

Annual Report 2014-2015

Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development

VIP ROAD, UPPER HENGRABARI, GUWAHATI-781036

Governing Body of the Institute

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- Professor Atul Sarma, Former Vice Chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi University & Former Member, Thirteenth Finance Commission

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- Member Secretary, Indian Council of Social Science Research
- Additional Secretary, Planning and Development Department, Government of Assam
- Principal Secretary, Finance Department, Government of Assam
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- Radhika Mohan Bhagabati, Senior Journalist, Govt. of Assam Nominee
- Professor Mihir Kanti Chaudhury, Vice Chancellor, Tezpur University, Govt. of Assam Nominee
- Professor Indranee Dutta, Professor, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development
- Prof. Kalyan Das, Professor, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development

Permanent Invitees

- Bhaskar Barua, IAS (Retd), Former Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India
- Vice Chancellor, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh

Member Secretary

- Professor Bhupen Sarmah, Director, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development

From Director's Desk

It gives me immense pleasure to place before you the Annual Report of the year 2014-15. At the outset, it must be mentioned that this year is very special for the Institute. Established in 1989 as Institute of Social Change and Development (renamed as Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development in 1995), the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Institute was launched on 15 September, 2014. A number of programmes were organized as part of the celebration. The inaugural lecture was delivered by Prof. Mrinal Miri, member Rajya Sabha and Chairperson, Indian Council of Philosophical Research. As part of the yearlong celebration, two special lectures were organized. The first lecture was delivered by Prof. Prabhat Patnaik who spoke on the theme Capitalism and Global Poverty on November 26, 2014. Prof. Amitabh Kundu delivered the second lecture on January 21, 2015 on the topic, "Environment-Development trade off at Regional Context: Common but Differential Responsibility". Three seminars were organized as part of the programme in this financial year, on the themes: "Public Provisioning in Basic Services and Infrastructures: Country Experiences and Outcomes" on 25-26 September, 2014; "Ideology and Social Sciences" on 27-28 November, 2014; and "Environment and Development Trade Off" on 21-22 January, 2015.

In pursuance of its commitment for good and effective governance practices, the Institute has undertaken and finished successfully a number

of projects and studies. The Institute has submitted the Assam Human Development Report to the government of Assam during this period. Based on a large scale survey of 39,998 households, the report highlights the critical concerns related to key dimensions of human development viz. health, education, income, gender and environment indicating broad policy contours for improving quality of life of the people. The report provides a rich statistical appendix based on primary data, many which have been produced for the first time in the state at various levels of disaggregation. The report makes a strong case for a pro-active state in bridging the gaps in human development outcomes by emphasising upon focused and differential approach in managing the challenges offered by myriad diversities in the State. The Institute has also successfully completed a study on non-structural measures in flood disaster management that recommends adoption of certain additional measures to sustain the environmental regime. It also completed monitoring of the implementation of Backward Region's Grant Fund (BRGF) in eleven districts of Assam. Another important achievement of the Institute was the preparation of facility atlases for the districts of Kamrup and Dibrugarh. A web-based dynamic decision support system has been developed under the project. The project is expected to aid decentralized planning which requires disaggregated data at the sub-district level.

The Institute has been widening the scope and making new collaborations with different institutions from abroad. Recently, it completed the project “Does Urban Greenery Reduce the Cost of Cooling Homes?” sponsored by South Asian Network for Development of Environmental Economics (SANDEE). The study investigated the effect of urban land use change on land surface temperature and pointed out that the city of Guwahati has a prominent urban heat island effect, where temperature is almost 6°C to 8°C higher during summer than peripheral low density settlement. The study recommends creation of more urban greenery and it offers conclusive evidence of the significant economic gains deducible from urban greenery.

The Institute has also excelled in academic pursuits per se and its academic staff participated in many conferences in India and abroad and published many valuable works. I would like to flag off some of the notable academic achievements here. Prof. Indranee Dutta was nominated as a member of the Governing Board of the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) and a member of the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology. Prof. Bhupen Sarmah was invited to take part and present papers in the 50th Conference of Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA) at Chiba City, Japan. He also took part in a workshop on Basque Nationhood in a Globalizing World in Biblao, the Basque Country, Spain. Prof. Kalyan Das attended the

meeting of executive committee of Indian Society of Ecological Economics, held at Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi. He also presented paper “Would making the youths capable to read the labour market signal help?” at the seminar on Youth and Skill Development in North-East India organized jointly by ICSSR-NERC and VV Giri National Labour Institute at Shillong. Dr. Saswati Chowdhury delivered two lectures at Gauhati University on “Gender Budgeting” at the Refresher Course for College Teachers. Dr. Joydeep Baruah was invited as a panelist in the Symposium Human Development in Global South: Post MDG as at New Delhi organised by Institute of Human Development (IHD), New Delhi and WNTA & UNESCAP at IIC, New Delhi. Dr. Arunima Deka’s article “Dangerous Motherhood Exploring Maternal Deaths in Assam” on the other hand got published in Economic & Political Weekly, August 16, 2014. Shri Akshay Jyoti Sarma was invited as a resource person at a National Integration Camp held a Nagaon organised by Nehru Yuba Kendra at Nagaon. Monjit Borthakur attended Write Shop, a workshop organised by South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE) at Kathmandu Nepal.

As has been mentioned in the outset, the Institute is celebrating its silver jubilee and the celebrations would continue in the coming year too. I look forward to your kind cooperation in this regard and in other activities of the Institute. With this short note, I take the opportunity to put this Annual Report in the public domain.

25 Years of the Institute

The year 2014 marks twenty five years of the existence of Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development. The Institute came into existence in 1989 under the joint initiative of the Government of Assam and Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. It has traversed a long tortuous

Chairman of OKDISCD and Professor Bhupen Sarmah, Director of OKDISCD planted the saplings along with other members of the Institute. Professor Surinder Kumar, Director, Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow and Professor D.M. Diwakar, Director, A.N. Sinha Institute, Patna were also present on the occasion. The Silver Jubilee programme of the Institute was formally inaugurated by the noted academician Professor Mrinal Miri, a Member of Rajya Sabha and the Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research. Delivering the inaugural address on "Idea of Research" Professor Miri stressed on the non-linear, inter disciplinary and autonomous nature of knowledge contrary to

application oriented and problem solving nature of knowledge. He further observed that within the diversity of ideas, it is still possible to find nuanced areas of convergence within the broad ambit of knowledge building and research. This, he said, may question the idea of



journey and established itself as one of the premier social research institutes in the region. This academic year was also very eventful. The yearlong Silver Jubilee celebration of the Institute got underway on September 15, 2014. The programme started with the plantation of twenty five saplings in the morning. Professor Atul Sarma,

immediate relevance in research in general. Marking the occasion, four books of the Institute namely *Neo-Liberal States and its Challenges*, *The Look East Policy*, *Education for Capability*, *Tea Small Holdings of Assam* along with its journal *Social Change Development* and a commemorative volume recounting the journey of the Institute *OKDISCD: Twenty Five Years and Beyond* were also released. The inaugural programme was chaired by Professor Atul Sarma, Chairperson of the Institute. Jatin Hazarika, H N Das and Bhaskar Barua who were the founding members of the Institute way back in late seventies shared the dais as special guests and spoke about their reminiscences. Professor A C Bhagabati, the first Director of the Institute was also present on the occasion and

recollected his association with the Institute in the initial years. While welcoming the august audience, Professor Bhupen Sarmah, the Director of the Institute dwelt briefly about the trajectory of the Institute in historical perspective. He also outlined the series of programmes and activities that have been planned in next couple of months as a part of Silver Jubilee celebration. The function was held in the seminar hall of NEDFi. This function marks the onset of a series of programmes organized by the Institute to mark the occasion.

