

Inclusive development of excluded groups: Need for paradigm shift in the development discourse

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Abstract

Socially excluded groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, women are excluded in the development process due to their caste, ethnicity, religious and gender identities. The effects of such exclusion are staggering, deepening inequality and eventually, hampering them as stakeholder in the development process. Today, the term 'inclusive development' is gaining wider currency in development discourse across the world. Indeed, the process is seen as necessary by all societies as it is, first and foremost, to promote and engage in development that is inclusive. Development experts also have acknowledged that the very notion of development necessitates inclusiveness and asserted the need for paradigm shift towards inclusive development. Development can be inclusive, only if all excluded groups are entitled as stakeholders in the development process. Growth, progress, equity, caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, poverty and the environment can no longer be treated as loosely connected components of development. Recognizing their interdependence is at the core of improved and sustained development for all, viz inclusive development. This paper argues inclusive development is the key to alleviate the deprivation among these marginalized and excluded groups.

Keywords: Excluded groups, Inclusive development, Inclusive Growth, Development discourse, Paradigm shift

1. Introduction

No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which, by far the greater part of the numbers are poor and miserable - Adam Smith (1776)

The above quote suggests that real and sustained social and economic progress cannot truly occur, if large segments of a country are marginalized or otherwise overlooked in development process. Today, the term 'inclusive development' is gaining wider currency in the studies and literatures of development discourse. Indeed, inclusive development is seen as necessary by all societies as it is, first and foremost, a moral responsibility of all governments, organizations and citizens to promote and engage in development that is inclusive. For governments and international organizations, it is reflected in goals, policies, strategies, regulations, agreements/charters and programmes. For businesses, it is framed as corporate social responsibility and for citizens; it is embodied in constitutional rights or is viewed as part of values or individual perceptions that guide their actions. This paper argues the need for paradigm shift as far as development of socially excluded groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, women and poor are concerned and justifies inclusive development of them is very imperative.

2. Inclusive Development: Origin and Discourse

The term inclusive development is currently has wide appeal in the development field especially in developing countries where priority and part of national development goals and plans are generally defined as development that includes the needs of the poor, the marginalized and the excluded. It is only recently that development experts, international organizations and governments have acknowledged that the very notion of development necessitates inclusiveness. UNDP observes that many groups are excluded from development because of their gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability or poverty. The effects of such exclusion are staggering, deepening

inequality across the world. The richest ten percent of people in the world own 85 percent of all assets, while the poorest 50 percent own only one percent.

Inclusive Development is based on understanding of two concepts; 2.1 Inclusion and 2.2 Development.

2.1 Inclusion

Inclusion is the converse of exclusion which attempts to change the circumstances that lead to social exclusion. It is a strategy to combat social exclusion. It is the coordinated response to the very complex system of problems known as exclusion. Some people are excluded from society because of difference. Thus, inclusion is about society changing to accommodate differences and to combat discrimination. It sees society as the problem, not the person.

To achieve inclusion, a twin track approach is needed;

- 1 Focus on the society to remove the barriers that exclude or mainstreaming communities/groups.
- 2 Focus on the group of persons who are excluded to build their capacity and support them to lobby for their inclusion.

Because inclusion involves everyone in society at all levels. Collaboration, networking and policy advocacy are core strategies to achieve inclusion.

2.2 Development

Prof. Yogendra Singh refers to development as a strategy of planned social change in a direction which is considered desirable by the members of a society. He asserts that the notion of development may, therefore, differ from society to society based on its socio-cultural background and political and geographical situation. According to him, "development is a composite concept". The development of a society includes progress in various fields including trade, agriculture, industry, education, health, etc. It also includes the welfare of weaker sections like Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, women etc.

Various policies and programs aim at the development of Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, women and poor. Development is a value loaded concept specific to the socio-cultural and economic needs of a given society, region and people. Thus, the term development has acquired wider currency in India as a very significant concept of change in a desired direction.

Inclusive development requires addressing issues of structural transformation, especially, in socio-economic, cultural and political aspects. A multi-pronged policy/programme is indispensable to an inclusive development agenda. Inclusive development should include sensible macro/micro-economic policies, institutional reforms, public-private sector development, consensus building on public policies and programmes and policies and interventions tempered to socio-economic and cultural factors. UNDP advocates for a stronger role of the state, enhanced public investment and economic governance to ensure that everyone has access to vital public services. For economic growth to be inclusive, it must be sustained and sustainable and that, for it to be sustained and sustainable, it must also be equitable. Growth, progress, equity, caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, poverty and the environment can no longer be treated as loosely connected components of development. Recognizing their interdependence is at the core of improved and sustained development for all, viz inclusive development.

