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Q13

What are the salient features of 'inclusive growth'? Has India been experiencing such a growth process? Analyze and suggest measures for inclusive growth.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS III · 15 marks · Inclusive Growth

Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Core demand of the question

- Define salient features of inclusive growth
- Analyse whether India's post-reform growth has been inclusive
- Suggest measures that spread jobs, services, and regions without wrecking the fisc

Revision summary

Inclusive growth is broad jobs, falling poverty, regional and gender balance, rights, and sustainability - not GDP alone.

India cut poverty and built MGNREGA, NFSA, education and health missions, and Jan Dhan access.

Regular jobs, women's paid work, learning and nutrition, and lagging regions still show incomplete inclusion.

Measures are labour-intensive industry, quality rural works, nutrition and schools, women's time-saving public goods, and honest targeting.

Inclusion that busts the fisc is not durable inclusion.

Introduction

Inclusive growth is growth whose **pace, pattern, and participation** reach the poor, women, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and lagging districts - and that can last. A high **Gross Domestic Product** with jobless urban islands is not inclusive. India after 1991 grew faster than before. Whether that process was inclusive is a mixed, region-and-group story, not a yes or no.

Body

Salient features

- **Broad-based employment**, not only output in capital-heavy sectors.
- **Falling poverty** and a narrower gap in consumption and human development (health, school, nutrition).
- **Voice and rights**: land, forest, and labour rights so growth is not only a transfer from the weak.
- **Regional balance**: BIMARU and the North-East not left as labour-exporting hinterlands.
- **Gender**: women in paid work and in assets, not only as unpaid care.

- **Sustainability:** inclusion that does not eat the next generation's water and air.
- **Financial and digital access** so the poor can save, insure, and receive transfers without a tout.
- The **Eleventh and Twelfth Plans** already used "inclusive" as official language; the **Sustainable Development Goals** later locked the same idea internationally.

Has India been experiencing it?

- **Yes, in parts:** poverty headcount fell; **National Food Security Act**, **MGNREGA**, **Right to Education**, **National Rural Health Mission / National Health Mission**, and rural roads raised a floor. **Jan Dhan**, Aadhaar, and mobile payments widened account access. Some social groups saw faster school enrolment.
- **No, in the job and wage sense:** growth was **services-and-construction** heavy; **regular salaried** work grew slowly; farm still holds too many people at low productivity. **Female labour-force participation** stayed weak.
- **Inequality:** urban-rural and top-end wealth gaps remained wide; capital share rose relative to labour in many formal firms.
- **Human development** (stunting, anaemia, learning outcomes) moved slower than GDP. Inclusion of calories is not inclusion of capability.
- **Regions:** western and southern industrial belts pulled ahead of eastern and dryland India except where mining or a State compact worked.
- **Verdict:** India experienced **poverty-reducing growth with incomplete inclusion** - a floor rose; the ladder into decent work did not widen enough.

Measures

- Labour-intensive manufacturing and care jobs (see industrial policy and food processing), not only capital subsidies to robots.
- **Quality** of MGNREGA assets (water, trees) and timely wages; skills linked to local vacancies.
- **Health and school** outcomes, **not only buildings:** frontline workers, nutrition, and learning.
- **Women's time:** fuel, water, crèches, and property rights.
- **Agricultural inclusion:** irrigation for rainfed lots, pulses and millets in procurement, and Farmer Producer Organisations - not only paddy-wheat belts.
- Targeted **Direct Benefit Transfer** with a still-physical food and health safety net where markets fail.
- Eastern and North-Eastern infrastructure and rule of law so private jobs can exist.
- Tax the broad base honestly so inclusion is **fiscally durable**.

Flow diagram

Inclusive growth -> Jobs
 Inclusive growth -> Health school nutrition
 Inclusive growth -> Regions gender rights
 India since 1991 -> Poverty down floor schemes
 India since 1991 -> Job gender regional gaps
 Industry care DBT quality public goods -> Inclusive growth

Conclusion

Inclusive growth means jobs, services, regions, gender, and a path that lasts. India after reforms cut poverty and built a legal welfare floor, but jobless patches, weak female work, stubborn human-development lags, and regional skew show the process is only partly inclusive. The measures that matter are labour-absorbing industry, rural assets, nutrition and learning, women's time, and a solvent, targeted transfer State.

Facts & figures

MGNREGA 2005

Legal rural employment floor of 100 days; a core inclusion tool if assets and wages are real.

NFSA 2013

National Food Security Act: legal grain entitlement for a large share of rural and urban households.

RTE 2009

Right of Children to **Free and Compulsory Education Act:** schooling as a right, still weak on learning outcomes.

Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile

Account, identity, and phone trinity used to deliver transfers with less leakage.

Female LFPR

Female labour-force participation in India stayed low in the 2000s-2010s despite GDP growth - a central inclusion failure.

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