

## **Inclusive Planning for Social Integration: A Short Note\***

### **1. Introduction:**

The 1995 World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) in Copenhagen, the assembled world leaders called for fostering stable, safe and just societies where every one would have equal rights and can grow with access to services to contribute to the fullest of their potential.

### **2. Background:**

The world summit endorsed a coherent people-centred approach to development, noting the importance of social integration as the key to creating a society for all, that actively supports eradicating poverty and generating productive employment for all. A 'Society for all' is the goal of such a declaration where all individuals with their rights and responsibilities has an active role to play in the functioning of the government and society they live in. Social integration was rightly identified as the underlying condition to enable societies and individuals living therein to fully participate in all the activities in all the domains of life, be they political, economic, and cultural and all other areas. Failure to achieve social integration is likely to lead to social fragmentation, increase disparities and inequalities within societies and thus undermining the social cohesion so much needed for avoiding conflict and promote cooperation. However, the question remained how countries achieve this lofty ideal? What are the means and steps to achieve social integration that will foster stable, safe and just societies?

Social integration goals will require policies to be inclusive, an approach and process that embraces all groups and promotes tolerance for attending to the needs of all. This means societies must promote inclusionary approach in policies that fights the existing divisiveness and exclusionary tendencies almost inherent in all societies due to various factors of discrimination, control and authoritarian mindset and approaches. The fact that social exclusion is noticeable in most societies at varying degrees that keeps weaker sections out of the mainstream remains the primary constraint for achieving social integration. To fight this social, political and economic inclusion is increasingly being recognized as the key strategy. Inclusionary approach in policies is therefore being favoured over top-down bureaucratic policy process. However, as increasing attention is being paid to inclusive policy questions are being raised if that is enough. Whether inclusive policies will take care of the social exclusion and thus promote social integration. It may not be so, as we discuss further the disconnect between having inclusive policies and an inclusive society.

### **3. Why Inclusive Planning is Important in achieving global commitments and goals?**

Since the Copenhagen Declaration (1995) and the First UN Decade for Eradication of Poverty (1997) and the Millennium Declaration (2000), global and national calls for

creating a just and inclusive world that addresses the concerns of the weak and vulnerable have grown louder and planning for the goal has become pronounced through national multi-year plans, PRSPs and MTEFs and other home grown instruments around the world. However, as we now know progress on the poverty front has been limited and uneven and hence the necessity of proclamation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), and being midway to the Millennium Development Goal's target date (2015), increasing and more comprehensive efforts are to be mounted if the world wishes to see the global community's goals to be achieved.

We also understand from the various assessments that although there has been increasing attention to hear the voices of people and various stakeholders in programming at the national and sub-national level the most excluded group like the older people, disabled, indigenous people and other groups like the youths are still not fully represented in the process and therefore the inclusive planning process still remains elusive. This is particularly important because these vulnerable social groups constitute a large segment of the total population as demographic transition results in both ever increasing older people and youths in most countries. PRSPs and national development plans needs to find a way to include such excluded groups if they are to be inclusive to achieve the goals of creating a 'society for all' that not only aims for the higher purpose of social integration and equalization of opportunities for societies to accept all. Notwithstanding the justification of such an approach the path to fulfill the promise can not rest on wishes alone but needs deliberate and meaningful actions to make it possible.

#### **4. Why Inclusive Planning is yet to be Widely Practiced?**

While there has been some efforts addressed to mainstreaming inclusive policy process that transcends beyond the participatory process that has been in vogue for several decades now, our understanding of the process itself and more importantly to operationalise it remains the challenge. One of the major constraints remains the lack of capacity at the national level to transcend the hitherto known participatory approach to include the so called excluded groups as referred earlier and ensure their full participation in the planning process as well as allowing their concerns to be programmed and incorporated in the planning process.

A second and related constraint is the lack of interest among UN Country Teams to pursue a full-fledged inclusive planning process addressing the concerns of the vulnerable social groups either in their own planning instruments like the CCA, UNDAF and UN Country Plan. While reference is made to the situation of these vulnerable social groups in the country assessments, they are often not mainstreamed in the planning and assistance framework to the extent that these groups receive programmatic and funding attention given their precarious situation. UN agencies having presence in the field (both Funds and Programmes and Specialized agencies) focus largely on their strategic objectives and mandate that focuses on their mandated areas of intervention and thus leaves out vulnerable social groups from receiving much attention in specific program and project planning exercises. While UNICEF is increasingly paying attention to youths and adolescence in addition to their primary focus on children and women; UNFPA

dealing with Census and other surveys have quantitative data for all social groups; ILO has specific youth employment programs in many countries and UNDP in addition to their lead role in monitoring MDG is also increasingly involved in national planning and long-term developmental goals, collectively the UN Country Team's contribution to transcending from inclusive policy to planning could be far more emphatic if a conscious decision is taken to ensure it is done so at an operational level.

