

# Tapping the grass root innovation for inclusive socio-economic development

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Grassroots innovation is defined as innovative product or process created at the bottom of the pyramid, usually due to necessity, hardship and challenges (Hilmi M. F., 2012). Grass root innovations are important as low cost and locally sustainable, offer new problem solving techniques which can be applied in different contexts, it can be blended with the scientific and technological knowledge of formal sector to develop value added products and services.

In the recent past, technological innovation has led to increased productivity, higher economic growth, improved living conditions and poverty alleviation around the world. However, access to the benefits of this rapid development has been uneven, with a large share of the world's population not benefiting from these advances. Nearly 2.5 billion people live on less than US\$2 a day. More than 35 percent of the population do not have access to basic sanitation facilities and 22 percent do not have access to electricity (World Bank, 2013). These data indicates that innovation is not sufficient to improve living standards and it is not inclusive. Inclusive means that it must be accessible and affordable to those at the base-of-the-pyramid (BoP) or help create better economic opportunities for them. Inclusive innovation refers to the "knowledge creation, acquisition, absorption and distribution efforts targeted directly at meeting the needs of the low-income or the BoP population in order to improve their welfare and access to better economic opportunities.

Large corporations have now been realized that mere reliance on market forces will not fill gaps in innovation or successful positioning innovative products/processes in the market especially among disadvantaged segment in the population. Therefore it seems to be lack of sourcing of ideas which can add value to existing knowledge, disseminating innovations in a manner that users can adapt to their local context and innovating for social equity.

The emerging consensus in the discourse on development is that poor people are not just sink of aid and assistance but can also be a powerful source of ideas and innovation.

"Any country that aims at harmonious and inclusive development will have to draw upon innovations at grassroots level which are clearly distinguished from innovation for grassroots applications" (Gupta Anil K., 2006)

Initiatives taken by emerging economies such as India and China to harness grass root innovations have demonstrated unambiguously, that the innovator at grassroots can indeed become an instrument of decentralized, diversified and dynamic development, locally as well as globally. The g2G model (grassroots to global) in India has become evident in which queries are received for innovation based products and services from more than 60 countries and products were sold in all the five continents.

This review paper aims to mine secondary data published in regard to initiatives, models & policy frameworks towards tapping grass root innovations and to stimulate a discussion on how grass root innovation be promoted for inclusive socio-economic development in the local context. The structure of the paper is as follows. Section I presents initiatives, models & policy frameworks implemented by other countries towards tapping grass root innovations. Section II summarizes lessons learnt of inclusive development based on grass root innovation case studies (successes and failures). Section III draws out implications for governments seeking to promote harnessing grass root innovation and finally Section IV discusses implications for other key stakeholders in bring in grass root innovation for inclusive development.

**Keywords:** *Innovation, Grass root innovation, Inclusive development, Socio-economic development, Social equity*