



To work towards
recognition and respect for the right to a self- determined
future
in partnership with the Indigenous Peoples of the North
Eastern Region of India,
with respect for our ancient inheritance
building on our faith in humanity's role of trusteeship of
resources
in peace with all other peoples

ANNUAL REPORT 2004-05

FOUNDATION PROGRAMMES

- » **Information Services Centre**
 - ¥ Library and Resource Centre
 - ¥ Documentation & Research
 - ¥ Internet & audiovisual advocacy & information
 - ¥ Papers, presentations studies submissions
- » **Capacity Building Training**
 - ¥ In-house training and internships
 - ¥ Community based training/capacity building
 - ¥ International and regional training
- » **Human Rights**
 - ¥ Monitoring, Reporting and Urgent Appeals and Action communiqués
 - ¥ Monitoring and Advocacy on thematic issues
 - ¥ Engagement with Standards Setting mechanisms
 - ¥ Campaigns and Education
- » **Children and Youth**
 - ¥ Armed conflict
 - ¥ Sexual violence abuse trade and trafficking
 - ¥ Monitoring the Convention on Rights of the Child
 - ¥ Legacy and rights of inheritance
- » **Natural resources and sustainable development**
 - ¥ Biodiversity, climate change and adaptation
 - ¥ Rivers, wetlands, dams and mining
 - ¥ Globalization and economic transition
- » **Governance**
 - ¥ Democratic functioning of Traditional Institutions and the Law
 - ¥ Women's Leadership and Governance
 - ¥ Enhanced engagement of elders, children youth

GREETINGS

This year indeed a great honour and most remarkable year for us. The Region of Tuscany in Italy has bestowed to our colleague, Ms Anna Pinto the distinguished "Silver Banner Award" the highest award of the region. This award, in recognition of her work in championing the rights of children and women, particularly those that are facing the devastation of armed conflict and war, was conferred to by the Presidency of the Regional Assembly of Tuscany at the Award Ceremony on Tuscany Day on 29 November 2004 in Florence.

With this achievement, our organisation has crossed another milestone. With the steadfast support and unstinting confidence of our communities in our work CORE has earned a new image in local, national and international arenas. The communities' encouragement, understanding and acceptance of our limitations while challenging us to greater effort is and will always be the source of our strength.

Over the years of our work, CORE's initial assumption of community as the centre and base of initiative has

proven itself as each year, as it remains the spring of our most resolute patronage. Our communities whom we serve in fact enable us to fulfill our commitments and mandate to the extent we have. In every effort we have made, our communities encourage us with moral and material contributions, and understanding.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge this, which, despite the increasing hardship we all experience due to new faces of poverty emerging in our lands and the sensitivities of working in this extremely complex environment, continues to affirm our initiatives.

We would also like to acknowledge our deep indebtedness to the partners and friends who have financially and materially supported our work this year:

Members

Membership Subscription

Contributions from Members in money, in kind and services

Other sources

Local Community contributions in money, in kind and services Donation from Public & Sympathizers in money, in kind and services Donation in kind and services from e-pao web server

Individuals

Norma Turner in kind and services for web server Shoko Oshiro in kind and services Chine Chan in kind and services Elinor Gollay and Rex Brassell in kind and services

Donor support from International partners

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Women's Learning Partnership (WLP)

Dag Hammarsjöld Foundation

International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples (NCIV)

INFORMATION SERVICES CENTRE

We have substantially upgraded our technical equipment for storage and retrieval of our electronic database, reference materials and literature. We have also found the opportunity to reconstruct our website to make it appropriately informative and updated.

Library and Resource Centre

Since the time CORE establish till date CORE as a resource center has been quietly and consistently acquiring education materials, books, information, reports, periodicals, journals, occasional papers and a

range of gray literature.

According to last year's records, we had a modest but unique collection of 6000 books, over 1500 journals and 15,000 documents between the two offices. This year we have had to lease a new bigger office space in order to accommodate the library and the "Two-thirds of us" project, for CORE North Eastern Regional office. The office has therefore moved to the second floor of the building from the ground floor.

