

Bridging Inequality: Social Inclusion and Poverty Alleviation in India and Brazil

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ABSTRACT

In developing countries like India and Brazil, social exclusion prevents access to the political, economic and social aspects of life. There is a need to address the root causes of structural exclusion and discrimination to eliminate poverty and to support sustainable, inclusive growth. At this juncture, there is a need for social inclusion, which can support economic growth. Both India and Brazil have a record of suffering from economic, social, political and regional inequalities along the lines of race, sex, class, caste or regionally biased. This makes them unique case studies that help them understand different dimensions of inequality. The 2030 Agenda aspires to “leave no one behind” and to eradicate poverty by 2030. Both nations have implemented various social welfare schemes as emerging economies from the Global South, and their architecture of poverty reduction included alternative models to the Western models of poverty reduction. They emphasised the approaches that are based on participatory democracy. This is a unique feature that brings them together. Despite the challenges they faced in strengthening their democracy, they have strengthened democratic systems where social movements, actions of the judiciary and political advocacy give shape to the efforts of social inclusion by proving that democracy aims at addressing social inequality and establishing social inclusion.

Keywords: Social Inclusion, Marginalised, Social Exclusion, Affirmative action, Poverty Alleviation,

INTRODUCTION

In developing countries like India and Brazil, some factors or groups encounter barriers that prevent them from accessing the political, economic, and social aspects of life. These encountering groups are excluded through legal systems, biased or inequitable attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. These groups are disadvantaged based on gender, age, race, religion, citizenship, disability, occupation and gender identity, among many factors. This social exclusion environment suffocates the individuals of their dignity, an opportunity to lead a standard and comfortable life and the security revolving around it. There is a need to address the root causes of structural exclusion and discrimination to eliminate poverty and to support sustainable, inclusive growth. At this juncture, there is a need for social inclusion, which can support economic growth. If not addressed, it can be costly to economic development as it can impact the socio-political and financial aspects of individuals' lives, the nation at large, and humanity at the global level. At the individual level, the impact could be the loss of wages, quality of education, savings and employment opportunities. At the national level, it impacts the economic development as a whole. At the global level, it is the human development index. The World Bank Group has made social inclusion a vital component in achieving its twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. For the World Bank to intervene in the development and to achieve sustainable development, it affirms that social inclusion is critical, as mentioned in the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF).¹ To understand the concept of social inclusion, let us see what the literature describes and discusses.

Academic literature on social inclusion: Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society, improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those

¹ World Bank. (2016). *World Bank Environmental and Social Framework*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/837721522762050108-0290022018/original/ESFFramework.pdf>

disadvantaged based on their identity.² Social inclusion aims to amend and overthrow the hurdles and the imbalances that are produced by social exclusion. Social exclusion is more focused on the systematic marginalisation of individuals and communities from socio-economic security and equal access to public work and services.³ In the process of formulating agendas for development UN has included social inclusion and social integration, which were used interchangeably. For the first time, social integration with the concept of social exclusion was introduced in the UN Copenhagen summit on social development in 1995. The social summit has defined the concept of an inclusive society as “in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play”.⁴ The summit has defined the concept of ‘social integration’ as that which upholds the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as the ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life, encompasses all aspects of social development and all policies which call for a strong economic environment founded on freedom and responsibility. This can be achieved with the complete involvement of the state and civil society.⁵

One of the first to deal with the issue of social inclusion/exclusion in Asia was Dr Amartya Sen.. In his work on gender-based exclusion, “resulting in the millions of missing women in South Asia”, Amartya Sen discussed subjects relating to social exclusion.⁶ He mentioned in his work that there exists a specific type of social exclusion, which is basic education and elementary social opportunities that are like plagues on the economies of the West and South Asia.⁷

This concept of social inclusion, and in the policy-making proposals of the United Nations, did not surface in the two poverty eradication decades that followed the Copenhagen Summit, nor the concept in the Millennium Declaration.⁸ This concept has surfaced in the formal call for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty – 2018. UNDESA stated that the Government policies alone cannot create social inclusion for the people who are left far behind, and there is a need for them to overcome poverty in all its dimensions⁹. The key concept of social inclusion surfaced in the global intergovernmental UN debates in the UN agenda for Sustainable Development Goals¹⁰ According to the resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 25th of September 2015, on Transforming our world: 2030 agenda for Sustainable development, “Sustainable Development recognises the eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are linked to each other and are interdependent.¹¹. Inclusiveness is a notion that makes cities and human settlements inclusive of social, political and economic aspects, with sustainability as a basic principle and providing justice based on social, economic and political aspects by constructing institutions which are inclusive at all levels for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda aspires to “leave no one behind” and to eradicate poverty by 2030. Strengthening social inclusion is highlighted in CSocD63. The 63rd Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD63), which was held from 10th to 14th February 2025, aimed to take forward global commitments to social inclusion, resilience,

