

A Report on the Progress of the Project in Last One Year

Reflections:

- In the year under consideration (November, 2013-October, 2014), three consultative meetings were held in Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai. The Delhi meeting was held in February, 2014. In the meeting, Amit Prakash, Ishita Dey, Madhuresh Kumar, and Mithilesh Kumar promised to work on different issues related to migration, urbanization, and social justice. Mithilesh Kumar would work on migrant labour and the reconfiguration of the Delhi Airport area. Amit Prakash would focus on laws, governance, and issues of social justice for migrants in a city with multiple authority structure and unclarified legal situation regarding urban property, and analyze the logic of urban planning. Ishita Dey would chronicle the migrant women workers' movements in Delhi and the way care economy had emerged as a critical component of modern urban structure. Madhuresh Kumar would write on the movements and controversies around removal and relocation of industries, the mohalla structure, migrants' hamlets, the emerging new town, and the rights issue involved in all these. He would also chronicle some narratives of Bihari migrants in Delhi. It was also decided that these four studies would result in a book to be part of a three volume series on the theme dealing with studies on Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata. The work would be for 2 years. Each of the researchers from Delhi was asked to send a 1000-word abstract on respective areas within March 15 on the basis of which the work would commence.
- The researchers from Mumbai and Kolkata were also asked to send their respective abstracts within March 15. All the proposals arrived in time.
- A consultative meeting was held in Kolkata on March 19 to discuss the objective and plan of the project with respect to the individual proposals. The general thematic and conceptual outline of the project was also held under scrutiny. The attendees of the meeting were Ranabir Samaddar, Debarati Bagchi, and Iman Mitra of CRG, Atig Ghosh of Viswabharati University, Bishnu Mohapatra of Azim Premji University, Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay of Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, Mahalaya Chatterjee of Centre for Urban Economic Studies, University of Calcutta, and V. Ramaswami.
- A resolution was taken for organizing the first workshop under the project in Kolkata. It was decided that the workshop would take place in July or August in this year. The resolution was followed by a discussion of the concept note of the project, which brought into light quite a few interesting points including the amorphous and often misconstrued notion of the “migrant worker,” the complicity of the procedures of urban planning in the treatment of migrant workers in the city, and the strategies of and need for implementation of social justice for the rural-to-urban migrants.
- The meeting ended with a review of some of the proposals from Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai. The proposals seemed to address an array of issues, concerns, and areas of research which were immensely topical and innovative. They included studies of the service villages in the vicinity of Delhi, the legal-administrative structure of city governance, the role of the migrants in development of the city space, and implementation of social justice mired in the

dualities of urbanization and migration practices. The consensus was that it would be crucial for these studies to re-interrogate and redefine the category of “migrant worker” itself implicated in the histories of town planning and imagination of the city space as a problematic in contemporary India.

- Iman Mitra, Research and Programme Associate at CRG, attended and presented a paper at the National Seminar on Migration, Poverty, and Social Justice at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai (TISS) on March 24 and 25. His presentation (co-authored with Debarati Bagchi, Research Assistant at CRG) was based on the abstract and work plan for the Kolkata segment of the project. The plan for the Kolkata segment would focus on interlinks between city planning and migration practices in the last twenty years in Kolkata in the background of development of new townships and both shrinkage and proliferation of various work opportunities. A special emphasis in this segment would be on questions of refugee influx and rehabilitation after the Independence and women and children trafficking in recent times. The focus would remain on interrogating and disintegrating the category of migrant worker in terms of various social, political, and cultural indices like caste, gender, religion, age, place of origin, and language. Amit Prakash, Professor, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, attended this seminar and gave keynote address in the session titled ‘Coping and Agency: Migrant Experience in Urban Spaces.’ Sudeep Basu, Assistant Professor, Centre for Studies in Social Management, Central University of Gujarat and a member of the Calcutta Research Group also presented a paper titled ‘Diasporic Remittances, Inequality and Social Transformation in Rural Gujarat.’
- The Mumbai meeting was held on March 23. The attendees were Ranabir Samaddar and Iman Mitra of CRG and Manish Jha, Pushpendra Singh, Ritambhara Hebbar, Mouleshri Vyas, and Simpreet Singh of TISS. It was pointed out in the meeting that there was a need to locate the specificity of the rural migrant among the urban poor (perhaps along the line of “belongingness” and identity formation of the “authentic” city dwellers).
- The researchers from Mumbai presented their ideas which they would like to pursue. Manish Jha and Pushpendra Singh’s proposal focused on the apparently invisible yet numerically significant homeless migrants in Mumbai who faced apathetic treatment from the state and hostility from various citizens’ groups clamoring for rights over public spaces like the pavements, walkways, and parks. Ritambhara Hebbar’s proposal dealt with the phenomenon of private security services in Mumbai and the employment of migrant workers therein. Mouleshri Vyas’ proposal concentrated on the security guards hired by the housing complexes in Mumbai and their foothold in the city in terms of their access to amenities, services, and entitlements, and their interactions with various employment and support networks. Simpreet Singh was also asked to initiate a study on contemporary urban policies in Mumbai and their impact on the living and working conditions of the migrant labor force. The meeting ended with a resolution to organize a two-day workshop in Kolkata in August where the respective researchers from Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata would present long abstracts of their individual studies.

