

How to Create Inclusive Growth for India as it Moves Towards Becoming a Developed Nation

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Abstract

This paper explores actionable strategies to achieve inclusive growth in India as it transitions toward becoming a developed nation. By analyzing economic theories, policy frameworks and empirical data, the study identifies critical gaps in India's current approach to addressing inequality and proposes targeted interventions to ensure equitable economic development.

It emphasizes the need for transformative policies in education, healthcare, infrastructure and financial inclusion, aided by technology and participatory governance.

The study discusses the imbalanced nature of India's growth, comparing it with the more inclusive growth of other emerging economies like China, Brazil and Indonesia. It examines the structural barriers to equitable growth, including urban-rural disparities, gender inequality, caste-based discrimination and the challenges faced by the informal sector which employs a significant percentage of India's workforce.

This paper analyses global best practices to offer policy recommendations. These recommendations include vocational training, building social safety nets and leveraging digital technologies to reduce gaps in access as well as in opportunity.

Relying on case studies from both India and abroad, this paper emphasises the importance of public-private-NGO partnerships in fostering inclusive growth. It concludes that inclusive growth is not achieved just through wealth redistribution. India needs to reduce or eradicate systemic issues through sustained political will, innovative financing and community-driven solutions. By addressing structural inequities, India can unlock its full economic potential and redefine what it means to be a developed nation in the 21st century.

2. Introduction

Why this conversation now?

India became the fifth-largest economy in the world in 2021, overtaking the UK. It was at number ten, just ten years before that. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects that India will be at number three in terms of the size of its economy by 2030.

Although India's GDP has increased and poverty rates have come down the benefits have not been equal across its large population. Economists like Amartya Sen have suggested that India's development model is focused on growth but that there is no thought when it comes to ensuring equitable growth. World Bank reports point out that economic gains are taking place mostly in urban areas, while rural India is neglected. To become a truly developed nation and sustain the momentum, India must find ways to include a major part of its population in its economic revolution. If the country does not plan for equitable distribution, it will not be able to harness its full potential

India is currently in the midst of this demographic transition, with over 65% of its population under the age of 35. According to the United Nations, India's working-age population will peak by 2040, making the next two decades a critical window of opportunity.

If the working-age population is not equipped with the necessary skills, education and healthcare, their potential contribution to the economy will remain untapped.

3. The gaps this study aims to fill

Most existing studies discuss structural reforms and macroeconomic policies but don't give much importance to local governance, participatory decision-making, and the integration of marginalized people. There are not many studies on how digital inclusion can help create equitable growth.

Value of this study

This study integrates theoretical frameworks with data to suggest actionable insights to bring about inclusive growth. It also discusses the roadblocks in India's journey toward equitable development and offers potential solutions.

4. Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods approach:

1. **Quantitative Analysis:** Secondary data from sources like the World Bank, IMF, and Indian government databases help figure out trends in income inequality, access to education, healthcare and financial services.
2. **Qualitative Analysis:** Existing literature, reports and case studies have been used to understand systemic barriers specifically within India.
3. **Comparative Analysis:** India's strategies have been compared to countries, such as China, Brazil, Kenya and South Korea, to gain insights and understand best practices.

5. Global Context: India's Growth vs. Other Emerging Economies

How does India fare as compared to other emerging economies?

1. China: Manufacturing-Led Growth and Infrastructure Development

- **Growth Model:** China's economic growth has been driven by a manufacturing-led export model, supported by massive investments in infrastructure and human capital. The country became the "world's factory" by leveraging its low labor costs and creating special economic zones (SEZs) to attract foreign investment.
- **Inclusivity:** China's growth has been more inclusive than that of India's due to China's focus on rural industrialization and poverty alleviation programs. For example, the Targeted Poverty Alleviation Program lifted over 800 million people out of poverty between 1980 and 2020.
- **Infrastructure:** China invested heavily in infrastructure, including roads, railways and ports, which connected rural areas to urban markets. This improved connectivity reduced regional disparities and created jobs in construction and manufacturing.
- **Comparison with India:** Unlike China, India's growth has been services-led, particularly in IT and finance. Both these industries employ a small fraction of the population. India's infrastructure development has also lagged and rural-urban disparities remain a reality. While China's rural poverty rate dropped to below 1% by 2020, India's rural poverty rate remains at around 10-15%.

