



**INDIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTE**  
Center for Research, Training and  
Action for Social and Economic  
Development and Human Rights

# SUBALTERNS

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## Editorial

## Civil Society in a Democratic Republic

On 26th January, 1950, India proclaimed itself a Sovereign Democratic Republic on the day when the Constitution of India came into effect. The Preamble of the Constitution begins with the words "We the People", implying that the future of the country lies in the hands of its citizens. In a democracy, along with its three pillars – executive, legislature and judiciary – civil society plays an important role in the growth and development of the country as well as ensuring that democratic practices and principles are adhered to by all sections of society. Civil society comprises of citizens acting collectively to make demands to the state or to express in the public sphere their interests, preferences and ideas or to make the state authorities accountable. In India, civil society has played an important role in building and maintaining the country as a democratic republic. They have been reaching out to provide support and basic needs to people in the remotest regions of the country. They are engaged in development work in rural areas as well as with the urban poor. In this manner, they have been able to help the Government in their efforts to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and now, the Sustainable Development Goals. They have tried to ensure that the welfare schemes of the Government reach the poor and

the needy in every part of the country. During the COVID-19 pandemic, civil society came out in large numbers to support migrant workers and the suffering people with food, shelter, clothing, medicines and other basic needs, which helped the country to tide over the crisis. Civil society in India has become a platform for people from marginalized communities, like Dalits, tribals, minorities, women, farmers and informal workers, to voice their issues and concerns before the Government, policy makers, corporates, and even international organizations and the United Nations (UN). Several civil society organisations have consultative status at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in the UN, which gives them the time and the space to share their views at high-level political meetings. Therefore, civil society tries to ensure that the Government fulfils the commitments made at the international level, whether it be on sustainable development, or climate, labour or human rights. Civil society has also championed the rights of marginalized communities and have led people's movements against Government policies and actions that have been detrimental to them. A lot of the socially relevant laws such as the Right to Information, Right to Food, Right to Education, Mahatma Gandhi National Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Forest Rights Act have emerged from civil society campaigns for these legislations. Civil society has also championed for human rights of all the citizens of the country and highlighted issues of custodial deaths, torture and atrocities on marginalized sections of society. At times, Governments negotiate with civil society to address people's concerns. However, in recent times, the Government has been systematically targeting civil society organisations. The amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), the taxation laws and other rules and regulations have made civil society organisations vulnerable to the brute power of the state. Many civil society organisations have been denied renewal of their FCRA registration and have been targeted with raids and other coercive measures. Several prominent members of civil society have also been arrested under the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). The weakening of civil society in India will only result in weakening of democracy and strengthening of a majoritarian autocracy. It is hoped that even though they are under tremendous pressure due to the coercive power of the state, civil society in India will remain vibrant and active to preserve India as a democratic republic. □ **Denzil Fernandes**

# CIVIL SOCIETY: AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT IN A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Archana Sinha

A democratic state cannot be stable unless it is effective and legitimate with the support of its people. Civil society plays multiple roles, as they are an important source of information for both citizens and government and also a vital partner in the quest for this kind of positive relationship between the democratic state and its people. Civil society is recognised globally as an important stakeholder in the progress and development of a country. Social activists have been conducting important debates about these questions, which have great significance for civic educators in their efforts to develop capacities for democratic citizenship among communities and societies. Thus, the importance of civil society in a democracy raises questions and issues for civic education.

A constitutionalised democratic government is empowered to protect individual rights of free expression, assembly and association, that are necessary to the independent operations of civil society organizations. Therefore, there is a top-to-down safeguard of civil society, from the constitutional government of the state to the local activities of the people, which guarantees the rights of individual freedom to join civil society organizations. But there is also a bottom-to-up support for the constitutional democratic state, which originates from the bottom, that is, the grassroots, through community based, civil society organizations acting democratically for the good and welfare of its citizens. The local, regional, and national level civil society organizations are the pathways by which citizens express their needs and interests for representatives in government for possible transformation into public

policies. Thus, they are people's guardians that empower citizens to take responsibility for their rights and hold public officials accountable to their constituents.

