that particular person should have to be reported as disappeared by kith and kin, and absent from a settled home. The act of disappearance also means that these disappeared people are not in the place and space where they were supposed to be. It can also be interpreted as, though not generalised, that a certain section of them has either migrated either willingly or forcefully. Shelter homes for trans persons and queer people in Pune and Kolkata have instances of people who have had to leave home because they have been forced to dress or behave in a manner that is in contradiction to the gender with which they identify, placing them at the receiving end of sexual and physical violence. These people are probably made invisible because their chosen gender is not being recognised. It is anecdotal to reason enough that such peer pressure to identify with the existing norms of the society forces oneself to become invisible in their known social circle. Usually most of the young adults who have not finished their formal college education and identify themselves as trans who migrate. What happens when they are forced to leave home? Usually, they manage to migrate to big cities, solely on the aid of community networks. These migrants are barely accommodated in government shelter homes because they might not be enrolled in places with the genders with which they identify due to their sex assigned at birth and not with the gender they identify. Even after the decriminalisation of homosexuality in India and the adoption of the Trans Act, protection of the trans people largely remains the same especially when considered from perspective of inclusive society or access to dignified job. When we talk of *hijras*, *aravanis*, etc., these are not simple identifiers of different categories of trans people but are also distinct occupational identities limited to only trans people at large, especially by trans women. However, the term trans women do not suffice as being coterminous with *hijras* or *aravanis*. Any trans people leave home without documentation which were essential to include them in the National Register of Citizen or these documents were in their dead names, i.e., the names and identity they had before becoming a trans person. Even if people manage to migrate through networks, one may question what kind of livelihood do trans people experience in the cities. Transit homes are only temporary shelters, and young people who migrate do not have the necessary skills or job opportunity. Thus, migration for the trans people does not merely mean a loss of identity but also loss of possible opportunities to make a living. UNHCR recognises that people belonging to LGBTQIA+ spectrum may become victims of persecution in places which are homophobic like in Afghanistan and therefore have the possibility of relocation or seeking asylum in Western countries. But it becomes difficult to seek asylum if the person is belonging from a country which is technically not homophobic, for example India. Trans people

are triple marginalised in the gender politics not only because of their social gender, their assigned gender but also of the choice they made reacknowledge the body they want to live with. The story of the trans people is of a society at margins.

Roshan Pokharel looked into the position of women migrants and migration policies in Nepal. Migration is integral in the economic development in Nepal and people tend to move to countries with better economic opportunities especially in the GCC countries. Migration mostly takes place from rural areas of Nepal, where men migrate leaving their women behind. In a traditional joint family structure, the autonomy of the left behind wife is compromised. When women migrate, there is disqualification and deskilling. Overqualified women are less likely to be hired in foreign countries and hence women voluntarily hide their qualification to increase the possibility to migrate to foreign countries. There is no fixed age limit for women migrating from Nepal and occasional blanket ban on destination countries and sectoral bans make these women migrants fall into traps of unsafe and undocumented migration. This role of monitoring the women migrants and the visa policies prevailing in the destination countries, especially the short term visa available to Nepali citizens induces more women into the migration network than the male migrants who are prone to long term migration. Women also migrate to countries with intergovernmental agreements like Japan, Israel, and South Korea. However, in countries where Nepal does not have a government to government (G2G) agreement, women migrants are more vulnerable and are offered jobs in dance bars leading to sexual exploitation. There is provision of deploying Labour Attachee to the diplomatic mission only if the number of female migrants exceeds 1000. The Ministry of Labour Employment and Social Security also looks into the safe migration channels, respectful migration and made pre-departure foreign employment training mandatory, manage a foreign employment welfare fund for the wellbeing of the migrants abroad and run the returnee migrant's welfare programme, especially for returnee women migrants. Apart from protecting gendered vulnerabilities of women, Nepal took a step forward as in June 2023, Supreme Court of Nepal, passed a bill to register same-sex marriage.



