

FOREWORD

There have been many attempts in the past to provide reviews of Indian economic development both at the conceptual and empirical levels. The Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore was presented with a unique opportunity to review the national development policies and priorities since the Indian Independence keeping in view the sustainability perspectives. This research was commissioned by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi through Winrock International India. The study is an attempt to bring together policies and programmes at the national level framed to bring about economic development that is sustainable into the future.

Although there were differences in the degree of emphasis, India's economic policies have relied largely on the public sector initiatives to achieve the goals of development. Emphasis has been placed on the development of democratic political institutions. Raising the standard of living for the population as a whole has been the key objective of the planning process. However, concerns relating to sustainable use of natural resources have emerged in this process early in the 1980s. The extent to which the goals of sustainable development and economic growth can be combined in policy would depend on the ability of policy makers to understand the implications of each policy measure on one another.

The present research is an attempt to bring together diverse threads of policy to focus on development and sustainability of development. There have been changes and turns in economic policies, especially with respect to strategies and instruments. In the decade of the 1990s, the economic policies became more liberal leaving far greater space for the markets in decisions relating to allocation of resources. The new policy regime, however, has recognised the need for public interventions to safeguard sustainable use of natural resources and also protect the weaker sections of the society from market failures.

What would be the next generation of policies? This monograph only presents a basis for discussions. Its aim is modest, to provide a summary of past policies and developments with an underlying concern on sustainable development.

*December 2003
Bangalore*

*Gopal K. Kadekodi
Director, ISEC*