² World Bank. (n.d.). *Social inclusion*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion>

³ Koehler, G., Cimagamora, A. D., Kiwan, F., & Monreal Gonzalez, P. M. (Eds.). (2020). *The politics of social inclusion: Bridging knowledge and policies towards social change* (p. 15). ibidem Press.

⁴ Koehler et al., 2020, p. 22

⁵ United Nations. (1995). *Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development* (A/CONF.166/9, Chapter I, Annexe II, p. 1). United Nations. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.166_9_PoA.pdf

⁶ Sen, A. (1990, December 20). *More than 100 million women are missing*. *The New York Review of Books*. Retrieved from www.nybooks.com/articles/1990/12/20/morethan-100-million-women-are-missing/

⁷ Sen, A. (2000). *Social exclusion: Concept, application, and scrutiny* (Social Development Papers No. 1, p. 31). Manila: Asian Development Bank, Office of Environment and Social Development. Retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29778/social-exclusion.pdf>

⁸ United Nations. (2000). *United Nations Millennium Declaration* (Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/55/2). New York: United Nations. Retrieved from

⁹ Koehler et al., 2020, p. 23

¹⁰ United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1). United Nations. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

¹¹ United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1, Article 13, p. 5). New York: United Nations. Retrieved from

https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf

and solidarity in alignment with the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Agenda for 2030 for Sustainable Development.¹²

Whether it is the United Nations resolutions, the World Bank summits, Amartya Sen, Gabriele Koehler, Alberto D. Cusumano, they aimed at sustainable development goals through social inclusion and excluding social exclusion. The main aim of the international organisations is to see that the nations leave no one behind so that global commitments to solidarity and sustainable development can be achieved. As emerging economies, India and Brazil are struggling with inequalities significantly. They are marked by large, diverse populations and histories of entrenched social hierarchies, and continue to this day with deep-rooted economic and social differences. India's caste, class and religious differences, along with Brazil's racial and regional inequalities, have navigated their course of development. As contesting leading economies of the global south, India and Brazil have implemented many poverty reduction and welfare programmes that reflect their social inclusion and welfare governance model. Understanding these dynamics develops insights into the role of democratic governance and social policy innovation in fostering more inclusive societies to attain sustainable development.

India and Brazil as emerging economies with significant inequality:

Inequality in India has been a concern for the nation as such. The 2011 assessment of Indian poverty by the World Bank states that when inequality is founded on income rather than consumption measures, India is in no way different from countries like Brazil and South Africa in terms of inequality.¹³ India stands among those countries with the highest recorded inequality if it is measured based on per capita income. Both India and Brazil have a record of suffering from economic, social, political and regional inequalities along the lines of race, sex, class, caste or regionally biased. This makes them unique case studies to understand different dimensions of inequality. These democratic countries have huge populations with diverse societies, where Brazil stands with racial and regional diversities and India with diversities in caste, sex, religion and ethnicity. These diversities make it difficult to bridge the gap of social inclusion. The exploited caste system of India since the external invasions and the colonial history of slavery in Brazil, deep-rooted social hierarchies which still influence social, political and economic aspects of the society. Both nations have implemented various social welfare schemes as emerging economies from the Global South, and their architecture of poverty reduction included alternative models to the Western models of poverty reduction. They emphasised the approaches that are based on participatory democracy. This is a unique feature that brings them together. Despite the challenges they faced in strengthening their democracy, they have strengthened democratic systems where social movements, actions of the judiciary and political advocacy give shape to the efforts of social inclusion by proving that democracy aims at addressing social inequality and establishing social inclusion.

