



**INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE
(ISEC)**

VISION 2020

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

Thirty eight years – a travelogue

Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) has completed 38 eventful years of a journey which has been in turns, exciting, challenging, rewarding and satisfying. The Institute was established at a time when social sciences research in India was in a nascent stage. Owing to the very significant work it has done over the decades, ISEC has achieved the distinction of being India’s premier research institute for social sciences and built up a formidable reputation. The coming years will see ISEC defining a path that will seek to build on that reputation and enhance it. Before this very crucial phase begins, it is essential to pause, reflect, take stock and spell out a vision for the coming decades, which is what the Vision 2020 paper aims to do.

“I now want to utilize some of my time in building up a third institution in the field of social sciences, in addition to the two which I have helped to build, namely, the Delhi School of Economics and the Institute of Economic Growth. As I have built these two institutions in the north, I want to establish the third one in the south; Bangalore is an ideal place for its location.” – V.K.R.V. Rao, 1974

ISEC’s vision for the future is based on the belief that the basic function of any social science research organisation is to understand the problems of society, and suggest means to overcome them. This requires sustained research on social dynamics in a two-way process; the research requires interaction with various stakeholders who make a difference to society i.e. policy makers, the polity, civil society organisations, and communities etc. It also involves a process of taking the findings back to the stakeholders in the form of policy initiatives.

Given the significance of research in the evolution of societal processes, ISEC has given prime importance to interactive research and made a conscious effort to create a congenial climate for this at the Institute. ISEC has also worked on the understanding that research alone is not enough and it is equally important to ensure that the research is used for wider dissemination of the learnings, and for effecting change in society through policy. Towards this, ISEC has showcased its research findings using various spaces and forums, and used them to make meaningful contributions to dialogues around development of policy and other important processes that impact society.

The beginning

Prof. V.K.R.V Rao founded ISEC in 1972 with the help of like-minded colleagues, noted academicians, the Government of Karnataka and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). It was envisaged as a national centre of excellence that would specialise in interdisciplinary research, training in social sciences and analyses of critical issues affecting the transformation of economy, polity and society. The mandate of the Institute

was also to generate state-of-the-art knowledge and initiate micro and macro-level studies, which could improve the quality of policy-making.

If there is one clear statement of what Dr. VKRV Rao wanted for ISEC – which is embedded within its very name – it was to have social scientists from various disciplines think hard, and work towards getting at a practical way to provoke “Change”. The need of the day therefore is to have behavioural economists who can analyse and initiate this.

Within a very short span the founding group and their supporters, led by Prof. Rao, mobilised the necessary human and material resources required to establish a team of dedicated researchers to stimulate a good environment for social science research. ISEC now holds the distinction of being the largest among the clutch of research institutions functioning under the ICSSR and has benchmarked excellence in social science research methods.

A birds-eye view of ISEC

In line with the vision of the founders who set goals for the institute, which were well ahead of their time, ISEC has, since inception, attempted to play an important catalytic role in social and economic transformation in the country.

The micro-level studies based on primary data collected in Tumkur district, the landmark study based on the Bangalore city survey conducted by the Institute, ‘*The Remembered Village*’ of Prof. M.N. Srinivas, and the monumental work by Prof VKRV Rao on India’s National Income, are the initial studies carried out by ISEC. This was followed by the work by dedicated faculty members on similar lines, which have left their footprints on the field of Indian social sciences.

ISEC’s concern for the social and economic welfare of the poor and disadvantaged groups reflects strongly in the large number of studies it has undertaken to understand the various dimensions of poverty and human development. Analytical and applied research studies particularly in policy-related areas have also been areas of priority at ISEC. Central, state and local level governments have come to rely on the Institute for evaluation of various policies and programmes.

The fresh thrust as envisaged then

“The major thrust behind the Institute is an integrated harnessing of social science skills for identifying and understanding the social and economic change taking place in our country, linking it with its programmes of economic growth and social development, and evolving policies and proposals for stimulating change in the right direction and increasing the well-being and welfare of vast masses of our people, who stand today below the poverty line.”

(From Professor V.K.R.V. Rao’s welcome address during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s visit to ISEC for laying the corner-stone - 11th July 1974).

ISEC has also developed some very prestigious and valuable research linkages. In order to promote core-funded activities at ISEC, Prof Rao got the support of the Union Ministry of Agriculture to house one of its three agro-economic research units i.e. the Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation (ADRT) at the Institute (the other two are housed at

the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, and the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad). The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also established the Population Research Centre (PRC) at ISEC.

In addition to these core-funded activities, the Institute, over the past 38 years, has established the following with support from various departments and institutions:

- Centre for Economic Studies and Policy and RBI Endowment Unit supported by Reserve Bank of India
- Sir Ratan Tata Deferred Endowment Fund supported by SRT Trust
- Shri Ramakrishna Hegde Chair on Decentralised Development
- Centre for research in Decentralisation and Development with support from Ford Foundation

The Institute has also established close relationships with research and training institutions of repute in India such as the Institute of Rural Management, Anand, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi and Madras School of Economics, Madras Institute of Developing Studies, Chennai and several others. Among the Indian universities, ISEC has close relationships with Bangalore University, Mysore University, Osmania University and Mumbai University. It has also developed close ties with a few foreign universities such as London School of Economics, NORDIC Centre, Maastrich University, Netherlands, University of Warsaw and others.

It will also be necessary to work in a net-work mode on practical issues. Change can come from government policy – whether via central, state or village and municipal governments, or via the actions of private individuals and NGOs. It will enter through the market forces forcefully entering through liberalisation / globalisation Here we may have to analyse the impacts as well as coping behaviours of people of different classes/castes/regions are inadequately researched and conceptualised.

ISEC has received generous support from Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) for capacity building and research activities. This support has helped the capacity building and dissemination programme for the faculty. It also helps to collaborate on research activities with other institutions. The selection of the faculty for the purpose is done on the basis of specific collaborative proposals submitted by the faculty members of the Institute and collaborating members. The experience of the programme up to now has been encouraging and ISEC has published about 20 monographs based on research carried out by the faculty. A number of research scholars have taken benefit of the collaborative work and modification of the focus of the programme in the coming decade is under consideration.

ISEC from the beginning has received major financial support from ICSSR and a matching grant from the Government of Karnataka. In addition, to meet increasing funding requirements for core activities and to upgrade the infrastructure, the Institute undertakes sponsored projects. Sponsored projects account for an average of 45 per cent of the total research expenditure, and core funding by the state government and the ICSSR, and the endowed Chairs and Centres together generate 54 per cent of the revenues.

