

# INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE (ISEC)



## VISION

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\* As approved in the Board of Governors Meeting held on March 10, 2012

*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.*

– M.K. Gandhi

## **Four Decades – A Travelogue**

Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), founded in 1972, was envisaged by its founders as a national centre of excellence specialising in interdisciplinary research and training in social sciences and analyses of critical issues affecting the transformation of economy, polity and society. ISEC has now completed four decades of its journey marked by both achievements and challenges. Owing to the yeomen efforts of those involved in shaping ISEC over the decades, it has now achieved the distinction of being one of India's premier research institutes in social sciences with a formidable reputation. The journey has been exciting, rewarding and satisfying. In the coming years ISEC would like to define its path and will attempt to become an institution committed to excellence and social justice. But before efforts in this direction begin, we need to pause, ponder, take stock and spell out a vision for the coming decades. We began the reflection on this vision with the formulative ideas of Professor V.K.R.V. Rao and the subsequent changes in the social sciences domain of the country. The vision and the strategies outlined here are a synthesis of the contributions by the faculty, the members of the Board of Governors and the well wishers of ISEC, as also the experience thus far.

ISEC has worked on the understanding that research alone is not enough and equally important is to ensure that the findings of its research are disseminated among the stakeholders and for effecting changes in society through policy. Towards these ends, ISEC has showcased its research findings using various spaces and forums, and closely interacted with policy makers at various levels. Our efforts would be to consolidate goodwill and reputation that ISEC has earned so far and enhance it further.

## **Vision Statement**

This vision statement is an attempt to set goals to be achieved by 2025. Any such attempt requires both critical appreciation our capabilities and planning the strategies for the future course of action. Accordingly, the elaboration of goals and strategies is based on the premise that the basic functions of any social science research organisation is to understand socio-economic problems, to analyse the social and economic changes and to suggest directions for policy formulation. Professor Rao's initial vision statement is certainly a precursor for this. He wrote, *"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.*” His dream of *“strengthening and diversifying development research, analysis of the rapid changes and increasing the influence on policy making”* is the theme of ISEC’s vision for 2025.

ISEC needs to move towards an institution of meritocracy where merit and achievement are recognised and rewarded. Its vision for 2025 shall help towards building a body of knowledge where the contemporary issues of society, economy and polity are understood and attended to reach towards policy. As a centre of excellence, ISEC shall endeavour to augment and sharpen its contributions at both regional and national levels in social sciences.

### **Impact of ISEC Studies**

Down the years, ISEC has impacted society at various levels, directly and indirectly, through its policy research and policy interface. It has contributed substantially to the understanding of economy, polity and society and disseminated information to the public through publications, seminars, workshops and training programmes. During this period ISEC has assisted and advised policy making particularly at the state and local levels; it has also directly influenced government policies through representing on various commissions, committees and working groups. Periodical training programmes for government officials to help them understand the philosophy and rationale behind the design and implementation of various policies has been one of the important and continued activities. Besides, comprehensive training programmes for functionaries of decentralised governance, particularly from district panchayats have been an important contribution towards capacity building at the grass-roots.

Interactions with civil society in a non-activist role to impart capacities in action-oriented research and training for NGO functionaries to improve on their work are also part of ISEC activities. Towards capacity building among social science researchers, ISEC has imparted knowledge skills in research methodology through rigorous, structured programmes. Further, ISEC has imparted advanced training to researchers, university and college teachers and social scientists on latest developments. Through arranging public lectures by eminent social scientists on the economic, political and social issues confronting the country and the region, ISEC has initiated informed debates. ISEC has also 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 like the implications of WTO or the introduction of new taxation systems. Overall, ISEC lived up to its initial mandate creditably.

Despite the inadequacies in its core funding, ISEC has been able to sustain itself through sponsored research projects. Thanks to the high quality of research projects undertaken in the past and the reputation earned over years, ISEC has been able to be choosy about research studies that have desired academic content rather than being mere consultancies and this has helped it maintain its strong academic character. There is a realisation that excessive dependence on projects could lead to gradual erosion of academic standards; therefore, the choice of projects is now

governed by the need to ensure stability of funding and academic contents and to minimise the adverse effects of *projectitis*.

