

REPORT OF THE ICSSR REVIEW COMMITTEE (2007)

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES (ICSS), SURAT

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Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi

April 2007

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#### I. Introduction

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) set up a Review Committee, under Rule 16(9) relating to the condition of assistance of Research Institutes, to visit and assess the work of the Centre for Social Studies (CSS), Surat to examine its activities and achievements during the preceding ten years (after the last review in July, 1997), its perspective plans, and financial requirement for the XI Plan period.

The Committee consisted of the following:

- |    |                                |          |
|----|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | Professor Janak Pandey         | Chairman |
| 2. | Professor Jandhyala B.G. Tilak | Member   |
| 3. | Professor P.P. Ghosh           | Member   |
| 4. | Professor Meenakshi Thapan     | Member   |
| 5. | Professor D. Narasimha Reddy   | Member   |

The Review Committee visited the CSS, Surat on February 24, 2007.

Dr. K.H. Tadvī, Principal, Government Commerce College, Surat represented the Government of Gujarat. Dr. S.V. Khandewale, SSLO and Dr. (Mrs.) Jessy George, Assistant Director, ICSSR coordinated the work of the Review Committee. Dr. Khandewale also visited the Centre along with the Committee.

The terms of reference of the Review Committee were to

- to review the academic programmes including research, publications, teaching and training,

- to review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the organizational structure of the institute,
- to assess the need for additional physical infrastructure and to project the financial requirements taking into account the revenues for the next five years, and
- to examine any other problems of the institute that the Committee may consider appropriate.

The Centre provided the following documents for consideration of the Review Committee:

- i) Write-up on the Centre.
- ii) Memorandum of Association.
- iii) List of research studies conducted.
- iv) List of publications, books, monographs, research papers, and occasional working papers.
- v) Financial statement for last five years (annually submitted to the ICSSR).
- vi) Annual Report of the last five years (annually submitted to the ICSSR).
- vii) Auditor's Reports (annually submitted to the ICSSR).
- viii) XI Plan period proposals of the Centre.

The ICSSR provided the report of the last Review Committee, which visited the Centre in January 1999.

The Committee first met Professor Biswaroop Das, the Director. It was followed by a presentation by him in the presence of the entire faculty.

Subsequently, the Committee met the faculty (without the Director) and then the administrative and support staff (again without the Director). The Director took the members around the Campus to examine particularly (i) the status of the library; (ii) the condition of the old office building now being partly used, as a hostel and guest rooms complex, and (iii) the staff quarters (some quarters are abandoned and the rest are occupied in spite of the risk involved).

The Committee also met Mr. I.J. Desai, (professionally a very senior Chartered Accountant), Chairman, Finance Committee and Mr. M.D. Desai, (professionally an engineer/architect), Chairman, Building Committee.

## II. Profile of the Centre

In his presentation, the Director gave a detailed background of the Centre, highlighting its past achievements, present endeavours and future plans. He also highlighted major problem areas needing interventions for the development of the Centre.

Established as the Centre for Regional Development Studies by the Late Professor I.P. Desai in 1969, it was renamed as the Centre for Social Studies in 1979. Its core objectives are to undertake, aid, promote and co-ordinate research in the field of social sciences and to undertake, organize and facilitate studies, training courses, conferences, seminars, lecture series etc. for educational purposes. In 1973, the ICSSR accepted the Centre as one of its aided institutions and the Government of Gujarat agreed to match the Council's recurring and non-recurring grants on a 50:50 basis. Since 1980, the Centre is located in its own premises in the Campus of the Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat.

During the period between 1974 and 1986-87, the grants from the Government of Gujarat came from its General Administration Department (GAD – Planning). Subsequently, from 1987-88 onwards, the scheme for annual recurring and non-recurring grant was transferred to the Education Department.

Since 1990-91, however, grants from the Government of Gujarat began to fall short of its matching share. By 2002-03, the Government of Gujarat decided to fix a ceiling of Rs.22.00 lakh for the Centre. This, in essence, has been a violation of the original agreement between the ICSSR and the Government of Gujarat, and in effect between the Union and the State Governments. Starting from 1990-91 upto 2005-06, the difference to be received on a matching basis from the side of the Government of Gujarat is more than Rs.1.5 crore.