In soliciting sponsored projects, the Institute ensures that the core objectives are not compromised. A majority of the projects undertaken have been for the Central and state

The main objectives of the Institute as enshrined in the initial documents are to:

- Undertake pure and applied research in social sciences encompassing all aspects of a developing society in an inter-disciplinary framework. These include studies on economic, ecological, sociological, demographic, educational and administrative problems and issues of the country.
- Assist central, state and local governments by providing policy inputs based on research studies.
- Undertake regular training of doctoral students and teachers in universities and colleges, and training programmes for officials and political functionaries, particularly at local levels, to upgrade their skills and make them aware of social and economic issues.
- Maintain a documentation and data centre for social sciences.
- Take all measures within the competence of the Institute for the promotion of pure and applied research in social and economic development and change.
- Assist multilateral organisations such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UN (ESCAP), UNICEF and ILO in undertaking collaborative research and training programmes.

government agencies, the Ford Foundation, Swiss Agency for Development Corporation (SDC), MacArthur Foundation, London School of Economics, Food and Agricultural Organisation, the World Bank and other international agencies. A large number of studies have also been sponsored by various Central and state ministries and the Planning Commission.

Infrastructure and facilities

The ISEC campus is located in Nagarbhavi, Bangalore on the south-western outskirts of the city. Set amidst 16 hectares of verdant green landscapes, it abuts the Bangalore University's Jnanabharati premises. The campus has:

- An academic and administrative complex.
- Student hostels.
- A good guesthouse for visiting scholars.
- Residential facilities for 77 faculty members and staff.
- Four well-equipped seminar halls.
- Two committee rooms.
- A spacious 300-seater auditorium.

V.K.R.V. Rao Library

The V.K.R.V. Rao Library at ISEC has an impressive collection of two lakh titles, 400 microfiche copies of periodicals, official and non-official documents and back volumes of professional journals and periodicals. ISEC also subscribes to about 350 professional foreign and Indian journals, and nine newspapers. The V.K.R.V. Rao Library is considered as one of the best reference libraries in social sciences in south India, and the World Bank and

several other international organisations have recognised it as a depository library. The collections of valuable books received as bequests from Bharat Ratna Sir M. Visveswaraya, Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao and Prof. P.R. Brahmananda are treasured possessions of the library and have added great value to it.

Recently, with a grant from Government of Karnataka ISEC has started a digital library and a large number of rare books and reports in social sciences have been digitised. Additionally, some books published by ISEC students and other ISEC publications have been digitised and all of these are available online to users. ISEC has entered into agreements with Mythic Society, Mysore University and Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics to take ahead the process of digitisation.

Data bank

ISEC has set up a data bank for storing both secondary and primary data collected for several projects. It has also gathered and stored basic NSS and census data and other secondary data from World Bank, RBI, etc., as well as data on the Indian economy, polity and society and classified them in a user-friendly manner. Manned by a data bank manager, there are plans to index the data available in the bank for easier use. All these will be put on the network and the entire work will be taken up in a time bound manner to make it available to ISEC users.

Faculty and staff

The Institute has a strong, well-qualified faculty to handle multi-disciplinary social sciences research. The specialisations include economic theory, macro economics, public finance, statistics, econometrics, labour economics, sociology, anthropology, agricultural economics, ecological / environmental economics, political science, public administration, education, demography, geography and other social sciences.

The positions at ISEC are filled through open advertisements and competition. The Institute is an equal opportunity employer from inception and follows the reservation policy for disadvantaged groups as per government rules.

Management and operation systems

The Director is the Chief Executive of the Institute and reports to the Board of Governors consisting of:

- 10 elected representatives drawn from founding/life members.
- Four co-opted members of which two are female members.
- The Principal Secretaries of Finance, Planning and Higher Education in Karnataka.
- A representative each from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and the ICSSR.
- Two elected representatives from the faculty.

The Board, which meets at least three times every year, provides a policy framework to the Institution and is responsible for all important policy decisions. Board meetings are presided over by the Chairman, who is chosen from among the elected members. The

Governor of Karnataka is the President of the ISEC Society and presides over the annual general body meeting (AGM), which includes all the founding/life members of the Institute

The present Chairman of the Board of Governors is Professor KRS Murthy, alumni of Harvard Business School and renowned management expert and former Director of Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB).

A Search Committee constituted by the Governor of Karnataka short lists a panel of suitable persons for appointment as Director of the Institute after which the Governor recommends the name of the Director to the Board. ISEC has had very eminent social scientists as its Directors, and among them are Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, the Founder Director, and thereafter, Dr C.S. Sheshadri, Mr Srikanthiah, Dr. L.S. Venkataramanan. Dr. G. Thimmaiah, Mr. T.R. Satishchandran, Dr. P.V. Shenoi, Dr.M.Govinda Rao, Dr. Gopal K. Kadekodi, Dr. N. Jayaram and presently Dr. R. S. Deshpande.

Dr. R.S. Deshpande, who took charge on August 21, 2008, is the present Director of ISEC. He was a Professor and Head of ADRT Centre of ISEC for ten years; has served in various capacities in the Institute and has rich academic and administrative experience.

ISEC encourages employee participation in decision making. The Director is assisted by various statutory committees in implementing policies. These include the Research Programme committee, Academic Programme Committee, Joint Consultative Committee, Finance Committee and Investment Committee. There is adequate representation of faculty members in the committees who are nominated as members on rotation. The Director is the Chairman of these committees and one of the professors is the Vice-Chairman by rotation in some of the committees.

The Institute also has a few non-statutory committees such as the Grievance Redressal Committee, which has recently been constituted to address grievances of the faculty and staff. Similarly, the Research Ethics Committee lays down basic ethics through a written code to be followed for research studies and brings to the notice of the authorities, any violation of good ethical practice.

There is also a Gender Committee in the Institute to take care of any gender discrimination or harassment of women employees. The Building Committee takes care of repairs and construction and is helped by external civil engineering experts. The Computer and Technical Committee and the Publications Committee help the Director in relevant areas.

The Registrar heads all administrative functions and supervises the administrative staff of about 90 members, who in turn manage the large estate and infrastructure. Some services like gardening and security are outsourced.

ISEC and its impact

ISEC, down the years, has impacted society at various levels, directly and indirectly through its policy research and policy interface. It has:

- Contributed to the understanding of economy, polity and society and disseminated information to the public through publications, seminars, workshops and training programmes.
- Assisted and advised particularly at the state and local levels, through policy research and evaluation studies, in the design and implementation of policies.
- Directly influenced government policies through ISEC representation in various commissions, committees and working groups.
- Imparted training periodically to government officials to help them understand the philosophy and rationale behind the design and implementation of various policies.
- Undertaken comprehensive training programmes for functionaries of decentralised governance, particularly from district panchayats.
- Interacted with NGOs to bring in action oriented research and trained NGO functionaries to improve on their work.
- Trained social scientists through rigorous, structured programmes, which have led to doctoral degrees in all social science disciplines.
- Imparted advanced training to university and college teachers and social scientists on latest developments to enhance the quality of teaching and research.
- Arranged public lectures by eminent social scientists on important political, social and economic issues and developments confronting the country and the region.
- Worked closely with the private sector and helped the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Confederation of Indian Industry and other entrepreneurial organisations to prepare them for emerging business developments e.g. implications of WTO or the introduction of new taxation systems.

