Women and Social Exclusion in India

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Abstract

It is the common disease in our society that a number of certain groups on the basis of race, creed, colour and caste are excluded and this is considered as the social exclusion. Exclusion of the women on the basis of their strength, financial condition and many other things is becoming a routine. This paper discusses the implications of such exclusion, especially as manifest in discrimination in our man dominated society. After briefly explaining the concepts of social exclusion in various aspects of women life, the main focus of the paper is on the gender-based social exclusion and women labourer discrimination in India. This paper covers all types of exclusion faced by women. It concludes that even though the extent of discrimination and severity of discrimination has declined over the years, there is still a large degree of disadvantage faced by women in employment and wages. A large part of it is accounted for by differences in endowment among different social groups but a significant part is due to discrimination. The paper concludes by suggesting that capacity enhance and affirmative actions are necessary to bring about equality of opportunity in the society.

Key words: Exclusion, Inequality, Opportunity, Discrimination, Domestic Violence
Introduction

Concept of Exclusion

Exclusion is the denial of control over natural resources; the denial of opportunities for healthcare, education, housing; the denial of the right to participation in social, economic, political and cultural life; the denial of human rights and human dignity. Because it is an institutionalized and social/religiously sanctioned attempt to exclude, segregate or cast out a segment of the population, it is that much more difficult to change. But social exclusion is being challenged in India in multiple ways. (Dr Prakash Louis) Social exclusion, discrimination and identify-formation have become the central focus of discourse in India today. Social exclusion and discrimination refer to the process and outcome of keeping social groups outside power centres and resources. Identity-formation, on the other hand to the reformulation of one’s social characteristics and consequently self-determination. (Dr Prakash Louis) Exclusion and discrimination take different forms in different societies. They adapt and change themselves according to changing social reality. To say that in a modern, liberal society and polity, exclusion and discrimination are reduced or eliminated would not be in true with reality. To deny the scope of identity-formation even among the most discriminated social groups would also be unrealistic. (Dr Prakash Louis) The people included men, women and children who are partially treated against often end up excluded from society, the economy and political participation. There are very much chances they could be poor. These people are more likely to be denied access to income, assets and services. They generally bound to suffer from social exclusion – and poverty reduction is harder as a result. Exclusion is frequently more exquisite and accidental, for example when disabled people are excluded from services, markets and political participation through a lack of awareness of their needs or by social attitudes, or when minority groups are excluded by language barriers. In addition, the resulting sense of powerlessness can rob people of their self-confidence and aspirations and their ability to challenge exclusion. Exclusive growth on the other hand leaves a sizeable lot of population deprived of the fruits of growth. Since last few decades the condition of women have been very good as far as progressive status of women and girls is concerned, yet the cultural roots of gender inequality are still strong and affect both the genders in many ways. The high salaries and independent lifestyles of women in metropolitan cities of India have captured public imagination .The political visibility of women has improved with 33 percent reservation in gram panchayats (local governments). Due to many technical advancement in the field of medicines there have been declines in fertility and as a result they have freed up from the cycle of child bearing and child rearing and some Indian states resemble high income countries. Young women today are healthier and more educated than
their mothers were and there are indications that the infamous sex ratio at birth may be correcting itself (John et al, 2008; Dasgupta, Chung and Shuzhuo, 2009).