### **Governance**

The CSS functions in a decentralised manner with substantial autonomy. The Board of Governors, presently Chaired by Professor A. M. Shah, an eminent senior sociologist, is its prime policy making body, and consists of academicians, professionals, the Director, a representative from among the faculty and nominees of the ICSSR and the Government of Gujarat. The Board of Governors is guided and informed by different Committees in matters related to personnel, building, finance, publications and research. The Board of Governors and the Finance Committee meet at least twice a year while the other Committees meet whenever there is a need to do so. There is a Faculty Council consisting of all faculty members. It meets on a regular basis and constitutes Committees related to various purposes for smooth functioning of the Centre.

In addition to the above Committees, there are other two Committees dealing with specific welfare aspects of the Centre's employees. These include the Medical Relief Committee and the Staff Welfare Co-operative Society. Both these Committees are managed by the faculty and the administrative staff and

report on fund position, rate of utilisation and other relevant matters once a year at a meeting attended by all members of the staff. All policy and programme specific decisions are taken in these General Body meetings.

### Research Activities

Since 1969, the CSS has carried out 192 research projects. This, on an average, is a little more than five projects a year. Some of the large projects undertaken by the Centre include ethnographic studies on malaria, studies on rehabilitation and resettlement, benchmark survey of Narmada command talukas, study on migrant labour, socio-economic study of slums in Surat, processes and dimensions of social justice, conflict mitigation, urban space and health (plague epidemic), micro-finance and rural credit markets, impact of port development in the state, governance and civil society, etc.

The Centre has always encouraged multi-disciplinary research. The faculty members at the Centre represent various disciplines and often carry out joint research. They are also active in fact-finding assignments after social conflicts and calamities as well as interacting with NGOs, activists and Human Rights Organisations. The state specific studies include analyses of the Nav-Nirman Movement, the Anti-Reservation Movement, and the 2002 Communal Riots, the outbreak of plague, the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, the 2006 Surat floods, etc. In the aftermath of the *tsunami* that hit the Andaman and Nicobar islands, it also undertook a study on the social context of interventions in a disaster situation.

Currently, there are twelve on-going studies. These are (i) Dalit Situation in Maharashtra; (ii) Ethnography of Fishermen in Gujarat; (iii) Functioning of Panchayati Raj in Schedule Areas of Gujarat; (iv) Study on Dalit Members of Social Justice Committees in Gujarat Panchayati Raj Institutions; (v) Understanding Socio-Economic Impact of Land Acquisition by a Cement Project

in Marwar-Mundwa Region of Rajasthan; (vi) Socio-Economic Conditions of Rag pickers in Surat; (vii) Money Remittance Channels of Oriya Migrant Workers; (viii) Globalisation, Gujarat State and Welfare of Poor; (ix) The 'Reservation' Question: A Study of Recent OBC Reservations in Gujarat; (x) Impact of Jyotigram Yojana in Navsari District; (xi) Resettled 'Sardar Sarovar' Oustees of Gujarat; and (xii) Role of Gandhian Ideas and Constructive Activities in the Present Context of Gujarat.

### **Publications**

During the last 36 years of its existence, the Centre has published 60 books in English, 57 books in Gujarati and 16 as translated versions in Gujarati. The research papers brought out by the faculty are numerous. By 2006, nearly 550 articles have been brought out by the faculty, of which around 15 per cent are in Gujarati.

Other publications include 18 I.P. Desai Memorial Lectures, 22 Occasional Papers and 4 Working papers.. The Centre continues to bring out booklets in Gujarati under its *Samaj Darshan* series in easy and jargon-free language for the general public on a variety of contemporary social and developmental issues to enlighten them with social science knowledge and thereby to empower them. So far, it has brought out six such works in this series. Since 1981, the Centre has been bringing out a quarterly social science journal in Gujarati called *Arthat* and so far 78 issues of *Arthat* have been brought out in which most articles address issues that relate to the Gujarat polity, economy and society. In addition, there have been six special numbers of *Arthat* dealing with subjects related to literature and social consciousness, reservations, urbanization and urban poverty, women, the Gujarat earthquake and communal harmony. The forthcoming special numbers planned are on the Indian diaspora and role and impact of micro-finance.

### **Training, Workshops and Seminars**

The Centre has been engaged in outreach activities within and outside Gujarat through different training programmes and workshops. While it organizes training of young social scientists in computer applications annually, it has also been training social activists in methods of understanding society. It has organised several dialogues between the scholars and civil society organizations on subjects like the class-caste interface, identity question and political formations, caste or class as the basis of backwardness, tribal identity, forest rights, thoughts on Gandhian reconstruction, large dams and rehabilitation, the communal question, poverty and the urban question, etc. Under the Guidance and Consultancy Scheme of the ICSSR, the Centre continues to guide and help researchers and doctoral students in their research work, including all help for processing of their data under the 'Guidance and Consultancy' scheme of the ICSSR.