Through participation in organizational activities, members acquire knowledge, skills, and virtues of democratic citizenship. So, community-based organizations are public arenas in which citizens learn democracy by doing it, contributes exceedingly to democratic governance of both the state and the civil society that it serves. Civil society, then, can be conceived in practice as a supporter of any state governed by constitutional democracy. The government of such a state is simultaneously limited and empowered for the common goal of securing rights to life and liberty, which will be at risk if the government is either too strong or too weak. At the same time, its constitutionally provided powers enable the democratic state effectively to enforce laws that protect and advance human rights, maintain order and safety necessary for productive organizational life, and provide social benefits in partnership with civil society organizations.

There are, however, notable weakness in civil society development in democracies throughout the world. Foremost is its dependence upon external sources for funding, which compromises independence of action and accountability to members, communication technologies, which inhibits inadequate distribution of information and development of networks, low levels of social capital, which is necessary for effective operation of democratic nongovernmental organizations, insufficient security for constitutional rights to freedom

of speech, press, assembly and associations, which critically inhibits or impedes the operation of civil society organizations. Given the global importance of civil society in a democracy, the idea of civil society is just as important in civic education for democracy as constitutionalism, human rights, sovereignty, and democratic governance. One criterion among others considered to distinguish democracies is the presence or absence of a vital civil society. A government with power to crush or control civil society organizations is not believed to be an authentic constitutional democracy. A political system without a genuine civil society cannot truthfully claim to be a constitutional democracy.

Undoubtedly, a vibrant civil society is an essential ingredient of democracy and freedom that must be conserved and nurtured if we would have a chance to sustain our civic heritage. Civil society is a debatable concept, which has been used variously by political theorists and practitioners during the past years. Civil society seems to be necessary for the consolidation of constitutional democratic governance. Research on civil society within democracies has revealed a mixed picture of problems and potential. The problem pertaining to insufficient protection of civil liberties and rights, indicates inadequate development of constitutionalism and the rule of law. The rule of law, grounded in a democratic constitution, is an indispensable regulator of governmental and non-governmental behaviour that enables civil society to function freely for the common good. Thus, a country with a fundamentally strong civil society has a reasonable likelihood to become and remain a democracy. □

## STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY: FCRA

Lancy Lobo

A citizen is by and large at the receiving end of state, market and civil society. There are times that the state dominated the market; sometimes the market dominates the state and civil society; and rarely does civil society dominate either state or market or both at the same time. By civil society we mean non-governmental organizations (NGO), including religious organizations that impact the life of citizens. It is well known that NGOs are most often voluntary organizations registered under the Charity Commissioner with clearly stated objectives. Most depend on foreign financial assistance. There are all types of NGOs, including prominent ones which are religious or faith based.

Most of these NGOs do the following: people oriented activities and interventions and capacity building programmes undertaken by religious personnel; women empowerment, promotion of child rights, youth empowerment, community based rehabilitation for persons with disabilities, protection of environment, promotion of health, capacity building programmes for various categories such as catechists, teachers, volunteers, priests, religious, youth, women, children, farmers, peace intervention activities, and relief work thereby touching the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and bring solace to them. A few fight for human rights. Others work for relief during disasters and natural calamities. Recently, the State has refused renewal of FCRA to a number of NGOs, such as OXFAM, Green Peace, Mother Teresa Sisters of Kolkata, ANHAD (Act Now for Harmony and Democracy), Lawyers collective, and Citizens for Democracy. In the case of Mother Teresa institutions 22,000 inmates, mostly destitute, and employees were put at great risk of deprivation. The FCRA registration of Mother