In spite of the above mentioned reasons the progress of women has been very unpredictable and slower than would have been expected based on India’s levels of per capita income. Females still have an overall survival deficit in childhood and during their reproductive years and are severely disadvantaged in the labour market. The lack of education among girls put them behind that of boys. But as in other areas, in gender inequality too, India is highly unpredictable. Outcomes for instance, tend to be much poorer among Adivasi (Scheduled Tribe), Dalit (Scheduled Caste), and Muslim women than among others. There are also large regional differences. The World Bank’s report on Poverty and Social Exclusion in India captures some key areas of female exclusion. The term ‘social exclusion’, however, seems to continue to be linked with employment status, as the starting point in the European context, even in more recent periods. While initially ineligibility for social protection due to not being in the labour force and, therefore, in employment, was seen as social exclusion, in later years especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, lack of work (unemployment) and vulnerable (low paid casual and informal employment without social protection which sharply increased in the wake of globalisation, was seen as a form of social exclusion (see e.g. a study of Paugam (1995) on France). Attempts have also been made to extend the concept further to relate it with poverty and social relationship, besides the labour market (e.g. Paugam (1996) in a multi country comparative study), and make it multi-dimensional incorporating lack of participation in what would be considered ‘normal activities’ – participation in consumption activity of at least a minimum level, productive activity by engaging in economically and socially valued work, political activity including voting and membership of political parties and social activity in terms of social interaction and membership of social-cultural organisation (see, e.g. a study by Burchardt et al, 1999) on Great Britain). An European Commission document, “Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion, Report of 1992”) defined social exclusion “in relation to social rights of citizens – to a certain basic standard of living and to participation in the major social and occupational opportunities of the society” (Gore, et al, 1995, p.2).

**Discrimination and Social Exclusion**

The phenomenon of social exclusion has existed in all societies and at different stages of their development. But its perception and forms have varied. In the European context of the later part of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries; the concept was viewed primarily with the prism of welfare state (Saith-2001). While all members in the group were treated equal and discrimination on the basis of colour, race and religion was not supposed to exist, yet some definite categories of people were excluded from the provisions of the welfare state. These provisions had their origin in social security and welfare measures introduced in
the case of factory workers (Bhalla and Lapeyere, 1999). Socially excluded were those not protected by these welfare provisions due to their not being eligible as they were not workers due to being mentally and physically handicapped, aged and invalid. Subsequently, of course, they were all covered by other provisions of the welfare state. The concept of ‘social exclusion’, however, seems to continue to be associated with employment status, as the starting point in the European context, even in more recent periods. While initially ineligibility for social protection due to not being in the labour force and, therefore, in employment, was seen as social exclusion, in later years especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, lack of work (unemployment) and vulnerable (low paid casual and informal employment without social protection which sharply increased in the wake of globalisation, was seen as a form of social exclusion (see e.g. a study of Paugam (1995) on France). Attempts have also been made to extend the concept further to relate it with poverty and social relationship, besides the labour market (e.g. Paugam (1996) in a multi country comparative study), and make it multi-dimensional incorporating lack of participation in what would be considered ‘normal activities’ – participation in consumption activity of at least a minimum level, productive activity by engaging in economically and socially valued work, political activity including voting and membership of political parties and social activity in terms of social interaction and membership of social-cultural organisation (see, e.g. a study by Burchardt et al, 1999) on Great Britain). An European Commission document, “Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion, Report of 1992”) defined social exclusion “in relation to social rights of citizens – to a certain basic standard of living and to participation in the major social and occupational opportunities of the society” (Gore, et al, 1995, p.2). It has been a matter of great concern that social exclusion in the European context has led to the advancement of the concept in two directions: first, focus on factors, processes and dynamics that lead to poverty, and second, encompassing a multidimensional concept of living conditions, going beyond the notion of income shortage (Berghman, 1995). This is a very good step from the ‘exclusion from the social protection’, ‘exclusion from welfare state’ and ‘exclusion in relation to employment’ approaches developed earlier. Universal application of any of these – old and new – concepts of social exclusion is, however, fraught with serious difficulties, especially in the case of developing countries. The criterion of non-availability of social protection would place a large majority of workers (86 per cent in the case of India, according to NCEUS (2006) in the category of ‘socially excluded’. The type of income support that the European countries with well-founded welfare state provide will require “an incomparably higher level of fiscal commitment in relation to resources” as it would have to be given to over half the population in these countries as compared to around ten per cent in industrialised countries (Osmani, 1991). And application of the criterion of lack of, or vulnerable and unprotected, employment would again qualify a large majority
(over 80 per cent in the case of India) of workers to be “socially excluded”. Viewing social exclusion in terms of poverty is no doubt, more meaningful, particularly if measured in a multi-dimensional mode. But here again the estimates of the socially excluded may turn out to be too large to be operationally meaningful. Use of income based poverty may yield more manageable estimates but that would be a rather limited approach to the concept. More important, poverty is an outcome, not a symptom of social exclusion. At the same time, social exclusion is, but not the only cause of poverty; nor is poverty the only outcome of social exclusion. It is not logically correct to identify one with the other.