The difference in the effectiveness of welfare strategies can be understood by comparing the paths that India and Brazil deploy to achieve social inclusion, like the stronger role of race in Brazil with that of caste and religion in India. The study of both India and Brazil provides a framework for understanding the strategies and challenges that are involved in bridging inequality through social inclusion and poverty alleviation. Both these nations with diverse populations continue to grapple with deep-seated economic and social disparities. The diversified inequalities have shaped their trajectories of development on democratic lines. As emerging economies and vibrant democracies of the Global South, India and Brazil have implemented notable poverty reduction programs such as India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and Brazil's Bolsa Família, reflecting different models of welfare and inclusion. Examining their experiences not only provides insights into the dynamics of inequality but also highlights the role of democratic governance, social policy innovation and grassroots mobilisation in fostering more inclusive societies.

¹² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2025). *63rd session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD63)*. Retrieved from <https://social.desa.un.org/csocd/63rd-session>

¹³ Badda, J. P., & Burra, N. and others (2011). *Poverty and social exclusion in India (Vol. 1 of 2): Main report* (pp. 1–2). Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/857771468260645048>

When comparing India and Brazil, social inclusion strategies highlight the critical role of context-specific interventions in addressing systemic inequalities. In India, affirmative action policies established by the constitution – Articles 15 (4), 16(4), and 46 – mandate reservations of 15% for Scheduled Castes (SCs), 7.5% for Scheduled Tribes (STs), and 27% for Other Backward Classes (OBC)s in public sector employment and education, covering nearly 50% of the population [Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 2022]. Despite different efforts from the government, some disparities exist. The 2019-20 periodic labour force survey shows that Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India face persistent exclusion in employment, with an unemployment rate of 8.4% compared to the national average of 6.5% (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation¹⁴). This inequality persists in education as well as SC literacy rates trail the general population by 8 percentage points.¹⁵ In Brazil, despite the huge success in reducing the national poverty of the Bolsa Família program, the racial disparities continue. Afro-Brazilians make up only 56% of the income of the white Brazilians, and they account for more than 75% of the victims of homicide, which highlights deep social and economic segregation.¹⁶ These structural differences that exist in society are examples of the patterns that underscore the limitations of inclusion policies in India and Brazil. The same Bolsa Familia program, which was launched in 2003, distributed conditional cash transfers to families and reached 25% of the Brazilian population by 2014.¹⁷ The Bolsa Familia program reduced the national Gini index from 0.58 in 2001 to 0.51 in 2015.¹⁸ When it comes to education, the SC dropout rate at the secondary school level decreased from 52% in 2001 to 37% in 2018.¹⁹ Whereas in Brazil, secondary school enrolment among the Afro-Brazilian youth improved from 45% in 2000 to 68% in 2018.²⁰ Brazil has implemented racial quotas in the admissions of the university, with 50% of places being reserved for students in public universities from public schools and marginalised racial groups²¹. Comparing these two countries highlights the effectiveness of different policies – structural affirmative action in India versus targeted poverty alleviation and racial quotas in Brazil – in improving social and economic outcomes among historically excluded groups.

Comparative Insights into Social Protection Models:

The comparison of India's and Brazil's outcomes and strategies for social inclusion and poverty alleviation is significant. Both nations are large, diverse and rapidly developing countries with significant challenges in poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Yet, they have adopted different paths and approaches with a similar goal to achieve.

- Brazil has emphasised direct cash transfers and worked on social programs like Bolsa Família. They have worked towards a significant reduction of poverty and improvement in health and education outcomes.²² Though India didn't work on direct cash transfers, it has taken a more multi-pronged approach, including a guarantee for employment [MGNREGA], subsidies, along with experiments in Direct Benefit transfers (DBT).²³
- Brazil's integrated social registry [Cadastro Unico] provides a useful model for unified data on low-income populations, which India can seek to build through Aadhaar-linked systems. India's scale of

¹⁴ Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). (2021). *Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2019–20: Annual report*. Government of India. Retrieved from <https://mospi.gov.in>

¹⁵ Census of India. (2011). *Primary Census Abstract: Data highlights*. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. Retrieved from <http://censusindia.gov.in>

¹⁶ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (2022). *Desigualdades sociais por cor ou raça no Brasil*. <https://www.ibge.gov.br>

¹⁷ Ministry of Social Development. (2014). *Bolsa Família Program: A decade of social inclusion in Brazil*. Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger, Brazil.

¹⁸ World Bank. (2016). *Shared prosperity and poverty eradication in Brazil: Recent progress and future challenges*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25880>

¹⁹ Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). (2018). *Educational statistics at a glance*. Government of India.