Teresa sisters was restored after two weeks due to public outrage. Those who defend secularism or religious minorities have also been prime targets of the government since 2014. In 2015, it prevented thousands of NGOs from receiving funds from abroad without which they can no longer operate. Reasons given were that these NGOs have not used the money for what it was meant, raising suspicion that they might have gone for illicit activities, such as laundering money and financing terrorism. Christian NGOs were accused of using the money for conversions. Some secular NGOs were also accused of showing India in a bad light by their reports when they showed realities on the ground. "In March–April 2015, 10,117 NGOs had their FCRA license revoked. A similar number of organizations were affected the following year, reducing the number of Indian NGOs from 33,000 to approximately 13,000, most of them being unable to meet their financial needs without foreign help" (Jaffrelot 2021:183). Further stringent rules were made to the use of FCRA, such as reduction in administrative costs to 20 per cent and barring transfer of funds to another Trust or organization. Some NGOs focused on economic development and sustainable development, especially in remote rural areas and slums in urban spaces. Others focused on human rights and securing entitlements from the government. A few worked for communal harmony. Of course some worked for relief during disasters. The government has come down heavily on NGOs working for economic development and those fighting for human rights and communal harmony. OXFAM highlighted the nature of economic inequality, skewed growth, hunger and poverty in India. Aakar Patel (2021) lists around twenty-five different indices on India, conducted

by reputed organisations across the globe and shows how they have fallen during seven years of Modi-rule. Some of the indices are Human Development Indicators, Democracy Index, National Civic Space Ratings, Religious Restrictions, Freedom in the World, World Competitive Ranking, Global Soft Power Index, Women, Peace and Security Index, Prosperity Index, Sustainable Development Solutions, Economic Freedom Index, Gender Gap Index, International Corruption Perception Index, Smart City Index, Quality of Life Index, Inclusive Internet Index, World Bank Doing Business Index, Global House Price Index, Quality of Nationality Index, Air Quality Index, Climate Risk Index, Food Sustainability Index, Migrant Integration Policy Index, Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index. The list goes on giving data on the fall of India's position on most of these indices. Indeed, it is a matter of embarrassment to the State to have NGOs expose the ground and grass root situation in the country. The FCRA account of Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) was frozen as they exposed the role of the state in engineering riots and disturbing communal harmony through promoting hate against minorities. Amnesty International's bank accounts were frozen in 2020 as the government disagreed with its report on Delhi riots as it was put in bad light. Any single intellectual, journalist, or organization that critiques the state is called anti-national and sedition charges, and other draconian laws are applied to harass, intimidate, humiliate and deprive them of their sources of funds. The arms of the government, police, vigilance and investigative agencies are deployed to do surveillance and are hostile to civil society organizations that are not with the majoritarian, authoritarian and anti-secular government. While

stringent rules are applied to those who oppose such a regime no audit, surveillance or revoking of FCRA licenses are done to those on the side of the majoritarian government. One hardly gets to know the foreign funds that Hindutva organizations receive and the use they are put to. In conclusion, it must be stated that

the role of NGOs in general became very visible during the Covid-19 crisis when lakhs of migrants were tended by them. The same government unashamedly sought help of NGOs to feed, house and clothe the migrants. The same NGOs and civil society organizations came forward to attend to the Covid

patients, provide oxygen, and later even to cremate or bury them. One wishes that the current regime does handholding also with secular and faith based organizations that work to mitigate and promote sustainable development, and thereby improve human living conditions. □

## IT IS TIME TO REVIVE DEMOCRATIC VALUES THROUGH CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

*Thomas Varghese*

After seventy-one years of being a democratic republic, democracy in India is in peril. The fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India seem to be controlled by the rich and powerful. Freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of religion are controlled by the ruling class. Free movement at times is also restricted. Hate speeches and atrocities on the minorities by the majority group and ruling class are rampant. All the important agencies are under the direct control of the ruling government. The goals of secularism, socialism and professional ethics are coming under increasing strain. As a result, justice is not delivered to the affected people. Anyone opposing or raising voices against injustice is silenced outright. Today, democracy in India has become rule by the corrupt and for the corrupt.