- The proposed workshop was finally held in Kolkata on August 1 and 2, 2014. In the workshop, all participants presented their long abstracts which were discussed by eminent academics and social activists from all over India. A more detailed report of this workshop with a list of participants is given in the next segment. Also a public lecture was held in Kolkata on July 31, 2014, on the issues of urbanity and housing rights activism in Mumbai. It was given by Simpreet Singh, himself a housing rights activist and a participant in this project.
- Though it took place in November, 2014, another consultative meeting between the participants of the project needs to be reported for its importance in the progress of the project. Ranabir Samaddar and Iman Mitra visited Patna on November 11 to attend the inauguration of a book titled 'Traversing Bihar: The Politics of Development and Social Justice' (Orient Blackswan, 2014). The book is an anthology of essays exploring the complex dynamics of developmental activities and programmes of social justice in contemporary Bihar. It is edited by Manish Jha and Pushpendra, the two participants of the project from Mumbai and it was inaugurated by Ranabir Samaddar, the project coordinator and Director of CRG. On this occasion, a discussion of the book was organized at the A. N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna where Samaddar gave the keynote address. In many ways, this book resonates with the ongoing project on urban poverty and migration as many of the essays in the book have tried to link the two issues with a broader politics of governance, rights-based mobilization, and demands for social justice.
- A meeting was held among Samaddar, Mitra, Jha and Pushpendra on the same day to discuss the prospect of the research on migration from the flood-prone region of Bihar to the urban centres of the country. Four districts in the Kosi region of the state were chosen as the sites of the study which would track the journey and work experiences of the migrant workers on the move to the big metropolises. This study, as it became apparent from the discussion, would not only shed new light on the routes and networks of migration and contractual job seeking, but also contribute to the research on development and social justice in one of the most 'underdeveloped' regions in India.
- A range of concerns and issues have seemed to emerge from the consultative and advisory meetings and the abstracts presented by the respective researchers: (a) there is a strong need to critically engage with the existing literature on migration and urbanization in India and interrogate thoroughly the category of migrant worker in the context of changing modalities of urbanization in the last couple of decades; (b) the concrete reality of migration practices needs to be explored in detail through close ethnographic studies, especially when there is an urgency to disintegrate the category of the migrant in terms of different socio-political markers; (c) the biggest challenge for this project will be to situate the migrant worker among the urban poor and devise a conceptual framework which will offer a general idea about their exclusivity in relation to the struggles for livelihood and identity amidst the harsh and unsympathetic environment of urbanity in India. We may hope that this reorientation of the concept of migrant worker will allow us to look at the associated issues of sustainability of rights and guarantee of social justice from a fresh and innovative perspective.

Activities/Issues Addressed in Proposal:

- Mapping the history of migration from rural and semi-rural areas to these select cities in the last twenty years.
- Mapping the major work forms and existence forms of these migrants or migrant communities.
- Documenting major cases of violence, xenophobic attacks, and unequal treatment involving the migrants in these select cities (with special attention to gender, caste, and location).
- Documenting and evaluating the urban renewal plans in these cities in the last twenty years and trace their impact on relative use of urban spaces by different groups.
- A critical assessment of protection services for migrant labor in these cities along with relevant policies and Acts.
- A review of the relevant relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement policies in the cities in the wake of riots and natural disasters.
- Reviewing the nature of the urban regional plans around these megalopolises (such as the National Capital Region Plan) in the perspective of the need to establish balance between the city and the rural hinterland.
- Comparing these findings and experiences of four big cities and a mid-size town.
- Preparing policy recommendations on the basis of these investigations, mapping exercises and a comparative study of the findings, bringing these recommendations to the attention of media, urban planners, and elders of the corporations or municipalities of these cities, and popularizing them.
- Finally theorizing the lessons of the study in terms of (a) the unequal urbanization structure of the country; (b) comparing lessons from China and South Africa with the Indian lessons in managing the floating populations in the cities who comprise a large section of the urban poor through policies and measures; (c) and drawing general observations from the angle of social justice.

