North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati
Annual Report
April 2016-March 2017

INTRODUCTION

We are glad to present to you the Annual Report of North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati, for 2016-17. During the year, NESRC organised two national level seminars, three state level interfaces, two peace activists’ meeting and a state level youth convention. The seminars and workshops brought together scholars, students, activists, government officials and civil society leaders on a common platform to engage with issues especially concerning those sections of society who are at the margins. Most seminars and workshops were held in collaboration with academic institutions or civil society organisations.

NESRC published eleven books, three booklets and one monograph. Three books were published on the theme of gender implications of tribal customary law in Northeast India; two books were on development-induced-displacement; two on the role of the media in conflict zones; another book on conflict resolution systems in Northeast India; one book on the concepts of autonomy, sovereignty and self-determination as understood in Northeast India; one on the impact assessment of ICDS and one on the Heraka movement. A monograph titled Enduring Loss captures inspiring stories of how individuals who lost their loved ones to conflicts rebuild their lives. Two booklets containing the findings of the study on budget for children in Assam and Meghalaya were published. Another booklet shared the finding of the study on the impact assessment of ICDS in Meghalaya.

Two national seminars deserve a special mention: the first on Rethinking Autonomy, Self-Determination and Sovereignty as Tools for Peace and the second on Changes and Continuities in the Religious Landscape of Northeast India. While the former strove to better understand the crucial concepts on which political struggles and autonomy movements are mobilised in Northeast India, the latter reflected on the changing landscape of religion in the context of the dominant presence of mainstream religions in the region.

Three studies dealt with the rights of children to live with dignity. The first study, Children and Governance, looked at the state budgets of Assam and Meghalaya from the point of view of children to assess the allotment of financial resources. The second study examined the impact of Integrated Child Development Scheme on the children in Meghalaya. A third study, Tracking of Weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) and Provision of Handholding Support in Selected Tea Gardens of Upper Assam, was an effort to evaluate the impact of WIFS on tackling anaemia in three districts of Upper Assam.

The pages below provide more information on the various activities organised by NESRC during 2016-17. It is with great joy that we present this Annual Report for your perusal. We want to assure you that NESRC remains committed to the building of an inclusive society where everyone feels counted, included, and wanted, and provided with a voice in shaping their own destiny.
1. STUDIES COMPLETED

1. Melvil Pereira, Madhusmita Chowdhury, Meenal Tula and Farhana Yashmin: Financial Tracking and Implementation Status of the Integrated Child Development Scheme, Meghalaya. *This study is jointly done by NESRC and HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, Delhi.*

2. Walter Fernandes and Bhaswati Borgohain: Understanding Autonomy, Self-Determination and Sovereignty as Tools for Peace. *This study was done in collaboration with DSSS-Imphal, JUST-Agartala and Peace Channel, Dimapur.*

3. Melvil Pereira and Angshuman Sarma: Causes and Extent of Health Vulnerability: A Study of Health Status of Women and Children in Tea Gardens of Assam. *This study was commissioned by National Foundation of India, New Delhi.*


5. Melvil Pereira and Bhaskar Athparia: Tracking of WIFS Implementation and provision of handholding support in selected Tea Gardens of Upper Assam. *This study was commissioned by UNICEF, Assam.*


B. ONGOING STUDIES


## 2. SEMINARS, INTERFACES AND CONVENTIONS

1. **Manipur-Nagaland Peace Activists’ Meet:** It was held on 13-14 June 2016 at Life Spring Corner, Khermahal, Dimapur organised by North Eastern Social Research Centre and Oriental Theological Seminary (OTS) in Collaboration with Peace Channel. Over 50 people from Manipur and Nagaland participated in the Meet. They discussed the three contentious bills passed by the Manipur State Assembly and their impact on civil society in Manipur. It is the first time that some Naga and Meitei participants from Manipur met each other. They realised that more than the issues involved, they had to deal with the total lack of communication between the communities and that it made dialogue impossible between them. As a step towards such a dialogue, the participants formed a small group made up of people from the three main communities of Manipur in order to create an atmosphere for dialogue between them.

