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## HD INSIGHTS

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### ***Social Inclusion and Human Development***

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Throughout the last two decades, the international development actors have witnessed a growing concern about poverty, marginalization and various forms of deprivation. Two concepts stand out prominently in this regard: human development and social inclusion. Both are not substitutive but complementary, addressing in-depth specific aspects of poverty understood as a multidimensional challenge. What unites the two is their focus on people which is put at the centre of the policy focus in an attempt to achieve the ultimate goal of improving their opportunities and realizing their capacities.

#### ***What is Social Inclusion?***

Social inclusion is a relatively new concept promoted especially by the European Union (EU). The EU defines social inclusion as a "process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live".

Thus, social inclusion is understood as both a relative concept where exclusion can only be judged by comparing the circumstances of some individuals (or groups or communities) relative to others, in a given place and at a given time; and as a normative concept which places emphasis on the individual's right of "having a life associated with being a member of a community".

In order to achieve these rights, inclusion policies have to address institutional inefficiencies, which derive from exclusionary acts by agents based on power and social attitudes and result in multiple disadvantages based on gender, age, ethnicity, location, economic, education, health status or disability, etc. Social inclusion policies correct negative outcomes of policies, be it intentional (systematic discrimination) or unintentional ones (failure to recognise differential impact of policies on individuals or groups).

#### ***How does Social Inclusion complement UNDP's concern for Human Development?***

Both concepts are people-focused and go beyond material well-being. Human development stresses the significance of education, access to adequate social services (health and education in particular), environmental sustainability, guarantees for basic political freedom, gender equality and respect of citizens' rights. Restriction in any of these is perceived as detrimental to human beings' freedom of choices. Social exclusion can similarly be understood as 'capability' deprivation that goes beyond income deprivation. In fact it is difficult for a country to claim high levels of human development if social exclusion persists.

Social inclusion adds the institutional dimension of exclusion (the agents, institutions and processes that exclude) to the human development concept. A social inclusion perspective can thus help sharpen

the strategies for achieving human development by addressing the discrimination, exclusion, powerlessness and accountability failures that lie at the root of poverty and other development problems. Both concepts are complementary in policy respect with human development bearing stronger focus on "what" needs to be achieved and social inclusion on "how" it should be achieved.

Policy frameworks for human development and social inclusion depend very much on political will, except in the EU where member states have agreed to reduce poverty and social exclusion by 2010 and this obligation is being monitored by a common measurement framework (Laeken Indicators). Outside of the EU, the MDG framework (adapted to national or local contexts) could be used to monitor both, human development as well as social inclusion policy outcomes. For that purpose however, MDG targets and indicators need to reflect national and local priorities and challenges.

### ***Measuring Social Inclusion and Human Development***

Although from different perspectives, both social inclusion and the human development framework address issues of marginalization and exclusion. Hence, it seems logical to expect that indicators used will be semantically and contextually close. Indeed, both social inclusion and human development indicators put strong focus on poverty, employment, education, health and civic and political participation. Social inclusion, being a relative concept emphasizes inequality measures.

Given the richness of these challenges and the variety of their determinants, no single indicator can grasp the challenges adequately. This is why social inclusion and human development indicators (as well as nationalized MDG indicators) are not substitutive but highly complementary and should be seen as different shades of a complex multidimensional reality.


Both frameworks also share similar challenges regarding availability of data. Since exclusion happens at local or community level, disaggregated data by location and characteristics, such as ethnicity or disability is a prerequisite for monitoring progress towards social inclusion. However, such data often does not exist at all or is being considered too difficult or sensitive to collect. Going beyond national averages is the real challenge of relevant social inclusion and human development monitoring.

### ***Outlook***

Social inclusion will likely become more prominent in international development efforts by providing the space to address difficult issues of social discrimination, inequalities and social fragmentation. By emphasizing the individual's right of a decent quality of life, it raises further attention for human development and directly helps improving human development opportunities. Innovative work on measurements and data can bring both concepts even closer in the future.

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