The larger impact of ISEC has been through dissemination of the results of its research studies. In the past 38 years of its existence, the Institute has completed studies on wide-ranging topics in social sciences. The papers and publications have been shared widely with other social science research institutions and are well received by scholars in social sciences and policy makers alike. To list some of them:

- 650 applied and policy-related studies on various economic, social, political and administrative issues.
- 225 books.
- Over 2,500 technical articles published by the faculty. Of these, over 1100 articles were published in refereed journals in India and abroad, 400 articles in various magazines and about 1,000 articles in various media. ISEC faculty members have made their presence felt in many national and international seminars, conferences and workshops.
- Regular contributions by ISEC faculty and students appear in leading newspapers to raise the standard of public debate and influence public opinion on several contemporary issues.
- 225 working papers and 20 monographs by the faculty have been published.

Other areas that have received significant attention in research studies at ISEC are human development, natural resource management, rural transformation and eradication of poverty. Sustainable development is a priority area at the Institute, and ISEC is the earliest institution in the country to have established a separate unit on ecological economics. In recent years,

decentralisation and governance have emerged as important focus areas and ISEC has established a centre focusing on this area.

With funding from Ford Foundation, a number of studies have been carried out on their fiscal, political, administrative and sociological facets. Various evaluation studies on programmes and policies have provided useful inputs in designing and reforming government policies on education, health care and implementation of anti-poverty policies and social welfare schemes.

Despite relative inadequacy in core funding by the ICSSR and the State government, ISEC has been able to sustain itself through sponsored research projects. Thanks to the high quality of the projects undertaken in the past and the reputation it has earned, the Institute is today in a position of being able to choose from a large number of projects being offered. This has helped in choosing projects with academic content rather than mere consultancies and has helped the Institute maintain its strong academic character.

There is a realisation that excessive dependence on projects could lead to gradual erosion of academic standards. It is therefore important to ensure stability of funding to minimise the adverse effects of *projectitis*.

PhD programme and capacity building activities

ISEC is well known for its unique PhD programme in most disciplines of social sciences. Over the years, ISEC has produced 145 doctorates. Doctoral students from across the country are selected on the basis of tests and interviews conducted at the Institute. The selected students undergo a rigorous course in theory, research methodology and quantitative techniques. On completion of the course, the students appear for an examination and only the eligible are accepted for the PhD programme.

This is followed by a pre-PhD training course for one year in which, besides imparting advanced grounding in theory, quantitative techniques and research methodology, an interdisciplinary perspective is imparted by arranging special lectures by eminent personalities. The course is continuously modernised and updated to keep up with the most recent developments. Significant upgradation in the teaching programme has been accomplished recently by revising the syllabi and inviting professors to teach in the course. The scholars trained in the Institute have secured responsible positions in reputed organisations and earned recognition and respect for their understanding of social, political and economic dynamics.

The Institute has organised trainings for different groups and important among these are:

- Refresher courses for college and university teachers in economics, sociology, education and development administration.
- Training on various aspects related to economy and policy for senior government officials.
- Capacity building to train elected representatives from different district panchayats.
- An innovative training programme for rural marketing management trainees of Hindustan Lever Limited in a bid to reach out to the private sector.

- Capacity building for IAS officers in the use of data for micro-level planning and decentralisation.
- Training in econometric tools and techniques for senior IES officers of Government of India.

The Institute collaborates with international agencies such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Ford Foundation, Commonwealth Organisation, other research organisations and universities to organise conferences, seminars and workshops. Some of the important seminars and workshops organised by ISEC in the recent years include:

- A workshop on ‘Evaluation of Poverty Reduction and Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals’ in collaboration with the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) of the World Bank, in June 2002.
- A three-day workshop on research methodology for members of International Food Rights Campaign (IFRC) sponsored by Action Aid, an international NGO.
- A workshop on ‘Land-Cover Change and Watershed Services in the Western Ghats Region’ in collaboration with UNESCO in January 2003.
- A workshop on ‘Strengthening Public Information and Communication in ADB Projects’ as part of the policy of the Asian Development Bank in July, 2004.
- An international conference on ‘21st Century Challenges to Sustainable Agri-Food Systems: Bio-technology, Environment, Nutrition, Trade Policy’ in March 2007, jointly with UAS, Bangalore, USAID and IOWA State University, USA.
- Asia regional workshop on ‘Compensation for Eco-System Services’ in coordination with the International Centre for Research in Agro-Forestry, Nairobi, Kenya and ICRAF in May, 2006. The workshop was attended by participants from South Asia and Kenya.
- Review meeting of the ISEC-IFPRI study on ‘Making Decentralisation and Local Governance Work for the Rural Poor: Lessons from India’, held in July 2006, in collaboration with the International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C. and was attended by government officials including those from zilla panchayats and taluk panchayats.
- Farm Sector in Karnataka: Farmers' Indebtedness and Risk Management, 2009.
- National Seminar on “Climate Change: Data Availability and Requirement” 2009.
- Annual Conference of Indian Association for Research on National Income and Wealth, (IARNIW), 2009.
- Workshop on Formative Evaluation of the Management Development Programme (MDP) for the field level functionaries in the education department of the state government, 2008.
- Seminar on Draft Karnataka Groundwater (Regulation and Control of Development and Management) Bill, 2008.
- Thirtieth Annual Conference of the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP)(October 17-19, 2008)
- International Seminar on “Diversities in the Indian Diaspora: Nature, Implications and Responses in partnership with the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS),

- Shimla, 2008.
- Round-Table on ‘Indicators of School Quality: Towards Gender-Friendly Schooling Environment jointly with Commonwealth Secretariat, and the Commonwealth Foundation, London, and the Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, 2008.
 - Micro Finance Needs of Vulnerable Groups, 2008.
 - National Seminar on Globalisation and the Management of Vulnerabilities, 2008.
 - Water Resources in Karnataka: Emerging Challenges and Options, 2008
 - Developing Handbook on Research & Evaluation within SSA Framework, 2008.
 - Regional Consultation on "Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector, 2007.
 - International Conference on 21st Century Challenges to Sustainable Agri-Food Systems: Biotechnology, Environment, Nutrition, Trade and Policy, 2007.
 - Workshop on Implications of NFHS-3 Preliminary Findings for Karnataka, 2007.
 - Asia Regional Workshop on Compensation for Ecosystems Services, 2006.
 - Conference on Macro Economic Policy, Agricultural Development and Rural Institutions, 2006.
 - International Symposium and 37th Annual Conference of the Indian Regional Science Association Training Workshop for Young Regional Scientists, 2006.
 - Lives at Risk: Vulnerable Daughters in a Modernizing Society, 2005.
 - Development in Karnataka: A Multi-Disciplinary Perspective jointly with Cornell University, Ithaca, USA, 2005
 - Chinese Economic Development: Lessons for India, 2005
 - Civil Service Reforms and E-Governance, 2005.

