

Chapter V

Policy imperatives for leaving no one behind

Key messages

- *In order to leave no one behind, Governments must promote social inclusion as well as tackle the barriers that create and sustain exclusion. A universal approach to social policy, complemented with special or targeted measures, is key to addressing the underlying causes of exclusion and social injustice.*
- *Leaving no one behind calls for institutional change as well. Ensuring that institutions are inclusive can contribute to levelling the playing field and providing all citizens with opportunities to participate in public life on equal terms.*
- *Changing the social, cultural and political norms that underpin or perpetuate unequal power relations and the disadvantages experienced by some social groups is often a long-term process, dependent on national and local circumstances, but with political will Governments can influence and help transform them.*

In committing to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Member States recognized that the dignity of the human person is fundamental. They are also endeavouring to reach first those that are furthest behind. The fact remains that today, some human beings are condemned to endure short or miserable lives as a result of their origin, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, economic status or because they have a disability. Overcoming the biases associated with these circumstances requires a policy approach that puts human beings at the centre of development, as agreed at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen more than 20 years ago. What is needed is an approach that expands the opportunities to improve people's quality of life – now and in the future – and protect their rights. An approach which considers economic growth as a means to leave no one behind, rather than an end in itself.

Policy approaches to address exclusion and leave no one behind have often been centred on the promotion of the rights and capabilities of disadvantaged social groups. There is nonetheless growing recognition that action to promote social inclusion must go beyond group-specific approaches. It is contended in the present report that, while breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion does require policies and strategies which actively seek and facilitate the participation of those individuals and social groups that face the greatest challenges in overcoming such ills, measures are also called for

that would address the underlying social, economic and political causes of inequality and social injustice.

As noted in the previous chapters, the process of social inclusion is shaped by national and local circumstances – from economic, social and political institutions to norms, behaviours and social relations. Therefore, no single set of policies or strategies is applicable across all countries and in all contexts. Instead, successful examples point to several imperatives to address the structural causes of exclusion and social injustice. The first imperative is to establish a universal approach to social policy, complemented by special or targeted measures to address the distinct obstacles faced by disadvantaged, marginalized or otherwise excluded social groups. The second imperative is to overcome the misalignment often observed between social development goals and macroeconomic policy frameworks. The third broad imperative is to promote inclusive institutions.

The universal provision of social protection as well as good-quality health and education services can address a range of exclusionary barriers. Access to good-quality education in particular empowers individuals economically by enhancing their human capital, but it also entitles them socially and politically. Further, such education can build confidence among groups facing systemic disadvantages by enabling them to participate more meaningfully in public and civic life.

Analysis throughout the report has highlighted the role that economic, social, political, legal and cultural institutions play in either perpetuating exclusion or, alternately, promoting inclusion. Ensuring that institutions are inclusive can contribute to levelling the playing field, providing all people with opportunities to participate in public life on equal terms. Institutions can also foster positive change in attitudes and behaviour. In this chapter, therefore, there is an examination of how Governments as well as the international community can encourage institutional environments in which policies for inclusion are more likely to be adopted, take hold and flourish. Such norms and values evolve slowly and are affected by context, culture and history, but – as the examples presented in the next sections indicate – Governments can influence and help to transform them. Institutional change is often a long-term process, dependent on national and local circumstances. However, with concerted effort and political motivation, it is possible to change institutions.

A. Addressing exclusion: forward-looking strategies for social development

1. The importance of a universal approach to social policy for promoting inclusion

Inclusive societies are those that have ensured equal access to opportunities and guaranteed fairness in the distribution of outcomes. Evidence shows that a lack of social protection or inadequate coverage is linked to entrenched poverty and insecurity, rising inequality and underinvestment in human capital (ILO, 2014c; UNRISD, 2010). In high-income countries, recent fiscal consolidation programmes following the global financial and economic crisis that began in 2008 have contributed to worsened poverty and social exclusion, including among older persons, women with young children and persons with disabilities. In the European Union, 123 million people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2012 compared with 116 million in 2008, with 800,000 more children living in poverty than in 2008 (ILO, 2014c; UNRISD, 2010).

The universal provision of services in such key areas as health care and education, coupled with social protection for all members of society, contributes to social inclusion in a number of important ways. By ensuring that access to good-quality public goods and services is extended to all members of society, regardless of status, ethnicity, sex or age, the State acknowledges that all individuals, households and communities are worthy of consideration and should benefit from the basic entitlements that come with such consideration (UNRISD, 2010). Identifying and legally recognizing all individuals and groups, ensuring that they are counted, as well as engaging with potential beneficiaries and understanding their needs, and making certain that they count, are key to any attempt at ensuring the universal provision of social services.

A universal approach to social policy also contributes significantly to realizing the normative human rights commitments that underpin social inclusion. Through that approach, the responsibility and duty of the State is realized in terms of guaranteeing the protection of social rights for all in such areas as education, health care and housing, without discrimination. These rights, as laid out in the “International Bill of Human Rights”⁷⁷ and other universal human rights instruments, are of intrinsic value as well as important means for promoting the well-being of all. Governments around the world have grounded the extension of free primary education, for example, in the universal right to basic education. In recent times, such Latin

⁷⁷ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III), forms the first part of the International Bill; the second and third parts consist of two covenants: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, which were adopted by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI).

