

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23



INDIA INSTITUTE FOR CRITICAL ACTION-CENTRE IN MOVEMENT  
(CACIM)

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## IN FOND REMEMBRANCE OF VIMALBHAI



We fondly remember Vimalbhai who unexpectedly left us on 15 th August 2022.

An ardent lover of both people and nature, his passion for rivers to remain free and flowing, remains the hallmark of his work that spans over 4 decades. He worked relentlessly to oppose mindless damming of rivers, pollution and supported communities to be involved in the developmental processes. A person who remained down-to-earth and non-consumerist throughout his life, Vimalbhai was often one of the 'go-to' persons for many friends and communities who would land up in Delhi with plans for dialogue, demonstrations and delegations. His home was always open to karyakartas of all movements. He was an excellent cook, artist, poet, docu-film maker, social worker, friend; all packed into one.

He was extremely resourceful as an intense social worker and diligently used all democratic tools to hold authorities and institutions accountable to people's rights and laws of the land. His imprint on many of the SC and NGT judgements, legislations over the years on environmental matters are part of his legacy. He was always keen on engaging with and training young people and so many of us have benefitted from our association with him, over the years.

In the last two years of the raging covid pandemic, in addition to enormous relief work, he immersed himself in assisting thousands of families of Khorigaon who were displaced by the Haryana Govt. and sought fair rehabilitation for them until the day he could remain healthy. He succumbed to severe health complications owing to his compromised immunity.

He was a Project Coordinator at CACIM.

## CACIM or the India Institute for Critical Action - Centre in Movement

CACIM (the India Institute for Critical Action - Centre in Movement) was founded in 2005 to promote a culture of critical reflexivity, thought and action in public life and activity. Our programmes are part of the larger effort to create spaces where dialogue can happen among people on the margins, academia and social groups. Through critical action, our attempts are to contribute broadly and more effectively for transformational social power.

CACIM grew out of an experimental informal association named Critical Action (CA) that existed during 2001-05 between scholars and organisers in different parts of the world; and of several years prior to that, of research into and direct involvement in the history and dynamics of social and political movement, by several CA members. Having started with a primary focus on the project of democratisation and active citizenship, we gradually expanded into the areas of environment, urbanisation, marginalities, active citizenship, and financial accountability.

### Mission

CACIM strives to strengthen the capacities and effectiveness of social organisations and their members and of their supporters, through helping them develop a deeper than usual analysis of broader political, social, and economic structures and dynamics that underlie various problems. Our mission is to stimulate multiple learning centres across disciplines and cultures, and support and encourage all those involved in different ways with social organisations – organisers, researchers, teachers, professionals, artists, composers, and thinkers, both mature and young, and to promote criticality in socio-political processes and actions. A related goal is to help social organisations to build mutually supportive alliances instead of operating alone on single issues.

### Focus of our work:

CACIM has envisioned and planned its key areas of engagement across:

- Strategies and Cultures of Movement: movement dynamics, social transformation processes and the role of alliances and networks
- Rights, Resources and Accountability: community rights over natural resources, access to rights, accountability of state and non-state actors
- Marginalities, Democracy and Power

### Key Processes

CACIM attempts to be critically reflective in all its work and processes, as well as all times, promote critical thought, engagement, and action, also learning from other initiatives and processes. Our core activities are:

- research and documentation resulting in publications in different languages
- building awareness and strengthening capacities through organising workshops, seminars, and other meetings
- networking and outreach collaborations with community groups and organisations across the country
- educational initiatives and courses for young people inside and outside the colleges and universities
- disseminate and promote all publications through the use of list serves, websites, and other new media.

## Annual Report 2022-2023: Introduction

There has been a global slowdown after the Covid pandemic-induced contraction of the global output, followed by the Russian-Ukraine conflict leading to a worldwide surge in inflation. This has led to the cost of living crisis for the common people and huge current account deficits for nations as interest rates hike by the US Federal Reserve System pulled capital into the US markets causing the US Dollar to appreciate against most currencies. Many countries are facing huge debt crises including Sri Lanka and Pakistan. According to the World Bank, the world may be edging towards a global recession and a sting of the financial crisis in emerging markets and developing economies that would do them lasting harm.

The response in countries like ours which is seemingly maintaining growth in the available context is to increase capital expenditure leading to massive investment in infrastructure projects across the country. The work on social and economic safeguard assume a special significance in this context. While there has been some movement towards adoption of Environmental and Social governance in the context of attracting private capital, the diluting of environmental and social protection policies continue.

The year also passed by with us connecting with communities who are affected by climate change to help them articulate their perceptions of just energy transition. There has been internal criticism that our country is not walking the talk regarding its pledges towards low-carbon development given at the climate summits. There is an increasing trend to do away with mandatory environmental impact assessments before the expansion of airport terminals, strategic highway projects and an increase in threshold limit for thermal power projects. It is pertinent that people need to be at the centre of this transition but are often left out in the dialoguing spaces. As agreed by communities, a just transition to a carbon-neutral society is more of a policy directive than attaining indicators and targets.