Additionally, several workshops and seminars have been held on issues relating to sub-national tax reforms, policy and institutional issues related to good governance, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and Indian agriculture and problems of child labour.

Publications

ISEC reaches out to the academic stakeholders through its publications. The working paper series has a large number of titles and all are available on the ISEC website. These are the papers that show the preliminary results of the ongoing researches and are blind refereed before publication through website. The monograph series includes the results of the research work carried out at ISEC and published after a rigorous refereeing process for dissemination among the stakeholders. There are about 20 monographs published and barring the latest, all the others are available on the website.

ISEC also publishes an interdisciplinary bi-annual journal in social sciences entitled ***Journal of Social and Economic Development***. The initiative was begun in 1998 with the objective of making available a refereed journal with an all-India focus, rather than one to merely publish internal research findings. The editorial committee of the journal comprises eminent social scientists, and other social scientists are invited to submit their papers for publication after refereeing. In addition to these ISEC also issues occasional policy briefs and State macro scan (SMSO) covering the major policy feedback for the government.

Externally funded Initiatives

V. K. R. V. Rao Chair

In 1997, Ministry of Finance, Government of India gave ISEC a corpus of Rs. 1 Crore. A part of the interest income from the corpus is utilised to fund the Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao Chair. The Board of Governors of the Institute chooses an economist of international eminence for the Chair for every two years. The selected person is expected to spend at least three months in ISEC during his/her tenure to interact with the faculty and students, give lectures and seminars and undertake research. Under the arrangement the Institute meets the cost of air travel to visit the Institute twice during the tenure and the professor is paid a monthly honorarium.

Prof. T. N. Srinivasan, Chairman, Department of Economics, Yale University was the first V.K.R.V. Rao Chair Professor, followed by eminent persons like Prof. Kaushik Basu, Carl Marks Professor, Cornell University, Prof Arvind Pangaria, Professor Ravi Kanbur of Cornell University, Prof James Manor, Professor Michael Walton, Kennedy School. Professor Ashutosh Varshney of Brown University is presently the Chair Professor.

Rajyotsava extension lectures

To coincide with Kannada Rajyotsava day, ISEC organises a prestigious lecture in November every year. Prominent citizens of Karnataka are invited to deliver the lectures and the past invitees have included Justice M. N. Venkatachalaiah, former Chief Justice of India, Prof. U. R. Rao, former Chairman, Space Commission, Mr. T. R. Satishchandran, former Governor of Goa, Prof. U. R. Ananthamurthy, eminent writer, M. Y. Ghorpade, a freedom fighter and statesman, Mr. N. R. Narayana Murthy, Former Chairman and CEO, Infosys, and Ms Aundhati Nag, an eloquent theatre personality.

Research Activities

ISEC endeavours to periodically update its research vision keeping in view the emerging challenges in social sciences. While attempting this, a good balance is maintained between pure and applied research at ISEC. Research activities are conducted under the various centres, which also match the thematic research areas and the requirements of the funding agencies. The various centres are:

- Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation Centre
- Centre for Economic Studies and Policy
- Centre for Decentralisation and Development
- Centre for Human Resource Development
- Centre for Political Institutions
- Governance and Development
- Centre for Ecological Economics and Natural Resources
- Population Research Centre

Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation (ADRT) Centre

ARDTC was established at the inception of ISEC to provide policy feedback to the Ministry of Agriculture Government of India. It is one of three such centres, the other two being at IIM Ahmedabad and Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi. The Ministry of

Agriculture, which has funded the centre, is closely associated with its activities. The broad areas of research are discussed and finalised at a meeting of all centres held every year.

Till 2008, ARDTC had completed over 130 research studies covering several aspects of India's agrarian economy. These relate to the economics of crop production and consumption, pricing and efficiency of resource use, agrarian institutions, agro-climatic regional planning and evaluation of various agricultural programmes. ARDTC also undertakes studies for state governments and other funding agencies on themes pertaining to agriculture and rural development.

ARDTC is currently engaged in research on the wide ranging changes taking place in the agricultural and rural economy of the country during the past decade. WTO, horticulture mission, agro-processing, agriculture and industry related schemes, and domestic policy reforms have been prioritized as issues of immediate concern. These will continue to be prime areas of focus on the research agenda of ARDTC, while agricultural trade has emerged as a new area for research.

The role of ARDTC in policy making both at the state and central levels is well recognized and this will continue to be central to the future vision of ISEC. The centre has been leading policy debates at both levels. The important policy concerns in the coming decade will be:

- Continued stagnation in agricultural production.
- Issues in horticultural development, floriculture.
- Development of trade in agriculture,
- Issues in water policy.
- Farm sector credit and investment.
- Problems in rural employment and housing.
- Decision-making process both at micro and macro levels has been an area of policy concern for the faculty.
- Farming system approach is another sector that has linkages at farm-levels whereas at macro-levels linkages need to be established with the help of suitable modeling exercises.

ARDTC has been contributing to various policy issues in the agricultural development of Karnataka. The role of formal and informal institutions in the agricultural sector is significant and therefore the centre intends to undertake continued research on the role of institutions in agricultural development during the next decade.

Centre for Decentralisation and Development (CDD)

The Centre for Decentralisation and Development (CDD) was set up in 2002, with a mission to support decentralisation efforts by undertaking policy-oriented research, dissemination and capacity building. The basic focus is on community-driven development for better governance and to reduce market 'imperfections'.

Research in this area will address reforms pertaining to the structure/decision-making, commitment, skills, and attitudes towards decentralised local governance, improved

responsiveness and participation. The centre has designed its agenda with an initial focus on improving institutions for pro-poor growth. This work is undertaken in collaboration with Oxford University, and London School of Economics. The research addresses the long term goal of understanding institutional constraints for achieving pro-poor growth.

Fiscal decentralisation will also occupy a prime place in the future research agenda of CDD. Against an established theoretical background, the centre will continue to undertake studies on fiscal decentralisation to identify policy changes and institutional strengthening. This will involve analysis of the pattern of tax and non-tax revenues at different levels of rural local governments to bring about better revenue-expenditure linkage. Examining the adequacy, design and impact of general purpose transfers at different levels of panchayats will also be an important component.