Documentation & Research

Documentation is the backbone activity of CORE. It is based on continuous and systematic processing of information from the newspapers, Journals, Magazine with follow up and research on selected issues or events from the Internet and ground verification. This year, our research focused on armed conflict and children, water issues, traditional indigenous leadership institutions and laws. We are also intensifying documentation of development interventions or plans which are to affect the region, initiatives taken with World Bank, Asian Development Bank, bi-lateral corporate and other Financing Sources on large infrastructure building in the region. We are also compiling information on the impact on natural resources by mining, lumber and plantation industries.

We do of course, continue to document violations of human rights under special legislation granting impunity to the government and its security forces, "anti-terrorism policies", torture, extra judicial executions, arbitrary detentions, rape, and enforced disappearances.

Based on this documentation CORE has developed a number of researches and reports to various United Nations and International forums including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the 9th meeting on the Convention on Climate Change (COP 9), the World Social Forum, Porto Alegre. CORE has contributed papers, organised side events and consulted and provided resources to wide spectrum of international, national and regional issue platforms.

Internet advocacy and information

CORE has a wide range of thematic base Internet advocacy. Internet is one of the important means of communication for CORE. Gathering, sharing and disseminating of Information, monitoring and campaigning work has been possible to the extent we have conducted it, only due to our access to this medium.

Papers presentations studies and submissions

» International

- Resource Person, Dag Hammarsjöld Foundation with International Center Chiang Mai University on Burmese Refugees in Thailand
- UNEP, WHO, UNDP, UNICEF on health-related concerns and issues of indigenous peoples, women and children at several consultations/meetings
- Amnesty International, Amnesty India programme on human rights violations, monitoring and advocacy in the North East region of India
- Executive Director, CCDU, Human Resource Development Programme in Rural Water Supply & Sanitation, Manipur
- Asia Pacific NGO Consultation on Vienna +10
- Rivers for Life - the 2nd international meeting of dams affected people and allies, Rasi Salai

- Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Chiang Mai
- Expert Resource Person, South Asia Consultation Water Resource Management, Kathmandu
- Report on the situation of Children Affected by Armed Conflict (India), December 2004
- "A survey of self employed women in Imphal"
- A study with grassroots capacity building on indigenous women's traditional institutions and their role in indigenous polity (on-going).
- Inherit the earth: Indigenous children's rights to ancestral lands: trans-generational, comprehensive, trans-national, collective

National

- Armed Conflict, Peace Processes, Incentives and the Fallout in the North Eastern region of India.
- Stakeholders, Rights Holders and Resources: Indigenous Peoples of North East India and "Growth"
- Status of Indigenous Children in the North East India: National Human Rights Commission Regional Consultation with NGOs/Voluntary Organisations of the North Eastern Region
- Torture in North East: National Human Rights Commission Regional Consultation with NGOs/Voluntary Organisations of the North Eastern Region
- First Comments and Constructive Suggestions to the Draft National Tribal Policy 2004 India, in response to the invitation of the Government of India from the Director IT, Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- Role of NGO's in Peace and Development: seminar on "Peace and Development" 1 December 2004 Bijni, Kokrajhar Assam
- Situation of Indigenous Women in North East India: National Human Rights Commission Regional Consultation with NGOs/Voluntary Organisations of the North Eastern Region
- The River Linking Project (For Economic Social and Culture rights): National Human Rights Commission Regional Consultation with NGOs/Voluntary Organisations of the North Eastern Region
- Status of Indigenous Children in the North East India: Children's presentation on education, National Human Rights Commission Regional Consultation with NGOs/Voluntary Organisations of the North Eastern Region
- Impunity: National Human Rights Commission Regional Consultation with NGOs/Voluntary Organisations of the North Eastern Region

CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

Local indigenous peoples' human rights organizations need skills and information for effective monitoring, campaigns and advocacy. We organise and conduct regular orientations and capacity-building programmes both in situ and at CORE premises, in formal training workshops and in-house, in extended internships, research associations and short programmes

In-house training and internships

Only strengthening capacities of our team can enrich our organisation. Members of the team are facilitated to attend at least 3 external training programmes every year in addition to intensive in-house capacity building for the team. Interns and short-term trainees and associates also participated intensively in team

capacity building with a hearty exchange of skills and ideas

Community based training/capacity building

15 volunteers and interns have been trained in documentation techniques and campaign organisation training programmes over the year. Almost all have subsequently have been volunteers from other NGOs/community organisations and have returned to work in these. Two have been indigenous international students one of whom will be with us until June.