India took over the presidency of G20, a powerful club of highly influential and rich nations comprising 19 countries and the EU for the year 2023. G20 was formed in response to Asian Financial Crisis and currently influences policies at the global level, particularly on the global economy, financial stability and climate change.

Organisationally, primarily we have been responding to these challenges through knowledge-based responses through publications and public awareness on climate change, the role of finances in driving development projects and the need for accountability of the same. We are also actively working with civil society organisations to bring a people perspective, particularly from that of Southern countries.

Meanwhile, our work from previous years with natural resource based communities, urban marginalized and vulnerable communities continued.

# Community Organisation and Action towards Access to Justice and Good Governance

## Rights and Welfare of Sewer Workers

Delhi NCR, although capital of India, is home to several slums dwelled by the most marginalised communities, mostly scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The sewer workers come from marginalised communities and are often neglected in such emergency situations and have to risk their life to feed their families. Our team surveyed temporary sewer workers working under contractors in many areas of Delhi. In this survey, it was found that many of them do not get any kind of safety gears, soap, oil, etc; they neither have any kind of identity card nor work permit; there is caste discrimination with them at work place; If the contractor has a tender contract for six months, he pays wages to the sewer worker only for four months. Even from the wages which are given to the workers, 25%- 35% is deducted by the contractor; the contractor neither gives weekly off nor gives any holiday on government holidays. If he does not go to work on holidays or on medical emergencies, then money is deducted from the monthly/daily wages; diseases related to sewer cleaning are long-term and fatal, which comes under the category of occupational health disease. But due to non-availability of facility of insurance, ESI and PF to the sewer workers, they get deprived of it; the pressure of the contractors is so much that the sewer worker is not able to speak openly to neither the government nor any organization.

As continuation of our previous years' efforts with them, this year too we held multiple fact finding missions, meetings which included awareness meetings, safety training workshops, press conferences, and a roundtable discussion bringing state officials and all stakeholders together for dialogue.

Some of the programmes we held together with the sewer worker communities were:

- Capacity-building Workshop on Unorganised Waste Management, with 25 waste works leaders at Seemapuri Delhi.
- The 3rd Dalit Literature Festival (DLF) was organized at Aryabhatta College, Delhi University, on its premises on 3rd and 4th February 2023. The third edition was brimming with ideas and evolution of humanity as in making this world a better place to co-exist. It is precisely with this aim that the DLF worked on the theme: A better world is possible with literature. On both days the audience around witnessed speakers, writers, poets and performers from different parts of the country and it became a confluence of litterateurs and artistic performances.
- Every year on the occasion of Savitribai Phule Jayanti we organize discussions on education and its contributions to society, and this year we visited Delhi's colonies of Sewer Workers and Waste workers at Narayana Gaon Slum Camp, Khichripur Slum Camp and Begumpur Colony.
- Our team initiated in Delhi "Sunday for Sewer Workers" - A Campaign for Safety and Dignity
- We conducted a fact-finding study on 8th Oct. 2022 at Faridabad where during the cleaning 4 Sewer workers had accidents and died at QRG Hospital, Sect.16, Faridabad Haryana. Our team met with officials and victims' families.
- Another fact-finding happened on 17th Oct. 2022 on more sewer worker deaths during cleaning of septic tank in UP Ghaziabad.
- A meeting of more than 80 families of waste pickers was organized on 27th Dec. 2022, Tuesday, Basti Vikas Kendra, New Seemapuri, Delhi on implementing Solid Waste Management Rule 2016
- A meeting was held in Bhupur village, a place of waste segregation and habitation of waste workers, in the Gaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh on Ghaziabad, 24 Dec 2022. There is approx. 70 families in the waste work and segregation. Each family is comprised of 5-8 members, including school-going children.



## Welfare of Natural Resource-based Communities

Our work for peoples' access to land, resources, welfare, rights and justice for natural resource-based communities is spread across the mountain states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the plains of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, and the coastal belt of Kerala.

Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are mountain states whose more than 90% of the population is dependent on natural resources for their livelihood needs. In Himachal Pradesh, less than 12% of the total geographical area is under private ownership and 2/3 of this is under Commons where local communities have traditional access and usages but the ownership and management lies with the forest department. The objective of our engagement with the villages through our project was to build the capacity of local communities through awareness and training programs on various legal provisions of the Government available to them, in order to establish and secure the communities' access, traditional usages and management of natural resources which will lead to strengthening of the natural resource-based livelihoods.

We are working in 5 districts i.e. Lahaul and Spiti, Kinnaur, Sirmaur, Chamba and Kangra of Himachal Pradesh, where in partnership with Community-Based Organisations we are conducting awareness meetings and training programs for the local community. The past year saw the following activities by our teams:

**1. Local Dialogues, Awareness and Training programmes:** We are continuing our work of awareness and training programs in 6 districts like Sirmaur, Lahaul Spiti, Kinnaur, Kangra, Mandi and Chamba of Himachal Pradesh on community-led natural resource management and associated laws.





**Sirmaur:** Training and awareness meetings were organized in 10 villages of Shillai and Nohradhar tehsils namely Arlu, Bhutli Manal, Blaindhar, Rihada, Jarwa Juneli, Pab, Bindoli, Lani Borad, Bali Koti and Balona Balad.

