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458**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE  
INCLUSION OF THE EXCLUDED:  
TOWARDS A STRATEGIC  
METHODOLOGY WITH EMPIRICAL  
ILLUSTRATION**

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EXCLUDED: TOWARDS A STRATEGIC METHODOLOGY  
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## ABSTRACT

Social inclusion has become a buzz word in development discourse in recent years. The Twelfth Five Year Plan as approved by the National Development Council has advisedly added a new chapter under the caption *social inclusion* avowedly making it a national objective. This paper tries to argue that local governments constitutionally mandated to 'plan for economic development and social justice' at the local level are eminently qualified to take up the task of working towards this goal. Using the BPL Survey data 2009 for Kerala which was mostly patterned on the Socio-economic and Caste Census 2011 are used to construct an indicative model to illustrate the tremendous possibilities that lie ahead towards achieving the goal of social inclusion in this country.

**Keywords:** Local Governments, Grama Panchayat, Social inclusion, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Fisherfolk

**Jel Classification:** H7, O2, R58

## **Introduction**

The three volume draft Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) (TP for short) with the sub-title 'Faster, More Inclusive and Sustainable Growth' approved by the National Development Council on December 27, 2012 has now advisedly added a chapter captioned 'Social Inclusion'. In the Eleventh Five Year Plan document as well as in the Approach Paper to the Twelfth Plan this chapter was conspicuously missing. The first chapter of TP titled *Twelfth Plan An Overview*, although tries to explain the meaning of 'inclusiveness' avoids a definition of social inclusion, but explains 'inclusive strategy'. In the words of the Planning Commission:

"This inclusive strategy involves a much greater role of the states, and closer coordination between the centre and the states, than would be needed for a purely corporate-led growth strategy" [Planning Commission (2012):5].

Any inclusive strategy necessarily will have to be different from "a purely corporate-led growth strategy", which seems to be the overarching concern of the Twelfth Plan. This paper argues that the Planning Commission's approach to and strategy of 'social inclusion' is fundamentally flawed and that a strategy of inclusion of the excluded is feasible as part of decentralized governance within the Indian federal polity. We believe that the Socio-economic and Caste Census 2011

(SECC 2011) which is nearing completion holds tremendous potential to usher in a viable project for social inclusion. Needless to say, all decentralised social inclusion efforts should be complemented by relevant macro policies that will compensate for the historic exclusion of vulnerable social groups in this country and ensure food security entitlements for all. After all, the real development issue in any democratic society is to have an inclusive society comprising all its citizens with ‘the goal of living in freedom together’<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the potential of local governments (LGs) as instruments of strategic interventions for social inclusion. An indicative model using BPL Census data of Kerala (2009) is illustrated to show the great possibilities of employing LGs as part of such an effort. It may be mentioned that we have also used this data (BPL Census) to identify and compare the vulnerabilities of the three historically marginalized communities viz: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Fisherfolk by panchayats and facilitate action at the household level.

### **1.0. Planning Commission’s strategy of social inclusion: A brief critique**

A strategy is a plan of action to achieve a definitive goal. Social inclusion is a national goal as exemplified in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. In any democratic society no one should be kept out or left out no matter who you are and where you live. Logically this means if you really want to go beyond rhetoric the historically marginalised and the poorest of the poor will have to be progressively brought into the main stream of the economy and society. Indeed, injustice is “simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all” [Rawls(1971:62)]. The issue of inequality has to be faced fairly and squarely.

Inclusiveness as explained in the *Overview* chapter of TP covers reduction of poverty, promotion of group equality, regional balance, empowerment, participatory democracy and gainful employment. Inclusiveness and social inclusion do not mean the same thing. The

terms of inclusion are what really matters. Certainly social inclusion assumes significance only when it enhances valued functionings<sup>2</sup>, freedom and human dignity to all citizens. In the words of Sen,

‘The issue, ultimately, is what freedom does a person have everything considered’. [Sen(2000):29].

Planning Commission do not advance an integrated approach and clear cut strategy towards social inclusion. The terms such as ‘inclusive growth’, ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘social inclusion’ used interchangeably in the TP document lack an organic link. Presenting growth and inclusiveness as co-equal development objectives, Ahluwalia (2011) observes:

“The Eleventh Plan aimed at delivering faster and more inclusive growth and it is logical to assess performance against this dual objectives” [Ahluwalia (2011):88].