As part of the yearlong celebrations, two special lectures were organized in the financial year 2014-15. The first lecture was delivered by Prof. Prabhat Patnaik, a renowned economist. In the lecture he said that while in recent times there have been episodes of high growth in the world and also in India, there has not been improvement in the living conditions of people. In fact, the world hunger has increased as per capita absorption of food has declined substantially during the last couple of decades. He remarked that such decline in food absorption has been brought about by a falling real income of people

resulting from income squeezing policies pursued under neo-liberalism. Under the influence of global finance both the state and people have been entrapped in a situation which has adversely impacted the condition of working population. As a solution to overcome this, he stressed upon the significance of a set of universal rights to food, education, health, employment and old age pension which a democratic state must ensure for its people. The second lecture was delivered by Prof. Amitabh Kundu, an economist of great repute. Contextualising the development strategy for the India's north-east region, Professor Kundu observed that sustainability of high growth depends on the issues of environmental sustainability since there is a strong tradeoff between development and environment. Referring to the much debated issue of hydropower potential of the region, he was of the opinion that a transparent and informed regional consultation is needed at the moment rather than haste and urgent competition between the north-eastern States driven by revenue prospects of such projects.

To mark the Silver Jubilee Year, the Institute organized three seminars in this financial year. The first seminar organized as part of the celebrations was on the theme "Public Provisioning in Basic Services and Infrastructures: Country Experiences and Outcomes" on 25-26 September, 2014. The seminar essentially had thorough discussions on the themes which could help to formulate policies to ensure inclusion and wellbeing in the society. Many prominent academics of the country participated in the seminar including Ravi Duggal, Bhagirathi Panda, S.N. Ambedkar, Nirankar Srivastav and Akhil Ranjan Dutta. The second seminar on the other hand was on the theme "Ideology and Social Sciences" held during 27-28 November, 2014. The seminar saw some of the very reputed academicians presenting papers like Sobhanlal Dattagupta, Prasenjit Biswas, BP Mishra, Sanjoy Roy, V Krishna Ananth, Surajit Mukhopadhyay, Pratik Roy, Asok Kumar Ray, Gorky Chakraborty and Sambit Mallick. The third silver jubilee seminar in this financial year was on the theme of "Environment and Development Trade Off" held on January 21-22, 2015. The seminar was inaugurated with a special lecture by Prof. Amitabh Kundu. It was attended by a host of scholars from different parts of India and from other countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The Silver Jubilee celebrations are to be continued in the next financial year as well.

Research at the Institute

The present research agenda of the Institute emanates from its reformulated Perspective Plan prepared in 2011 for the next five years. It revolves around basically three themes, namely governance, development and peace. Based on these broad themes, six areas of research were identified that consist of: (i) Environment, Resource and Development (ii) Law, Governance and Institutions (iii) Ethnic Identity and Social Movements (iv) Demography (v) North East India and Emerging Southeast Asia (vi) Gender and Social Relations. In the specific context of the Northeast India, it has been observed that absence or inadequacy of data based on research on the distribution of resources, pattern of resource consumption and environmental degradation has created major lacunae in understanding the region in the context of colonial and post colonial changes. To address this lacunae, the Institute's research agenda is set so as to address such issues as resource use and changes in human consumption; land ownership, patterns of its changes and impact on livelihood; climate change and its impact on agriculture and livelihood; urbanisation and migration; and water resource, energy demand and energy market.

The next research agenda spurs the Institute to study issues of autonomy, self-determination and sovereignty in the changing regional as well as global context. Without overlooking the intrinsic relations between the processes of development, governance and the social movements distinctly marked by political assertions of different ethnic identities in the contemporary Northeast India, the Institute has decided to pay more attention to studies on ethnic identity and social movements in their historicity in one of its its research agenda. In addition to addressing questions associated with distinctly differentiated growth rate of population, experienced by the thinly populated states of the region, and the causes and implications of rural-urban migration backed by emergence of primate towns or cities indicating patterns of uneven development, the Institute has to make fresh attempts to comprehend the issues

of both immigration and out-migration and is a priority research area for the Institute.

The crucial role which the North East region of India ought to play in shaping the patterns of interdependency and regional cooperation between India and the Southeast, and the inevitable implications on the socio-economic domains of the connecting region i.e. the North East India, are some of the fundamental issues that the Institute has envisaged under its research priorities. Reiterating the need to address the gender question – considering it as an institutionalised system – the Institute also endeavours to make more rigorous attempts to address the questions relating to gender equality, re-examine societal practices, persisting beliefs, customs and traditions instrumental in construction of gender and the associated myths, impacts of and changes induced by growing influences of a market economy and the processes of globalisation. Besides reorienting the focus of research, the Perspective Plan also emphasises on collaborations, networking and exchange of scholars and resource persons.

Projects Completed

Preparation of Assam Human Development Report

Sponsored By: Government of Assam

Research Coordinator: Dr. Joydeep Baruah

The Assam Human Development Report prepared by the Institute has been submitted to Government of Assam in February, 2014. The report titled “Managing Diversities, Achieving Human Development” highlights multifaceted diversities of the State – geographic, demographic, institutional and economic and tries to explain the differential human development achievements in terms of these diversities. Based on a large scale survey of 39,998 households, the report highlights the critical concerns related to key dimensions of human development viz. health, education, income, gender and environment indicating broad policy contours for improving quality of life of the people. The most striking feature of the report is its innovative approach of bringing together both outcome and process aspects into the capability framework and stressing upon the significance of evaluating processes including governance and service delivery while evaluating human development achievements. The report provides a rich statistical appendix based on primary data many of which have been produced for the first time in the state at various levels of disaggregation. The report makes a strong case for a proactive state in bridging the gaps in human development outcomes by emphasising upon focused and differential approach in managing the challenges offered by myriad diversities in the State.

Non-Structural Measures in Flood Disaster Mitigation: Perspective of the State and People in Assam

Sponsored By: ICSSR

Research Coordinator: Prof. Kalyan Das

The study draws sample and interacts with the households in 59 villages of 14 Brahmaputra Valley districts to understand issues associated with agriculture operations and other livelihood in the farm and non-farm sector, flood damages, reconstruction activities, relief and institutional supports, perception on floods as an inevitable natural phenomenon, perception on embankments as protective measures, early warning, living with flood and best practices in the crisis situations. The view and approaches of the state on flood disaster mitigation till recent past largely reveals efforts to keep floods away from most part of the floodplains through structural interventions. The reports on frequent breach of embankments in the state though questions on its effectiveness, it appears from field interactions that people have tremendous liking for the embankment structures for multiple. The

concentration of the approaches though primarily focused on the structural measures. In recent years the state has gone for certain non-structural approaches to mitigate or lessen the impacts of disasters. The state, here has a larger role to play, as certain issues to deal with the adversities and keep the resilience level of people intact. It requires comprehensive understanding on the determining factors and subsequent adoption of stringent regulations. The approaches on structural as well as non-structural measures try to ensure protection of people in situations, which are considered as static (in the short run at least), assuming that these do not get worsened to extreme fronts. The study reveals that the disasters created by flood have become more intense and uncertain in recent times and the State needs to take certain additional measures to sustain the environmental regime.

Evaluation of Backward Regions Grant Fund Assam

Supported by: State Institute of Rural Development

Coordinator: Mr. Monjit Borthakur

Funded by Government of India (GoI) and managed by Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), the Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) programme primarily intends to redress regional imbalance in development. Launched in 2007, the programme has been designed to provide financial support to 250 districts of India identified as economically backward to supplement the existing development inflows. The objectives of the programme are: first, to bridge critical gaps in local infrastructure and other development requirements that are not being adequately addressed through existing inflows, secondly, to strengthen the institutions of local governance such as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in terms of their required level of capacity for planning and implementation of the development plans emerged from below and thirdly, to facilitate professional support to the institutions of local governance for planning, implementing and monitoring their plans. It is anticipated that the outcome of BRGF would reduce the structural as well as institutional deficiencies in backward regions through supplementing inter-sectoral requirements. In Assam, the BRGF programme has identified eleven districts during the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) as backward. These districts are (1) Barpeta, (2) Bongaigaon, (3) Cachar, (4) Dhemaji, (5) Dima Hasao, (6) Golapara, (7) Hailakandi, (8) Karbi Anglong, (9) Kokrajhar, (10) Morigaon and, (11) North Lakhimpur. Towards the end of the Eleven Five Year Plan (2007-2012), when each of the eleven BRGF districts of Assam was expected to complete a substantial part of the envisaged development interventions, the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Assam assigned the responsibility on Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD), Guwahati to review the outcome of BRGF in each of the backward districts of the state. The Institute, therefore, has made an attempt to conduct an objective assessment of the outcomes of BRGF in the eleven districts of Assam. This review mainly focuses on management or utilization of fund released to each district, the planning process, and overall efficacy of the programme in bridging the critical gap besides other critical dimensions.