At this point I would say that this is because our education system has miserably failed. We have failed to educate the people what really democracy is. Instead, they are led by the majoritarian ideology. In fact, real democracy is to be understood as a way of life. It is about living together and it is connected with one's perceptions, assumptions and common experiences. It is very well spelt out in the Preamble of our Constitution as 'to secure to all the citizens: justice – social, economic and political, liberty of thought, expression, faith, belief and worship, equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all

fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and integrity of the nation'. The democratic values need to be instilled in the people for them to live in peace and harmony.

In order to foster these democratic values in the people we need right type of education. This is possible because these values are very much reflected in the National Education Policy (1986), in the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and in the National Education Policy (2020). They emphasize on ethics and human & Constitutional values like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality and justice. All that we need is to bring democracy into the classrooms. Democracy should be taught to prepare children to become citizens who will preserve and shape democracy in the future. It should be noted that in Japan the first two years of education is on instilling civic sense. While the key concepts of democracy are understood by children, living and acting in a democratic environment is very important.

We know that teachers are the nation builders. We need to devise new strategies for enabling teachers to inculcate democratic values in students. Teachers are the ultimate instruments of change. The qualities like tolerance, acceptance, a wider view, global awareness, reflection and equal justice rest

with the teachers to shape the students in all possible ways. The teacher's role is very significant in shaping and molding the future of a nation by tending the young minds as the architects of the future generation. Teachers can help children develop and appreciate the core democratic values and inculcate a sense of commitment and attachment to those values. Mere knowledge of democratic processes is not sufficient, but they should understand the meaning of democracy in terms of social justice and equality. It is also important that they learn to respect democratic values. This will happen when school management itself functions democratically and they adopt democracy as a way of life. So, teachers have to play an important role to ensure that the students understand not only the form but the spirit of democracy. When the teacher incorporates the values of democracy using democratic approach, students are enabled to practice democracy. At the same time teachers should hold democratic values in high esteem and adopt appropriate teaching methods in accordance with those values. They should have strong commitment to democratic education. A democratic teacher should be fair and apply rules uniformly to everyone. The teacher should make sure that the classroom is provided with safe and active learning environment, where student rights are guaranteed, it is

safe enough for them to take risks and comfortable enough for them to conduct discussions openly.

One should also remember that teachers are role models for their students. Students imitate their teachers. Therefore, teachers need to not only believe in these

democratic values, but also practice them very much in their classrooms and in their lives and be examples for their wards. When teachers become examples by demonstrating respect for children by establishing children's decision-making bodies and peer mediation, trusting

children to organize their events and empower children to explore issues, to discuss, to formulate opinion, to debate and to propose strategies to deal with conflict and achieve reasonable goals, they are forming truly democratic and inspiring leaders for the country. □