²⁰ Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA). (2019). *Social Panorama of Brazil*. Brasília: IPEA

²¹ Brazil, Law No. 12.711/2012. (2012). *Lei nº 12.711, de 29 de agosto de 2012: Dispõe sobre o acesso ao ensino superior e técnico no Brasil*. Diário Oficial da União

²² Lindert, K., Linder, A., Hobbs, J., & de la Brière, B. (2007). *The nuts and bolts of Brazil's Bolsa Familia Program: Implementing conditional cash transfers in a decentralised context* (pp. 4–13). World Bank.

²³ Drèze, J., & Khera, R. (2017). Recent social security initiatives in India. *World Development*, 98, 555–572.

rural employment guarantees [MGNREGA] offers insight into public works as a form of social protection and empowerment.²⁴

- Brazil and India have made their social, political and economic investment in evaluating the effectiveness of their programs. Brazil witnessed a notable reduction in income inequality during the 2000s, and it was largely attributed to the contribution of Bolsa Família and increased minimum wages.²⁵ Whereas in India, MGNREGA has been linked to increased rural wages, reduced distress migration and enhanced women's participation in the labour force.

These comparative frameworks can promote policy innovation. By comparing the national cases, cross-regional learning and adaptive governance can be encouraged. It highlights how institutional capacity, political commitment and citizen engagement shape social inclusion policies.²⁶

Summary table comparing India and Brazil's strategies and outcomes for social inclusion and poverty alleviation:

Table-1

DIMENSION	INDIA	BRAZIL
Main Strategy	Employment guarantees (e.g., MGNREGA), subsidies, food security (PDS), Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT)	Conditional Cash Transfers (e.g., Bolsa Família), social pensions, universal healthcare (SUS)
Flagship Program	MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act)	Bolsa Família Program
Targeting Mechanism	Aadhaar-based identification, Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC)	Cadastro Único – Unified Social Registry
Program Type	Public employment, food and fuel subsidies, and partial cash transfers	Conditional cash transfers linked to education and health
Coverage	Over 100 million households in MGNREGA; ~800 million under the National Food Security Act	~14 million families covered under Bolsa Família
Poverty Reduction Impact	Rural poverty decline; improved household consumption; reduced distress migration (Drèze & Khera, 2017)	Poverty halved from 2003 to 2013; major drop in Gini index (Soares et al., 2010)
Gender & Social Equity	Higher female participation in MGNREGA, some caste-targeted programs	Empowerment of women via direct benefits; focus on racial equity
Delivery Innovations	Aadhaar-linked DBT; JAM trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, Mobile)	Smart card-based transfers; municipal coordination

²⁴ Jha, R., Gaiha, R., Shankar, S., & Katsushi Imai, K. (2012). *Temporal and spatial poverty in India: Lessons from a long panel*. Journal of Asian Economics, 23(4), 405–417

²⁵ Soares, F. V., Osório, R. G., Soares, S., Medeiros, M., & Zepeda, E. (2010). *Conditional cash transfers in Brazil, Chile and Mexico: Impacts upon inequality*. Estudios Económicos.

²⁶ Hickey, S., Sen, K., & Bukenya, B. (Eds.). (2020). *The Politics of Social Protection in Eastern and Southern Africa*. Oxford University Press

Challenges	Leakages in PDS, exclusion errors in DBT, delays in wage payments	Graduation from poverty unclear; political volatility affects program continuity
Policy Lessons	Importance of legal entitlements, decentralised implementation	Importance of conditionality, unified data, and integration of services

In the Socio-Economic context of comparison, India has a diverse population, a caste system, a rural-urban divide, and economic growth with disparities. Whereas Brazil with racial and regional inequalities, a history of social exclusion, and urban poverty (favelas). Their unique identities of political, institutional, and social dynamics have shaped their approaches to poverty reduction and social inclusion.

After the democratic transition in the mid-1980s, Brazil has adopted proactive social policies for poverty alleviation. The introduction of the federal Constitution of 1988 laid the groundwork for the expansion of social welfare programs. The Bolsa Família program was a prestigious program for the government of Brazil, launched in 2003 by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. It provides a conditional cash transfer as a financial aid to low-income families to contingent upon children attending school and receiving vaccinations. It aimed to address immediate poverty while promoting long-term human capital development. By 2011, the program covered approximately 26% of Brazil's population, which resulted in a significant reduction in poverty and inequality. Between 1999 and 2009, extreme poverty decreased from 15% to 5%, and the Gini index, a measure of income inequality, dropped from 69% to 54%.²⁷

In India, the strategy for the alleviation of poverty was based on rights-based frameworks that aimed at empowering the marginalised communities. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, guarantees 100 days of wage employment per year to rural households, aiming to enhance the security of livelihood. The National Food Security Act (NFSA) of 2013 seeks to provide subsidised food grains to approximately two-thirds of the Indian population. They are designed to address the structural inequalities and promote social inclusion by providing basic privileges, though challenges exist in the implementation.