2. Brazil: Conditional Cash Transfers and Social Safety Nets

- Growth Model: Brazil's growth has been fueled by its natural resources, agriculture and manufacturing sectors. However, its most notable achievement has been its focus on reducing inequality through social programs.
- Inclusivity: Brazil's Bolsa Família program, a conditional cash transfer scheme, has been highly successful in reducing poverty and inequality. The program provides financial aid to low-income families in exchange for school attendance and vaccinations, ensuring better health and education outcomes.
- Social Safety Nets: Brazil has also invested in universal healthcare and education, which have improved human development indicators. For example, its Sistema Único de Saúde (Unified Health System) provides free healthcare to all citizens.
- Comparison with India: While India has launched similar programs like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and Ayushman Bharat, implementation has been inconsistent and coverage gaps still remain. Brazil's success in reducing inequality through targeted social programs highlights the need for India to strengthen its social safety nets.

3. Indonesia: Decentralized Governance and Rural Development

- Growth Model: Indonesia's growth has been driven by its natural resources, manufacturing and tourism sectors. The country has also focused on decentralized governance, empowering local governments to address regional disparities.
- Inclusivity: Indonesia's Village Fund Program allocates funds directly to villages for infrastructure and development projects, ensuring that rural areas benefit from economic growth. This investment has reduced poverty and improved access to basic services in remote areas.
- Rural Development: The country has also invested in rural infrastructure, such as roads and electrification, which has improved connectivity and created economic opportunities.
- Comparison with India: India's decentralized governance model, through Panchayati Raj institutions, has not been as effective in addressing regional disparities. While programs like MGNREGA provide rural employment, they lack the scale and impact of Indonesia's Village Fund Program.

4. South Korea: Education and Technology-Driven Growth

- Growth Model: South Korea transformed from a low-income agrarian economy to a high-income industrialized economy within a few decades. This was achieved through heavy investments in education, technology and export-oriented industries.
- Inclusivity: South Korea's focus on universal education and skill development ensured that its workforce was equipped to participate in high-value industries. The country also implemented land reforms and rural development programs to reduce inequality.
- Technology and Innovation: South Korea's emphasis on R&D and innovation, particularly in sectors like electronics and automobiles, created high-paying jobs and drove economic growth.
- Comparison with India: India's education system has not kept pace with the demands of a modern economy. While South Korea spends over 4% of its GDP on education, India spends less than 3%. This has resulted in a skills gap, with many Indian graduates lacking employable skills.

Key Takeaways from the Comparison

1. Sectoral Focus: Unlike China and South Korea, which focused on manufacturing and technology, India's growth has been services-led, creating fewer jobs for its large, low-skilled workforce.

2. Infrastructure Investment: China and Indonesia's investments in infrastructure reduced regional disparities, while India's infrastructure gaps have increased inequality.
3. Social Safety Nets: Brazil's success with conditional cash transfers and universal healthcare highlights the importance of well-designed social programs, which India has yet to fully implement.
4. Decentralized Governance: Indonesia's Village Fund Program demonstrates the effectiveness of decentralized governance in addressing regional disparities, a lesson India could learn from.
5. Education and Skill Development: South Korea's emphasis on education and skill development ensured that its growth was inclusive, while India's underinvestment in education limited its ability to create a skilled workforce. India's gross enrollment ratio (GER) in higher education is only 28.4%, far below the global average of 38.7%.

6. The Reasons for Unequitable Growth

Economic liberalization started in the 1990s and whilst it created opportunities, it also created big monopolistic conglomerates which controlled a significant percentage of resources. The wealthiest 1% of Indians control more than 40% of the country's wealth.

