

Greetings from the Foundation for Agrarian Studies!

The second half of 2025 has been a period of significant activity for the Foundation, marked above all by the successful organisation of the International Conference on Agrarian Change, held from 6–9 November 2025. This special edition of the bulletin highlights the work leading up to the conference, the event itself, and the broader research and institutional initiatives undertaken during these months.

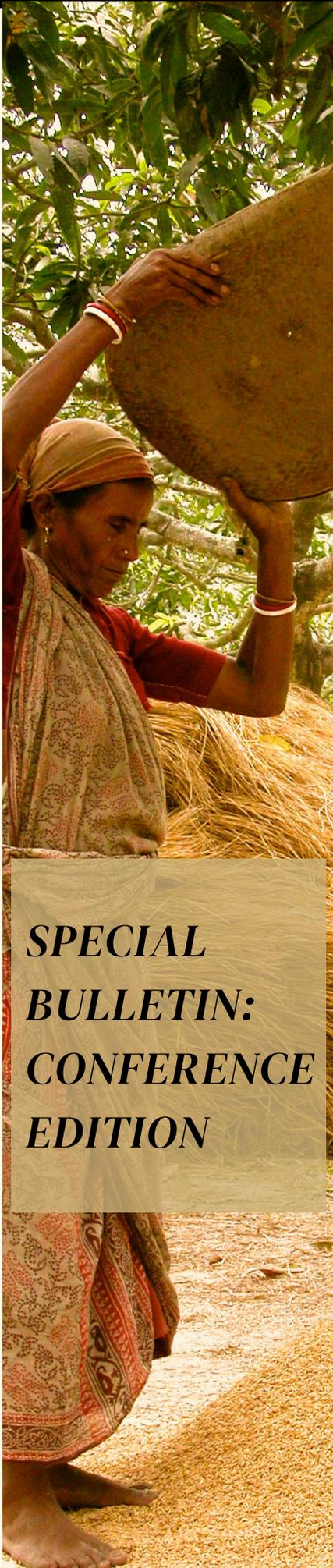
Preparations for the conference accelerated steadily in this period. By September, the team was deeply engaged in outreach and publicity, followed by coordination and logistical planning. The first week of November saw the culmination of these efforts in four days of rich presentations, discussions, and academic exchange. Scholars from around the world participated to present their research and engage in reflections on diverse aspects of agrarian change. The conference created space for learning, debate, and strengthening of international and domestic collaborations. Post-conference work continued through the second half of November, focusing on disseminating findings, sharing proceedings and recordings, and widening engagement through public communication.

Alongside this extensive conference-related work, the Foundation advanced several major research efforts. The first set of results from the surveys conducted in the state of Uttar Pradesh in 2023 was published over two issues of the Review of Agrarian Studies, the journal of the Foundation. The research on digital agriculture in India progressed well. The information collected through in-depth interviews with a range of actors engaged in the ecosystem of digital agriculture have been analysed. The main findings from the study are being presented on multiple academic platforms. The first phase of the work under the CGIAR–SPIA-funded research projects on agricultural innovation in North, and South India is nearing completion. The major findings from it will be presented at a national consultation in Delhi in January 2026.

The oral history project continued to strengthen its documentation of the early generations of agricultural scientists in India. The team worked on preparing the initial set of interviews for publication, began a new round of recordings, and co-organised a public event that brought historical perspectives on agricultural transformation into conversation with contemporary debates. Field research also continued in the Cauvery basin, where the team undertook a fifteen-day visit for surveys, case studies, and discussions with stakeholders, deepening ongoing work on irrigation systems and agrarian change.

With these activities, the Foundation has sustained its research momentum, strengthened institutional partnerships, and deepened engagement with both senior and emerging scholars. We look ahead to the next year with optimism as we continue to expand our research, outreach, and academic initiatives.