American countries as Brazil have increasingly emphasized social justice and citizenship rights as part of social policy reforms (UNRISD, 2010). Jamaica has been able to create a normative framework that obligates the Government to continually seek solutions to housing challenges that its citizens face by recognizing the human right to shelter through laws, policies and international treaties (UNRISD, 2010). Similarly in India, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act passed in 2005 is aimed at realizing the right to work for all Indian citizens, while experiments with a basic income guarantee programme have been conducted in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh under the justification of the right to a basic minimum income (Davala and others, 2015).

Critically, a rights-based approach to promoting social inclusion – with emphasis on social justice, fairness and solidarity – directly challenges the values, social norms and attitudes that give rise to exclusionary behaviour and practices within communities. This aspect is important as policies aimed at fostering equal opportunities can easily be undermined if they do not tackle discriminatory beliefs and practices (Lakhani, Sacks and Heltberg, 2014).

Clearly, universal approaches to social policy will be realized in different forms in various country contexts. Common to all approaches, however, is the recognition of the duties and responsibilities of the State towards all members of society. Under the Social Protection Floor Initiative of the United Nations system, for instance, a nationally defined set of minimum guarantees is proposed for all citizens without discrimination.⁷⁸ It is therefore illustrative of a policy approach with a universal vision and scope that can be implemented in different ways at the national level based on country-specific institutional and administrative structures, fiscal space and social policy needs, objectives and priorities. The European Union's "Europe 2020" strategy for growth, combined with the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, is an example of an overarching regional policy framework which has inspired consistent national plans while still reflecting specific political, social and economic priorities. At the national level, the national development plan of Rwanda, Vision 2020, is grounded in social inclusion and calls for equity-oriented national policies. A health system for all citizens is central to the plan and has helped to sharply reduce premature mortality rates and increase life expectancy (Binagwaho and others, 2014).

The case for a universal approach to social policy inevitably raises concerns about its affordability. When it comes to social protection, ILO has estimated that the cost of providing a universal social protection floor is affordable, even for least developed countries. For a selected set of low- and low-middle-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, a basic package of social protection, including old-age and disability pensions and family allowances, but excluding health care, was estimated to cost between 2.2 per cent and 5.7 per cent of GDP (ILO, 2008).

⁷⁸ E/2009/114, para. 26.

Delivering comprehensive universal health-care coverage is generally more expensive than providing basic social protection. OECD countries spent 8.9 per cent of GDP on health care in 2013 (OECD, 2015c). Thailand has been able to implement a comprehensive universal coverage scheme with an expenditure of 6 per cent of GDP (WHO, 2016). Yet a growing number of developing countries are rolling out universal health-care coverage programmes. In most cases, countries are moving slowly towards the universal provision of services, with the aim of gradually improving benefits, quality and financial protection by focusing initially on the needs of people living in poverty and other disadvantaged groups who most often are not covered by programmes in place (Cotlear and others, 2015; Cecchini and others, 2015). Universal access to primary and secondary education is less costly, with OECD countries spending an average of 3.7 per cent of their GDP on such services (OECD, 2015d). Recent estimates suggest that, for low- and lower-middle-income countries to meet some of their targets of delivering universal pre-primary, primary and secondary education under Sustainable Development Goal 4, Governments will need to increase spending from 3.5 per cent to 6.3 per cent of their GDP between 2012 and 2030 (UNESCO, 2015c).

Social protection programmes currently are strongly dependent on international aid, especially in low-income countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The challenge for many poor countries is to raise additional revenues domestically and through development assistance. Some developing countries have seen a rise in public revenues during the last decade. This rise has been partly on account of both indirect and direct taxes, but equally important have been the increase in non-tax income in commodity-exporting countries, the rise in official development assistance, particularly in countries recovering from conflict, and a reduction in the interest burden of public debt.

Policy-oriented research indicates that there is scope for further mobilizing domestic resources and therefore expanding fiscal space in developing countries (Hujo, 2011). There is also potential for increasing the redistributive impact of taxation and social transfers in both developed and developing countries, for example, through higher tax rates on top earners and dividends on property, as well as strengthening tax collection systems that broaden the domestic tax base. The mobilization of domestic resources through modernized, progressive tax systems, improved tax policy and more efficient tax collection is a key action area that was agreed by Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa.⁷⁹ The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development also includes a commitment to combat tax evasion and corruption through strengthened national regulation and increased international cooperation, and to reduce opportunities for tax avoidance.⁸⁰ These are not quick or easy processes but,

⁷⁹ General Assembly resolution 69/313, para. 22.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 23.

while systems will need to adapt to local circumstances, mobilizing domestic resources constitutes the most effective way of raising public revenues sustainably in the long term. Taxation revenue is generally deemed superior to other sources because of its stability and its potential for financing programmes offering universal coverage. Prioritizing a broad and progressive revenue base can itself promote social inclusion not only by bolstering national fiscal space, but also by contributing to the kind of social solidarity and public “buy in” discussed previously.