**Exclusion of Women**

Women in South Asia form the most excluded and discriminated segment of the population. Patriarchy is the principal cause. Patriarchy constrains women in many ways. Control of women's reproductive abilities and sexuality is placed in men's hands. Patriarchy limits women's ownership and control of property and other economic resources, including the products of their own labour. Women's mobility is constrained and their access to education and information hindered. Over the years, it has been recognized that the experiences of the majority of women are grounded in both poverty and patriarchy. Both these feed into each other and subject women to exclusion and exploitation. Over the past three decades, theorists, practitioners and activists involved in both women's movements and women's studies around the world have also focused on attitudinal underpinnings in the relationship between men and women.

**Table 1: Perceptions about men and women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submissive</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive</td>
<td>Rational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>Courageous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Decisive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexy</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>Manipulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealous</td>
<td>Bold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>Goal-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Eloquent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The very perception of women by men (Table 1) is an indication of the exclusion and discrimination women are subjected to. In these ways, patriarchal structures perpetuate the enduring gaps between the opportunities available to South Asian women and South Asian men.
Exclusion of Minorities

The minority Muslim community is excluded in India. There are more Muslims below the poverty line than the total population. They earn less than the others. Only 21% of Muslims use the public distribution system (PDS) compared to 33.2% of the entire population (Table 2). Enrolment rates among them are lower, while dropout rates are higher.

Table 2: Levels of income and material wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty head count ratio (%)</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income (Rs)</td>
<td>22,807</td>
<td>25,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita income (Rs)</td>
<td>3,678</td>
<td>4,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work participation rate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisanship</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaried</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landholding -- household (acres)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchha houses (%)</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric connection (%)</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected water (%)</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having toilet (%)</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using PDS (%)</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zoya Hasan. Muslims In India: Why are they Excluded and Discriminated? A concept note prepared for DFID

Reasons of Social Exclusion

Another approach to the study of social exclusion is to identify the groups that are known to have been or are in danger of being socially excluded on the basis of their specific attributes and examine the mechanisms of their exclusion and possible ways of increasing their inclusion in the mainstream. Gender-based discrimination and exclusion is found to be a common phenomenon across the globe. It has been extensity studied and commented upon in its various dimensions including historical sexual division of work, discrimination in hiring, placements and promotions and differences in wages and earnings between women and men. Studies have also focused on differential rates of labour force and workforce participation by women and men and consequent underrepresentation of women in workforce; as well as the sex-based discrimination in family and society in the spheres of education and skill formation and attitudes towards women’s work — forms of discrimination that precede discrimination in the labour market and influence the gender based differences in employment and earnings.
Parallel to gender based discrimination and exclusion, most societies have also practised and observed social exclusion based on race, colour, creed and caste. Division of society and exclusion of some groups based on race and colour, have been part of social, political and economic history of many countries. The black-white division in the United States and ‘apartheid’ in South Africa are the most widely known and studied cases of this kind. In both cases, discrimination had its roots in slavery, was practised historically, led to dissensions and struggles, was finally recognised as unfair and unhealthy and measures were sought and used to remedy the situation. Discrimination against some groups based on their social attributes has been historically practised in several other countries also. Caste, ethnicity and religion, have most often been such attributes on the basis of which social exclusion and discrimination is practised. Among such cases, caste- based division in India, especially among the Hindus, is probably the most well-known and well documented and studied example of the phenomenon of social exclusion.. Exclusion based on social attributes of population groups is different from the kind discussed earlier in the European context. It is based on some group based attribute rather than the status of an individual (like ‘out of job’, in precarious job, without social protection, disabled, delinquent etc.). Since its basis is permanent and, therefore, the exclusion is perpetual and not transient. An unemployed person could become employed, but a member of a race, caste or ethnic group remains to belong to it. It is distinct even from the exclusion based on disability and delinquency in so far it is passed on in inheritance.

