

**Contribution by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration to the
2017 ECOSOC Integration Segment with the theme of
“Making eradication of poverty an integral objective of all policies: What will it take?”**

Chairperson’s summary, Prof. José Castelazo, 30 March 2017

Eradicating poverty as a cross cutting objective of institutions and SDG policies¹

Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept, going beyond income alone to include elements such as health, education, housing and other living standards. Both measurements and solutions need to address these other dimensions, which interact with each other in dynamic ways. Individual conditions matter as well – for example, poverty can occur at different points in the life cycle; women face unique constraints such as their responsibility for care work; and various elements of identity can increase the chances of being poor as they may be associated with violations of human rights standards. Social and environmental factors are also important – for example, there are well documented correlations between poverty and crime and violence; increasing inequalities and the concentration of wealth can trap people in poverty; and those who derive their livelihood from natural resources may be especially at risk in fragile environmental contexts.

Solutions therefore need to be designed and implemented across sectors – it is not sustainable to have ‘more of everything’, so synergies and trade-offs must be recognized, and leveraged.

Successful poverty eradication strategies must have at least two components – jobs, and social protection for all. Social protection systems should offer a stable and standardized level of minimum living standards for all people at all times. There is a positive relationship between public expenditure on social protection (as percentage of GDP) and the ratio of people above the poverty line. There has been gradual acceptance of this over the last century and the SDGs (particularly SDG

¹ The following section contains an extract of the report of the expert meeting on readying institutions and policies for integrated approaches to implementation of the 2030 Agenda held in Vienna from 14 to 16 December 2016 in connection with CEPA and HLPF.

1.3) help to realize this. At the country level, national social protection strategies need to be part of national development policies. Developing countries are expanding social protection systems.

Measurement of poverty as a multi-dimensional concept has progressed over the past decades. Recent innovations in the methodology, such as including dimensions associated with other SDG measures, have generated more comprehensive 'multiple deprivation scores' and study the correlations among various dimensions of poverty at the individual and households levels.

Poverty reduction strategies have to be grounded into each country's specific context and circumstances. International organizations can help in this regard by transferring knowledge of other countries' experience.

Other issues to be addressed include: the difficulties of reflecting the 'feminization of poverty', given that the smallest unit of most data collected is the household and not the individual; the need for complementary policies such as those that could help in addressing the care needs of children and the elderly; improving the connection between macroeconomic and social policies, such as growing and maintaining the fiscal space for making the necessary interventions; how quality education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels is an essential component of poverty eradication; the growing importance of urban poverty; investing in the 'traditional heritage, sustainable tourism and urban regeneration as ways out of poverty; and the need to collect more timely and comprehensive data.

Implications for building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions

Effective, transparent and inclusive institutions at all levels have critical role in addressing poverty in all its forms and dimensions. To do this, three mutually associated ingredients are key: structures; mechanisms or processes; and incentives. Because institutions are not separate from the cultures, societies, histories and politics within which they exist, it is necessary to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders.

In submitting input to the 2016 HLPF, the Committee stressed that political leadership at the highest level, an effective institutional coordination mechanism and well-recognised leading institutions, are all essential to spearhead data- and evidence- driven SDGs implementation and review. Public institutions also need to have the capacity for integrated multi-disciplinary system thinking and problem solving in complex and increasingly volatile contexts. Their vision should be adaptable and future-conscious to ensure that progress on SDGs and poverty eradication is not reversed due to unforeseen factors, conflict, disasters, etc. In addition to mapping the interrelations and interdependencies among targets, the process also entails putting in place adequate institutional arrangements, public administration practices, mechanisms, capacities, budgetary arrangements and resources to ensure that sectoral policies are informed by the possible impact of actions on related areas and on poverty in particular.

