



**INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE**

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***RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES – 2004-2010***

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## **ISEC RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES (2004-2010)**

### **1. Preamble**

The Institute for Social and Economic Change was established in 1972 by the visionary, scholar, statesman and a distinguished social scientist Prof.V.K.R.V.Rao. It has always been conceived as an all-India institute of interdisciplinary research and training in social sciences. This is one of the first and largest institutions to be established under the ICSSR and simultaneously with a support from Karnataka state government. The principal objective of the Institute is conducting research, pure and applied, in social sciences and enlarging the canvas to include doctoral programme, training and policy dissemination. Therefore, the Institute set out to organize and conduct systematic, theoretical, empirical, methodological and scientific studies on social and economic development and change at the national and regional levels. It is hoped that in turn ISEC would be able to influence policies and practices as well as generate ideas, dialogues and debates that would collectively contribute to the fast, efficient and effective realization of the goals and values of the Constitutional Philosophy of India.

The main objectives of the Institute summarily stated are<sup>1</sup> to:

- undertake pure and applied research in social sciences encompassing all aspects of a developing society in an inter-disciplinary framework.
- assist central, state and local governments by providing advice based on policy-related studies;
- undertake regular training of doctoral students and teachers in universities and colleges, and for the officials and political functionaries, particularly at local levels
- maintain a documentation and data centre in social sciences, and
- 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 the multilateral organisations such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UN (ESCAP), UNICEF, WHO and ILO in undertaking research and training programmes.
- collaborating with universities, research institutions and the non-governmental organisations (NGO) in the region in improving the quality of research and training.

By fulfilling these objectives, the Institute is required to play the role of a catalyst in social and economic transformation in the country. These objectives are translated into action with a four-fold foci in its functioning. They are:

- Faculty research;
- Organization, facilitation and conduct of seminars, conferences and training programmes;
- A Ph.D programme and
- Advocacy and outreach.

The Medium-Term Perspective developed and presented here is based on the long-term vision of the Institute as well as gyrates around the four-fold foci mentioned above.

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<sup>1</sup> The Objectives as set out in the Memorandum of Association of ISEC

## **2. Logic of the perspective**

Change and continuity are integral to the society in which we live. As of now, Indian society is in a transitional state beginning with economic policy reforms since 1991 as well as metamorphic initiatives for change in the economy, polity and society since independence. Structural changes and adjustments are being regularly observed both in the macro and micro economy, as well as at the productive and developmental sectors. The observed changes are not limited to India. They are on-going on a global scale. The impact of these policy shifts on the macro economy and the development process as well as their implications for the common man are latent, subtle and significant. Just as the social, economic, political and cultural reality around us are subject to change, there is a need to readjust the perspectives of research in social and economic change and development so as to make such researches relevant, meaningful and valuable. Fast and continuous policy changes in the larger society and economy in which we live provide the necessary conditions and sufficient logic for relocating our priorities in social science research. The present document is an effort in this direction. A shift in locus of control under the existing canopy of the Institute's interests is provided herein.

## **3. Commitment to the society**

The basic objectives of ISEC mentioned in the Preamble are to be addressed along the process of social and economic transformation in the country and act as a catalyst on this by closely interacting with the society. In committing on these objectives, the Institute always kept the balance between national, state level and local level deliverables. The Institute, through its various activities, has been impacting on all these segments of the society in one or the other following ways.

- Contributing to the understanding of economy, polity and society and its dissemination to the public through publications;
- Assisting and advising, particularly at the State and local levels, in the design and implementation of policies, through policy research and evaluation studies;
- Directly influencing government policies as Chairpersons and members of various commissions, committees and working groups;
- Imparting training to government officials on subjects relevant to them from time to time to enable them to understand the philosophy and rationale behind design and implementation of various policies;
- Undertaking comprehensive training programmes to functionaries of decentralised government, particularly to District Panchayat functionaries.
- Interacting with the NGOs to bring in action orientation to research and to train the functionaries to enable them to improve their own task;
- Training social scientists through a rigorous and structured programme leading to doctoral degrees in all disciplines in social sciences;

- Imparting advanced training to university and college teachers and social scientists to equip them with the latest developments in the respective fields to impact on the quality of teaching and research in the region;
- Arranging public lectures by eminent social scientists on important political, social and economic issues and developments confronting the country and the region;
- Working closely with the private sector and helping various Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Confederation of Indian Industry and other organisations of entrepreneurs and preparing them for the emerging business environment such as the implications of WTO or the introduction of value added tax.

The biggest impact of ISEC on the society is dissemination of the results of its research studies<sup>2</sup>.

Some of the major avenues opted in this direction thus far on this are:

- Publications in professional journals, books;
- Outreach via ISEC's own publications of Working papers, journal and Monographs and commercial books and publications in journals and periodicals;
- Presentations in national and international seminars and conferences;
- Advising state and central governments, and local bodies;
- ISEC faculty acting as Chairpersons, members, and advisors to state and central governments;
- Training the trainers;
- Doctoral programmes;
- UGC and other faculty upgradation and refresher programmes;
- Capacity Building programmes: both for scholars outside of ISEC and internal;
- Networking with other research institutions for research and teaching; and
- Collaborating with national and international agencies on seminars workshops and conferences

#### **4. The Institute's Canopy**

There are nine Research Units in the Institute, which concentrate on various dimensions of social and economic change with interdisciplinary mind-sets and perspectives. The Units are: Economics (ECON), Ecology Economics (EE), RBI, Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation (ADRT), Population Research Centre (PRC), Sociology (SOC), Decentralisation and Development (DDU), Development Administration (DA), and Education (EDN). The ADRT Unit is financed by the Ministry of Agriculture the PRC Unit is financed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The RBI Unit is financed

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<sup>2</sup> During the last thirty-two years of its existence, the Institute has completed a large number of studies on wide-ranging topics in social sciences. Since its inception, the Institute has completed about 700 applied and policy-related studies on various economic, social, political and administrative issues. The faculty of the Institute has published about 240 books, and over 2,500 technical articles. Of these, over 600 articles were published in refereed journals in India and abroad, 900 articles in various magazines and about 1,000 articles were presented in seminars and workshops. Besides these, the faculty has been regularly contributing to leading newspapers to raise the standard of public debate and to influence public opinion on many a contemporary issue .

by an Endowment donated by the RBI. The DDU is financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation. The other Units are financed through annual block grants from the ICSSR/MHRD and the Government of Karnataka as well as from savings generated from grants for specific projects by international agencies.

The research Units are supported by four academically linked major sections or departments. They are: Ph. D. section, Computer system, Publication section and Library.

The present Research Perspective has been developed basing itself on the existing strengths among the nine Units, and the support from the library, computer system, publication and PhD sections. This perspective is submitted under the four-fold foci of the Institute, already referred to. The Unit-level perspectives are also presented separately in Section 9 so as to clarify and fine-tune the understandings.

## **5. Changing Research Perspectives<sup>3</sup>**

The overall thrust of the perspective for research during the medium-term 2004 to 2010 can be summarily described as “Social Science Research with a Human Face.” Transformation and change in any society are driven by both the globalisation process (via external factors) and internal drive to change (via social and economic growth factors). Therefore, against the backdrop of the objectives and social commitments made by the Institute, the agenda of reforms at the regional, national and global levels constitutes a common thrust of research in the Institute. The impact of reforms on the economy per se and the implications of reforms on developmental concerns are overriding in the researches proposed across the Units.

In addressing this over-riding research perspective, some thing should be mentioned at the methodological level. Firstly, the demand now is more and more on multidisciplinary framework in social science research. The Institute has an advantage in addressing on this front because of a well-knit linkage between the various research Units. Secondly, the Institute would like to continuously monitor and measure the socio-economic milieu at the national, state, regional and local levels. This is an issue of geographically scaling the research agenda, but the issue itself may be of local and regional relevance. Thirdly, the canvas of research is pegged to a much wider scale, addressing to national level issues, while not compromising the regional and local level ones. Finally, the Institute would like to bring in a balance between theoretical and empirical research. While many of the research questions can have some policy orientation, ISEC social scientists need not shy off from contributing to the theoretical development on the subject.

The major thrust of the specific themes cutting across the Units are clubbed in to six major themes, as summarised below.

### **□ Macro-Economic Reforms and Public Finance**

Several studies are on the anvil, which indulge in macro-economic reforms. Systematic studies of changes in key macro-economic relationships owing to structural changes and adjustments in the economy with special focus on consumption, investment, international trade, revenues, expenditures and prices are being proposed. Market for consumer goods and specifically utilities, emerging opportunities for private investments at

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<sup>3</sup> In the year 2000, the Institute had prepared a Vision 2010 document as a ten-year perspective.

firm and aggregate levels, changes in capital markets in relation to exchange rates and trade liberalization, external and domestic factors affecting price stability, rationalization process in indirect taxation, regulation mechanisms of fiscal deficit, impacts on ecology and environment and natural resources, and social sector spending are some of the variables that provide the context of macro-economic relationships. Some of these are also addressed to the emerging WTO regimes. The impact of economic reforms on the quality of life of backward castes, dalits, women and similar vulnerable sections of the society with special reference to employment, welfare and political leadership convey the policy messages of societal concern.

Therefore, the thrust of research under this canvas can be divided as: Public finance and policy, trade and environment, macro level societal impacts of globalisation.

#### □ **Sectoral Reforms**

The macro perspectives are to be further viewed within the sectoral configurations. Studies of Reforms in several sectors at national and regional levels are therefore proposed. Some of the sectors, which are in focus, are:

- Agriculture,
- Health,
- Education,
- Environment, biotechnology, information technology and
- Telecommunications, power and other utilities.

