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Subject: Reaching the Unreached-Inclusive Governance

“Governments emanates from Community, is subordinate to Law and must seek POPULAR WELFARE. ...Government is a TRUST ON BEHALF OF PEOPLE”

John Locke ‘The second Treatise on government’
(Emphasis supplied)

Delving on the Theory of Social Contract, Locke held that “the agreement is between individuals, not between ‘ruler’ and ‘ruled’”. The former are merely ‘fiduciary power’ or ‘Trust’ to be exercised solely for the good of the community. The conception of Trust explains better than the ‘ruler’ and the ‘ruled’ conception under the ‘Contract (social) theory of Political Science. In a contractual relationship, there are ‘rights ‘ and ‘ obligations’ on both sides, but where a ‘Trust’ exists, the rights are all on the side of the beneficiary (the Community).

Hence the starting point is that the Governments and its representatives are merely the Trustees and shall always work for the betterment of the Community-at-large irrespective of caste, colour, creed or sex and other disabilities. Since this is not happening, hence the need for INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE, so that fruits of growth are shared by all and not cornered by few.

The word ‘inclusive’ as per Dictionary means ‘including, enclosing, comprehending, comprising (something specified), and embracing; World Bank describes ‘Governance’ as relating to decisions that define ‘expectations’, grant power, or verify performance. It consists either of a separate process or of a specific part of management or leadership processes. Sometimes people set up a government to administer these processes and systems.’ There would be other definitions of Governance but we find it is best defined by the European Commission, in which the word Governance is meant to “refer to rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised at European level particularly as regards *openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness sand coherence*. These five ‘principles of good governance’ reinforce those of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Inclusive Governance represents /reflects the extent to which Governance Institutions provide ‘space’ to overcome the systematic exclusion of disadvantaged groups seeking to participate in decision making, affecting them.

Inclusive Governance encompasses the management of social, political and economic issues for Human Development and represents the issue of Rights based approach.

Even though it is now well appreciated that only Inclusive Governance can lead to Inclusive and Equitable growth, yet, lack of Inclusive Governance continue to widen the 'divide' between the rich and the poor across the world. Barriers to Governance Institutions are preventing tens of million of women, indigenous people (SC's, ST's OBC's in this country), people with disabilities to critical Governance services, as well as, preventing them from exercising their Human Rights and achieving higher levels of Human Development. Political inclusion of such Groups is a sin-qua-non to overcome the deeply embedded social and economic inequalities prevalent in the country.

The challenge to overcome this is a common one – to create an enabling Governance Environment, that is not only aware of and responsive to the needs and interests of most disadvantaged and marginalized, but that is willing and able to provide sound and effective remedies to this Group's concerns. Remedy perhaps lie in the application of Principles of Accountability and Empowerment in Governance Areas as well as promoting the use of 'Human-Rights – based approach to programming on Inclusive Governance'

To be 'inclusive' is a core value of Democratic Governance, in terms of equal participation, equal treatment and equal rights before the Law. This implies that all people –including poor, women, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups – have the right to participate meaningfully in Governance process and influence decisions that affect them. It also means that GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES ARE ACCESSIBLE, ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIVE to DISADVANTAGED GROUPS, protecting their interests and providing diverse population with equal opportunity for Public Services such as Justice, Health and Education.

In UNDP's Human Development Report, this country and many others in the region fare at lower middle level almost in respect of all Indicators. We are also not really better off in achieving many important 'goals' enshrined in the ' Millennium Development Goals' to be achieved by 2015.

It is not that this country and many other countries in the Region, have not done well economically in terms of GDP/GNP, but we are severely affected by, what Prof Amratya Sen. calls “ an extremely asymmetric development of the global economy, including Indian” “India's poor suffer not only from lower incomes but also from lower access to and quality of public services, such as basic health, education and infrastructure. The poor often lack the leverage to ensure that State institutions serve them fairly, and thus lack access to public-facilities or receive goods and services of inferior quality. They often must pay for education and health services, which others receive for free. For example, studies by India's Public Affairs Center indicate that the wealthy and middle classes are often more likely to resolve their complaints at lower cost. Corruption is often a highly regressive tax and the poor pay more of their incomes proportionately than do the Wealthy and the middle class” A World Bank Development Policy Review- India sustaining Reform, Reducing Poverty.