Presentations in Panel V: Gendered Vulnerabilities



Participants in the Media Workshop, 28 July 2023

Reporting Migration: Values, Structures, Linkages A Media Training Workshop

(Date: 29 July 2023
Venue: Crystal Hall, Hotel The Sojourn, Kolkata)

Report

Organised by
South Asia Network of Communication, Displacement and Migration (SAN-
CDM)
and Calcutta Research Group
In collaboration with
Deutsche Welle Akademie (DWA)

REPORTING MIGRATION: VALUES, STRUCTURES, LINKAGES

A training workshop for journalists

**IDENTIFY
TYPES OF
MIGRATION**



**EXPLORE GLOBAL
AND LOCAL LINKAGES**

**LEARN
REPORTING
STRUCTURES**



**ORGANISED BY
CALCUTTA RESEARCH
GROUP
IN COLLABORATION WITH
DW AKADEMIE**

29 TH JULY 2023, KOLKATA

The Media Training Workshop was organised in congruence with Calcutta Research Group's (CRG) previous endeavours on media studies and practices. The South Asia Network of Communication, Displacement and Migration (SAN-CDM) and CRG jointly organised the Media Training Workshop on July 29, 2023, in Kolkata, with the support of DW Akademie. The programme began with introductory notes from **Dr. Samata Biswas**, Department of English, Sanskrit College and University & CRG, who explained the necessity of organising the training workshop and the timeliness of it. This was followed by the self-introductions of the participants.

The programme was divided into 3 sessions. For the first session, the trainer was **Subir Bhaumik**, senior journalist, and for the second session, **Debashish Chakrabarti**, Professor & Dean, School of Communication, G D Goenka University, India, in his brief presentation, discussed the ethics of writing a journalistic report with a focus on migration, the types of migration, the tools to report migration, and so on. In the last session, chaired by **Prof. Paula Banerjee**, IDRC Endowed Chair, Gender and Forced Displacement, Director, Center on Gender and Forced Displacement, Gender and Development Studies, Department of Development and Sustainability, School of Environment, Resources and Development, Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, **Bharat Bhushan**, Associate Editor, 360info interacted with the participants and gave insightful comments on their proposed reporting ideas.

First Session

Trainer: Subir Bhaumik

In this session, **Subir Bhaumik** discussed the ethics of reporting and highlighted the dos and don'ts of reporting and writing about migration. It was an engaging session that lasted for almost two hours. Bhowmik majorly touched upon the following points:

- i. **Joining the Larger Dots**
- ii. **Facts, Not Bias**
- iii. **Humanitarian Approach**
- iv. **Challenge Hate**
- v. **Do thorough Fact Checking**
- vi. **Identifying types of migration**
- vii. **Refugee flow or Internal Displacement (possible spill overs) or Phased migration – Whether conflict induced or economy or environment induced or any other reason behind migration.**
- viii. **Linkages of migration to economy and the politics of host society**
- ix. **Reporting structure for migration**

- x. **Usefulness of networks for reporting migration**
- xi. **Bias and objectivity in reporting migration**
- xii. **Tools to report migration**

These pointers formed the cardinal crux of his elaborate presentation, in which he spoke on a lot of issues pertaining to reporting migration. He began by noting that it is important for journalists to know what migration really is, how and why it is happening at a particular place, the reasons behind it, and so on and so forth. To report properly, journalists must have a holistic understanding of the factors and situations that trigger migration. It is also important for journalists to adhere to neutrality, as good reporting can happen only when journalists maintain an objective distance from what is happening around them and stick to reporting an event based on facts, figures, and everything that is tangible.

It is also important for journalists to be abreast of Refugee Laws, International Treaties, Local Laws and geopolitical interventions that are cardinal to the place and community on which they are reporting. The journalist must have a thorough understanding of the political, social, and economic contestations relevant to the field of reporting. Without this, a report can't be prim and proper and would lack essential information vital to knowing and understanding the real concerns. The journalist must have a deep understanding of the identity contestations intrinsic to the field, as without this background knowledge, the report itself would be half done and miss out on a lot of angles and perspectives necessary for unbiased reporting. The reporting should be laced with facts, and the reporter should never take sides while reporting. The task of the reporter is to maintain objective distance from the events while at the same time not losing that touch of humanitarianism. Bhaumik noted that loss of objectivity is a primary problem with today's journalists, as they are more focused on peddling one-sided or biased narratives. This should not be the case, and good reporting should always be objective. He also emphasised the need to challenge hate all the time, but the means to do so should be factual reporting. The report should not be based on bias but on hard facts, and one way of doing so is to run extensive fact-checking measures, which the journalist must do by themselves through the engagement of sources, assistants, and also by reading up on previously published materials and so on.