2. Complementing a universal approach with special measures

Even under a policy framework grounded in universalism, certain segments of the population face greater challenges than others in overcoming social exclusion, as illustrated in chapter 3. In general, certain groups and geographical areas benefit disproportionately from publicly provided goods and services as well as resource rents. For example, the quality of education is often better in urban areas than in rural ones, even under a framework designed to ensure universal access. Its provision in urban areas tends to be less costly and more efficient, and the recruitment and retention of the most talented teachers is usually easier, as is administrative monitoring and oversight (UNESCO, 2015a). However, within urban areas, significant variations may also exist in the quality of schools and other public services between poor and rich neighbourhoods (UNESCO, 2015a). Other inequalities based on individual or group characteristics, such as sex, disability status, or ethnicity, can also prevent certain people from accessing services, or affect the quality of the services that they are able to access (United Nations, 2013b). Complementary special efforts are therefore needed, even if temporarily, to overcome these barriers and make universal provision more effective in promoting social inclusion.

Special or targeted measures include affirmative action policies, targeted monetary transfers and preferential access to credit for people living in poverty and extreme poverty, transport vouchers for persons with disabilities, as well as policies which recognize and protect languages, including interpretation services for indigenous language speakers. Affirmative action policies are aimed at redressing discrimination suffered by certain social groups. Reservation of seats for women in national and local government bodies in India and Rwanda have been shown to improve political participation for females (Powley, 2006; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004). Preferences in university admission have helped students from low-income families and minority backgrounds to access higher education in Brazil (Gacitúa-Marió and Woolcock, 2008) and the United States (Kahlenburg, 2012). However, the full potential of such measures to improve social inclusion is strongly dependent on context. While better-connected or wealthier women may find more opportunities in politics as a result of female quotas, poorer women may see little change in their prospects for participation. Equally, preferential

access to universities assists only the relatively small number of students from historically excluded groups who have completed secondary education. Additional research is needed to assess the overall impacts of these policies on other key inclusive outcomes, such as the reduction of poverty or income inequality (Marcus, Mdee and Page, 2016).

Targeting suffers from other problems: the high levels of administrative capacity required for means-testing, high transaction costs, the risk of political capture by the elites or the richest regions and its potential impact on social segmentation have been widely documented (United Nations, 2009). In recent decades, targeting has often been suggested by multilateral financial institutions and donors as a way to achieve social objectives without a significant rise in social spending (United Nations, 2009). In practice, however, social policies are rarely based on purely universal or purely targeted approaches; some measures are universal while others are targeted towards groups that need particular support and are difficult to reach through universal measures. Both types of spending may be justified depending on each country's situation. Criticism levelled at targeted or special measures for disadvantaged groups has been most acute when such measures have been used to replace universal ones rather than to complement them (ECLAC, 2015).

Often, special measures may be grounded in national and international legal instruments, including constitutions, conventions and declarations, aimed at protecting the rights of such groups. In Canada, constitutional reform in 1982 was designed to protect the rights of aboriginal citizens. Similarly, the United States in 1990 passed the Americans with Disabilities Act to prohibit discrimination based on persons' disability status and to impose accessibility requirements on public and private entities. At the global level, one of the purposes of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol is to change attitudes and approaches towards persons with disabilities by viewing such persons as "subjects" with rights who are capable of claiming those rights, making informed decisions on their lives and, overall, being active members of society. The Convention has been ratified by 160 States.⁸¹

Empirical literature on the link between such instruments and practical impacts for rights holders is, however, mixed. DeLeire (2000), for instance, found that in the 10 years following the adoption of Americans with Disabilities Act, persons with disabilities in the United States were less likely to be employed than persons without disabilities, as employers wanted to avoid the associated costs of ensuring accessibility. However, other authors have found positive relationships between constitutionally protected rights and improved outcomes for rights holders (Heymann, Raub and Cassola, 2014). Moreover, there is strong qualitative evidence to suggest that such

⁸¹ <https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY>, accessed on 25 October 2016.

legal codification of the rights of historically excluded groups can promote an attitudinal shift, both in society at large in terms of recognition and acceptance and among individuals in the excluded group in terms of a sense of entitlement, belonging and pride (Mattlin, 2015).

Nonetheless, if special or targeted measures are to genuinely promote inclusion, Governments must design them in ways that minimize chances of stigmatization. Affirmative action policies, for instance, need to be implemented within a broad framework of improved access to services for all, to ensure that they do not cement negative attitudes and a perception that members of groups targeted by such policies have not “earned” the advantages provided.

