

MAHANIRBAN CALCUTTA RESEARCH GROUP

Annual Report for 2006-2007

- 1. Programmes**
- 2. Publications, Seminars, and Public Lectures**
- 3. Website**
- 4. Members of the staff**
- 5. Assets**
- 6. Network, partners, and collaboration**
- 7. Membership**
- 8. Tasks for 2007-2008**

1. Programmes of the CRG:

Winter Course on Forced Migration: The Fourth Winter Course on Forced Migration concluded in December 2006. In terms of quality of participation this was possibly the best. The participants were from the countries of South Asia; besides that there were participants from Burma, Switzerland, Finland, and Nigeria. Participants from two National Human Rights Commissions also came. Developing the strong features of the previous years' courses this year's course had more workshops and assignments. Two of the most distinctive features of the course was the creative assignment segment and the introduction of the credit system for the course. Other improvements were in the area of interaction during distance education, quality writings, production of various reports, and group work. On the basis of the direction of the Advisory Committee that the course should be now treated as a full-fledged programme covering the entire year, other features were added. These other aspects of the programme, distinctive in their own right, were (a) public lectures; (b) a short course held in Jamia Milia Islamia University, Delhi; (c) research output, eventually published in Refugee Watch or as research papers in Policies and Practices Series, or Refugee Watch online; and (d) exchange visits between Indian and Finnish scholars and (e) research writings by the visiting fellows of the exchange programme. The exchange visits were successful and strengthened the bond between the participants. Among the visiting participants one Ksenia Glebova was enthused to request CRG to let her serve as an Honorary Programme Associate for the Fifth Annual Winter Course. The entire report of the Winter Course and all other relevant documents are available on the CRG website and the course report has been sent to all members of the Society. A copy is attached here as **Annexure – I**. Dr. Paula Banerjee, Coordinator of the Course, handled all the activities smoothly and efficiently with the help of Ms. Shreyashi Chaudhuri, the Programme associate. The programme is supported by the Government of Finland, UNHCR and the Brookings Institution.

1.2 Research and Advocacy Programme on the IDPs: The Brookings Institution funds the IDP Programme of CRG. Conceived in the year 2002 CRG has been actively involved in various campaigns related to IDPs. In the year under review the CRG in collaboration with the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) organised a three-day workshop on the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in India's Northeast at Hotel Japfu in Kohima, Nagaland during August 24-26, 2006. The CRG website carries detailed report on the workshop. This was the first of its kind in Kohima and held in partnership with NPMHR it strengthened CRG's relation with Naga civil society. In this period CRG also brought out the report of the the "Voices of the IDPs in Camps" South Asia – a research done in collaboration with the Brookings

Institution, USA. Conceived in a small South Asian meeting held in Bangkok in March 2005 the project began in August 2005. The details of the report are available on CRG website; also printed copies have been sent to all the society members. The newspapers, which carried Voices report are: *The Telegraph*, Guwahati Edition, 24 February 2007; *The Kathmandu Post*, Kathmandu, 24 January and 25 February 2007, *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, 24 February 2007, *The Sentinel*, Guwahati 24 February 2007, *The Statesman* (All editions), 8 January 2007; *Prothom Alo* (Bengali Language Daily) Dhaka, 13 August 2006, *Kantipur* (Nepali Language Daily), Kathmandu, 25 February 2007. In March 2007, CRG published a status report on Displacement in Assam & Manipur authored by Monirul Hussain and Pradip Phanjouban. This has been published as a paper, *Policies and Practices –12*. For details all these please visit to the website –www.mcrg.ac.in. CRG in collaboration with other institutions and the NHRC plans to hold this year three workshops in Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, and Calcutta on the Situation of IDPs in India. Plus, it will complete a critique of the National R&R policy, and publish an investigative report on Chattisgarh Unrest and Displacement. Besides it has held public lectures in Delhi (by Jeevan Thiagarajah on Civil War and Continued Internal Displacement in Sri Lanka), Dhaka (Ranabir Samaddar and Paula Banerjee on IDPs in South Asia) Guwahati (Ranabir Samaddar, Monirul Hussain, and Sanjay Borbora (Voices of the IDPs), and Kathmandu (Vopices of the IDPs). It has hosted trainee fellows also in the institute. Dr. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury with the help of Dr. Banerjee (particularly on the “Voices” project and Dr. Samir K. Das on Kohima workshop) has coordinated the programme. The report on Voices has been sent to all. This is attached as **Annexure II**. Rest of the details including the Kohima Workshop report can be found on the CRG website.