### **Research Agenda in the Context of our Vision**

Research activities across centres are now redesigned keeping in view the focus of our vision statement. These also recognise and ensure the boundaries of the thematic research areas and the requirements of the funding agencies across centres. Overall, our research agenda is directed to strengthen and diversify social science research in an interdisciplinary context keeping with the dynamic changes and emerging needs. The research agenda of individual centres are given below as envisaged by the faculty of the respective centres.

### ***Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation Centre (ARDTC)***

ARDTC was established to provide policy feedback to the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. It is a fully funded centre of the Ministry of Agriculture. Its broad areas of research are discussed and finalised at a meeting of all such centres across the country held every year, but the Centre enjoys full autonomy to work on the need based research themes.

ARDTC is currently engaged in research on the wide-ranging changes taking place in agriculture and rural economy of the country over the past decades. Agricultural stagnation, WTO, horticulture mission, agro-processing, agriculture and industry related schemes, and domestic policy reforms have been prioritised as issues of immediate concern. These will continue to be prime areas of focus on the research agenda of ARDTC. The Centre has been leading policy debates both at the state and the central levels which is well recognised and shall continue with the vision of ISEC. Important policy concerns in the coming decade will focus on the stagnation in agricultural production; horticultural development, floriculture; role of institutions; trade in agriculture; water policy; and farm sector credit and investment. Changes in land laws and farming system approach shall be other areas of academic pursuit. Research at the Centre shall also address macro-level linkages that need to be established with the help of suitable modeling exercises.

### ***Centre for Decentralisation and Development (CDD)***

CDD was set up in 2002 to support decentralisation efforts by undertaking policy-oriented research, dissemination and capacity building. Its focus is on community-driven development for better governance and to understand the adverse consequences of market 'imperfections'. Research in CDD will address reforms pertaining to the structure/decision-making, commitment, skills and attitudes towards decentralised local governance, improved responsiveness and participation. CDD has designed its agenda with an initial focus on improving institutions for pro-poor growth, undertaken in collaboration with Oxford University and the London School of Economics.

Decentralisation of development initiatives and Fiscal decentralisation will also occupy a prime place in the future research agenda of CDD. Administrative decentralisation with devolution of functions and responsibilities will be an important area of focus, with decentralised planning being an important component. Multi-agency partnerships and new alliances between the different stakeholders have been an area of research at CDD, and it will continue to undertake studies on effective service delivery, social security, micro-finance and child labour.

CDD also intends to take up analysis of specific purpose transfers for implementing state level programmes and policies to different tiers of panchayats and focus on gender and caste/class issues. 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 in collaboration with training institutes.

### ***Centre for Economic Studies and Policy (CESP)***

CESP was constituted by merging the erstwhile Economics, Quantitative Economics and RBI Endowment Units. Its 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, Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management 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 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 has attracted attention of researchers at 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. Periodically, the Centre brings out State Macro Scan (SMS) providing analyses and policy leads at the state level.

### ***Centre for Human Resource Development (CHRD)***

CHRD covers an expanded span of unified concerns of human resources development. The centre recognises the instrumental role played by human

resources in fostering economic growth and social development and in promoting global competitiveness. Therefore, it focuses on the dynamics of change in these parameters. In the coming years, CHRD plans to engage in studies relating to policy analysis as well as contemporary macro- and micro-level problems and issues relating to 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; marginalised population; education, youth and migration and its impact.

CHRD plans to emerge as the key resource centre for providing professional and research support to education, planning and human development activities. It is now in a strategic position to undertake multidisciplinary research studies. It has a faculty with specialisation in diverse disciplinary backgrounds, such as education, demography and human geography. Inter-institutional collaborations for furthering its agenda will be encouraged at CHRD. The Centre will focus on the implications of changing development strategies on family health and the effectiveness of the health management and spatial differentials in human development and the determinants of these.

