



Annual Report 2019-2020

A. Hazards Centre

This is the fourth year that Hazards Centre has been facing financial constraints that have curtailed and constricted its activities. Given the limitation of funds and, therefore, of personnel, the Centre could not take up any activities on its own; but that further strengthened the supportive role of the Centre. The critical interventions in 2019-20 are briefly outlined in this annual report, arranged in five sectors of engagement – which often intersect with each other.

Governance

We continued to participate in initiatives to promote and protect public transport in Mumbai, Gurgaon, and Kolkata with local civil society organisations. Larger issues of investment in public infrastructure were further explored at Jaipur, Nagpur, and Kochi; including debates on public health care in Delhi and Kodungalur. The Centre assisted in analysing the Master Plan of Srinagar, and in the popularisation of the fundamental rights embodied in the Constitution.

In Delhi, our staff facilitated, to the extent our resources would allow us, the community efforts in Bhalaswa, Bawana, Narela, and Kathputli Colony to obtain their entitlements of water, education, land, housing, health and sanitation. All these entitlements are included in both laws and policies on the government but it is an uphill task to actually access them in the face of bureaucratic apathy, corruption, as well as opposition, especially from the land owning and rehabilitation agencies. This year, we were also able to complete the legal brief, with the help of a lawyer, to provide a frame for the communities' demand for right to land tenure rather than to built-up housing. Late in the year we were also a party to the revival of the Sajha Manch, an alliance of several grass-roots organisations in Delhi which the Centre had originally promoted in 1996.

Labour

The issue of safety at work figured prominently in this year. We pursued the work initiated last year with the stone carving and stone crushing industries in Pindwara and Beawar to provide safer conditions for workers. Workers have themselves begun to design, produce, and experiment with dust-extraction technologies that can be retrofitted on power tools and in workplaces to reduce exposure to hazardous silica pollution. The issue of silicosis was also discussed at a national conference organised in Delhi.

Research on developing an affordable Capnometer was revived this year with a young entrepreneur in Delhi and this will help in measuring energy expenditure at work, thus paving the way for computing what should be a living wage in accordance with the tripartite agreement at the 15th Indian Labour Conference. A collaborative study in Dehradun on the rate of decomposition of dry fecal matter under ambient conditions began to show promising results which can be used to argue for an alternative waste management system as compared to underground sewers and septic tanks that are fatal to sewer workers. We have also prepared modules on participatory research with labour and how to promote and use labour laws for worker welfare.

Environment

The mapping of the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi valleys to locate the extent of environmental degradation over a span of 14 years was completed. A layer of maps to illustrate to changing patterns of pollution in the Singrauli area and its impact with over 40 years of monitored data was initiated, while continuing with legal and technical support to the local organisations.

Discussions were held with groups in Kolkata, Delhi, and Chennai on the causes of air pollution and how to mitigate it. At the urging of experts in the chemical industry we approached the Department of Chemicals to take immediate action to treat the thousands of tonnes of waste that was polluting the groundwater in Bhopal. A project was initiated with a waste-pickers organisation to steer a study in Naintial, Delhi, Indore and Pune to document the impact on waste-pickers and the environment if plastics were eliminated from the waste stream. We also tried to intervene in workshops on climate change, agro-ecology, disaster management, river ecology, waste management, urban environments, and preventive approaches.

Communication

Workshops for students and activists on how to rethink development and environment were conducted in Siddhbari, Kandbari, and Thrissur. The Centre offered support to an alliance of child care organisations which came together on the issue of harassment of children and women and caregivers by persecutors. There was also an attempt to review the state of education in the divided State of Kashmir. In addition, several somewhat unsuccessful attempts were made to extend the findings of the study on agency of railway children to a larger audience in order to question the prevailing rescue and return mode of care and protection.

As these activities, as well as the ones related earlier, demonstrated to us, while we could not take up any proactive measures for information dissemination, the Centre had a store of very valuable stories in its archives that had great use as learning material about participation of people in the democratisation of knowledge. There were at least 150 stories over 25 years that could map out the trajectory of communities who learnt from the Centre's inputs and began carrying out their own research into their concerns, grasped the problem at its roots, and found their own solutions; while some even took the initiative to extend their knowledge to other communities – at least, according to the information in our files. Thus, a small initiative began this year to start organising the archives so that the stories could be revealed and documented.

Administration

The limiting element has been, as mentioned before, the lack of financial resources. About Rs. 32.1 lakh remain frozen in the FCRA Bank accounts because of the non-renewal of our certification. Another Rs. 4.8 lakh remain pending because Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung has refused to reimburse expenses. Our annual expenditure therefore, remained restricted to the Rs. 16.2 lakh that we were able to raise from our extremely generous individual donors. Several proposals have been submitted for mass monitoring of air pollution, participatory solid waste management, and science education in schools, to both private as well as public institutions but there has been no response during the year.

A legal notice was served on the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; and there have been a series of hearings in the Delhi High Court on our petition questioning the Ministry's non-renewal of FCRA. The High Court directed the Ministry to give us a fair hearing and then give a reasoned order. The Ministry finally did conduct a hearing and then gave an adverse order citing that, "The Memorandum of Association of Sanchal Foundation lists out activities like ... mobilization of communities (and) advocating contentious issues"; "its main functionary was once denied entry into Jammu & Kashmir"; "foreign contribution has been used ... for advocating referendum and

demilitarization in Kashmir”; and “is driven by ultra Left ideology”. None of these charges have any factual basis and the Order is being challenged.

B. Independent Council for Road Safety International (ICoRSI)

1. Special session on Evidence Gap Maps organised on 25 May 2019 at the World Conference on Transport Research in Mumbai.
2. Publication of a *Status Report on Road Safety in India 2019* in collaboration with IIT Delhi (http://tripp.iitd.ac.in/assets/publication/Road_Safety_in_India_2019update1.pdf).
3. Organisation of an International Course on Transportation Planning and Safety in December 2019 in collaboration with IIT Delhi (http://tripp.iitd.ernet.in/activities/training_program_detail/11).
4. Organisation of an International Workshop on *Globalising Vision Zero: Generating Scientific Evidence for the Road Ahead* in Stockholm, Sweden, as a Pre-Conference event on the occasion of the United Nations 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety (<https://www.roadsafetysweden.com>).
5. Publication of a special issue of the *International Journal of Injury Control and Safety Promotion* (<https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/nics20>). This special issue is devoted to state of the art articles on road safety commissioned by ICoRSI (Sanchal).
6. Preparation of Evidence Gap Maps in the area of traffic safety in collaboration with Campbell Collaboration International and publishing the same. The map is a matrix of safety intervention categories and changes in crash rates and identifies existing evidence (or lack of it) from all effectiveness studies and systematic reviews which can inform policy. Out of a total of over 100,000 citations collected, about 2,000 have been selected for their scientific rigour for further analysis and categorisation. This work will enable future research and discussions to be based on approaches and interventions which science shows can be effective in different parts of the world. This work started in July 2019 and is expected to be completed in March 2021 (<https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1077>)

Finances

A total of rs. 15,00,000 was received as grants in 2019-2021