While for sheer demographic reasons and the importance of such a large group in the political stability and economic progress of nations, youths do receive attention but often not to the extent that a long-term view of their cause is incorporated in national development planning. Similarly when countries prepare their own planning documents like Five Year National Plans, PRSP, Sectoral Perspective Plans etc and requests technical support from UN agencies and Country Team the support provided does support broad based inclusive and participatory approach but inclusion of vulnerable social groups are usually not ignored but forgotten as inclusive approach is neither already mainstreamed nor specifically targeted for program interventions. However, it does not need to be so nor does identifying specific stand alone programmes for these groups are the key to inclusive planning. What is more important is an appreciation of inclusive approach in planning rather than mentioning them in passing in the approach sections and then ignoring them in program and project formulation exercise. The essence of such a realization should lead to creating a level playing field or an enabling environment for all social groups not only the vulnerable ones and appreciating the perspectives, constraints and aspirations of all in the program and project planning initiatives.

Here comes the importance of outlining the steps and techniques of inclusive planning that can be integrated within the national planning process and cycle in order to ensure that no groups are excluded, and that their concerns are included in the national planning process for providing them with voice and avenues to integrate within the mainstream not as a bureaucratic top down integration but a truly inclusive integration on their terms and limitations. While inclusive policy development is a necessary first step it is not a sufficient condition for ensuring inclusive planning is undertaken in earnest, as the latter requires breaking the elements of inclusive policy process into operational blocks and providing with appropriate tools that can support the planning process.

Any planning activity be that at the national, sub-national or local level starts with the so called 'planning Assumptions'. Planning assumptions comprise of the resource envelope, national, regional and sub-regional characteristics, as well as the broad national goals, outcomes and targets. While the resource envelope is given understanding and analyzing the regional and sub-regional characteristics and setting national goals and targets are the areas where inclusiveness can be highlighted to ensure inclusive planning process is undertaken. There is increasing emphasis on listening to the voices of poor and women and sometimes the ethnic minorities which has off late become synonymous with the PRSP process and to some extent the national planning exercises. However, the concerns and voices of the youth, disabled, older people, indigenous people and ethnic minorities are still missing from the planner's drawing boards in most countries resulting in less

than inclusive planning process that in turn affect the achievement of global commitments and goals of poverty reduction and social integration.

## **5. An Operational Approach to encourage Inclusive Planning**

To encourage and ensure inclusive planning support is needed in outlining the elements of inclusivity and how that can be linked with standard planning steps and process. The following items may be a starting point to establish the settings for initiating inclusive planning in various less developed countries.

## **6. Guidelines on Step by Step Approach to Encourage Inclusive Planning**

### **6.1 Embracing Inclusive Planning as the Vision and Strategy of Planning**

Most country level major planning documents be they Five Year National Plans, longer term perspective plans and UN documents like UNDAF and UN Country Plans choose one or more major higher level objective as the overarching goal for the plan period. Usually such higher and overarching objectives set the tone of the planning document. They are reflected in the specific sub-title, described in brief under preamble, objectives and challenges in line with the structure of the reports in different countries. For example the title of India's 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2007-2012) reads as "Towards a Faster and Inclusive Growth". In the approach paper of the plan (Government of India 2006) inclusive growth is restated prominently in the vision for the plan that notes that the Plan "provides an opportunity to restructure policies to achieve a new vision based on faster, broad based and inclusive growth". By inclusive growth the plan refers to an all out effort to increase the access of basic social services to the masses (presumably the left outs included) not only as a welfare measure but as a strong justification for robust growth in the long run. The second reference it makes is to ensure weaker and vulnerable sections of the population like the elderly, disabled, adolescent girls and children under three and "primitive tribal groups" and others whose interests are not always strongly lobbied receive adequate attention. These pronouncements in the first chapter of the Five Year Plan set the tone for the planning objectives and hopefully reflect in the investment and outlays.

Similarly, on the UN side, the UN Country Team and host government conducts the Common Country Assessment (CCA) which in turn feeds into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). UNDAF is the principal policy and strategy document for the country concerned which *inter alia* with concerned agency's CPAP or biennial work plan forms the basis of agency wide and UN Common Annual Work Plan. The UNDAF document has specific template and like the Five Year National Plans it is important that inclusive approach is included in the Results section under National Development Priorities and Goals and Outcome list.