Bhaumik emphasised the need to cut away all sorts of "wooly information" by which he meant that there should not be anything to the report that was not subject to scrutiny and fact-finding. He drew extensively on his experiences as an investigative journalist and cited a plethora of instances and examples of how field-based reporting should be carried out and how the subsequent report should be written. He also discussed in detail the importance of establishing networks for reporting migration by citing examples from his own experiences of reporting on the Rohingyas. He narrated instances of how he befriended the top brass of the army and insurgent groups in order to gain deeper perspectives. He also narrated his experiences of striking up

conversations with locals in order to have first-hand knowledge of important events happening in and around localities.

Second Session

Trainer: Debashish Chakrabarti

Debashish Chakrabarti, in his brief presentation, highlighted the need to be unbiased and fierce while writing reports. He took the instances of a few events and discussed how the same events were reported by different media houses the world over. In so doing, he brought home the necessity of being steady while reporting. His comparative analysis of a few reports highlighted the multiple ways in which reporting is done the world over and also emphasised the need to develop a style of reporting. The session ended with feedback from the participants who noted that they have been benefitted by the insights of the two resource persons.

Third Session

Interactive Session and Planning Collaborative Reports with Bharat Bhushan

Chair: Prof. Paula Banerjee

Prof. Paula Banerjee began the session by describing her experience studying the borders. Emphasising the institutionalised forms of smuggling cows to Bangladesh, the security forces from both sides of the borders are also involved in these smuggling rackets. However, economically deprived villagers living in the bordering villages were involved in the frontline of the job (i.e., taking the cows from the Indian side of the border to the Bangladesh side). Therefore, they faced the most gruesome consequences. Even knowing the risks attached with the job, these people have to do this for their livelihood. She pointed out how the women on the border dealt with the borders and questioned the complex identity of the border. She gave the example of Felani Khatun's murder while crossing the border. Banerjee ended her comments by saying that the role of the media is essential in dragging out the stories of the border to understand the complexities.

Bharat Bhushan began the session with three questions for the participants:

- a) **What is the theme or story related to migration that the participants would want to do?**
- b) **What will be the medium of their presentation?**
- c) **What kind of collaborations and from which agencies would they expect while doing the stories?**

Sangeeta Aparajita, a filmmaker from Bangladesh and participant in the training programme, said that she wanted to do a 7–10-minute documentary on displaced Rohingyas in Bhashan Char. Bharat Bhushan admired the idea and advised her to consult the South Asia Forum for Human Rights, Sara Kamal, and Meghana Guhathakurta of Bangladesh before doing the project. He also suggested that Sangeeta could make two videos. As she mentioned, one for social media, which would be 2.5 minutes long, and another for 7–10 minutes. **Anup Ojha** proposed a long-form story or a documentary on refugees in Nepal. Bharat Bhushan asked him to report on the struggle of the Bhutanese refugees, who did nothing for the refugees from Nepal. He wanted to talk to He advised him to make a short video on the issues for a preview. **Devika Pradhan** wanted to do a story on one of the recent flash floods in the Eastern districts of Bhutan, where 23 lives were lost and many people were displaced. She said that she would go to the field by herself or send a set of questions to her bureau representatives in that region and collaborate with them. Bharat Bhushan advised her to publish it as a joint report. **Krishna Prasad Pradhan** proposed a story on the psychological condition of migrant workers who worked in different corporate jobs in Australia. He would do it in collaboration with his news agency. **Ayesha Chathurangi** wanted to do a short film on the disabled children of migrant workers in Sri Lanka and their struggle to co-opt with the environment. She would collaborate with her university to do the job. Ayesha also wanted to do a short story on the possible role of migrants in the 2024 general elections in Sri Lanka and whether the migrants would be the crucial factor. Bharat Bhushan advised her to keep in touch with Annie Philip and to collaborate with Ayesha on the issues of migrants. **Ignatious Joseph** wanted to work as a resource person or assist any journalist doing stories on human trafficking. He offered help with field work and put in touch with the concerned people, researchers, and government agencies involved in such issues. He provided support to CRG on these issues. **Riya Singh Rathore** would work on a story on the migrant workers in Rajasthan. She said she would collaborate with her news agency and send the report to CRG. **Shadab Farooq** wanted to do a story on the people who do not want to migrate because they fear losing their biological identities. He told about a village in Punjab where people married within their clans to keep their physical identity unique. He proposed to write on this issue. Bharat Bhushan advised him to also think about a story on the migration and displacement in Joshimath and the migration after the New Forest Act.