## TRIBALS AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

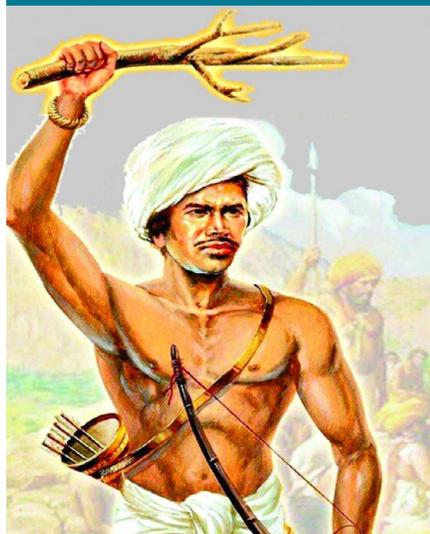
*Punam Murmu and Vincent Ekka*

The term 'civil society' generally means associations or communities that works with and beyond the state and governments. It consists of hosts of non-political groups, institutions, and unions, which may relate to various religious, cultural, economic and other activities of society. Civil Society bears credibility for its moral values and authority and hence it becomes complementary and works as a shadow vigilante of the administrative functioning of the governments and state. Therefore, authoritarian governments feel threatened by the watchful activities of civil society groups. Civil society so far has been influencing state's policies on social welfare, articulating views on current issues, serving as the voice of constructive debate, providing a forum for the exchange of new ideas and information, initiating social movements that ensure the roles, responsibilities and accountability of the governments and the state. Thus, it helps in the making of democratic societies. Civil society is viewed as a structure and also as a process where democratic values take shape and a republic, a form of government, is established in which the power is held by the people (civil society) and their elected representatives (democratic republic). Among the most significant initiatives was the campaign for the Right to Information. The effort grew into a nationwide campaign, beginning with agitation in rural Rajasthan to release information on government funds spent on village development.

Similarly, rights-based laws passed in recent years was a result of the contribution of social movements and citizen's groups to the legislative framework. Civil society plays a vital role in developing a democracy. They monitor the functioning of the officials. A role for civil society organizations is to lobby for the needs and concerns of their members, as Adivasis, Dalits, women, students, environmentalists, and so on. The marginalized and the less privileged are not acknowledged as civil society or even citizens with equal rights. They are politically invisible as a result of their economic and social marginalization. Since caste, religion, and race have been getting involved in creating a civil society, a gap is being generated at the foundational level of humanity. In the present times, political dialogues are manufactured in such a way that it affects civil society, and in turn, the functioning of civil society gets disrupted. This leads to the dismantling of democratic ideals as well. In the context of globalization, an argument relating to civil society arises that deals with the universality of civil society. It is argued that specific economic, social and political conditions influence the growth and functioning of civil societies, and thereby it cannot be universal. Adivasi societies functioned democratically even before democracy was established as a political system in the West. After the Independence of India, Jaipal Singh Munda, a tribal, on behalf of the tribal communities of the country made a monumental statement in

the Constituent Assembly. He said, "You cannot teach democracy to the tribal people; you have to learn democratic ways from them. They are the most democratic people on earth." Tribal groups operated politically as a civil society through movements within the community and outside. Tribal uprisings are not a new phenomenon in Indian history. As is known, tribals live among nature, take care of it and worship it religiously. Jal (water), jungle (forest), and jameen (land) have belonged to these original inhabitants, but the government restrains their rights over these resources. Secondly, the tribals never accepted dominance, exploitation and oppression of the outsiders. Due to these obstructions, they were bound to form unions and movements to preserve their territories and uphold their livelihoods. Nowhere in India we find the resistance movements, protests and uprisings as many as occurred in tribal regions against all kinds of exploitation, dominance and injustices. Some drawbacks of civil society in a democratic republic are that although they are supposed to be independent of the government, these principles are repeatedly challenged. Another drawback is that a civil society organization rests upon the hands of the elites. Civil society is not as utopian as it seems in theory. It has its limitations that the changemakers, that is, us, could address. What is interesting is that each of us can be a part of civil society and influence policies and laws that will shape our democratic republic. □

# BIRSA MUNDA JAYANTI



On the occasion of Birsa Munda Jayanti on November 15, 2021, a national webinar was organized by Indian Social Institute, India Indigenous Peoples, and Adivasi Samanway Manch, Bharat. The webinar was held between 7:00-8:30 pm on the Zoom platform and streamed live on YouTube. The webinar was opened with a



welcome note by Dr. Vincent Ekka of the Indian Social Institute on behalf of Stalyn Ingti, President of Adivasi Samanway Manch, Bharat. The two speakers, Mahadev Munda and Ashok Chaudhary, were invited as the key speakers. Mahadev Munda spoke on the topic of Birsa Ulgulan Aur Adivasi Rajneeti. He talked about the significance of traditional institutions of Adivasis and their self-governance, keeping in mind Birsa Munda's struggle for the same. He also expressed hope for reviving the traditional system

of self-governance for empowering tribal political systems. Ashok Chaudhary's topic was Birsa Darshan Aur Adivasi Samaj. He said that Adivasis need to reclaim their rights and transform internally and socially. He hoped that the values for which Birsa fought and gave his life would show them the way for their survival, governance and affirmative actions. Dr. Aashish Xaxa and Punam Murmu moderated the webinar. In the end, the vote of thanks was presented by Lalita Roshni Lakra. □