Measures targeting the empowerment of women must avoid features that perpetuate gender stereotypes or social stigmas, such as conditions that increase women’s unpaid caregiving and domestic work (UN Women, 2015). Instead, social transfer schemes can provide incentives for men to take on childcare or other social care responsibilities. Labour market policies that require the provision of paid family leave, particularly paternity leave, have immense potential to contribute to women’s participation in the labour market, including women’s advancement in their jobs or careers (Pew Research Center, 2015). The private sector can lead in promoting more inclusive business practices, correcting gender imbalances in the workforce by confronting taboos against hiring women, eradicating gender pay gaps, investing in knowledge and skills of female employees as well as providing flexible working arrangements for all staff. Governments can also build the capacity of health and social services to eliminate gender-based violence, or work with civil society to enable women and girls to effectively enjoy their rights to health care and reproductive health services and sanitation. These measures can include building adequate sanitation facilities in schools, or conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the responsibilities of men to tackle sexism and gender-biased attitudes, such as taboos concerning menstruation (UN Women, 2015).

Governments must also recognize the need to integrate temporary special measures and social safety nets into broader social protection systems. While some groups, such as persons with disabilities, may always require specific efforts to ensure their inclusion, the ultimate goal of this approach should be to bring everyone up to the same starting line – to leave no one behind. Enhancing equality of opportunity and voice for all, coupled with social programmes that build human capital, help households manage risks and cope with shocks, will in the long run reduce the continued reliance on such special measures. Moreover, while targeted interventions help in addressing some dimensions of social exclusion for specific groups, without a broad-based universal approach grounded in social justice that is aimed at directly combating inequalities and generating solidarity around development objectives, such progress may not be sustainable.

3. Coherent policies for inclusive development

Universal access to social protection and to social services is necessary to shield all individuals and groups from economic shocks and other contingencies and promote their inclusion. However, social policies alone will not bring about the structural transformations that are necessary to promote inclusive development. By bringing them together, complementary social and economic policies can be used to foster social inclusion. They can help create employment and decent work and therefore provide opportunities for wealth creation for all segments of society. Indeed, aligning macroeconomic, social and environmental policies will enhance prospects for the achievement and sustainability of inclusive and equitable development.

Several economic and social policies can “work together” to boost demand in a sustainable manner through the creation of measures to increase decent work and universal social protection, rather than through speculation in credit and asset markets. This policy shift will require improved policy coherence, namely by aligning macroeconomic policy frameworks with social goals. It will mean paying greater attention to income distribution and to the creation of full employment and decent work for all – not only to keeping inflation low and controlling budget deficits. Maintaining levels of public expenditure and accepting budget deficits during economic downturns may be one important consequence of such a shift in attention.

In order for growth to be sustained and inclusive, economic policies must be concerned with the ability of growth to create full employment and decent work for all (OECD, 2014). As discussed in chapter II, labour market and employment policies, including collective bargaining and unionization, wage-setting mechanisms and minimum wage laws, are also essential to support inclusive growth. Environmentally sustainable growth which protects, rather than erodes, natural assets is crucial to ensuring that the effects of climate change do not continue to limit the ability of people living in poverty, or disadvantaged and marginalized groups to participate in society on improved terms (United Nations, 2016a). Similarly, for vulnerable urban populations, including slum dwellers, policies that support sustainable urbanization, including investments in green technologies and infrastructure, will be a crucial part of an inclusive development strategy. Sustainable urbanization should promote and protect communities and livelihoods, rather than disrupt them, as well as invest in public spaces and facilities that are accessible to all and encourage social interaction and civic participation.

Inclusive economic and social policies are mutually reinforcing. While macroeconomic policies can and should pursue social welfare and justice, well-designed social policies can enhance macroeconomic growth and post-crisis recovery through investments in human resources development and redistributive measures that increase productivity and aggregate demand. They can also build political stability, a robust determinant of long-term economic

growth (Alesina and others, 1996). A number of countries have recognized the importance of social protection to promote inclusive and sustainable growth. China and Thailand, for instance, have expanded and strengthened national social protection mechanisms while pursuing complementary economic and employment policies that emphasize broad-based and sustainable improvements in living standards, especially among low-income earners and the middle class (ILO, 2014c). In other countries, recent emphasis on balancing public budgets has increased volatility in the real economy and the labour market, resulting in declines in public investments in infrastructure, technologies and human capital, which are critical for stimulating aggregate demand and economic activity during times of crisis. Approaches that embed social policies in a wider range of coordinated macroeconomic, employment, labour market and fiscal policies are therefore crucial to creating inclusive societies.

B. The importance of inclusive institutions

As the structures, rules and practices that shape the way in which people behave, institutions play a key role in either perpetuating exclusion or alternately, promoting and achieving inclusion. They are the framework within which decisions on social, economic and environmental issues are made, policies are designed and all forms of social interaction are structured. Institutions and norms that promote open and inclusive processes create the conditions needed for the reduction of poverty and inequality, as do accountable and responsive Governments that encourage the participation of individuals and communities in social, economic and political life. Supportive institutional environments can make policies that promote inclusion more likely to be adopted, take hold and flourish.

This section explores whether and how institutions can be transformed so as to promote equity, voice, participation and empowerment, and an examination of the role that Governments can play in encouraging institutional change. Although some institutions can change quickly, namely political institutions following national elections, institutional change is often a slow and gradual process. Once inclusive and participatory political institutions are in place, however, they create checks and balances that prevent the abuse of power and tend to support the creation of inclusive economic and social institutions.