CDD also intends to take up analysis of specific purpose transfers for implementing state level programmes and policies to different tiers of panchayats. Indicators of change will be developed to monitor political decentralisation and inclusion of the marginalised groups and women on a continuous basis. Efforts will also be made to identify factors that provoke change with respect to caste-class conjunction, gender relations, and equality of opportunity for women and to the role rural elite.

Administrative decentralization with devolution of functions and responsibilities will be an important area of focus, with decentralized planning being an important component. Multi-agency partnerships and new alliances between the different stakeholders have been an area of research and CDD will continue to undertake studies on effective service delivery, social security, micro-finance and child labour.

Innovative and effective methods will be used for dissemination and advocacy in order to reach a larger group of stakeholders. Capacity building is an important objective of CDD and it will undertake training of trainers (TOTs) in collaboration with training institutes.

Centre for Economic Studies and Policy (CESP)

The Centre for Economic Studies and Policy (CESP) was constituted by merging the erstwhile Economics, Quantitative Economics and RBI Endowment Units. Within the framework of the Institute's research perspectives, CESP's research activities will continue to focus on theoretical, empirical and policy related issues dealing mainly with the Indian economy.

The centre's major thrust areas include banking and finance, public finance, industry and services sector, population and labour, poverty and public policy, environmental concerns, infrastructure, national income and transfer accounts, urban economic growth, econometric methods and international trade. The focus of these areas has undergone some changes to keep pace with the rapid changes in the economy and will continue to be high on the research agenda of CESP in the coming decade.

While industry as a broad group remains an important study area, new studies will focus on emerging industries such as ICTs or IT-enabled industries. In the field of public finance,

issues such as the financial burden on the government arising out of pension funds, FRBM and fiscal deficit related issues have been undertaken. Likewise, research on the social security of unorganised workers has helped policy makers to facilitate inclusive growth.

The impact on poverty as a result of some recent policies such as large scale debt waivers has interested the faculty enough to include it in the research agenda, as has the role of self help groups in impacting the rural poor both socially and economically.

The economic implications of demographic changes on national transfer accounts has been undertaken as a new area and that will be developed in the coming years. Resource management such as water resources in urban areas attracted attention of the researchers from CESP.

Research at CESP is characterised by the use of rigorous quantitative techniques and the creation of a new data base either by using existing secondary data or through large surveys. The centre periodically brings out the *State Macro Scan (SMS)* that provides analyses of most recent unpublished data on prices, output and so on at the state and district level.

Visits to universities and institutes of repute in India and abroad, winning coveted and competitive fellowships, and participation in public committees have been some of the major accomplishments of the centre. These activities will be continued in the future as well.

Centre for Human Resource Development (CHRD)

The education unit has been reconstituted as the Centre for Human Resource Development by (CHRD). This has helped to expand the span of its earlier narrow focus on education. While the Institute, from inception has focused on research on different components of human development, an integrated effort had not been attempted. Therefore, unified concerns of Human Resources Development have now become the core priority of research in CHRD.

The centre recognizes the instrumental role played by human resources in fostering economic growth and social development and in promoting global competitiveness. The earlier agenda of the unit has now been enlarged to support the state and national developmental efforts beyond education. All the aspects of human development now feature on the research agenda of the next decades.

The future vision of the centre is to engage in studies relating to policy analysis as well as contemporary macro and micro level problems and issues relating to all aspects of human resource development including health, education, skill formation, quality of workforce, gender concerns and nutritional status, alternate paradigms in planning and management of education and health care delivery services, child rights and issues; marginalized population; education, youth and migration and its impact.

CHRD is recognized by the MHRD/GoI as the nodal agency for monitoring the national flagship programme - Sarva Shikshana Abhiyana Mission in Karnataka. Additionally,

the state government considers CHRD as a key resource centre for providing professional and research support to education, planning and human development activities. CHRD is now in a strategic position to undertake multi disciplinary research studies. It has a faculty which has specialized in diverse disciplinary backgrounds, such as education, demography and human geography. Inter-institutional collaborations for furthering its agenda will be encouraged at CHRD.

In the next decade, the following areas will be prioritized for research:

- The implications of changing development strategies on family health at micro-levels and the effectiveness of the health management under the current institutional structure.
- The spatial differentials in human development and the micro as well as macro determinants of such differentials.
- Population and demographic changes in the changing scenario.
- Effectiveness of service delivery, the role of NGOs and pro-poor institutional structures.

Centre for Ecological Economics and Natural Resources (CEENR)

ISEC, in 1981, was the first research institution to establish a separate 'Ecological Economics Unit', now renamed as 'Centre for Ecological Economics and Natural Resources' (CEENR). The long term mandate of the centre is to analyze the interface between economics, ecology and institutions, the trade-off between growth and ecological balance, and to evolve an appropriate strategy for the management of natural resources.

CEENR has emerged as an important centre to analyze and identify various policy alternatives relating to sustainable development and management of natural resources. It has completed a number of studies covering a wide range of themes such as urban development, economic instruments for pollution abatement, and economic and institutional aspects of management of natural resources such as land, forest, water, resource flow and common property resources.

The present focus of research in CEENR includes, economic and institutional aspects of natural resource management and biodiversity conservation, solid waste management, household energy use, livestock and environment management, pollution, sanitation, irrigation systems and command area development, participatory forestry, water harvesting, watershed development.

The centre has developed expertise in agro-ecosystem management and production system analysis, protected area management, multi-scalar and multi-temporal pattern of landscape dynamics and socio-economic and ecological approaches for sustainable livelihood development.

Faculty/researchers of the CEENR are working on such issues in two most important biodiversity hotspots of the world i.e. the Western Ghats and the Himalayas. It has

received wide acclaim from academics, ecology, economy and environmental groups alike.

CEENR conducts two international courses for post graduate students from Nordic countries in association with Nordic Centre in India, Sweden on 'Approaching the Environment in India: New Theories and Methods in the Study of the Nature-Society Interface' and 'Methods and Applications in Social Science Research'. Both the courses are regular (full paid) post-graduate courses equivalent to 10 ECTS (European Union Credits).

The Centre will continue to enrich these courses and plans to expand them further. In the coming years studies will be conducted on:

- Climate variability and its impacts on socio-ecological system of most vulnerable ecosystems of the country.
- *In-situ* (on-farm) conservation of agro-biodiversity.
- Valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Payments for ecosystem services.
- Trend of resource use in short and long term.
- Use analysis in view of socio-economic and biophysical components of landscape development.

Centre for Political Institutions, Governance and Development (CPIGD)

The Centre for Political Institutions, Governance and Development (CPIGD), formerly known as Development Administration Unit, which was established in 1974, was restructured in 2006. Since its inception, CPIGD has published several books and research papers. The faculty members have published 16 books and 450 research paper. There are 30 completed research projects and 19 students have been awarded PhD degrees.