Treating inclusiveness and growth as disparate entities and again maintaining that as “logical” policy rule out integrated policy choices, structural transformations, institutional reforms, market failures, redistribution strategies, envisioning sustained capability enhancing policies and so on. No wonder, Planning Commission’s *Mid-term Appraisal of the Eleventh Plan* listed out 27 monitorable targets considered important for inclusiveness. As the Commission observe: “Of these, two were (a) growth of gross domestic product (GDP) and (b) the growth of agricultural GDP. There were also 25 other parameters relating to poverty reduction, employment, education, health services, child nutrition, gender balance, access to basic infrastructural services, and environmental sustainability” [Planning Commission (2011):7]. TP also affirms this type of monitoring which was there since the days of the First Five Year Plan and is no better than a progress card under the caption of inclusiveness. There is no escape from addressing the process that produces and reproduces exclusionary outcomes.

More fundamentally, a growth strategy that does not address the problem of inequality can never be truly inclusive. A situation in which growth keeps increasing and poverty is reduced, but at the same time faces widening income and consumption inequalities, what happens is what Sen (2000) calls 'exclusive growth'. Indeed, a slew of macro policy choices will have to be made and strategised to address this issue as part of any grand design towards social inclusion.

The chapter of TP on 'social inclusion' is but a narrative of the various policies, programmes and "strategies" implemented and recommended for implementation during the next five years. It is an addendum partly in response to the "left-wing extremism" that is acknowledged to exist in several districts in the country. Without continuous proactive measures to promote equal opportunity policies the deprivation caused by the historical denial of social and economic rights to a growing number of poor cannot be rectified. The inclusion strategy has to start from the poorest of the poor, the traditionally excluded as well as those marginalised by the market. In the context of this paper it is not wide of the mark to quote B.R.Ambedkar:

[T]he uplift of the Depressed classes will remain a pious hope unless the task is placed in the forefront of all governmental activities and unless equalization of opportunities is realised in practice by a definite policy and determined effort on the part of the Government [BAWS (1982), Vol 2,553-4] [Reproduced from Thorat and Kumar, ed. (2009): 46.]

Except the special component plan and tribal sub-plan which are of an earlier policy vintage there is no new social inclusion strategy in the chapter. Government of India initiated the tribal sub-plan (TSP) in 1974 and the Special Component Plan (SCP), now called Scheduled Caste sub-plan (SCSP) in the Sixth Plan. SCSP and TSP are envisaged as a twin strategy in closing the development gap between SCs, STs and

“others”. This project seeks to direct plan resources across central ministries and departments in states, at least in proportion to the SC/ST population at the national level and similarly at the state level to accelerate the pace of development to bridge the yawning gap. The strategy was reiterated at the 51<sup>st</sup> National Development Council meeting (June 2005) by the Prime Minister and was made “an integral part of Annual Plans as well as Five Year Plans, making provisions therein non-divertible and non-lapsable with the clear objective of bridging the gap in socio-economic conditions of the SCs and STs within a period of 10 years”<sup>3</sup>. But out of the 106 Demands for Grants from the Union government given in the Expenditure Statement 21 of the Union Budget only 25 departments/ministries have allocated funds under SCSP in the 2012-2013 budget. The allocations made under SCSP in 2012-13 (BE) is only 9.4% of the Plan Budget of Union Ministries although as per SCSP guidelines a minimum of 16% is required to be provided. No wonder even after three decades of the implementation of the special component plans, the gaps between the living conditions of the general population and those of SCs and STs have widened to an “unacceptably high” magnitude [Planning commission (2012):244]. That this has happened despite constitutional mandates and long-standing efforts by the Centre as well as by the various state governments is a matter no responsible government can afford to ignore. Although the Planning Commission have invested much time, resources and expertise to define the poverty line the operational question of identifying the poorest and vulnerable categories was left to the Ministry of Rural Development which conducted periodic BPL Censuses since 1992 (see section 3.0. below). Based on the suggestions of the N C Saxena Committee Report 2009 and after taking several precautionary measures to ensure quality and complete coverage, the SECC 2011 data hold out an excellent opportunity to work towards a socially inclusive regime. It is in this context that we discuss below a strategy for involving LGs as an integral part of the project for social inclusion.

