

# BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE

To imagine inclusive development without focus on creating inclusive homes and inclusive societies is a mirage

BY SANJAY KUMAR GUPTA

THINKSTO





The word 'inclusive' has become popular in its use — both in writing and speaking — in last few years especially in the development sector across the world. Phrases such as inclusive growth, inclusive development, inclusive school, inclusive marketing and inclusive discussion are widely used these days. In common parlance word 'inclusive' conveys all-encompassing and not leaving anything beyond it. However, in day-to-day lives we don't find inclusiveness around us as voiceless, powerless, poor and vulnerable, though in majorities; seem to have been left behind in all walks of life. Rising income disparity, racism, human rights violations, crime against women, abuse of the old and children, beggars and marginalisation of informal sector are some clear examples of non-inclusion happening around us.

Why is the present situation like this today?

Rigid and obsolete mindset of generations, our thoughts and attitude that get influenced more by challenges of day-to-day life than universal values and principles, the rat-race of acquiring more wealth and adoption of all means by those in power to keep the status quo lest a change will force them out perpetuate a vicious cycle of division, exclusiveness, and inequality.

Societal changes and government policies are surely responsible for such a state-of-affair but people's own attitudes and degenerating family values are equally to be blamed. But it's often overlooked. The key challenge is to recognise and accept the problem of non-inclusion first and then making efforts of reversing the process by finding ways to ensure inclusiveness at home, society and the country level. Inclusive homes constitute inclusive society which in turn makes an inclusive country. Therefore, to imagine of achieving inclusive development without focus on creating inclusive homes and inclusive society, is a mirage all of us seem to be following.

### Inclusive home

The first question we need to ask ourselves is 'do we have inclusive homes today'? I believe we don't as is exemplified by rising number of nuclear families, financially strained, ignored, isolated and even abused old people, crime against women, divorce cases, and discrimination against people who work in our homes such as maid servants and other ser-

vice providers.

Inclusive home is not an ideal home where all members live in perfect harmony, a rarity in today's world. Inclusive home is one where all important matters are discussed to build consensus and members bury their differences for a larger cause of staying together for happiness. Head of the family, mostly the main bread earner, guide, anticipates challenges, resolve conflicts, sets vision for an ideal home and make everybody try achieving it and in the process making them all live together. It is a home where elders are respected, spouses are given freedom to pursue their interests, members of the family are taken care of and each complements the other. If the head of the family fails to discharge these responsibilities family disintegrates gradually creating exclusive homes. It is the value-based education at home and school that would first prepare individuals with

inclusive mindsets who then become creators of inclusive homes in future.

### Inclusive society

The second question we need to ask ourselves is 'are we an inclusive society today'? I believe we are not as is clearly reflected in our day-to-day subtle discriminatory actions towards people of low economic status and engaged in specific occupations

such as taxi drivers, beggars, maid servants, homeless, people living in slums and roadsides, the disabled, HIV/AIDS infected, and people engaged in petty businesses who are subjected to restrictive entry in many places, abuse, offered low payment and are not supposed to raise their voice even for their genuine rights.

Economic growth has contributed to wealth creation among few and resulted into rising income disparities and gaps between haves and have-nots leading to self indulgent exclusive societies which solely want to enjoy the fruits of development without caring for poor and vulnerable, who are considered government's sole responsibility. We, of course, can't change the karmas of others but we can certainly change our attitude towards them and contribute to creating conducive support mechanism and developing pro-poor policies that addresses health, education, shelter and food needs which take away major chunk of their earning pie. The idea is not to make them ever dependent on freebies but addressing their basic needs should be the priority. Inclusive