Activities/Issues Addressed:

➤ *Issues Addressed:*

- The mapping of migration histories from rural to urban areas is being carried out by all the researchers in their various capacities in three big cities – Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata – and one medium size town (Siliguri). The researchers are studying migrant settlements and work practices in different areas in these cities including the vicinity of the core urban areas where the new development and construction activities are taking place.
- Similarly, the ongoing research activities are focusing on a range of work profiles with special emphasis on the caste and gender configurations in the workforce. In case of Delhi, the care

industry seems to flourish in the vicinity of the city leading to formation of migration settlements around the core urban areas. One of the studies focuses on the workers in various unorganized sectors like those who provide various services to the airports and airlines. Likewise in Kolkata, the tannery workers, workers in the waste management sector, or the rickshaw-pullers tend to belong to particular caste or language communities who feature prominently in the respective research works. In Mumbai also, the security guards or the homeless people seem to come from particular regions in the country and seek their livelihood through various networks based on caste, kinship, and other relationships.

- The instances of violence inflicted on the migrant workers in the city by the locals or cronies of political parties and interest groups are being chronicled in these works.
- The individual researches review the urban renewal plans and policies of urbanization adopted by the governments in the last couple of decades. The interconnection between the instances of violence and the conception of these plans are also being studied to etch out the structural or endemic nature of this violence.
- Associated with the issues of urban planning are the questions of relief and rehabilitation. The proposed studies focus on the implementation of these policies in the context of securing social justice for the migrant population.
- Amit Prakash (Delhi), Iman Mitra (Kolkata), and Simpreet Singh (Mumbai) are in particular reviewing the policies of urbanization, housing, and urban land resettlement in their respective research works.
- A complete review of the mechanisms of social justice will be available at the end of the project. A comparison with the situations in China and South Africa will also be possible once the researchers complete their respective studies.

➤ *Activities Performed:*

- Under the project, the First Researchers' Workshop was organized on August 1 and 2, 2014, in Kolkata.
- The participants in the workshop came from various parts of the country and outside and can be divided into two groups – researchers and discussants/commentators. The names of the researchers are: (1) **Project Coordinator:** Ranabir Samaddar (Director, Calcutta Research Group); (2) **Delhi:** Ishita Dey (Doctoral Student, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics); Amit Prakash (Professor, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University); Madhuresh Kumar (Independent Researcher and Activist, National Alliance of People's Movements); and Mithilesh Kumar (Doctoral Fellow, University of Western Sydney); (3) **Kolkata:** Sabir Ahmed (Independent Researcher and Activist); Debarati Bagchi (Researcher, Calcutta Research Group); and Samir Kumar Das (Professor, Department of Political Science, and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Calcutta); Iman Kumar Mitra (Researcher, Calcutta Research Group); and Kaustubh Mani Sengupta (Transnational Research Group Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University); (4) **Mumbai:** Mahuya Bandyopadhyay (Associate Professor,

School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai); Manish Kumar Jha (Professor, Centre for Community Organisation and development Practice, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai); Pushpendra (Professor, Centre for Community Organisation and development Practice, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai); and Mouleshri Vyas (Professor, Centre for Community Organisation and development Practice, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai). The names of the discussants were: Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay (Assistant Professor, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta); Paula Banerjee (Associate Professor, Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Calcutta and President, Calcutta Research Group); Swapna Banerjee-Guha (Professor, Development Studies, School of Social Sciences, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai); Anannya Bhattacharjee (President, Garment and Allied Workers' Union); Dyutish Chakrabarty (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, North Bengal University); Himadri Chatterjee (Doctoral Fellow, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University); Mahalaya Chatterjee (Associate Professor, Centre for Urban Economic Studies, University of Calcutta); Samir Kumar Das (Professor, Department of Political Science, and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Calcutta); Anita Patil-Deshmukh (Executive Director, Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action & Research [PUKAR]); Swati Ghosh (Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Rabindra Bharati University); Mithilesh Kumar (Doctoral Fellow, University of Western Sydney); Prabhu Mohapatra (Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Delhi); and Soumen Nag (Independent Researcher and Activist).