The Institute has successfully completed the monitoring in all eleven districts in November this year. Apart from identifying lacunae and gaps in the implementation of BRGF in these districts individually, the Institute has identified certain broad trends that gave rise to such lacunae. One such lacunae in the BRGF guideline is that it is not clear about the meaning of the critical gaps in local infrastructure to be addressed

under the programme. Rather, it leaves the matter to the planning bodies to decide what constitutes a critical infrastructural gap. In absence of clear guideline and district vision, most of the 'backward' districts of Assam could not set the priorities through planning and as a result the scope of the programme has been reduced to a supplementary grant-giving programme. It seems most of the works identified under BRGF could also have been undertaken through the existing flagship programmes.

Village Level Facility Mapping and District Decision Support System:

Sponsored By: UNICEF (Field Office Assam)

Research Coordinator: Mr. Monjit Borthakur

The Institute prepared district facility atlases for the districts of Kamrup and Dibrugarh. A web-based dynamic decision support system has been developed under the project. The decision support system will enable multi-criteria analysis to locate and map the facilities at the village level. It will support the overall planning through vertical and sectoral integration of schemes. It was submitted to the respective districts in June, 2015. The project is expected to aid decentralized planning which requires disaggregated data at the sub-district level. It must also be mentioned that decentralized planning has been envisaged by the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution of India.

Does Urban Greenery Reduce the Cost of Cooling Homes?

Sponsored By: SANDEE

Research Coordinator: Mr. Monjit Borthakur

The study investigates the effect of urban land use change to land surface temperature and how urban greenery have moderating impact in reducing the cost of cooling in residential units of Guwahati Metropolitan Area. During the last decade, Guwahati has undergone phenomenal urban change with high population growth and major changes to land cover. The complex urban fabric with high rise multistoried, roads and pavements increase the urban surface temperature due to their high heat storage capacity. The complex urban fabric also reduces the horizontal air flow in residential buildings. The study reveals that the city has a prominent urban heat island effect, where the temperature is almost 6°C to 8°C higher during summer than the peripheral low density settlements areas. The result of the panel data model shows that the densely populated urban areas with less than 10% greenery are on an average 1°C warmer than the areas with 50% greenery. Due to this additional heat, the daily increase in electricity demand for the city is estimated as 5.4 Mw with 1°C increase in surface temperature. Considering one unit cost of electricity, the study estimates that the urbanites residing in the downtown areas of the city are paying an additional amount of Rs. 846,000 per month to cool their residential units. The study offers conclusive evidence of the significant economic gains deducible from urban greenery. The results clearly show that the annual welfare gain to the city from urban greenery is significant in terms of reduced electricity consumption. The urbanites of Guwahati need to act now to maintain urban greenery. Urban forestry – grass to trees, living roofs and curbside planting can be the best possible options in this regard.

Supporting the CSR endeavours of North Eastern Electric Power Cooperation

Sponsored By: NEEPCO

Research Coordinator: Prof. Bhupen Sarmah

The Company's Act, 2013 makes it mandatory for the companies to take up projects under Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) and marks a new paradigm shift in the understanding of CSR activities in India. According to Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs, a minimum of 6,000 Indian companies will be required to undertake CSR projects in order to comply with the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013. This regulatory measure has meant that companies have to pursue their CSR activities more professionally. Taking this step of the Government very seriously, the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development has decided to make a major plunge in providing support to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities to some of the major Public Sector Units (PSU) in the Northeast region. Preparation of Baseline survey and formulation of CSR projects for Northeastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) is one such major step. It also includes documentation, monitoring and evaluation during its implementation. The Institute has prepared the Baseline Surveys and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Projects for the period 2012-13 to 2016-17 for NEEPCO and is now supervising the implementation of its CSR activities. The Baseline suggested four broad thrust areas – education, community health, infrastructure development and entrepreneurship development where the CSR activities need to be focused. The monitoring and evaluation for the year, 2014-15 has been completed by the Institute and the report was submitted to NEEPCO, which was well received.

Ongoing Projects

Attempting at Social Inclusion through Constitutional Amendments: Efficacy of 73rd and 74th Amendments in the Context of India's North East

Supported By: ICSSR

Study Team: Prof. Bhupen Sarmah, Dr. Joydeep Baruah, Dr. Arunima Deka

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) after the 73rd Constitutional Amendments brought in several measures to overcome past indignities related to the caste or creed and provided reservation within the seats and offices of the Panchayat. Though the caste hierarchy and rigidity is rather lax in Assam, domination of the Upper Castes in the PRIs cannot be ruled out completely. Moreover, identity based exclusion of the marginalized groups and minorities may occur in the system as there is a lack of ethnic cohesion among the people. The Institute has taken up this study in the two states, Assam and Tripura, to understand and analyze the diverse forms of social hierarchy and its relation to social exclusion.

The study has completed the field survey in the two states besides conducting a number of Focus Group Discussions with the members of the Panchayat in the two states.

Elementary education in Assam: For those in the margins

Supported: ICSSR

Research Coordinator: Prof. Indranee Dutta

The study envisages probing the foundation of the educational pyramid of the country which needs serious engagement, both understanding and dialoguing. Foundation here refers to two things, firstly, the elementary education, which is the first step in educational hierarchy and secondly, the elementary education that is being fed to those who are at the base of the society - the poor and the marginalized. The concept of the poor and the marginalized in the present study will include in addition to the SC, ST and minority population, people affected by flood and erosion and conflict, people with locational disadvantage and such other region-specific factors of marginalization of people.

The study has taken up the district of Lakhimpur in Assam as an experimental case and the field work has already been completed.

Collective Violence in Western Assam: Causes, Accounts and the Consequences

Sponsored By: ICSSR

Study Team: Prof. Bhupen Sarmah, Dr. Indrani Sarma, Mr. Akshay Jyoti Sharma, Dr. Uddipan Dutta

Violence spiraled into a major riot in July, 2012 in Western Assam purportedly between two communities – the Bodos and the Muslims. The violence has raised some of the very complex and delicate issues in Assam's politics, mainly practicing models of autonomy in ethnic lines, migration during the colonial and post-colonial period, the resultant demographic transformation and the series of clashes between different communities of the state in the last few decades. The event has turned uglier with the mass-exodus of thousands of blue-collared job-holders and students from the cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, Coimbatore and Pune with rumours and hearsays of possible revenge attacks going viral in the social media. This study has been envisaged to understand the historical context of the Bodo Movement, the migration that affected the land relation, militarization of the society and the immediate reasons of the spread of violence.

Besides the field survey, the study has already completed FGDs with large number of people from the BTAD and conducted interviews with various political leaders and leaders of various ethnic communities. A large number of documents have also been collected. The draft report of the study is nearing completion.

Development of Mountain Regions of North East India: Re-assessing the Space and Contemporary Contexts

Supported By: ICSSR

Research Coordinator: Dr. Kalyan Das

It is well known that mountain regions are unique natural regions of beauty and ecological value and are also storehouse of enormous natural resources. They are also home to a significant section of indigenous people. In the Northeast India, living aside the few prominent river valleys, rests of the areas are mountainous. Apart from livelihood and food security issues, these areas suffer from major deficiencies in the sectors of health, education and social security. It is therefore pertinent to explore and reassess the space in mountainous states of the Northeast region in contemporary regulatory context and address how the states of the North-East Indians developed policies for the mountain people placed in such difficult situations.

The data collection for the study has been completed and the background chapters have been written.

Women and Economy in Assam: Liberalization and Women Accessibility to Market

Supported By: Ministry of Finance, Government of India

Study Team: Prof. Indranee Dutta, Dr. Saswati Choudhury, Dr. Joydeep Baruah

Globalisation and the new economic policy reform in India have showed positive as well as negative impacts on women in general and rural women in particular. However, scope and opportunities for integrating the local market with global order has regional variations and women workers have been particularly disadvantaged in the process. This study delves into the question of women as part of the economic and social space and how the unequal distributions of household responsibilities between men and women affect the labour market outcomes.

The study has completed the analysis of secondary data and also three chapters. The field survey will be taken up later during the year.