1.3 Research and Dialogue Programme on Social Justice in India: Calcutta Research Group (CRG) with the support of Ford Foundation, has undertaken a multi-linear, multi-dimensional and an intense engagement with the concept and realities of ‘Social Justice’. In this perspective, a series of ethnographic studies, dialogues and lectures are being undertaken to investigate and analyse the actually existing notions of justice among various sections of population and to find out if any broad idea of Social Justice emerges from these inquiries. The programme in the First year had three segments – (a) research (b) public lectures (c) dialogues. The research segment contains three types of research – historical, ethnographic, and legal-analytic. The research has produced a series of draft reports on justice (16 in all), which will be published in form of a series of volumes on ‘Social Justice’. Out of these 19 research papers, CRG has already received 16, and the rest 3 will reach CRG soon. These papers are on:

- Bharat Bhusan: Indexing Social Justice in India - A Story of Commissions, Reports, and Popular Responses
- Peter de Souza: A study which will take into account (a) the structure of the concept of social justice and its components, (b) the question of recovery of the notion/s of social justice in the existential world of the dalits and other similar segments of population, (c) the issue of agency in the claims for justice, and (d) an examination of the institutional space opened up by several state reforms, and administrative measures.
- Ashok Agrwaal: The Lessons from Jurisprudence on Social Justice
- Manish Jha: The Intertwined Destinies of Violence and Social Justice - A Story of Some Villages in Bihar
- Kumar Suresh: The Emerging Institutional Space for Dalit Activism for Justice - A Case of Some Villages in Bihar
- Paula Banerjee: AIDS, Marginalities and Social Justice in India
- Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury: Case for Transitional Justice in India

- Bijaya Bohidar: Interrelated Dynamics of Globalization, Development, and the Requirements of Local Justice (in Orissa); Amrita Patel has written the second section on the above theme drawing attention to the gender related dimensions of this relation;
- Sanjay Chaturvedi: State of Environmental Justice in India'
- Kumar Rana: Social Justice Issues in Jhargram Block (West Medinipur)
- Amites Mukhopadhyay: Social Justice Issues in the Sunderbans (West Bengal)
- Ratan Khasnabis: Origins, subsequent development and current state of the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) in the perspective of social justice
- Badri Narayan: Dalit Perceptions of Justice, which will take into account issues of social justice in particular. It will be an ethnographic account within an overall historical framework.
- Oishik Sircar: The Fallacy of Equality: 'Anti-Citizens', Sexual Justice and the Law in India
- Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty: Social Justice Issues in the Tea Gardens of North Bengal; Roshan Rai has worked in collaboration with Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty on the same theme.
- Amit Prakash: Institutional dynamics of social justice for the indigenous people in India
- Samir Kumar Das: Study of Social Justice in the Constitutional Mirror.

Public Lectures: During the last year, five public lectures took place, under the Social Justice programme. The details of these lectures are as follows:

1. Ranabir Samaddar, Director, Calcutta Research Group, "The Final Immunity of Law", 02 May 2006. The lecture was held in Kolkata.
2. Sanjay Chaturvedi, Coordinator, Centre for the Study of Geopolitics and Department of Political Science, Punjab University, Chandigarh, " Environmental Justice", 18 July 2006. This lecture took place at CRG Seminar room.
3. Ranabir Samaddar, the Director of CRG, and Father George Thadathil, "Unsettled Populations: Evolving discourses on Social Justice in India" in Loreto College, Darjeeling, 11 December, 2006.
4. Rajeev Bhargava, Professor of Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. 'How should we Respond to the Cultural Injustices of Colonialism', 13 March 2007.
5. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Professor of Political Science, Rabindra Bharati University, "The Scope of Transitional Justice in India", 13 March, 2007. The above two lectures took place in the South and South East Asian Studies Department, Calcutta University.

