

Part one

Sources and manifestations of vulnerability

Introduction

77. The sources of vulnerability are as diverse as its many meanings. One approach is to investigate those sources by social group. However, many of the sources will be common to the groups in question, risking repetition. It is possible to take a different approach: categorize the social groups by their sources of vulnerability. The latter approach has the added advantage that policy prescriptions can yield multiple results: they are not necessarily specific to any one group but can be beneficial for more than one group at the same time.

78. In part I of the *Report on the World Social Situation, 2003*, the sources of vulnerability are used, to the greatest extent possible, to categorize the social groups concerned. Inevitably, there are sources of vulnerability that are unique and group-specific. When such situations arise, they have been identified by means of subsections in the chapters that follow.

79. Certainly, any clustering or classification of sources of vulnerability can be neither exhaustive nor comprehensive. Furthermore, the sources identified here — income insecurity, social ills, and sociocultural biases and discrimination — do not operate truly independently from each other. Their separation, therefore, introduces a certain degree of artificiality but, from a policy perspective, helps to facilitate the design of policy interventions.