Gender and Economics: The Place of Women in Assamese Society

Supported By: ICSSR

Study Team: Dr. Saswati Choudhury, Dr. Monimala Devi

The issue of gender in the context of contemporary Assam has to be understood and placed within the process of its historical setting and evolution. However, gender issues have not received adequate attention in the historiography of Assam. The study Gender and Economics: The Place of Women in Assamese Society envisages situating Assamese women within the economic structure of Assam both diachronically and synchronically.

The study has completed the first part which has looked into the question of gender in the context of Assamese society beginning with ancient period to the British period. The second part of the study looks into the question of gender in the post independence period is nearing completion.

Collaborations and network with other agencies

The Institute has collaborated and undertaken joint research studies with many national and international institutions of repute. The studies that are going on in joint collaborations are:

Land as Private Property: Changing Patterns of Land Relations in the Tribal Societies of the Northeast India

Supported By: ICSSR

Study Team: Prof. Bhupen Sarmah, Dr. Gorky Chakrabarty, Dr. Asok Kumar Ray

A major concern of the social scientists of North-East India has been the privatization of community lands of the tribal and indigenous communities. Historically, communities owning land resource was a norm. During the colonial period this right was protected to a large extent. After Independence, there was a protective regime guaranteed by the Constitution to safeguard the tribal land. But it has been observed that there have been violations and infringement of tribal land over the years. This study seeks to look at the changing patterns of land relations in the tribal societies of North-East India.

For this important project, the Institute has collaborated with scholars from the Institute of Development Studies (IDSK, Kolkata), North East Hill University (NEHU) and Mizoram University and individual scholars from Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. The first draft of the study is under progress.

Making Women Count for Peace: Gender Empowerment and Conflict in South Asia

Supported By: Research Council, Norway

Study Team: Prof. Bhupen Sarmah, Dr. Arunima Deka

With a focus on Northeast Indian experiences and a comparative look at Nepal, this research study addresses the role of women in local governance and politics, particularly in the context of peace and security processes. The aim of this study is to investigate the 'empowerment' and 'disempowerment' of women in the context of North East India as a case of protracted conflict with no third party mediation and to compare this with Nepal as a post-conflict case in which international agencies have been heavily involved. Funded by Research Council of Norway the Institute is currently working in partnership with Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), for this research work. The first draft of the paper on the Northeast India has already been submitted.

Imagined Sovereignties: Frontiers of Statehood and Globalization

Supported By: Research Council, Norway

Study Team: Prof. Bhupen sarmah, Mr. Uttam Bathari

The work investigates how sovereignty is perceived and debated by stakeholders and contestants in on-going sovereignty contestations taking place in culturally diverse and historically unique settings. In order to explore the multiple ways in which sovereign futures are currently imagined, three cases under study are: statehood contestations on the divided island of Cyprus, the Basque movement for self-determination, and Northeast Indian separatist and autonomy movements. Each case exemplifies a particular issue in current debates on the meaning of sovereignty: statehood, nationhood and indigeneity.

The Institute is collaborating with PRIO in this major research work *Imagined Sovereignties: Frontiers of Statehood and Globalization*. This study is also been funded by Research Council of Norway. The first draft of the report has already been submitted.

A study of witchcraft related incidents in Assam

Supported By: Project Prahari, Assam Police

Study Team: Professor Indranee Dutta , Dr. Indrani Sarma, Mr. Sapon Barua

The State of Assam has been witnessing a spate of incidents where some people have been branded as witches and subjected to humiliation, torture, social ostracism and often killing. According to the State Government records, between 2005 and 2013, altogether 66 women have been killed in the name of witch hunting. 'Witch' in Assam, is known as 'daini', who is believed to possess the magic power to cause disease, destroy crops and other livestock. Accusation begins with a witch doctor known as 'ojha' or 'bej' identifying the accused as casting spells to cause all kinds of misfortunes and instigating the community to take action for greater good, resulting in ghastly acts. The institute was by then contemplating to carry out a study on this serious issue, when it received a request from the authorities of the Project Prahari (An Assam Police community policing initiative for preventing and controlling violent crimes through peaceful means and participatory development). Accordingly, the Institute launched the study on 'Witchcraft related Incidents in Assam' in November 2014. The objective of the study is to understand the causes, social dimension and etiology of such crimes, and also to make some deeper analysis related to the belief systems of the affected people at large. The findings of the study are expected to be helpful in containing such incidents both from the community policing perspectives, as well as in terms of policy formulation at the State level.

Regional Cost Benefit Analysis of Ronganadi Hydro Electric Project (RHEP); Projected Estimation of CBA for Lower Subansiri Hydro Electric Project (LSHEP)

Consultant: Mr. Tasaduk Ariful Hussain

The Northeastern region of India has been found to have the potentiality of producing 63,257 MW of hydropower by a survey conducted by Central Electricity Authority in 2010. Such high projection has increased the importance of the region and is considered as a future power house of the country. Keeping in the line of this projection, 11 large hydropower projects, each with more than 25MW capacity is at present operating in the 6 states of the northeastern region with total installed capacity of 1,6686 MW. However, the proposed dams have come under severe criticism on the grounds of inequitable benefit distribution, downstream displacement, loss of cultural heritage, disruption of community networks, loss of unique biodiversity, sloppy Environmental Impact Assessment etc. So, it is important to understand the cost-benefit ratio of the existing and operating hydropower projects of the region to assess its viability for further expansion of hydropower potentialities. The study proposes to study an operative hydropower project in terms of its cost-benefit ratio under a definite ecosystem and estimate the cost-benefit ratio of another hydropower project under the same ecosystem. The rationale of the study is based upon the realization that no dam in the world could be an exact replica of another, even under the same or similar ecosystem. Various factors including geographic condition, technological advancement, diversity of implementing agency etc have influenced each hydropower project. Each hydropower project is unique and must not be an imitation another. Ronganadi Hydro Electric Project (RHEP) could be considered as the sample of operating hydropower project to understand the status cost benefit ratio and the inferences drawn from this estimation could be judiciously and realistically used to develop a cost-benefit model for Lower Subansiri Hydro Electric Project situated almost in the same ecosystem.

Effects of Violent Displacement: Study of Women in Conflict Zones in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) Areas of Assam (2008-12)

Supported By: ICSSR

Coordinators: Dr. Aparna Bhattacharyya (Project Director)

Dr. Sakira Sahin (Co- Project Director)

Funded by ICSSR, this project was transferred to the Institute in August, 2014 from Gauhati University. The project plans to study the effects of displacement on women in conflict-ridden areas of BTAD. It envisages to look at the psychological conditions of the displaced women after conflict, to understand the vulnerabilities in the social lives of women victims, to gauge the economic impact of conflict on the lives of displaced women, to help incorporation of women in the peace process, to comprehend the effect of repeated violence on the everyday life of women and to present the narratives that emerge from the violence. It is envisioned that the finding of the study would be helpful for policy making and can be used fruitfully, for active intervention in times of crisis.

Lectures in the Institute

Lecture by Jishnu Barua

The Institute organised a lecture by Jishnu Barua, IAS, then Commissioner to the Chief Minister, Government of Assam on the theme *Alexander the Great: His Personality and Military Tactics* on 30th July, 2014 at the Institute. The lecture was well attended by a host of academicians and bureaucrats. Showing a rare streak of erudite scholarship, Mr Barua gave a vignette of the exploits of Alexander the Great, his bravery and military tactics. He gave a background of the rise of Macedonia as a

military power during Alexander's father Philip's time and the kind of army Alexander inherited from his father. The highlight of the lecture however, was the military craftsmanship of Alexander the Great and his ability to lead his army from the front. He also gave a nuanced account of Alexander's various expeditions and the tactics he adopted to win the battles. Enriched with information, the lecture captivated the audience.