Issues concerning the study of social and economic change from the political and governance perspective remain the major focus of the Centre's research. In recent years, the perspective and research agenda of CPIGD has changed in the context of globalisation, democratic decentralization (73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment and new political movements) and technological revolution (information and communication technology).

The thrust areas for research, teaching, training and outreach are changing accordingly. Perspectives, theories, philosophies, and paradigms related to politics, governance and development have been at the core of the researches conducted at the centre. Future research will address development politics - state and societal relationships in historical, comparative and development perspective, and the role of state, market and civil society in governance and development.

Faculty members of the centre have undertaken research studies on political and administrative institutions, political regimes, democracy, political parties, pressure groups, executive, legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy, and institutions of rural and urban

governance.

These researchable areas will continue to figure on the agenda for the coming decade. The centre also plans to focus on political and administrative reforms for inclusive governance in the context of globalisation and technological revolution (constitutional, electoral and administrative reforms).

Implications of globalisation on polity, governance, disadvantaged and migration; the state's capacity to promote welfare, trade regimes, international organizations and development agencies are emerging areas of research at the centre. Political and governance issues at the national and sub-national level as well as at the sectoral and cutting edge level covering agriculture, education, health, industry, irrigation, natural resources, power, welfare and poverty, E-Governance, public and private partnership also form the future agenda. The new emerging themes pertaining to conflicts, communalism, corruption, terrorism, fundamentalism, sub-nationalism, regionalism, inter-state disputes, gender, ethics, poverty and environmental governance will be pursued in the research scheme of the coming decade.

Centre for Study of Social Change and Development (CSSCD)

The Centre has the process of social change and development as its focus right from the beginning. Several institutions and social situations have been the focal themes in such studies i.e. family, kinship, caste, marriage, rural and urban livelihoods, occupations and occupational groups, etc.

CSSCD aims at re-visiting the sociology of work and profession at a time when they are being pursued in a global market. The centre intends to undertake a few studies concerning the lives and working conditions of the building and construction workers, workers in security services, restaurants and hotels, workers in the entertainment industry, visual and print media, and other specific segments in the urban service sector, etc.

With the invasion of the drawing/living rooms by cable TVs, and mobile phones, the lives of people across castes and classes, males and females, in rural and urban areas are constantly in a state of inter-connectedness. The social and economic consequences of the increased density of interaction and multiple sources of cultural patterns need to be studied.

The centre was founded by Professor M N Srinivas who, during his life time inspired a series of intensive social anthropological village studies. Many of these studies focusing on agrarian change, health, poverty, migration, traditional institutions and gender relations, were carried out during the late 1950s and 1960s. CSSCD proposes to initiate a couple of rapid to analytical of the nature and extent of socio-economic-politico changes in such village settings.

The Centre proposes to undertake a series of fresh village studies to plot such villages on a graded matrix of social and economic change so that policy interventions are fine tuned

according to the level of their involvement in the process of change and indicators. A detailed methodology will be worked out in a way that the sample of villages will function as a standard 'panel of villages' providing continuous data on several social and economic indicators. In a way this proposed exercise will be attempted to constantly update the data that Professor D M Nanjundappa committee generated for identifying the backward *talukas* of the state. The outcome of such a series of studies would be of immense value to several other centres in the Institute that work on related themes and problems of research.

Population Research Centre (PRC)

The Population Research Centre (PRC) was set up in 1972 to actively engage in research relating to contemporary issues of demography and health in India. The major objectives of the centre are to conduct and promote research in population studies; and to assist the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), New Delhi with policy input and feedback on population and health issues.

The Centre also conducts training programmes including doctoral training on specialized aspects of demographic issues. The major areas of research pursued in the centre, and which form the core of the long-term research mandate are:

- Demographic processes.
- Demographic data collection and data quality.
- Reproductive health.
- Demography and gender.
- Health systems studies.
- Health programme evaluation.

The research agenda of the centre has changed in recent years to keep pace with the changing demographic scenario of the country. PRC intends to engage more actively on research relating to the implications of changing demographic processes; structural changes by age; changes in marriage pattern; family structure and relationship; elder care and wellbeing; and changing patterns of migration etc.

PRC has participated in nationally conducted large-scale surveys. The data collection and verification of its quality continues to be one of the priority areas. In the coming decades, the centre will strive to strengthen this area by building capacity among the current researchers to provide continuous flow of good quality demographic information.

Health programmes monitoring and evaluation will continue to be on the agenda of the Centre. This is in view of the fact that the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) programme launched by the Government of India places emphasis on the issues surrounding maternal, child and adolescent health, including HIV/AIDS.

It is increasingly recognised that gender issues cut across all the demographic and health processes and require stronger focus. This is particularly relevant within the changing contexts of family and society. The centre aims to develop this area of study in the coming years.

In-depth understanding of the functioning of health systems particularly its access and financing is vital from the perspective of policy. Such studies have been scarce in the

context of India in general and Karnataka in particular. PRC plans to develop expertise in understanding health systems in Karnataka. In coming years, the emphasis will be to further strengthen the existing area of research and develop new capacities in new fields.

What the future holds – the challenges and the vision

In order to continue achieving excellence in the coming decades, it is necessary for honest introspection and correction of certain anomalies that exist within the system. ISEC will be giving a lot of attention to this aspect. ISEC has spelt out its vision up to 2010 and a lot has already been achieved, albeit with the realization that social science research is a voyage that is never complete. The attempt is therefore to keep the goal dynamic and set a few posts for the coming decade.

While most senior faculty members have been able to avail international fellowships and other opportunities, it requires special efforts to ensure that younger members also get similar opportunities. ISEC will therefore explore avenues to provide international exposure to the younger faculty. Faculty exchange programmes with other institutions of excellence will be taken up and eminent scholars invited to visit and deliver lectures and associate with research studies at ISEC in order to provide the faculty and students with opportunities for greater interaction and capacity development.

The current system for increments operates routinely and there are no avenues to provide incentives for persons who have performed well. It is proposed to evolve norms for reviews which will link rewards with performance. ISEC allows faculty members to undertake consultancies and are aimed at helping the better performing faculty to use opportunities outside the Institute. Incentives for faculty will be structured accordingly- rewarding performers and perhaps punishing those who do not perform as well

Financial independence is required in order to ensure that the Institute engages in research that has a judicious mix of independent and sponsored research. Even within independent research, it is important to have an optimal mix of pure and applied research. This needs to be achieved by inducting competent young researchers with exposure to the latest developments in their respective areas, and ISEC will consciously fulfil this requirement.

A recent review by ICSSR pointed out that the research programme of the Institute is overwhelmingly concentrated on applied issues, with a little theoretical research being undertaken. It is proposed to rectify this in the coming years. Additionally, a number of measures will have to be initiated to improve the research quality and these will yield rewards soon.