### ***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 analyse 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 analyse and identify various policy alternatives relating to sustainable development and management of natural resources. The focus of research in CEENR in the next decade shall continue to address issues pertaining to 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. CEENR shall focus on climate variability and its impacts; conservation of agro-biodiversity; valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services; payments for ecosystem services; trend of resource use in short- and long-term; analysis of socio-economic and biophysical components of landscape development.

CEENR shall enhance its 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. CEENR will continue to augment its efforts on thematic international training courses.

### ***Centre for Political Institutions, Governance and Development (CPIGD)***

CPIGD, formerly known as Development Administration Unit, has over years focused on issues concerning political and governance and that shall remain the major focus of the Centre's research. Its research agenda shall include the changes in the context of globalisation, democratic decentralisation and ICT information and communication technology) revolution.

The thrust areas for research, teaching, training and outreach will be 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, political and administrative reforms and the role of state, market and civil society in governance and development. Emerging areas in urban governance, electoral reforms, Lokpal and the other institutions towards good governance will be incorporated in the research agenda. Seminars and debates on these issues will be conducted with the prominent thinks and civil society.

Implications of globalisation on polity, governance, disadvantaged and migration; the state's capacity to promote welfare, trade regimes, international organisations and development agencies are emerging areas of research at the centre. Issues pertaining to corruption, governance in education, health, industry, irrigation, natural resources, power, welfare and poverty, communalism, corruption, terrorism, fundamentalism, sub-nationalism, regionalism, inter-state disputes, gender, ethics, poverty, e-governance, public and private partnership also form the future agenda.

### ***Centre for Study of Social Change and Development (CSSCD)***

CSSCD has social change and development as its focus right from the beginning. It aims at re-visiting the sociology of work and profession in a global market. The Centre intends undertaking 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.

With the invasion of the drawing/living rooms by cable TV and mobile phones, the lives of people across castes, classes and gender in both 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.

CSSCD proposes to undertake a series of fresh village studies analytical in nature and focusing on the extent of socio-economic and political changes in such villages on the lines of those conducted during the 1950s and 1960s. These will help to plot such villages on a graded matrix of social and economic change 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. This proposed exercise will constantly update the data that Professor D.M. Nanjundappa committee generated for identifying the backward talukas of the state. The outcome of such studies would be of immense value to other centres in the Institute that work on related themes and problems.

### ***Population Research Centre (PRC)***

PRC was set up in 1972 to 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, Government of India with policy input and feedback on population and health issues.

PRC intends to engage in 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. 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 proposed to engage with gender issues cutting across all the demographic and health processes. PRC plans to develop expertise in understanding the functioning of health systems, particularly its access and financing of health systems from policy perspective.

### ***Virtual Centre for Policy and Government (VCPGG)***

VCPGG is a virtual centre that draws inputs from the other centres to prepare a policy interface. It has set its strategic vision in terms of (a) achieving excellence in research in public policy and governance studies; (b) imparting high-quality training in public policy and governance theory, methods and techniques of analysis and evaluation; and (c) translating state-of-the-art research into relevant and applicable policy prescriptions. The Centre aims to work with the government departments and other stakeholders to analyse key issues in urban and rural governance, identify solutions, help develop action plans, and support implementation of these plans. More importantly, the Centre will act as a think-tank and help translate government goals, objectives, and policy priorities into tangible reform outcomes with a focus on principles and practices of good governance. This will be a first-of-its-kind Centre in India aimed at conducting research and

developing expertise in public policy analysis and governance. VCPPG will draw on the academic resources from the other Centres at ISEC.

### **Aggregating Research Agenda for the Coming Years**

ISEC's mission in the coming decade is to strengthen and diversify the research in keeping with the changing needs. While individual scholars would continue to have the freedom to choose areas and issues for research, there is a need to have a unified approach in order to keep with the emerging challenges. There have been many changes in macro-economic policies due to paradigm shifts in development strategies consequent up on globalisation. Each centre shall endeavour to participate in current developments and react publicly with the views after due consideration.