2. **Interface and Release of Budget for Children Handout in Kohima:** The interface was organised by NESRC in collaboration with HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, Delhi, and Nagaland State Resource Centre for Women, Kohima, on 22 July 2016 at the Conference Hall of Nagaland State Secretariat. Mr Kiyanilie Peseyie, the then Honourable Minister for Social Welfare, Government of Nagaland, was the chief guest. Over 70 participants – government servants, heads of schools and members from civil society organisations took part in the interface.

3. **Youth Convention in Manipur:** NESRC in collaboration with DSSS, Imphal organised a youth convention on the occasion of International Peace Day on 21 September 2016. Five young persons from different communities from the nine districts of Manipur participated in the Convention. It was a follow up of the group formed in Dimapur during the peace activists meeting of 13-14 May 2016 and was an attempt to help some young persons from different communities to know each other. They spent two nights and a day together, listening to each other and also to some talks on peace by elders. The most important part was to know about the problems that each community faced, and their aspirations for the future of Manipur. At the end of the day the young persons from each community made plans for follow up in their own district.

4. **National Seminar on “Rethinking Autonomy, Self-Determination and Sovereignty as Tools for Peace”:** was held at Inspiration, Joypur, Guwahati on 16-17 December 2016. The seminar was organised by NESRC with the objective to create new knowledge on the concepts of autonomy, self-determination and sovereignty suited for the people of the region and to assist civil society groups who are trying to influence the peace process. Over 60 people from all over the Northeast as well outside of the NE region participated in the seminar.
5. **Peace Activist Meet**: North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati, organised a Peace Activists’ Meet on 9 January 2017 at Jagriti, as a follow up of the convention of September 21, 2016. Also some other organisations from Assam and Nagaland joined them and interacted with each other. The objective of this meet was to bring individuals and organisations involved in peacemaking to listen to each other’s stories and also look back on what had happened since the September 21 meeting. It provided a platform for peace activists of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam to share the success stories as well as challenges in peacemaking. Ten students and two professors from the Centre for Peacemaking, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, who happened to be at Guwahati at that time joined this Meet as observers.

6. **National Seminar on Changes and Continuities in the Religious Landscape of Northeast India**: It was organised by NESRC in collaboration with the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, and Asian Centre, University of Tartu, Estonia, on 19-21 January 2017 at Don Bosco Institute, Joypur, Guwahati. The seminar explored the rapidly changing religious landscape in Northeast India, an area of significant ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, and also one with a high incidence of inter-communal conflict and growing inter-religious tensions. The seminar was inter-disciplinary, bringing together scholars from radically different backgrounds (historians, folklorists, sociologists, musicologists, a geographer or two, and a sprinkling of linguists). This was important in order to allow the participants to appreciate the topic from different standpoints. The papers discussed recent aspects of religious reorientation and reformulation among ethnic groups living in Northeast India, explored new religious expressions across communities, and analysed new religious constellations within ethnic groups.

7. **Interface and release of handout on An Impact Assessment of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in Meghalaya**: The interface was organised by NESRC in collaboration with HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi and TUR, Shillong at Bethany Society, Laitumkhrah, Shillong on 27 January 2017. The interface was meant to share the findings of the study on the budget for children in Meghalaya. The study highlighted the different schemes from various departments which are divided into four sectors that is education, development, health and protection and the funds allotted for each of the sectors.

8. **Interface and release of Handout Budget for Children in Assam 2012-13 to 2016-17**: The interface was organised by NESRC in collaboration with HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi at the Conference Hall, Jagriti, Christian Basti, Guwahati on 30th January 2017. The interface was meant to share the findings of the study on the budget for children in Assam. Mr. Prabir Kumar Chakroborty, Deputy Director, Directorate of Social Welfare, Guwahati released the handout that contained the findings of the study. The handouts were given to the Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and to the various departments of the Government of Assam that formulated and implemented schemes related to children.
For effective advocacy in support of the marginalized, the findings of the studies and deliberations of the seminars/workshops must be circulated and made available in the form of professional and popular publications. NESRC published the following books/booklets during the year:


4. PROFESSIONAL ARTICLES

Apart from our own publications, the faculty of NESRC share their findings also through professional journals, edited books and newspapers. They published the following articles this year:

**Melvil Pereira**


Melvil Pereira and Angshuman Sarma


Walter Fernandes


Rajendra Prasad Athparia


“A Study of Folklore and Folk Culture of North East India”, in Dr. Ranga Ranjan Das- Folklore in North East India: Continuity and Change (pp.1-28). New Delhi: Lakshi Publishers & Distributors. (2017)


Angshuman Sarma


Asojiini Rachel Kashena

5. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Melvil Pereira

Walter Fernandes:
“Myanmar in Transition and India”, The Nagaland Post on 8 June 2016.
“AFSPA, the Supreme Court and Human Rights”, The Morung Express on 12 July 2016.

Meenal Tula

Angshuman Sarma:
“The Bitter Chai”, in the magazine Raiot on 1 May 2016.
“Politicians Want Their Votes, But Provide no Relief for Assam’s Tea Garden Workers”, The Wire, 27 June 2016
“Know the Story Behind Your Cup of Saah”, Eclectic North East, June 2016. (Cover Story)

Anindita Dutta
Melvil Pereira


“Re-imagining Social Science Research: Global Context, National Perspectives and Regional Priorities”, paper presented at the Decennial Conference of Sanskriti, NEICR, held on 19-20 November 2016.


“Demographic shifts, gender equality, livelihood issues and creation of jobs maintaining sustainability”, paper presented in a Regional Consultation on SDGs for Human Settlements in Himalayan Region on 14-15 December, 2016 at Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati organized by NITI Ayog, New Delhi.


‘Negotiating Land Rights for Women? The Politics of Identity and Denial’, presented a paper in a seminar entitled *Land Questions in Northeast India* organised by the Department of Sociology, Tezpur University, on 30 March 2017 at Tezpur.

Walter Fernandes


Rajendra Prasad Athparia


Meenal Tula

"Impact Assessment of ICDS in Meghalaya”, paper presented at State Level Consultation on Human Rights in Meghalaya organised by Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) in collaboration with Shillong Law College on 25 February 2017 at Shillong Law College, Malki, Shillong.

Angshuman Sarma


Jyotikona Chetia

“The Resilience of Karbi Customary Law: Reasons Behind its Persisting and Continuing Influence” paper presented during the Seminar on Unexplored History of the Karbis in Northeast India Past and Present Perspective, organized by Department of History Assam University and Centre for Karbi Studies, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam on 6-7 September 2016.
Asojiini Rachel Kashena

“Prayers from the Kuki-Naga Conflict-Living through violence in Manipur”, a paper presented at the International Conference on *Changes and Continuities of Religious Landscape in Northeast India* held on 19-21 January 2017 at Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati. It was organised by the North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati in collaboration with Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, and the Asian Centre, University of Tartu, Estonia on 19-21 January 2017, at DBI, Kharghuli, Guwahati.

“Prayers from the Kuki-Naga Conflict-Living through violence in Manipur”, a paper presented at the ICPR sponsored National Seminar on *The Tribes of Northeast India: Exploring Identities, Culture, Politics and Philosophy* held on 9-11 March 2017 at Janki Devi Memorial College Delhi University.

7. RESOURCE PERSON

**Melvil Pereira**

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

Resource person for the Refresher Course for Lecturers, Administrative Staff College, Gauhati University, on 9 September 2016 and lectured on the topic *Displacement and Women in North East India*.

Discussant of a book titled *Evangelising the Nation* by John Thomas on three different occasions on 18th and 19th October 2016: (1) At the Conference Hall of Ao Baptist Church, Dimapur, organised by The Morung Express, The Heritage Publishers and Orient Theological College, Dimapur – on 18 October 2016; (2) At Japfi Christian College, Kigwema – on 19 October 2016; (3) At the Japfii Hotel, Kohima, organised by the Kohima Institute - on 19 October 2016.

Examiner for a PhD proposal titled *Community work with women in Assam: Struggles, Transitions and Transformations* at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati, on 22 December 2016.

**Walter Fernandes**

CASA Consultation on Development and the Civil Society. Guwahati, November 1-2, 2016.


Consultation on *Solidarity for Sustainable North East* organised by ActionAid India, Guwahati, in February 16-17, 2017.