The profile of the Institute has been gradually changing from that of a regional to a national one. Much more however needs to be done and for this, research and publications on national rather than regional themes will be a focus area. National workshops and conferences, combined with interaction with other, national-level institutions will also be areas for focus.

ISEC organizes a number of training programmes, workshops and seminars and University Grants Commission (UGC) has recognised ISEC as a centre for conducting refresher programmes for university and college teachers. ISEC will also provide opportunities for university and college teachers to work in the Institute to use their sabbaticals productively. While ISEC also conducts a number of training programmes covering various target groups, it is important to systematize them and work according to a calendar of programmes, which will be planned at the beginning of the year. ISEC plans to increase its teaching component through various certificate courses in the specialized areas. This will help in better planning and programming of the short-term training programmes.

In order to achieve constant improvement in the knowledge base and impact the economy through policy inputs and training programmes, it is necessary to interact closely with academic institutions in the region, central and state government agencies, representatives of industry and trade and NGOs. Networking with other academic institutions in the region would help to foster collaboration, enhance gains by exchanging results of research, avoid repetitiveness and ensure cost effectiveness by reaping scale economies. Interaction with the bureaucracy is essential not only to understand the intricacies and difficulties of implementing policies but also to help the administrators with more informed policy inputs.

The Institute also proposes to set up a programme and set aside funds for training young faculty members in universities and educational institutions abroad for one academic year. It is proposed to collect funds to train about 10 young members of faculty over the next few years. The Institute will explore the possibility of mobilising resources for the purpose with different funding agencies.

Looking ahead

The next decade will see major transitions in India. Some of these will relate to:

- Movement from rural to urban areas.
- A shift from domination of national parties to a greater role for regional parties at the Centre.
- A high growth trajectory for the economy.
- Greater focus on raising agricultural productivity with emerging new technologies-challenges and ethical issues in technology adoption.
- Emphasis on generating non-agricultural employment in rural India.
- Fast pace of infrastructure development in urban and rural India.
- Public finance focus to make public expenditures efficient and targeted.
- Greater inequalities of income and wealth.
- Rising population of working age and of those over 60 for whom employment and social security have to be found.
- Need for improved quantity of quality education.
- Greater focus on training in a variety of skills.
- Improvements in healthcare for all.

ISEC in the coming years will raise various questions on dealing with issues of inequality, poverty, governance, globalization, power relationships, etc. We need to focus on overriding concepts such as social and economic inequality, governance and corruption, and impact of changing market conditions, get reflected in these functional centres/specialisations is not known. We need to closely work with governmental and nongovernmental organizations to evaluate the interventions, which have not contributed to the process of change. Corruption is one such area that attracts attention of many social scientists and ISEC will focus on that in the coming decade. Getting good data on corruption requires good fieldwork, a lot of local knowledge and an understanding of how the process really works – will be some of the important questions that will attract our attention. ISEC is uniquely positioned to make an important contribution in this field.

The interface between policies and the impact of markets, is affecting the poor/disadvantaged/ill-equipped most severely. Whether it is in PDS, employment, education, public utilities and services or health, this interface is showing a wide gap between not only a given theory and its practice but also a wide gulf between recommendations based on different theories, such as better regulation and governance and vouchers/market-based choices. The poor are caught between the markets, which have their own inflexible methods, and the governments, which are struggling and are looking at every situation from the point of view of how to acquire and stay on in power. Political competition is not leading to convergence on priorities with respect to better delivery of promises.

ISEC will endeavour to become more pro-active in understanding other ground level realities in Karnataka and the rest of South India – how well is NREGA working in Karnataka, how can PRI institutions be improved, how well as municipalities functioning not just in Bangalore but in small and medium sized towns and how can their functioning be improved?

It will be essential for us to focus on the new interventions on the part of the government and analyse their functioning at the grass-root level such as NREGA, Decentralised Governance and new areas in the format of decentralised governance. ISEC has been quite involved in analysing the process of decentralised governance but new issues need to be ventured into.

We have realized that Bangalore is having many active civic minded philanthropists who are funding large scale development projects. In addition to working with GoK, ISEC may collaborate with some of these. Many of these organizations working from Bangalore would welcome some research on how well their programs are working and what can be done to improve their functioning. ISEC researchers shall provide that crucial research components to these organisations.

Karnataka continues have its regional disparities and one need to focus on the development alternatives for these regions. There are a large number of complex issues coming under this, and we have a good understanding of many of them. We need to focus on what can be done to improve the situation

ISEC's work will be additionally focused on some important areas such as urban infrastructure development, improving supply and viability of energy including renewable, water resources, climate change and mitigation of its adverse effects, health care and delivery, education quality, governance of the state, corporations, education, health and non-governmental organizations, among others.

It is envisioned to transform ISEC into an institution of excellence, comparable with the best national and international institutions. Realising high levels of excellence implies:

- High quality research output on the theoretical and empirical fronts.
- Catalysing social and economic transformation through its research and policy advice for central, state and local governments functioning in different sectors of the economy.
- Imparting high level training to policy makers as well as other stakeholders in social science research and teaching.
- Creating an enabling environment for vibrant social science research.
- Moving towards financial autonomy with internal efforts.
- Accelerating capacity building in social science research across the country.
- Enabling efficient governance of welfare programmes.

While the measures mentioned above do not require any additional funding, creating the right environment, improvement in infrastructure and achieving development of human resources can be achieved only with significant investments, namely towards:

- Promoting multidisciplinary in research across centres in emerging thrust areas.
- Information development and dissemination.
- Visiting fellowships for faculty development.
- Interacting with eminent visiting scholars from within and outside the country.
- Repair and refurbishment of research and administrative complex, auditorium, hostels and guesthouse.

One of the main tasks is to consolidate and expand existing centres and sharpen their focus towards policy oriented research through participatory deliberations and external critical inputs. ISEC's presence in the public policy arena needs to be intensified and visibility achieved outside Karnataka.

ISEC will strive to enter new fields through amalgamation or creation of new centres, identification of new collaborators and resources, and higher participation in teaching. That would require enhancing ISEC's ability to tap faculty resources around India and abroad,

In order to improve academic governance in ISEC it is necessary to foster interdisciplinary research. It is therefore necessary to re-group various units from subject areas into theme areas. A step in this direction has already been initiated through programmes on decentralisation and governance, natural resources management and social sector policy and human development. Another important area that will take centre-stage in the coming years is the impact of information technology revolution and the spread of knowledge-based industries in the region on social and economic inequalities and the well being of the community at large.

The Institute will take a proactive role in trying to evolve close alliances and collaboration with the private sector and NGOs. As the private sector takes an increasingly active role in economic activity of the country, research and training will have to be designed to be useful to the private sector as well. However, with the passage of time, it is necessary to have greater collaboration with the private sector in order to evolve the research agenda. Greater private sector involvement for financing the Institute in the coming years is important as government support is not likely to keep pace with the increasing requirements.