Punam Murmu

Indian Social Institute, along with Impact and Policy Research Institute (IMPRI), Center for Work and Welfare (CWW) and Counterview, organized a series of online webinars on issues related to labour and employment since the beginning of the academic year 2021-22. They are: (1) "Impact of Covid-19, Reforms and Poor Governance on Labour Rights" on 8th April, 2021; (2) "Migrant Workers, Labour Rights and Policy: Impact and Way Forward" on 1st May, 2021; (3) "The State of Employment and Livelihoods in India: Trade Union Perspectives and the Way Forward amidst Coronavirus Pandemic" on 14th July, 2021; (4) "The Future of Labour Codes: Impact and Way Forward from Trade Union Perspectives" on 3rd August, 2021; (5) "The Need for an Employment Policy" on 12th August, 2021; (6) "The Future of Labour Codes: Impact and Way Forward from Employers' Perspectives" on

## WEBINARS ON LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

#WebPolicyTalk

#IMPRI Center for Work and Welfare (CWW),  
IMPRI Impact and Policy Research Institute, New Delhi,  
Indian Social Institute (ISI), New Delhi, and Counterview  
invite you to

The State of Employment and Livelihoods - #EmploymentDebate

*A Panel Discussion on*

### MGNREGS Amidst the Pandemic

#### Impact and the Way Forward

<b>Panelist</b>	<b>Panelist</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Panelist</b>	<b>Panelist</b>	<b>Panelist</b>
					
<small>Prof R. B. Bhagat Professor and Head, Department of Migration and Urban Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai</small>	<small>Prof Irudaya Rajan Founder-Chairman, The International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD), Thiruvananthapuram</small>	<small>Fr. Dr. Denzil Fernandes Executive Director, Indian Social Institute (ISI), New Delhi</small>	<small>Prof Aruna Roy President, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW); Founder, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)</small>	<small>Dr Gurjeet Singh State Coordinator, Social Audit Unit, Jharkhand; Former Consultant, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India</small>	<small>Sandeep Chachra Executive Director, ActionAid India</small>

December 11, 2021 | 4:30 P.M. IST Details: <https://www.impriindia.com/event/mgnregs-pandemic-impact-way-forward/>

20th August, 2021, (7) "E-Shram portal – Shramev Jayate: National Database for Unorganised Workers – Impact and Way Forward" on 10th September, 2021. (8) "Employment and Unemployment Scenario: Where are we and where are we going?" on 8th October, 2021, and (9) "MGNREGS amidst the Pandemic:

Impact and the Way Forward" on 11th December, 2021, moderated by Dr. Denzil Fernandes. Prof. K. R. Shyam Sundar from XLRI Xavier School of Management, Jamshedpur, was the moderator for most of these webinars, which had eminent speakers from the Ministry of Labour and Employment,

Employers Associations, Labour Union leaders, labour economists, academics, labour lawyers and civil society members working on labour issues. The deliberations during these webinars highlighted

the complexities in the changing labour market situation, schemes and interventions by the state and the impact of new labour codes and policies. The insights from these webinars provide a rich repository

of knowledge and experience on labour issues, which could help in policy formulation to respond to the challenges in the Indian labour market today. □ **Denzil Fernandes**