Dialogues: CRG carried out a series of three dialogues on justice in 2006 where about seventy people took part from diverse backgrounds. These dialogues have helped CRG in gaining knowledge about various repositories of archival material on justice, such as popular tracts, manifestos, legal materials, other popular writings, political declarations, and reportages that tell us lot about various perceptions on justice. The first dialogue was held in Kolkata on 5 June 2006 on the theme of "Conditions of Social Justice in India". The second dialogue was "An inquiry into the Conditions of Social Justice in India" and was held in Darjeeling, on 26-28 June 2006. The third dialogue was held in collaboration with the Lok Niti programme of CSDS, Delhi. It summarized the findings of the previous two dialogues held at Kolkata and Darjeeling. The report on the three dialogues was published in March (**Annexure III**), and was released and discussed in Delhi, CSDS, on 18 April 2007. Subsequently there have been other presentations and peer group evaluation meetings on the research papers. Dr. Samir K. Das coordinated the programme with the help of Sanam Roohi in the year under review. Subsequently Dr. Paula Banerjee is

coordinating the programme. Sanam Roohi, the programme associate, has been managing the details of the programme successfully and to everyone's satisfaction.

1.4 Research and Advocacy on “Regional Initiative of the Rights to Sustainable Livelihood and the Enabling of Social and Political Participation”: This collaborative South Asian Project assisted and coordinated by the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Sri Lanka continues. The main part has been completed in 2005 (Report on this programme is available from the last year Annual Report – 2005-6). CRG has continued with the last phase of the project, ‘Transfer of Customised Knowledge for Civic Action’. In the year under review we concentrated our effort mainly on national Dissemination of policy review of existing policies and guidelines of the governments for sustainable livelihood and social and political participation of the vulnerable groups across South Asia in the context of globalisation. This part is a follow up to the critical policy study conducted in the first phase of the programme. Besides, we concentrated on the design and development of the Education Programme (Toolkit) for teaching and training that will define a regional content including the definition of the SAARC Social charter, interpretation of rights prescribed and the antecedents found in international instruments, methodology for analysis of the rights and their status in countries including advocacy strategies, globalisation and the question of sustainability of rights and most importantly, the transfer of knowledge which empower groups and people to define, plan and forge their development. The course will therefore be customised in nature according to the specific needs of countries in South Asia in form of a toolkit. The toolkit was given a final shape. It was put to test of application in the educational workshop organised by CRG in association with PANOS South Asia in Guwahati, April 2006 under the following heads: Concept note, Critical Themes, Assignments and Interactions, and Results. Briefly the contents were: Rethinking Foundational concepts of Rights and Justice; Setting the Agenda of Rights and Justice in the Age of Globalisation; Policies and Practices Relating to Development and Justice: Governmental mode or Dialogic Mode; Administration and Delivery of Justice; Development Strategies and Alternatives: People's Movements and Struggles; Conflicts, Peace and Justice: The Case of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). The detailed report along with the resolution is available on the CRG website. It will be now printed as well as distributed widely in form of CDs.

1.5 Research on Rehabilitation of Women Affected by Erosion and Flood in West Bengal: The project, sanctioned by the National Commission for Women, New Delhi, was completed last year. Ms. Krishna Banerjee is coordinating this project under the guidance of the Project in-charge Dr. Paula Banerjee. An interim report was sent to the National Commission for Women. The final report was prepared duly and has been published. (**Annexure IV**). However we have not been able to circulate the report properly, and possibly we should think of its translation in Bengali. Colleagues involved in the study can be consulted further.