International capacity building

CORE, at the invitation of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation of Sweden, led a seminar under their campaign for support the Pro-Democracy struggle by the people of Burma (Myanmar). The Chiang Mai seminar, "Another Development for Burma" brought together over 30 organisations including ethnic nationalities' organisations introducing the centrality of natural resources and environment related issues in the political economy of the future of Burma

HUMAN RIGHTS

CORE consistently monitors the situation of human rights of the indigenous peoples in the North Eastern region of India, with special attention for the rights of women and children. CORE highlighted this concern by women's issues as the main theme of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the year 2004. CORE's human rights programme has always attempted to comprehensively address all aspects including support to victims and survivors of violations and abuse, documentation and monitoring, advocacy, training and networking. Concerns that are addressed are incidence of Torture, Extra-judicial Executions, Rape and Enforced Disappearances. Long-term campaigns and support to campaign activists confronting the condition of impunity of the State in committing such violations is the overarching focus of these activities.

Monitoring, reporting and urgent appeals communication

- CORE regularly launches and transmits appeals for immediate intervention to Local, National, Regional, and International Human Rights Organisations
 - We also consistently report to and interact with the state level, national and UN Human Rights Commissions and treaty monitoring bodies in cases of violations using both individual complaints and periodic reporting procedures
 - CORE also communicates and responds to urgent appeals initiated by other monitoring NGOs
- International Women's Day Manipur 2005

Support to Survivors of Torture

Our support to victims and survivors comprises

- Counseling, with traditional and conventional professionals and peers
- healing including where required medical support and temporary safe shelter
- legal advice and assistance
- support in organising community action

In order to offer this assistance, CORE works with a wide range of experts including health and medical professionals, legal professionals, traditional healers, women and children's peer counseling groups, other human rights organisations and activists and community leadership. We should like to thank them, Dr. Shantibala and Bhogen in particular, the Maibi and Maiba Loisang

- CORE supports various self-help groups of survivors, kin and community
- Special attention has always been given to women, youth and children building on the effective agency of these groups in support to victims and survivors and in prevention and advocacy campaigns. These are also, together with traditional leadership and elders, the main targets of violations and atrocities. We would especially like to mention Irom Sharmila who is now in her fifth year of fasting, enduring unimaginable torment by force feeding

Monitoring and advocacy on thematic issues with Government and UN

CORE is consistently monitoring the violation of civil and political rights by state agencies in the region and supporting such action elsewhere in the country. Reports were submitted to the National Commission for Human Rights and on-going dialogue is maintained with various State level commissions in the North East, including women's commissions. We have also observed various UN and International Days of Commemoration: Women's Day, Support of Victims of Torture, Rivers and others.

Engagement with Standard Setting mechanisms

We also engage intensively on the ground and internationally in the development processes of minimum standards of rights in a range of fora.

- Education in Emergencies, in collaboration with the International Network for Education in Emergencies for minimum standards. CORE organised several sub-regional workshops and participated in regional and international standards development consultations
- The UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations
- The UN Working Group on the Draft Declaration on Indigenous Peoples
- CORE, as secretariat of the COIH organised an international panel on the health of indigenous women and girls at the United Nations, New York City co-sponsored by the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the International Services for Human Rights (Geneva) and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Human Rights Campaigns and Education

CORE is actively involved with the on-going campaign for the Repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 and other Special Legislation imposed by the Government of India to suppress democratic dissent.

We are also engaged with on-going discussions at local fora and government agencies on inclusion of peace education and human rights education in school and college curricula in local languages in the region.

Additionally, we are developing training for education on economic rights of indigenous in the local contexts in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur in collaboration with community organisations.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Children are our trust in the present and our promise of a future. With this perception, the children's rights agenda has always been a strong focus at CORE. Indigenous children live in different circumstances and suffer distinctive discriminations and exclusions. We are working not only to monitor and advocate the rights explicitly acknowledged by States, but to refine the standards in the unique circumstances that our children face.