Some of the specific issues to be addressed are:

- Agricultural prices and subsidies, marketing, credit systems, irrigation systems, horticulture and floriculture, sericulture, watersheds, production processes at micro and macro levels, food security and droughts and institutional development constitute some of the foci in agriculture.
- Reproductive child health and public health shall be a major continuing concern under the health sector. Comparative studies of maternal and child health, varieties of disparities in access to health services, comparative studies of fertility and mortality, changing costs of health care, studies on occupational health hazards in sericulture and its bearing on quality of life are some of the themes.
- Human capital formation in a diversifying economy, macro issues in privatization of higher education, emerging linkages across levels and types of education will be focussed.
- Studies of sustainable use and management of natural resources, rural/urban livelihood systems, institutional alternatives for bio-diversity conservation, pricing of natural resource use, renewable energy sources, urban ecology are in foci.

#### □ **People in a Globalised world**

The on-going changes in the global economy have cascading effects on social and economic changes in India, which will be focussed cutting across various research Units in the Institute. Imperatives from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Public Sector undertakings, agriculture – prices and subsidies, marketing, domestic policies, credit, insurance, horticulture, floriculture and water policy, environment and trade in services, external accounts are included in these concerns. The manufacturing

sector attracts special attention w.r.t. employment, wages, markets and migration with their attendant implications for social security.

Distributional changes in incomes owing to globalisation led economic growth and its implications for consumption and poverty as well as disparities therein shall be in focus. Implications of the current process of globalisation on labour use, industrial relations and workers' organizations with special reference to contract labour, social security of industrial labour, effectiveness of rural local institutions are also proposed.

#### □ **Democratic Decentralisation and Development**

The on-going process of democratic decentralization, which got a Constitutional stamp in 1993, has several implications for power and authority structures. Traditional power, status and dominance are being challenged in the process. Space for women and dalits attract special attention in this scenario. Reservation practices for leadership positions for women and dalits and variations in developmental performance would be in focus. Therefore, it is proposed to take up studies on decentralized planning and finance in a substantial way. Decentralisation studies are not limited to Panchayathi Raj Institutions. Empirical studies of rural communities, community based organizations, non-governmental organizations and other rural local organisations are in focus.

Problems of collective action versus elite capture and limits to participation in a framework of a demand driven approach to development interventions are also proposed. Management of natural resources, basic community services and social development concerns by rural local organisations would be studied.

Decentralised planning, finance and governance have thrown open new opportunities and challenges for universalisation of elementary education of a 'given' quality and standards. Problems and issues of universalisation of elementary education in the near future and secondary education over a period of time with special focus on Learning Systems and processes, equity, justice and regional balance, teacher quality and capacity building programmes, are proposed. Education and development interface at national and sub-national levels would also be in focus.

#### □ **'Good' Governance**

Politics is the art of Statecraft. Governance is the function of the State. It is 'Good' governance that ensures development. The interface between politics, governance and development is a major theme of studies in the Institute. Role of political institutions and processes in influencing governance towards economic growth as well as sustainable and equitable development would be in focus. Comparative studies of national and sub-national systems with a special interest in Karnataka politics and administration are to be proposed. Sectoral governance reforms w.r.t. health, power, urban concerns are proposed. Special studies on e-governance, ethics in public life w.r.t. Lokayukta and other self-governing institutions are of interest.

#### □ **Studies on Gender and vulnerable Sections**

Concerns of 'development with a human face' such as gender issues, consumption and poverty, justice and equity in balanced distribution of income and other benefits of development, regional balance in development, space for backward castes, minorities and



dalits in development process are embedded in almost all the studies of the Institute. They are constituent to the focus of studies and serve as variables of analysis. However, studies devoted specifically to gender issues are noteworthy. Women in governance, gender concerns in demographic transition, women's health, women in decision-making roles, domestic violence, age at marriage and fertility, women's leadership, education of women and their employment in a market economy would be in focus.

In essence, research studies in the Institute are centered around the following major themes:

- (A) Macro-Economic Reforms including public finance,
- (B) Sectoral Reforms with special reference to Agriculture, Health, Education, Environment and Industry,
- (C) Impact and Implications of 'Globalisation' on Indian economy and society,
- (D) Democratic Decentralisation and Development,
- (E) 'Good Governance' and
- (F) Studies on Gender and vulnerable Sections

Details of specific themes can be noted from Section 9 on the Research Perspectives from the 9 Units of the Institute.

## **6. Seminars, Conferences and Training Programmes**

The Institute has been organizing over the years public debates on contemporary issues and concerns of reforms, growth, development and transformation as well as facilitating generation and dissemination of ideas through seminars and conferences. A large number of international and nationally known scholars are regularly invited to the Institute to posit on the contemporary issues. Immediate feedback through discussions and debates on annual Union and State Budgets is an annual feature of the Institute.

It has also addressed concerns of capacity building in planning, governance and finance of development through its training programmes. It also contributes empirical insights borne out of researches from within the Institute as well as ideas therein for the planning process through seminars on overall and sectoral planning issues from time to time. Specially organised talks such as VKRV Rao Memorial lecture, LS Venkaramanan Memorial lecture, Rajyotstava Lecture, etc., provide opportunities on wider discourse of social reforms and transformation.

Capacity-building training programmes on issues and concerns of decentralized development for district-level leaders of Panchayatiraj Institutions are being continuously organized. UGC Refresher Courses in various subjects/disciplines for college and university teachers are also being organized every year. The Institute has hosted several national/international seminars and conferences over the years. These functions shall be continued in the coming years also.

Three programmes on a continuing basis are proposed during the medium term. It is proposed to offer short-term, sandwich, need-tailored training programmes on 'Development Alternatives' for project managers and functionaries of non-governmental organisations and advocacy groups. The Institute's large canvas would facilitate the organisation of such programmes as in-house exercises. Initially the themes may be natural resource management, collective action, gender concerns, self-help groups and the like.

Second, there is a demand for research methodology training courses from college and university teachers<sup>4</sup>. The Institute would like to strengthen this program by approaching ICSSR for the purpose.

Third, it is proposed to repeat the organisation of a national level seminar on 'Dimensions of Social Change' after a gestation of three decades, as part of the Medium-term programme.

In addition to these in-house activities, ISEC has joined four other south based ICSSR research institutions to organize regularly one annual Development Convention, rotating among these institutions. The main purpose of this Convention is to bring young scholars and Ph D students together with representatives of senior faculty from the ICSSR research institutions and deliberate upon a common theme. This has been found to be very useful for the scholars to know each other in terms of their research works and also to exchange their academic interests for collaborations and networking. ISEC will continue to be part of this Convention.

## **7. Ph.D Programme**

The Institute has been running a Ph.D programme for the last three decades. 100 candidates have obtained the Ph.D degree so far, 10 have submitted their thesis for review, and 48 are on rolls at various stages. The Institute is affiliated to the universities of Mysore, Bangalore, Osmania and Mangalore for purpose of awarding degrees. Every year the Institute awards 8 to 10 Ph.D fellowships, which are sponsored by ICSSR and RBI. In addition, fellowships are also provided under ICRISAT, Ford Foundation and VKRV Rao Endowments as and when such provisions exist<sup>5</sup>. The admission to the programme is open at the national level, done through a common entrance test conducted along the lines of NET and interviews at the Institute.

There is a well-structured academic support system for scholars pursuing Ph.D at ISEC. From the time students qualify in their Pre-Ph.D course, a doctoral committee is evolved for each scholar to provide constant and continuous academic support and guidance until the completion of the programme. The doctoral committee consists of two faculty members, in addition to the Supervisor, one nominated by the Ph.D supervisor and the other by the Director. The membership of the doctoral committee by and large is restricted to faculty having specialization in the area in which the scholar is working, preferably adding to the multi-disciplinarity to the research work.

The bi-annual seminar series is another unique feature of the academic support system in ISEC, which constantly monitors and guides the work of the scholar. This is generally held in the months of June and December every year wherein ISEC Ph.D scholars at various stages of their work participate and receive inputs from not only the faculty members and the peers but also the two panelists who make a thorough assessment and review of the scholar's work. A distinguishing feature of the bi-annual seminar series is that the Ph.D scholars have the additional advantage of receiving inputs from the visiting professors of international repute to ISEC under various fellowship programmes every year.

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<sup>4</sup> The same was also mentioned by several members of AGM in the past.

<sup>5</sup> SRTT Self Assessment Team in June 2003 had recommended to have a few fellowships carved out of the SRTT support.

The free and full time access to high-tech computer lab and the well-equipped library provide additional academic and technical support to Ph.D scholars at ISEC.

## 8. Advocacy and Outreach

As stated in the sections on **Preamble and Social Commitments of ISEC**, a major responsibility of the Institute is to be transparent and outreach the nation at large, the state and local communities and social groups at various ladders such as academicians, policy makers, social workers, and politicians.

Various channels currently being used for this are:

1. In-house publications of the Institute: The Institute has already launched several publication avenues to outreach the society and public at large, and policy makers in particular. Some of them are:
  - The journal: *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, a bi-annual journal, which is in the sixth year of its series, and has reached an international standard.
  - *The ISEC Monograph series*: Eight monographs have been released so far. They contain the contributions from ISEC faculty clustered around some common themes, based on medium term researches.
  - *Working Paper series*: This series contains short research outputs for immediate dissemination, based on short-term research outputs. As many as 140 have been released so far.
  - *ISEC News Letter*: This is now running into its 10<sup>th</sup> year of publication. In recent years it has been converted to a major dissemination and outreach outlet by adding sections on *Policy Briefs and Out-Reach*, summary of Working papers, Monographs and books published by the faculty.
  - During this Medium term, it is now proposed to bring out yet another series under a title: *ISEC Policy Brief* as a separate publication, designed exclusively for the benefit and use of policy and decision makers.
- 2 Faculty publish in daily national newspapers on subjects of contemporary developmental concerns.
3. Participate in Radio/TV media on budget and other issues.
4. Serve on Task Forces, University Bodies, Management of Sister Institutions.
5. Deliver talks/lectures at university Academic Staff College and other courses.
6. Assist and guide NGOs in development.
7. Give consultation for multinational organisations, GOK, GOI and other bodies.
8. Publications in national and international journals.
9. Publication of books through reputed publishers.