Many developing countries, mostly in Asia, are using their own approach to development based on history and tradition, culture and values and political economy. India as a welfare state adopted mixed economy since independence but after 1991, it took the path of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization or shortly called as LPG. However, XI and XII five year plan documents proposed inclusive growth (XI Five-Year Plan: Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth and XII Five-Year Plan: Faster, More Inclusive and Sustainable Growth). Inclusive and sustainable growth requires, *inter alia*, good governance, progressive politics, effective management and successful engagement in the global economy. Some observers argue that the concept of inclusive growth has replaced the pro-poor growth concept which generally refers to achieving broad-based benefits from accelerated economic growth to accrue to all citizens are being widely embraced in developing countries, especially in Asia. The current state of mixed economy in India with a clear bent over to the privatization of resources and sectors of the economy is a game changing process.

3 Inclusive development as a Paradigm shift

To understand the need for inclusive development, especially the issue of mainstreaming of the excluded communities such as Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, women and poor in India must be understood from a development frame of India in the modern context. The paradigm of economic and social development in India has evolved forward from the socialistic pattern to the one of openness and private-public partnership. In India's current development plan, the government places high priority on inclusive growth and the strategy includes a key role for fiscal spending (on public goods, services and programmes) and a crucial role for state institutions. Even after six decades of planning and development, excluded groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, women and poor did not fare well in all social indicators compared with

established sections of Indian society. The state's attempt to bring the excluded majority into the mainstream through policy intervention, albeit, did not give fruitful effects in mitigating social exclusion due to various factors. Caste, ethnicity, religion and gender based discriminations are dominant causes for communities with specified identities to be deprived and continue to remain poor even after 68 years of the independence and democratically guided governance.

Socially excluded groups have the inbuilt disadvantage inhibiting access to rights, opportunities, entitlements and resources created by the public at large. The double whammy faced by excluded groups and furthers the depth of deprivation and exploitation emerges from other factors such as caste, ethnicity, religious values and gender etc. Thus, Dalits, adivasis, minorities, women and poor face disadvantage in their day-to-day living. In a pluralistic and diverse society like India, it is important, therefore, to find out as to how different groups of people such as those identified based on caste, ethnic origin (tribes), gender, religion, and so on are able to overcome deprivation. There are a number of qualitative dimensions which create hurdles and barriers for inclusive development which needs to be ameliorated in such as the continuing practice of untouchability, discrimination, racism, communalism, patriarchy and even bureaucratic bias.

The economic processes which are private but in principle endorsed by the public systems which also claim to be the so called inclusive cannot establish distributive justice to disadvantaged sections of society. The economy and markets must, therefore, operate and indeed promote the concepts of distributive justice and equity while making profits by exploiting local natural and human resources and adding value to the GDP. Important also is to know as what role the social system and culture has either to promote or inhibit communities to overcome inequality and what proactive initiatives are needed from the government systems. Therefore to understand mechanism to address deprivations amongst the Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, women and poor it is essential to lay bare all such dimensions which are a type of whirlpool or a sort of trap from which those affected have to be rescued and rehabilitated not only on the basis of empathy but with the aim of empowering whole communities so that they make their rightful claim of equal citizens of India. Nonetheless, the strength of her inclusive development approach lies in her focus on structural transformations associated with rapid economic growth and their implications for inclusive development.

Inclusive development offers much hope for progress in developing countries - especially in Asia where several countries are early leaders in this field, but also increasingly elsewhere towards achieving the goals of poverty reduction, sustainable high growth, social and economic inclusion. The perspectives on inclusive development are numerous and varied and they will continue to evolve over time. While the goal of inclusive development is achievable for many developing countries, the path to be followed is riddled with innumerable challenges that call for paying special and focused attention to an appropriate and leading role for both the state, NGOs and the private sectors, as well as to, *inter alia*, matters of concept and definition, governance and institutions, economics and politics, and culture and society.

4 Conclusion

For economic growth to be inclusive, it must be sustained and sustainable and that, for it to be sustained and sustainable, it must also be equitable. Development can be inclusive only, if all groups of people are entitled as stakeholders by giving equal opportunities to share the benefits of development and participate in decision-making in the development process. The goal of inclusive development is to achieve an inclusive society – a society which accommodates diverse groups and communities, thereby, ensuring all marginalized and excluded groups as stakeholders in the development process. Therefore, it is timely and essential to find out what kind of inclusive space be carried forward or what new opportunities have become available to those in the periphery of the social and economic domain such as Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, women and poor in the present ‘new-deal’ Indian economic policies.

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