Sandipan Baksi
Director, Foundation for Agrarian Studies



***SPECIAL
BULLETIN:
CONFERENCE
EDITION***



SPECIAL FEATURE: FAS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGRARIAN CHANGE

The International Conference on Agrarian Change, held in Thiruvananthapuram from November 6–9, 2025, was the central focus of the Foundation’s work during the second half of the year and marked a major milestone in our institutional journey. The months of preparation saw coordinated efforts across outreach, publicity, programme development, and logistical planning, including the launch of a new conference website, the release of communication materials, and the rollout of the Fields of Change video podcast series.

The Call for Papers received an extraordinary response, and invitations were extended to leading researchers, scientists, young scholars of rural India, policymakers, and grassroots-level workers from India and abroad.

The four-day conference brought together a diverse and distinguished group of delegates who engaged in rigorous discussions on agrarian change worldwide. Sessions covered themes such as rural labour, technological change, agricultural innovation, the land question, environmental challenges, and the political economy of development. The conference served as a vital platform for presenting new research, revisiting longstanding debates, and identifying directions for future collaboration. It also provided an important opportunity for younger scholars to engage with senior researchers, and for practitioners and activists to present grounded perspectives from the field.

Post-conference activities continued through November, with the publication of detailed reports, proceedings, photographs, and session recordings. The event marked the largest scholarly gathering hosted by FAS since its landmark 2014 conference and has already begun shaping the Foundation’s research agenda and partnerships for the coming years.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CONFERENCE



RESEARCH

Socio-economic Analysis of Classes from UP Survey Data

The Foundation re-surveyed two villages in Uttar Pradesh – Mahatwar (Eastern Uttar Pradesh) and Harevli (Western Uttar Pradesh) – in June 2023. These villages were first studied by the Foundation in 2006. With data processing now complete, the team has been finalising manuscripts for the first series of publications based on the study’s findings. Ten articles based on the findings of this research work featured in Volume (15,1) and Volume (15, 2) in the *Review of Agrarian Studies*.

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Digital Agriculture in India

This ongoing project, supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, explores the evolving ecosystem of digital agriculture in India. Teams from FAS conducted two field visits under this project in August and September. The first visit to Hyderabad, Telangana, focused on the supply side of digital agriculture, with the objective of mapping innovations, projects, and the roles of different stakeholders in this ecosystem. The second visit to Nalgonda district, Telangana, in September, focused on the reach and adoption of agricultural drones and digital extension services, and the development of digital public infrastructure.

A detailed summary of findings will be shared in the next project update.

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RESEARCH



Comprehensive Research on Canal Irrigation System and Agriculture in the Cauvery River Basin

This ongoing project, undertaken in collaboration with Professor Daizo Sugimoto of the Department of Economics, Meijo University, Japan, aims to understand the challenges faced by surface irrigation systems under adverse climatic conditions and their implications for agriculture and farmers at the village level.

In the second half of the year, the project team visited the Mandya region of Karnataka, which falls in the Upper Cauvery river basin. The fieldwork, comprising household surveys, detailed case studies, and interviews with administrative officials, was spread over two weeks and was completed in two phases.

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The Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in India

The Foundation, in collaboration with Monash University and ICAR–National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), is undertaking two CGIAR–SPIA–funded projects on agricultural innovation in North India, and South India.

During this period, the team advanced the first phase of work through a stocktaking exercise, documenting innovations introduced by CGIAR centres over the past two decades. Workshops were held to review the provisional list, and visits were made to selected ICAR institutes and State Agricultural Universities. An MoU was signed with ICAR–NBPGR, followed by an advisory committee meeting where members offered critical feedback. These inputs are being incorporated to refine the listing process and prepare for the next steps of the projects.

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RESEARCH



Oral History Project on Agricultural Scientists in India: 1950-1990

The Foundation, in collaboration with the Archives at NCBS, is undertaking an Oral History Project to document and critically assess the contributions of Indian agricultural scientists to agricultural science, food production, and development practice. These detailed interviews capture the experiences of some of the last living members of an independent agricultural research system, offering important insights into the history of agricultural research and education in India and helping identify archives and personal collections for future study.