Equally important is the need to closely interact with important NGOs who have been doing excellent work in a variety of activities relating to anti poverty interventions and rural development, reduction of illiteracy, capacity development, decentralisation, governance and sustainable development. ISEC intends to work in close collaboration with important NGOs particularly in capacity building in the State.

The most important aspect of building a vision for ISEC will be to ensure accountability, promote an informal environment, sans bureaucratic rigidities and minimise administrative overheads. This task of improving governance in administration is to re-structure and professionalise the administration. This calls for creating a responsive bureaucracy with clearly defined lines of authority, assignment of specific responsibility to each individual administrative agent and imparting necessary skills to undertake these responsibilities.

Over the last 38 years ISEC has evolved its administrative and organizational structure according to emerging needs and continuously strived to make it effective. The changed situations require restructuring of administrative components to suit the emerging needs. This leap forward will require financial support and ISEC will strive to build its finance requirements through well planned strategies to raise them. Action has already been initiated to examine the rules and procedures of the Institute afresh and it is hoped that it will soon be possible to work out a plan of action to simplify rules and procedures.

Rules and procedures will be simplified and individual employees of the Institute made accountable for the tasks assigned to them. Rules that have been framed earlier have served an important and useful purpose. These rules and procedures will be considerably simplified and made more transparent. Specific assignment of tasks helps to fix responsibility and this will be done in a transparent manner to avoid subjectivity and bias.

Capacity building

Human resource development calls for significant efforts at enhancing productivity and ensuring a secure future for the Institute. It is essential that programme be evolved to constantly upgrade the research capacity of both faculty and the research staff of ISEC. At present, no specific schemes are available through which the faculty and staff get opportunities to upgrade their knowledge base and catch up with recent developments in their area of specialisation. Specific schemes to enable the faculty to catch up with the latest developments in respective fields will be initiated.

Social science research would need continuing support for the following reasons: the transition from the present dependence on grants to self-supporting status would need time to avoid dislocation and distress to existing personnel. Social science research would have to strike a careful balance between activities yielding large returns and those – like Ph.D. programme where returns accrue to society and not to institutions. It may be difficult and also unfair to expect the institutions to fully cross-subsidise the latter activities by returns earned from marketable activities.

Hence it would require patient and careful nurturing of student flow to social sciences, supporting research institutions, personnel and facilities. Particular attention would have to be paid to progressive modernisation of facilities, capacity building of faculty, increased accountability along with a fair reward system and rehabilitation of weak institutions.

Social sciences and society

Social science research is a mirror to society and an essential tool for policy makers. It has wide ranging and in-depth implications which are revealed through analyses of existing problems and are capable of indicating future issues.

In rapidly changing circumstances, social sciences as an important branch of knowledge are inadvertently neglected. This is not so much an internal problem as it is one of market orientation of other disciplines. There is some justification for this viewpoint as social science education as a whole has received far lower emphasis and resources leading to neglect of the basics.

It must be underscored that policy making cannot move forward without steady and dependable feedback, insights and guidance from social science research. This can only be achieved by attracting capable students to social sciences and training them through to become competent social scientists.

ISEC plans to undertake significant and decisive steps towards capacity building of the social scientists at the entry level through its PhD programme and other initiatives. ISEC has already introduced two short-term certificate courses aimed towards capacity building as well as begun a Social Science Talent Search.

In conclusion

Over the years ISEC has crossed several milestones and achieved a great deal. ISEC is committed to change as basic to progress and hence ISEC vision is dynamic in its approach and content. ISEC also recognises that there is substantial scope to make social science research policy oriented, socially relevant and economically viable. The various means available for this include building up a corpus, initiating new areas of research, privatising services, rationalising administrative and supporting staff and augmenting earnings by using faculty expertise (e.g. projects and consultancy assignments of ISEC as well as of individual faculty members) and rich data bases.

However, social science research would still need continuing support for the following reasons:

- The transition from the present dependence on grants to self-supporting status would need time and that can avoid dislocation and distress to existing personnel.
- Keep the stake of ISEC in policy debates through accountability to funding agencies and interaction with the policy makers.
- Entering into new areas for capacity building, policy orientation and upkeep of infrastructure for this.
- Social science research would have to strike a careful balance between activities yielding large returns, and those where returns accrue to society and not to institutions.
- Inability of institutions to fully cross-subsidise the latter activities by returns earned from marketable activities.

ISEC is committed to continued attention to progressive modernisation of facilities, capacity building of its faculty in particular, and social science researchers in general, increased accountability along with a fair reward system and help to the weaker institutions. It would be important to have continuing government support though the quantum of support may decline over time. Industries, banks, large trusts and foundations would have to be far more generous than the support they give now. It is to be hoped that the vision document would be of some help in creating awareness among both the categories of supporters about their responsibility towards social science research.

While central and state governments have set up institutions to undertake social science research, their hardening budget constraints have posed difficulties of sustainability in these institutions and have prevented consolidation of gains from these institutions. Lack of visibility and the perception that social sciences are ‘soft’ subjects have led to a situation where youth have moved away from social sciences. Rejuvenation of research in social sciences would require resetting of priorities and substantial work to build the sector from the bottom (school level) onwards

ISEC’s ability to contribute to society, as detailed earlier has been adversely affected by the constraints it faces on the financial front. While the present attempt to rededicate the institution towards its goal would enhance its capacity. Therefore, it is expected that society would shoulder the responsibility of enabling the flow of finances to ensure a measure of certainty, improve the infrastructure, upgrade the knowledge base and help to build capacity.

Significant additional investments are needed to make ISEC an institution of excellence in social science research and training. Additional funding will go a long way towards: (i) refocusing research in emerging areas towards policy orientation; (ii) capacity development of the faculty within the institute and social scientists in general; (iii) transforming ISEC as a ‘Think Tank’ to help policy formation for development (iv) library upgradation; (v) improved infrastructure; (vi) instituting follow-ups to young social scientists to work in emerging areas; (vii) establishing a comprehensive social

science research depository; and above all (vii) ensuring and enhancing the measure of quality.

ISEC is the largest ICSSR social science research institute in the country. Over the last four decades, it has made significant contributions to the study of economy, society and polity and has impact on the society in a variety of ways. It has also made significant contributions towards policy formulation and this activity needs to be enhanced.

ISEC is envisioned to be an institution of excellence and concerted efforts are needed to steer it towards this goal. It is hoped that the government and society at large will contribute to its achieving excellence in social science research.

*“A small body of determined spirits fired by
an unquenchable faith in their mission can
alter the course of history”*
- Mahatma Gandhi 1938.