



**Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD)
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
in collaboration with the Government of Ghana**

Aide-Mémoire

Expert Group Meeting on

Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration: Lessons learned from existing policies and practices

17-19 November 2009
Accra, Ghana

I. Purpose of the meeting

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare of the Government of Ghana and UNDP Accra, is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on “**Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration: Lessons learned from existing policies and practices**” from 17 – 19 November 2009, in Accra, Ghana, as part of the preparations for the 48th session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD), which is scheduled to take place in New York from 3 to 12 February 2010.

The meeting is convened in the context of ECOSOC resolution 2008/19 in which the Economic and Social Council decided that the priority theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle of the Commission should be “Social integration”, taking into account its relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all. The outcomes of the meeting will be important inputs to the work of the Commission, in particular contributing to policy-oriented sessions geared towards promoting social integration.

II. Background: Justification and basic concepts

The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) established the concept of social integration to create “a society for all,” as one of the key goals of social development. The Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action saw social integration as both a goal and a dynamic process societies engage in to advance social development. Along with the other main objectives of the Summit - eradication of poverty and creation of productive employment, Member States made a commitment to promote social integration through fostering inclusive societies that are stable, safe, just and tolerant, and respect diversity, equality of opportunity, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

The Social Summit recognized that social integration was an important determinant of, and significantly affected by, poverty and unemployment¹. Likewise, poverty eradication and employment creation are considered to be key areas to achieve the goal of creating an inclusive society. It further viewed that the failures of social integration would lead to “social fragmentation and polarization; widening disparities and inequalities; and strains on individuals, families, communities and institutions as a result of the rapid pace of social change, economic transformation, migration and major dislocations of population, particularly in areas of armed conflict.”²

In spite of these convincing arguments, the concept of “social integration” has not been well understood nor effectively operationalized. Following the Copenhagen Declaration, significant policy commitments were made in the Millennium Declaration (2000), adopted at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, which embody the principles of social inclusion and other objectives and goals set out in the Copenhagen Declaration and subsume social integration in their synthesis of peace, security, development, and human rights.³ The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) forged “poverty eradication” as a major vehicle in advancing development. Following the 2005 World Summit, the goal of achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all was added as a new target under the MDGs Goal 1. However, the remaining goal of the Social Summit, “promoting social integration,” has not yet been effectively integrated thus far, despite the fact that these three goals are inter-related and mutually reinforcing.

The goal of creating a “society for all” remains elusive, with many individuals and social groups remaining invisible, voiceless, and excluded from decision-making processes that affect their lives. The needs, concerns and rights of the socially excluded, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, ethnic and religious minorities, migrant workers, and other marginalized groups are still missing from policy-makers’ drawing boards in many countries. It is therefore crucial to move beyond the concept of “social integration”⁴ and develop concrete and practical strategies to promote social integration and inclusion that affect the lives of many on the ground. Such strategies need to be based on realistic and updated information on what types of policies and practices exist across regions, as well as systemic analysis on what has worked/not worked and why it has worked/not worked.

There are various types of national policies that are conducive to promote social integration and inclusion. Some policies target specific social groups, such as youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, women, people living with HIV/AIDS, migrant workers, etc. Others are more general, but aim to ensure universal coverage; for example, education and public health for all. Other policies and programmes target people with specific conditions; for example, pro-poor policies, social protection, and conditional cash transfer programmes, which aim to protect and/or empower those with temporary or long-term disadvantage(s). In addition, there are anti-discriminatory

¹ Review of further implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly – E/CN.5/2005/6, para 165

² Review of further implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly – E/CN.5/2005/6, para 165

³ A/60/1, para 103

⁴ It is important to understand that social integration: 1) refers to the equal rights and responsibilities of all people; and 2) does not mean achieving a uniformity of society by making people adjust to society. Rather, it aims at accepting all people with different backgrounds and still fosters meaningful engagement. In an inclusive society, not only some but all members of society must have a say and a stake. This inclusiveness of society creates and maintains stability, a sense of belonging or inter-connectedness, as well as responsibility and ownership of their common future.

policies, policies towards more equitable distribution and policies that promote civic participation. More recently, rights-based approaches are often used to identify the root causes of systematic exclusion and to eliminate existing barriers to inclusion within various contexts, so that people can enjoy equal rights and opportunities to participate in economic, social, cultural, and political life on an equal footing with others. It is important to examine how these various types of policies are inter-linked and create a better synergy among them in order to consolidate national efforts and resources.

The existence of policies pertinent to social groups and more general “inclusive policies” alone, however, do not automatically produce expected impacts on the ground. To achieve the goal of social integration and inclusion, genuine, broad-based participation, and engagement of diverse populations in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, and programmes in all social, economic, political, and cultural areas is necessary. Appropriate mechanisms must be in place to promote and ensure this practice. Such mechanisms may be institutional, such as better coordination, creating focal points or working units responsible for social integration, or approaches to transforming existing policy/planning processes to be more inclusive and participatory.

The responsibility of advancing social integration does not lie solely with government, but should be shared by all sectors of the economy and society at large, including the private sector and civil society.⁵ Strengthening the capacity of various stakeholders at multiple levels is necessary. In this sense, creating a global/inter-regional knowledge-base to facilitate information-sharing among policy-makers, planners, and practitioners at the national and local levels could be an important contribution to the efforts in promoting social integration and inclusion, as well as achieving MDGs, as it can help in addressing various capacity-building needs. The value for some may be in the access to user-friendly resource materials, including guidelines that would lay out concrete steps to develop social integration/inclusion strategies in such areas as inclusive policy and planning processes at the national and sub-national levels and effective methods of advocacy and awareness-raising. Others may be interested in strengthening their capacities in research and systemic analysis to enable evidence-based policy-making.