## **6.2 Identifying the Social Groups and Weaker Sections**

Social Inclusion refers to the process that enables equal opportunities everyone regardless of background. It is not confined to economic opportunities only and transcends to all aspects of human life to ensure individuals can realize the full potentials of their life. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups and weaker sections in society. Therefore it is important to have identification of the groups and data for youth, disabled, older people and indigenous people and groups in country context (like disadvantaged castes, ethnic minorities etc.) within the country, regions and sub-regions corresponding to planning units (national, State/Provincial, District/Sub-district level). They are a significant proportion of the total population but their profile is largely invisible. Planning Ministries in the countries should have access to the data through National Statistical Office, Census Bureau, designated ministries while research for CCA should provide such data, information to be fed into UNDAF.

## **6.3 Characteristics of Social Groups and Weaker Sections**

demographic, socio-economic and participation in political process and social/community activities among others are important issues for understanding the group's status and role, which in turn is critical in ascertaining how to integrate them in mainstream development activities through planning process. Qualitative studies, Situation Analysis, variety of micro level case studies, stakeholder consultation records in addition to Census and other Survey studies can provide comprehensive data and information on these areas and both the government and the UN Country Team should have access to such studies.

## **6.4 Analyzing the Current Legal and Regulatory Environment**

Although social exclusion is often repudiated and rights of all citizens are usually proclaimed in no uncertain terms in all constitutions inclusion of all in the political process and every one's participation in the economic sphere is by no means assured through these constitutional guarantees. Appropriate examination of the legal and regulatory framework is therefore required to ensure there are no structural impediments for the usually excluded groups. For planning purposes, it is important that both the Government and UN System analyze the existing legal and policy instruments to ensure that planning for all can be carried out without legal or regulatory hindrances and appropriate policy support is present to support inclusive planning.

## **6.5 Promoting Participatory Methods in Policy Development and Planning**

Examine the practice of participatory methods in national/regional policy making and planning exercises. If there are precedents of employing participatory methods then the chances of inclusive policy making and planning may not be a distant dream, although for various reasons cited earlier it is by no means an automatic process, especially as it concerns less visible vulnerable groups.

Recent experience with national Five Year Plans and Sectoral Perspective Plans in many countries as well as preparation of PRSP, CCA has supported various forms of

consultative process. This must be encouraged and taken further to make inclusive consultation a reality and to feed the findings in the planning process.

### **6.6 Focusing the Social Groups and Weaker Sections within the Planning Resource Envelope**

Usually overriding priorities in the planning process include poverty reduction, eradication of hunger and malnutrition, reduction of mortality for children, women, education for all and such other MDG related and other global commitments. While most vulnerable social groups are poor and suffer from all other related deprivations they are usually not thought of in devising the target and thus receive no allocations either. This needs to be ensured in the resource envelope in order to initiate inclusive planning for all. Targeting programs are useful but not necessarily the only measure to ensure weaker sections receives the attention. The danger however is by just including a few token targeted programs for the vulnerable groups the responsibility of inclusive planning can not be thought to be complete and such approach may actually harm the process more. Therefore by adopting inclusive planning in the strategic objective upfront by mainstreaming their concerns is important which can be strengthened by allowing stand alone initiatives for the vulnerable groups.

### **6.7 Concerns for the Excluded in Planning assumptions**

Ensure concerns for the vulnerable social groups are duly included in the major planning assumptions at national and sub-national levels. This may refer to intra-regional differences, disparities as well as opportunities; government and other implementing agency's capacity to plan, monitor and evaluate programmes; availability of resources (both financial and human) to implement programmes for the group; risks of not undertaking such programmes and *inter alia* their implementation if undertaken at all levels. This would translate into taking cognizance of vulnerable groups' distribution in the country, impact of all new programs upon them, risks of not ensuring their mainstreaming including possible impact on MDG progress etc.

### **6.8 Align concerns of Social Groups to National Targets**

Align the concerns of the vulnerable social groups to the national goals and targets particularly in line with global commitments and goals, e.g., Copenhagen Declaration, MDGs, ratification of global conventions on disability, non-discrimination, and rights of older people, indigenous people and youths. This is particularly important because while aggregate progress on key indicators may rise this can still mask the intra-regional, intra-social group disparities which will negate overall national progress.

### **6.9 Establishing a Monitoring System that goes beyond aggregates**

Establish a monitoring system with key results and appropriate indicators reflecting the concerns of vulnerable groups as well as ensuring inclusiveness is mainstreamed and

clearly specifying time frame and responsible parties to follow-up on the planning outputs.

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