Indian Social Institute along with the Jesuit Collective comprising of SJES, LokManch, Migrant Assistance and Information Network (MAIN) and the Conference Development Office-JCSA, successfully completed the project "Break the Chain of COVID Pandemic through Community Health Surveillance System" funded by Xavier Network. The project was conceived at the peak of the 2nd wave of Covid-19 in the first week of May, 2021, as an emergency relief project. It was implemented from June to December, 2021. This project provided emergency relief to 630 villages across 55 Districts in 12 states, namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Goa, Nagaland, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. During the 7 months tenure of the project, a Community Health Surveillance

System (CHSS) was developed with a network of 70 organisations and 1,070 volunteers and community workers who reached out to 33,603 people across the country with the help of 150 BP monitors, 259 oximeters and 944 thermometers. The relief material distributed included 10,310 dry ration kits, 1,186 nutrition kits and 7,234 healthcare kits. 6,219 Covid-infected people were provided homecare and critical support services. In addition, a massive awareness campaign of COVID appropriate behaviour consisting of leaflets, posters,



banners, wall paintings and digital material reached 156,868 people and 31,834 people got vaccinated as a result of our interventions in 12 states. The successful completion of the project is a wonderful testimony of collaborative engagement of Jesuits and their network partners. □ **Denzil Fernandes**

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION DAY 2021



An Open Forum on "Accompanying Distress Migrants" was organised jointly by Migrant Assistance and Information Network (MAIN), Conference Development Office of JCSA and Indian Social Institute on the occasion of International Migration Day on 18th December, 2021. Fr. Siji Chacko SJ, the Director of MAIN and JCI-CDO began by welcoming the gathering and giving

a brief overview of the MAIN initiative of Jesuits in South Asia. Fr. Stanislaus D'Souza SJ, the President of JCSA, in his message hoped that the celebration will awaken the consciousness of the public regarding the plight and the challenges, rights and privileges of the migrant workers. The Chief Guest of the programme, Dr. Rashmi Singh, Special Secretary cum Director, Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, Government of NCT Delhi, reminded the gathering of the sacrifices and contributions of migrant workers in building

cities and providing essential services affecting our daily lives. She also spoke of Saheli Samanvay Kendras (SSKs) in Delhi that could help in providing various services to migrant workers. Dr. Denzil Fernandes SJ pointed out that the migrant crisis that unfolded during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown highlighted the need for Jesuits and civil society groups to work in partnership to ensure that migrants are able to live a dignified life as citizens in any part of the country. The programme included messages by experts working with migrants as well as testimonies of migrants about their struggles in living and working in Delhi. About 150 people, including migrant workers and representatives of various organisations working among migrants, participated in the programme. □

## CHRISTMAS GATHERING



The Staff Forum Committee organized a Christmas gathering for the staff members on 23rd December 2021. The programme began with Mr. Pascal Tirkey welcoming all the staff of ISI, JRS, SJES, CDO, and MAIN. Dr. Denzil Fernandes, the Executive Director, in his introductory remarks, said that we have faced the pandemic last year and still facing it but in spite of all the

difficulties we have gathered here as one family to celebrate the Christmas. He expressed the hope that in the future too we would work together and carry forward the mission of the Institute without any interruption. Christmas carols added joy and happiness to the event which were led by Dr. Vincent Ekka and Dr. Denzil Fernandes, along with several staff members. Dr.

Thomas Perumalil, Superior of the Indian Social Institute, in his inspiring Christmas message, said that good work does not need any publicity as Christ was born as a refugee and did not travel more than 300 miles but his work got much publicity later on and he is known to the whole world. Staff members Mr. Rameshwar Dayal and Mr. Sayed Parwez shared their experiences about Christmas in their lives. A game with balloons was organized for all the staff members in which all took part and enjoyed it very much. Later a video on Birth of Jesus Christ prepared by Mr. Ruben Minj was screened. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr. John Kullu and later everyone joined for high tea. □

**Rufina Lawrence**  
Staff Forum Committee

### BOOK POST

## SUBALTERNS

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