Chapter I

# Identifying social inclusion and exclusion

## Key messages

- Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon not limited to material deprivation; poverty is an important dimension of exclusion, albeit only one dimension. Accordingly, social inclusion processes involve more than improving access to economic resources.

- Social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.

- Measuring social exclusion is challenging due to its multidimensional nature and the lack of standard data sources across countries and for all social groups at highest risk of being left behind. Despite limitations, the existing data allow for a meaningful analysis of key aspects of exclusion. The report presents these data while illustrating data gaps.

- While inclusion is a core aspiration of the 2030 Agenda, conceptual and analytical work on what constitutes inclusion, as well as efforts to improve data availability, are needed.

## A. The concept of social inclusion

Enshrined in the 2030 Agenda is the principle that every person should reap the benefits of prosperity and enjoy minimum standards of well-being. This is captured in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that are aimed at freeing all nations and people and all segments of society from poverty and hunger and to ensure, among other things, healthy lives and access to education, modern energy and information. Recognizing that these goals are difficult to achieve without making institutions work for those who are deepest in poverty and most vulnerable, the Agenda embraces broad targets aimed at promoting the rule of law, ensuring equal access to justice and broadly fostering inclusive and participatory decision-making.

These goals and targets, when effectively translated into action and properly benchmarked, represent essential elements of social inclusion processes. However, social inclusion encompasses a broader set of concerns than those reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals. No single global, goal-setting agenda can adequately address the multiple dimensions of

exclusion or comprehensively promote inclusion, particularly given the diversity of circumstances around the globe.

This chapter presents working definitions of social exclusion and social inclusion and discusses concepts as well as measurement issues. Different places have different histories, cultures and institutions, which shape norms, values and therefore different approaches to social inclusion. It is contended, however, that the goal of achieving a society for all must conform to some general principles, even if the country-specific and evolving nature of social exclusion concerns and approaches to inclusion is recognized.[13]

## 1. Social exclusion

Although there is no universally agreed definition or benchmark for social exclusion, lack of participation in society is at the heart of nearly all definitions put forth by scholars, government bodies, non-governmental organizations and others (see box I.1). Overall, **social exclusion describes a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state**.[14]

Participation may be hindered when people lack access to material resources, including income, employment, land and housing, or to such services as education and health care — essential foundations of well-being that are captured in Agenda 2030. Yet participation is also limited when people cannot exercise their voice or interact with each other, and when their rights and dignity are not accorded equal respect and protection. Thus social exclusion entails not only material deprivation but also lack of agency or control over important decisions as well as feelings of alienation and inferiority. In nearly all countries, to varying degrees, age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, migration status, socioeconomic status, place of residence, and sexual orientation and gender identity have been grounds for social exclusion over time.

The term social exclusion was used for the first time by former French Secretary of State for Social Action, René Lenoir (1974), to refer to the situation of certain groups of people − "the mentally and the physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, drug addicts, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and other 'social misfits'"− whom he estimated to comprise one tenth of the population

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[13]   The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development noted that the aim of social integration was to create a "society for all" in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. See footnote 2.

[14]   Accordingly, the concept of social exclusion is used throughout the report as a general term to describe lack of participation in or exclusion from economic, political, cultural, civic and/or social life. Lack of participation in political processes, in civic life or in the labour market are construed as aspects of overall social exclusion.

> **Box I.1**
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> **Illustrative definitions**
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> *Social exclusion*
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> "**Exclusion** consists of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions—economic, political, social and cultural—and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterized by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to health inequalities", (Popay and others, 2008, p. 2).
>
> "**Social exclusion** is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole" (Levitas and others, 2007, p. 9).
>
> "**Social exclusion** is what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poor health and family breakdown"(United Kingdom Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004, p. 2).
>
> *Social inclusion*
>
> " The process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society" and "The process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society" (World Bank, 2013, pp. 3-4).
>
> "**Social inclusion** is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights"(Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p. 9).

of France and who were considered vulnerable yet outside the realm of social insurance systems of the welfare state. The concept soon took hold in other developed countries; more recently, the European Union dedicated 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Experts have questioned the utility of the social exclusion framework to lower-income, developing countries (Saith, 2001). Where the majority of a population work in informal and insecure employment, lack social protection coverage or do not complete secondary education, standards of normality as benchmarks of inclusion or exclusion are not what are aspired to. Yet, in Sen's (2000) view, the concept and its focus on relational features has led to richer analysis of processes that result in poverty and capability deprivation, many aspects of which are common across regions even at different levels of development. Issues related to the status, segregation and disempowerment of migrants, for instance, affect a growing number of countries – developed and developing.