In the second half of the year, the team prepared publication-ready versions of the first ten interviews (Phase 1) and began conducting Phase 2 interviews. The Foundation also co-organised an event with the Bangalore International Centre and NCBS on agricultural transformations in the 1960s, drawing on oral histories from agricultural scientists and agrarian movements.



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Voices from the Lab and the Field: Oral Histories of Agrarian Change

The Foundation, in collaboration with the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) and the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), organised an event titled “Voices from the Lab and the Field: Oral Histories of Agrarian Change” on September 24, 2025, exploring the agricultural transformations of the 1960s based on oral histories from agricultural science, and agrarian movements in India.

The speakers for the event were Parvathi Menon, Former Resident Editor of The Hindu, Bengaluru, and Sandipan Baksi, Director, FAS. The discussion was moderated by Madhura Swaminathan, Professor and Head, Economic Analysis Unit, Indian Statistical Institute.

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In-House Seminars



Minimum Wage Compliance in Rural India: The Role of Employment Guarantee Schemes - **Arindam Das**

On July 30, 2025, Arindam Das, Joint Director at the Foundation, presented his study in an in-house seminar organised by the Foundation.

The study has been conducted in collaboration with Bheemeshwar Reddy, Associate Professor, Department of Economics and Finance, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, Hyderabad.

Arindam recently presented this paper at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva. It is part of his ongoing doctoral research and highlights the ‘unintended’ effect of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in improving compliance with minimum wage laws.

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Young Scholars' Workshop on "Rural and Agrarian Realities"

Arindam Das, Joint Director of the Foundation, participated in the Young Scholars' Workshop on "Rural and Agrarian Realities: Critical Perspectives and Emerging Trends", held on October 16–17, 2025, at GITAM (Deemed to be) University, Hyderabad.

At the workshop, Arindam presented a paper titled "Method of Village Studies: Insights from the Primary Surveys," where he discussed the Foundation's Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI).

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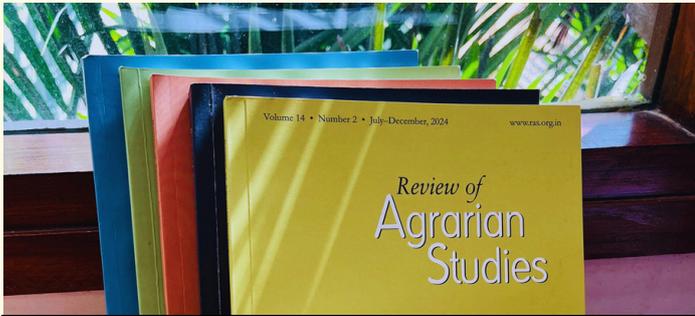


DialogueNEXT India

Madhura Swaminathan, Trustee of the Foundation for Agrarian Studies; Sandipan Baksi, Director; and Rebecca Rose Varghese, Coordinator (Communication and Events), participated in DialogueNEXT India, held on September 8–9, 2025, at the ICAR Convention Center.

As a Member of the World Food Prize Foundation Council of Advisors, Professor Madhura welcomed the guests, speakers, and delegates from across the world to the event. In the panel discussions, she reflected on the future of preserving the legacies of agricultural pioneers. In her closing remarks, she emphasised that "Food and water must never be allowed to become weapons of war."

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PUBLICATIONS BY THE FAS MEMBERS

“Agrarian Change in Uttar Pradesh: A Review of Village Studies”

Kunal Munjal, and Madhura Swaminathan
(RAS 15,2)

The paper provides a comprehensive list of all village studies undertaken in eastern and western Uttar Pradesh to date, and draws on those undertaken between 2000 and 2023 to describe features of production conditions, labour relations, and income and employment diversification since 2000. It also describes agrarian conditions in two villages surveyed by the Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI) in 2006, and uses this to highlight aspects of the development of capitalism in agriculture in the two regions.