One of the major issue involved is the attitude of the Policy makers at Macro-policy levels, who see the country's development solely in terms of growth in terms of GDP/GNP, with a fervent hope that its fruits shall trickledown. They have trickled down but most inequitably. We still have over 25% population living below the Poverty Line, even though no unanimity exists on the definition of 'poor', hence the percentage of people living below poverty line. WE continue to have one of the highest ratios of 'hunger and malnutrition' as also of Infant Mortality Rate (IMR).

It is now well appreciated that while growth of GDP must be kept up, it is the 'trickle-down' concept, which leaves much to be desired. . It is here that, 'Inclusive Growth', led by ' Inclusive Governance' holds the key, for taking the benefits to the sections of people deprived of the same hitherto.

The answer is ' Participatory Inclusive Governance', aiming at reducing poverty and inequalities-both Social and Economic-, by increasing Citizens influence in decision-making. This can contribute towards more equitable access to 'services' and 'Resources'. When the people are equipped with the knowledge of their entitlements and are empowered to engage with State Mechanism's, they are better positioned to secure their Rights and pursue their interests. This shall also lead to their 'EMPOWERMENT', which refers to increasing the political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

“ The potential for Economic growth and poverty reduction is heavily influenced by State and Social Institutions. Action to improve their functioning also improves both- Growth and Equity, by reducing bureaucratic and social constraints to economic action and upward mobility. However, devising and implementing these changes require strong Political will. Especially when the changes fundamentally challenge social values or entrenched interests. Governments can do much to influence public debate to increase awareness of the societal benefits of pro- poor Public action and build Political support for such action. (This could be on following lines)

- Laying the Political and Legal basis for Inclusive development;
- Creating Public Administrations for faster growth and equity;
- Promoting inclusive decentralization and community development;
- Promoting gender equity;
- Tackling social barriers;
- Supporting poor people's social capital.”

(Source-World Development Report 2000/2001)

- Participative Development i.e. Grass root development through Grass root Democracy could be the answer.

In India this was sought to be done by amending the Constitution in 1992, empowering the Local bodies- both at Urban and Rural areas. This was the foundation of the Participative Democracy as well as Participatory Development, guided by Inclusive Governance. But it has not worked, as Programmes and Funds continue to be allocated/managed at Central and State levels.. If we wish to realize the dream of Inclusive Governance, than the Programmes and Funds need to be placed at the disposal of Local bodies-urban and rural, subject of course to the Principles of Accountability, Transparency and Equity – Accountability not only in terms of fund management but also achievement in matters like, Ensuring Employment to the poor, sending children to the School, access to Health, drinking water and sanitation, creation and maintenance of rural infrastructure. An Action-Plan needs to be prepared at District, intermediate and Village local body (Gram Panchayat) on the Subjects allocated to these Bodies, where they shall be discussed at the Gram Sabha and other levels, to elicit the views of the ‘stakeholders’ as also to review their ‘progress’.

A need will arise to develop well-developed Indicators that shall help ‘ monitor and evaluate’ the progress and achievement of a given Programme in real and substantive terms, in order to strengthen the capacity of ‘Inclusive Governance’ institutions.

There shall also be a provision for ‘social-audit’

Any level of Institution not adhering to the Programme Objectives, Time-frame in executing the Schemes /Programmes entrusted to them should be held accountable, and there could be a provision for showing them the ‘door’ – remove them for non-performance. This shall reaffirm the key elements of Democratic Governance: Inclusion and Participation in areas having political, economic, civil, social and cultural dimensions; Equality and non-discrimination- very important for minority groups and indigenous people; and Transparency, Accountability and access to effective remedies.

Hopefully, this shall help ‘reach’ the benefits of State’s Policy and Programmes to the ‘unreached’.