

Meeting the unmet needs of the majority: A grassroots innovation perspective from Honey Bee Network

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Why have the basic needs of the majority of people in Latin America remained unmet:

Is it because people lack imagination, ideas, innovations or is it because the institutions which can convert their ideas into enterprises – social or economic, individual or collective or missing?

My contention is that it is institutional failure rather than the failure of the individuals or their communities.

What are the resources in which economically poor people are potentially rich:

- **Knowledge, creativity and innovation for survival**
- **Ethics and values**
- **Institutions (common property institutions, other social arrangements for using natural or other resources)**
- **Kinship networks**
- **Cultural communication channels**

What are the resources they lack:

- 1. Institutions (like gian.org, nifindia.org) providing handholding support at their doorstep**
- 2. Access to local or nearby labs and workshops to add value to their knowledge or fabricate tools for meeting their need**
- 3. Access to local language multimedia tools / databases of traditional knowledge or grassroots innovations by other communities in the region or around the world (such as Honey Bee database, sristi.org)**

- 4. Flexible access to natural resources governed by state or large private owners**
- 5. Access to micro venture capital and support for new product development**
- 6. Linkage with formal sector scientific labs for validating and valorising their knowledge of herbal healing and other technological claims**
- 7. Lack of low transaction costs system of IP protection without preventing people to people learning but ensuring benefit sharing with corporations**

What are the options:

- 1. Scouting and documenting local knowledge, innovations, practices, institutional structures**
- 2. Capacity building for detailed prior art search for distinguishing novel or hitherto undocumented knowledge and public domain common or uncommon knowledge**
- 3. Creating framework for prior informed consent of knowledge holding communities and individuals**
- 4. Providing low cost, fast track registration system for knowledge and innovations with associated protection (providing incentive for disclosure)**

- 5. Creating decentralised hubs for linking innovation, investment and enterprise – the golden triangle for rewarding creativity**
- 6. Providing support for screening local knowledge claims according to local protocols (through involvement of local colleges, other volunteers, small scale enterprises) and scientific protocols in formal labs with IPRs of local people intact**
- 7. Creating infrastructure/mobile labs/workshops for value addition by local artisans / tiny and small entrepreneurs to distinctive ideas and innovations**
- 8. A small, medium and large grant programme (through competitive as well as proactive documentation mode) so that large scale trials of technologies and institutional models for generating employment, improving livelihood, conserving resources, creating markets, etc., take place, particularly when cost of failure is low**

- 9. Triggering networks of local innovators, experimental communities and entrepreneurs to test market emerging products at grassroots level through market research support**
- 10. Linkage with public institutions for agriculture, industry, food processing, crafts, transport, energy, etc., for distributed trials of grassroots technological innovations for open source, widespread diffusion**
- 11. Large scale fairs at regional, national and sub-national levels to promote horizontal markets (people to people at local level) and vertical markets (from local to national), including G2G (Grassroots to Global)**

12. The horizontal markets need special attention because not even one per cent of the savings of micro finance groups are spent on the products made by them. This issue has been neglected by almost the entire micro finance movement.
13. Creating E-commerce opportunity by linking the platform with courier and packaging industry so that consumers interested in buying local value added products based on traditional knowledge or innovations are able to get them in best possible conditions of handling, transportation and delivery.

14. Creating licensing opportunities for local knowledge based products to large and small companies in a transparent manner with full accountability towards the knowledge holders
15. Encouraging youth in technological institutions to engage with grassroots innovators so that their projects can add value and in some cases, entrepreneurial partnerships may emerge. Likewise, creating a portal of all the projects done by under graduate and postgraduate technology students so that duplication is avoided, originality is promoted and small scale industries as well as others might become the stakeholders

16. Creating a portal for cultural contributions (songs, stories, performances, art, etc.) by the local communities and individuals for part free listening or viewing after which the downloads may be on the basis of ten cent per song. These amounts may go directly to the accounts of performers or local writers.

Where are we heading: Synergising four A's:

Access

Assurances

Abilities and

Attitudes

What process are we using: Combing seven E's

Ethics

Empathy

Efficiency

Education

Equity

Excellence and

Environment

What myths are we blowing:

1. Poor are not just consumers, they can also be providers of knowledge, innovations and ideas
2. Poor are not at the bottom of all pyramids: they may be at the bottom of economic pyramid, but are they at the bottom of ethical, innovation and knowledge pyramids
3. Innovations are not made only in high tech institutions, these also evolve in the 'laboratories of life', at the grassroots level by individuals as well as communities.

4. Innovations are imperative for survival, these are not as infrequent as we assume.
5. Traditional knowledge has not lost its relevance. The functional elements can be valorised to generate solutions for contemporary problems

6. What can we do together: Honey Bee Network, member institutions and IIMA are willing to join hands with public and private institutions, community initiatives and individuals who want to make a difference without devaluing the local knowledge, innovations and institutions.

Creativity counts,
knowledge matters,
innovations transform,
incentives inspire

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