READ THE ARTICLE

“Peasants and Proletarians in Harevli and Mahatwar”

V. K. Ramachandran, and C. A. Sethu
(RAS 15,2)

The article analyses socio-economic changes among peasants and rural workers in Harevli and Mahatwar based on 2006 and 2023 survey data, tracing shifts in labour use, income sources, proletarianisation, rising landlessness, and livelihood diversification, while underscoring the continued centrality of peasant production despite persistent inequality.

READ THE ARTICLE

“Land and Income Mobility in Two North Indian Villages: A Note,”

Rithika Pulagiri Reddy and Madhura Swaminathan (RAS 15,2)

Based on panel data from the Foundation for Agrarian Studies’ Project on Agrarian Relations in India for two Uttar Pradesh villages, Mahatwar and Harevli, from 2006 to 2023, the paper examines household mobility in land ownership and incomes, showing low land mobility and persistent agrarian inequality alongside higher income mobility driven by non-farm work and migration.

READ THE ARTICLE

PUBLICATIONS BY THE FAS MEMBERS

Economics of Farming in Mahatwar, Uttar Pradesh

Tapas Singh Modak, and Deepak Johnson
(RAS 15,2)

The article, based on a case study of Mahatwar village in eastern Uttar Pradesh, examines disparities in incomes and costs of cultivation across socio-economic classes, showing stark inequalities arising from high rental burdens, heavy reliance on family labour, and low marketable surplus among poorer households.

READ THE ARTICLE

Educational Achievements and Gaps: Insights from Longitudinal Village Studies in Uttar Pradesh

**Daya Susan Thomas and Madhura
Swaminathan**
(RAS 15,2)

Based on longitudinal data from two villages, Mahatwar and Harevli in Uttar Pradesh, surveyed in 2006 and 2023 by the Foundation, the paper examines achievements and gaps in literacy and school education, analysing changes in literacy levels, years of schooling, and school attendance disaggregated by gender, caste, and class in the region.

READ THE ARTICLE



VISITORS

Dr. Gaurav Datt

Dr. Gaurav Datt, Associate Professor at the Department of Economics, Monash University, visited the FAS office from July 16 to 19, 2025. Professor Datt is associated with the Foundation as the Principal Lead in our ongoing projects, “The Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in North India” and “The Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in South India”, and engaged with the project team on key aspects of the ongoing work. He helped chart out strategies and set goals for upcoming milestones and activities under the projects.

He revisited the FAS office in the second and third weeks of December, 2025, during which he engaged with the project team on key aspects of the work, including plans for next year’s one-day consultation on the North India project and the strategy for the pilot survey.

Professor Judith Heyer

Professor Judith Heyer, Emeritus Fellow, Somerville College, University of Oxford, visited the Foundation’s office on November 27, 2025.

During the visit, Professor Judith Heyer reflected on her long research trajectory – from studying rural livelihoods in East Africa to conducting village studies in Coimbatore – and on the slow pace of change in rural India. Our researchers also took this opportunity to discuss some of their research ideas with her.

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Professor R. Ramakumar

R. Ramakumar, Professor at the School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, visited the Foundation’s office on November 27, 2025. A long-time collaborator of the Foundation and an Advisory Committee member of the ongoing projects on agricultural innovation in North, and South India, he met with the project team to discuss key aspects of the work and offer guidance on the next stages of research.

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VISITORS

Professor Daizo Sugimoto

Daizo Sugimoto, Professor in the Department of Economics at Meijo University, Japan, has been visiting the Foundation's office since June 2025. He is based in Bangalore until March 2026. During this period, he will be working with the FAS team on the project "Comprehensive Research on the Canal Irrigation System and Agriculture in the Cauvery River Basin."

Professor Takahiro Sato

Professor Takahiro Sato, Deputy Director, Research Institute of Economics and Business Administration, Kobe University, visited the Foundation's office on August 18, 2025.

During the visit, the FAS team presented an overview of the Foundation's ongoing research projects and highlighted insights from the village studies database of the Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI).

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