## 9. Research Agenda-Unitwise

The Unit wise medium term research agenda are summarily presented here, without referring to details of genesis or methodology.

### 9.1 Agricultural Development & Rural Transformation

#### *On the Research thrust so far*

Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation (ADRT) unit was established with an objective to provide continuous policy feedback to the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, and hence adheres largely to the research agenda of the Ministry of Agriculture, Govt of India. However, keeping in view the commitments of the Institute and the broader vision, the faculty of ADRT have been able to focus on several issues in agricultural development at the State and country levels. These include:

- Impact of WTO on agriculture at State and Country level:
- Agricultural Price Policy
- Subsidies in agricultural sector,
- Agricultural prices and marketing,
- Issues in Indian irrigation, Tank Irrigation and traditional irrigation systems
- Agricultural credit, Macro-credit and Non-Governmental Organisations,
- Watershed Development,
- Dryland Agriculture, Insuring Agricultural Risks,
- Horticultural Development, emerging aspects of Floriculture,
- Role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Rural Development,
- Sericulture and Environmental issues in agricultural sector.

ADRT Unit was involvement in the study on Effectiveness of Minimum Support Prices coordinated across eleven states in the country. Another important study on “The State of the Farmer: A Millennium Study” was coordinated in the unit. The issues pertaining to Agreement on Agriculture in WTO and its implications have been in the focus.

There has been considerable interest in issues in irrigation and irrigation reforms. The focus on studies on irrigation is proposed to be widened and now the faculty of the Unit are covering water as a component of natural resources. Likewise the Unit in the past had conducted studies on Rural Credit System. This shall continue to be in the focus of our work.

Issues in watershed development and the research in economics of rainfed agriculture have been among the important areas pursued through various studies in the Unit, also being pursued currently.

Studies on drought, risk and uncertainty in agricultural sector have been a component of the policy-oriented research for rainfed areas. Members of the faculty have contributed substantially towards these areas of research.

Horticultural development and floriculture are emerging areas of interest of allied agricultural activities. These sectors are emerging as significantly important sectors in the context of global changes in agriculture. Hitherto, academicians in agricultural sector did not pay significant attention to these areas of prime importance.

Trade in agriculture sector is one of the most important emerging areas of research. The impact of the removal of quantitative restrictions was analysed in a study in detail. Similarly, the changes in the EXIM policy in the context of WTO, emerging trends in agricultural trade and its impact on the farm economy became important areas of concern in the unit.

### ***Medium Term Perspective***

The Unit has been expanding its research agenda towards the national scale, while the commitments to the states of Karnataka continues. Design of research agenda under such a scope are summarily presented here.

- *Changing Scenario of the Agricultural Economy – Implications and Imperatives:*

Under this broad theme the Unit proposes to analyse wide ranging changes that are taking place in the agricultural economy of the country during the past decade. Initiatives like Horticultural Schemes and Agro-Processing linkages; Agriculture & Industry linkage; Agricultural trade and impact of WTO on agriculture are emerging as important components of these changes and can have significant impact on domestic policy. Some of the major policy concern are water policy, micro-credit policy, farm technology and crop insurance.

- *Decision-making at Micro and Macro Level in Agricultural Production Process:*

The decision-making process both at micro and macro levels has been an area of greater policy concern. This process has been dynamic in its content and challenging in its methodology. There are complex linkages across sectors that influence the process of decision-making. These linkages need to be documented and carefully analysed if required through the individual components influencing the decision process. Farm system approach is one tool that helps to analyse such linkages at farm level whereas, at macro level the linkages need to be established with the help of suitable modelling exercises. The analyses of changing input structure, price policy, rural infrastructure and marketing process become components of such studies, so also the changes in market behaviour of the stakeholders accompany the processes.

- *Changes in agricultural development in south Indian states:*

The Unit has gained lot of experience in analysing agricultural sector of the state for different issues include the change in input structure, availability of infrastructure, the lagging regions, regional diversities, food security, droughts and agricultural instability (risk and uncertainty). Faculty members of the ADRT Unit have also been participating significantly in agricultural policy debates of the state and contributing towards policymaking. The Unit plans to expand the focus to a wider perspective of agricultural development at sub-national level.

- *Institutions and Agricultural Development:*

The role of formal and informal institutions in agricultural sector is a prominent factor catalysing the development of the sector. Hitherto, institutions have been understood largely from the formal institutional angle and the linkages across institutions and binding forces within the institutions were relegated as assumptions. It is essential to bring out these institutional linkages and binding forces that become prominent in sharpening the influence of these on the agricultural sector. Thus, the participation of the rural population in

implementing various agricultural development programmes forms part of the study of such institutions. The Unit intends to take up a continued research agenda on role of institutions in agricultural development during the next five years.

## **9.2 Development Administration Unit**

### ***On the Research thrust so far***

The Development Administration Unit mainly concentrates on understanding and assessing the influence of political and administrative institutions and processes on socio-economic transformation. Most of the studies including doctoral dissertations are empirical in nature and concentrated mainly on issues from Karnataka, although a few theoretical and comparative studies have also been undertaken in the past. However, theoretical/analytical framework has always framed basis for many empirical studies.

The Unit focuses on four distinct areas. First, political and administrative reforms for good governance in which issues like ethics in Indian governance, institutional strategies for minimising corruption, transparency in administration, and electoral reforms are being analysed. The second area relates to economic reforms and governance, interface between democracy, trade unions and economic restructuring, bureaucratic role in economic reforms, accommodating administrative reforms, role of multilateral agency in development, and issues of decentralised governance. The third area of focus relates to democracy and sustainable development, in which institutional aspects of management of common property resources, role of NGOs and decentralised planning, decentralisation and development issues are being analysed. Under the fourth area, issues relating to development politics, the role of political parties, electoral reforms, and ethics, politics and democracy are being analysed.

In the recent years, the Unit mainly focused on *Institutional Aspects of Development and Governance* covering PRIs and NGOs, Panchayati Raj Reforms, Ethnic Politics, Integrity in Administration, and Administrative Reforms in the context of Economic Reforms. All such studies can be categorized under the following major heads:

- *Government and Politics (Federal, Local and Ethnic Politics):*

Important studies conducted in the field include Central-State Relations in India; Stress and Strain in Federal Polity of India; Federalising Process in Developing Nations with special reference to Nigeria, Malaysia and India; Political Development and Constitutional Change; Local Government in India; Politico-Administrative Dynamics in Panchayati Raj System; Panchayati Raj System in Karnataka: The Historical, Institutional and Reform Aspects; PRIs in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka; Leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions, SC/ST and Women in Rural and Urban Governance and their Empowerment; Panchayati Raj System: Its Normative and Operational Aspects; Panchayati Raj as an Adjunct to the Federalising Process and its Constitutional Status, Theory and Practice of Decentralisation: Institutional Mechanism at various Levels for Decentralised Planning and Development; Ethnic Politics and Nativist Movement in Karnataka; Affirmative Policies for Recruitment, and Electoral Politics and Reforms.

- *Development Politics:*

Studies in development politics include Politics and Development in Andhra Pradesh; Politics, Administration and Sustainable Development in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka; Rethinking Cooperation: Towards a Non Essentialist Conception; State, Private Sector and Labour: the Political Economy of Jute Industry Modernization, 1985-90; Power Looms versus Hand Looms in Silk Weaving Industry in Karnataka; Impact of Economic Reforms on Labour, Union Politics and Ideology; Industrial Restructuring, Trade Unions and the State: Textile Workers in Ahmedabad.

- *Institutional Aspects of Development Administration:*

Both sectoral and local level studies are covered under this head. Studies conducted at sectoral level are: Problems in Minor Irrigation Development Administration in Karnataka, Role of Innovative Administrative Institutions such as Land Army in Rural Development; Public Distribution System; and Management of Higher Education. Studies conducted at the local level include Organisational Aspects of Rural Development Administration in Karnataka; Role of PRIs in Planning and Implementation of Anti-Poverty Programmes; Role of Voluntary Women's Organisations in Development; Administrative Aspects of Land Reforms; Co-operatives; Organisational, Managerial and Planning Aspects of Anti-Poverty Programmes like SFDA, IRDP, TRYSEM, Cottage Industries (Lacquaware) and Social Forestry; Local Organisations and Management of Sustainable Development (Common Property Resources); Dynamics of Tribal Development Administration; Leadership, Natural Resources and Rural Livelihood Systems in Transition.

- *Ethics in Governance and Administrative Reforms in the Context of Economic Reforms:*

Studies conducted in this area include Institutional Arrangement for Controlling Corruption; Lokayukta; Ethics Among Superior Civil Services; Ethical Dimensions of Recruitment and Training of IAS Officers; Human Rights Training and Evaluation of Police Officers; Economic Reforms and Administrative Reforms; Bureaucracy and Management of Economic Reforms; and Effective and Responsive Government in Karnataka.

### ***Medium Term Perspective***

It is aimed at broad basing the research focus of the Unit during the Medium term period now. The scope of the Unit can be broadly defined as: *Politics, Governance and Development Perspective*. They will include two sub-themes as: Development Politics, and governance and development (economic growth and social development).

The relevant questions to be addressed are: how do political institutions and processes (philosophy, values, institutions and actors in state and civil society) influence governance and development? How does governance (democracy, decentralization, social capital, rule of law, bureaucracy and human rights,) influence sustainable development?

Many studies elsewhere have come out with positive relationship between politics (political stability, predictable policies and laws, independent judiciary, freedom of press, competitive political parties and periodic elections and so on) and economic growth, and success or failure of SAP as well. Same is the case with the influence of institutional processes (good governance; transparent laws, regulations and procedures; accountable and responsive administration) on economic growth. The research in these twin areas provide opportunity to

undertake comparative and inter-disciplinary studies in collaboration with other Units in the Institute; particularly economics. Since the Institute has an obligation towards the State from which it gets major financial support, it is considered important to undertake studies on Karnataka Politics and Administration from historical and sectoral perspective.