We are also engaged with the Nomadic tribes (Gujjar Community - ST in HP) in Poanta Sahib, Sirmaur district. Training at 8 unsurveyed villages, namely Jammukhala, Puruvala, Majra, Girinagar, Dhaulakuwan, Gujjar Colony, Sukhchainpur and Behral in Paonta sahib were conducted and committees were formed at each place so that claim filing process can also begin.

**Lahaul:** 2 times training camps were organized in Keylong, Lahaul to help the claimants resolve the objections raised by the Sub Divisional Level Committee (SDLC) on their claim files. These camps were attended by claimants, FRC members and community-based organizations throughout the Lahaul Valley. This year in January, a total of 28 titles were given to the individual right holders.

**Spiti:** 2 day training program was organized in Kaza, twice.

**Kinnaur:** 4 Training programs were organized in Rupri, Bhabha Valley and Urni panchayat and a one-day convention on community-led natural resource management and associated laws was organized at Reckong po, Kinnaur with the women representatives of Kinnaur.

**Chamba:** Awareness meetings and two training programs on the rights of forest-dwelling communities were organized in 48 out of 53 panchayats in Tisa block which are Khushnagri, Bhanj Radu, Banantar, Aayal, Bairagadh, Kohal, Thalli, Chanju, Bhalodi, Shiri, Bihali, Santeva Chilli, Saprot, Lesui, Shalelbadi, Khajua, Ghulei, Bagheyi Garh, Kalhel, Dehgran, Kuthar Budhoda, Junaas, Paddhar, Bhavla, Thane Koti, Mangle, Charodi, Jashor Garh, Bonded, Jhajja Koti, Satyas, Kareri, Nera, Dehra, Sanyas, Tikrigarh, Charda, Guvadi, Guila, Tepa, Diyoli, Haratvas, Junga with active support of district administration.

**Mandi:** Awareness meetings and trainings were organized in 15 villages namely Teban, Chakheva, Fanerta, Firnu, Parlog, Bindla, Gwalpur, Mahog, Chauridhar, Nanj, Balidhar, Khadra, Katol, Shahot, Balaan.

**Kangra:** Awareness meetings were organized in 7 villages namely Chadhiyar, Brahamthedu, Rakh I, II and III, Bhont and Jamvalkad village of Bagora Panchayat.

Uttarakhand: Training was organized in Bajjpur, Uttarakhand with the Van Gujjars on resource access and rights of forest-dwelling communities.

**2. Research & documentation:** We conducted a study on analysis of the rights of forest communities focusing on community forest resource areas for all the constituencies of the State and prepared a report around the findings. This report and data were published and used as awareness-generation material among community members.



Documentation and research work related to writing and editing work for the publication of a report on the community forest governance initiatives of Mahila mandals in the trans-Himalayan valley of Lahaul is going on.



Understanding the community perspective on landslides in Kinnaur district. We visited around 21 village/panchayats in Kinnaur for the field work.

### 3. Capacity Building:

- A group of 16 people from different parts of Himachal Pradesh with different backgrounds (such as university students, community leaders, researchers, and Panchayati raj representatives) went for an exposure visit to Munsiri Uttarakhand to learn and explore how the communities in Uttarakhand are protecting and managing their Van Panchayats forests and sustainably using forest resources. The exposure visit was a week-long journey where we met and had a cross-learning with different organizations working on the issues of forest rights, women's rights, responsible tourism, migration etc.
- A two-day workshop on PESA and ST reservation in Vishakhapatnam was attended by the community representatives, one each from Lahaul, Spiti and Kinnaur. This workshop was attended by participants from all the scheduled 5 regions of the country.
- A national-level meeting of stakeholders was organized in Bhubaneswar on the potential of FRA in the context of tribal development on 7-8 July. It was attended and a presentation on the issues faced in Himachal Pradesh was given to the other participants.
- A three-day meeting of the pan Himalayan youth was organized in Sambhavna Institute from 24-27 Feb 2023 to discuss the issues and challenges being faced in the Himalayan region and build a solidarity network of youth from Himalayan states.

While in Mandla in Madhya Pradesh, the efforts for helping forest-dwelling communities access justice continued the past year as well. Regular follow-up meetings are conducted with the villagers applying for revenue land. A few major meetings and their findings are detailed below:



#### 1. Rights of forest-dwelling communities:

- The process of claiming community rights is being carried out in 12 villages. Under this, well-cutting by the Forest Department has been successfully stopped in the Mrigaha forest of Suarjhar village.
- Action regarding converting 2 forest villages of the work area into revenue villages has been proposed by the Gram Sabha and sent to the Sub-Divisional Officer.
- The claims of individual rights of other traditional forest dwellers (non-tribal) of 7 villages were pending at the government level for a long time. After investigating these claims, the government officials transcribed the statements of the claimants and verified the land.

2. Organic farming has been done for the Rabi crop by 24 farmers.

3. Due to the wrong code being uploaded to the computer of Chubhawal Panchayat, no one has getting Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana for the last 3 years. Complaint about this was given to the administration and the local MLA in the Jan Samvad program. After that, 84 Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana will be built. The work towards this has been initiated.