Below are the reasons for unequal distribution of wealth:

1. India's economic growth has been spurred by a few sectors like IT, financial services and industrial manufacturing, which employ just a fraction of people seeking employment.
2. A whopping 80% of India's workforce works in the informal sector where they get low wages, few or no benefits and no social security. Agriculture, for example, contributes only ~18% of GDP but employs ~45% of the workforce. Informal workers don't benefit from GDP growth as this growth is taking place in organized sectors.
3. Government expenditure on education (~2.9% of GDP) is strikingly low as compared to global averages. Quality education is not available to a large portion of India's youth and they are therefore not in a position to participate in the country's economic growth.
4. Urban areas have better access to infrastructure, education, healthcare and job opportunities compared to rural areas. States like Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka have advanced industrial bases and higher per capita incomes, while states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha are far behind. The reason is that both public and private investments in these states have been low and human capital is not well developed, leading to low income and joblessness. Policies and investments tend to favour states with strong infrastructure and that's how a cycle of disparity is created.
5. A large portion of the population in rural areas is still unbanked, limiting their ability to save, borrow or invest. Urban areas, meanwhile, have benefited from digital payment systems, which rural areas have been excluded from due to lack of internet access and private sector investment.
6. Only ~23% of women participate in India's labor force. This number is amongst the lowest in the world. Factors that contribute to this phenomenon are social taboos, no childcare and unsafe work places. The exclusion of half the working population based on gender reduces household income and has a direct impact on India's productivity. Although economic policies have been implemented to help include women in the workforce, these policies are at the macro level and do not take into account regional or community specific needs. Add to that, corruption and inefficiencies and it becomes clear why the impact of these policies is limited.

7. Problems Unique to India that Foster Unequitable Development

India is a large, diverse country whose culture is unique. India's culture brings with it a mindset that is different from many other countries. Below are some factors that work to foster inequitable growth.

Gender Norms and Low Female Labor Force Participation

Indians are rooted in tradition. Traditional societal roles and norms favour men when it comes to income generation and on the flip side, they discourage women from seeking and finding jobs. Women are expected to look after the family and often face opposition if they choose to work.

In many urban and rural areas, it is unsafe for women to travel to work alone which acts as another deterrent to women entering the work force. Add to this the poor infrastructure and it becomes clear as to why many women do not work.

Many women contribute to the agricultural sector by working fields that belong to their families. They are not paid for their labour and so their work does not contribute formally to economic metric calculations.

Caste and Social Stratification

India has had a caste system for centuries. Marginalized communities do not have the same opportunities as privileged ones. These communities are not well educated and do not have access to good employment opportunities or to capital. A high percentage of people from marginalized communities are employed in the Informal sector where the wages are low and there are no benefits.

Marginalized communities also face discrimination when it comes to getting well paying jobs. They cannot, therefore, move up the ladder and remain poor. Affirmative action policies like reservations have helped but more still needs to be done.

Traditional Occupations Carry on for Generations

Younger generations are often pressured into working in family trades or traditional occupations rather than working in industries that suit their skills. Economic diversification, therefore, becomes difficult.

Land Ownership Favours Male Heirs

Inheritance laws are not equal and patriarchal traditions prevent women and lower-caste groups from participating equally in land ownership.

Early Marriages and Dowry

Many families still pay dowry. This practice places a financial burden on families and they have to compromise on women's education and/or they need to take loans, leading to indebtedness. Early marriages in many rural communities reduce women's access to education and therefore their prospects for employment.

Language and Regional Challenges

The elite Indians are fluent in English and dominate the high paying jobs. People who are more comfortable in speaking Hindi or other regional languages are excluded from many good job opportunities. Disparities in education and infrastructure between urban and rural areas exacerbate the situation.

Education and Skill Mismatch

The Indian Education System is centered around rote learning. Skill development is not a priority with the result that young graduates are not employable without training.

Many parents push their children towards pursuing what they consider safe and prestigious careers like doctors, lawyers and engineers. This bias results in a mismatch between inherent interests/skills and the career that youth work towards.