The next decade will see major transitions in macro economy and its determinants; foreign Investment-role, nature, incentives, effects. It is necessary to study the ways and means for high growth trajectory for the economy and inequalities of income and wealth. Inclusive growth has to be looked into in the face of reforms. Emerging issues in public finance require attention so as to make public expenditures efficient and target-oriented. In the coming decade, greater focus is needed on the determinants of raising agricultural productivity with emerging new technologies, challenges and ethical issues in technology adoption, non-agricultural employment in rural India, etc. We are now moving from merely analysing resource and people movement from rural to urban areas to its consequences like demand and quality infrastructure development in urban and rural India. This entails the study of labour mobility and poverty. On the political front, we are visualising a shift from domination of national parties to a greater role for regional parties and issues in bureaucracy and accountability.

Changing composition of population, consequent changes in working age and employment along with the issues in ageing and social security will be on our research agenda. In this context, the need for improved education, health care, nutrition and food availability assume importance. The studies on environment, ecology, forests, and development have been our major pursuits and these will continue to be on the agenda. Besides, issues pertaining to land ownership, land degradation and Common Property Resources will also be taken up. Supply and viability of energy along with studies on infrastructure – roads, railways, telecommunications; private and public sector efficiencies and performance will be attempted as new areas. Hitherto ISEC has not ventured into these areas. Social inclusion and disparities with reference to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled and the minorities have been components of our work and that will be taken ahead. Similarly, research on issues pertaining to governance, corruption and reaching benefits to the target populations will also be attempted in the context of globalisation.

It is not presumed here that the society would be moving in this direction without any value judgments, but ISEC will be involved in analysing the changes on this path with an objective understanding. The future course of action is broadly delineated in the paragraphs here. To a large extent, the research agenda of the

centres clarify the focus on these issues.

### **Ph D Programme and Capacity Building Activities**

ISEC is well known for its unique PhD programme in many disciplines of social sciences. Over the years, ISEC has produced 180 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. The course is continuously modernised and updated to keep up with the most recent developments.

Significant upgrading of the teaching programme has been accomplished and that needs to be continued. Teachers and academics from reputed institutions need to be involved with our teaching programme. Teaching programmes will be upgraded to keep pace with international standards through appropriate curriculum revisions and academic collaborations involving faculty and student exchange programmes. There is need to increase the intake and upgrade the skills of our Ph D students by creating opportunities for international exposure to them. Facilities to the students also have to increase to enable the students to access international standard academic resources. ISEC shall continue to provide increasing opportunities for university and college teachers to work in the Institute for their Ph D and use their sabbaticals productively.

### **Capabilities to Achieve the Vision**

ISEC is uniquely positioned to make an important contribution to the social sciences in the country. Our journey towards new achievements is decided by the capabilities (available and incremental) as also the right strategy. The Institute has well-qualified faculty to handle multi-disciplinary social sciences research. The specialisations of the faculty 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.

Faculty 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. ISEC has to change towards a facilitative administrative structure, efficient staffing pattern and relevant research areas in relation to the current changes. It must also reflect on the extent to which ISEC work has influence over state and national policies and how much ISEC work is referenced in the country and around the world.

It is important to have rigorous procedures for faculty assessment and promotion. This will be achieved in a calibrated manner rather than by 'big bang approach'. Faculty will be consulted and transparent procedures will be established.

Physical infrastructure is important for facilitating faculty and students to excel in research and teaching. Institute's infrastructure needs to improve the convenience, upgrading of facilities, hostels, guest house, recreation and facility centre, library to improve up on electronic access rather than physical access to journals/magazines. All the buildings of ISEC were constructed around 1975 and are near four decades old. Therefore, improving physical infrastructure and maintenance will be a priority for the coming decades. ISEC has to build new infrastructure keeping in view its needs and maintain the earlier in the best possible manner.

## **Capacity Building**

Human resource development calls for significant efforts at enhancing productivity and ensuring a secure future for the Institute. It is essential that programmes be evolved to constantly upgrade the research capacity of both faculty and the research staff of ISEC. Specific schemes to enable the faculty to catch up with the latest developments in respective fields will be initiated.