## **2.0. Local Governments and the inclusion of the excluded**

Decentralised democratic governance is a process that can provide the required institutional framework to take forward the goals of social inclusion. Almost simultaneous to the launching of economic reforms during the early part of the 1990s, Government of India (GoI), initiated the 73<sup>rd</sup>/74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments which added a third tier to the Indian federal system (part IX and IXA of the Constitution). This new architecture of decentralised governance was designed to devolve more powers, functions, funds and functionaries to the LGs so that participatory democracy (an essential component of social inclusion) becomes a reality in the country. Gram sabha as envisaged in the constitution is a sovereign body meant to voice the will of the people<sup>4</sup>. It is the bed rock of participatory governance and social inclusion. On apriori grounds no institution in India is more qualified to provide universal primary education and preventive, curative and promotive primary health care than a well-equipped gram panchayat. Equally important is the comparative advantage of panchayats and municipalities in providing quality public services like street lighting, sanitation, drinking water, waste disposal and so on. Above all they are the practice ground of participatory democracy and therefore eminently qualified for promoting sustainable inclusive development. Of course, institutional decentralisation, as in Kerala where Krishi bhavans, veterinary services, primary health centres, primary schools, hostels for scheduled caste/scheduled tribes and so on are transferred to the gram panchayats (with the corresponding higher level institutions assigned to the higher tier panchayat institutions) is a necessary condition for facilitating decentralised governance. In most other states progress on this score has been tardy or even absent and therefore has to be significantly improved to make LGs effective agents of inclusion.

Part IX and IXA of the Constitution seek to usher in ‘Institutions of self-government’ mandated to do ‘planning for economic

development and social justice' at the local level (Articles 243 G and 243 W) and create District Planning Committees (243ZD) which have to prepare bottom up draft district development plans. The mandate to deliver social justice is evidently a call to include the traditionally excluded communities as well as women and all other marginalized in the scheme of planning for economic and human development. This is evidently an important way to operationalise the intent of Article 38 of the Constitution. The institution of gram sabha, one-third reservation of seats for women (raised to 50% in several states) and representation for the historically marginalized communities on population basis, the establishment of the state election commission to ensure fair elections every five years, the creation of the state finance commission to rationalize state sub-state level vertical and horizontal fiscal imbalances and above all the District Planning Committee for the consolidation of the various levels of local level development planning are important tools towards enhancing the quality of participatory governance and social inclusion. A report of World Bank that critically studied the decentralisation process in India even notes that Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as political institutions can play a critical role in strengthening voice and representation, access and inclusion of the marginalized, and that they can be effective only if they are able to broaden the democratic base by tackling political exclusion and strengthening the "synapse" between communities and governments for better local governance (World Bank 2006:78).

Even so, neither the Five Year Plans since the 73<sup>rd</sup>/74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (Eleventh and Twelfth) as well as the GoI do not seem to have recognised the crucial role of LGs as instruments of social inclusion. Yes, the XI<sup>th</sup> Plan did note that it is "absolutely critical for the inclusiveness of our growth process" that the 3.2 million elected representatives in the PRIs are "fully involved in planning, implementing and supervising the delivery of the essential public services" (Planning Commission (2007):23). However, it is widely known that not much

happened on the ground. TP also does not assign any critical inclusionary role to LGs. While we do not want to discount or berate the contributions of some of the flagship programmes of GoI notably that of the MGNREGA, the persistent sidelining and side stepping of the PRIs can only take the country far away from the goal of meaningful decentralized governance and social inclusion. The Twelfth Plan Approach Paper speaks of central ministries typically acting as silos. “Plans and schemes are prepared along the jurisdictional lines of the ministries and departments, based on vertical management and decision systems which often makes coordination with other concerned ministries very difficult” [Planning Commission (2011):169]. It is difficult to share the optimism of TP that efforts will be made to rationalise the centrally sponsored schemes and reduce their number<sup>5</sup> and accelerate the progress of democratic decentralisation because several committees appointed by the National Development Council since 1968 have repeatedly said almost the same thing. It is illogical, but not surprising that the chapter on social inclusion has left out district planning as a strategy of decentralised governance and delivery of social justice. In the context of the wealth of data that are likely to be generated, through SECC, 2011 no well-meaning policy maker can stay indifferent to the challenging task of planning for social inclusion. What we attempt below is to throw some sidelights to show the potential for planning and action towards including the excluded.