Violence Against Children

CORE as a member of the NGO Advisory Group to the Independent Expert for the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children is working to assure appropriate inclusion of indigenous children's issues in the ongoing international consultations. On-going activities on this issue such as consultations and research compilations are being carried out with support from children, youth and students organisations

Armed conflict

CORE has successfully conducted a research on Children and Armed Conflict in India. The report covers primarily the North East region and Kashmir. It is under publication.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

CORE as a member of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child has convened a sub-group on indigenous children. Through this sub-group we hope, with support for focused programmes, to be able to strengthen the advocacy on children through this second UN decade on Indigenous Peoples

NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CORE continues research, documentation, sensitization and advocacy campaigns to restore the connectivity of indigenous life and eco-systems from the rampant invasion, occupation and erosion of lands and land rights, a process which is destroying the fragile interests of the peoples of the northeast region. We are concerned with the conservation, promotion, enrichment and transmission issues of indigenous cultures assuring ecological and social stability and sustainability on various aspects, including the revival of spiritual and equitable economic traditions of our peoples.

Biodiversity, climate change and adaptation

The pilot episodes of "**Two Thirds of Us**" on "*Eshingi Wapham*" (The Question of Water) highlighted the sacred meaning of traditional indigenous attitudes and practices, the impacts and consequences of mismanagement and abuse on social, biodiversity and ecological balances, of water. Using video images of local situations, a vox populi was conducted to the accompaniment of traditional musicians and artistes, to construct a culturally significant ambience in the site of the filming and to offer a traditional context to the current issues relating to water under discussion. The concept will be mainstreamed into CORE's methodology for documentation, research and campaign.

Rivers, wetlands, dams and mining

This year, we have focus on campaign work on River against Dams in collaboration with SARP. With a substantial experience in mobilizing communities and organising events and campaigns on this issue, CORE has provided resource to grass root and local communities organizations in the field, in Nepal, Bangladesh and the Northeastern region of India. We have also contributed expertise to workshops on people's resistance strategies and alternatives to privatization of Water and Power as well as supported the organisation of the third SARP Forum to be held in May 2005 since its scheduled venue and dates in Nepal have become complicated.

We have also organized "The South Asian Strategy Meet on Water" at Kaziranga, Assam to discuss future course of action by civil society in South Asia on many critical aspects of water management and rights.

We are a member of the Communications and Capacity Development Unit, Human Resource Development

Programme in Rural Water Supply & Sanitation with the State Government of Manipur.

CORE supported local communities to organize public awareness cum protest campaign on International Rivers Day, 14 March against environmentally and socially disastrous big dams and their financing for private profit by public money. The observance specifically targeted the on-going investment of the prestigious Life Insurance Corporation of India Ltd in the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) projects in Assam and other part of the country.

CORE also supports several local organisations and campaign groups working on dangerous extractive industries on indigenous lands without prior, free and informed consent of the people, evictions of indigenous from their lands for wildlife and forest conservation projects.

Globalization and economic transition

CORE is involved with several campaigns advocating the rights of indigenous to maintain and conserve natural resources, knowledge and traditional economies ranging from international campaigns on norms and standards for IFIs to local campaigns to strengthen and protect traditional gender sensitive economics and livelihoods generation. We are active on international campaigns calling for and taking action on violative practices of International Financing Agencies, unfair Trade agreements or practices and the imposition of a damaging market economy on indigenous.

Specifically we are involved with campaigns on the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, major corporate investors and the Government of India's privatisation and liberalization policies

CORE is actively and consistently supporting the Market Women's Association of Manipur to retain the ancient traditional Keithel (women's Market) area against government efforts to replace it with a multi-storied supermarket. This year we facilitated to bring about meetings and exchanges with other similar groups in the Northeast, particularly supporting a group of young women from Amar Bazaar movement among traditional women vendors of Assam.

GOVERNANCE

Democratic functioning of Traditional Institutions and Law

CORE has successfully facilitated the first and consistent participation and representation of indigenous women of the North Eastern region as traditional defenders of their communities' human rights in national and international forum. Specific issues include justice and redress under the situation of armed conflict and suspension of civil rights prevailing in the region, rights to traditional resources in the face of the juggernaut of globalization and privatisation, women's traditional rights to gendered fields of indigenous knowledge, institutions and livelihoods and the revival of gendered traditional community leadership institutions, in keeping with our policy of mainstreaming gender.