Keeping the thrust areas of research in mind, five research themes are identified for the Medium Term. They are: (1) Development Politics, Politics and Economic development (2); governance and development;(3) globalisation (4) Ethics in Public Life; (5) Karnataka Politics and Administration.

In this context, the issues concerning the study of social and economic development from the political and governance perspective (particularly institutional aspects of good governance) mentioned for the Medium term are most relevant ones. Politics with positive attitude and approach towards development provide the thrust and direction to policies and programs for promotion of sustainable development, and thereby ensuring social equity. The institutions of good governance provide the necessary conditions and the framework to translate the policies into action.

Some of the major topics and sub-topics to be taken up during the medium term are:

- Politics, development politics and ethnic politics:  
This broad theme will cover issues such as conflicts, governance, politics of reforms, implications of SAP and stability, leadership, and sustainable development
- Implications of globalisation on policy, governance, environment and disadvantaged:  
Issues of contract labour, social security etc. will be addressed.
- Governance, institutions and sustainable development: Service delivery, urban governance, waste management, panchayats and watershed development, social capital
- Karnataka and development: A number of issues such as e-governance, corruption, administrative reforms , NGOs and self-governance, privatisation

### **9.3 Decentralisation and Development Unit**

#### ***On the Research thrust so far***

Decentralisation is a process that transfers political, administrative and fiscal responsibilities to the local elected bodies, and also empowers communities to ensure that these bodies function effectively. It not only improves governance through accountability and incentives, participation of the marginalised and women in development but also strengthens democracy, participation and civil society institutions. It is an important instrument for poverty alleviation, and sustainable material and human development.

The goal of the Unit is to emerge as a centre of excellence in 'Decentralisation and Rural Development' through research, advocacy and capacity building. The mission of the Unit is to support and further decentralisation efforts of the government, people, donors and civil society institutions by undertaking policy-oriented research, dissemination and capacity building initiatives.



Some of the studies completed by this Unit during short period of three years of existence are:

- ✓ Studies on Rural Local Organisations, with focus of watershed development, drinking water and sanitation, and rural women based institutions,
- ✓ Fiscal decentralisation in Karnataka and Kerala.
- ✓ Documental of gram panchayats on their fiscal performance over four years.

### ***Medium Term Perspective***

A focus on decentralisation and community-driven development may bring both better governance and reduced market ‘imperfections’. But this requires change at two levels. First, reform of state agencies (structure/decision-making, commitment, skills, attitudes) towards decentralised local governance, improved responsiveness and participation. This implies a shift in the locus of power from the centre to the periphery. Second, rural people, including the poor, need to seize the new opportunities provided. They should also take up the challenge of reforming the state and countering the oppressive elite. This raises a key issue regarding decentralisation; how to balance the locus of power between the centre and the periphery and develop accountability and responsiveness at central and local levels (encourage participation and voice, and limit exit, co-optation, and capture).

The following studies, to be taken up by the Unit, are intended to contribute towards getting the right balance.

- *Political Decentralisation: Inclusion of the Marginalised Groups and Women*

In the context of affirmative action for the inclusion of the marginalised and efforts to strengthen their capacity as elected leaders, there is a need to monitor the changes on a continuous basis their inclusion, participation, obtaining enduring benefits and utilising the same; and identify the factors that contribute or retard the change. Some of the important issues proposed to be examined are the following:

- *Caste-class conjunction* in the political process, and also gender relations as these affect power relations and equity in sharing and management of resources.
- The equality of *opportunity for women to participate in politics* vis-a vis equal sharing of power. What factors contribute to the differential participation of men and women? Why is the authority of women representatives (as elected functionaries) not converted into power? How do men use their power as individuals and elite to maintain differential power structures? Why do women legitimise male power? Why do women accept ideologies that sustain their subordination?
- The rural elite wields considerable *control in the functioning of local elected bodies*. The power to the non-elite was often inversely related with that of rural elite. The conditions of social life adversely affect participation and empowerment of several groups in society. Poverty severely limits power that is available to the people as well as their ability to effect changes and outcomes in society, through local elected bodies. The relationship between poverty reduction and the enhancement of people’s power would be studied.

- There is a connection between being among the *elite and being a patron*. The influence that this has on inclusion and participation of the marginalised will be yet another long-term researchable issue in the Unit.
- Grama sabhas are important mechanisms to ensure *accountability of the local elected bodies*. The research questions are: What can be done to strengthen the grama sabhas and to ensure accountability in the system? What are the alternative mechanisms to revitalise the grama sabhas? What supportive systems are needed to strengthen this institution? What role the civil society institutions can play in this regard? Strengthening of grama sabhas should be preceded by efforts to improve the economic base of the poor and the legal and policy framework within which the local elected bodies function, which is an important researchable issue.

- *Administrative Decentralisation: Devolution of Functions and Responsibilities*

Lack of proper demarcation of functions is often a cause for confusion and division of responsibilities between the line departments and panchayats and also between the different tiers creating a kind of complex situation that hinder the process of implementation of rural development programmes.

One of the critical current challenges in making rural development more effective -- in terms of improving services and resource management -- lies in fostering multi-agency partnerships and new alliances between the different players (the state, local government, private sector, civil society, NGOs, and community groups) building on their comparative advantages.

The Unit undertook a large research programme on Roles of Rural Organisations. This programme analysed the roles and relationships between local organisations, and between local organisations and implementing agents (usually the state) to have a better understanding of which organisations are best suited to what task and how to forge effective alliances and partnerships between them.

The study findings suggest that the local organisations undertake basic functions, and perform well in this regard. The findings in so far as design prerequisites indicate that (i) effective, accountable and pro-poor *project management*, and (ii) more effective configuration of the local organisational landscape including alliances between *local organisations* (PRIs, user groups, CBOs, line departments and NGOs) are to be now linked to future research agenda on functional decentralisation.

- *Fiscal Decentralisation*

Fiscal decentralisation accords substantial revenue and expenditure authority to intermediate and local governments. The decentralised government at all the levels has very low level of fiscal decentralisation in India. In theoretical terms, the levels of independence in raising resources, composition of revenues and expenditure autonomy would have a bearing on levels of participation by people demanding the accountability and effectiveness in the service delivery. Against this theoretical background, the Unit will undertake studies on fiscal decentralisation to identify policy changes and institutional strengthening required to ensure more efficient and equitable provision of public services with the following research agenda.

The following research agenda are related to the analysis of own revenue, inter-governmental transfers (general and specific) and expenditure autonomy.

- Analysis of the pattern of own tax and non-tax revenues of different levels of rural local governments to identify additional sources and tax and non-tax revenues that can be assigned to the rural local bodies to strengthen their finances and bring about better revenue-expenditure linkage.
- Examining the adequacy, design and impact of general purpose transfers at different levels of panchayats: Lack of information on finances required and available at the local level has resulted in giving lump sum transfers irrespective of their fiscal capacity or need. Such an analysis of the transfer system is needed to design the general-purpose transfer system, which is simple and not too demanding in terms of information requirements, and yet has the right incentive structure.
- Dependency of local elected bodies on scheme-specific transfers of resources for the delivery of services: The strings attached to the schemes and their multiplicity often results in poor expenditure autonomy. Analysing the specific purpose transfers for implementing state level programmes and policies to different tiers of panchayats and the multiplicity of programmes implemented by the local governments under these schemes are two important issues.
- Another important research agenda is to analyse the level and composition of expenditures at all the levels of local government to help the government departments to enhance allocative and technical efficiency in public expenditures and improve the delivery of public services in rural areas.
- Transformation of expenditure into services: It needs to be noted that the expenditure efficiency based on the standards of service levels is difficult to be inferred as the role of local governments in providing these services has not been significant in the past and many of these services are provided concurrently with the state government. Appropriate methodologies will, therefore, be developed.

▪ *NGOs and Decentralised Government*

The emergence of NGOs vis-à-vis the GPs as development actors in India implies that one can hope for more attention to the needs and concerns of the poor in policy formulation and implementation. The research studies of the Unit, confined largely to south India, have shown that though the two actors have comparative advantages in certain functions relating to rural development, their relationship has often been sporadic, and characterised as antagonistic. Against this background, the Unit intends to work on researchable issues such as the areas where the local decentralised government, on the one hand, and NGOs and community-based organisations, on the other, can work together, and the necessary conditions for such relationship.

▪ *Decentralisation and Improving Service Delivery*

The important services relating to social security, water supply, etc., are supposed to be delivered by the local elected bodies; but line department agencies still have considerable role and control in the delivery of services. In this context, the researchable questions on the role of local elected bodies in the service delivery are the following: How effectively local bodies

can be used as vehicles of delivery of services such as social security, drinking water, etc.? What measures can be initiated to foster better co-ordination between line department and local bodies? Is the community prepared to shoulder more responsibilities essential for the success of decentralisation? What are the changes in the values, motivations and attitudes of main actors in the service delivery? Is there any resistance from the departments/administration towards the process of decentralisation? If yes, what are the reasons? How can they be resolved within the framework of decentralised planning and management?

In order to fulfil these research agenda, the Unit has proposed three research studies in collaboration with other units at the Institute. The work relating to water supply in Karnataka towns (in collaboration with Ecological Economics and RBI Endowment Unit) looks into institutional issues relating to the provision of quality water resources by urban local bodies. The work relating to the organised segment of beedi rollers is taken up in collaboration with the Economic Unit to look into the issues relating to the provision of social security to unorganised beedi workers through the local elected bodies. Similarly, the study on child labour in sericulture activity looks into the institutional issues relating to implementation of child labour policies and programmes in collaboration with the Sociology unit.