### **3.0. Working towards a strategic inclusive model**

The powers, authority and institutions devolved to the third tier by the Constitution will have to be productively pressed into use to promote social inclusion. The third tier in India especially the PRIs depend precariously on inter-governmental transfers [Oommen (2006)]. That incidentally offers great possibilities for designing and implementing an equitable and inclusive sub-state level transfer system. The 73<sup>rd</sup>/74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments provide for the institution of State Finance Commission (SFC) a counterpart of the Union Finance

Commission (UFC) at the state level which has the responsibility to determine the vertical size of state's transfers to LGs as well as the manner of their horizontal distribution among the various tiers of rural and urban local governments. That it is possible to design a sub-state level transfer system that provides for an inclusive model of allocation is well exemplified in the recommendations of Kerala's Fourth State Finance Commission (SFC-IV)<sup>6</sup> which used the data from the BPL Census conducted by the Government of Kerala in 2009. SFC IV tried to design a transfer system to compensate and help the most deprived and fiscally weak gram panchayats through the use of a deprivation indexed formula. The basic objective of BPL Census, was to identify the rural households living below a given poverty line who could be provided assistance under the various programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development of GoI. Official estimation of poverty (the so called head-count ratio and the numbers thereof) for the nation as well as for the states are done by the Planning Commission based on a poverty line calculated on calorific-norms separately for rural and urban areas. Since such broad aggregate numbers even if valid<sup>7</sup> are not helpful in identifying the poor households, the Ministry has conducted quinquennial BPL Censuses since 1992 (1992, 1997 and 2002). Because of the widespread criticisms against the 2002 BPL Census, an expert committee was appointed in August 2008 by GoI to improve the methodology and the manner of canvassing data. The committee (with NC Saxena as Chairman) submitted its report in September 2009. Kerala is one state that studied the report, modified the recommended schedule and extended it to the urban area. Such a BPL Census covering both rural and urban areas (for more details, see section 3.1.) if properly conducted is a better and definitely concrete methodology than any estimates based on random sample household expenditure surveys that have been in vogue for several years now<sup>8</sup>. Identification of the poorest of the poor by social groups and classes which is the essential first step in any process of social inclusion is not possible under the Planning Commission's Poverty Line<sup>9</sup>.

### 3.1. The data and methodology

A truly inclusive system can be designed and built only by creating a valid data base. This is important not only for formulating relevant social inclusion policies but also for designing an efficient and equitable state sub-state level transfer system. For the purpose of the identification of the most deprived as already noted we have relied on the comprehensive BPL Census covering the entire state conducted in 2009 by the Commissionerate of Rural Development, Government of Kerala, using school teachers as investigators<sup>10</sup>. Although the BPL Census 2009 covered both rural and urban local governments, for empirical illustration we have used mostly gram panchayat data. The BPL Census, 2009 used two survey schedules viz. form A and form B the same pattern followed later in the SECC, 2011. Form A was used first for every household. It contains questions related to the employment status of the family members (whether the house has any member who is an employee or pensioner in any of the government, quasi-government, aided or co-operative sector or working abroad etc) and the housing status (whether the house is higher than 1000 square feet or the household owns land above one acre or has a four wheeler vehicle for private purpose etc). The social group classification of the household was also enumerated through this form under four heads – SC, ST, minorities and others. Form B was canvassed in a house only if all the eleven characteristics<sup>11</sup> of form A were reported nil. In this schedule information on the housing conditions, health status (for limited variables only), land holdings, and availability of other household basic amenities and so on were collected. The main economic activities (occupation) of the families were also gathered from Form B.

From this data four groups of information were generated separately for SC, ST, fisherfolk<sup>12</sup> and general population. The details of SC, ST and general population are obtained from the social groups in form A. It may be noted that since the social groupings given in ‘form A’

are as SC, ST, minorities and others, it was difficult to get fisherfolk as a separate category from form A. Therefore, the fisherfolk group was arrived at by using form B, where the occupational details are furnished. The group 'fisherfolk' includes only those families whose main source of income is fishing either marine or inland.

From the BPL Census data, we have identified nine important parameters for constructing a deprivation index which will provide a number which in the aggregate will measure multiple deprivations along with details regarding each one of them. The nine parameters we used are housing status, availability of drinking water, sanitation, electricity, landholding, education, destitute women, aged and handicapped. They are defined below:

- a. **Sanitation:** Percentage of families reported as without latrine, Kayal<sup>13</sup> latrine, latrine without tank, pit latrine and common latrine;
- b. **Drinking Water:** Percentage of families whose access to drinking water source is more than 300 meters away from dwelling place; and relying on pond, river and private distributors for drinking water;
- c. **Housing Status:** Percentage of families living in huts and dilapidated houses;
- d. **Electricity:** Percentage of families without electricity connection for household purpose.
- e. **Landholding:** Percentage of landless families.
- f. **Education:** Household with school dropouts.
- g. **Oldage:** Percentage of families with members above the age of 65
- h. **Gender:** Percentage of families with deserted women and unmarried mothers.
- i. **Handicapped:** Percentage of families with disabled members (Blind, deaf, dumb, insanity, mentally retarded)