Religious and Communal Factors

Minority communities face long standing biases that can prevent them from moving up the financial ladder.

er. Studies show lower access to government schemes, credit and formal employment for some sections of society. Communal tensions and occasional conflicts make economic stability hard to achieve in some regions.

Generational Poverty and Debt Cycles

Many Indian families are stuck in cycles of generational poverty since they don't have access to good education, healthcare or opportunities.

Cultural norms sometimes force families to borrow for social ceremonies or agricultural inputs. They have to take high-interest debt which further weakens their financial situation.

Resistance to Modernization & Migration

Rural communities tend to shy away from urbanization and industrialization as they see these as threats to their way of life.

Migrating for better job prospects is not as common as it is in many other countries and perpetuates regional income disparities.

Cultural Stigma Around Some Jobs

Cultural and caste-based stigma attached to certain types of jobs like sanitation work, domestic work etc. have been associated with jobs that the lower castes do over the centuries. This stigma reduces dignity of labor and mars upward mobility for those relegated to menial jobs.

8. Measures That Have Worked For Emerging Nations

Below are examples of programs from emerging countries that have helped create some level of equitable economic growth. These programs focus on issues like gender inequality, equitable education, financial inclusion and regional disparities - challenges that are also relevant for the Indian context.

- 1. Bolsa Família (Brazil):** A conditional cash transfer (CCT) program that gives financial aid to low-income families, based on children's school attendance and vaccinations. Bolsa Família helped reduce poverty and created a higher level of equality by improving educational outcomes and health. A similar program customized for India could alleviate intergenerational poverty through better educational outcomes. India's Jan Dhan Yojana accounts could be used to directly transfer and track conditional funds to families based on pre-determined parameters.
- 2. ProHuerta (Argentina):** A government program to promote agriculture in urban and peri urban areas. This scheme provides seeds, tools and training to low-income households. The program enhanced food security and improved livelihoods through small-scale farming. With close to a majority of India's population dependent on agriculture, ProHuerta-like programs could help farmers and urban poor become self-sufficient. Training programs could be customized to incorporate sustainable farming practices to combat climate change as well.
- 3. Grameen Bank (Bangladesh):** A microfinance institution providing micro loans to poor women, without the need for collateral or guarantees. The program helped poor women succeed, helping reduce poverty and making women self-sufficient. Microfinance programs like Grameen Bank could be scaled up in India using digital tools like UPI.
- 4. BRAC Education Program (Bangladesh):** An education program that gives informal primary education to underprivileged girls. It works because it offers flexible schedules to accommodate child labourers. BRAC has educated millions of children who would otherwise not have had any education. A similar program can be implemented in India to address high dropout rates among children in rural and marginalized communities.

5. **Plan Ceibal (Uruguay):** An initiative that gives complementary laptops to school children and teachers to help bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas. Such a program could benefit children in India's rural areas too. Affordable or free devices and internet connections for students in rural areas could enhance learning outcomes and in turn increase employability.
6. **Oportunidades (Mexico):** An all encompassing social assistance program combining conditional cash transfers, nutritional support and educational incentives for marginalized families. The program was successful in reducing poverty, improving school attendance and enhancing health outcomes for low income families. A similar program can help empower rural and tribal communities in India. Combining this program with India's existing public distribution system could amplify its reach and impact.
7. **One Village One Product (OVOP) (Japan, adapted in Thailand and Malawi):** A local initiative that promotes unique, locally produced goods for national and global markets to boost the local economy. The program helps rural communities to produce products unique to their region, thereby increasing income and preserving cultural heritage. India's artisans and traditional industries (like handlooms, handicrafts) could benefit from a similar initiative, especially since India is well known for handicrafts. Programs like "Vocal for Local" have helped local communities flourish through better market access, funding and technology.
8. **Rwanda's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy:** Rwanda prioritized gender equality after the genocide by forming policies that promoted women's participation in governance and economic activities. Women now hold more than 60% of parliamentary seats and the economic growth has been more inclusive. India has also instated laws that have reserved seats for women in both government and corporate leadership but these need to be carefully monitored and non-compliant organizations need to be fined. Strengthening legal frameworks could help to create a more inclusive economy.
9. **Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP):** A government program that gives food or cash in return for labour on community infrastructure projects. The program reduced hunger, created stable income streams and improved infrastructure in rural areas. This initiative aligns with India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Strengthening and diversifying MGNREGA projects to include climate-resilient infrastructure can increase its impact.
10. **Kenya's M-Pesa:** A digital, mobile money transfer system that allows people to save, send and receive money securely. M-Pesa revolutionized financial inclusion for rural and unbanked communities. While India has made great strides with UPI and mobile banking, M-Pesa's steps to create financial literacy are missing.
11. **Key Lessons for India:** Link social assistance with development goals using education, healthcare and financial inclusion as the means to create long-term impact. Uplift marginalized communities through gender equality, employment opportunities and caste inclusivity. Leverage technology to achieve these goals. Promote local economies through schemes for rural entrepreneurship and value-added production through targeted initiatives. Build capacity by investing in skills training and infrastructure to create sustainable economic opportunities and growth.