While intertwined, the concepts of poverty and social exclusion are nonetheless distinct. Poverty is an outcome, while social exclusion is both an outcome and a process. Poverty and exclusion need not go hand in hand; not all socially excluded groups are economically disadvantaged. People are often excluded due to a disability or because of their sexual orientation, for instance, without necessarily living in poverty. Levitas and others (2007) observed: "Many of the attempts to define social exclusion distinguish it from poverty… on the basis of its multi-dimensional, relational and dynamic character". Indeed, whereas poverty is most commonly defined in monetary terms, social exclusion takes a more holistic view of human development.
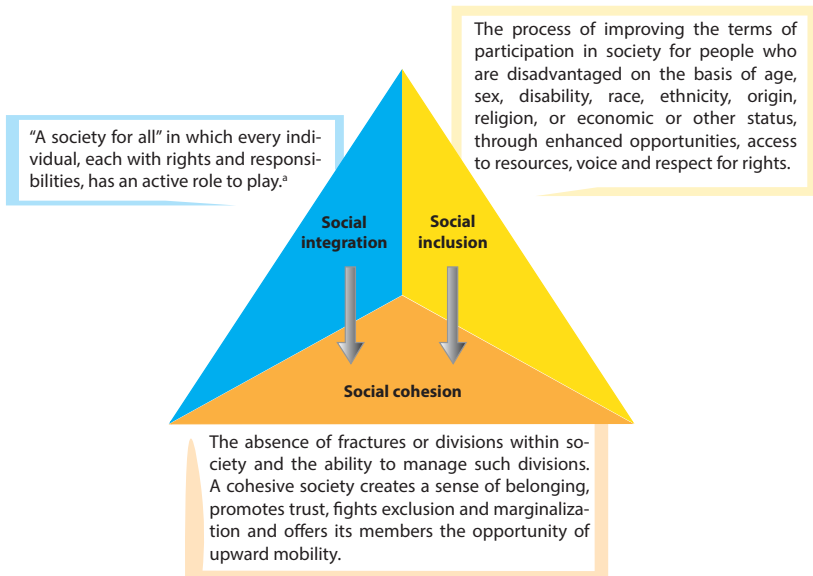
## 2. Social inclusion

In the policy discourse, efforts to promote social inclusion have arisen from concerns over social exclusion. For the purpose of the present report, social inclusion is defined as **the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights**. Thus, social inclusion is both a process and a goal. In the present report, it is contended that promoting social inclusion requires tackling social exclusion by removing barriers to people's participation in society, as well as by taking active inclusionary steps to facilitate such participation. As a political response to the exclusion challenge, social inclusion is thus a more deliberate process of encompassing and welcoming all persons and embracing greater equality and tolerance.

It should be noted that fostering social inclusion may or may not increase the capacity of people to live together in harmony. Societies that are otherwise cohesive may exclude some sectors of the population (United Nations, 2010). Similarly, social inclusion is not the same as social integration, even though the two terms are at times used interchangeably. Social integration and social inclusion should, however, contribute to making societies more cohesive (see figure I.1). Although the present report touches on some aspects of social cohesion and social integration and examines indicators that are relevant to both concepts, its focus is on the elimination of social exclusion and the promotion of social inclusion.

## 3. Elements of exclusion and inclusion

The report's definition of social inclusion explicitly refers to *people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, or economic or other status* for two reasons. First, although anyone may be potentially at risk of social exclusion, certain attributes or characteristics increase such risk. These are often linked to identity or group ascription. Kabeer (2006) described

Figure I.1
## Social inclusion, integration and cohesion

The process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.