1.6 Collaborative Research: The CRG as reported last year had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the International College de Philosophy, Paris, for a joint research and seminar programme on mutually agreed upon issues. As part of the MoU the first conference was held in Paris on 2-4 November 2006 on the theme of “Terror, Histories, Societies, and Philosophies”. Several other institutions also collaborated in holding the conference. CRG website has link to the conference schedule and papers. The report of the conference is available on the website. Now, Rada Ivekovic (on behalf of the CIPh) and Samir K. Das (on behalf of CRG) are jointly in charge of editing the proceedings towards publication of a volume. Besides, the publication of a CRG–MSH volume based on the papers of the conference, “Conflicts, Law and Constitutionalism” jointly hosted by the MSH Paris and CRG in 2005 (as reported in last year's AR) is in progress. This year several European institutions have approached CRG to become partners in proposals of joint research programmes. CRG has accepted them. However

we still do not know of their eventual outcome. Also CRG members have been invited to teach in Finland – here too we await the finalisation of the discussions.

2. Publications and Public Lectures

2.1 Research Paper Series (Policies and Practices):

- Flags and Rights/ Ranabir Samaddar (Policies and Practices No. 11)
- A Status Report on Displacement in Assam and Manipur /Monirul Hussain & Pradip Phanjoubam (Policies and Practices No. 12)

2.2 Journal: *Refugee Watch*: No. 28, No. 29

All these publications have been sent to interested readers and society members. Copies of these enclosed herewith (**Annexure V**)

2.3 Joint publications with McGill University (Women's Studies, Research, and Training Centre), Montrea, Canada and EURAC (Bolzano, Italy) have been also planned in this period. CRG has also planned with the Anthem Press a series on critical thinking. Under the series Dr. Paula Banerjee and Dr. Samir K. Das will jointly publish an edited volume based on the 2005 conference on "What is Autonomy?" Ranabir Samaddar has published the first volume under the series, titled, *The Materiality of Politics*.

2.4 Public Lectures and Staff seminars:

- Shreyashi Chaudhuri, Research Scholar, Department of South and South East Asian Studies and Programme Associate, Calcutta Research Group, "Trafficking of women in India, Nepal & Bangladesh, 05 April, 2006
- Ranabir Samaddar, Director, Calcutta Research Group, "The Final Immunity of Law", 02 May, 2006;
- Jyrki Kakonen, *Professor*, Tampere University, Finland, visited the office of the Calcutta Research Group and discussed possibilities of cooperation between the University of Tampere and the CRG; he also addressed gatherings in Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies and Department of South & Southeast Asian Studies, University of Calcutta, respectively on the themes of "Environmental Issues in European Politics" and "Role of European Union in Asia".14 June, 2006; Sanjay Chaturvedi Coordinator, Centre for the Study of Geopolitics and Department of Political Science, Punjab University, Chandigarh, "Environmental Justice", 18 July, 2006;
- Jeevan Thiagarajah, Executive Director, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Colombo, "War and Continuing Displacements in Sri Lanka", 21 August, 2006;
- Ram Niwas Mirdha, *President Indian Society of International Law*, On International Humanitarian Law on the occasion of the Hindi release of the UN Guiding Principles for the Internally Displaced Persons, 21 August 2006;
- A Delegation of Burmese Women visited the MCRG and discussed in details their experiences and issues relating to Forced Migration and Legal Protection, 11 September, 2006;
- Flavia Agnes, Women's Rights Lawyer, Majlis, Mumbai ," The Bar Dancer and the Trafficked Migrant Globalization and Subaltern Existence", 1 December, 2006
- Hans-Joachim Heintze, Senior Researcher, Ruhr-University Bochum, "International Legal Regime for Refugee Protection", 13 December, 2006;

- Hameeda Hossain, Director, Ain O Shalish Kendra, Dhaka," Forced Migration and Trafficking of Labour-Migrant Women Workers of Bangladesh", 15 December, 2006
- Paula Banerjee, Senior Researcher, Calcutta Research Group, Department of South-East Asian Studies, Calcutta University," Refugee Women and the Nation State: A Response to Hannah Arendt", 21 February, 2007;
- Sonia Dayan Herzbrun, Professor of Sociology, University of Paris VII, "Permanent Exile of the Palestinians", 26 February, 2007;
- Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Professor of Political Science, Rabindra Bharati University," The Scope of Transitional Justice in India", 13 March, 2007;
- Rajeev Bhargava, Professor of Centre for the Study of Developing Societies," How should we Respond to the Cultural Injustices of Colonialism", 13 March, 2007

3. Website:

3.1 Updating: As reported last year, one of the most notable features of the CRG is its website and our information dissemination structure. The website was designed indigenously after several experiments and now it is recognized as an exhaustive database of CRG activities. The website has data information on all its research, conferences, dialogues, publications and orientation and training programmes. Currently Samaresh Guchait is looking after the website and updates the website. The website has proved significant as the interactive site in the distance education phase of the Winter Curse.