9. Efforts For Economic Inclusion in India over the last 10 years

Over the last ten years (2014-2023), the BJP government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has worked towards creating public-private partnerships (PPPs) and collaborations with NGOs to help create inclusion. Some of these initiatives which have had positive outcomes have been outlined below.

Private Sector Contributions

Financial Inclusion Initiatives:

HDFC Bank's Sustainable Livelihood Initiative (SLI): HDFC Bank has worked within the government's *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)*, to create financial literacy for 11 million people in rural areas and has given them access to microloans as well as skill development training.

UPI Expansion: The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has partnered with private Fintech companies like PhonePe, PayTM and Google Pay to accelerate the growth of digital payments. The government launched the *Unified Payments Interface (UPI)* in 2016. UPI has seen exponential growth thanks to the convenience it offers and has significantly reduced dependence on cash, helping increase rural economic participation.

Skill Development and Employment Generation:

Tata STRIVE: Tata Group launched a skill development programme along with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) under the *Skill India Mission*. Tata STRIVE has skilled over 1.5 million disadvantaged young people in fields like IT, healthcare and construction.

Flipkart Samarth: The government's *Vocal for Local* and *Make in India* campaigns inspired Flipkart to help artisans, weavers and craftsmen by integrating them into its e-commerce ecosystem, enhancing their livelihoods.

Rural Infrastructure Development:

Adani Foundation's CSR Efforts: The Adani Foundation works closely with the government to develop rural infrastructure like schools, healthcare facilities and clean drinking water systems in underserved rural areas.

Reliance Jio's Digital Inclusion Drive: Reliance Jio's affordable 4G internet has been a game changer for digital inclusion. It has brought affordable digital connectivity to rural areas, helping the underprivileged take advantage of online training, access to banking, loans and much more.

NGO Contributions

Education and Healthcare:

Pratham: Has partnered with state governments to enhance learning outcomes for children through grassroots interventions. Pratham helps implement the *Right to Education Act* by improving school enrollment and quality.

Smile Foundation: Works closely with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to provide primary healthcare in rural areas through mobile health vans.

Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods:

SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association): SEWA has partnered with the government to help increase financial inclusion for women. It provided micro-insurance and capacity-building programs for women in rural India, helping them become economically independent.

Barefoot College: Works with the government's *National Solar Mission* to train rural women, known as "solar mamas," in solar engineering. Barefoot's mission aligns closely with the government's renewable energy goals under the *National Solar Mission*.

Sustainability and Renewable Energy:

Selco Foundation: Provides affordable energy to rural communities through off-grid solar solutions, aligning with the BJP's push for renewable energy under the *International Solar Alliance (ISA)*.

Sanitation and Hygiene:

Swachh Bharat Mission Partnerships: NGOs like Sulabh International have played a key part in building toilets and imparting education on hygiene, taking forward the government's *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*. Sulabh has improved sanitation in thousands of villages by reducing open defecation.

10. Policy Suggestions

Based on the research above, this paper outlines some policy suggestions that could help India move forward in a more equitable, inclusive manner.