Special Lecture by Professor Prabhat Patnaik

Professor Prabhat Patnaik, a renowned economist and distinguished thinker delivered a special lecture on the theme *Capitalism and Global Poverty* on November 26, 2014 at ITA, Machkhowa. The lecture was organised by the Institute as part of its Silver Jubilee celebrations. In the lecture he said that while in recent times there have been episodes of high growth in the world and also in India, there has not been improvement in the living conditions of people. In fact, the world hunger has increased as per capita absorption of food has declined substantially during the last couple of decades. He remarked that such decline in food absorption has been brought about by a falling real income of people resulting from income squeezing policies

pursued under neo-liberalism. Under the influence of global finance both the state and people have been entrapped in a situation which has adversely impacted the condition of working population. As a solution to overcome this he stressed upon the significance of a set of universal rights to food, education, health,



employment and old age pension which a democratic state must ensure for its people. The Lecture also inaugurated the Silver Jubilee Seminar on "Ideology and Social Sciences" organised by the Institute during November 27-28, 2014. Chairing the Lecture, noted intellectual Professor Hiren Gohain commented that the demanding of universal rights can serve only as a practical strategy to mobilise people as these rights cannot be expected from the

present state. Earlier Professor Bhupen Sarmah, Director of the Institute welcomed the audience by introducing the series of silver jubilee programmes planned over the year while Professor Atul Sarma, Chairperson of the Institute gave an introductory remark on successes and failures of the Institute over the last twenty five years highlighting the manifold contribution of the Institute.

Special Lecture by Prof. Amitabh Kundu

Keeping in sync with the yearlong celebrations of Silver Jubilee of the Institute, the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development organised a special lecture by Prof. Amitabh Kundu, a noted economist on January 21, 2015 at the Institute's Conference Hall. He spoke on the topic "Environment Development Trade-off at Regional Context: Common but Differentiated Responsibility". The Lecture also inaugurated the Seminar on Environment and Development Trade-Off organised by the Institute on January 21-22, 2015. According to Prof. Kundu, India and China are fast emerging as global giants and by the end of 2050 the World economy is projected to be dominated by China and India. It has been projected that India's per capita income which is

about 30 percent of the average per capita income of the World at present will be at least 20 percent higher than the World per capita income by the end of 2050. He, however, remarked that while high



growth rates of the recent past in the country relative to the global growth rates has contributed to such a projection, benefits of high per capita income in coming decades may fail to produce socially desirable outcomes if the present level of regional inequality continues to prevail in the economy. Contextualising the development strategy for the India's north-east region, Professor Kundu observed that sustainability of high growth depends on the issues of environmental sustainability since there is a strong tradeoff between development and environment. Referring to the much debated issue of hydropower potential of the region, he was of the opinion that a transparent and informed regional consultation is needed at the moment rather than haste and urgent competition between the north-eastern States driven by revenue prospects of

such projects. He stressed upon the point that it is not the revenue alone that would be able to ensure sustainable development in the region but way in which the revenue would be spent should be important. The Lecture was chaired by Prof. Atul Sarma, Chairman of the Institute.

Lecture by Gunnel Cederlöf

Eminent historian Prof. Gunnel Cederlöf of KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden delivered a lecture titled Governing Monsoon Landscapes: East India Company Expansion on Its North-Eastern Frontier in the Early 19th Century at

East India Company's command over its new territory and the people that gradually came under their control. The lecture discussed the problems that the Company had to face during the beginning of the critical half century due to inclement weather conditions, unknown terrain and ecology. However, towards the end of the half century the company was in full control of the administration. The lecture as a whole captures the detailed history of the early expansion of the British East India Company in the Northeast Bengal and the Northeastern frontier of the British India. It detailed the expansion of the Company in the critical half decade



3.30 pm on February 13, 2015 at the Institute's Conference Hall. In her lecture, she talked about a critical half century in the expansion of East India Company in between 1790-1840. The lecture examined the history of space and polity during the formative period of the East India Company's expansion in the Northeast India. She probed critically three significant issues in her lecture – Climate, Commerce and Polity – which had played crucial role in determining

when the Company strove to establish control over the North-Eastern Frontiers engulfing an area around River Brahmaputra to Burmese Border. The Lecture in brief, threw light upon the broader history of the complex and uneven process through which the British East India Company constituted a governing bureaucracy in the larger region. The lecture was well attended by scholars from different educational institutions of Assam.

Courses/ Workshops/ Training Programmes

Monsoon School, 2014

The Institute organised a five day Monsoon School on 'Philosophy of Social Sciences' at the Institute from July 14 to 18, 2014. The prime objective of this Monsoon School was to provide an understanding to the philosophical traditions of ancient, medieval and modern period. Two distinguished scholars of Social Sciences namely Professor B.P. Misra



and Professor Sobhanlal Dutta Gupta were the resource persons who delivered lectures on the *Ancient and Medieval Traditions: Hellenistic Age to Renaissance* and *Positivism, Hermeneutics, Marxism and Critical Theory* respectively. Under both the themes, the resource persons offered a lucid introduction to the history of philosophical development and also a trajectory of philosophy of social sciences. A total of twenty five scholars across social science disciplines from different Universities and Colleges of Assam participated in this Monsoon School.

Certificate Programme in Corporate Social Responsibility (ICP-CSR)

The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), an Institute of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has launched a Nine Month Certificate Programme in Corporate Social Responsibility (ICP-CSR) that commenced from October, 2014. The Institute has been selected as one of the partner institutes for conducting the course in the North East India. It must be mentioned here that the Institute has already made a major plunge in providing CSR support to some of the major Public Sector Units (PSUs) in the North East India. With its experience and expertise, the Institute is well poised to conduct the course. The significance of the course is that the Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013 has mandated corporate entities for more extensive engagement in community development and environmental conservation. As per the expert view, given the mandate for CSR under Companies Act, 2013, it is estimated that the career prospects and job avenues for trained and certified professionals would be about 50,000 in the next couple of years. Given this estimate, the role of the Institute would be pivotal in preparing professionals of the North East Region to qualify them for the jobs in this emerging area.

Workshop for the Preparation of the Report on the Status of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in Assam



India will be reporting to the UN next year about its achievements in MDGs after the completion of the stipulated time frame of fifteen years. The Planning and Development (P&D) Department, Government of Assam is the nodal department monitoring the MDG outcomes in the state. A workshop was organised by P&D Department and facilitated by the Institute along with UNICEF Field Office, Guwahati on November 4, 2014 at the Conference Hall of the Institute to finalise the process of preparation of the State MDG Report of Assam by bringing together all important stakeholders in the state. Dr. Joydeep Baruah gave a presentation on the issues pertaining to the workshop. It was followed by a brainstorming on how to prepare a comprehensive report taking all pertinent matters into consideration. It was decided in the workshop that the report would take into consideration the existing sources of secondary data.

Training programme on Research Issues and Methods in India's Plantation sector

The Institute in collaboration with National Research Programme on Plantation Development (NRPPD) at the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thiruvananthapuram organised a two-day training programme on *Research Issues and Methods in India's Plantation Sector* at the Institute on 17-18 November, 2014. The programme was attended by 31 postgraduate students, research scholars and colleges teachers. The objective of the programme was to expose the students and researchers to different research issues in plantation and commercial agriculture



and to equip them with tools of research to explore issues. Several eminent scholars deliberated on different issues relating to plantation sectors including – Professor D Narayana, Consultant Kerala State Planning Board; Professor K J Josheph, Professor U S Mishra, Dr. N Vijayamohan Pillai and Dr. Vinoj

Abraham from CDS; and Dr. C Veeramani from Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research (IDGR), Mumbai. The training programme revolved mostly around the issues of production, trade and international competitiveness, labour and locality specific issues of the plantation sector. The programme also included a panel discussion consisting of members from Tea Board and Coffee Board of India. Dr. G Boriah and Dr. Biswajit Bera from Tea Board and Dr. Chandrasenan Nair from Rubber Board participated as panellists. It may be noted that the NRPPD in CDS instituted by the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India. It undertakes policy oriented research on all aspects of plantation sector in India. The Programme also has the mandate of capacity building through training *inter alia* with a view to attract scholars into issues pertaining to plantation sector.

Workshop on Witchcraft

In collaboration with JB College Jorhat, the Institute organised a workshop on the practice of witchcraft during January 30-31, 2015. Along with participants from the various educational institutions, the workshop saw the participation of twelve victims of this evil social practice. They narrated their stories and the circumstances under which they were branded as witches by a section of their society and community. In addition, there was a detailed presentation of the recent incident of witch hunting at Sikari Gaon, Majuli and an effort was made to understand the social dynamics of such a situation. The workshop dwelled upon the conditions of the victims, the role played by the civil society and the urgent need of intervention on the part of the government.