In the end, Bharat Bhushan advised focusing on only one issue about the refugees, deeply investigating it, and publishing a report. The participants expressed their gratitude to the trainers, and with that, Mr. Bhushan ended the Media Training thanked everyone for their comments and participation in the training workshop.

List of Participants

Annie Philip, *SAN-CDM*
Anup Ojha, *Senior Sub-Editor, The Kathmandu Post, & SAN-CDM*
Arup Kumar Sen, *Member, CRG*
Ayesha Chathurangi, *SAN-CDM*
Barasha Das, *Independent Journalist, & SAWM*
Bharat Bhushan, *Associate Editor, 360info, CRG, & SAN-CDM*
Coreena Enet Soares, *Editor, NewsMeter, & SAWM*
Debashish Chakrabarti, *Professor and Dean, School of Communication, G. D. Goenka University*
Debashree Chakraborty, *Researcher, CRG*
Debasree Sarkar, *Media Officer, CRG*
Devika Pradhan, *Journalist, Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBSCL), & SAN-CDM*
Farhana Ahmed, *CRG-IWM Media Fellow 2023, & District Correspondent, Assam Tribune, & Northeast Now*
Ignatious Joseph, *International Justice (IJM)*
Jayanta Roy Chowdhury, *Regional Bureau Chief, PTI*
Krishna Prasad Pradhan, *Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBSCL), & SAN-CDM*
Lachlan Gusselli, *Commissioning Editor, Asia Pacific, 360info Sydney*
Patricia Mukhim, *Editor, The Shillong Times, & SAWM*
Paula Banerjee, *IDRC Chair, Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, & CRG*
Poulami Chatterjee, *Senior Sub-Editor, ABP*
Rajat Kanti Sur, *Researcher, CRG*
Rajat Roy, *Senior Journalist, & CRG*
Ranabir Samaddar, *Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies, CRG*
Ria Ernunsari, *Senior Commissioning Editor, Asia Pacific, 360info Bandung*
Rituparna Datta, *Researcher, CRG*
Ritwika Mitra, *CRG-IWM Media Fellow 2023*
Riya Singh Rathore, *CRG-IWM Media Fellow 2023, & Editorial Manager, Social Policy Research Foundation (SPRF)*
Roshan Pokharel, *Constitutional Lawyer's Forum Nepal, Media Practitioner, & SAN-CDM*
Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, *Professor, Rabindra Bharati University, & Honorary Director, CRG*
Samata Biswas, *Assistant Professor, The Sanskrit College and University, CRG, & SAN-CDM*
Sangeeta Aparajita Ghosh, *Filmmaker, & SAN-CDM*
Shadab Farooq, *Independent Journalist, & SAN-CDM*
Shahirah Hamid, *Commissioning Editor, Asia Pacific, 360info Kuala Lumpur*
Sharmistha Sarker, *Programme Officer, Goethe-Institut /Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata*
Shatabdi Das, *Researcher, CRG*
Shyamalendu Majumdar, *Secretary, CRG*
Subir Bhaumik, *Senior Journalist, CRG, & SAN-CDM*
Swati Bhattacharjee, *Senior Assistant Editor, ABP, & SAWM*
Tina Kuriakose Jakob, *National Senior Lead, Research, International Justice (IJM)*

CRG Team

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