Education and Skill Development

Current Gaps: India's gross enrollment ratio (GER) of 28.4% in higher education is well below the global average of 38.7%.

Key Insight: Students across the country need easy and affordable access to quality primary and secondary education. Many would benefit from vocational training aligned with market demand as this training will increase employability and can help reduce regional inequalities.

Policy Suggestions:

1. Education Equity Fund: A framework for public-private partnerships that can fund the building of more schools, provide teacher training and ensure digital access to rural and marginalized communities.
2. Vocational Training Programs: Launch skill development programs tailored to local industries so that employment rates increase and people can earn better livelihoods.
3. Performance-Based Incentives for Teachers: Implement tangible incentives based on specific outcomes for teachers working in rural areas.

Healthcare Access

Current Gaps: India's government spend on healthcare is approximately 1.28% of GDP which is significantly less than the global average. Health infrastructure in most rural areas is poor and doctor-patient ratios are well below WHO recommended standards.

Key Insight: The government needs to allocate more funds to improve the infrastructure. Telemedicine based solutions could be researched and implemented.

Policy Suggestions:

1. Expand The Ayushman Bharat Scheme: More vulnerable populations should be covered and investments for adding primary healthcare facilities should be sanctioned.
2. National Telemedicine Network: Create a telemedicine infrastructure connecting rural populations to good hospitals close by, using mobile apps and call centers.
3. Health Infrastructure Investment Scheme: Provide incentives like subsidies and tax breaks for private companies investing in rural healthcare infrastructure and equipment.

Financial Inclusion

Current Gaps: The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana has helped rural people access bank accounts but the usage is low. These populations need financial literacy programs and digital infrastructure.

Key Insight: Increasing financial literacy, creating microfinance schemes and adding digital payment systems in rural areas can help.

Policy Suggestions:

1. Financial Literacy Drives: Work with NGOs and banks to conduct community workshops and online courses on savings, loans, credit and digital payments.

2. Digital Banking Hubs: Create digital kiosks with trained personnel in villages to provide people with convenient access to banking services.
3. Subsidized Loans for Women Entrepreneurs: Promote low-interest rate loans for women-led small businesses to encourage more women to enter the workforce.

Infrastructure and Connectivity

Current Gaps: There are significant rural-urban disparities in road connectivity, electricity access and internet penetration.

Key Insight: Government investment in creating state of the art rural infrastructure is important. Public-private partnerships for smart infrastructure development can also help.

Policy Suggestions:

1. Rural Connectivity Mission: Fast track road construction under schemes like Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Create last-mile connectivity for villages.
2. National Broadband Plan: Incentivize the telecom industry to expand internet coverage to rural regions.
3. Green Infrastructure Projects: Create renewable energy-based grids in remote regions to ensure consistent and affordable electricity access.

Technology as an Enabler

Opportunities: AI, IoT, and big data should be integrated to govern and improve service delivery as well as transparency. Digital India initiatives have done well but need to be scaled for impact.

Policy Suggestions:

1. AI-Driven Governance Platforms: AI systems can be used for real-time monitoring of welfare schemes and to identify corruption or inefficiencies.
2. AI-Driven Systems For Agriculture: AI systems can be used for real-time weather updates, soil health, price discovery and optimization to help bridge the rural-urban divide.
3. Digital Literacy Campaigns - Promote nationwide digital literacy campaigns to show how rural populations can use digital tools for educational, healthcare and financial literacy.
4. Digital Skill Development Programs: Train rural youth in emerging technologies like data analytics, AI and IoT to help them access lucrative jobs.
5. E-Governance Expansion: Scale up initiatives that have been known to work - for example, e-District projects should cover every state and citizen services should all be accessible online.
6. Blockchain for Transparency: Explore the use of blockchain technology to ensure transparency in welfare schemes and reduce leakages.

Participatory Governance

Key Insight: Marginalized voices will only be heard if decentralized governance models and community participation are implemented. Policies that are tailor made can then be implemented for greater impact.

