



*25 Glorious Years  
1991-2015  
A Journey to remember*

Asian Development  
Research Institute

As the Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI) steps into the 26th year of its existence, it's a great, emotional moment for its members. This 25-year journey, which has been quite a challenging and encouraging one, just would not have been possible without the support and the warmth of the organisation's well-wishers, infused into its functioning day after day. All through our journey so far, we have been playing an important role not only in conducting social science research, but in simultaneously influencing the policy formation through wide interactions with development functionaries and preparation of critical advocacy materials. The Institute now plans to celebrate its Silver Jubilee in the grandest manner possible during 2016-17, again with the support and good wishes of its friends and well wishers.

### Looking Back

Established in 1991, the ADRI is now one of the most active social science research centres in Bihar. The name of the Institute attempts to reflect upon the long and integral relation Bihar has had with the rest of Asia. From the spread of Buddhism to the South, South-East and East Asia to the arrival of Sufism and other versions of Islam from the West Asia to Bihar, the state has been at the centre of major exchange of ideas. It is against this background that ADRI seeks to place itself in the context of Bihar, in particular, and Asia, in general.



The genesis of ADRI can be traced to an economic and political milieu during the eighties, when a number of state-funded social science institutions were struggling to survive, following the weakening of the state itself. Together with the widening of the development deficits and the emergence of the neo-liberal regime, there was a growing demand for research support to various development agencies – national and international, and governmental and non-governmental. All

these have prompted experiments for alternative organisational frameworks for academic institutions and the establishment of ADRI was one such attempt. It is indeed satisfying that, passing through a number of tribulations during the last quarter of a century, the Institute has finally acquired an academic recognition from both scholars and institutions across the country.





The academic agenda of ADRI is informed by a holistic view of social sciences and its scholars' attempt to understand social, economic and political dynamics within the cultural context. ADRI's objective is not only to bring development issues to the fore, but also to seek integration of 'generation of ideas' with 'implementation of ideas'. We feel proud in acknowledging that the Institute's academic agenda also includes responses to demands from individuals, state and other institutions.



### Journey through the Years

Influenced by the experiences of the existing social science research institutes, ADRI was initially conceived as a single unit research body, which would have both a research agenda of its own and a supplementary agenda that responds to the research needs of development agencies, sponsoring those need-based studies. The Institute had indeed functioned along that framework during the initial years; but gradually that framework had to be altered when some development agencies, instead of sponsoring a research study, had decided to sponsor a specialised centre to provide constant research support to its functioning. The Institute, thus, now hosts 5 such centres, each with a specific agenda, but working in tandem to realise the overall objectives of ADRI.



At the core of these specialised

centres lies the ADRI Institute which has been functioning since 1991. Starting with a few sponsored studies in the early nineties, this Institute gradually grew to be a major social science research centre in Bihar, a peripheral region of India. The Institute has set for itself a research agenda that is geared towards the felt needs of several development agencies, including the state. Some of the major areas of research have been the imperatives of a knowledge society, working of the forces of liberalisation and globalisation, and the issue of good



governance and civil society. Another area of specialisation of the Institute has been the evaluation studies of socio-economic programmes, sponsored by various development agencies. The Institute has also been engaged in creating and continuously updating a databank for researchers and development agencies across the country.

Presently, apart from its base in Patna, ADRI Institute has also a regional centre in Ranchi. The Ranchi Centre was established in 1995, even before the creation of the state of Jharkhand out of the erstwhile state of Bihar.

One of the specialised centres at ADRI is the Centre for Economic Policy and Public Finance (CEPPF). Right from its early years, ADRI has been providing significant professional support to the Government of Bihar on issues of development strategy or public finance. For two years, the Government of Bihar had outsourced to the Institute the responsibility of preparing the Annual Economic Survey for the state. It was, however, later realised that instead of periodically outsourcing such responsibilities to the Institute, it is desirable to establish a dedicated centre at ADRI, which could not only regularly prepare the Annual Economic Survey but undertake other research studies as well, related to the economic policy and public finance of the state. The objective of the CEPPF is to provide research support to the state government for evolving a framework of improved management of public finance. Such research includes studies on resource mobilisation, quality of state government spending, management of deficits and debt, framework of centre-state financial relations, and policies for economic and social development. To collect academic wisdom relating to developmental challenges, the Centre also organises seminars and workshops on various issues.



The second specialised centre at ADRI is the International Growth Centre (IGC).

Financially supported by the Department for International Aid (DFID) of the UK Government and organised jointly by London School of Economics and Oxford University, the IGC has 16 centres in its partner countries, including the one in Bihar. The IGC India-Bihar Programme had started as a response to the invitation of the Government of Bihar to IGC to help it plan and sustain its growth process. The IGC programme in Bihar is currently focussed on five key sectors — agriculture, education, state finance, health and water resources.

The specialised centre State Resource Centre (SRC) for Adult Education in Bihar was established at ADRI at the request of the National Literacy Mission (NLM). Later, the NLM had again requested ADRI to organise an SRC in Ranchi for the newly-created state of Jharkhand. Both these SRCs have the same objective of supporting the adult literacy campaign in their respective states through production of teaching-learning materials, development of training manuals, training of senior literacy functionaries, undertaking environment-building programmes, and a few other related activities. Extending their



original mandate, the two SRCs also undertake evaluation studies of literacy-related programmes.

The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) in Patna is yet another specialised centre hosted by ADRI, which is also sponsored by the NLM. Conceptualised essentially as a vocational training institution, the agenda of the JSS may not be academic but its proper functioning lends substantial support to the adult literacy campaigns, supported by the SRC.



