

Fifth Annual Research & Orientation Workshop in Global Protection of Migrants and Refugees

(Kolkata, 16 November – 21 November 2020)

Concept Note

Migration flows have taken increasing complexity, which indeed is one of the main marks of contemporary time. Refugees, asylum seekers, labour migrants, ecological refugees, stateless groups – all are rolling into one massive and mixed phenomenon signifying population shifts in global geo-political and geo-economic context. In this context, it has become even more important to study labour flows and labour control systems regulated by institutions, infrastructures, processes, and practices. Equally important is to study the new formations of space and time effected by footloose families, transformation of cities, existence of Diasporas, global commodity chains including care chains, and migrants' modes of encountering borders, boundaries, immigration control systems, surveillance systems, interception methods, etc. This situation - marked by (a) massive and mixed flows and (b) transformation of the migration dynamics - puts the old strategies of protection at odds with the evolving scenario. The categories of protection are found of decreasing relevance. The implications cut across legal, national, administrative lines of protection. It becomes worse due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic. People in all over the world not only lose their lives due to the disease, but, also due to massive joblessness, lack of public health facilities, and massive financial crisis.

The current challenges to the global protection system for refugees and migrants along with new protection issues in the light of the UN initiated two global compacts for the protection of refugees and migrants. The states along with different global agencies tried different protection measures to fight against the pandemic. But, the treatments or protections they have taken for the migrants and refugees are questioned from different aspects. Different research organisations and civil society initiatives have pointed out the discrepancies and loopholes of the global and the state-based agencies regarding different protection measures (e.g. public health, law and order etc.). The inequalities related to gender, race, caste and other vulnerabilities have become more prominent and the neo-liberalist agendas of the states get a new dimension during this pandemic crisis. Several discussions have been organised to address these problems. Several books, report and policy papers have been published. Calcutta Research Group (CRG) has also published a book (Borders of an Epidemic) and a policy brief (Burdens of an Epidemic) to address the pertinent questions on global protection regime during the pandemic.

In this background, the Calcutta Research Group in collaboration with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and Institute for Human Sciences Vienna (IWM) will organise a research and orientation workshop and international conference on 'Global Protection on Migrants and Refugees' from 16-21 November 2020 in Kolkata. The orientation programme will have the

larger Asian situation in mind, while the focus will be on South Asia and the neighbouring countries around the region. CRG has the experience of running for twelve years an annual winter workshop on issues of forced migration, racism, and xenophobia. Every year the course had a focal theme (Please see the past programmes section of CRG website for details - <http://www.mcrgh.ac.in/winter.asp>). The key theme for this year's workshop and conference is 'Global Protection on Migrants and Refugees'. It will begin with a 4 day workshop from 16 November 2020 to 20 November 2020 (preceded by three months' online interaction between workshop coordinators and participants), which will be followed by a 1 day plenary conference on the final day on 21 November 2020. The workshop will aim to engage with the new realities of migration as well as various approaches to the theoretical, methodological, and legal challenges to grasp the complex phenomenon of migration. The workshop and the conference will provide a space for debate and exchange between academia and practice, and will aim at stimulating discussion between scholars, legal practitioners, media activists, representatives of what is called the "civil society", and personnel belonging to governments and international humanitarian agencies.

The workshop and conference will revolve around six research themes.

Module A: Global protection of refugees and migrants with emphasis on protection in the time of a pandemic;

Coordinator- *Nasreen Chowdhory, Assistant Professor, University of Delhi.*

Module B: Migrants and the epidemic: Gender, race, and other vulnerabilities;

Coordinator: *Samata Biswas, Assistant Professor, The Sanskrit College and University.*

Module C: Neo-liberalism, migrant labour, and the burden of the epidemic;

Coordinators- *Arup Kumar Sen, Associate Professor, Serampore College, & Iman Mitra, Assistant Professor, Shiv Nadar University.*

Module D: Statelessness with emphasis on de facto statelessness and the rightlessness of sections of population;

Coordinator – *K.M. Parivelan, Associate Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.*

Module E: Legal regimes of protection and the time of the pandemic;

Coordinator- *Oishik Sircar, Associate Professor, Jindal Global Law School.*

Module F: Ethics of care, public health, and the migrants and refugees

Coordinator- *Paula Banerjee, Professor, University of Calcutta.*