The comparative experiences of both India and Brazil show that while structural reforms like affirmative action and targeted poverty alleviation can significantly advance social inclusion, their success ultimately depends on sustained political commitment, continuous adaptation, and addressing deeper cultural biases that persist beyond economic indicators. Social inclusion is not achieved by policy alone, but by reshaping the very structures of opportunity, dignity and representation, which is inevitable from the experiences of India and Brazil.²⁸

Government Policies and Programs:

Table-2 Comparative Government Policies on Social Inclusion – India and Brazil

Policy Domain	India	Brazil
Affirmative Action	Reservation quotas for SCs, STs, OBCs in education, employment, and legislatures (Art. 15 & 16 of the Constitution).	Racial quotas in federal universities (Law 12.711/2012); Affirmative policies targeting Afro-Brazilians and indigenous peoples.

²⁷ Soares, S., Osório, R. G., Soares, F. V., Medeiros, M., & Zepeda, E. (2010). *Evaluating the impact of Brazil's Bolsa Família: Cash transfer programs in comparative perspective* (pp. 20–21). International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.

²⁸ World Bank. (2003). *Rural poverty alleviation in Brazil: Toward an integrated strategy*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://hdl.handle.net/10986/15115>

Poverty Alleviation	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 – guaranteed wage employment for rural households.	Bolsa Família / Auxílio Brasil – conditional cash transfers to poor families, improving education and health access.
Education Inclusion	Right to Education Act (2009) – free education for ages 6–14; 25% quota in private schools for disadvantaged children.	Statute of Racial Equality (2010); legal instruments for anti-discrimination and social equity.
Economic Empowerment	Stand-Up India Scheme (2016) – loans for SC/ST and women entrepreneurs.	Affirmative microcredit and housing policies, such as Minha Casa Minha Vida, target low-income families.
Legal Frameworks for Equality	Constitutional guarantees for social justice; National Commissions for SC/STs.	Statute of Racial Equality (2010); legal instruments for anti-discrimination and social equity.

The approaches of both India and Brazil differ in their emphasis and design in the implementation of policies towards social inclusion. India's strategy is based on affirmative action through constitutionally mandated reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backwards Classes in education, public employment, and political representation as enshrined in the articles of the Indian Constitution. Brazil, in contrast, has implemented poverty alleviation and racial inclusion through universalist and targeted social programs. India's model is centred around caste-based legal entitlements and targeted support. Brazil has leaned towards redistributive welfare and anti-racism policies rooted in its recognition of racial disparities.

Challenges in the implementation of social inclusion in both India and Brazil:

In both India and Brazil, the implementation of social inclusion has significant challenges due to their historical, social, economic and political factors. Both are large, diverse and developing nations with the legacies of inequality deeply rooted, and face distinct as well as overlapping obstacles. In India, the caste system historically institutionalised social exclusion. Despite legal safeguards like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, discrimination persists in employment, education, and housing. Brazil's history of slavery resulted in racial inequalities. Afro-Brazilians constitute over 55% of the population but are vastly underrepresented in higher education and better-paying jobs. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2020) found that white Brazilians earn 73% more than black Brazilians. [IBGE (2020, 2021). *Various statistical reports*]. In India, informal labour is more prevalent, and schemes like MNREGA are often mismanaged or not funded to the extent that is needed. Welfare schemes are often under criticism for corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and lack of transparency. In the Public Distribution System (PDS), a study of Jharkhand found that 30% of the food grains were missing. [Khera, R. (2011). *Trends in PDS Performance*].