Women's Leadership and Governance

One of CORE's on-going programmes to strengthen indigenous women's capacity to protect and promote their rights, to build solidarity and support mechanisms for those who have experienced violations either individually or as a group, is continuing with partnership of the Women's Leadership Partnership (WLP). A series of capacity strengthening workshops in Manipur and Assam is continuing in corporation with the village networking groups using the Women's Leadership Training manual. Men have also been sensitized

on these issues by including them appropriately, in some workshops.

In view of the increasing wide public protest against mega dams construction in various parts of North Eastern states of India, CORE supported organisation of a series of meetings and events on human rights, indigenous rights to lands and resources, women's rights issues and the role of women in safeguarding these natural resources of their communities and their own gender based rights to community owned natural resources and livelihood security in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. International Women's Day was observed with communities in Assam and Manipur.

Engagement of traditional gender balanced leadership

Our efforts initiated the opportunity to meet and discuss urgent concerns of our peoples for self rule, self determination and peace in a regional assembly of indigenous and tribal peoples in the North East, a national level process of consultations and a national convention to collectively craft our own position and policy agenda presented to the Government of India. The North Eastern Regional Indigenous Peoples' Assembly was held 2-4 June 2004 at Village Akajan, Assam

Kangla: living institution or relic

CORE is strongly working on a campaign to revive the pre-British occupation heritage site of the Kangla as a living establishment, re-installing traditional indigenous institutions as functioning entities in their original places. We are particularly focused on advocating to reinstall the Maibi Loisang (the traditional Institution of women's spiritual leadership) inside the Kangla, and to facilitate its rejuvenation and status as a living cultural and spiritual heritage guardian.

IN THE REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ARENA

This is an exhausting, complex and sensitive task given the wider political issues linked with indigenous peoples rights concerns in the South Asia region and traditional attitudes including governmental attitudes towards indigenous peoples. This year CORE has invested considerable efforts and resources in strengthening its networks across the region to include Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. We have also become more proactive on issues and platforms at the Asia regional level, with the intention of strengthening ties in the different sub-regions of Asia.

Our consistent interventions and growing presence at the sub regional and regional levels has made new demands on CORE. One of the major impacts of globalization is unquestionably, the development of sub-regional and regional processes following older or more rational configurations linked to topographical and basic cultural associations. This has particular implications in the context of indigenous peoples' rights issues since many indigenous peoples are spread across national borders. The established role of CORE in the region as a forward-looking indigenous peoples' rights organization has laid on us increased responsibility of developing and strengthening regional platforms for advocacy of indigenous peoples' rights.

Our advocacy on Indigenous Peoples' issues has been widely expanded in international arena also. We were entrusted to coordinate the selection of membership for the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous People in Asian Region. In Chiang Mai, Thailand, CORE has also actively participated on Asia Preparatory meeting of United Nations Working Group of Draft Declaration on Indigenous Peoples.

CORE is co-initiating discussions for comprehensive Regional and national policies to promote indigenous rights over natural resources with partner organisations based on the principles of self-determination. We are engage with the United Nations Development Programme for the finalization of the Initiative for Indigenous Peoples, Tribals and Ethnic Minorities (Asia-Pacific Region).

PROMISES STILL TO KEEP

In this fast changing world, CORE needs strong partnerships and commitment to realize its vision and responsibilities to future generations. In this vitiated social environment, young people see little hope and are absorbed by short term but nonetheless critical issues, often relating to immediate income generation and job opportunity rather than even careers. Opportunities for training and exposure are expensive and difficult to come by and given the poor standards of education in the region, qualified persons are difficult to find.

The need to strengthen information management and dissemination in and through the grass root and community based organisations remain as one of our greatest challenges. Considerable sensitization of support and donor agencies is needed to convince them of the need for this as a priority.

The rapid advancement of CORE as an advocate at the regional and international levels also requires consolidation and capacity building of its personnel and staff. Intensive networking, essential in an isolated, fragmented and beleaguered region such as ours, takes up a massive amount of time and skilled resources.

In order to begin to keep our promises to the youth at CORE, we have the pleasure and privilege of welcoming some of our dedicated younger team members onto our Board.

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