- The structure of the workshop was different from the one usually followed in most workshops and conferences. The abstracts were set for discussion over a number of sessions keeping in mind the thematic consistency and comparability of the research proposals. To lengthen the time of discussion and to encourage maximum intervention from the audience, every session was initiated by a presentation by the discussants. The discussion of each abstract was followed by questions and suggestions from the audience and responses from the author. To ensure the availability of all the abstracts to every member in the audience, soft copies were circulated beforehand. Hard copies of the abstracts were also made available in the beginning of the workshop.
- The papers presented on Day 1 (August 1, 2014) included: 'The Capital City: Discursive Dissonance in Law and Policy' (Amit Prakash); 'Urban Planning, Settlement Practices, and Issues of Justice in Contemporary Kolkata' (Iman Mitra); 'Taking Refuge in the City: Migrant Population and Urban Management in Post-Partition Calcutta' (Kaustubh Mani Sengupta); 'Logistical Labour and the Airport City' (Mithilesh Kumar); 'Competing Dreams: Delhi and its Migrants' (Madhuresh Kumar).
- The papers presented on Day 2 (August 2, 2014) included: 'A Transit Town: Siliguri in the Global Era' (Samir Kumar Das); 'On the Move: An Ethnographic Account of Rural Migrants' Journey from Village to City' (Pushpendra Singh and Manish Jha); 'Migrant Workers and Informality in Contemporary Kolkata' (Iman Mitra); 'Women and Children Migrants: A Study of the Urban Workforce in Kolkata' (Debarati Bagchi with help from

Sabir Ahmed); 'Homeless Migrants in Mumbai: Life and Labour in Urban Space.' (Pushpendra Singh and Manish Jha); 'The Emergence of the Migrant as a Problem Figure in Contemporary Mumbai: Chronicles of Violence and Issues of Justice.' (Simpreet Singh); 'Dangerous Labour: Age and Precarious Work Practices in Mumbai City' (Mouleshri Vyas); 'Migrants, Vigilantes and Violence: The Making of New Urban Spaces in Mumbai' (Mahuya Bandyopadhyay and Ritambhara Hebbar).

- Few of the questions and concerns that emerged from the presentations and the ensuing discussions were:
 - a. *Who is a migrant?* Is the definition a policy question? What is the 'agent' we are studying? Is the city a distinct spatial entity or agglomerate comprised by the migrants who constitute its labor base and diversity the demographics of its population?
 - b. *Borders and boundary-making exercises that are carried out within the city.* How are different spaces made, remade, and recreated into different, fluid zones within the city?
 - c. *The questions of subject, subjectivity, subjectification.* Subjectivity can be present without a subject. Should one desubjectify the subject in order to talk about subjectivity? Researchers are encouraged to define these phenomena – the process by which a subject becomes a 'subject,' and the linkages to subjugation and violence.
 - d. *Where does one situate 'migrant labor' within a general theory of labor?* Migrant labor's composition has to be broken down in order to know the elements that go into making that abstraction. Moreover, there are different social constituencies that make up the 'urban' poor. Has the disaggregation of the urban poor into its different social constituencies adequately captured the differences in the urban poor experience?
 - e. *The securitization of urban spaces.* Researchers ought to include a study of international protocols given their discussion of phenomena in the globalizing world.
 - f. *Political economy of migration and social justice.* Under this project, political economy plays a crucial role in explaining certain critical connections: (1) the urban-rural connection: in what ways rural migrants are connected or not connected, or connected, yet remain unhinged, to urban spaces; (2) the connection of urban political economy with the national political economy: the binary of cities and the rural hinterland is no longer relevant; now cities have come to constitute a continuous national space with assertions of a national political economy; and (3) the urban-global connection: there are different routes that cities take towards globalization (for example, Mumbai's insertion into the global economy is different from that of Delhi or Kolkata).
 - g. *Issues of justice, claim-making, agenda setting.* What is a just city? How do we conceptualize the 'just' city and, from there, the right to it?
- A detailed report of this workshop is available in the website of Calcutta Research Group (http://www.mcrg.ac.in/Rural_Migrants/Rural_Migrants_Report.asp). Though the report is prepared by the researchers at CRG, it is based on valuable reflections and contributions by all the participants and discussants at the workshop.
- The Researchers' Workshop was preceded by a Public Lecture by Simpreet Singh on July 31, 2014. The Lecture was held at the Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta.