#### **9.4: Economics Unit**

##### ***On the Research thrust so far***

The major focus of the Unit is on macroeconomic issues of the Indian economy with special emphasis on areas relating to public economics, planning and development, poverty and public policy and urban infrastructure. The research agenda of the Unit has included issues relating to central, state and local finances, inter and intra-regional disparities in the levels of living, fiscal federalism and inter-governmental fiscal relations and privatisation and public enterprise reform. The studies on urban local finances and issues related to urban infrastructure and housing have also received attention. There has been a particular focus in the studies on domestic trade taxes in India. Studies have also been undertaken on expenditure restructuring at central and state levels. The Unit works closely with the State Government in the design and reform of the State tax system.

During last five years, the thrust of areas of research has been on industrial economics, social infrastructure economics, public economics, and labour economics. In general, research in these areas has been comprehensive in terms of data research, policy research and professional research. Further, the focus of research in each of the thrust areas has been richly diversified in contents and coverage by including policy issues and reforms at the state level, inter-state level, national level and global level.

In industrial economics, the focus of research has been on empirical estimation of the impact of WTO agreements and policy incentives on industrial development in general and on small-scale industries in particular. In addition, impact analysis of industrial sector reforms with special reference to public sector enterprise reforms is focused.

In social infrastructure economics, economic analysis of higher education, health and housing services with special reference to financing and subsidies, and estimation of consumer demand for telecom services are focused. Within public economics, policy research on fiscal federalism and decentralisation, and tax reforms with special reference to sales taxation and value added taxes have been the focus areas of research.

In labour economics, socio-economic analysis of labour markets with special reference to determination of minimum wages, valuation of life and injury risks, impact of trade unions on the compensation of job risks, and social security for unorganised labour have been the key topics of research.

A series of studies have been recently completed on the evaluation and changing focus of commercial taxation the Karnataka state. Specific issues addressed are, on the evaluation of incentives (exemptions etc.) from commercial taxes upon industrial performance, and reforming professional and entertainment taxes.

Moreover, economic analysis of inter-sectoral and inter-regional disparities, including rural-urban disparities, in the process of economic development have been researched, either separately or as a part of the above focus areas of research.

### ***Medium Term Perspective***

The medium and long term research perspectives of the Economics Unit are focused on select themes in industrial economics, regional economics of trade and investment, fiscal and financial economics, economics of higher education, infrastructure economics, labour economics, and fiscal decentralisation and rural development. They are elaborated below.

- *Impact of economic reforms and WTO on regional trade and industry*

Over the years, the impact of intensified process of globalisation, especially with the establishment of World Trade Organisation (WTO) have been witnessed on trade and industry sectors, among others. In this regard, the important themes of research include the impact of (a) WTO of Small Scale Industries, (b) fiscal incentives on industrial development and (c) public sector reforms on financial status of public sector units and adoption of Voluntary Retirement Scheme in Karnataka State.

- *Impact of fiscal and financial sector reforms*

Fiscal reforms are introduced at the national and state level in the form of tax reforms and measures for containing the government deficits through public expenditure reforms and management of public debts. Financial sector (i.e. comprising banking and capital markets) reforms are, in general, economy-wide reforms. The focus of themes of these reforms are on (i) impact of macroeconomic variables (e.g. interest rate and exchange rate) on economic growth and internal stabilisation through banking sector reforms; (ii) impact of fiscal sector reforms on economic development of Karnataka state; (iii) rationalisation of government expenditure in Karnataka State; (iv) rationalisation of State taxes with special reference to commercial taxes, stamps and registration duties; and (v) transitional issues relating to the introduction of Value Added Tax in Karnataka State., and (vi) analysis of commercial taxation in the state.

- *Impact of reforms in utility services (telecom and power sector) on consumer demands*

The telecom and power sectors have been undergoing major policy changes, since the start of national economic reforms in July 1991. These changes are evident in the New Telecom Policy 1999 and the establishment of Central and State Electricity Regulation

Authorities/Commissions. The issues to be addressed are: access and usage, affordability and pricing, subsidisation and financing. Modeling and estimation of consumer demand for such utility services at the national and state level shall be undertaken.

- *Analysis of labour market, employment, and wages*

Economic analysis of market structure, employment generation and wage determination for both organised and unorganised labour, have potential for wide policy implications at all levels of government and usefulness for all non-government stakeholders in India. The key themes of research in these areas include (a) estimation of return to education by gender, caste, sector, location and age cohort, using the NSS data; (b) impact of rural out-migration on agricultural/rural sector and on the emergence of urban informal labour market; (c) valuation of mortality reduction measures (e.g. industrial safety or environmental health programmes) through a compensating wage study; (d) patterns of growth of service sector in national and state income, and the impact of growth of service sector on employment in organised and unorganised sectors; and (e) growth and determinants of wages and productivity of labour in manufacturing sector based on Annual Survey of Industries.

- *Economic empowerment and social security*

In the process of economic transformation, as induced by economic reforms and globalisation, there are several transitional stage issues, such as inequitable growth, inter-regional or inter-sectoral disparities in production, growing disparities in consumption between rural and urban population, growing disparity in wages between organised and unorganised labour, and disparities between social castes and gender.

In this regard, the major themes of research include:

(i) social security for workers in unorganised sectors, especially in the informal sectors; (ii) analysis of social and economic infrastructure by rural and urban categories; and (iii) evaluation of programmes/schemes for poverty alleviation, and upliftment of vulnerable and deprived castes and women, especially by Panchayat Raj Institutions in Karnataka state.

- *Process and impact of fiscal decentralisation in Karnataka State*

Fiscal decentralisation is one of the aspects under decentralised planning and governance. This process has generated diversified impact on the objectives of economic planning at the local levels. In this regard, the major themes of research include (a) analysis of resource mobilisation by local governments; (b) effectiveness and efficiency aspects in the working of fiscal decentralisation; (c) fiscal transfers from the Central and State government in the context of fiscal decentralisation.

## **9.5: Ecological Environmental Unit**

### ***On the Research thrust so far***

The mandate of the Unit 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. With the passage of time and with several ecological issues of development coming to the fore, the Unit has emerged as

an important focal point to analyse and identify various policy alternatives relating to sustainable development.

The Unit 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, and common property resources. The Unit works in close collaboration with several other Units in the Institute and with CISED. The focal areas of research of the Unit have been water resources and watershed development, forestry, biodiversity, solid waste management, urban pollution and economic instruments.

During the last five years the focus of research in the Unit includes solid waste management in urban areas and institutional aspects of bio-diversity conservation, household energy use, livestock and environment, irrigation systems and command area development, social forestry, water harvesting, watershed development and dryland agriculture. The institute has special expertise in the management of water resources, analysis of water markets and command area development.

Some of the major thrust areas researched during the last five years are:

- *Livestock Environment Interactions:*

The study focused mainly on ruminant livestock- cattle, buffaloes, sheep, and goats. Rearing of these animals, are remunerative to the rural families in India; they exert tremendous pressure on the ecology and environment in terms of free grazing, on common property land resources. The study stressed on sustainable manner of managing common land resources as well as maintaining these animals.

- *Protection and Participation: Sustainable Development and Forest Biodiversity in South India:*

The Phase-I study reviewed earlier efforts made IFP and others, on the biotic pressure, soil type, topography, and landscape in the Western Ghats of Karnataka. Based on that, in Phase-II, the study selects some areas around the sanctuaries of Nagarhole and Bandipur, to study the socio-economic impacts on forest and ecology as well as landscape change.

- *Economic and Institutional Aspects of Producing Bio-fuels from Oilseed Bearing Trees in Karnataka:*

In view of increasing oil-import bill and explore the possibility of renewable energy sources in a decentralised manner, the study looked at the potential of production and usage of bio-fuels in Indian context.

- *Role of Market Based Instruments in Industrial Pollution Abatement: A Comparative Study of India and France:*

This study attempted a comparative analysis of two countries – India and France on industrial pollution abatement strategies, including understanding the market based instruments play a key role in controlling industrial pollution.

- *Rural Drinking water in Karnataka and Gujarat:*

The study so far prepared a situation analysis of rural water supply in two different states supported by case studies of best practices and household survey to understand social inequities.

- *Inter-sectoral management of water in a river basin context:*

The study looked at the growing conflict among the competitive sectors (domestic, industrial and agricultural) for water resources. It plans now to carry out the study in a specific river basin to understand various players, their roles, and emerging conflicts, mechanisms to manage, and its inadequacies.

- *Institutional framework for rural infrastructure and poverty alleviation:*

In spite of various efforts by government agencies, semi-autonomous agencies in improving rural infrastructure the conditions still demand lot of attention. Donor support also has not resulted in significant improvement. The study looked at types of institutions required to manage rural infrastructure in Indian context, with any one state as a case study.

### ***Medium Term Perspective***

The Ecological Economic Unit expanding its scope, will work towards building knowledge systems and capacities to influence policy and actions to improve rural and urban livelihoods and environmental development in a sustainable manner. Studies on the sustainable use and management of natural resources have been and will remain a major focus of the research activities of the Ecological Economics Unit. Accordingly, the Unit strives to work on the frontline issues listed below.

- *Development and conservation*

Effects of interventions through watersheds on poverty, livelihood systems and natural resources will be focused. Understanding the linkages between development interventions and conservation of natural resources and poverty with focus on interventions like grazing lands, forests, water bodies other CPRs and biodiversity. Effect of development interventions on livelihood systems will be analysed with farming and livestock systems and interactions with local ecosystems.

- *Economics of bio-diversity conservation and institutional alternatives*

This is necessary to promote biodiversity and to understand various institutional options based on climatic and natural resources conditions. People's perceptions on the environment and value preferences for environmental conservation are another area for future research.

- *Economic growth, resource depletion and pollution*

Pricing and subsidy issues and how they impact on the environment will be analysed. This will cover areas such as water, energy, forests, etc. The linkages between environmental degradation and economic growth will get more attention in the Unit's research activities.