4. Under social security schemes, action has been taken to provide old age, widow and disabled pension to 16 women and 9 men from 2 villages.

5. A program was organized and the local MLA was made aware of the various problems of the Baiga tribe-dominated Bhanga Tola (Dongar village). The MLA has given administrative approval for the construction of a new Anganwadi centre, drinking water system and a road from the village to the main road.

6. A national-level meeting of stakeholders was organized in Bhubaneswar on the potential of FRA in the context of tribal development on 7-8 July. It was attended and a presentation on the issues faced in Himachal Pradesh was given to the other participants. Collector. In 2022-2023, 8 women and 20 men have presented new claims before the Collector. So far, 307 revenue land claims have been made.

7. A meeting/workshop has been organized with the community regarding the rights of forest communities and PESA Rules.

8. At present, action is being taken to prepare the Biodiversity Register in the villages on the banks of Narmada. A mapping of natural resources in 5 villages and an estimation of annual income from it is being prepared.

Similarly, support is extended to communities staying at Alaknanda Valley along River Tons in Uttarakhand, where Network Mori hydroelectric project construction is threatening the natural balance of the ecosystem. Rehabilitation policies for the communities were prepared for the affected families here. The rehabilitation policy for people affected by the Vishnugad Pipalkoti Hydro Electric Project has been unsuccessful since some families were not ready to leave their old habitats and because their new habitation was not at all planned. The struggle for compensation for families affected by Srinagar HDP is still ongoing and consistent support is provided to the families to access proper compensation. This work was disrupted by the untimely death of our main project coordinator Vimalbhai.

In the south, continuing our previous years' engagement with natural resource-based coastal communities a study was done to investigate the crises and survival of the fishermen women in the working class of the region. As a first step, several discussions were held with women working in different fields in the context of discussions with labour movement leaders, social workers, women leaders working in politics etc. on what should be the focus of data collection. If we want to understand the survival of fisherwomen in the Covid era, it is also necessary to understand how the power systems such as government, family, society etc. affect the survival of fisherwomen. Towards this, group discussions, life experiences of selected women and personal data collection were conducted to understand in detail how each fisherwoman survived the lockdown period. Working women of different ages were selected for data collection.

A sample survey was conducted in the fishing villages of Thiruvananthapuram district such as Poonthura, Valiyathura, Beemapalli, Valiyaveli and Cheriyaathura, and corrections were made in the survey form in order to understand in detail some of the things learned from the sample survey. The experiences of 250 women, 250 families and 1500 individuals were captured through this data collection. The family members include 650 women, 212 men, 345 youths and 293 children.

In the second phase, women councillors and fishermen leaders collected information from 250 women individually and through group discussions. A seminar was organised with selected labour leaders and women workers to discuss their experiences and suggestions with women leaders from different sectors.

It was understood that if epidemics and lockdown-like situations occur in the future, the survival of fisherwomen will be possible if they had knowledge beforehand. In particular, the livelihood opportunities and suggestions which emerged from the survey are useful for all the fishermen of Thiruvananthapuram district as the suggestions included could provide relief to the fishermen's families from additional financial burden while maintaining the food security of the family.

The insecurity and occupational, economic, social, health and crisis created by the lockdown imposed unexpectedly during the period of the Covid pandemic was very acute for the fishermen's families overcoming the crisis. When the problems faced by the women who were the breadwinners of the fishing family to maintain the family and the ways they solved them were presented to mainstream society, it was understood that the state's approach to the fishermen during the lockdown period had to be changed.

### Public Awareness and Capacity Building on Government's Rehabilitation and Welfare Schemes in Delhi NCR.

International Women's Day Celebrations by Community, Lal Kuan, Delhi, 12 March 2023: On the occasion of International Women's Day, the residents of Lal Kuan, a vibrant community situated at the border of Delhi and Haryana states, came together to celebrate and discuss important issues concerning women. The event saw active participation from local women, civil society organizations, and students, airing concerns on the need for better representation of women in different spheres, education, biased wage system, domestic violence, and women's contribution in times of crisis.

Facilitation Camps for Government Housing Schemes in Delhi NCR, 6th to 9th February, Delhi NCR: The residents of Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) are largely unaware of the various government entitlements provided to them, particularly in the area of housing schemes. Due to a significant number of families residing in huts or rented houses, housing schemes have become a preferred option for improving living conditions. However, many residents lack awareness about the application process, hindering their access to these schemes. To address this issue and make the process easier, a series of four-day facilitation camps were organized in the community.

Document Verification and Duplication Copping Mechanism: One of the key aspects of the facilitation camps was the checking of valid documents. The team were present to assist residents in ensuring that they had the necessary documents to apply for housing schemes. Additionally, a duplication coping mechanism was introduced to prevent multiple applications, ensuring fair access to the schemes for all eligible residents.

Connecting with Government Grievance Redressal System: Recognizing the importance of addressing grievances and concerns, the facilitation camps provided a platform for residents to connect with the government grievance redressal system. The team were available to answer questions, clarify doubts, and provide guidance on resolving any issues related to the housing schemes. This direct interaction instilled confidence in residents and reassured them of the government's commitment to their well-being.