Conferences and Seminars

Seminar on Public Provisioning in Basic Services and Infrastructures

A national seminar was organized on the theme “Public Provisioning in Basic Services and Infrastructures: Country Experiences and Outcomes” on 25-26 September, 2014. The seminar focused on the fact that the wages and earnings across the economic sectors in most of the developing countries indicate distortions in the labour market, which in turn have induced exclusion of a significant section of



people from accessing basic provisioning in life. The approaches and programmes of the State for inclusion have been piecemeal, making it ineffective in real terms. This not only creates governance problem but also induces dependency syndrome among the people on the depleted State. The outcome in the labour market would have been different had there been sufficient or universal public provisioning in certain basic sectors– health, education, infrastructures etc. The inadequate and poor quality of public provisioning compel people to go for expensive backups such as private health and educational institutions to power generation sets etc, which apart from being costly produces several negative externalities like insecurities, corruption, labour market distortions and so on. The seminar essentially had thorough discussions on the themes which could help to formulate policies to ensure inclusion and wellbeing in the society. The broad themes of the seminars were: provisioning, resource utilisation and inclusion; costs of inadequate provisioning; labour market outcomes; financing public provisioning; and governance of public provisioning. Many prominent academics of the country participated in the seminar including Ravi Duggal, Bhagirathi Panda, S.N. Ambedkar, Nirankar Srivastav and Akhil Ranjan Dutta. A host of young scholars too presented their papers. The seminar was held in the conference hall of the Institute.

Seminar on Ideology and Social Science

As part of its Silver Jubilee Celebrations, the Institute organised a two-day seminar on Ideology and Social Sciences during 27-28 November, 2014. In the welcome address, Professor Bhupen Sarmah set the agenda of the seminar and spoke on the role of ideology in social sciences, particularly in the context of neo-liberalism. He also gave a vignette of the programmes scheduled for the Silver Jubilee celebrations. He also



pointed out that this seminar would result in the publication of a book and that he is personally communicating with some of the renowned publication houses. Dr. Arunima Deka, co-convenor of the seminar gave the introductory remarks. The seminar saw some of the very reputed academicians presenting papers like Sobhanlal Dattagupta, Prasenjit Biswas, BP Mishra, Sanjoy Roy, V Krishna Ananth, Surajit Mukhopadhyay, Pratik Roy, Asok Kumar Ray, Gorky Chakraborty and Sambit Mallick. It also saw the participation of a host of young scholars from the country and abroad. The list includes Thallapelli Praveen, Saikat Roy, Sushant Kr. Singh, Vagesh, Pia David, Sumit Howladar, Pratip Chattopadhyay, Dhritiman Chakraborty, Sohini Dutta, Esita Sur, Gitta Srestha, Dawa Sherpa and Hirokjeet Roy. After two days of brainstorming, the Valedictory Remark was delivered by Dr. Joydeep Baruah. All the paper presenters were requested to send their final papers by 31st of January for the purpose of publication.

Silver Jubilee Seminar on Environment and Development Trade Off

The Institute organised a seminar on the theme of Environment and Development Trade Off on January 21-22, 2015. The seminar was inaugurated with a special lecture by Prof. Amitabh Kundu. It was attended by a host of scholars from different parts of India and from other countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The seminar had been arranged thematically and the first session was dedicated to the



discussion of river dam issues, one of the most burning topics of the state. Neeraj Vaghlikar of Kalpavriksh, Vibha Arora of IIT Delhi, Ngaojahao Kipgen of IIT Guwahati and Tasaduk Ariful Hussain of NEST participated in this brainstorming session. The next two sessions of the day were themed around resources and land use changes vis-à-vis environment. Prof. Madhurjya Prasad Bezbaruah of Guwahati University and Prof. Saundariya Barbora of IIT, Guwahati chaired the two sessions. The next

day saw the presentations on the issues pertaining to community and environment, agricultural issues and resource use and livelihood. Prof. Bhupen Sarmah of the Institute, Prof. Nirankar Srivastava of NEHU and Prof. Indranee Dutta of the Institute chaired the three sessions respectively. It was decided in the concluding session that all the participants would send their revised papers and a volume would be published with a reputed publisher. The vote of thanks was given by Monjit Borthakur.

OKD Dialogue

The Institute conceived the idea of *OKD Dialogue* as a monthly discussion forum with a view to create a network among social scientists, academicians, social workers, media persons and research scholars from Guwahati to sit once in a month and share their views and ideas over a pertinent social/political/economic issue. The forum is basically a space for learning and sharing of ideas among diverse section of people from Guwahati actively involved or engaged in social research or causes and issues. Over the last four months four such *Dialogues* have been organised successfully on issues like Parliament Election 2014, FDI issues in India, Assam Nagaland border conflict etc. It has been a successful endeavour and the programme has been well received among both academic and non academic fraternity of the Institute and participants from diverse profession have shown keen interest in the programme.

May Dialogue, 2014

The first Dialogue was held on 8th May 2014 at the Institute. The topic of discussion for the month was *The General Election 2014: Issues and Contours*. The discussion was held at a time when the general election for the 16th Lok Sabha was underway. The agenda set forth for the discussion were : the nature of political campaigning, the influence of media, the popular uprisings like anti-corruption movement and their political manifestations, the nature of polarization in Indian politics and the challenges ahead for the democracy of India. Prof. Apurba Kumar Baruah, an eminent social scientist of the Northeast participated in the discussion along other participants besides the Faculty of the Institute. The discussion brought to the fore the issue of polarisation of votes in religious line in electoral politics of India and felt that such developments were detrimental to democratic politics in India. In this context the role of the media was also highlighted particularly the changing nature of the social media which plays a major role in the electoral politics of the country.

June Dialogue, 2014

Keeping the situation of ferment and perpetual violence in Western Assam, particularly in Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD) in mind, the second OKD Dialogue was organised on the theme of *Recurring Violence in BTAD: Issues of Ethnic Autonomy in a Multi-ethnic Society* on June 20, 2014. The dialogue focussed on two specific issues namely, nature and politics of exclusive ethnic homeland, and the use of violence as a political instrument to achieve this goal. Introducing the

theme, Prof. Bhupen Sarmah gave a brief trajectory of the ethnic consolidation and assertion in the state. He pointed out how the political developments in the colonial era itself had led to the inroads for ethnic unrest in the post-colonial state of Assam. Taking part in the discussion, Prof. M.P. Bezbaruah of Gauhati University viewed that every small community should have right to assert its cultural identity; but every individual identity essentially has multiple identities. However, only the ethnic part of identities gets overemphasised and other sides become unimportant in most of the cases today. Brig. S.M. Ismail was of the view that lack of development and lack of opportunity have been major reasons for insurgency and violence in the region. Young people have lot of aspirations and therefore, measures must be initiated for fulfilling their aspirations to keep them out of violent means. He also criticised the negative role played by the media for over-sensationalising social issues, sometimes leading to damaging impact. A common understanding that emerged from the discussion was that asserting ethnic identity also has its political nuances and therefore despite the fact that people have pluralistic identities, yet they prefer to assert their ethnic identity as the main identity marker. Such ethnic identity assertion has its own political game as well.

July Dialogue, 2014

The third OKD Dialogue focussed on a very pertinent theme *India and FDI* in the present economic policy of India. The discussion threw light on the positive as well as the negative impact of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) on Indian economy. Dr. Joydeep Baruah initiated the discussion with a brief presentation on the philosophy, impact and possible outcome of FDI in India. Prof. MP Bezbaruah of Gauhati University, Dr. Khanin Das from IIM Shillong and Prof. Bhupen Sarmah of the Institute participated and made significant interventions in the discussion. Important issues that came up for the discussion include, whether FDI is indispensable for economic growth in the country and whether the resultant growth, if in case FDI is at all successful in begetting it, will be sustainable. More specifically, the issues related to productivity and efficiency of FDI in general and its diverse spill-over effects in Indian context in particular were discussed. Given the volatility of global capital market, questions were also raised regarding the possibility of sudden capital flight from the country making domestic economy susceptible to crisis. The legal framework for capital market in India needs to be strengthened more so as to protect interests of domestic sectors.