1. Institutions for equity

Levels of public spending and regulation over markets and property rights have distributional effects and can either support or undermine social inclusion. The institutionalized racial segregation of the system of apartheid

in South Africa, for instance, limited access to resources and opportunities among non-whites and therefore created social exclusion, as did the legacy of so-called Jim Crow laws in the United States, as discussed in chapter IV.

Changes in institutional arrangements regarding the ownership and use of land, the rights of workers and entrepreneurs, all have shown potential to promote inclusion. Institutional acknowledgement of the customary rights of indigenous peoples over land in a growing number of countries, for example, has helped support entrepreneurship, economic security and development among these historically excluded groups. Similarly, a range of gender-sensitive reforms in land titling and inheritance laws across Latin America and the Caribbean, including ending formal gender discrimination in land ownership and inheritance as well as preferential treatment for women in titling, contributed to a significant increase in the percentage of women registered as landowners (Deere and León de Leal, 2001). Legislative frameworks that encourage collective action and bargaining rights can also help empower workers and small-scale producers. In rural settings, cooperatives and other producer organizations and self-help groups have been effective at increasing incomes of members as well as building confidence for participation in community and political life.

Improving access to legal institutions and ensuring equality before the law is also key to promoting inclusion. People living in poverty generally have limited awareness of their rights and lack legal literacy. Pursuing justice also comes at a high cost, both monetary and in terms of lost working time. Therefore, such strategies as programmes and campaigns to enhance legal awareness and literacy, low-cost legal services, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and reform of traditional or customary justice systems that disadvantage certain social groups have the potential to tackle social exclusion through multiple channels. In Indonesia, for example, the Government implemented reforms of religious courts nationwide, introducing court fee waivers and increasing the availability of legal information at the village level. These steps resulted in a fourteenfold increase in the number of clients living in poverty who became able to access such courts and a fourfold increase in the number accessing circuit courts in remote areas (World Bank, 2013).

Corruption is a major institutional barrier to inclusion and equity. It erodes trust between Governments and citizens as well as among citizens, who may feel that certain individuals or groups receive favourable treatment as a result of corrupt practices. Combating corruption, changing incentive structures and mindsets, fighting entrenched corrupt norms, including in the management of resource rents, and combating illicit financial transfers have all had varying degrees of success in this regard (Fosu, 2013). Successful anti-corruption efforts have also often been initiated from the bottom up, challenging behaviours that generate corruption and creating an increased sense of responsibility to fight it (Panth, 2011; van der Gaag and Rowlands, 2009).

2. Institutions for participation and voice

Barriers to participation, including discrimination, make it much more difficult for excluded and marginalized groups to express their concerns and have their voices heard and translated into meaningful action (Silver, 2012). Promoting inclusive institutions therefore involves the identification and elimination of such barriers as well as active efforts to create enabling conditions for all individuals and social groups to participate and express their voice. When those who are most at risk of exclusion are able to participate in such processes, institutions are more likely to address their needs.

Participatory processes are also necessary to avoid violent expressions of social discontent that exclusionary and unjust institutions can provoke. Social movements and local associations have traditionally been important in this regard. They have given people living in poverty and those who belong to other excluded groups a voice and greater agency to articulate their interests. Often informal and uncoordinated, these forms of collective action are an essential countervailing force to the excessive concentration and use of power. Historically, social mobilization efforts have raised and advanced issues that have subsequently become important priorities for the State, including issues such as environmental degradation and women's rights (Mulgan, 2007). They have helped discourage people from joining violent conflicts and have opened space for the exercise of civic and political rights. They have challenged stereotypes of poverty or those based on group identity. They have also played a role in building self-esteem and shared identities among, for instance, workers in the informal sector, and have brought recognition to their work. As discussed in chapter III, social capital – the gains that come from cooperation between individuals and groups and the creation of social networks – is as important to empowerment as is human capital. By investing in social capital through supporting social mobilization, helping build collective associations and strengthening community action, Governments are enabling individuals and groups to become agents of change and development. Governments can create an enabling environment for such grass-roots movements by building capacity, opening spaces for consultation and forming alliances between social movements and political institutions, including parliamentary committees and political parties. Changes in legislation may also be necessary to legitimize such movements and strengthen them.

The Internet, social media networks and mobile technologies can also be used to enhance public participation and service delivery and support social mobilization. Online civil society platforms, such as *Por Mi Barrio* in Uruguay and *I Change My City* in India, connect to existing government complaint systems, enabling urban residents to report public service problems (World Bank, 2016). However, recent evidence also suggests that such initiatives can reinforce rather than replace existing accountability mechanisms, relying on offline mobilization for sufficient uptake and generating the most success

when addressing fairly straightforward information and monitoring problems (World Bank, 2016).

