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Inclusive Development & G20: Progress & Prospects

India, with its rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and religions, offers an intricate mosaic of development challenges and opportunities. As the world's largest democracy and most populous country, achieving inclusive development is pivotal to ensuring sustained socio-economic growth. This article delves into India's pursuit of inclusive development with a focus on the crucial sectors of education and healthcare.

The aspiration towards inclusive development is grounded in South Asian tradition and thought. Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on uplifting the village economy as a strategy for development as well as the dangers of unchecked growth and environmental degradation have formed the bedrock of the sustainability movement in much of South Asia.

Inclusive development refers to economic growth that extends benefits to the widest range of people, including the marginalized and vulnerable sections of society. It emphasizes equal opportunities in terms of access to markets, resources, and an unbiased regulatory environment. It seeks to reduce inequalities, foster social harmony, and ensure that no one is left behind in the process of development. This is consistent with Prime Minister Modi's credo of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas" (Participation of All, Development for All, Trust for All).

Synergies between Health and Education

For inclusive development, education and healthcare must be viewed synergistically. Better education leads to improved health outcomes, as educated individuals are more likely to understand and access healthcare services. Conversely, a healthy population is better able to participate in and benefit from educational opportunities. Programs that address health and nutrition of school-going children, such as the Midday Meal Scheme, which is a multi-faceted programme of the Government of India that seeks to tackle issues of food security, lack of nutrition, and access to education on a nationwide scale, exemplifies this synergy.

Role of Education

India has made significant progress in improving access to quality education, increasing school enrollment, and reducing the number of out-of-school children. These achievements have been strengthened by key legislations, policies, and schemes such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act (2009) which mandates eight years of quality education for all children aged 6-14; the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which complements the RTE by aiming to universalize elementary education, bridging social, regional, and gender gaps; the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy (2013); the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) which seeks to boost the quality of state institutions; and the National Education Policy (2020), a transformative policy designed to overhaul India's education system. Recognizing that formal education might not be the only path to employment, India has also emphasized vocational training through schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).

However, while policies abound, the implementation often witnesses disparities. Fragmented service delivery, bureaucratic delays, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of awareness among beneficiaries can impede progress.

In education, while enrollment numbers have surged, learning outcomes remain a concern. Teacher absenteeism, outdated curricula, and

India can harness mechanisms to cultivate a digitally skilled and future-ready workforce, facilitating the implementation of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and beyond. Consequently, digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity within the digital economy, and digital upskilling stand as imperative priorities.

India's Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization (WHO), at the G20 Health Ministers Meeting in August 2023.

inadequate infrastructure are critical challenges. Quality of education is also a major issue. Continuous teacher training and a shift towards learning outcomes rather than rote memorization are necessary. Lessons from the pandemic have also shown that making education more accessible through online platforms and digital tools can help advance learning outcomes and bridge the rural-urban divide.

Healthcare: Sustained Inclusive Development

India's healthcare system is characterized by a vast network of health facilities. Recent policy interventions have been focused on trying to improve the accessibility, affordability, and quality of healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. These include the National Health Mission (NHM) which aims to improve healthcare services by focusing on 18 states that have poor public health indicators and/or weak infrastructure; the Ayushman Bharat Scheme (2018), an ambitious initiative that aims to provide free healthcare coverage to over 500 million people, making it the world's largest government-sponsored healthcare scheme; the

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) which provides insurance cover for over 100 million vulnerable families; the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) which incentivizes institutional deliveries; and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program that focuses on holistic child development. These policies have contributed a great deal towards improving the inclusivity of healthcare delivery in India.
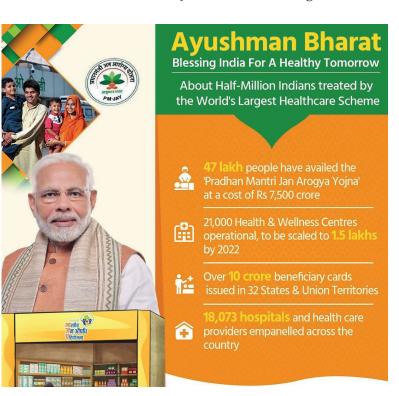
There are several challenges remaining with the delivery of healthcare. For instance, while insurance schemes have expanded access, quality of care can vary. Overburdened public health systems, lack of specialists in rural areas, and out-of-pocket expenditures remain pressing issues. The shortage of trained healthcare professionals is a major challenge. Incentivizing medical education and facilitating the deployment of healthcare workers in underserved areas is essential.