Based on these definitions we can identify the poorest of the poor using the data from form B. An important point to be noted is that since these parameters are generated from form B, the four social groups under consideration are netted out of the eleven characteristics. Therefore, the resulting differences in deprivation across the social groups cannot be very substantial and can be comfortably brought under the rubric of the poor. Since all these data are collected for each local government and for each social group viz., SC, ST, fisherfolk and general population, it is possible to plan for each category and even for each individual household.

In order to identify the vulnerable GPs, a composite deprivation index is constructed comprising all these nine variables. We have used a modified version of the Deprivation Index (DI) employed by the UNDP for measuring human poverty. Conventionally deprivation index is used to measure the vulnerability of a community in terms of basic amenities that are critical to human well being. The Kerala Human Development Report (2005) throws light on the proportion of people who lack quality housing, access to water, good sanitation, and electricity for household lighting based on 2001 census data. Besides updating the data we have used also landlessness, a crucial vulnerability parameter quite often ignored for want of reliable data and four other parameters. School dropouts in Kerala a state of near universal literacy is an expression of capability deprivation of the vulnerable groups. The proportion of aged has been considered as another important parameter in the index as population aging<sup>14</sup> has attracted considerable attention in Kerala which has the lowest mortality rate and highest life expectancy among Indian states. To give a new gender dimension to the index, we have considered the proportion of deserted women and unmarried mothers, as they are the most deprived among women. The disabled (blind, deaf, dumb, insane and mentally retarded) proportion of the families is also considered as they have a bearing on the economic status of the family.

Considering four indicators such as housing, water, sanitation and electricity, the Kerala Human Development Report 2005 adopted a formula to calculate human deprivation index (which is similar to that of Human Poverty Index used by UNDP), which is given as:

$$(DI) = [1/4(d_1^\alpha + d_2^\alpha + d_3^\alpha + d_4^\alpha)]^{1/\alpha} \dots\dots(1)$$

Where **(DI)** is index of deprivation,  $d_1$ ,  $d_2$ ,  $d_3$  and  $d_4$  are the percentage of families who lack the four basic amenities;  $\alpha$  (alpha) is a weight parameter. If  $\alpha = 1$ , the index of deprivation is the average of its indicators. As the  $\alpha$  increases, greater weight is given to the indicators in which there is the most deprivation. The Kerala Human Development Report assigned a value of  $\alpha = 3$ . An important shortcoming of this method is that it assigns equal weight to all the indicators. However, since these indicators in fact vary in importance, one needs to assign different weights. Keeping in view the basic aspects of quality of life, drinking water, sanitation, and housing deserve special attention. Therefore, if we make the formula flexible by giving relatively more weight to drinking water, sanitation, and housing and treat other parameters as of equal importance, then the modified formula for 9 parameters will be as follows:

$$(DI) = [1/13(3d_1^\alpha + 2d_2^\alpha + 2d_3^\alpha + d_4^\alpha + d_5^\alpha + d_6^\alpha + d_7^\alpha + d_8^\alpha + d_9^\alpha)]^{1/\alpha} \dots(2)$$

Here **(DI)** stands for deprivation index,  $d_1$  percentage of families who lack drinking water;  $d_2$  = percentage of families who lack sanitation;  $d_3$  = percentage of families who lack housing with permanent structure;  $d_4$  = percentage of families who lack electricity for lighting;  $d_5$  = percentage of landless families;  $d_6$  = percentage of families with school dropouts,  $d_7$  = percentage of families with aged above 65;  $d_8$  = percentage of families with destitute and unmarried women and  $d_9$  = percentage of families with handicapped members;  $\alpha$  is a power weight parameter as used by the UNDP. Like the UNDP and Kerala Human Development Report 2005, we too assign a weight  $\alpha = 3$ . However, apart from the

power weight of 3 for  $\alpha$ , an additional weight of 3 for drinking water, and 2 each for sanitation and housing is allocated. Thus using this formula we can assess and rank the absolute deprivation of all the 978 gram panchayats as well as for the four social groups in Kerala.