**Early Marriage**

The decision of marriage remains the key factor which is generally decided by the parents of the girl in Indian context and Indian women’s lives revolve and it has significant cultural and welfare implications. About 60 percent of Indian girls are married by the time they are 18, and many are married by age 15 (Desai et al 2010). Cohabitation occurs fairly soon, and almost one fourth of Indian women even in the 20–24 year age cohort have had their first child by the time they are 18. Globally, this puts India on par with Guyana and Senegal and at a level well below Vietnam, where only 4 percent of girls in the same age group have had a child by age 18 (PRB 2008). Early marriage has many negative effects on the lives of women and their children. A system of village exogamy that distances married women socially and geographically from their natal families prevents young women from being able to voice their needs during periods of strain. Combined with a system of patrilocality, which means that married women live in the family homes of their husbands, young brides, especially in rural areas, are often isolated in the families of their husbands. While a number of programs have targeted women in independent India, the focus on adolescent girls is a development of the last decade or so. The 11th FiveYear Plan for the first time placed policy emphasis on
adolescent girls as a discrete group in need of special attention. A new program, the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls, has been launched to provide resources to strengthen life skills among adolescent girls who are at risk of early marriage and early childbearing (see Government of India 2008, 2010).

Death due to Child Birth

Women dying unnecessarily in childbirth are very huge in numbers which points to deep seated problems. Indian women face a 1 in 70 risk of dying in childbirth, which falls at the high end of the global spectrum—Chinese women face a 1 in 1400 risk of maternal death, while risk among Vietnamese women is 1 in 280 (PRB, 2008). The poorer Indian states account for a majority of maternal deaths. More worryingly, these states also show a very slow decline in maternal mortality over time. Less than half of Indian women receive complete antenatal care and 60 percent of all childbirths take place at home. The outcomes are significantly worse for Adivasi women of whom nearly 80 percent give birth at home. Medical practitioners often cite ignorance as the reason for poor outcomes among women. It is true that among women interviewed for the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) in 2005–06 and who gave birth at home, 72 percent felt that to give birth in a medical facility was not necessary. However, the low demand for health care may also be triggered by gaps in supply, the inability to reach a health centre in the moment of need, and the lack of information on whether the health centre would be open.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence against women is widespread and the India Poverty and Social Exclusion Report find that it has strong association with women’s access to maternal health and the health of their children. According to the NFHS 2005/6, nearly one-third of Indian women have experienced spousal violence at some point in their lives. Nearly 81 percent of women who have never experienced violence reported receiving ante-natal care in the NFHS 2005/6, in contrast to only 67 percent among women who had experienced violence. The multivariate analysis shows poorer outcomes for women facing violence even after controlling for a number of household and individual characteristics, including ability to reach a health centre and whether distance to a health center is a problem. Women who have experienced such violence are also one and a half times more likely to have had a terminated pregnancy or still birth. Their children were 1.14 times more likely to be stunted than the children of mothers who had not been abused.

Labour Market

Peculiarities of the labour market that arise from the inseparability of the object for sale and the seller result in labour being always at a disadvantage, on the one hand, and make the labour market discrimination prone, on the other. Since it is in the nature of human beings to like some and dislike other persons, one has to forgo the services of those not liked, as buying
their services means approving of them. In other markets one can buy without getting influenced by the social attributes of the seller and even if the buyer dislikes the seller, the transaction can still take place, as the object of sale is independent of the seller. Labour market thus offers opportunities to exclude and discriminate rarely found in other markets. How does development in economic and social spheres influence the phenomena of segregation, social exclusion and discrimination in the labour market? Development includes expansion of transport and communication which facilitates greater mobility of people across locations and regions. In so far as that happens, labour market segmentation based on geographical location should decline. Lack of mobility due to socio-cultural, including linguistic reasons, may still remain and may eventually decline as a result of development of education, another essential component of development. Expansion of employment opportunities accompanying economic growth and development is likely to reduce un-employment and combined with increase in mobility, will reduce the disadvantage that labour suffers Vis a Vis capital. Greater market penetration is also likely to bring in a change in value orientation leading to dilution in the influence of cognitive factors in labour market decisions. Increasing demand for labour leading to a tightening of the labour market could also dilute the extent of social exclusion and discrimination, as the employers may not get enough supply of labour from amongst ‘included’ and ‘preferred’ social groups.

