

Introduction: The Reality of Social Exclusion and Policy of Inclusion

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Social exclusion continues to surface in development and public policy debates all over the globe. The concept of social exclusion is used to denote a group of people or a community, who are excluded from the everyday activities in society in a variety of ways. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 put out by the United Nations to promote 'inclusive development', within the framework of a transformative agenda, in which all the seventeen goals have a strong underlying message of inclusion, equity and sustainability across the world. Simultaneously, the importance of negating the detrimental impacts of social exclusion on humankind is being realised by governments and various development agencies all over the world. Despite constitutional, human rights and other safeguards to create an equitable society, social exclusion as a social construct is practised in myriad forms in different societies. It negates the basic principles of democracy, human rights, justice and equality. Social exclusion and inclusion remain a growing concern among policymakers and intellectuals. They seem to be more pronounced in the developing world, where the very structural foundations of the society are unequal and divisions along lines of caste, class, gender, religion and other social categories are sharply manifested.

The developed world too is struggling with its own social exclusion issues with respect to race, immigrants, minorities of different kinds, women and others. With the retreat of the welfare states, the terms 'exclusion' and 'inclusion' came into vogue in the post-industrial, democratic, industrial and capitalist societies (Byrne, 2005). However, with rising consciousness regarding human rights, citizenship rights, individual dignity, gender and social equality, social and distributive justice, the debate on social exclusion is alive in the face of struggles for inclusion all over the world.

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