### 3.2. Kerala as an Illustrative case

We have already noted that a sub-state level inclusive model of transfer arrangements is possible [for details see Government of Kerala (GoK) (2011)]. Besides this arrangement illustrated in GoK (2011), there can be several alternate ways of designing inclusive models of transfer systems which a state finance commission or even a state government can experiment with. In this section we try to throw some light on the great possibilities of building inclusive strategies for PRIs through micro level planning at the gram panchayat level as well as through district planning for the district as a whole. At the micro level it is possible to map out the most vulnerable gram panchayats or municipalities and that too by the social group-wise categories. Social class-wise and deprivation parameter-wise disaggregated data facilitate strategic decision making by gram panchayats, gram sabha, SFC, planning agencies and other relevant institutions. Table 1 presents deprivation index by social categories and by each parameter for Kerala based on the formula discussed in the previous section. We have constructed four variants of the deprivation index: *i.e.*  $DI_9$  with all the nine parameters;  $DI_5$  with only the five major basic needs *viz.*, housing, sanitation, drinking water, electricity and landlessness;  $DI_6$  with six parameters, adding school drop outs with  $DI_5$  and finally a  $DI_3$  that takes into account only the demographic parameters such as age, gender and handicap as could be seen in the last four rows. It is clear from Table 1 that the  $DI_3$  does not occupy any major significance as an indicator of deprivation in the case of Kerala.

**Table 1: Deprivation Index by social categories and by disaggregated parameters for gram panchayats in Kerala.**

Sl.No	Dimensions of Deprivation	General%	SC%	ST%	FF%	Total%
1	Households without Permanent Houses	25.3	33.3	42.6	32.9	27.4
2	Households without Proper Sanitation facility	24.3	36.6	51.8	37.3	27.7
3	Households without Drinking water in premises	4.8	6.7	13.8	10.4	5.6
4	Households without Electricity	12.5	21.3	50.7	11.4	15.2
5	Households without land	9.8	10.4	18.4	11.4	10.2
6	Households with school drop- outs	2.5	3.6	7.7	4.4	3.0
7	Households with members above the age of 65	26.4	23.5	19.1	20.2	25.5
8	Households with deserted women and unmarried mothers	3.3	3.6	3.3	1.4	3.3
9	Households with disabled members	5.1	4.8	3.8	4.3	5.0
DI <sub>9</sub>	Deprivation Index – all 9 variables	27.4	38.1	53.1	38.5	30.3
DI <sub>5</sub>	Deprivation Index – first 5 variables	30.3	42.8	59.9	43.4	33.7
DI <sub>6</sub>	Deprivation Index – first 5+sixth variable	29.2	41.4	57.9	41.9	32.5
<b>DI<sub>3</sub></b>	<b>Deprivation Index – 3 non economic demographic parameters (7, 8 and 9)</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>17.7</b>

FF stands for Fisherfolk *Note: It was found that the deprivation index for the STs and fisherfolk, gets bulged upward for those GPs with very small number of ST and fisherfolk households. To resolve this issue we have considered only those GPs with ST and fisherfolk households with over 50 households (in the B-form).*

Table 1 clearly shows that the first five variables are critical and increasing the number to six or nine does not seem to improve our understanding level of deprivation and vulnerability of people at the grass roots level. However, all the items are important and helpful to spot out critical areas. In a given local government context only the field surveys can reveal which are to be underscored. It is evident from Table 1 that adivasis (STs) with a deprivation index of 59.9% (based on  $DI_5$ ) and fisher folk with 43.4% are the worst among the social classes under study. The lowest percentage of households with members above the age of 65 among the STs is indicative of their poor life expectancy and health hazards. Again as regards such critical parameters like supply of electricity the adivasis' deprivation index is as high as 50.7% as against 15.2% for the poor as a whole. The poor among the general population are invariably better than their counterparts in other classes in regard to all parameters. However they are vulnerable in regard to the non-economic factors like aging because of their higher life expectancy. Given the relatively lower average life expectancy of the ST, SC categories the proportion of the aged is not a major problem for them at present compared to others. So also are the other non-economic variables for SC, ST and fisher folk. The endemic ill health and the lack of freedom to live long is prominent among these groups. Table 1 clearly shows that  $DI_5$  comprising drinking water, sanitation, housing, electricity and landlessness are the most important parameters. Table 2 shows the district-wise distribution of  $DI_9$  and  $DI_5$  deprivation indices. The two tables (Table 1 & 2) unmistakably confirm that  $DI_5$  could be used as a reliable measure of deprivation. Reckoned in terms of  $DI_5$  while Thiruvananthapuram district tops the list, Kannur has a relatively better position. School dropouts do not occupy a major weight in the deprivation measurement in Kerala while this could be a significant variable in most other states. Here too, however, the story of STs stands out significantly different.

