

Project Update: September 2008

The EIA Resource and Response Centre (ERC) has taken a formal shape over the last one and a half year. Some of the significant outputs have been the following:

Organisational

The ERC has been established as separate institution by three civil society group's viz. Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (headed by Ritwick Dutta), Peace Institute and The Environics Trust. A charter has been agreed to and an MOU between the groups have been entered.

ACTIVITIES

- The database of EIA report has progressed very well with over 350 EIA report available of which around 100 are available online.
- The website is now functional and serves as the only website in India providing comprehensive EIA related information. (www.ercindia.org)
- An 'ERC Journal' has been launched (the first of its kind in India) as a serious electronic journal to debate on issues of EIA. (<http://www.ercindia.org/ejournal>)

ALTERNATIVE EIA's and EIA CHALLENGED

- **4 alternative EIA reports** have been prepared related to projects located in Maharashtra (Thermal Power Plant, Ratnagiri), Iron Ore mining in Goa, (Sarvona), EIA Report for Thermal Power Plant in Raigad, Maharashtra). These projects are located in the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats and mangrove forests. Thus an in-house capacity for analyzing EIA reports specially on mining and thermal power plants have developed. The sustained pressure has led to rejection of 4 thermal power projects in view of the anticipated impacts. *A total of nine alternatives EIA on select parameters have been prepared since the launch of the project.*
- **Four Hydel power Projects** in the Himalayas (Kothlibhel Stage I A , Kothlibhel Stage 1B and Stage II have been challenged before the National Environmental Appellate Authority on the grounds of its impact on Otters and the Himalayan Forests. Alternative studies and field studies were conducted on the during the month of June, 2008 for ground truthing of the EIA Report.

WORKSHOP AND CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS

- **Training workshops on EIA :** Over 6 Training in the States of Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Sikkim, Orissa were held over the last 8 months and 210 people were trained.
- A Right to Information Cell under ERC has been set up to assist communities in accessing information on RTI and related information from the Government and its agencies.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Ritwick received the Ashoka Fellowship (see www.ashoka.org) in recognition of the work of challenging developmental projects impacting on ecologically sensitive areas.