Policy Suggestions:

1. Citizen Monitoring Councils: Citizen councils should be created at the village or district level to monitor government schemes and budgets.
2. Decentralized Budgeting Framework: Empower local governments to create participatory budgets that take care of community needs.
3. Incentives for Community Initiatives: Additional funding should be allocated to communities that show measurable progress in developing local projects.

Strengths of Proposed Interventions

The strategies suggested above are loosely based on proven models and in addition, they incorporate technology and participation to address equitable growth.

Challenges and Barriers to implementing the strategies

- State governments are resistant to changing policies.
- Budgets for social spending are limited
- Cultural and systemic biases have existed for centuries and are difficult to change

11. Conclusion

As India enters 2025, it stands at a pivotal moment in its history and will need to balance the unleashing of its economic potential with age-old structural and societal issues. As the country moves toward achieving its dream of regaining its past glory, inclusive growth must be more than a philosophical ideal - inclusive growth must be carefully thought through and addressed by creating national policy, specifically with that goal in mind. Moving towards inclusive growth means understanding the connections between economic, social and environmental issues and it means taking into account the diverse needs of a complex and multi-layered society.

The research and analysis in this paper shows that inclusive growth is not about redistributing wealth but about creating systems and processes that create equitable opportunities for even the most marginalized communities.

Education can prove to be the most powerful tool to create an equitable society, but it is still plagued by inequities in access and quality. India needs policies that will ensure regular investments in teacher training, digital infrastructure and vocational programs specifically designed to suit local economies. Similarly, healthcare needs to be overhauled - shifting from being urban-centered to including rural areas. Policies that focus on preventive approaches powered by telemedicine and grassroots health workers can go a long way in reducing the cost of healthcare and including the impoverished sections of society.

Infrastructure development is crucial for India's economic growth but must be done equitably and sustainably. Development that prioritizes rural infrastructure, renewable energy and digital inclusion can both promote economic participation and address climate change issues.

The government has made some strides towards financial inclusion efforts but those have mainly been in the area of account creation. The focus also needs to be on financial literacy and empowering marginalized groups, particularly women, daily wage workers and rural entrepreneurs, so that they can be empowered and have a fair chance of increasing their livelihood.

The country needs to create more policies that help address social norms that are detrimental to certain groups if we are to look at inclusive economic growth. The bails of the caste system, gender biases and resistance to change still persist in many parts of the country and inhibit economic participation, perpetuating inequality. Finding a solution to these challenges could require combining legal reforms with grassroots advocacy and awareness campaigns to change age old mindsets. Participation of marginalized groups in the governance of their own towns and villages is the key to ensure that government policies are grounded in reality. India has a diverse population and to make a change, policy makers need to create tailor made policies for different parts of the country based on their specific issues.

Technology has proved to be a transformative tool to bridge gaps in governance, education, healthcare and financial services and the government has used it well in the last decade. However, we need more policies that prioritize technological accessibility and affordability for the underserved. Successful global

models, such as Brazil's Bolsa Família program or Rwanda's use of technology for governance, provide good insights and could be customized to help the weaker sections of India's society.

India's path to inclusive growth is not going to be easy primarily because of the government outlay it will entail, regional disparities and fixed mindsets that are deeply engrained over generations. On the flip side, the country has the largest functioning democracy, a youthful population, and an unbeatable entrepreneurial spirit that holds the promise to propel the country towards sustainable, equitable growth. Existing and ever-increasing public-private partnerships and collaborations with local (and national) governments have already been successful particularly in areas like digital payments, skill development and rural healthcare. The need of the hour is to scale these efforts through innovative policies, accountability mechanisms and sustained political will.

In the final analysis, inclusive growth for a country as diverse as India, is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Continuous adaptation based on data-driven insights and participatory governance can help the country achieve its goals.

The government must prioritize equity as an integral part of economic growth, ensuring that even the most vulnerable are uplifted as the country moves towards becoming an undisputed economic power. By addressing structural inequities, fostering innovation, and leveraging its diversity, India has the potential to not only become a first-world nation but also redefine what it means to be one. India has the potential to relive its glorious past.

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