**Table 2.0: District wise Deprivation Index using DI<sub>9</sub> and DI<sub>5</sub>**

Sl.No.	District	DI <sub>9</sub>	DI <sub>5</sub>
1	Alappuzha	38.3	42.7
2	Ernakulam	26.0	28.3
3	Idukki	40.3	45.3
4	Kannur	22.2	22.3
5	Kasargod	39.8	44.5
6	Kollam	39.2	43.9
7	Kottayam	28.3	31.1
8	Kozhikode	26.3	28.5
9	Malappuram	24.6	26.8
10	Palakkad	32.4	35.8
11	Pathanamthitta	34.2	38.1
12	Thrissur	26.3	28.6
13	Thiruvananthapuram	42.9	48.2
14	Wayanad	33.7	37.9

After measuring deprivation by district, it is important also to analyse the situation by social classes. Table 3 presents the district-wise break-up of deprivation index (DI<sub>5</sub>) by social classes. For general population the deprivation index ranges from 20.9% in Kannur district to 45.1% in Thiruvananthapuram. There are seven districts whose deprivation index for general population is above that of the state average of 30.3%. When it comes to SC population the index ranges from 29.7% in Kannur to 56.4% in Kasaragode district with a state average of 42.8% and seven districts come above this. The ST deprivation index ranges from 46% in the Alappuzha district to a disturbingly high number of 83.1% in Palakkad with a State average of 60.8%. There are eight districts that fall below this state average. The poverty situation of the STs is disquieting. The deprivation index of fisherfolk ranges from 23.1% in Kozhikode to 61% in Thiruvananthapuram with a state average of 43.4%. The fisher folk, are not important in five districts.

**Table 3.0: District-wise break-up of DI<sub>5</sub> by social classes**

Sl. No	District	General	SC	ST	FF
1	Alappuzha	39.2	52.7	46.0	54.1
2	Ernakulam	25.8	37.2	46.9	35.8
3	Idukki	40.0	48.0	63.3	NA
4	Kannur	20.9	29.7	47.5	25.6
5	Kasaragod	40.6	56.4	64.8	46.6
6	Kollam	41.0	53.2	65.6	41.2
7	Kottayam	29.0	39.5	42.7	NA
8	Kozhikode	26.6	38.6	47.0	23.1
9	Malappuram	24.1	34.9	71.7	60.4
10	Palakkad	32.6	42.4	83.1	NA
11	Pathanamthitta	34.3	47.9	66.7	NA
12	Thrissur	26.0	35.8	48.1	44.4
13	Thiruvananthapuram	45.1	54.7	60.0	61.0
14	Wayanad	30.1	43.0	56.7	NA

NA-Not Applicable

Identifying spatially and social-class-wise the deprivation parameters that need action is a definite and decisive step in district level planning as well as in village panchayat or municipality level planning. It is possible to map out the vulnerable panchayats by social group categories. In Table 4.0 we give the social group-wise names of most vulnerable 47 gram panchayats identified using DI<sub>5</sub>. The range of permutation and combination for 'planning for economic development and social justice' to enable the District Planning Committee to facilitate bottom up planning and social inclusion is indeed remarkable.

It is evident that these panchayats need immediate attention and remedial action. In the 47 gram panchayats analysed in Table 4, in 14 gram panchayats the social class-wise differentiation is immaterial. All

**Table 4.0: Social Group wise Most Vulnerable 47 GP across Districts: Based on DI:5**

Sl.No.	District	General	SC	ST	FF	Total
1	Alappuzha	Neelaperoor	Kainakary	Thuravoor	Neelaperoor	Neelaperoor
2	Ernakulam	Elanji	Chellanam	Vangoor	Chengamanad	Kuttampuzha
3	Idukki	Vattavada	Vattavada	Idamalakkudy	-	Idamalakkudy
4	Kannur	Cherupuzha	Edakkad	Aralam	Azhikode	Aralam
5	Kasargod	Enmakaje	Kumbadaje	Manjeswar	Chemnad	Enmakaje
6	Kollam	Arienkavu	Chithara	Arienkavu	Panayam	Arienkavu
7	Kottayam	Thalayazham	Thalayazham	Mutholi	Arpookara	Udayanapuram
8	Kozhikode	Koorachundu	Kattipara	Kattipara	Atholy	Kattipara
9	Malappuram	Velyankode	Edapatta	Urangattiri	Perumpadappu	Velyankode
10	Palakkad	Puthur	Eruthempathi	Puthur	-	Puthur
11	Pathanamthitta	Chittar	Thannithodu	Aruvappulam	Kadappa	Chittar
12	Thrissur	Athirapally	Athirapally	Athirapally	Punnayoor	Athirapally
13	Thiruvananthapuram	Azhoor	Azhoor	Kulathur	Kottukal	Azhoor
14	Wayanad	Poothadi	Thondarnad	Pozhuthana	-	Thirunelli