3.2 The website contains the complete archives of all issues of Refugee Watch and has a special section called 'Refugee Watch Online'. For regular updating, addition (for instance, photo archive, documents archive), improvement, etc. we need more cooperation and initiative from our staff and society members. Like wise the online version of RW can be improved in a large way. There has been however some improvement in this case, largely due to the efforts of the three programme associates, Ksenia Glebova, Sanam Roohi, and Shreyashi Chaudhury.

3.3 The website is maintained by the fund available from the grant from the Ford Foundation. Members may kindly advise on this significant aspect of CRG's activities.

4. Office Staff

4.1 Academic: In the period under review we had on roll three senior researchers and three programme associates. About new researchers:

4.2 Sanam Roohi: She was selected and appointed to the post of Programme Associate to work for the Social Justice project. She is handling all relevant work including research and administrative connected with this project. She has also presented a seminar at CRG in April 2007. Ksenia Glebova: She was one of the participants of the last Winter Course, and now is attached to CRG as Honorary Programme Associate to help the work of Winter Course. She was here under the exchange of fellowship programme between India and Finland.

4.3 Office Members: The services of Ratan Chakraborty, M. Chatterji, Ashok Kumar Giri and Samaresh Guchait were reconfirmed with a revision of their salary. The part time service of R. K. Mahato as Typist was also reconfirmed with an increase in salary. Together they combine the work of administration, accounts, library, Internet, website, assets and computer management.

4.4 The Director heads all these activities. On the completion of his term, it was renewed it for another term of 3 years with an increase in salary.

5. Assets

5.1 As informed earlier an Asset Register has been prepared in which assets of CRG including Library books are recorded regularly. The updated Register is open for inspection of the members.

5.2 The library is holding 919 copies of books and 66 pieces of CDs. The list of books and CDs are enclosed in **Annexure VI**. Members may be happy to note that CRG is now taking steps to subscribe on-line for journals to reinforce our research capacity.

6. Network, partners, and collaboration

6.1 As reported in last year's report CRG has several partner institutions. The list of our partners is on our website. The website also mentions the organizations providing grants for various projects. Now CRG has gained new institutions as partners. Last year's report mentions this also. The need is now to strategise our partnerships, put into operation our relations, and make them concrete. We have seen that whenever we have taken recourse to our partnerships, our programmes have achieved commendable success. It will be good to have a guideline on this.

7. Membership

6.1 The CRG's current roll of Members is as follows:

- Pradip Kumar Bose
- Samir Kumar Das
- Jayanta Dasgupta
- Paula Banerjee
- Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury
- Subir Bhowmik
- Krishna Bhattacharya
- Sarbani Sen
- Krishna Banerjee
- Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty
- Anita Sengupta
- Mushirul Hasan
- Prasanta Ray
- Sanjay Chaturvedi
- Asha Hans
- Soumitra Dastidar
- Ranabir Samaddar (invitee)

The AGM has to decide if the current roll is to be followed and if CRG wishes to invite new members.

8. Tasks for 2007-2008

8.1 Below we present a brief list of our tasks for this year in order to generate a discussion on this aspect:

- Increase our full time research strength, and give full time researchers more responsibility;
- Improve the quality of our research work and publish individual research work;
- To broaden the grant base;
- To gain academic recognition from Governments, and attain greater visibility;
- To draw up a plan in order to acquire its own premises

8.2 It will be seen that these were broadly the same tasks set in our preceding report. Members may kindly discuss, while CRG has made commendable progress in many areas, have its tasks been pursued and achieved, and if so to what extent, and if no, why not?

8.3 Do we have a strategic goal? What is our vision in terms of CRG's future as a research institute of a critical kind?