**Legal awareness Workshop, 26 March 2023:** On 26th March, a workshop was organized for the residents of Khori Gaon to discuss their legal rights and explore the available options for addressing their concerns. The workshop aimed to empower the community by providing knowledge about the law and facilitating discussions on the challenges faced by the residents. The book 'Aam Admi aur Kanoon' (Common man and law) was a key resource discussed during the session.



**Focus on Safeguarding Laws:** The workshop primarily focused on the fundamentals of safeguarding laws that are essential for protecting the rights of individuals. Participants were encouraged to engage in interactive discussions and healthy debates surrounding laws and their implications. Various topics were covered, including the process of filing a First Information Report (FIR), different categories of crimes, rights during arrest, complaint redressal departments at the state and national levels, and women's rights. The workshop also shed light on women's rights, emphasizing the importance of gender equality, safety, and empowerment. The discussions aimed to create awareness about legal provisions that protect women's rights and promote gender justice within the community.

Apart from the workshop, follow-up sessions and resources were made available to the participants to continue their learning and address any specific legal queries or concerns they may have had. These resources included contact information for legal aid services, informational brochures, and online platforms where residents could access further information and support. The workshop was part of a larger effort to empower and educate the residents of Khori Gaon about their legal rights and equip them with the necessary tools to protect themselves and seek justice when needed.

**International Human Rights Day Calibration and Awareness Building, 10th December 2022:** On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, a vibrant celebration and awareness-building event was organized to promote human rights values and principles in Lal Kuan and bordering areas of Delhi-Haryana state. The event aimed to engage the community, raise awareness about human rights issues, and foster a sense of unity and commitment towards upholding human rights for all.

The event focused on raising awareness about the right to expression, livelihood, women, children and housing rights issues. Interactive sessions, workshops, and panel discussions were conducted to shed light on topics such as gender equality, freedom of expression, right to education, non-discrimination, and social justice. Through these activities, participants were able to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of human rights and their role in promoting a just and inclusive society.





## Support to communities in Bihar

- A workshop for families of information seekers who were killed in Bihar was organised in July. A public hearing was also organised around the issue of attacks on information seekers. This work has generated a lot of follow-up work. We have been helping with the follow-up with advocates and the information commission.
- Our team Supported rural employment guarantee workers in various districts. Often workers fail to get payments not knowing why payments to them failed. Our team in Bihar helped many workers with information from MIS which has in turn helped them to follow up with respective block-level offices.
- Our team have used the grievance redressal act of Bihar to highlight the issue of families of migrant workers not getting compensation after the death of the breadwinner of the household due to COVID-19.
- We have been attempting to help people with healthcare issues in marginalized communities. We try and facilitate their care starting from diagnosis, hospitalization, post-care care etc. We also have tried to help them access relief from the CM Relief Fund.



## Knowledge and Resource Sharing towards Empowerment of Youth, Students, Communities, Civil Society Organisations

CACIM, through its diverse projects, has attempted to undertake multiple actions for developing briefing material and content to foster understanding and engagement of students, activists, civil society, communities and researchers on complex issues of urban agriculture, cities' riverfronts, global and national financial architecture, especially related to that of economy and development. Our team developed content based on action and desk research on diverse dimensions of the mentioned areas, and they were published as briefing materials, reports, primers, and articles; undertook field visits wherever possible to deepen engagement with communities; organised multiple webinars; engaged in solidarity support to communities and peoples groups by providing technical inputs to strengthen their struggles.

Some of the major areas covered by the team in 2022 are:

### Adequate environmental and social safeguard policies in financial institutions and investments:

One major part of our work was on building public opinion and systems to promote adequate environmental and social safeguard policies in financial institutions and investments for responsible investments. According to a recent RBI report, only 2 out of 12 public sector banks and 4 out of 16 private sector banks have put in place an internal strategy for managing climate risk and integrating it into their risk management framework. The need and effort are to bring a public discourse on the need for adequate environmental and social safeguards in financial institutions and investments. This is being done in multiple ways by creating a knowledge base on the issue and engaging in public awareness through printing leaflets, participating and raising this in meetings and discussions, organising meetings etc.

- Publication of Need for Environment and Social Safeguard Policy for Indian Financial Institutions: The public awareness work for building better accountability systems was supported by bringing out an analysis which looks into where Indian systems are trailing with regard to social and environmental policies and existing systems within the country. The handbook compiles the need for environmental and social safeguard policies for financial institutions in India from the perspective of various stakeholders involved. It details why there is a need for demanding environmental and social safeguard policies for Financial Institutions through examples of various projects which impacted people's lives and resulted in environmental and social costs.

The publication argues that while there have been social movements that have and continue to raise issues on the environmental and social impacts of the projects from the human rights perspective, the financial institutions that fund these projects have long been out of scrutiny. There are hardly any effective mechanisms to hold financial institutions accountable. There are hardly any questions on the impacts of such lending to project finance on the institutions themselves, on the customers, or on the people who would be impacted by the project.

A second booklet on the need for environmental and social safeguards was published for communities to understand what such policy could help protect the rights of people and the environment while creating transparent financial systems.

