

Fellow Presentation- MAKAIAS

Topic: “Internal Displacement in Contemporary Nepal: Causes, Protection and Dilemmas”

Presenter: Dr. Monika Mandal, Fellow, MAKAIAS

External Expert: Prof. Sucheta Ghosh (Jadavpur University)

Date: 20.07.2012

Time: 3.30 pm

Venue: Azad Bhavan, Salt Lake

Rapporteur: Anwasha Ghosh, Researcher, MAKAIAS

Dr. Mandal’s presentation focused on the patterns of displacement, the plight of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the policies pertaining to these issues in contemporary Nepal. Tracing the developments in the whole issue of IDPs since the rise of the Maoist movement in Nepal, her presentation pointed at the direct correlation between political instability, corruption, the dissolution of the Monarchy, the rise of Maoist insurgency and the displacement of thousands of people across the country. Focusing on the displacement caused by the decade-long (1996-2006) strife between the Maoists and the political dispensation in Nepal, Dr. Mandal also dealt with the concept and definition of “IDPs” and the attempts to find solutions for the problem, especially the aspects pertaining to women and children. The situation which is the direct outcome of a flawed identification and registration process was also discussed in the presentation. Dr. Mandal argues that the displacement situation in Nepal is a serious problem and it requires immediate cooperative efforts of state in the form of international intervention and assistance. Continuing violence, instability, and the lack of development in conflicted districts in Nepal indicate that the government needs to take a more active role in creating favourable conditions for the safe return of the displaced. To conclude, it was also suggested that the recent attempts at peace building between the Maoists and other political parties and new outbreaks of violence in certain districts of Nepal must be monitored closely to ensure security for the safe return of IDPs.

The external expert **Dr. Sucheta Ghosh** congratulated the presenter for selecting a topic which seldom gets the required attention though it is extremely relevant in the present context. She added that extensive attention is often given to the state policies as opposed to the ‘x’ factor or the ordinary people who constitute the central element of the state. The authorities need to give required attention to internal factors like that of IDPs along with the larger issue such as the peace process. She added that a lot depends on the willingness of political dispensation and thinks that powers like India must proffer a helping hand to assist Nepal to address these problems within its borders. Dr. Ghosh also pointed out the role played by international organizations like UNHCR in tackling the issue in question. She however added that their actions might have ramifications in the

national sphere. To conclude, she said that though issues like that of IDPs have immense potential for academic research they are often neglected, therefore Dr. Mandal's project is a welcome initiative; her work would add to the existing body of knowledge on IDPs in Nepal.

Dr. Sreeradha Dutta, *Director of MAKAIAS* seconded the expert's comments on the presentation and agreed that issues like these have largely remained unaddressed. Regarding the presentation she wanted to bring two extremely valid points to the notice of the presenter. Firstly, the unfolding political developments and their impact on the population (IDP). Dr. Dutta added that the fact that Nepal had a IDP Policy and allowed international intervention speaks a lot for a country, which has virtually been held together by its bureaucracy. The second point she made was that issues like trafficking or abuse of women and children, mentioned in the presentation, are socio-economic problems intrinsic to all South Asian countries. To engage with these issues strictly from the perspective of 'IDP problems' might not be fair. She advised Dr. Mandal to deal with them not emotionally but with a more objective approach. She suggested that the State's policies to deal with the IDPs can be incorporated in the paper along with the return and rehabilitation policies. She concluded by saying that she is hopeful that Dr. Mandal's forthcoming field trips would be useful for enhancing the clarity of her project.

The points which were raised in the discussion session are as follows:

- ✓ Suggestions were forwarded to put the issues discussed in the paper under the broader Human Security Framework and then look at how the state is dealing with the issue. This would give a theoretical foundation to the subject.
- ✓ Questions were posed on the recent civil agitation in Nepal.
- ✓ It was asked how internal issues such as IDPs can pose a challenge for neighbouring countries.
- ✓ The roles which multilateral organizations like SAARC and BIMSTEC could have played in addressing issues like these were also discussed.
- ✓ The potential of interstate interference in the formulation of IDP policies was discussed. It was mentioned that though there have been several instances of micro level assistance through NGOs and humanitarian organizations to help deal with these issues from India to Nepal, however as a sovereign state India would prefer to keep aloof from Nepal's internal policy formulations.