

## **Foreword**

Decentralised governance was taken up as a major policy initiative during the early 'nineties with an Amendment to the Constitution and enactment of laws in different states. Karnataka has been one of the pioneering states in spearheading decentralised system of governance. There were two prominent stages in the state of Karnataka that marked the process of decentralisation. Even though these stages were separated by time, the theme followed in the Panchayati Raj Act was similar. Following these changes, good amount of academic work was carried out in Karnataka on the process of decentralisation encompassing many aspects of the issue. Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) has always been in the forefront in analysing the process of decentralisation and its impact on governance and development in Karnataka. It was under the leadership of the late Shri Ramakrishna Hegde that ISEC had organised a brain-storming workshop on decentralised governance as well as initiated training programmes for officers and other stakeholders in the decentralised governance system of Karnataka. Prof Abdul Aziz and his team provided the initial leadership in the process of conducting such studies and training of elected representatives of panchayats. Subsequently, a separate centre was established at ISEC to conduct studies on 'Decentralisation and Development' under Professor D Rajasekhar. These studies have received the attention of all policy makers over years.

The present study is an outcome of the rich experience gathered by Dr M Devendra Babu in conducting and analysing various aspects of decentralisation with respect to governance, planning process and devolution of functions. The in-depth study looks into the nuances of the process and highlights the problems faced in the devolution of the functions and financing of panchayats. Dr Devendra Babu has a very rich experience in understanding the system bottom-up and, therefore, his study provides an interesting lead towards policy planning for effective functioning of the Panchayati Raj in Karnataka. I am sure that this study will be taken as a welcome addition to the existing literature on Panchayati Raj and shall provide policy leads to the administrators as well as stakeholders in the Panchayati Raj system.

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