Legislation and regulation that guarantees the rights of citizens to information and to engagement with public institutions is essential, and building institutional capacity in information-sharing and the organization of public consultation forums needs to be developed. Access to accurate and relevant information on such issues as basic human rights and entitlements, the availability of basic services and work opportunities is required for effective participation in governance and other decision-making processes as well as to hold Governments accountable. Transparency initiatives, when complemented by accountability mechanisms, such as auditing and oversight, help to ensure that public institutions are responsive and policies are effectively implemented. For example, in the Philippines public financial management reforms in 2010 were focused on improving public access to information on the allocation, disbursement and status of programmes, official invitation of civil society participation throughout the national budget cycle and a commitment to the international Open Budget Initiative;⁸² these measures have resulted in a vastly increased involvement by civil society actors within decision-making processes (Dressel, 2012).

At the State level, no single ministry alone can promote participation. The principle of leaving no one behind should cut across all ministries and agencies. However, institutional arrangements alone may not determine success. In all potential avenues for change, leadership and reform-minded individuals within government who have experience in other spheres, such as civil society and academia, can be crucial in mediating between citizen interests and competing interests and pressures. Similarly, openness from policymakers to seek collective solutions, as well as patience from citizens to allow reforms to emerge slowly through a process of trial and error rather than to expect an immediate quick fix, can also be important ingredients for bringing about inclusive institutional change (Booth, 2012).

3. Institutions for recognition

Institutional environments that ensure recognition and respect for equality as well as diversity are also essential for promoting social inclusion. Fostering respect for diversity requires strengthening formal mechanisms that officially acknowledge excluded groups as well as challenging values, attitudes and behaviours that discriminate and exclude.

Official recognition requires strengthening systems of civil registration and legal identification. Making sure that groups that have often been “invisible”

⁸² For further information, see www.internationalbudget.org/opening-budgets/open-budget-initiative/.

in official statistics, including ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, foreigners, homeless persons and persons in institutions, are recognized and counted in these systems can be a powerful tool to promote inclusion. Basic civil registration, particularly of births, establishes legal identity. It lays the foundation for citizens to claim their rights and facilitates the interaction between citizens and their Governments on rights and obligations. Without civil registration, children of excluded groups are much less likely to enrol in school, for example, limiting the potential of such services to act as a vehicle for inclusion. Civil registration systems equip Governments with the necessary information for their endeavours to meet the needs of their citizens and invest in their future through resource allocation, institutional arrangements and design, and the provision of public services. The decision of India in 2010 to launch the Aadhaar⁸³ programme to enrol the biometric identifying data of all its 1.2 billion citizens, for example, was a critical step in enabling fairer access of the people to government benefits and services. Programmes such as Aadhaar have tremendous potential to foster inclusion by giving all people, including the poorest and most marginalized, an official identity. Fair and robust systems of legal identity and birth registration are recognized in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an important foundation for promoting inclusive societies.

Respect for difference and diversity involves challenging social and cultural norms, values, attitudes and behaviours, such as racism, xenophobia, sexism and homophobia, that perpetuate structural injustice, discrimination and exclusion. Such exclusionary attitudes can permeate all facets of a society; inclusive institutional change has often involved addressing them through a range of channels. Formal guidance and training to tackle discriminatory beliefs and change the mindsets of power-holding individuals, such as government officials, police officers and members of the judiciary, can be a particularly important tool to promote such change. Similarly, public media and communications campaigns as well as civic education focused on tolerance and respect (such as the example described in box V.1), combined with campaigns for legal reform or better enforcement of existing laws and regulations, have been used to confront discrimination. In Thailand, the trade union movement, along with disabled persons' organizations and campaigns to promote positive images of people with disabilities in the media, played an important role in supporting international norms enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by the Government of Thailand in 2008 (ILO, 2011b).

⁸³ Aadhaar is a transliterated word meaning “foundation” or “base” in Hindi. For further information about the programme, see <https://uidai.gov.in/beta/your-aadhaar/about-aadhaar.html>.

Box V.1

Promoting social inclusion through human rights education

Human rights education is a powerful tool for removing barriers to participation and facilitating social inclusion of disadvantaged individuals and groups. Refugees often face limitations on the enjoyment of economic, social and political rights due to their particular status. Their voices may not be heard, or they might be unaware of their rights. When exclusion and lack of awareness of rights reinforce each other, human rights education in schools presents a special opportunity to break this cycle. Moreover, promoting attitudes of inclusion, tolerance, peaceful resolution of conflict and respect for diversity among children and youth, helps embed these values more broadly.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has pioneered a unique policy on human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance in its education programme in Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which comprises the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and the Syrian Arab Republic. It integrates child and youth-friendly activities and human rights-based teaching methodologies into all subjects and classes that UNRWA provides for 500,000 Palestine refugee students enrolled in UNRWA primary and preparatory schools and, in Lebanon, in secondary schools also.