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 will be 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. In the coming years, ISEC shall offer overseas scholars attachments of varying durations with selected centres and that will increase exposure of the internal faculty.

The current system of increments is a routine statutory provision 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.

In order to achieve constant improvement in the knowledge base and impact the economy through policy inputs and training programmes, it will be necessary to interact closely with academic institutions in the region, central and state government agencies, representatives of industry and trade and NGOs. The Institute will take a proactive role in trying to evolve close alliances and collaboration with the private sector and NGOs. ISEC intends to work in close collaboration with important NGOs particularly in capacity building in the state. 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.

### **Strategy to Achieve the Set Vision**

It is essential to chalk out a clear strategy to achieve the Vision statement and elaboration given above. The design of this strategy must keep in view the existing capabilities and those gaps which need to be filled in the coming years. Above all, this strategy must emerge from the existing faculty as also the visionaries, so that it gets the required ownership. Such ownership only can take the strategy smoothly through implementation. 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. The attempt is therefore to keep the goal dynamic and set a few milestones for the coming decade.

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.

We have realised that Bangalore is has many active civic minded philanthropists who are funding large-scale development projects. In addition to working with the Government of Karnataka, ISEC may collaborate with some of these philanthropists. Many of these organisations working from Bangalore would welcome some research on how well their programmes are working and what can be done to improve their functioning.

Sustainability of any research Institute depends on the quality of its publications. Apart from other methods, links between outside world and the Institute is through its publications. The articles published in peer reviewed journals reflect the quality of Institute's research. It is obvious that the number of peer reviewed research papers should be improved in future. Besides, peer reviewed publications, dissemination in the form of policy oriented seminars, discussions with the government and other organisations, policy briefs and publications will be enhanced.

In order to improve academic governance in ISEC it is necessary to increase focus on inter-disciplinary research. It would require re-grouping various units from subject areas into theme areas keeping in view the borders of the disciplines and porosity of issues. 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.

There is need for networking with research institutes/universities in India and abroad for mutual benefit. ISEC has developed contacts with some institutes/universities in

India and abroad. ISEC faculty members undertake projects funded by national and international organisations. Project work enables access to and wide dissemination of data, provides an interface between academia and policy makers, and facilitates the growth of a network with other institutions and researchers. The networking with research institutes/universities should be improved in future.

Over the last four decades, ISEC has evolved its administrative and organisational structure according to emerging needs and continuously strived to make it effective. The changed situations require examination of 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. The most important aspect of building a vision for ISEC will be to ensure accountability and create a responsive administration with clearly defined lines of authority, assignment of specific responsibility to each individual administrative official and imparting necessary skills to undertake these responsibilities.

There is a need to move towards participatory governance particularly involving faculty and management. Transparency is an important aspect and hence the deliberations of various committees and the important decisions shall be put on intranet. Joint Consultative Committee is body that has representation of all categories of staff and this should become more effective in decision making. The other important committees like Grievance Committee, Gender Committee and the Students Committee will move towards effective roles.

## **In Conclusion**

Ever since its establishment, ISEC has crossed several milestones. ISEC is committed to change as basic to progress and hence ISEC's 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.

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 towards:

- Promoting multidisciplinary in research across centres in emerging thrust areas.
- Information development and dissemination.
- Transforming ISEC as a think-tank to help policy formation for development
- 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 critical inputs. ISEC's presence in policy making needs to be intensified and visibility achieved outside Karnataka.

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.

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)***

### ***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.

ISEC has also developed some very prestigious and valuable research linkages. In order to promote core-

#### ***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).

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

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.

### ***Objectives of ISEC***

The main objectives of the Institute as initially envisaged by the founders 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.
- Collaborate with universities, research institutions and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the region to improve the quality of research and training.

### ***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 Srikanthaiah, 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.

### ***Impact of ISEC Research***

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.

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 '21<sup>st</sup> 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.