Seminars at the regional and national levels have been periodically held. In addition, the Centre also regularly organizes in-house faculty seminars and invited lectures.

### **Infrastructure**

The Centre has a library, a computer lab, teaching aids especially for conducting training programmes in computer applications in social sciences, a seminar hall and a limited number of guest rooms. In addition, it has housing facilities for 16 staff members.

### **III. Observations and Recommendations**

1. The Centre is an example of "small is beautiful", where a small faculty in a small campus have done excellent research, training, outreach activities, and pursued social responsibilities.



2. The Centre has been highly productive academically. Much of its research work so far is based on an inter-disciplinary approach. The strength of the Centre lies in the areas of continuous and sustained empirical research on weaker sections and marginal groups in the State. Though limited, the Centre could play a sustained social interventionist role. The commitment of the Centre to understand local social crisis situations and contingencies is commendable. Its networking with other research and civil society organizations with a focus on qualitative research is laudable. Further, the efforts of the Centre to disseminate research output among the general public through substantial publications in the vernacular medium (Gujarati) is also commendable.
3. The Centre has a well-developed Committee system for academic and administrative decision-making and the process is truly participative and democratic.
4. The Centre faces constraints on filling any vacant posts or creating new positions as the State Government does not provide official clearance. This has affected its faculty and administrative strength. The Centre is constrained to function with many among the staff being on a contract appointment. The current faculty strength is only nine, though even in 1997, the ICSSR Review Committee (Professor Sundaram Committee) had stated that immediate steps should be taken to fill up vacant positions, bringing up the faculty strength to at least 15 members. The Committee recommends that the ICSSR should take up with the State Government the matter related to filling up of vacant and other needed positions and the issue of matching grants. As this problem has been persisting for several years, the ICSSR should approach the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to influence the State Government and, if necessary, the Union Secretary, MHRD may call a meeting of Secretary of

Higher Education of Government of Gujarat, Member-Secretary of ICSSR and Director of GIDS, SPIESR and CSS.

5. The Centre had initially started with a rather modest infrastructure. The earthquake and the floods in Surat have damaged that infrastructure and it is now unusable. Although the Centre now has a new building, it is hardly adequate to accommodate its present activities. The guest-house located in the old administrative building and staff quarters are so badly damaged that these structures are now unsafe and beyond repair. The earlier Review Committee had also made recommendations for rebuilding of these structures. The Centre is in a dire need of a new building complex that could house library, administrative unit and guest rooms. Their present requirement is about 1500 sq. mtrs. of space, along with suitable furnishing and equipment. The structures initially built for housing units were of low-cost variety, with an expected life span of about 20 years. Therefore, the overall present condition of residential quarters is very poor. The Centre needs 14 new housing units to replace the existing ones.
6. The Centre draws faculty from different disciplines, and taps and nurtures local potential in research. Nevertheless, the Centre suffers from a "periphery syndrome" for being located in Surat, not a well-known academic Centre. It is, therefore, unable to attract good scholars. Surat being a remote town, ICSSR should provide an enhanced financial assistance for CSS to hold national level workshops and seminars.
7. The ICSSR should provide an annual grant earmarked for the faculty to pursue research in their respective areas of interest and to meet short term research work on issues that require immediate attention.

8. In addition to the existing grants, the Committee recommends the following financial assistance to the Centre to upgrade its infrastructure and strengthen its research activities.

	Item	(in lakh)
<b>a)</b>	<b>(Non-Recurring)</b>	
(i)	New building for library and Administrative Unit	Rs. 50.00
(ii)	Guest House/Scholars' hostel	Rs. 100.00
(iii)	Residential quarters (14 Nos.)	Rs. 150.00
(iv)	Automation of library	Rs. 10.00
(v)	Up-gradation of Computer Centre	Rs.10.00
<b>B.</b>	<b>Recurring</b>	
(i)	Research grant (Rs.2.00 lakh per annum).	Rs. 10.00
(ii)	Emeritus/adjunct/ visiting faculty (Rs.5.00 lakh per annum).	Rs. 25.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rs.355.00</b>

*Janak Pandey*  
**Janak Pandey**  
 Chairman *April 28, '07*

*JBT*  
**Jandhyala B.G. Tilak**  
 Member

*Meenakshi Thapan*  
**Meenakshi Thapan**

*P. P. Ghosh*  
**P.P. Ghosh**  
 Member

*D. Narasimha Reddy*  
**D. Narasimha Reddy**