In a region laden with risks to education, including widespread conflict, and in which Palestine refugees experience profound vulnerability, UNRWA promotes safe learning environments where students explore the many aspects of human rights and tolerance, not only through study but also by participating in purpose-designed activities. Role-playing and group games, for example, help students to learn about and critically reflect on sensitive social issues, such as gender roles and discrimination in all its forms. In so doing, they learn that concrete actions can be taken to help strengthen social inclusion, which is all the more important in contexts where the refugee community faces exclusion. Empathy and critical thinking are key to the process, in which students are encouraged to understand the importance of social inclusion as well as the repercussions of attitudes, values and actions that contribute to exclusion – such as discrimination and racism. Implemented in an increasingly challenging environment, where many Palestine refugee children may experience exclusion, discrimination and other human rights violations, the programme also teaches children and youth to resolve conflicts through dialogue rather than violence. The human rights programme of UNRWA has an impact beyond school walls as students, supported by faculty, try to reach the entire refugee community through public events and advocacy, including via media. An UNRWA evaluation found that 98 per cent of participants in the UNRWA Human Rights Day 2015 commemorations in schools said that they had a “greater appreciation for diversity among different people” (UNRWA, 2016).

To strengthen the application of human rights concepts, UNRWA has also established school parliaments in all of its 691 schools across the five fields where it operates. On any given day, the elected school parliamentarians are actively promoting the inclusion and empowerment of young people, by mediating grievances between faculty and students, or forming support groups for peers at risk of dropping out of school or succumbing to early marriage. School parliaments have also resulted in greater participation in community life of people with disabilities; they are nurturing the civic spirit of inclusion and participation of children in decision-making both in school and in their community.

Internal evaluations show that students who are exposed to human rights education tend to support gender equality, value diversity and take action to end bullying and violence inside and outside of school. Heba abu Laban, a 13-year-old member of her school parliament in Gaza, commented: “I have learned a lot about diversity and human rights. Now I know that people have different religions or colours, but while we all have the right to be different, we need to be treated equally” (UNRWA, 2015). In explaining the impact of the programme on her students, UNRWA teacher Maison Askar said: “There is less intolerance among students in the school; they are more respectful with each other and towards each other’s opinions. They consciously listen to each other” (UNRWA, 2015).

4. *The role of Governments in promoting inclusive institutions*

Changing institutions requires challenging norms and values that evolve slowly and are deeply affected by context, culture and history. Those who benefit economically or politically from existing power imbalances often resist such change, as it threatens their vested interests.⁸⁴ Even when there is political commitment to promote inclusion and participation, complex and at times conflicting group and individual interests create resistance to rapid change. Any move towards more inclusive institutions necessarily requires a challenge to the existing incentives and constraints that Governments face from powerful sections of their constituencies.

Institutions and norms that promote inclusion and empowerment are influenced by actions taken by many stakeholders, including States as well as members of civil society, social movements, trade unions and associations of self-employed workers, the private sector, the media and, most importantly, individuals and groups who live in poverty or are otherwise socially excluded. In practice, it is often the formation of broad coalitions of various stakeholders, rather than action by the State or civil society alone that leads to the formation of pluralistic, inclusive institutions. However, the role of Governments remains key to creating the institutional conditions for social inclusion. Governments are best positioned to remove the formal and informal institutional barriers that prevent some individuals and groups from taking action to improve their well-being and expand their choices. Only Governments can establish inclusive and secure legal, administrative and regulatory environments at the national and local levels; they possess the mandate and resources to provide services and infrastructure on the scale needed. Action by Governments is also crucial in curtailing the excessive concentration of power and influence that ultimately results in exclusion.

While the private sector has at times been a driver of exclusion through exploitative, unfair and unsafe practices in employment and in the provision of essential services, it can also be a crucial partner for Governments in encouraging inclusive institutions. Voluntary standards and corporate social responsibility initiatives, encompassing decent labour conditions, fair remuneration and contracting, occupational health and safety, more environmentally sound production patterns as well as sustained and sustainable investments in the long-term welfare of society, can support the efforts of Governments towards inclusive institutions.

There is no one-size-fits-all template for how Governments or other stakeholders can initiate the process of institutional change, but with concerted effort and political motivation, they can influence it. Encouragingly, even limited institutional changes initiated by key individuals or power-holders can

⁸⁴ Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) provided numerous historical examples of elites sustaining exclusive or inefficient institutions that benefit themselves.

gradually grow in significance over the course of time. Research suggests that inclusive political institutions tend to support inclusive economic and social institutions by creating checks and balances that prevent the concentration of wealth. Similarly, more inclusive economic institutions create incentives for further breaking down exclusionary political and social barriers (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012).

Taking initial steps – however modest – towards a more inclusive approach, can slowly encourage different interest groups to come together and push for further change. For example, policymaking or problem-solving mechanisms that promote broader participation, even if limited at first, create new pathways for the participation of individuals and groups previously excluded from decision-making processes. These new voices can help to create momentum for further change and for those institutions to look beyond the needs of their current beneficiaries. Participatory mechanisms can also affect long-standing institutional cultures and the mindsets and behaviour of those individuals involved in making decisions. While the success of such efforts depends greatly on national and local circumstances, as well as on the actions of other stakeholders, including the private sector, it is clear that Governments must lead the way.

C. Conclusions

The evidence presented in the report illustrates that a person's chances in life depend significantly on group ascription. Group-based differences in access to education, health care, infrastructure and employment as well as inequalities in political participation are pervasive and symptomatic of the exclusion of members of certain groups. These disadvantages reinforce one another. In particular, lower levels of health and education go hand in hand with higher levels of poverty and unemployment, as well as with less voice in political and civic life. Thus, progress in one domain alone will not be sufficient to end social exclusion.