Despite notable advancements in social inclusion policy, India and Brazil face persistent structural and administrative challenges that hinder effective implementation. Corruption and inefficiencies in implementation undermine the delivery of welfare programs. Brazil's flagship programs, like Bolsa Família and public housing under Minha Casa Minha Vida, have faced the challenges of political clientelism and misappropriation of funds.²⁹ Similarly, in India, irregularities in the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and leakages in employment and housing schemes have raised challenges over transparency and accountability.³⁰ Another major challenge is resource allocation and infrastructure disparities that hinder the implementation. The rural

²⁹ Hunter, W., & Sugiyama, N. B. (2014). *Democracy and Social Policy in Brazil: Advancing Basic Needs, Preserving Privileged Interests*. Latin American Politics and Society, 56(2).

³⁰ Drèze, J., & Khera, R. (2015). *Understanding Leakages in the Public Distribution System*. Economic & Political Weekly, 50(7).

health centres in India and schools often suffer from a lack of sufficient staff and funds. Whereas in Brazil, the disparities between wealthier southern states and poorer northern states persist despite efforts at fiscal decentralisation.³¹ Both nations are struggling with implementation gaps and rising urban poverty, which is leading to the expansion of informal employment. 90% of the labour force in India is employed informally, limiting access to healthcare and social security.³² These challenges persist to limit the potential transformation of the inclusive policies, further necessitating reforms and structural changes focused on governance and policy making.

Comparative insights:

India and Brazil have a contrasting yet complementary approach to social inclusion. They provide valuable insights for each other. Brazil's universalist social program provides immediate relief to economically marginalised populations regardless of racial and class identity. Whereas India's structured affirmative action system is deep-rooted in its constitutional mandates and implemented through caste-based reservations, it validates a long-term commitment to addressing inequalities in access to employment, political representation and education. India could benefit from Brazil's integrated cross-sectoral welfare approach, and Brazil can look to India's institutionalised mechanisms for legal redress and quota-based inclusion, most importantly for Afro-Brazilian and indigenous populations. Brazil has a decentralised system for a community-participatory model in healthcare delivery under the Unified Health System (SUS) could inspire India to deepen decentralisation and community engagement in public health. Both of these can have an integrated hybrid approach that could enhance social equity.

Table-3 The Contributions of Social Inclusion to Sustainable Growth between India and Brazil, 2024.

Country	Key Social Inclusion Initiative	Impact on Sustainable Growth	Economic Growth	Social Outcomes
India	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	Provides 100 days of wage employment to rural households to promote livelihoods and reduce poverty.	Increased rural incomes	Strengthened rural communities
			Reduced migration to urban areas	Reduced income disparity
				Promoted sustainable rural development practices
Brazil	Bolsa Família Program	The program provides financial aid to low-income families, conditional on school attendance and healthcare checkups.	Reduced poverty and inequality, increasing economic participation.	Increased school enrollment and health improvements for marginalised groups.
				Indirect impact through promoting sustainable livelihoods

Table-4 Analytical breakdown of the contributions of social inclusion to sustainable growth in some countries, 2024.

Country	Social Inclusion Initiative	GDP Growth Contribution (%)	Poverty Reduction (%)	Increase in Employment (%)	Social Cohesion Index	Environmental Sustainability Score
India	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment	1.80%	20% reduction	+5% rural employment	Moderate (7.2/10)	6.8/10

³¹ Berman, P., & Ahuja, R. (2008). *Government Health Spending in India*. Health Affairs, 27(4).

³² International Labour Organisation (ILO). (2018). *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture (3rd ed.*

	Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)					
Brazil	Bolsa Família (Cash Transfer Programs)	1.50%	25% reduction	+3% employment in rural areas	Moderate (7.0/10)	6.5/10

The contributions of social inclusion to sustainable growth in India, if we take MNREGA, it provides 100 days of wage employment to rural households to promote livelihoods and reduce poverty. It increased rural incomes and reduced migration to urban areas. It helped in the 20% reduction of poverty and a +5% increase in rural employment with +1.8% growth in GDP.³³ It strengthened rural communities and reduced income disparity by providing rural development practices.³⁴ Whereas in the case of Brazil's Bolsa Família, the GDP growth rate is +1.5%, and a reduction of poverty by 25%, with a +3% increase in rural employment.³⁵ The Program has contributed to economic growth by reducing poverty and inequality, increasing economic participation. It has increased school enrolment and health improvements for marginalised groups.³⁶