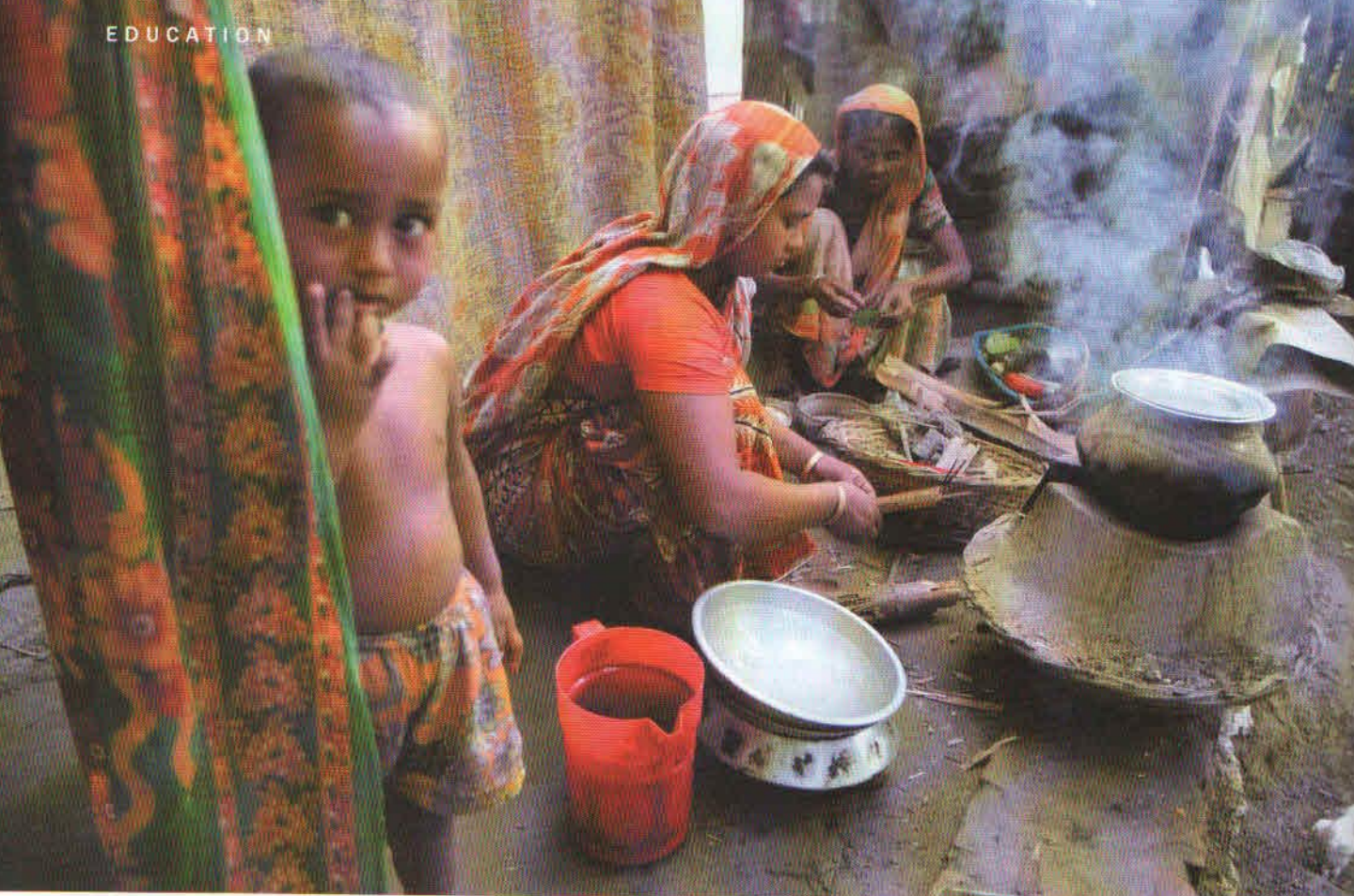
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**It is the value-based education at home and school that prepares individuals with inclusive mindsets to become future creators**





**Harmony across sectors, equitable distribution of resources, equality of all human beings and developing sensitivity towards nature are imperative for an inclusive country**

society is one where all sections of society, irrespective of their creed, caste and colour, live in harmony. Local leaders have specific responsibility to take a lead in this direction and become torch bearers of the cause.

### **Inclusive country**

The last question we need to ask ourselves is 'is mine an inclusive country today ensuring inclusive development for all?' and one gets the answer as perhaps most countries are not. In every country we

may find tribal, aboriginals who are synonymous with poverty pockets, and infrastructure constraints put rural areas in disadvantageous position compared to cities that receive repetitive investments, and remain ahead on the growth curve and become engines of growth. Also, when majority is engaged in non-formal sectors, lack of policies to support them in terms of working capital requirement, skill enhancement, tax benefits/exemptions, marketing support and legal protection from harassment by local authorities, remain a concern.

Natural instincts and entrepreneurial attitude

will surely make some communities move faster and reach early at the top of Maslow's pyramid of self actualisation stage but for the majority, who remains at the bottom of pyramid and struggle for their daily survival, pro-poor government policies would be required. Harmony among different sects, equitable distribution of resources, equality of all human beings, and developing sensitivity towards nature is important to make an inclusive country and therefore, an inclusive world.

There ever was such a period of inclusive growth or there would ever be such an ideal period remains an elusive answer but history shows that things happen for good only when we think and act upon them. Inclusive approach resides in an inclusive mind built over a period of time by inclusive attitude which we develop by acquiring learning from actions of our parents in childhood or triggered by an act of discrimination or feeling of hurt or developing compassion for others. Inclusive approach involves a workable marriage between top-down and bottom-up approach by involving poor community in co-creation, implementation and monitoring. Till such time the goal of achieving equitable allocation of resources with benefits incurred to every section of the society is met, development and growth would be elusive and not inclusive. ■