"A society for all" in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play.[a]

**Social integration**

**Social inclusion**

**Social cohesion**

The absence of fractures or divisions within society and the ability to manage such divisions. A cohesive society creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, fights exclusion and marginalization and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility.

*Source:* Based on Easterly (2006), Hulse and Stone (2007), OECD (2011a), United Nations (2010).
[a] Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995, para. 66.

two types of identity. One relates to "groups of people who acknowledge their common membership, have shared beliefs and values and act in collective ways. Caste, ethnicity and religion are examples of such group identities". The other refers to categories of people defined on the basis of some shared characteristic rather than shared values and way of life. Members of these categories do not necessarily know each other and share very little in common, aside from the nature of the discrimination they face. Street children, people with leprosy or AIDS and undocumented migrants are examples of such socially excluded categories. In the present report, the term "group" refers to both types of identity and is recognized as a social construct used to facilitate the analysis.

Second, in aspiring to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all members of society, target 10.2 of the 2030 Agenda draws attention to these attributes; under that target, it is emphasized that all should be included "irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status". The bases of disadvantage included in the report's definition are therefore those explicitly included by Governments in the Sustainable Development Goals. While not comprehensive, the list highlights many of the attributes that have historically put individuals most at risk of exclusion.

The present report's definition of social inclusion also refers to the process of improving the terms of participation in society. Social inclusion processes require both addressing the drivers of exclusion, including certain policies and institutions as well as discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, and actively "bringing people in". To the extent that policies and institutions define the "rules of the game" for social interactions and the distribution of power, status and control over resources, they can drive social exclusion or, alternatively, mitigate its impacts. As discussed in chapter V of the present report, some institutions systematically deny particular groups of people the recognition which would enable them to participate fully in society. Discriminatory attitudes and behaviours further drive exclusion, although they are not its only cause. People living in remote areas may not be able to fully participate in social, cultural or political life, for instance, without being discriminated against by law or by the rest of society. As described in chapter IV, discrimination can hinder access to and enjoyment of goods, services, justice, opportunities and culture, discourage the efforts of social groups to advance their interests, all of which results in spatial segregation. Norms, policies and institutions can also result in participation in society but on adverse terms (Hickey and Du Toit, 2007). For instance, participation in the labour market may be imposed or engaged in voluntarily but under precarious conditions.

## B.  The challenge of measuring social exclusion

Identifying a set of criteria to determine who is excluded and in what ways is key to track progress, assess the impact of measures undertaken to promote inclusion and ultimately ensure that no one is left behind. Yet quantifying social exclusion presents considerable challenges. People are excluded from many domains of life – social, economic, political, civic and spatial – and the salience of each domain depends strongly on the country and local contexts as well as on the stage of a person's life course. That is to say, the concepts of social inclusion and social exclusion are multidimensional and context-dependent. Consequently, translating them into a limited set of indicators constitutes a considerable challenge. National definitions and measurement are thus the starting point for monitoring and analysis, although a limited set of measurable attributes applicable across countries is also necessary for global monitoring and analysis.

Furthermore, adequately assessing who is being left behind and how not only requires "objective" indicators of the status of individuals and social groups, but also must take into account their subjective judgments and perceptions. Exclusion is, after all, a personal experience, and the views of those affected by it or at risk of being left behind cannot be disregarded (United Nations, 2010). Relational issues, such as the presence of discrimination, the level of personal safety or the extent of participation in political processes

or social life, must also be factored into key dimensions of inclusion and exclusion processes. Measuring exclusion therefore involves some compromise between the theoretical considerations discussed in section A of this chapter and what is possible empirically. Data availability and quality have improved significantly in the last 10 years, but considerable efforts are still needed to fill knowledge gaps and foster access as well as appropriate use of data, as discussed in box I.2.