Urban labour markets are especially unfriendly to women. As against over one third of rural workers, only 18 per cent of urban workers are women. In larger cities their share is still lower around 12 to 15 per cent. Workforce participation rate is as low as 14 per cent as against 55 per cent for men in urban areas; the two rates are 29 and 55 respectively in rural areas (CSO, 2010). Lower workforce participation is a result both of lower labour force participation rate – a smaller percentage of women than of men actually looking for work – and of the employers preferring to employ men rather than women, reflecting labour market discrimination. Labour force participation rates are generally much lower among women than among men, but the gap is much larger in urban than in rural areas: during 2007-08, labour force participation rates among men were estimated to be 55 per cent in rural and 57 per cent in urban areas, but only 22 per cent in rural and 14 per cent in urban areas, among women (CSO, 2010). That of those looking for work, a smaller proportion of among women than among men found jobs was evident by a higher rate of unemployment among women than among men, especially in urban areas. Unemployment rates were around 2 per cent both for men and women in rural areas, but in urban areas, female unemployment rates were around 7 per cent as against 4 per cent in the case of males. That women have a lower chance of getting jobs than men and employers clearly discriminate against women in hiring, wage fixing and promotion is demonstrated by several field studies. For example, a study of recruitment in a sample of enterprises over a period of two years in the city of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh,
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During 1980s found that selection to application ratio with similar qualifications was 0.034 among men, but lower at 0.025 for women candidates (Papola, 1986). To begin with, a smaller number of women than men apply for jobs: on an average 22 persons applied for a job of whom 17 were men and 5 women. In so far as excess supply of labour and unemployment persist, as is commonly found to be the case, the phenomena of social exclusion and discrimination are likely to continue. It is indeed important to study whether and to what extent development leads to a ‘secularisation’ of the labour market by reducing social exclusion and discrimination practised against certain social groups. Is certain pattern of development more ‘inclusive’ than others and what kinds of interventions – capacity building and/or affirmative action are likely to prove effective to redress the disadvantage of the excluded and discriminated groups?

Exclusion Based on Caste

Social exclusion based on caste is by far the most common among its various forms practised in India. Discrimination against certain caste groups is generally a practice observed in Hindu society though in its broader interpretation which identifies dalits as the excluded groups it could be seen among other religious groups as well. Exclusion of ethnic groups commonly identified as scheduled tribes is of somewhat different nature as the basis of exclusion here is not one’s position in caste-hierarchy, but cultural and geographical isolation. Caste system has been a mechanism for social and economic governance of Hindu society since ages. It divides people in social groups with pre-determined and ascribed rights and responsibilities in public sphere. It envisages a broad division of labour in social and productive functions. A person belongs to a group by birth and heredity, not by any acquired attributes. The most distinctive feature of the caste system is that it is hierarchical. It identifies castes as higher and lower, and superior and subordinate. Corresponding to them are superior and inferior occupations. Social exclusion of lower castes from occupations and activities seen as superior and respectable, and unfavourable (forced) inclusion in inferior and often “polluting” ones thus has been an integral part of the caste system and practised over centuries. Customary rules and norms were set to implement the system which were reinforced with religious and ritual sanctions (Scoville, 1991).

Effect of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion explains why some groups of people remain poorer than others, have less food, die younger, are less economically or politically involved, and are less likely to benefit from services. This makes it difficult to achieve the MDGs in some countries without particular strategies that directly tackle exclusion.
Poverty and Hunger

In Vietnam, the government estimates that, by 2010, 90% of the poverty in the country will be among ethnic minorities. • In Bolivia, the poverty rate among the non-white population is 37%, compared with 17% for the white population. • In Tanzania, households with disabled members are 20% more likely to be living in poverty. • 100 million older people live on less than a dollar a day, and 80% of older people in developing countries have no regular income. • Women account for nearly 70% of the 1.2 billion people currently living in extreme poverty.