- *Renewable energy and alternative fuels:*

Owing to increased usage of fossil fuels, pollution levels and dependency on foreign exchange on one side, and on the other, lack of local-based and low-cost technologies, there is a need to evolve alternative and renewable energy sources. The Unit will focus more on bio-fuels and alternative fuels.

- *Urban ecology:*

As urbanisation increases, problems resulting from more pressure on limited resources, public utilities and services are also increasing. Issues related to assessment of wastewater, solid waste, air and water quality problems and effect on human and livestock health and bio-diversity of the urban area. Inadequacy of appropriate technologies and capacity building is another dimension of the problem. It is necessary to understand the complexity of problems in the Indian context and to design strategies and holistic approaches to gradually overcome the constraints. In addition, there is a need to evolve mechanisms and institutional alternatives to overcome the problems.

- *Evolving enabling policy, legal and institutional framework*

Major focus will be on environmental federalism related issues. Besides, efforts will be made to analyse policy and legal dimensions of natural resources like land, water - both ground and surface - and forest. Also air and water quality issues. Review current framework, database at various levels, and document the constraints for facilitating better interface between resource usage and users and agencies' activities. Generate debate on frontline issues and evolve strategies to influence better policy and action environment. The focus will be on environmental federalism.

- *Capacity building and outreach*

For effective diffusion and debate on knowledge generated, the EEU will undertake substantial outreach, followed by capacity building at different levels across the agencies concerned. The Unit will evolve mechanisms to regularly bring out policy briefs and organise brainstorming sessions on key issues. It will bring out publications and widely disseminate them to generate debate on research findings. EEU will also develop networking and coordination with other institutions. Regular training and workshops both for government officials and academics are also on its agenda.

## **9.6: Education Unit**

### ***On the Research thrust so far***

Research in the Education Unit has always been on a wider scoop of search for solution to problems of human civilization, exploring some of the fundamental (i.e., constitutionally) and pending issues, concerns and problems of the country. In this context, it can be said that the Unit has been striving with a large number of emerging issues in the field of delivery of status and dignity of life through education.

Human Resources Development has been one of the priority areas of research in this Institute right from its inception. Over the years, considerable work has been done by the

Institute on macro-level problems and issues such as literacy, basic education, vocational education, women's education, and educational planning and management. There have also been studies on the role of education in accelerating growth and development, promoting social mobility, creating a shared basis of economic growth, and social justice, and creating a society with high ethical, social and economic values.

Some of the recently focused studies are:

- *On matters of literacy and universalisation of primary education*

A number of studies have been carried out by the Unit in the recent past on literacy and universalisation of primary education, The findings reveal gaps in terms of 'quality' and 'standards'. The available facilities in schools are not subjected to optimal utilisation.

The Education Unit has undertaken a number of studies in the areas such as "Evaluation of Capacity Building Programmes for Primary Teachers", "Functioning of Kendriya Vidyalayas", "Capacity Development of Village Education Committees", "Reforming Higher Education Sector". There are also studies on gender issues relating to higher education.

Some of the recently completed and on-going researches in the Unit within the focus areas identified earlier are noted below.

- *Free Uniforms to School Children - An Evaluation*

The focus of this study is to assess the relevance, significance and efficiency of a major incentive system like free uniforms supplied to school-going children at the elementary and secondary stage with the intention of improving attendance and participation of children in school activities.

- *A Study of Pre-service Secondary Stage Teacher Education for Emerging Diverse Educational Contexts in Karnataka - Perspectives, Practices and Prospects*

The major focus of this study is to assess the implications of existing teacher preparatory programme at the secondary stage for emerging challenges and demands posed by the economy and society to the education system within the context of globalisation.

- *Residential Educational Institutions in Karnataka State - A Status Study and Perspective Plan*
- *An inter-state analysis of education and development*
- *"Restructuring Educational Administration in Karnataka State" for the Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of Karnataka.*
- *Decentralised Management of Education in Karnataka State" for the Government of Karnataka/World Bank.*

### ***Medium Term Perspective***

With the going themes at the Unit level, several medium term studies are proposed for the medium term.

- *Universalisation of primary education and links with secondary education*

The dynamics of universalisation, persisting problems therein, facilitators and constraints in the areas of planning and management, governance at school and higher levels, promotion of equity and justice in participation and utilisation of facilities, quality of teachers, infrastructure facilities, transactional processes, customer satisfactions and related concerns form the focus of research in elementary education in the Unit in the medium term also.

- *Community participation in education*

One of the measures of making the elementary education more effective and efficient is through decentralization of school education. Decentralization has also increased community participation in the management and control of the educational institutions. The community members are not only involved in monitoring of school activities, but also are acting as resource support to the schools. In this case, the role of grassroots participatory structures as well as NGOs and civil society in providing additional support to the ongoing educational activities needs explicit recognition. Research in education would also focus on this area.

- *Links between primary and Secondary education*

With the passage of time and success of Universalisation of Primary Education, there is observed a phenomenal growth of demand for secondary education. Efforts are afoot to prepare for a future India where universalisation of secondary education shall be the norm. Further, within the context of globalization, the economic and societal changes are placing new demands and pressures on schools, teachers and students. Apart from sufficient basic skills, critical thinking, life long learning and technological literacy have become the new keys to productivity in the emerging knowledge based society. In this direction, research in secondary education as well as education of secondary school teachers assumes crucial significance in equipping them with appropriate professional skills and competencies to discharge their expected roles with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

- *Quality of learning*

In the context of planning education for development, linking the quality of learning in schools with improvements in education of teachers is important. In recent times, the job of teaching has become more complex than ever with the social problems brought into the classroom. The advent of new technologies and the cutbacks on education resources are putting greater restraints on teacher education programmes. With lifelong learning skills and technological literacy becoming the new keys to productivity in the emerging knowledge based society, the need for enhancing professionalism in teacher preparatory programmes has assumed all the more significance. Therefore these issues will also be the focus of the Education Unit.

- *Macro-level linkages of education*

India is a large federation. Taking individual States as cases for study, it is proposed to examine the interface between education and the development process using a variety of indicators in discrete and composite ways as proxies. The purpose is to identify levels and types of education as well their spread which area critical for the development process. Schooling per se may not contribute to optimize overall efforts for development. It is the

'right' type of schooling that matters. Orchestration of schooling processes, both curricular and co-curricular processes, with economic policies, expected social changes, political processes and national developmental efforts require a continuous and critical examination. Collection, consolidation and collection of evidence from the field for an examination of the relationship between schooling, literacy programmes, non-formal education and development processes would facilitate the fine-tuning of education with development. Macro-level analysis of relationships between education and development would also become more meaningful with micro-level perceptions.

- *Privatising education*

There are several macro issues of financing education, which are rooted in efficiency of State expenditures as well as go beyond concerns of efficiency such as promotion of a liberal society. With increased privatization in the field of education, and higher education in particular consequent to liberal policies of the Indian government, it is both relevant and significant to understand the role played by the private sector. While the economic implications of this in terms of cost, investments, returns and benefit merit investigation, the other equally important issues relating to this is the quality and equity concerns.

- *Education and gender*

The positive interventionist role-played by education in empowering women and changing the status of women in society is being increasingly recognized. However economic, social and institutional factors continue to act as barriers for girls and women to participate in the developmental activities. It is in this context that there is a need to examine the gender issues. The interface of gender with education and employment market is increasingly emerging as another area of concern both at the national and international levels. With expansion of educational facilities and increased access to education of girls at the school level, promoting and sustaining their participation at higher levels appears to be an important concern. Despite girls faring better than boys at the secondary stage, they are underrepresented in higher education and more so in emerging fields of study. How social and economic factors influence career choices and options of men and women and the issue of gender segregation and its interface with employment market is another important area of research particularly in the context of globalisation and emergence of a market economy.

- *Economic reforms and human capital formation in Karnataka*

It is proposed to look into the formation and accumulation of human capital within the State of Karnataka during the pre and post economic reforms period. The State's recent Vision Document identifying education sector as one of the crucial sectors for promoting economic development assumes significance in this context. Within this context, it is of primary importance to identify the winners and losers in terms of accumulating human capital over the years. Such an analysis would reveal to what extent the State has been able to address issues concerning educational inequalities across geographical regions in Karnataka. Karnataka is a middle ranking State in overall as well as sectoral development among the major States of India.

- *Vocational and technical education*

The diversification and structural shift will imply new demands of educational skills. Specifically, the educational structures need to be diversified in accordance with these new demands. This is all the more significant in the context of liberalisation of controls on trade, industry and services as well as of the economy. New demands on education would require a serious look at vocational and technical education in the country. Post-secondary polytechnic education and technical education have been accorded low priority in research pursuits all these years. Problems in this area of education are both internal to the system and external to it. They will form one of the themes of study in the Unit.

## **9.7: Population Research Centre (PRC) Unit**

### ***On the Research thrust so far***

The research priorities of the PRC since inception have been changing concomitant to the changes in the demographic scenario and also the welfare programme in the country and the state.

Since its inception, the Unit has been involved in (i) conducting and promoting research on Population Studies; (ii) assist the State and Union Governments by undertaking analytical studies relating to population trends, demographic transition and health-related issues with policy implications; (iii) provide evaluation of various programmes and schemes launched by the governments at both the central and state levels; and (iv) conduct training programmes including doctoral programmes on specialised aspects of Population Studies.

The Unit has been undertaking large-scale surveys to gather primary data and generate information on various aspects of demographic transition. Specific studies dealing with these macro aspects include those on various aspects of reproductive and child health, health delivery system, studies on rates of mortality and morbidity and evaluation studies of family welfare programmes. The Unit also has been focussing on the fast changing demographic scenario in Karnataka State. With this in view, the Second National Family Health Survey was carried out. The research focus of the Unit also included studies on the status of women, fertility, regional variations in demographic behaviour, migration and urbanisation and family planning among backward communities.