The title of the lecture was 'Politics of the Civil Society and Civility of the Political Society.' For the lecture, he drew upon his experiences as an activist with a housing rights movement in Mumbai to critically engage with the idea of civil and political societies. He wanted to bring forth the point that the civil society is not that civil as Partha Chatterjee wants us to believe. Rather it engages with a politics that is informed by its own self interests and excludes and violates the vast majority of the other i.e. the urban toiling masses, which, according to Chatterjee, constitutes the political society. The experience of Mumbai which also rings true for other cities also informs us that the city dwellers can be understood as constituting different classes and interests and all engaging into politics to make claim to the city and in contestation with the other. Politics thus is not the exclusive domain of one particular group or section. Rather, the elite and the privileged (that constitute the civil society) are able to have their say in the city many a time, although have to face firm resistance and contestation by the urban poor. The lecture was attended by more than hundred people including the students of the university.

Indicators of Success Identified in Proposal:

- Extensive research on three big cities in India (Kolkata, Delhi, and Mumbai)
- Study of one fast growing medium sized town, Siliguri (rich in fast cash, smuggling, heavy presence of rural migrants, and standing on the cross roads of two states, West Bengal and Bihar, and three countries, India, Nepal, and Bhutan).
- Coverage of at least one flood prone area (either the Kosi belt in North Bihar or the Ganga-Padma belt in central Bengal) from where affected population groups migrate to the cities and form a bulk of the urban poor there.
- Finally, we would also have to keep in mind the comparative pictures in South Africa and China, and the lessons of the related public policies these countries have adopted. However, the comparative dimension will not be a fundamental part of this enquiry.

Actual Results to date:

- Iman Mitra and Debarati Bagchi have initiated research for the Kolkata segment. Amit Prakash, Ishita Dey, Madhuresh Kumar, and Mithilesh Kumar have started their own research for the Delhi segment. Manish Jha, Pushpendra Singh, Ritambhara Hebbar, Mouleshri Vyas, and Simpreet Singh are working on the Mumbai segment.
- Samir Kumar Das has started working on the small town segment (Siliguri).
- Pushpendra and Manish Jha have initiated a study of the journey and work experiences of the migrants from the Kosi region of Bihar. This region is notorious for frequency of floods and other natural disasters which displace thousands of people every year and force them to migrate to the big cities in search of work.

Expected Goals to be Achieved:

- To know the nature of the violence on urban poor, their vulnerability and precariousness and bring to light the varying nature of this precarity according to gender, caste, age, place of origin and destination, especially in context of the nature of resource transfer that makes the process of migration even more structurally violent.
- Foreground the issue of social justice in the field of public policy on urban planning, urban rights discourse and migration.
- Publication of research papers based on the findings of different researchers.
- Strengthening the network of concerned academics, young researchers and interlocutors, urban rights and migrant rights activists and concerned organizations through dialogues, public forums and public lectures.
- Strengthening the CRG website as an important tool for discussion, archiving and interaction.
- Suggesting effective policy interventions through the research work.

Goals Achieved to Date:

- In the proposed studies to be carried out by the researchers in Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi, the question of vulnerability and precariousness of the migrant workers is addressed from various perspectives including issues of crime and violence in the context of human trafficking and specific forms of work processes like sex work or domestic labour. Also the varying forms of structural violence internal to the very process of resource transfer from the rural areas to the city will be duly under study, as one of the objectives of the project is to disentangle the category of migrant worker in terms of various socio-political indices like caste, gender, and religion. In case of Delhi and Mumbai, for example, the question of vulnerability of the migrant workers at the face of demands for cleansing of the city by the citizen's groups is being explored in the ongoing research activities. The question of physical violence and the increasing insecurity and discomfort associated with the presence of the so-called "outsiders" to the city will also appear in the respective research works in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Delhi.
- The category of migrant worker is being explored from various legal and policy perspectives in all the proposed works. The interconnections between urban planning and the perception of the migrants as part of the urban poor remain one of the most crucial concerns for most of the proposed works. It is to be seen how the issue of social justice is implicated in the instances of carrying out these planning initiatives and whether they are being addressed with proper care and sincerity at all.
- From the very outset, the project has been designed as a collaborative endeavour between researchers from various fields working in three different cities. Also, we have proceeded with the work plan in consultation with academics and researchers working on related areas.

The consultative meetings were an outcome of such network building and consultative efforts. For our ethnographic research we have conceived a dialogue-based participatory framework involving NGO activists from various organisations and members from the communities of informal workers and homeless population of the city.

- On the CRG website, a page has been launched for the project with details of research plans and proposed works. The uploaded materials include: (1) concept note of the project; (2) details of the researchers and their respective research themes; and (3) a detailed report of the workshop. The web page will be regularly updated in accordance with the progress of research.