Lessons for the World

India assumed the year-long presidency of G20 in December 2022. Under India's G20 presidency, there has been a significant emphasis to push for inclusive development as a cornerstone of the global agenda. Given the complex and

interconnected challenges facing the world today—from economic inequality to climate change—leading such an influential group of countries has offered India a platform to drive meaningful change. India has vast experience in addressing challenges of poverty, innovation, and sustainability, and as G20 Member States position themselves to tackle these urgent issues at the G20 Summit in New Delhi in September 2023, India can leverage its own experience to promote inclusive development in various ways.

In the field of health, with respect to global health security, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, India has been leading discussions and actions to strengthen global preparedness for future pandemics, emphasizing the importance of healthcare infrastructure and rapid response systems. It has used the platform to improve international cooperation for future pandemic preparedness, including vaccine development, manufacturing and

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Ayushman Bharat
Blessing India For A Healthy Tomorrow

About Half-Million Indians treated by the World's Largest Healthcare Scheme

- **47 lakh** people have availed the 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna' at a cost of Rs 7,500 crore
- 21,000 Health & Wellness Centres operational, to be scaled to **1.5 lakhs** by 2022
- Over **10 crore** beneficiary cards issued in 32 States & Union Territories
- **18,073 hospitals** and health care providers empanelled across the country

a major global player, providing affordable medications and vaccines. India's emphasis on cost-effective healthcare solutions can provide a blueprint for nations looking to optimize healthcare expenditure without compromising on quality. Finally, leveraging its advancements in digital infrastructure, India is spearheading digital health initiatives that enable telemedicine, healthcare data analytics, and online health services to reach underserved populations.

India has also underscored the importance of inclusive and quality education as a means to foster sustainable development and economic growth. Education is central to the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). India could use its presidency to reiterate the importance of education in meeting these global goals, sharing strategies for effective implementation and monitoring. With the advent of digital technology in education, India could stress the importance of digital literacy as a fundamental skill and discuss initiatives to provide accessible and affordable digital tools for education. India's focus on education, epitomized by campaigns like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter), and innovations like the National Digital Library, offer lessons in using limited resources to achieve expansive goals. Finally, given the changing nature of the global job market, India could promote skill-based education and

distribution. India has also made strides in providing affordable healthcare solutions and can bring this experience to the G20 table. The country's pharmaceutical sector has also been

vocational training as a key agenda item, sharing its own experiences and programs like the Skill India initiative.

Development Journey

India's socio-economic landscape is diverse and complex, but the country's commitment to inclusive development, especially in education and healthcare, is unwavering. The recent policy initiatives in India show a strong commitment towards achieving inclusive development. However, effective and efficient implementation of these policies is key. This requires relentless political will, increased financial allocations, robust data systems for monitoring progress, and active participation of the civil society in holding the system accountable.

In an increasingly interconnected world, India's development journey holds lessons for many other nations striving to grow in an inclusive and sustainable manner. Today, as India successfully straddles the intersection of modernity and tradition, poised to become a USD 5 trillion economy, public-private partnerships, technology integration, community involvement, and robust monitoring mechanisms can fast-track the journey towards an inclusive and prosperous India. While challenges persist, the drive for inclusive development in India—by ensuring equitable access to quality education and healthcare—is a testament to the nation's vision for a sustainable, equitable and inclusive future.

India's experience and perspectives offer a rich source of insights for global challenges. As a key player in the G20, India not only stands to benefit from international cooperation but also has much to offer in shaping a more equitable and sustainable world order. ∎

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