Research activities in the last 5-year period have broadly been categories into six major heads:

- (i) Estimation of demographic and health parameters and differentials, Changes in the age and marital status structure - specifically old age and age at marriage, development and population change.
- (ii) Evaluation studies of welfare programmes – utilization and reasons for not utilising these facilities and impact of welfare programmes in terms of beneficiaries study.
- (iii) Gender related issues like son preference while acceptance of family planning methods, changes in woman status and impact of working mothers on their children health.
- (iv) Training programmes for empowering the panchayat members in population and health and develop appropriate training modules and videos
- (v) Migration and urbanization with reference to slums

- (vi) Administration of health and family planning welfare services in the state, district and below.

### ***Medium Term Perspective***

The major long-term research agenda of the PRC are split as for the medium and long term periods specifically. They are: on demographic transition, reproductive and child health, demographic studies with reference to special or marginal groups, gender issues, regional disparities and special demographic topics, and studies relating to health and panchayat institutions. Short-term research agenda has been guided by the long-term research agenda.

#### ***A Long-term studies***

The long-term research activities have been envisaged in the areas of demographic transition, Reproductive and Child Health, demographic studies with reference to magical or special groups, gender issues, regional disparities with reference to socio-economic and demographic change, specific topics like migration and urbanization, marriage, old age, nutrition, anemia, and obesity.

- *Differential demographic transition in Indian states*

The accelerated pace of demographic transition in other three south Indian states and the low pace, which is being observed in Karnataka is a matter of great concern. Hence the long-term research goal will be studying the fertility and mortality situation in Karnataka, analysing the current demographic scenario and explore the reasons for the slow reduction in fertility and mortality in order to come out with relevant policy suggestions to accelerate the pace of demographic transition. The regional disparities and socio-economic differentials in the demographic transition are also major thrust areas of the research agenda.

- *Reproductive Child Health Programme*

The health programmes, especially women and children are of long term concern. Maternal and child health, and family planning programmes have been merged into Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) in 1994. Under RCH programme many schemes for women and children are being implemented. Various aspects of woman and child health need to be investigated to help the programme to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

- *Health status of marginalized groups*

The deteriorating health status of marginal groups of population like tribal, migrant workers, slum dwellers etc., shall be an added theme in the long run. So far very little has been documented on these population groups and they are at a disadvantage in receiving the welfare programmes because of lack of knowledge, illiteracy and ignorance. It is, therefore, felt that these groups need special attention to be integrated into the main stream of the society. Keeping this in view, some studies will be carried out in the Institute.

- *Gender disparities and health status*

It has been observed that there is a wide range of gender related issues that needs to be focussed in demographic studies. The issues like gender disparities in provision of services

like health and education, studies on women autonomy, women's role in household decision making, domestic violence, studies on son preference and family size, female child schooling and status of women will also be investigated.

- *Regional disparity, migration, urbanization and health status*

Regional disparities in socio-economic and demographic indicators are observed in Karnataka also. In general, southern Karnataka has low fertility and high acceptance of family planning compared to northern Karnataka. These issues have been studied in the past and were helpful in designing region specific policies for the implementation of health and family welfare programmes. Studies focusing regional variation will also be under taken in future.

Studies on specific topics like migration and urbanization and its impact on various health and demographic issues, marriage pattern, studies on ageing and its socio economic implications, studies relating to nutrition and anemia among children, obesity will also be covered.

Studies relating to public health and Panchayat raj institutions will also be undertaken. Such studies were carried out in the past and will also be taken up in the future. Various evaluation studies will also be taken up to fulfill the mandate of the Ministry of Health and Family Planning, GoI.

#### *B Medium-term*

These include the current research activities, projects submitted for funding and the studies to be taken up in the near future.

- *Special area based studies*

Demographic transition in small geographic regions take different pathways, on account of differential female literacy, population pressure, age at marriage, degree of urbanization, adoption of family planning methods, migration pattern etc. Districts such as Mandya and S. Canara shall be studied.

In the Institute, some of the studies that are going to be carried out are the District Level Household Survey under RCH programme in Karnataka, Kerala and Goa. These surveys will provide health and demographic indicators at district level for the monitoring the RCH programme at district level. In addition, some studies are being planed on adolescents, women about to reach menopause, widows and on the safe delivery practices in the community. It is also proposed to study the unmet needs in family planning. Such a study will facilitate the prospective acceptors to adopt family planning methods and thereby achieve faster reductions in fertility. This is being investigated in the slums of Bangalore city. Reproductive morbidity is another major issue to be dealt with. The prevalence levels of morbidity will be useful for the implementation of RCH programme.

- *Status of Widowhood in Karnataka*

It is planned to take up a study on widowhood in Karnataka. Widows pertain to unfortunate and underprivileged segment of our community. A large number of households headed by females are below the poverty line. Projections point towards an increase in the

absolute magnitude of widows in the near future because of aging and differential mortality. Under such circumstances it is relevant to study the policies and programs available for widow rehabilitation.

- *Girl child and health*

In India, female children are at a disadvantageous position compared to male children in all walks of life. It is however not explicitly observed in the society. To investigate the areas of discrimination of female children and underlying factors influencing discrimination is being investigated in a study by collecting macro level data, both qualitative and quantitative.

## **9.8: Reserve Bank Unit**

### ***On the Research thrust so far***

In the past, a number of studies, which are of interest to the RBI, have been completed by the Unit. These include studies on Rural Credit Delivery System, International Financial Markets, Monetary and Fiscal Policy Issues, Institutional Finance, Rural Development, Inflation and Stock Markets, and Economics and Exchange Rate Dynamics. Attempts were also made to build a macroeconomic model for simulating alternative fiscal and monetary policy parameters.

Since the last few years, the Unit has been concentrating on studies relating to public health, analysis of state level investments, role of service sector, planning and sustainable development. They are summarized briefly here.

- *Understanding the Growth Process at the State level: A Study of Investment in Industry*

There is a wide spectrum of performance of Indian states over the last 50 years both as a result of differences in the initial conditions of the state economies, differences in the natural endowments including geographical features and also other factors such as governance. An understanding of the state level growth performance is important in designing policies for better performance including the issue of fiscal management at the state level. This is linked to the investment strategies in different states.

Uneven growth performance of the economies is likely to be a result of uneven investment in different states. Variations in investment spending by both private and public agencies across the states explain variation in total investment expenditures. In 1990s, the importance of private sector investment has increased relative to the public sector investment as compared to the past periods. In the context of declining resources for public sector investment, the states have designed policies to attract private investment. Influence of both macro economic factors such as monetary variables and fiscal measures and the state level factors such as infrastructure, initial level of industrial base, human resources and state policies including governance are examined.

- *Review of Studies and a Developing a Framework for Modeling of the Service Sectors:*

The service sector has emerged as the predominant sector in the Indian economy now accounting for about 52% of GDP. In fact, more than 60% of the growth in the national output as measured by the GDP, in the 1990s has been contributed by the service sector. In



the traditional macro economic models the service sector's output has been modeled as being determined by demand from the other two major sectors: agriculture and industry. Economic reforms in the area of financial services and telecommunications have led to sharp growth in these two service sub-sectors. Another important driver of growth for the services has been the offshore demand for IT related services. In this sense, the growth in the 1990s for the services has been partly related to the supply response for meeting the under-served demand for such services and partly due to the external demand. A modelling exercise on the service sector output in the Indian economy with a view to providing forecasts of the performance of this large and growing sector is currently on.

- *Study on public health delivery: A pilot*

A study of coordinating various state and local organisations to achieve better disease control outcomes is currently on. The differential performance of public health delivery systems in states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are concurrently being studied, while a pilot for Karnataka is being designed.

- *Development Policies and Priorities in the Context of Sustainable Development*

As part of a series, a paper on India's National Communication on Climate Change has been prepared recently. The changing plan priorities driven by sustainable development criteria are traced and documented.

### ***Medium Term Perspective***

It is proposed by the Unit to initiate several long-term studies, with compact deliverables in the short and medium terms.

- *On Financial resource management*

The period since the early 1990s has represented an important change in the economic policies leading to qualitative changes in the economy. The markets for financial transactions, global economic relationships and for capital in general have expanded dramatically witnessing increase in the number of agents, number of market instruments and new market regulators. The manner in which the government has laid claims to financial resources in the economy has also changed from one based on regulatory powers to one subject increasingly to market discipline. There are also measures, which aim at improving the efficiency in the economy. The policy changes are not limited to the Central government alone. The states have reformulated their industrial, agricultural, fiscal and social sector policies to accelerate growth and promote human development. These will be studied in a phased manner.

- *Macro-economic changes*

In the context of major changes in the economy, it is important to constantly assess the basic macroeconomic behavioral relationships such as consumption, investment, trade and taxes; the inter-relationships between financial and goods markets; the inter-relationships of the domestic markets with the global markets. Such an assessment will be valuable for analysing policies and suggesting changes in policies to achieve the key macroeconomic policy objectives. While such research does emanate from other distinguished research institutes in the country, focus on the empirical assessment of the underlying macroeconomic relationships is generally not carried out systematically. An understanding of the implications of the changing

macroeconomic scenario at the national level to the regional or state level is also an area of research that has not been pursued systematically in the country.

The Unit proposes to address to the need for a systematic study of the key macroeconomic relationships in the Indian economy in the medium term of a research agenda. The macroeconomic relationships that will be focussed are (1) the consumption function (2) investment function (3) international trade and investment relationships (4) aggregate price behaviour and (5) fiscal-output-price linkages. What are the implications of emergence of vigorous marketing infrastructure for consumer goods; what is the impact of changing demographic patterns; what is the impact of dismantling of administered interest rate structure and the impact of changing tax structure? These issues need to be examined to predict the impact of various trade, fiscal and monetary policies. Similarly, the canvas for a study of investment behaviour is large. With the narrowing of the scope for public investment, the private sector the investors need to consider opportunities for new investment in the framework of increased market competition. The small-scale enterprises do not have the same extent of protection and support in the market, as was the case in the period before the reforms of the 1990s. The labour policies are also likely to come in for changes. In this context understanding investment behaviour both at the firm level as well as aggregate level will be important in any assessment of growth prospects for the economy. The emerging business opportunities in the services sector such as IT, communications and business process outsourcing have an impact on the future direction of the economy. Investment decisions in these sectors therefore, need to be tracked and compared with the scenario in the more traditional sectors such as manufacturing.