The analysis underscores the inextricable linkages among the overarching objectives of poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all and social inclusion – core commitments made at the 1995 Summit for Social Development and now integral parts of the 2030 Agenda. The analysis also calls attention to the Summit's broad vision of social development as a process that involves a fairer distribution of opportunities and resources to foster social justice, equality and the participation of all people in social, economic and political processes. The report further highlights the Summit's people-centred approach to development and the emphasis placed on integrated policy frameworks to tackle inequalities, also reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda.

Beyond the foundational role of inclusion and the moral imperative to promote it, there are also instrumental reasons to ensure that no one is left

behind. There is indeed growing recognition of the importance of reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion to strengthen not only the social but also the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Member States have agreed that no Sustainable Development Goal – be it on climate change, infrastructure or economic growth – should be considered achieved if the targets are not met for all members of society. Exclusion has economic costs, and the inequitable distribution of income reduces the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction, which itself is both a cause and a consequence of social exclusion. Exclusion has political costs as well, as illustrated in the previous chapters.

However, this awareness has not yet translated into the level of political commitment or the necessary normative shifts that it is argued in this report are imperative for inclusive development. Instead, overreliance on market mechanisms, retrenchment of the redistributive role of the State and growing inequalities have contributed to social exclusion and have even put the social contract under threat in many countries in the last few decades. Often, social policy has become merely a corrective means to temporarily cushion the effects of crises or other shocks. Where identity-based disadvantages have been deliberately supported by the dominant majority, Governments may not have been urged to tackle them. Correcting asymmetries in power, voice and influence is not only the right thing to do, but also the necessary thing to do in order to strengthen the social contract both at the national and global levels.

Meeting the vision of the 2030 Agenda requires a reconsideration of the policy priorities that have prevailed over the last two decades. The experience of countries and regions that have succeeded in reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion has shown that States can affect market forces so as to promote social justice without altering economic competitiveness. Global agreement on the need to enhance policy coherence (targets 17.3 and 17.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals) itself comes from the realization that macroeconomic and social policies have at times had opposing effects on social and economic inclusion. Countries that have benefited from complementary social and economic policies have been able to stimulate inclusive economic growth and create decent work opportunities for all in a sustainable manner. Achieving policy coherence and policy integration in practice still requires evidence-gathering and analysis of good practices, including better understanding of the context of effective policymaking and implementation. Such a learning-from-experience approach is critical for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The commitment to leave no one behind and thus ensure that every individual participates with equal rights and enjoys the full range of opportunities expressed in the Sustainable Development Goals is an important step towards reconsidering policy priorities. One year into its implementation, the 2030 Agenda has already succeeded in driving the attention of the international community towards social exclusion and inequality, including

through the 2016 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the theme “Ensuring that no one is left behind”.⁸⁵ However, the extent of inclusion that the 2030 Agenda will help to achieve will depend on how it is implemented. Framing goals in universal terms alone does not ensure universality. Despite aiming for universal primary education, for instance, the Millennium Development Goals failed to promote the action necessary to reach the children furthest behind first, as shown in the present report. At the same time, focusing on extreme states of exclusion and poverty will do little to affect the wider societal, economic and political processes that drive social exclusion in the first place. It is contended in this report that social inclusion cannot be pursued as a sectoral initiative or in a piecemeal fashion. It requires an orientation of policy objectives and priorities towards the well-being of all.

In terms of monitoring, identifying individuals and groups that are left behind and addressing the challenges they face will require better household- and individual-level data, increased availability of microdata and strengthened capacity of national statistical agencies. For instance, to date, few of the current Sustainable Development Goal indicators can be disaggregated by migrant, disability and indigenous status. In addition, as discussed throughout the report, social groups that are omitted from household surveys and censuses are often those at the highest risk of being left behind. A global effort to improve data availability for all population groups, including through improvements in the integration of data sources, has already begun. Further work is needed to enhance the coverage, quality and frequency of data to ensure that the most vulnerable and marginalized people are the first to be reached.

However, improved data alone, where available, have not driven all countries or organizations to address the barriers that disadvantaged groups face. In contrast, some countries have effectively addressed such barriers with imperfect information. In essence, ensuring that all individuals are afforded the same rights and opportunities demands political will and commitment.

Concrete proposals have been put forth for the establishment of mechanisms to ensure that implementation will be targeted first at the individuals and groups that are furthest behind. One proposal calls for setting “stepping stone” equity targets for interim points between 2015 and 2030 in order to identify and highlight gaps in progress across groups (Save the Children, 2014). Another envisions conducting needs assessments at the national level, identifying the groups and communities left furthest behind from achieving each goal in each country and then identifying common challenges, exchanging lessons learned and agreeing on how such challenges will be tackled (ODI, 2016). These and other proposals, including of mechanisms to foster participatory implementation and monitoring

⁸⁵ For further information, see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/HLPF/2016>.

processes, illustrate the feasibility and flexibility of translating into action the political commitment to leave no one behind.