August Dialogue, 2014

The Dialogue for the month of August took up the long standing border issue between Assam and Nagaland which resurfaced once again during the period with killings across both sides of the border. Four speakers –Samudra Gupta Kashyap, Assistant Editor of *Indian Express*, Sushanta Talukdar, Senior Assistant Editor of *The Hindu*, Haresh Ch. Dutta, Director of ASTEC, and Devojit Phukan, Assistant Professor of Devraj Roy College, Golaghat joined the discussion and put forth their views. Initiating the discussion, Samudra Gupta Kashyap recounted his childhood experiences of living in a village located close to Naga hills. He remembered how the Nagas came down into the plains to sell their products particularly limestone and cinnamon. He deplored the fact that in spite of having a close

relationship between the communities across the borders for ages, there grew mistrust and suspicions due to mishandling of the border situations by the government. He was also very critical of the role of the media that has sensationalised the border row. Gleaning from his myriad experiences of working in the Assam-Nagaland border areas in different capacities, Haresh Ch. Dutta emphasised upon understanding ethnographic reality of the people living along the borders. He also gave a clear cartographic representation of the Assam-Nagaland border areas through different satellite images. Giving a portrait of the conflict along the borders, Devojit Phukan on the other hand recollected the historical trajectory of the dispute. According to him, the vagueness on the part of the government on the issue of boundary demarcation since the creation of the separate state of Nagaland in 1963 has intensified the recurrence of violence and the sustenance of the dispute. Sushanta Talukdar on the other hand made a comparison of the accounts of the violence as represented in media of both the states. He showed it quite succinctly how the claims made by the media of the respective states gave only a partial picture of the situation blurring the truth completely. Significantly, the discussion brought out the crucial unbiased role that ought to be played by the media while reporting on sensitive issues as these and how small trivial issues become catastrophic due to inappropriate handling.

October Dialogue, 2014

The monthly discussion forum of the Institute *OKD Dialogue* was organized on October 29 at its conference hall. This month presentations were made by two of the faculty. Dr. Joydeep Baruah gave a presentation on "Limits to Human Development". Dr. Indrani Sarma on the other hand spoke on "FRA 2006 and its Implementation in Assam". According to Dr. Baruah, the idea of human development appears to be rather 'liberating' when emphasis is put over 'freedom' as *the* essential constituent of the idea of 'development'. However, a careful scrutiny of the capability approach reveals that the essence of the notion of capability lies in its 'intensive' as well as 'extensive' *connectedness*. The approach, though, acknowledges the *connectedness*, it tries to impose many disconnects by way of dichotomising diverse notions such as 'opportunity' and 'process', 'positive' and 'negative' freedoms, 'agency' and 'well-being' aspects etc. placing one vis-à-vis other. These dichotomisations lead to the critical distinction between 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' significances, which, in turn, endogenise *only* a part of inter-connections, leaving aside the others as *given*. These dichotomisations invariably favour status-quo and are, therefore, render the capability approach potentially 'self-limiting'. Therefore, according to him the notion of human development has to be made 'liberating' within the theoretical premises of capability approach if it is to serve the purpose of development in true sense. Dr. Indrani Sarma in her presentation flagged off the issue of implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 in the State of Assam. It confers rights upon those who have traditionally lived in the forests, and derive basic sustenance from it. No doubt that the Act has a broader framework for recognising the long denied rights of the forest dwelling communities. However, certain definitional problems in the Act have raised questions and concerns about its prospects in Assam and indeed in many other areas of India. She pointed out the shortfalls of the Act and the difficulties of its implementation by analyzing rather incisively the different provisions of the Act.

February Dialogue, 2015

OKD Dialogue, a monthly discussion forum of the Institute organised a discussion on the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014 on February 16, 2015 at the Institute's Conference Hall. The discussion was attended by people of different walks of life i.e. research scholar from Gauhati University, NGO activists, students and the faculty members of the Institutes. A vibrant discussion on the nuances of the land Ordinance took place in the Dialogue. The Dialogue expressed deep concern over the amended provisions of the land acquisition especially the clauses of 'no consent' and 'no social impact assessment' which may affect not only the land owner but also the direct and indirect dependants of the land including the tenants. Another significant issue came out from the discussion that the Act or the Ordinance is silent on the land issues in Northeast India. In the Northeast, land relations have a peculiar pattern with the notion of community ownership in the region. Similarly, cropping pattern in the region is different. The ambiguous state of land settlement has been another concern in the region. Thus, the Ordinance will have severe consequences especially for the Northeast India. The forum decided to continue the discussion on the plausible consequences of the Ordinance on India's Northeast in a follow-up dialogue in the month of March, 2015.

March Dialogue, 2015



The OKD Dialogue for the month of March was on the issue of Fourteenth Finance Commission and Special Category States. It was held on March 26, 2015 at the Institute's Conference Hall. Following the submission of the report of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC), speculations were floating around regarding the potential implications it may have on Special Category States (SCS). Even though the FFC has not come up with explicit recommendations

regarding the 'discontinuation' of the provision of Special Category States (SCS) while providing grant in aid to these States, the report specifically states that while making the recommendations 'the distinction between General Category and Special Category States have not been considered'. The report clearly underlines the approaches and principles, based on which, the distinction between the General and Special Category States has been ignored. The report emphasises on statutory transfers from Centre to States with an objective of strengthening 'cooperative federalism' rather than grants-in-aid which are primarily 'discretionary in nature'. The principles of the FFC need to be examined in proper perspective to understand the implications that they will cast over resources of the Special Category States. Already Assam Legislative Assembly has moved a unanimous resolution requesting the Centre to continue with the provision of Special Category States for Assam. The move, unfortunately, tends to miss-out the implications in totality and therefore, limits itself to weak demand for privileges. With the NITI Ayog replacing the Planning Commission, the federal structure in the country presently is awaiting newer forms of 'institutional arrangements'. It is, therefore, right time to review the idea of 'cooperative

federalism' idealised by the FFC and examine its implications for Special Category States like Assam. This episode of OKD Dialogue was an attempt at critically looking at these issues.

News from the Academic Staff of the Institute

Prof. Indraneel Dutta

- Has been nominated as a member of the Governing Board of the Secondary Education Board of Assam, SEBA.
- Completed the chapter on 'Education and literacy' in the Assam Human Development Report, 2014
- Acted as a resource person in the Seminar on "Inclusion in Education: Issues and Challenges" held at Rangia College, during 19-20 January 2015
- Appointed as a member of the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology, Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India.
- Participated and chaired two sessions of a workshop on Witch Hunting organized by JB College, Jorhat on 30-31 January, 2015.

Prof. Bhupen Sarmah

- Was invited to take part and present papers in the 50th Conference of Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA) organised jointly with International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) Inter Congress 2014 held on May 15-18, 2014 at the International Conference Hall of Makuhari Messe, Chiba City, Japan. Prof. Sarmah presented a paper titled *Tribal Societies of India's Northeast and Constitutional Mechanism of Political Inclusion*
- Took part in a workshop on *Basque Nationhood in a Globalizing World* in Biblao, the Basque Country, Spain on 28-30 May, 2014 and made a presentation as Panelist on a Panel Discussion on "Women in Peace- Man's Voice" and also participated in the Partners' Meet.
- Delivered the key note address "The Idea of the Northeast" in the seminar *Politics of Location: With Special Reference to Northeast India* held at Sazolie College, Kohima on 14-15 November, 2014.
- Delivered a lecture "Indian Democracy and Youths" at Jorhat organized by Jorhat District

Political Science Association on January 29, 2015.

- Presented a paper “Immigration, Identity Politics and Exclusion: The Experience of Assam in the International Seminar Development and Modernization: Inclusion and Exclusion organized by DAV College for Girls, Yamunanagar, Haryana on February 7, 2015
- Delivered a Lecture “ Understanding Assam Politics” at the University Institute of Legal Studies, University Law School, Punjab University, Chandigarh on February 9, 2015.
- Participated in the Roundtable "Women and Peace Building: A Policy Dialogue" on February 21-22, 2015 in New Delhi.