- *Studies on External sector*

India's external sector scenario has changed dramatically especially in the capital account. Capital flows have increased manifold and the exchange rate is sensitive to market conditions. The trade barriers have reduced with further reductions expected in the future. Globalisation of the Indian markets have implications for the composition of trade as well as for the volume of trade. Trade in services is increasing rapidly with the technological advances reducing the cost of trade in services. The importance of global factors in influencing India's external accounts can be expected to rise as India's trade barriers decrease. Attempts to understand the factors influencing the composition, direction and volume of trade in goods and services shall be made. Issues influencing the movement of investment funds into the India economy shall be examined. In the context of increasing global linkages, India's emerging investment and trade linkages with a few important global economies will be focussed, particularly with linkages in the services trade.

- *On Macro Price stability*

Aggregate price stability is a key objective of macroeconomic policy. Often the objective is stated in terms of low and stable rate of inflation. Both external developments and domestic factors influence the price stability. Oil price shocks have been an important source of instability in prices emanating from the external sector. Capital movements and asset price changes are likely to be another source of financial instability that can be translated into price and output shocks in the economy. On the domestic front, natural calamities such as drought and floods play an important role in influencing prices and output. While the globalisation of the markets have imparted some stability to prices there is also the potential for new channels by which global market shocks are transmitted to the Indian economy. An analysis of the factors influencing aggregate price stability and the role for macroeconomic policies in achieving the objective of

low and stable rate of inflation shall be undertaken.

- *On Fiscal management*

On the revenue front, fiscal policies have seen move away from a regime of high rates of taxation to more moderate but more wide-based tax rates. There has also been an attempt to increase the direct taxes. Rationalisation of tax system has also meant a plan to move the domestic indirect taxes towards a Value Added Tax both at the Central and State levels. The expenditure side of the fiscal policies is increasingly subject to attempts to move towards fiscal sustainability. The Fiscal Responsibility Acts at the Central level and in some of the States point to the critical nature of the problem of fiscal imprudence. There is greater flexibility for the Reserve Bank in determining the pattern of financing of Centre's deficit. What is the impact of these changes on the economy? Have the changes led to moderating the inflation rate? Have the changes improved investment climate? Or have the changes affected government's ability to spend on social sectors? The Unit proposes to take up some of the crucial issues in this area relating to Central as well as State level policies.

## **9.9: Sociology Unit**

### *On the Research thrust so far*

Since its inception, the Unit has completed a large number of analytical and insightful sociological studies on wide-ranging issues, the main ones being on rural livelihood systems and sustainable natural resources management, rural poverty, caste in contemporary society, untouchability and social development of backward classes, privatisation of common property resources, entrepreneurship and social mobility, and survival strategies in drought-prone areas. For instance, the study on "Power, Patronage and Accountability of Panchayats of Karnataka" analyses the political dynamics in decentralisation. "Democratic Decentralisation and Participation of Women" dealt with the issue of real empowerment of women in decentralised policy. Most of the studies are inter-disciplinary in nature and policy focus.

The Unit during the last five years has undertaken several theme based research studies. These included:

- Beneficiary Assessment of the National Sericulture Project' and the Sericulture studies under the Seri 2000 Programme: This is a national level study.
- Study on Dalit social mobility: This is a national level study.
- Rural Livelihoods Systems and Natural Resource Management.
- Studies in Decentralised Governance in Karnataka and Kerala states: This is an inter-state study.
- Studies on the impact of structural adjustment on rural communities in the four southern states.

In addition, there had been several studies undertaken to examine the status of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in Karnataka, the impact of Dairy Development programmes upon the Backward Castes, of programmes aimed at empowerment of rural women, and the programmes of watershed development.

### *Medium Term Perspective*

While the thrust of the studies would still continue to be on the lines laid out in the past, several newer dimensions have been identified for the medium term. In doing so, enhanced focus is laid on multi-disciplinarity between sociology, social anthropology, economics and political sciences. Some of broadly designed studies for the medium term are described here.

- *Participatory development*

There has been increasing interest now on equitable and sustainable social and economic development, with a focus on people, especially stakeholder participation in project designing and implementation, besides ownership in the post project scenario. An underlying assumption of such an approach is to free communities and people in them from the state or NGO dependency syndrome, while encouraging a demand driven approach to development intervention with a component of community contributing to the programmes.

There is the question of 'Problems of collective action' and limits to participation. In the light of this emerging intellectual debate, the Sociology Unit aims to contribute through a series of studies on rural communities and community based organisations (e.g., project initiated groups and associations), the problems and challenges to collective action and sustainable development. It is proposed that the Unit will undertake systematic empirical studies to examine the issues now being debated. By the end of August 2004, one such study is likely to be launched in Karnataka, hoping to cover a wider geographical area in the sub-continent subsequently.

- *Urban social change and development*

Invariably, the thrust of sociological studies in the Institute so far has been on the rural social change and development. Though there had also been collaboration of the faculty with specialists from other disciplines in examining the 'Urban' society, this has not been sustained, as the demand for studies on rural communities and their institutions grew.

Although Indian society continues to be predominantly an agrarian and rural society, the growth of the 'Urban' and tertiary sectors has been phenomenal. This is certainly an emerging new research theme now with considerable shift in its social and cultural milieu. For instance, the growth of Bangalore over the past four-five decades, initially as an industrial centre and later as service centre, and now as a nerve centre of information and knowledge based industry cannot be left sociologically un-harvested. During the coming five-six years, the Unit proposes to undertake a series of studies, focusing on the social dimensions of such a growth.

- *Studies on vulnerable sections*

Serious concerns have been expressed over the consequences of the pace and nature of economic policies being pursued both by the state and central governments with the backdrop of reforms. The cause for concern has been from the vantage point of view of the vulnerable sections of society, such as the Backward Castes, Dalits and Women. Questions are about the likely effects on these sections of society if economic policies permit market forces to determine employment and welfare opportunities, which in the past had been the primary

responsibility of the State. The Sociology Unit will undertake studies to examine the emerging scene with respect to the capacity building abilities and limitations among such vulnerable groups. Initially such studies will be carried out within Karnataka, before expanding the scope to cover other regions as well. A related crucial theme of importance has been the question of leadership among the Dalits and Backward Castes in various fields, beginning with politics. This focus too forms a major thrust area for research in the coming years.

- *Deprivation and destituteness*

Caste and Untouchability as deprivation mechanisms operate in various areas of life in India even in the context of democratic law, politics and economy. The way the extremely complex, pluralistic and diverse forces influencing either as positive or negative factors in promoting development and change in Indian social, political and cultural life has still got larger scope for study. What has been the meaning of such notions as freedom, equality, fraternity and justice seen in terms of competing fundamental forces and the forces of emancipation and liberation? How the traditional notions of power, prestige and dominance still hold sway over the life of untouchables and what has been the new pattern of life if at all for the contemporary untouchables? How far the state has been effective in delivering the goods that it promised to the under privileged classes as it embarked upon the new democratic era of life in India? These are some of the questions, which shall form the basis of research in the field of Dalit studies.

- *Dimensions of Social Change in India*

The Unit proposes to hold a conference to make an assessment of the direction and consequence of social change in the past three decades. Efforts are on already in contacting some prominent social scientists from different parts of the world to contribute and participate in such a conference. Tentatively, it is proposed to convene this conference sometime during early or mid 2005.

- *Decentralised governance*

The theme of decentralised governance dominated social science research during the decades of 1980s and 1990s. The true impact of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution is only now beginning to tell. The interest that the Unit showed in the initial decades will be continued in the coming years as well, with new areas and questions for examination. The impact of reservations/quotas to certain disadvantaged groups will also be assessed, notwithstanding the fact that quotas for certain groups are also at the cost of excluding other groups. However, the disadvantages that groups such as scheduled castes, and women (particularly of SCs), have faced in various spheres of life are such that, without such quotas/affirmative action, they would still remain in situations of acute deprivation.

- *Occupation and Health related Issues*

The health of individuals is a condition, which affects the quality of life, whether seen, in terms of the environment in which they work, or in terms of the debilitating effects of disease/specific disabilities, which follow from their work. In the even more severe condition of poverty, it imposes certain further conditions of deprivation that aggravate ill health. This follows from the initial situation in which workers have to take up jobs in hazardous conditions, their less than robust physical state, and the continuing impact of ill health on their

earning capacity as well as the possibility of social mobility through the occupation in which they are engaged. This would be investigated in the occupation of silk reeling and other occupations in the post cocoon stage of sericulture development as much as among *beedi* workers. Occupational health, or health problems, is not connected only to working in such occupations, but being in the vicinity of such workplaces. Being in such an environment itself poses health problems, as to the infants who are kept in the confines of reeling units while their mothers work, or the families of reeling owners who suffer health problems only because the reeling units are immediately adjoining their living quarters.

The Unit also aims at organizing two outreach activities on selected themes of social relevance. They are:

- On weakening link between the social research and teaching in the Universities. The sociology unit, in association with a few other Units such as Ecological Economics proposes to offer short-term courses (ranging from three weeks to six weeks) to NGOs and Advocacy groups on the themes of natural resource management, collective action, etc.
- Globalisation and its cultural dimension shall form the focus of research activities in the coming years, in the light of revolutionary changes in the field of information technology, market expansion and reforms driven economic changes. It is also proposed, as part of this focus, to revisit some of the villages that were studied during the mid 1990s (under the PRAVA Research) to examine the social and economic changes in them.