The ADRI Institute and the specialised centres together have conducted a number of sponsored studies and the list of sponsors include Government of India, Government of Bihar, World Bank, DFID, IDRC, UNDP, IFAD, UNICEF, CARE, Aga Khan Foundation and European Science Foundation. ADRI has also joined hands with various universities and academic institutions, either in India or abroad, for collaborative research studies. These include London School of Economics, Institute of Development Economics (Tokyo), Georgia State University (USA), VU University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands), International Institute of Asian Studies (The Netherlands), National University of Singapore, Dhaka University (Bangladesh), Pratichi (India) Trust and Ranchi University.

The locale of the research studies of ADRI is generally Bihar, but it has also researched some important social and economic issues in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Odisha, and even outside India -- Bangladesh, Surinam and Mauritius.



## Research Output

Principally, the issue of development and an inter-disciplinary openness has informed the research agenda of ADRI. A number of research studies that the Institute has conducted, sponsored either by self or some development agency, can be broadly divided into three streams — Analytical, Advocatory and Evaluative.

Under analytical studies, the Institute has covered diverse fields such as human development, regional economies, civil society organisations, public finance, water resources, youth, communalism, refugees and minority issues amongst others. In particular, the Institute has been preparing the Annual Economy Survey for the Government of Bihar for last several years. Among the advocating texts that ADRI has produced, one must mention the document pleading the case for the 'Special Category Status for Bihar', a valuable material for the politico-economic debate. Another important effort in this category was the large scale survey on 'Socio-economic and Educational Status of Muslims in Bihar', drawing attention to a serious social challenge in Bihar. Finally, there were evaluating studies, mostly of the welfare programmes of the central or state government; some of these had also involved methodological innovations as required by the nature of the evaluated programme. The projects undertaken by the IGC at ADRI cut across a range of initiatives: Education, Health, Finance, Rural Development, Social Welfare, Water Resources, Disaster Management.



Since ADRI has been extensively associated with the adult literacy campaign, its academic output also includes literacy primers, training manuals and other related materials.

### Lectures and Seminars

Towards enriching the academic ambience in Bihar, ADRI organises two annual lectures — the ADRI Foundation Lecture and Myles Horton and Paulo Freire Memorial Lecture. These lectures have covered issues that span nearly every dimension of social challenges and have been a rare source of the frontier areas of social thought for the intelligentsia of Patna.



The Seminars are a regular activity at ADRI, addressed by faculty members and invited scholars. Under thematic seminars, ADRI has organised a number of them in the past, including — 'Cosmopolitanism and The Nation State', 'Free Market: Problems & Prospects of Economic Development', 'Dunkel Draft and the Future of Indian Economy', 'International Conference on Bihar in the World and the World in Bihar', and 'Academic Dependency'.

### Being Futuristic

The journey of ADRI during the last 25 years has indeed been satisfying, but many goals on its original agenda are yet to be accomplished. For one, the academic focus of ADRI is still rather limited, guided as it is by the users of its research output. But such demand-driven research which no doubt has immense justification, should possibly not



Under the ADRI Foundation Lecture, out of 11 till date, the last 5 distinguished scholars were Professor Francine R. Frankel, Professor Barbara Harris-White, Professor Andre Beteille, Professor Amartya Sen and Professor Joseph E. Stiglitz.

The Myles Horton and Paulo Freire Memorial Lecture is a reflection of the substantial engagement of ADRI in the field of literacy and education. Out of the 13 lectures delivered so far, the last 5 eminent speakers were Professor Budd L. Hall, Professor Darlene E. Clover, Mrs. D. Purandeswari, Professor R. Govinda and Professor V. Vasanthi Devi.



occupy the entire workspace of a research institution. In future, thus, ADRI would strive for a resource base that allows it to widen its research agenda.

Till date, ADRI has been contributing towards the creation of a knowledge society in Bihar, a disadvantaged



region, along with a few other institutions. But the task is formidable and it undoubtedly requires the participation of more institutions of same genre, opening the possibility of wide exchange of ideas among those institutions. ADRI would like to work towards the emergence of a favourable institutional ambience where new knowledge-oriented institutions are expected.

It is the human base of a research institution that acts as its most important pillar. In the past, ADRI has been very active in promoting and nurturing the young social scientists. But there is still a substantial gap between demand of social scientists and their availability in Bihar. In future, ADRI would be more active in helping local young social scientists to grow, which alone could bridge the gap between the metropolitan and the mufasil in terms of intellectual capital.

### Towards the Silver Jubilee

The year-long Silver Jubilee celebrations for ADRI during the whole of 2016-17 would cover a number of events, where the local intelligentsia would get an opportunity to



interact with some renowned national and international scholars of various disciplinary backgrounds.

Aside from the annual Foundation Lecture, ADRI plans to organise a number of Silver Jubilee Celebration Lectures during 2016-17, to be delivered by outstanding scholars on themes that confront the humanity most. The celebrations would also include Seminars and Conferences (national and international), Panel Discussions, Exhibitions etc. where the participants would deliberate on fundamental social issues. The Institute also plans to felicitate social scientists



making outstanding contributions in their discipline or young scholars exhibiting great potential. Publication of seminar/conference papers and making of documentary films will also be a part of our celebrations.

The proposed celebrations are to be primarily organised by ADRI, but it would certainly be looking forward to the cooperation of agencies that have helped it grow or others that appreciate or share its objectives.



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