In response to recent policy developments undertaken by India's banking regulator, Reserve Bank of India, an article was written in The Wire which mapped climate policy, finance and banking landscape and argued for the implementation of environmental and social safeguard mechanisms in Indian financial institutions.

Team members also wrote blogs and articles on the need for the adoption of environmental and social safeguards.

- Analysis of financial institutions' policy orientation towards environmental and social safeguards, identifying gaps and limitations

The Gap analysis is an attempt to analyze the policy orientation of financial institutions with regard to environmental and social safeguards identifying the existing gaps and limitations. This is done by comparing the existing policies with an ideal set of principles that need to be enshrined in developing an environment and social safeguard policy.

This study has taken the top two Financial Institutions that are lending to large scale projects – Public banks, private banks, insurance companies, NBFCs. For each of the institutions, the study looks into its available policies on the environment and sustainability. Annual reports of the last three years (2018 – 2022) are studied for any commitments from the institutions on ESS, Climate crisis etc.

- Awareness videos on the need for safeguards

The awareness video on safeguard policy goes into a particular incident and then builds on to the story on how projects are funded and why it is essential to have environmental and safeguard policies in place. The five-minute video uses animation, and live visuals in the story to drive the point. The video is used in awareness sessions and discussions with communities

- Impact on national financial institutions funding on communities.

As part of building the knowledge base and narrative, various visits to communities that are impacted by development projects were undertaken. These visits apart from deepening the understanding also led to community-level interaction and intervention. This led to the identification of two thermal power projects, mapping their impact and interacting with the community leading to communities engaging with financial institutions citing violations of the respective banks' commitments to Environmental Safeguards and sustainability issues, lapse or violation of environmental laws. Communities wrote to twelve financial institutions that put finances into these projects.

### Just transition by integrating ESF and human rights into renewable energy investment:

The transition to low-carbon development through prioritising renewable energy is the path which nations are following. It is important that this transition needs to be a just one by integrating social and economic rights into the framework. The case study is looking at one of the largest solar parks in the world which is in the state of Rajasthan.

- Case study of Bhadla Solar Park: The Bhadla Solar Park in Rajasthan covers 5,700 hectares with solar panels to produce 2.25 GW of power and is developed in four phases with an estimated investment of INR 98.5 Billion. Field visits to the area have brought out issues faced by the community whose livelihood was dependent on community land. The community land was being used for cattle rearing and for small-scale farming with incidental rains during monsoon season. Several families in Bhadla village do not own land of their own and are dependent on the community land. The land was however given to the solar park by the state government. Given that the area lies in the Thar desert where water is being brought through the Indira Gandhi Canal from Punjab for drinking and irrigation purposes, the second major area of conflict is on water usage where water from canals, tube wells and community ponds are being used for washing solar panels. It is estimated that there are 10 million solar panels and some estimates pitch 7000 – 20000 litres per MW per wash. The livelihood of cattle rearers is affected by the loss of common lands. Interestingly, the electricity supply is very erratic on the basis of Bhadla village which was visited. The case study report is under production currently.
- Publication of Rewa Solar report: The report on Rewa Ultra Mega Solar Power Project, published in March 2021, was printed in 2022 due to demand from many quarters and is being shared with various groups as it covers some of the issues like impact on land, water and livelihood in the said project. These we hope will be pointers to other communities which are being impacted by solar power like that of Bhadla.
- Briefing paper on India's climate action pledges: The briefing paper 'India's climate action pledge at Paris COP -21 (NDC) and Glasgow COP 26' was brought out analysing GOI's NDC and their compliance and achievements. While India is very much on course on some of its pledges, some are clearly off-course. The paper finds what India has pledged and what we have achieved is not sufficient to contribute our fair share of climate protection for a safer 1.5 C temperature rise limit (by the end of this century) agreed upon.
- A briefing paper The Great Indian Power Crisis was published with India facing a largescale power crisis, triggered by the coal shortage. The paper argues that a cocktail of poor planning, slow transition, financial mess and climate change have been the key factors behind the crisis. Any attempt to address the crisis, a phenomenon which is likely to repeat year after year, needs to keep these at its core.

## Strengthen civil society platforms on financial accountability for monitoring and demanding accountability in national and international institutions and investments.

Facilitating and strengthening a platform for demanding financial accountability is an absolute need to engage and collectivise people's perspectives and demands in financial investments and policies. Though the scope of the work is vast, this would enable a platform to further the demand for social safeguards in national finance institutions.

**a) Outreach and visit to states:** The effort in the year was to link with various groups across the country through communications and visits to build the network initially. Planned visits were conducted in the first phase to Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. These visits include visiting prominent personalities, academicians, and civil society leaders and conducting civil society meetings on the need for social safeguards in financial institutions. An [FAQ on environmental and social safeguards](#) was published and circulated for the state visits along with a briefing note on Environmental and Social safeguards for a deeper understanding of the issue. Some of these were translated into [regional languages](#) for better communication and reach.

The meetings brought together various movements including Gandhians, environmental groups, Dalit groups, land rights groups, academicians, lawyers, cultural activists etc. The participants welcomed the idea of taking forward issues on accountability of financial institutions and matters on the economy and finance that impact people.

The network as a whole responded to the SEBI consultation paper on regulating ESG rating agencies. The [response](#) critiqued the ESG framework that is being pushed to increase profits rather than as environmental and social safeguards. It also emphasized the need for accountability mechanics and mandatory policies to have any impact on the companies and financial institutions.

The visits resulted in linking with groups and initial steps towards building a network of people and groups working on financial accountability issues. The network is semi-formalised with meetings and the formation of state chapters

**b) Meeting of the Working Group:** There was at least two meeting of the working group. The working group met online on December 1st 2022 with participants representing various organisations and networks. Another physical meeting was held in Chennai on Dec 6, 2022, in the sidelines of the Energy Finance Conference to discuss the way forward and came up with the following plan

- Continue to expand membership
- Formation of more state chapters
- Hold consultations on social and environmental safeguards for financial institutions
- Take forward the wealth tax campaign
- Alliance building among natural resource-based communities and organisations
- Regular distribution of materials on finance and economy in various languages and medium

The visit to states and the efforts to meet people during these visits along with small meetings of civil society groups helped to connect with local issues and civil society leaders at the regional and grassroots level. The level of interaction was informal and could connect intensely with the groups.



We have started discussions with various banks based on concrete experiences on the ground to create an impact-driven logic and context for demanding social safeguards and why banks have to adopt the same. The banks need a push for this to happen as many of them are yet to travel that path themselves without a government directive or public pressure.

### Creating Resources for Communities and Social Processes

As part of our work - creating pedagogical tools for Class 8th Students to include urban agriculture in the teaching method, we began our collaboration with Joseph and Mary Public School, Burari in late October. Multiple initial meetings were conducted with administration and faculty in October and November (both in person and online), and basic data on the school's processes, the students' daily schedules etc. was collected during November and December. The curriculum review process also happened during this time. Additional meetings with the faculty were conducted in January, and the interactions with the students - including a field trip to a nearby farm were conducted between 23rd and 27th January. Right now, we are in the process of writing the case study report and finalising a toolkit based on the findings/ feedback we received from the school. We are also taking forward the draft Urban Agriculture Policy we launched in September. As a follow-up, we have been conducting a series of public dialogues with local communities in December and January. We have held 7 meetings as of now, with the following groups - farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Pawta Faridabad (17th December), women in JJ Colony Bawana (24th December), young girls in Savitribai Phule Community Centre Bawana (24th December), women from Indira Basti Timarpur (6 Jan), women from Buddh Vihar Rohini (8 Jan), farmers from Majnu Ka Tila (21 Jan), and fisherfolk in Ramghat (19 Jan). The first two editions of the Nagar Nadi dispatch - an attempt to study the interlinkages between the rivers, urban processes and infrastructure development proposed and executed on rivers at regional and city - were released the first 2 dispatches in January 2023, and work on 3 further editions is ongoing. We also finalised and uploaded 2 of our Nagar Nadi Fellowship reports (one on Banaras and the other on Surat) in January. A third report documenting the state of the river Musi in Hyderabad was finalised on 24th January and will be published soon. Fieldwork for the Nagar-Nadi report on Pune was also completed in November, and work on finalising it is ongoing. Other ongoing work includes a book on Ecological Urbanism, which a consultant is working on, and will complete by March end. 2 documentaries are also in process - one on the gig economy in the city, and the other on play in the city.

### Recovering Education of Girls from Marginalised Community from Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

We inaugurated the Savitribai Phule Community Centre for young girls and women in Timarpur on 10th December, apart from the one we run in Bawana. Regular activities at both these centres that are ongoing include the availability of a study centre for girls within the community who do not have a good learning environment at home, classes for girls till the 12th-grade level - for those who are not able to access education, support for school admission for girls, general SRHR awareness workshops, storytelling sessions on movement leaders etc. A book bank was also recently started at both centres (in Bawana in November and in Timarpur since its inauguration) for students from classes 10 to 12th. An empowerment workshop was also conducted at both centres (Bawana - 11 Feb, Timarpur - 20 Feb).

### Community Empowerment and Leadership Development of Young Women

A Youth Leadership Development Program is also ongoing at the Bawana Centre since November, where 11 young girls and women are given leadership training. The selection call for this was sent out in October, and applications were received and selected in November. The first orientation workshop was



held on 29th November, and the first set of trainings will happen soon over a period of 8 days. A similar leadership program is being conceptualised for the Timarpur Centre as well.

## Fellowships

**Smitu Kothari Fellowships:** In memory of Smitu Kothari, a distinguished environmentalist and scholar-activist, in 2018, the Centre for Financial Accountability established the Smitu Kothari Fellowship (SKF) to encourage young writers to critically look at the world of development finance beyond the lending and 'development'. The fellowship is open to writers in English and vernacular languages, aged below 35 years. The three-month-long Fellowship, between mid-November and mid-February, entails writing comprehensive, well-researched, and investigative articles, photo essays or short documentaries on the specific area/projects. The fellows are mentored by Rakesh Dewan, editor of Sarvodaya Press Service, assisted by subject experts at CFA.

The first year saw five promising researchers writing on the themes of Financing Smart cities and Industrial corridors, International finance on climate change, and rising NPAs in the thermal power sector.

Following the increasing need for fellowship for young writers, CFA continued with the second call for fellowship in 2019 focusing on renewable energy, NBFCs, the Infrastructure sector, Ease of Doing Business and Inland Waterways. The writers selected for the year doubled this time, which was very encouraging for the team.

During the third year in 2020, calls were sent out for the themes on privatisation of the infrastructure sector and banks, the Indian coal sector and inclusive post-COVID recovery, and eleven writers were selected by the Fellowship committee.

The fourth year had 13 fellows working on Privatisation of the Public Sector, Pandemic, Public finance and Public health, Energy Extraction and Renewables, Infrastructure Finance, State Preparedness and capacity to deal with the pandemic and Steps to revive the economy.

The theme for the 5th SKF included environment, fiscal federalism, inequality, urban planning, and waste management. The ten recipients for 2022 (three months fellowship) come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and hail from different parts of the country across the length and breadth of the nation.

## Conferences

### Energy Finance Conference India (EFCI) 4th Edition

As in the previous years, this year's EFCI brought together activists, practitioners, academics and policymakers together to discuss issues around the energy sector in India. With the context of discussing India's energy finance and economy, the conference analysed, in-depth, the energy sector in India- briefing the energy landscape in India with its recent changes such as the Electricity Amendment Bill, also touching upon the complications persisting within the energy sector and how to aile them. With finance being one of the key focuses of the conference, it delved deeper into the nitty gritty of the public and private players within the energy sector. Discussing the financing models in the energy sector, the conference provided a nuanced understanding of the functioning of the financing models and mechanisms in the RE sector. Consequentially, a discussion around ESG, RE & storage, up-and-coming infrastructure in the RE sector, next generation in the bio-fuel technologies etc. was emphasized upon discussing India's challenges moving ahead on the confluence of energy finance and climate justice.

The 4th EFCI was held on December 6-7, 2022 at IIT Madras, in collaboration with IGCS and Climate Trends.

### **Conference on Finance in India (COFI) – First Edition**

The team along with Focus on the Global South and Economic Research Foundation organised a two-day Conference on Finance in India (COFI) from 11th – 12th November 2022. The conference analyzed the depth of the predicted global recession, its genesis, dynamics and intricacies with the consequences of the recession on emerging markets and especially India. The conference gave me an opportunity to scratch the surface and ask some fundamental questions about the susceptibility of finance capital to crises and their impact on developing economies. Attempts were made to critique the mainstream ways of combating recession and inflation and look for alternative processes to strike the right balance between inflationary and recessionary tendencies. To go beyond the GDP-centric understanding of growth and recession to focus on the informal sector which has taken the worst hit over the last few years was also central to the discussions... The deliberations at the conference delved into the subject of overleveraged crony capitalism that thrives today, its ramifications in such uncertain times, our learnings from the 2008 crisis and the crucial role that public sector banks played in insulating us. Finally, the convening also attempted to evaluate India's particular vulnerabilities defined by our economic choices, the socio-political consequences of the same, the possible future trajectories and the way forward.

### **National Conference on Infrastructure Finance**

Our team organised a national conference in Delhi on 29-30 August 2022 to build on discussions on the infrastructure development in India, and the increasing importance and speed of implementation of infrastructure projects regarding economic growth and national development. The conference sought to build the interlinkages between the macro and the micro factors in this aspect, including the launch of national programs to construct infrastructure projects and the formation of new institutions to finance these projects. It also attempted to deep dive into specific thematic sectors and develop an understanding of the recent legal, regulatory, financing and other mechanisms to increase the pace of implementation of these projects. The sessions included discussions on governance issues, privatisation and public-private partnerships, climate crisis and environmental jurisprudence.

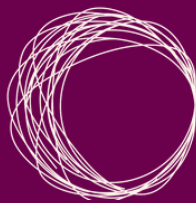
### **Other Activities**

A Global Plastics Treaty is being negotiated under the aegis of the UNEP. This is an outcome of the advocacy with the United Nations Environment Assembly by several civil society organisations globally since 2017. There are to be 4 rounds of negotiations of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and then a final INC where member states will sign the treaty that is negotiated. CACIM has been involved in this process since the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) 1 which was held in 2022 from November 18 – December 2 in Uruguay. During the proceedings, CACIM had the opportunity to make a written submission.

We have also been a part of several conferences, workshops and meetings at IISER Pune, Car Free City Alliance Pune, PUSA Delhi, WRI Delhi, and Bauddh Circle Cycling Event Nepal.

CACIM (the India Institute for Critical Action – Centre in Movement) is an initiative towards cultivating and nurturing a culture of critical reflexivity and action in individual and public work.

In principle we expect to work in many fields, but our focus at the moment is on activism, research, and publication in relation to social and political movement. We primarily work by building and maintaining real and virtual spaces for fundamental research and critical reflection, exploration, action, and creation in the field of movement : Books, seminars, workshops, websites, listserves, and newsbulletins and action alerts. Initiated in India in 2005, CACIM is transnational, intercultural, and interdisciplinary in vision and culture.



INDIA INSTITUTE FOR CRITICAL ACTION-CENTRE IN MOVEMENT (CACIM)