are economically vulnerable classes and other differentiation pales into insignificance. Needless to say it is possible to map out the vulnerable panchayats and rank them. Actually any local government can initiate a process of preparing a shelf of projects and action programmes using a progressive inclusion strategy in consultation with and cooperation of the gram sabha. Kerala's multi-stage process of decentralised planning could now be made more meaningful and effective if only these data are purposively analysed and integrated into the process of decision making and plan formulation in the district planning process by the District Planning Committee.

To conclude, the idea of social inclusion in India if taken beyond the realm of rhetoric can be made a meaningful component of integrated strategic planning and decentralised governance. Indeed, the scope and opportunities are tremendous. It is possible to identify gram panchayats by SC, ST and Fisher folk and initiate action to remedy various dimensions of deprivations by household. The BPL Census data which we have used are now supplanted by SECC (2011) which if properly used opens remarkable opportunities for modelling and remedial action. In sum, this paper is an attempt to initiate discussion to put democratic decentralisation as a major instrument towards effectively strategising social inclusion. Kerala data are used to present an indicative illustration to stimulate more meaningful discussion and policy choice. In so far as development focus is on the lives that people live, policy choices necessarily will have to assume meaningful direction.

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## Notes

1. John Dunn (1992) after reviewing democratic theory and practice from Athenian democracy till modern times elaborates this goal [ for details see Dunn ed., (1992):258-59].
2. Originally an Aristotelian concept, functionings as elaborated by Sen refer to the life a person leads or achieves as a combination of various doings and beings. The capability and freedom to achieve higher order functionings therefore becomes important.
3. See D.O.No.M.13054/2/2005-BC issued by Chandra Pal, Adviser, Planning Commission on January 12, 2006.
4. Today if in many states they turn-out to be an inane institution, the governing elites (bureaucrats and political class) cannot escape the blame.
5. The Budget speech (2013-14) by P. Chidambaram on February 28, 2013 announced that steps will be taken to reduce the CSSs from 193 to 70. If past is any indication, it is difficult to believe that this will be done.
6. The first author of the paper was the Chairman of the Fourth State Finance Commission.
7. It is beyond the scope of this paper to review the rich literature elaborating the shortcomings of such an approach.
8. We are surprised that the scholarly community and policy makers have virtually blacked out this approach. *The Great Indian Poverty Debate* edited by Deaton and Kozel (2005) does not even remotely mention about the BPL Census.
9. Although the scholarly community today with the conspicuous exception of Amartya Sen is not concerned about inequality as a policy variable. In the 1970s several scholars and policy makers were deeply concerned about inequality in income and consumption and envisaged perspective projections about reduction of poverty and remedial action [For e.g. See Srinivasan and Bardhan ed.,(1974)]. Amartya Sen's Poverty Index despite the pertinent issues he raised (such as of monotonicity – a reduction in income of poor must increase the poverty measure) [Sen (1976)], is not helpful in identifying the poorest households.
10. The entire raw data were made available to the first author by the Kerala State Commissionerate of Rural Development. We have processed the data and own the responsibility for that.
11. Form A canvassed 11 variables for purposes of exclusion viz: families with employees in government sector (Class I to Class IV); employees in private/quasi-government/aided sector; employees in co-operative sector; pensioners in government/service; pensioners in quasi-government/aided institutions; pensioners in co-operative institutions; regular salaried in public/private institutions; house structure higher than 1000 sqft; four wheeler motor

vehicle for private purpose; NRIs; with land possession higher than one acre (except for STs).

12. We have purposively included fisherfolk because of their admittedly depressing socio-economic conditions.[See D. Shyjan (2011);and Department of Economics (2009) among others].
13. Kayal latrines refer to those families that use backwaters for answering nature's call.
14. As per Census 2011, over 11.8% of the population of the state is above the age of 60 as against 7.5% for the country as a whole.

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