**Melvil Pereira & Walter Fernandes**

Two credit course on Forced Migration and Internal Displacement to students of M.A Programme, Peace and Conflict Studies at Tata Institute of Social Science Research, Guwahati
8. PARTICIPATED IN SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

Melvil Pereira

Consultation on the role and importance of Autonomous Councils under the provision of the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution and the scope and relevance of its extension for the 5th Schedule Areas of the Constitution organized by the Action-Aid and TISS at TISS Seminar Hall, Guwahati.

Ashoka as a Universal Indian, Third Foundation Lecture of Cotton College State University by Prof. Nayanjoti Lahiri, Professor of History, Ashoka University on 9 September 2016 at Praggyotish ITA Machkhowa, Guwahati.

Regional Consultation on Draft National Policy for Women. It was organised by Government of Assam and Assam State Commission for Women in collaboration with National Commission for Women on 27 June 2016 at the Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati.

Consultation on Investing in Action: Campaign to ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions organised by Citizens Collective, Guwahati, on 14 November 2016, in Hotel Blue Moon, Guwahati.

National level Conference on Protection of Child Rights in Tea Plantations of India, organized by ASCPCR, Guwahati in collaboration with NCPCR, Delhi, and UNICEF, Assam held at The Lily Hotel, Khanapara, Guwahati on 4-5 November 2016.

Rajendra Prasad Athparia

Consultation on Policy Dialogue with the CSOs and Academics situational Analysis of Children and women in Assam on May 3-4, 2016 at OKDISCD, Guwahati.


State level Consultative meeting on Universal Periodic Review-3 of CSO-Stakeholder Report on Human Rights held on 23 July 2016 at DBI, Kharguli, Guwahati.


Third Round Conference on North Eastern States and Sikkim on Effective Implementation of Children Act, 2015: Focus on Rehabilitation Services and Linkages with the POCSO Act, 2012 on 26 and 27 November 2016 at Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati. It was organised by Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Committee and hosted by the Gauhati High Court.

Melvil Pereira, Meenal and R. P. Athparia

Workshop on Choosing Identities, Gender Just & Violence Free Society held at Shanti Sadhana Ashram, Guwahati, on 10-12 November 2016.
Angshuman Sarma

Workshop by ACTED on development of its strategic framework for its intervention in India with special focus to North East India at Greenwood Resort, Khanapara, Guwahati on 16 November 2016.

Dissemination workshop on Child Right Situational Analysis in tea Gardens of Assam organised by Save the Children on 21 December 2016 at Rajdhani Resort, Guwahati.

Jyotikona, Sunumi and Thomas Small

Movie Screening-Rambuai: Mizoram’s Trouble Years at Royal Group of Institutions, Betkuchi, Guwahati on 20 October 2016.

Meenal Tula


Anindita Datta

Dissemination Workshop on Mapping of Children Affected by Violence in Assam organised by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Guwahati in partnership with UNICEF, Guwahati at DBI, Joypur on 23 January 2017.


CONCLUSION

As can be seen from the annual report, the year 2016-17 has been eventful with many studies, programmes and publications. It has been possible because of the support and encouragement of many organisations and individuals. Among those who have supported us financially and with solidarity are DKA/KFO - Austria, Jesuitenmission - Switzerland, Misereor – Germany, Missio Aachen and Missio Munich – Germany, Jesuitenmission-Germany, UNICEF-Assam, National Foundation of India – Delhi, Anthropological Survey of India (NERC)-Shillong and Indian Council of Social Science Research (NERC) - Shillong. We also would like place on record our gratitude to those with whom we have jointly undertaken various studies and organised seminars: HAQ - New Delhi, NED Social Forum - Guwahati, Peace Channel – Dimapur, JUST - Agartala, DSSS – Imphal, Nagaland State Resource Centre for Women - Kohima, Oriental Theological Seminary - Dimapur, TUR – Shillong and University of Tartu –Estonia. I also wish to appreciate the generosity of individual donors who have helped build the corpus fund of NESRC. We place on record our immense gratitude to all of them.

Guwahati
31 July 2017

Melvil Pereira
Director