Specific policy interventions should be in place to target vulnerable segments of the population for poverty eradication. Some of these policies can be universal in nature, while others might be more targeted such as policies of affirmative action. For the latter, different criteria such as a specific set of vulnerability or geographical variables can be used to determine the target beneficiaries. For example, specific policies can apply to only young women or those with certain disabilities or they could be valid for those dwelling in certain regions or localities. Policies can also be implemented and scaled up at different levels of administration – local, national, regional, or national. They can be issued as decrees, legislation, acts, rules or regulations. Depending on the context and purpose, they can be incorporated in national constitutions, as in Canada, Norway, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, and Malaysia. In other countries, this could take the form of legal templates or other policy actions.

Inclusion and participation are critical elements of effective public policy-making and SDG implementation for all. Inclusiveness helps to ensure that the right mix of people, skills and resources will be involved in the policy-making and implementation process to ensure the best

decisions are made in the public interest and that they will be implemented. Public institutions need to support not just the inclusion but also the empowerment of people by reducing barriers that constrain their opportunities, and by ensuring that development programmes are participatory. Particular efforts and innovative approaches are required to allow the poorest and most vulnerable people to participate.

Local authorities, under the right conditions, are in general better placed to understand the needs of people and to address those needs in a responsive and effective manner. In past deliberations, CEPA has recommended the adoption of local Agendas 2030. It has also called for the elaboration of local development strategies, designed on the basis of local consultations and addressing the needs of the poorest, most vulnerable and discriminated groups. At this year two of SDG implementation, it is critical for local authorities to have developed, or start developing, 'local Agenda 2030' or 'local SDG achievement plans' with a strong focus on eradicating poverty, promoting prosperity and leaving no one behind. This should start with an effort to localize the Goals and targets, so that they are attuned to the situation of people, but respecting the ambition of the global and national Agendas.

In certain situations, however, even local authorities may not always best placed to reach the poorest and most vulnerable – such as slum dwellers, migrants or people living in the most rural or remote areas. Mobilizing local communities include civil society organisations in decision-making and the private sector through partnerships may thus be a solution.

It is also critical to mobilize civil servants at all levels around the SDGs. There is a need to bolster the capacities and skills of public administrations to understand and incorporate the targets in new or existing plans and policies, embrace integrated approaches and consult civil society and the private sector – and more specifically the poorest and most vulnerable people – in an effective manner.

There are also other capacity gaps to be addressed for public institutions. Institutional capacities are needed for eradicating poverty and inequality, especially in the developing countries and the least

developed countries, and to review implementation and monitor progress. Major efforts are also needed to boost statistical capacities in institutions, regarding official statistics, disaggregated data and big data. There is a need to establish common national metrics to shape, and measure and review efforts for helping the poorest and those left behind across the different vulnerable groups.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda goes beyond the responsibility of the national ministries and sectoral agencies. Parliaments also have a critical role to adapt the legislative framework to the pursuit of the SDGs. Supreme audit institutions at the national level can likewise play an important role in advising the government on implementing the SDGs and in overseeing progress.

Some challenges exist pertaining to policy dilemmas that may arise in the process. For example, to what extent do we pursue prosperity for all as compared to ensuring equitable economic and social progress to the bottom one per cent of the population? What is the degree of participation and inclusion when considering the overall efficacy of public service delivery and SDG implementation, given the fact that participation and inclusive processes are resource and time-intensive? These are public administration issues to be considered carefully, tailored to specific context and bearing in mind the globally agreed principles of the 2030 Agenda.

Sources

Report of the expert meeting on readying institutions and policies for integrated approaches to implementation of the 2030 Agenda held in Vienna from 14 to 16 December 2016

<http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/Report%20Vienna%20meeting%20FINAL.docx.pdf>

Informal communique of the Small Island Developing States Symposium held in Nassau from 21 to 23 February 2017

United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration input to the 2016 HLPF

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10196Cmtt%20of%20Experts%20on%20Public%20Admin%20Contribution%20to%20HLPF%20recd%202016-May-5.pdf>

Report of the expert group meeting on formal/informal institutions for citizen engagement for implementing the post-2015 development agenda held in Paris in October 2014

<http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN94094.pdf>