Prof. Kalyan Das

- Delivered five lectures – “Human Insecurities”, “Labour and Employment Situation”, “Process of Industrialisation and Migration” and Internal Movement in the context of North East India and on Health Care Market of India, in the 23rd Orientation Course of UGC Academic Staff College of Manipur University organized during 30 June -1 July, 2014
- Attended the meeting and participated in the deliberation on Assessment of Research and Training Needs in North Eastern Region coordinated by Centre for North East, VVG NLI on Wednesday, 30th July, 2014 at Ministry of Labour & Employment, Shram Shakti Bhawan, New Delhi. He also delivered a talk on Internal Migration in Assam” at Tribal Research Institute, Assam, September 18, 2014
- Was elected as Joint Secretary of Indian Society for Ecological Economics for the period 2014-16.
- Delivered a lecture on *Internal Migration of Assam*, at Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati on 18th September, 2014
- Coordinated the Seminar on Reviewing Public Provisioning in Basic Services and Infrastructure: Country Experiences and Outcomes during 25-26 September, 2014
- Contributed as Evaluator at the State Level National Children’s Science Congress, 2014, Assam held at Guwahati during October 16-19, 2014
- Coordinated a discussion with the small tea growers on Issues related to extension supports, marketing and infrastructure in Golaghat district on 13th November, 2014
- Coordinated the OKDISCD-Centre for Development Studies, Training Programme on Research Issues and Methods in India’s Plantation Sector during 17-18 November, 2014
- Made a presentation on the chapter “Environment and Sustainability” at the *Review Workshop on Draft Assam Human Development Report* on November 22, 2014 at Institute for Human Development

- Attended the 27th Governing Body Meeting of the State Resource Centre, Assam on November 23, 2014.
- Served as a discussant at the Annual Winter School on Research Methodology, organized by TISS, Guwahati, during 15-19 December 2014.
- Supervised a thesis “Post-liberal Policies and Programmes in the Social Sector: A Study of the Health Sector of North Eastern India”, leading to submission at Department of Economics, Dibrugarh University on 19th January 2015.
- Attended the meeting of executive committee of Indian Society of Ecological Economics, held at Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi on 20 February, 2014.
- Attended a discussion meeting on mapping of various social groups of Assam at North East Social Research Centre on 25th February, 2015.
- Presented a paper “Is Assam Bracing for Climate Change Like Situation, at a National Seminar on Climate Change, Food Security and Livelihood, Department of Geography, NEHU during March 2-3, 2015.
- Prepared reading materials on a unit "Livelihood, Labour Market and Labour Mobility" for the Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University, Assam.
- Presented paper “Would making the youths capable to read the labour market signal help?” at the Seminar on Youth and Skill Development in North-East India, ICSSR-NERC and V V Giri National Labour Institute, Shillong, during March 26-27, 2015

Dr. Saswati Choudhury

- Participated as a Resource Person in the one day workshop on Assessing GRB and resource allocations in North East Region (NER) – Assam organized by North East Network (NEN), Assam on 23rd May, 2014.
- Presented a paper *Between State and People: Forests caught in contest of claims* at the Seminar on Anthropology of Environment and Forests on 12th September, 2014 at Cotton College State University.
- Have taken six sessions at the Department of Women’s Studies, GU for their course on Gender, Work and Labour for the Third Semester Post Graduate Students in the Department in November, 2014.
- Participated in the Roundtable Workshop on *Sub-Regional Cooperation: India, Bangladesh and Myanmar* organized by ICRIER on November 27th, 2014 at Guwahati and made a presentation on trade and investment scenario in Northeast India the context of political,

social and economic history of the region and understanding the dynamics within the neo liberal framework.

- Wrote the chapter “Inequalities Matter than Differences” on gender dimension in the Human Development Report, 2014.
- Coordinated the Silver Jubilee Seminar on “Environment and Development Trade Off” at the Institute on 23-24 January, 2015.
- Delivered two lectures at Gauhati University on “Gender Budgeting” at the Refresher Course for College Teachers on March 9, 2015.
- Participated in a workshop on Witch Hunting organized by JB College, Jorhat on 30-31 January, 2015.

Dr. Joydeep Baruah

- Invited as a panelist in the symposium on Human Development in Global South: Post MDG in New Delhi organized by Institute of Human (IHD), New Delhi and WNTA 7 UNESCAP at IIC, New Delhi on 28-29 April, 2014.
- Invited to take part and present papers in the 50th Conference of Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA) organised jointly with International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) Inter Congress 2014 held on May 15-18, 2014 at the International Conference Hall of Makuhari Messe, Chiba City, Japan. Dr. Baruah presented a paper titled *Politics of ‘Governing’ Development in Post Colonial India: Ideas and Instruments*.
- Presented a paper “Understanding Limits to Human Development: Group Affiliation and Social Conditioning” at the Human Development and Capability Association’s annual conference on *Human Development in Times of Crisis* held in Athens, Greece from September 2-5, 2014
- Attended the *Executive Programme of Evaluation for Development* by UNICEF and Indian School of Business (ISB) at ISB, Mohali, October 12-19, 2014.
- Delivered an invited lecture on “Human Development: Concept and Measurement” at the Course on Research Methodology in Rural Development, National Institute of Rural Development, Guwahati, October 27, 2014.
- Delivered an invited lecture on “Quantitative Research Methods and Their Applications” at the Course on Research Methodology in Social Sciences organised by Department of Mass Communication, Tezpur University, Tezpur, December 1-2, 2014.

Mr. Akshay Jyoti Sarma

- Attended as a Resource Person in a training on “ Youth Leadership and Community Development” organised by NYKS, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports on 22nd November, 2014
- Participated in the Roundtable Workshop on *Sub-Regional Cooperation: India, Bangladesh and Myanmar* organized by ICRIER on November 27th, 2014 at Guwahati and made a presentation on trade and investment scenario in Northeast India the context of political, social and economic history of the region and understanding the dynamics within the neo liberal framework.
- Invited as a resource person to a National Integration Camp held a Nagaon organised by Nehru Yuba Kendra, Nagaon and District Administration, Nagaon on February 17, 2015 to speak on ‘India and Secularism’ in an academic session of the event.

Dr. Arunima Deka

- Her article “Dangerous Motherhood Exploring Maternal Deaths in Assam” got published in *Economic & Political Weekly*, August 16, 2014 vol XLIX no 33.
- Presented the paper “Women and their Bodies- Menstruation and the Construction of Sexuality” in a seminar on *Sexuality and Society in India* at Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla on 16th – 18th September, 2014.
- Presented the paper “Debating empowerment: The 73rd Amendment and women’s political participation in Assam” at *Prio Partner’s Meet* in Kolkata on 6-8 November, 2014.
- Participated in the Roundtable “Women and Peace Building: A Policy Dialogue” on February 21-22, 2015 in New Delhi.

Dr. Indrani Sarma

- Presented a paper on ‘*Forest Governance in India: Reconciling Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Needs of the Communities*’ at the 3rd UNITAR-YALE Conference on Environmental Governance and Democracy organized by United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR) and Yale University, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment. The Conference was held at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA from 5-7 September 2014.
- Written a book review “In Search of an Ordered Landscape” of the book *Founding an*

Empire on India's North-Eastern Frontiers 1790-1840: Climate, Commerce and Ecology by Gunnel Cederlöf (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014) in the JOURNAL OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT, Volume XI, Number 2 (ISBN: 0975-4016)

- An article "M.N. Srinivas: The Man and His Works" has been accepted to be published in Journal ANTHROPOS INDIA.
- Participated in a workshop on Witch Hunting organized by JB College, Jorhat on 30-31 January, 2015.

Shri Monjit Borthakur

- Has participated in the 28th Biannual Research and Training Workshop held on June 16-20, 2014 organised by South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE) at Thimphu. He had also made a presentation on his ongoing research study "Does urban greenery reduce the cost of cooling homes?" at the Royal University of Bhutan on 16th June, 2014.
- Published the paper "Operation of Backward Regions Grant Fund in Assam: Decentralised Planning or Populist Strategy?" at *Social Change and Development, Vol. XI No.2, 2014*
- Attended *Write Shop*, a workshop organised by South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE) on 7- 9 November, 2014 at Kathmandu Nepal

News from the Administrative Staff of the Institute

Deepshikha Pathak

- Was called as a Subject Expert Member for the interview of the Post of Library Assistant (Unreserved) for Administrative Staff College, Khanapara on 3rd January , 2015
- Was invited by State Resource Center, Assam as Resource Personnel on 5th February, 2015 to give Training on Documentation
- The paper entitled "Linking, improving, status, career: making in Library and Information Science MOOC" has been accepted at 10th International CALIBER 2015.