Women Health

In Brazil, nearly three times as many black women as white women die from the complications of pregnancy and childbirth. • In Guatemala, the number of children dying before they reach their fifth birthday is 56 in every 1000 for children of European descent, compared with 79 in every 1000 in the indigenous population. • In India, it is estimated that discrimination against girls increases the total rate of child mortality by 20%.

Education

In Serbia and Montenegro, 30% of Roma children have never attended primary school. • In the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, primary school enrolment for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls is 37%, compared with 60% for girls from non-scheduled castes. Among boys from non-scheduled castes, 77% are enrolled.

Gender Biasedness

A study in Namibia found 44% of widows lost cattle, 28% lost small livestock, and 41% lost farm equipment in disputes with their in-laws after their husbands died. • Women hold fewer than 13% of the world’s parliamentary seats – and in developing countries they hold fewer than 9% of seats. • Globally, 16-50% of women in steady relationships have been physically assaulted by their partners.

Conclusion

The availability of information is clearly essential for a better estimate of the extent to which the socially excluded among the poor systematically report lower levels of income and capabilities than others while more detailed qualitative research can help to uncover the mechanisms by which exclusion is reproduced over time. The agencies responsible for collecting data at both national and international levels may need greater disaggregation of the poor than has hitherto been the case. Cultural norms and values which lead to the persistent discrimination against excluded groups can be changed through the educational system, the media, public campaigns and setting up a legal framework which discourages discriminatory behaviour and strengthens the civil and political rights of excluded groups. The content of the educational curriculum, the language in which it is taught and the extent to which teachers are
drawn from, or at least sympathetic to, Addressing social exclusion will require changing the attitudes of those responsible for policy delivery, tailoring policy design to the pace at which change takes place in conditions of intransient poverty, earmarking the resources necessary to ensure these provisions are implemented and, above all, creating mechanisms which allow those who have a stake in the success of these efforts to participate in their design. Strengthening the voice of the socially excluded in policy and political processes may mean changing the way that these processes are done. The decentralisation of governance structures would appear to be an essential element of this change. How decentralisation is carried out, what powers and responsibilities are devolved may vary by context but bringing the power of the state within the reach of actors who cannot access more remote centralised structures of power must be an important precondition for building participation and accountability. To make a difference, NGOs must not operate in isolation and must broaden their perspectives. In February 2014, for example, representatives from 80 NGOs, trade unions, alliances of organizations and social movements working with people dependent on the informal economy drafted a Working People’s Charter. Their demands for social security included:

Old-age pension and health benefits along with employer liability; contribution towards a provident fund; Compensation for workplace related injuries and hazards, pension and gratuity; maternity benefits and crèche facilities; Expansion of the Employees State Insurance scheme to all in the informal sector; Set aside 3 per cent of the total annual revenue of the central government to form a recurring welfare fund for unorganized sector workers who are currently not covered; Ensure registration and recognition of all workers under the tripartite welfare board; On closure of a company, first charge of a portion of its assets to be used for workers’ compensation and rehabilitation; Host-state welfare schemes to be open to interstate migrant workers; Ensure compensatory allowances for disabled communities to help them function at the workspace; Right of protection to those unable to work, for example the very young, elderly, ill, and, those with severe disabilities; State to ensure employment and provide skills training to the youth of working families and the Right to Housing.

Inequalities along group lines are not only visible despite decades of equality before the law, but they are also increasing with India’s economic growth. This observation is a powerful reminder that a framework on human development cannot ignore dynamics of social exclusion if it is to be relevant in today’s world. The trajectories of the four excluded groups outline four key recommendations for the post-2015 framework: 1.It should embed targets in the existing human rights framework; 2. Call on governments to frame policies, planned around systemic vulnerabilities of the group; 3. Link policy targets with the requirements to report group-wise progress on the goats with a gender disaggregation for each group; 4. Go beyond opening spaces for consultations with civil society organisations and involve those it
aims to serve in the planning, implementation and review of the new framework by meeting them in their own spaces and through their own representatives.

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