Given the multiple dimensions of social exclusion, data to measure it generally come from a variety of sources that are different in scope and purpose. National population censuses and some internationally standardized surveys, including labour force surveys, demographic and health surveys, multiple indicator cluster surveys and living standard measurement

### Box I.2

## A data revolution for all?

In 2013, the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda called for a "data revolution" for sustainable development, with initiatives to improve the quality of statistics and information available to people and Governments (United Nations, 2013b). In their report to the Secretary-General, a year later, the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development noted that the massive increase in the volume and types of data available brought about by digital technologies opened unprecedented opportunities for transformation and development, but also brought risks (Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, 2014). In particular, the Group stated that the data revolution poses challenges regarding access to data and their use, and threatens to open up new divides between the data "haves" and the "have-nots".

Much more is indeed known about poverty and human development now than 20 years ago, partly as a result of data investments made to monitor the Millennium Development Goals. However, considerable efforts are still needed to ensure that everyone is counted—many people and entire groups of the population are statistically invisible, as this chapter explains—and that important events are registered. Civil society organizations, academics and companies, which increasingly collect and analyze their own data, are helping fill some of these gaps. Yet assessing whether and how growing data availability is benefitting those left behind is a challenging task. Data generation itself often responds to society's demand for information and is helping improve policymaking and increase participation, although it can also be used to discriminate and harm.

Growing data openness is making information available to more and more people but much data, including so-called big data, are in private hands, and owners are reluctant to share them. New technologies are helping bring data within people's reach, but there, too, a large divide exists in access and use across communities and social groups, as described in chapter III. Beyond data access, potential beneficiaries often do not have the skills needed to use existing data, or else data are not provided in user-friendly formats or at appropriate levels of disaggregation. In addition, the quality of data produced is often unreliable, and standards are harder to apply as the range of data producers grows. Leaving no one behind in the data revolution will entail closing key gaps in access and use, including by improving data and statistical literacy. Doing so may also require a more democratic approach, not only to transparency and openness in data dissemination, but also with regard to what is measured.

surveys, as well as selected opinion polls, are available for a large number of countries and are fairly comparable across countries. However, each of these sources is designed for a specific purpose and none of them alone allows for comprehensive international assessments of social exclusion. Only limited attempts have been made to link microdata from different sources, although it is increasingly possible to do so.[15] Thus indicators of social exclusion have rarely been combined at the individual level into one composite index.[16] Assessing changes in indicators of exclusion over time results in additional challenges, as some data sources are available for one point in time only and comparability issues arise even between censuses or surveys of the same type. Even though cross-country assessments can hardly gauge the multiple dimensions of exclusion, in-depth, quantitative indicators should, whenever possible, be accompanied by qualitative evidence, including participatory assessments and in-depth interviews. There are important elements of the exclusion experience that cannot be reduced to statistical analyses.

Ideally, empirical studies should determine which individual characteristics or combinations thereof increase the risk of disadvantage and exclusion. However, lacking the information necessary for individual-level analysis, most studies of social exclusion, including the present one, pre-select some criteria that have been proven empirically to increase the risk of exclusion – most often age, sex, ethnic background, income, nationality or place of birth.[17] While grouping is a fundamental tool of social analysis, aggregate-level approaches based on traditional criteria run the risk of missing new forms of exclusion and are limited in their capacity to examine intersecting inequalities. As Brubaker (2002, p. 165) noted, the tendency to partition the social world into deeply constituted, quasi-natural groups "is a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things *with*; it belongs to our empirical data, not our analytical toolkit". While statistical groups are useful analytical categories, it is important to note that they are not necessarily factual entities with common agency or even common purposes.

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[15]  Mapping information using geographic information system (GIS) technologies is enabling experts to combine and map multiple indicators in order to better understand the geography of deprivation, although their use in assessing the role of individual characteristics or social identity, beyond ethnic identity, as estimated by geographical location, has so far been limited.

[16]  The Social Exclusion Survey 2009, carried out in six countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), constitutes a notable exception. Designed for the purpose of measuring exclusion, the survey allowed for the construction of a multidimensional exclusion index. The survey was not used to sample pre-defined population groups at high risk of exclusion only; instead it was assumed that all individuals face some risk. