

Annual Report 2003-2004

Introduction to the Centre for Environment and Food Security

The Centre for Environment and Food Security (CEFS) was founded in April, 2001 by some eminent scholars, writers, environmentalists, scientists and activists like Prof. Ashis Nandy, Dr. Kamla Chowdhry, Dr. Pradipto Roy, Mr. Anupam Mishra, Prof. P. S. Ramakrishnan, Dr. T.N. Khoshoo, Mr. P.N.Singh and Mr. Parshuram Ray. The CEFS was founded with the broad objective of knowledge-based activism on the issues of poverty, hunger, food security, sustainable livelihoods, sustainable development and ecological security. Research, Advocacy and Campaign on these issues is the core mandate of this NGO based in New Delhi. Parshuram Ray is the Founder Director of CEFS.

CEFS is currently carrying out a study and advocacy project on the political economy of hunger in Adivasi areas of India in collaboration with HIVOS- Netherlands.

In last three years CEFS has been documenting and carrying out secondary research on the issues of hunger and poverty in tribal areas of India, Globalization, agrarian distress and farmers' suicide and the challenge of sustainable development and sustainable livelihood.

The main aims and objectives of the Centre for Environment and Food Security include:

- To promote study and research on environment and food security to create awareness and knowledge among the people.
- To disseminate environment and food security knowledge among the people by conducting training programs and holding lectures, workshops and seminars.
- To implement and encourage all kinds of projects, plans and programs for promoting ecological balance and food security.
- To build a resource centre on environment, food security and sustainable livelihoods.

- To mobilize people and build a network of grassroots organizations, civil society groups, NGOs, activists and experts for promoting sustainable development and food security.
- To publish books, research papers, monographs and occasional papers on environment and food security related issues.
- To carry out intensive campaign with media for covering and highlighting the issues of environment and food security.
- To promote strategies for conservation of natural and human-managed biodiversity, which have implications for food and human security for all sections of the society, especially societies living close to nature and natural resources.

Introduction of CEFS Founders and Board Members

1. **Ashis Nandy** is presently Senior Fellow of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and Chairperson of the Committee for Cultural Choices and Global Futures, both in Delhi. He has been Director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (1992-1997); Woodrow Wilson Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center, Washington (1988); Charles Wallace Fellow, Department of Politics, University of Hull (Summer, 1990); Fellow, Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities, University of Edinburgh (Summer, 1991); UNESCO Professor, Centre for European Studies, University of Trier, Germany (Summer, 1994); and Regent's Fellow, University of California, Los Angeles. Trained as a sociologist and clinical psychologist, Nandy's research interests are political psychology, cultures of knowledge, utopias and visions, popular culture, and futures. Among Nandy's books are *Alternative Sciences* (1980,1995); *At the Edge of Psychology* (1980); *The Intimate Enemy* (1983); *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias* (1987); *The Tao of Cricket* (1989); *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism* (1994); and *The Savage Freud and Other Essays in Possible and Retrievable Selves* (1995). He is also co-author of *The Blinded Eye* (1993) also published as *Barbaric Others*, and *Creating a Nationality* (1995). Nandy has edited two books, (ed), *Science, Hegemony and Violence* (1988); and *The Secret Politics of our Desires*; and co-edited

The Multiverse of Democracy (1996). Oxford University Press is now bringing out an omnibus edition of all his works. Nandy's works have been translated into a number of languages, among them Bengali, Chinese, Finnish, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Malayalam, Marathi, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Tamil. He has also contributed to major human rights reports on ethnic and communal violence and democratic elections.

2. **Dr. Prodipto Roy** has an M.Sc and Ph.D. in Rural Sociology with a minor in Agricultural Economics from the Pennsylvania State University, USA and a B.Sc. in Agriculture from the Agricultural Institute of Allahabad University. He started his professional career as an Assistant Professor of sociology, Washington State University, (1957-61); Director (Sociology) National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad (1961-68); Director and Executive Chairperson, Council for Social Development, New Delhi(1968-1979); Visiting Professor, Tribhuvan University(1979-81) and then Sociologist, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu (1984-89). Important Assignments: UN Centre for Regional Development, Nagoya, Japan 1974; ILO Bangladesh 1975; UN Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia(1981); IBRD Consultant (1982-83); Australian AID project on R & R of project affected people due to Coal-mining, Jharkhand, 1994-98; appraisal of a Tree-growing programme, Palamu, Jharkhand (1998-2000). Publications: *Manual for Block Level Planning* NIRD, Hyderabad, Macmillan, Delhi, 1977 with BR Patil; *Planning with People: Decentralization in Nepal*, with Sant B Gurung, Orient Longmans, New Delhi 1987; *Third World Surveys: Survey Research Methods in Developing Nations*, New Delhi, Macmillan 1976; *Ecological Responsibility in Social Change*, Vol 31 Nos 1 & 2, 2001.

3. **Prof. P.S. Ramakrishnan**, Professor Emeritus of Ecology at Jawaharlal Nehru University, is an internationally recognized ecologist working in the interphase areas of linking ecological processes with social processes, directed towards sustainable livelihood/development of traditional societies. For his work, involving over 350 research publications and 8 books in this area of study, he has received a variety of national and

international recognitions. He is currently involved in networking with a large number of scientists through many national and international programmes.

4. **Dr. T.N. Khoshoo**, was (expired in July 2002) one of the foremost environmental scientists of the country. His environmental canvas widened considerably when he was secretary to the govt. of India in the dept. of Environment. He was fellow of all the major science academies in country, and had to his credit a number of prestigious medals, prizes and awards including the Padma Bhushan, Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar, Government of India (1993) and Sasakawa Award of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-2002).

5. **Dr. Kamla Chowdhary**, currently heading the Vikram Sarabhai Foundation, is former Chairperson of the National Wastelands Development Board, Govt. of India, former Director of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, former Chairperson of the Central for Science and Environment. She was faculty at Harvard University and has worked with the World Bank and Ford Foundation too.

6. **Shri Anupam Mishra**, currently General Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, is a distinguished social and environmental activist of India. Mishra's contribution in popularizing and reinventing the role of traditional Water Harvesting Practices of India has earned him a special name in the country. He is author of the celebrated book on traditional tanks of India titled *Aaj Bhi Khare Hai Talab (Tanks are still alive)* which has been translated in many languages and the print - run of the original Hindi version is a record 75,000 copies till now.

7. **Shri B. P. Singh** is a distinguished scholar and civil servant. Over the past 40 years he has held a variety of important positions within Assam as well as in the Government of India including Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forests (1993-95), Culture Secretary (1995-97) and Home Secretary (1997-99). He was Executive Director and Ambassador at the World Bank (1999-2002) representing India, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. B.P. Singh has authored four books including the two widely

acclaimed ones: “The Problem of Change: A Study of North-East India” and “India’s Culture – the State, the Arts and Beyond” both published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi. He is also Chief Editor of the “Millennium Book on New Delhi” published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi in 2001. Currently, B.P. Singh is Chancellor of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath (a Deemed University). He is also Chief Editor of the South Asia Series on “Perspectives on Economics, Technology and Governance” of Oxford University Press, New York.

Programmes and Projects Implemented during 2003-2004

1. Research and Advocacy Project on the Political Economy of Hunger in Adivasi Areas of Rajasthan and Jharkhand

Since November 2003, we have been doing research on the issue of hunger in tribal areas of Rajasthan and Jharkhand. This project is an effort to bring the issue of hunger in Adivasi areas in the forefront of intellectual discourse and policy planning. We have already carried out a sample survey of one thousand Adivasi households from forty Adivasi dominant villages spread over four Adivasi dominant districts of Rajasthan and Jharkhand. We carried out our sample survey in Udaipur and Dungarpur districts of Rajasthan, and Gumla and West Singhbhum districts of Jharkhand. We are currently doing survey data analysis and detailed research on the same.

2. Research on the impact of international farm-trade on the livelihoods of arecanut farmers and labourers in Karnataka and Kerala

CEFS carried out a field research on the impact of WTO and trade liberalization on the livelihoods of arecanut farmers of Uttar Kanara, Shimoga, Davangiri and Dakshina Kanara districts of Karnataka, and Kasargod district of Kerala. This research project carried out during July-December 2003 also involved a field trip of over two months undertaken by CEFS director Parshuram Ray.

To assess and understand the impact of price crash in arecanut on the areca growers and labourers, CEFS carried out a random survey in more than 10 areca growing villages spread over 5 districts of Karnataka and Kerala. During this survey we conducted open-ended interviews of more than 100 Areca farmers and over 50

labour families. Besides visiting these 10 villages, we went to another 15 villages to study the individual cases of areca farmers' suicides in these five districts.

More than 95% of areca growing families interviewed were burdened with heavy loans from banks, cooperative societies and private money lenders. Till 1999, most of these areca farmers were leading a comfortable life and earning a decent livelihood. These families enjoyed very high status in society and non-areca growing farmers of other regions were jealous of their prosperity. Among the 100 families interviewed, there were less than 5 who were not borrowing money and these had large areca gardens and some bank savings from a pre-1999 period when areca prices were very high. We came across only one farmer family who had not taken any loan, because he himself was a money lender and a very big farmer.

Over 95% of areca farmers are under heavy loan burdens, have completely stopped repayment of interests to the banks and societies and depend on the mercy of banks, cooperative societies and money lenders to meet their survival needs. They are facing tremendous psychological distress because their earnings from areca gardens at the current price are not sufficient to meet their interest liabilities, what to talk of principal repayment or maintenance of family. Among the interviewed farmers, many said that they were feeling like committing suicide because life has become unbearable and there is no ray of hope. The current areca prices are less than a half of the ruling price of 1999.

The livelihood crises in arecanut areas is not limited to growers alone. The entire economy of these areca growing areas has been ruined. Whether it is petty traders retailers or street vendors, the crises has hit everybody. The entire economy of the region has come to a standstill. There is no flow of money in the market because the entire economy of this area is dependent on the purchasing power of arecanut farmers. Since growers themselves are finding it difficult to survive, the dependent and allied sectors of the economy are facing similar distress conditions. As a community, labourers are the second most affected people, farmers being the

hardest hit. We interviewed more than 50 labour families from 5 villages. These labourers are entirely dependent on areca gardens for their livelihood. Till 1999, they could find work for the whole year. The average daily wage was Rs.80-100 for male and Rs. 50-60 for female. But after the price crash of areca in 1999, the daily wage for male has been reduced to half at Rs.40-50 and that for female to Rs. 25-30. Moreover, they find it difficult to find even 8-10 days work in a month now because areca farmers are themselves engaged in the proverbial “struggle for existence”, hence unable to employ labourers in their areca gardens. Out of 50 labourers interviewed, there was not a single one getting two square meals a day. Most of them feel lucky and happy even if they get one square meal in a day. Most of them survive on *ganji* (distress-time food of liquid rice) and wild roots, stems and green grasses available from forests and plains. These labourers are literally on the verge of starvation. Asked about their food and livelihood security during pre- 1999 period, all of them without a single exception said that up to 1999 they could not even imagine of skipping a meal or worrying about their food or livelihood security. The children and women have been the worst victims. Many of children live on only mid-day meals served in their schools. Many of the children said that, at best, they get some “boiled grass” before going to bed. Out of 20 children interviewed (10 boys and 10 girls) all of them were scared at the mention of words like ‘holiday’, ‘Sunday’ or ‘long vacation’ because when school is open they are guaranteed a mid-day meal. During the closure of schools, the children starve. Many of them narrated chilling stories of hunger in their families. These children don’t even go and ask for food from their mothers, because they know that there is no food in the home. These labourers have been earning their livelihood from working in areca gardens for decades and centuries and are so “attached” with these gardens that they do not think of migrating to towns and cities in search of work even when they are hungry. Prior to three years ago they had not experienced anything like this. All of a sudden their livelihood has been destroyed by the price crash of areca caused by its indiscriminate import from South East Asian countries.

3. Dossier on Agrarian Distress and Farmers' Suicides

The issue of agrarian distress and farmers' suicides is on the top of CEFS agenda. Apart from doing desk research on this issue, we have prepared a dossier on "Farmers' suicides and farming crisis in India". This is a collection and compilation of in-depth research papers, interesting case studies, incisive analysis, authoritative writings, popular newspaper articles and instructive reports on agrarian distress and farmers' suicides in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab and Maharashtra. This dossier contains an exhaustive array of theoretical and empirical insights of distinguished academics, experts, journalists, economists, environmentalists and researchers like Professor Utsa Patnaik, Professor Jayati Ghosh, Dr. Vandana Shiva, Dr. Devinder Sharma, Mr. P. Sainath, Mr. Sunil Mitra, Ms. Shanta Gokhale, Mr. Raju Bist, Ms. Pushpa Surendra, Ms. Kasturi Das, Mr. Rick Giombetti, Professor Kamal Nayan Kabra, and Ms. Katherine Aigner, Ms Amy Waldman, Mr Ramesh Menon and Mr. Krishna Kumar, etc. This dossier also includes many interesting news items and field reports published in popular newspapers and magazines like *The Hindu*, *The Hindu Business Line*, *The Indian Express*, *The Deccan Herald*, *The Tribune*, *Frontline*, etc.

4. Dossier on Contract Farming in India

Contract farming is now a buzzword for many agricultural experts and agri-business corporations. Many state governments are introducing facilitating legislations to promote contract farming as a panacea for all the farming problems facing Indian farmers. However, there is complete ignorance about its details and there are serious doubts raised about its implications for Indian agriculture. Realizing the importance of this issue, we have prepared a compilation of published and unpublished literature, research papers, articles and lectures on the pros and cons of contract farming for a country like India.

5. Dossier on Sand Mining in India

Sand mining and its adverse impact on river ecology is a relatively less known issue. However, this is one of the major ecological problems facing India. Realizing the seriousness of this issue, CEFS has prepared a dossier on ecological and economic implications of sand mining, especially in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. CEFS has compiled and collected various case studies showing how sand mining has wrought ecological disaster and economic catastrophe in various parts of the country.

Proposed Programmes for 2004-2005

1. Panel Discussion on Farming crisis and the Union Budget 2004-5

CEFS will organize a panel discussion on ‘Farming Crisis and the Union Budget 2004-2005’ in July 2004 at India International Centre, New Delhi. The panel discussion will be chaired by Former Union Home Secretary, Mr. B P Singh and the lead panelists will include Dr. Vandana Shiva, Dr. Devinder Sharma, Professor B.B. Bhattacharya and Mr. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta.

2. Freedom from Hunger bimonthly lecture series

CEFS is going to hold a bimonthly public lecture series on “Freedom from Hunger” in collaboration with the India International Centre New Delhi from February 2005- August 2007. Six lectures have already been scheduled for 2005 (February 10, April 12, June 10, August 10, October 14 and December 9). The potential speakers are Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, Dr. N.C. Saxena, Dr. Vandana Shiva, Prof. Jean Dreze, Dr. Devinder Sharma, Prof. Utsa Patnaik and Mr P Sainath. More than 350 million Indians still go to bed hungry every night and political freedom for these people would be a mere myth. Will our conscience allow us to celebrate our platinum jubilee in 2007 while one- third of our countrymen face chronic starvation. At least that was not the kind of India Mahatma Gandhi had imagined. To banish this scourge we need to bring this issue in mainstream intellectual discourse and at the centre of public policy. Hence, we propose to organize this public lecture series in collaboration with IIC.

3. Bimonthly Public Debates on Economic Development vs. Ecological Security

In collaboration with India Habitat Centre, CEFS is going to hold bimonthly public debates on “Economic development vs. Ecological Security” from

January 2005. It is now universally acknowledged that protecting ecological security of the planet is the most serious challenge facing mankind. Protection of natural resource base is very critical especially for a developing country like India where more than 70% of population still earn their livelihood off natural resources. However, there is another school of thought which holds poverty as the biggest polluter and economic growth as the most effective instrument of sustainable development. Many economists think that economic growth is synonymous with sustainable development while environmentalists regard present economic growth models as ecologically destructive. To bring this discourse in sharper focus, we have decided to hold this public debate. The tentative list of potential debators includes environmentalists like Dr Vandana Shiva, Ms Sunita Narain, Ms Arundhoty Roy, Ms Maneka Gandhi, Dr M S Swaminathan, Dr R K Pachaury, Dr Kamala Choudhry, Dr Ashok Khosala, Prof P S Ramakrishnan, Shri Ashis Kothari, Shri Rajendra Singh, Ms Medha Patkar, Shri Anupam Mishra, Dr Virbhadra Mishra, Shri Dinesh Mishra, Shri Ravi Aggarwal, Dr Devinder Sharma and economists/industrialists like Prof Bibek Deb Roy, Dr Jairam Ramesh, Mr Swaminathan Ankalesaria Aiyer, Mr Sanjay Baru, Mr T N Ninan Mr Rahul Bajaj, Mr Anil Ambani Mr Tarun Mitra etc.

- 4. Documentation, Research and Advocacy on “Agrarian Distress and Farmers’ Suicides in India”.**
- 5. Action Research on Communities’ Coping Mechanisms in Arsenic affected areas of Uttar Pradesh (Ballia district) and Bihar (Buxar and Bhojpur districts).**
- 6. Documentation, Research and Advocacy on “Sand mining and River Ecology”.**

- 7. Documentation, Research and Advocacy on “Food Insecurity in Tribal Areas of India”.**
- 8. Documentation, Research and Advocacy on “The Interlinkages between Environment and Poverty”.**
- 9. Documentation, Research and Advocacy on “Deforestation and Livelihood Crises in Tribal Areas of India”.**