The meeting is part of ongoing efforts at UNDESA to clarify the broad meaning and implications of social policy in a contemporary world, including the interconnection of inclusion, participation, rights and justice in building socially integrated societies. Social integration/inclusion, in this context, refers to a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background and economic, social, or political status so that individuals can achieve their full potential in life. It is a multi-dimensional process aimed at creating conditions which enable full and active participation of every member of the society in all aspects of life, including, civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as genuine participation in decision-making processes.

III. Objectives and Methodology

Within the broad objective of creating an inclusive society, “a society for all” in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play,⁶ the meeting aims to develop practical strategies to promote social integration and social inclusion, focusing on selected potential areas where concrete steps can be taken. Drawing lessons from a selected number of national experiences in various regions, the meeting will:

- 1) Review challenges and opportunities of existing policies, strategies, and practices aimed at promoting social integration and inclusion;

⁵ Commission for Social Development, 47th Session, Chairpersons’ summary

⁶ Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action (1995)

- 2) Examine national mechanisms effective in implementing such policies, strategies, and practices;
- 3) Identify national capacity gaps to promote social integration and inclusion and explore areas for strengthening that capacity;

The meeting will identify areas where progress has been made and make policy recommendations on concrete steps that can be taken at the national, regional and international level to strengthen capacity to promote social integration and inclusion.

Specifically, the meeting aims to:

- a) Review policies geared towards promoting social integration, such as policies geared at more equitable distribution, social protection, policies to promote civic participation, pro-poor policies, including conditional cash transfer, social floor, and draw lessons from their strengths and weaknesses;
- b) Review policies targeting certain social groups (i.e., youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, women, people living with HIV/AIDS and other excluded or disadvantaged groups), as well as more broad-based approaches, such as universal access to basic services, or rights-based approaches, and explore ways and means to create a synergy between them;
- c) Identify several types of national mechanisms, such as institutional, coordination, planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, that are considered to be effective in mainstreaming social inclusion objectives/principles into sectoral policies and poverty reduction strategies;
- d) Identify existing barriers that impedes the effective implementation of inclusive policies;
- e) Explore the potential role of inclusive and participatory planning as a tool to translate social integration/inclusion policies into practice;
- f) Identify the areas where national capacity can be strengthened in order to promote social integration and inclusion.

The meeting will also provide an opportunity to compile successful interventions, useful information and resources in this area. In the context of identifying effective strategies to promote social integration, the meeting will also address such areas as legal and regulatory framework, data collection and analysis, mapping, planning, priority setting, resource allocation, monitoring, and impact assessment. Other contextual aspects, such as social capital, social network, social service delivery, and/or social protection will also be explored.

IV. Expected outputs

The meeting will produce the following outputs:

- a) Policy recommendations at international, national, and local levels will be adopted;
- b) A final report of the meeting will be produced;
- c) 5 – 10 page expert papers on the agenda item will be prepared.
- d) Practical strategies to promote social integration and inclusion at national level, including through building inclusive planning processes that ensure the involvement of vulnerable and disadvantaged population, will be presented
- e) National mechanisms geared towards promoting social integration and inclusion will be presented;
- f) National capacity needs in this area will be identified;
- g) A knowledge-base, including good practices and lessons learned, will be created;
- h) Directions for further study and potential partners will be identified.

The results of the meeting will be incorporated in the final report, which will be used as a basis of a future publication to be prepared by DSPD. Policy recommendations will be circulated during the forty-eighth session of the Commission on Social Development scheduled to take place in February 2010.

V. Organizational and administrative matters

The Expert Group Meeting will be organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of UNDESA, and hosted by the Government of Ghana. The Meeting will be conducted at the ALISA Hotel, Accra, Ghana, and is scheduled to take place from 17 - 19 November 2009.

The number of participants will be approximately 35, including 14 experts, who will be identified and invited by the Division for Social Policy and Development. In addition, the following will participate:

1. Staff members of United Nations Secretariat (UNDESA/DSPD) as an organizer to provide substantive and administrative support;
2. Representatives from the United Nations Regional Commissions;
3. Representatives of the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare and other Government officials;
4. One consultant/facilitator to be selected by the United Nations;
5. Other participants invited as observers/discussants by the United Nations and/or the Government, including representatives from the United Nations system, and from Intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations or institutions.

The participants will meet in plenary as well as in working groups. In an opening plenary, participants' presentations will create a conceptual framework for the discussion. The plenary will be followed by short presentations and in-depth discussions on specific issues both in plenary and working groups. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants will outline the major conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. A final report will be produced after the meeting.

VI. Documentation and the Language of the meeting

The documentation of the meeting will be comprised of relevant publications, documents, and materials related to social integration, social inclusion and cohesion, 5 – 10 page papers from the expert participants, and relevant United Nations documents, that will be made available on the web site to be created for the meeting. Expert participants will be invited to provide their contributions in advance (to be submitted by **5 November 2009**), and to make brief presentations in the plenary.

The working language of the meeting will be English. Documentation for the meeting will be provided in English.

VII. Passports and Visas

Participants will be expected to make necessary arrangements with regard to passports, visa and health certificates for travel. An information note will be sent out to participants to assist them with travel arrangements.

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