

Seminar on
**Social Science Research in India:
Challenges and Way Forward**

Madurai Symposium

**28 September, 2007
Thamukkam Grounds**

**Tata-Dhan Academy
Madurai**



Madurai Symposium

The Biennial Madurai Symposium was designed by DHAN Foundation to celebrate recent development related initiatives and innovations. The celebration acts as a platform to share, comprehend, network, learn and plan for all future development interventions. All stakeholders of development – community institutions, civil societies, government organisations, NGOs, financial institutions, academicians and researchers – are invited to the celebration. This year's Symposium – the third so far – is scheduled on 24–29 September. As with the two prior symposia, conferences will be organised as either People Convention (6 sessions) or Development Convention (22 sessions). One of the three seminars that Tata-Dhan Academy has planned to hold on 28 September 2007 is 'Social Science Research in India: Challenges and Way Forward'.

Seminar Background

The purpose of social science research is to identify significant problems in the society, determine the causes for these problems, and suggest appropriate solutions for addressing those problems to improve people's quality of life. Well-designed and well-conducted social science research has the power to shape public opinion and influence public policies, which would facilitate the creation of a just and humane society. In India, where a high rate of economic growth coexists with starvation, distress sale of agricultural products, frequent man-made and natural disasters, and many other socio-economic problems, the role of such comprehensive research increasingly gains importance.

Research is not static. For example, while social science research has historically been the domain of government level academic and research institutes, in recent decades many private and non-governmental organisations have also been engaged in such research. Although this involvement has improved knowledge and action on development issues such as gender equality, environmental protection, and empowerment of dalit or disadvantaged segment, a number of emerging issues such as social capital, social audit, natural resources depletion, climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk and vulnerability, and governance have not been adequately researched.

It has been increasingly perceived that because of the gaps between researchers, policy makers and development professionals social science research has not able to meet its very purpose mentioned earlier. In fact, at this juncture, there are still many questions about social science research which influence its future. Is contemporary social science research enough to cover the emerging socio-economic issues in the society and accordingly able to facilitate action among development practitioners and policy makers? Are researchers able to work free from compulsion of donor agencies or political obligations? Do contemporary researchers have the skill and attitude necessary to carry out research properly? What form of mutual cooperation or integration among researchers, policy makers, and development professionals is necessary if research is to meet its very purpose?

The above issues need to be deliberated by the different stakeholders in social development including researchers, policy makers, and development practitioners. With this background, Tata-Dhan Academy conducts a seminar on 'Social Science Research in India: Challenges and Way Forward' during the third biennial Madurai Symposium, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders.

Objectives

The objectives of the seminar are to:

1. Understand the current trends in social science research;
2. Identify emerging research areas for development;
3. Identify the challenges in social science research and develop the possible way forward;
4. Explore the needs of research capacity building of different stakeholders to carry out research for advancing development; and
5. Explore the scope of collaboration for research and dissemination between researchers, development professionals, NGOs, and policy makers.

Participants

The seminar invites participation from research institutes, universities, colleges, individual researchers, development professionals, donors, and other individuals and organisations involved in social science research.

Expected Output

The seminar envisages the following outputs:

1. Areas of emerging social science research;
2. Needs of research capacity building;
3. Challenges of current social science research and possible way forward; and
4. An effective network of researchers/research institutes, practitioners, policy makers, and donors to carry out collaborative research and dissemination.

Programme Schedule

Day: 28 September 2007 (Friday)		Venue: Thamukkam Grounds, Madurai
10.00 a.m – 10.10 a.m	Invocation followed by Welcome Address	
10.10 a.m – 10.40 a.m	Keynote Address	
10.40 a.m – 11.00 a.m	Background Paper Presentation on Current Scenario in Social Science Research: Challenges and Way Forward	
11.00 a.m – 11.45 a.m	Lead Paper Presentation – 1 Role and Contribution of Social Science Research in Development of India: Problems and Prospects	
11.45 a.m – 12.30 p.m	Lead Paper Presentation – 2 Emerging Areas of Social Science Research and Social Development Research Capacity Building in India	

12.30 p.m – 1.15 p.m	Lead Paper Presentation – 3 Collaboration in Social Science Research: Challenges and Way Forward
1.15 p.m – 2.15 p.m	Lunch Break
2.15 p.m – 3.30 p.m	Sub-Group Discussion
3.30 p.m – 4.00 p.m	Presentation of Sub-Group Findings
4.00 p.m – 5.00 p.m	Synthesis by Panel Members
5.00 p.m – 5.30 p.m	Conclusion and Way Forward

Note: Each lead paper presentation will be for 30 minutes followed by a discussion for 15 minutes.

About Tata-Dhan Academy

Tata-Dhan Academy is promoted by DHAN Foundation, a pioneering grassroots organisation, and Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT), Mumbai, to identify, nurture, and groom young graduates into development professionals through its flagship 23-month Programme in Development Management (PDM). The PDM is a careful blend of classroom and field segments.

In addition to long-duration education programme and research, the Academy has identified short duration development management programmes to enable the world of practice. The thematic programmes include Development Management Appreciation Programme (DMAP), the Art of Upscaling Microfinance (ART Programme), Microinsurance, Social Development Research Capacity Building (SDRC), and Leadership Education in Advancing Development (LEAD). The purpose of these programmes is to professionalise the development sector and make it more efficient and effective. Through its varied efforts, the Academy hopes to position itself as a Centre of Excellence in development management.

For further information, please contact

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