



Reviewed by Dr Avanish Kumar

Inclusive Aid: Changing Power and Relationships in International Development

Edited by Leslie Groves and Rachel Hinton

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In the past decade, area of scholarly discourse in the development paradigm that has arguably discussed sustainability of development initiatives primarily focused on the dialectics between the ideological framework of aid and practice. Rapid change in economic and political structure has influenced the history of aid function as well as structure through 'exclusive aid to somewhat inclusive aid'. It is pertinent to understand the core issues behind the quest of aid to resolve unsustainable income, inequitable resource distribution, and consumption. Aid phenomena involve two parties of exchange: a giver and a receiver. The strategic positioning of the giver and receiver has created two distinct types of categories, the developed and the underdeveloped or in geographical aid paradigm the 'north' and the 'south'.

Groves and Hinton's *Inclusive Aid: Changing Power and Relationships in International Development* is a concise, self-contained, and up-to-date presentation of views on the power and politics of aid. The book originated as a set of lectures in a workshop organized at Institute of Development Studies. The views and experiences shared are primarily of scholars and donors on institutionalization of development ethics across the actors for effective aid. The informative and agreeable thought for aid in development is full of

devious submission for donors who seek tangible targets from aid with less priority towards examining the dynamics of constraint in the development processes.

Inclusive Aid is a book with a potential to influence the role of all actors in development as a challenge for today and for future. The book puts forth issues like the bureaucrat and reflections on organizational change and shifting power to make a difference with supporting examples like Action Aid's ALPS (Accountability, Learning, and Planning Systems) and AP Mahila Samatha Society, which is another theoretically correct example confined to a limited population. The developing countries possess colossal success stories of similar potential but the question is on replication and sustainability beyond the geographical boundary. One such case supporting the views of the authors is a programme to strengthen 500 civil society organizations for better realization of rights and entitlement of the poor. It is being supported by the DFID in the 100 poorest districts of India.

The action-oriented views in all the three parts are towards building effective partnership in development than towards depicting the history of changing relationships, except the article by Robb titled Changing power and relations in the history of Aid. A better title for the book would be

Inclusive Aid: Challenge for today and future of tomorrow as the views and opinions in the book propagate for an effective change which is yet to be witnessed in reality. The opinions are based on the osmosis of examples of scattered case studies but need to be crystallized and adopted by most of the donors. This reflects that the mechanism of aid is shifting and factors behind aid are bridging the gap between the objective and purpose of aid but still it is not the popular pattern of aid in the developing countries.

The editors, in the challenges and opportunities in discussing the complexity of aid, illustrate very appositely the dynamics of changing politics in aid and perspectives in organizational development. In the article Reflections on organizational change, Jean Horstman describes the hows and whys of organizational change and with the example of CDC/ARI (Community Development Corporation/Arts Resource Institute) funded by the Ford Foundation, even proposes tools to design intervention plan and work within the local framework more than 'aid'. However, all the three articles draw upon the history of aid as a sign of complex intension. No donor would accept the proposition that differentiates between donors and lenders, but it lies at the heart of the theory Groves and Hinton called *Inclusive Aid*.

In the section Power, procedures, and relationships, I shall very briefly argue, first, that the notion of ownership and accountability in poverty reduction strategies or comprehensive development framework has been successful because the social structure is an erroneous construal of a case study in Bolivia. As an anthropologist, it is difficult for me to accept the theory of social structure that allows an outsider to be part of the local community. The social structure does not actually contribute to the justification of local ownership; and contrary to Eybens' conclusion, what results of the National Dialogue and PRSP process and its lessons is

over simplified principles of community ownership to implement 'lessons for myself'.

In this section, authors reiterate the importance of effective partnership as the explicit process derived from certain fundamental principles in the socio-political culture of aid. Case studies of Tanzania, Uganda, Nepal and Action Aid experiences of Ethiopia, The Gambia, India, and Kenya focus on the framework of accountability, primarily based on learning and reflection. Learning and reflection sufficiently lead to ownership and accountability of the process. Implicit in all these case studies is the message that interventions fall apart when the objective of aid varies with the core idea of poverty reduction, with an agenda of cooperation for mutual advantage.

The article by Win on letter to Christine, on the issues of reporting raises concern on the intention of reporting formats and factors inhibiting sharing of project learnings. It advocates reporting for changing the reality of people's lives rather than merely words in the format. It is the reporting format that reflects the latent manifestation of aid. This is a necessary recommendation if the conception of reporting format is for learning and not merely a tool of earning. Jassey, however, has argued that the notion of bureaucracy needs to be redefined with a more proactive contribution in development. I think Jassey is right. As it is hard to see that right-based approach for poverty alleviation is not fighting poverty but fighting against transparency and accountability.

The ideas of *Inclusive Aid* accept and recommend the fundamental principles of accountability of donors, the third part of the book on The way forward is derived from the comprehensive participation of actors in the development paradigm. Chambers and Pettit's comprehensive views that the dynamics of aid actors influence the context in which they operate imply a change in the power structure. Groves raises concern over the strategic

redefining of overlapping concepts and terminologies with 'inherent' overlap as it may distract attention. While I agree with the influence and importance of processes like the ALPS and Logical Framework Analysis on behaviour and culture of the organization, it is too simplistic an argument as the agent of change for organizational development. The complexity of culture of the organization is directly influenced by the power and relationship that exists beyond the boundaries of the organization. However, an argument on inversely proportional relationships between control or rule and ownership connecting across entities is a sound explanation of effective partnership and networking. Minding the gap, and personal change and responsible well-being by Pasteur and Scott Villiers is genuine inclusive thought towards sustainable growth. The thoughts are ideological construct of methods for change, often devoid of socio-

political constraints that influence the intention of donors. Eyben and Ferguson on increasing accountability, proposes to bridge the gap between the donor need and people demand. The two-fold strategies proposed are donors' vision in line with the poor and peer pressure on donors to construct that vision.

While, the issue of acceptable principles of inclusive aid includes an inbuilt mechanism for mutual benefits across the actors that will promote sustainable relationship, the suggestion by Groves and Hinton is that the need for *investing* in relationship building to achieve development goals needs deeper thought on the proposed investment pattern for relationship building. But one needs to accept and endorse the ideas put forth into inclusive aid to translate ideal thought process based on tangible examples to a pattern of development aid.