CONCLUSION

There is a need to reiterate the importance of inclusive development in ensuring long-term prosperity and stability. For India progressive civil society has developed a five-pronged approach to address social exclusion and promote social inclusion for prosperity and development. Based on a systematic study and observation, '5Rs' – recognition, respect, representation, reparation and reclamation- are adopted as a framework for social inclusion. This is built on the principles of social equity and integrated with the rights-based approach. This framework is beyond charity, patronage and development to emphasise the need for social equality.³⁷ In this framework for social inclusion, Recognition aims to recognise the excluded social groups and find the root causes. It also tries to find the form and nature of social exclusion, with the magnitude of the issue in terms of inequalities, development, population etc... Respect aims to regain the respect of the identity, culture and practices of the groups that are excluded and ensuring their dignity by respecting their contribution and leadership in the growth and development of the nation. This framework includes representation at various levels of social and public spaces. It reiterates the representation of concerns, policies and provisions of the socially excluded. The broad framework aims at the reparation of adequate and effective legislative and other measures to address social and economic disadvantages. It also advocates for effective legislative measures to promote social inclusion. Reclamation in the framework promotes social inclusion by education, active social inclusion measures based on experiential learning, and on mutual respect and dignity.

In uplifting the marginalised communities, both India and Brazil have made a loud impact through a mix of legal mandates, welfare schemes, and rights-based frameworks. Despite the achievements made by these two nations, there is an unevenness visible in the implementation. They face hurdles, and the challenges of informal employment and urban poverty are growing. There is a need for them to include the framework of the 5Rs in the formulation of policies and their implementation. Both nations should invest in stronger, adaptive safety nets that not only protect vulnerable populations in times of crisis but also build long-term human capital. The road to genuine social inclusion lies not only in policy formulation but in accountability and people-centred implementation. The combination of data-driven tools with democratic engagement, India and

³³ Virapongse, A., Brooks, S., Metcalf, E., Zedalis, M., Gosz, J., Kliskey, A. and Alessa, L. (2016). A social-ecological systems approach for environmental management. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 178: 83-91

³⁴ Mosley, J. and Wong, J. (2020). Decision-Making in Collaborative Governance Networks: Pathways to Input and Throughput Legitimacy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 31(5): 1-9.

³⁵ Donnelly, C., Boyd, I., Campbell, P., Craig, C., Vallance, P. and Walport, M. (2018). Four principles to make evidence synthesis more useful for policy. *Nature*, 558: 361-364.

³⁶ Zu'bi, M. (2018). *SDG11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities*. Emerald Publishing

³⁷ Koehler, G., Cimadamore, A. D., Kiwan, F., & Monreal Gonzalez, P. M. (Eds.). (2020). *The politics of social inclusion: Bridging knowledge and policies towards social change* (p. 340). ibidem Press.

Brazil can move closer to realising inclusive development that is sustainable, equitable and resilient with respect, reclamation, representation, recognition, and reparation.

India and Brazil with diverse populations and vibrant democracy, they have seen through history, inequalities. By adopting the framework that revolves round on reclamation, recognition, respect, representation, and reparation, they can work on social inclusion that is sustainable, equitable and resilient. Through reclamation, India can work with marginalised communities to regain control over the ancestral lands and resources by promoting indigenous knowledge systems and integrating them into mainstream education and policy-making. Brazil, through reclamation, has taken steps to reclaim the rights of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous communities by conserving and promoting Afro-Brazilian heritage. India can recognise the unique identities and contributions of all marginalised communities by ensuring their representation at all levels and celebrating their culture and traditions at the national and international levels. Brazil has recognised the Afro-Brazilian history and culture by mandating the teaching of these at schools and by establishing the Ministry of Racial Equality to work on racial disparities and promote social inclusion.

Respect is the most important framework in building a culture. Anti-discriminatory laws are to be implemented effectively to protect the interests of the marginalised groups and promote inter-community dialogues in case of India. Brazil has publicly acknowledged its past injustices committed during the military dictatorship and extended an apology to indigenous populations for the first time in the country's history. Representation in the framework has to be enhanced by both India and Brazil by ensuring proportional representation in the political institutions and decision-making bodies. At the same time, encouraging the participation of women in leadership roles across different sectors. Reparation involves the implementation of programs to develop and uplift the marginalised. Both nations have initiated reparative measures to uplift the poor. By accommodating this framework, both nations can work towards constructing societies that are inclusive, just and resilient. Such a framework not only addresses historical and systemic inequalities but inevitably paves the way for sustainable development that benefits the nations and their population.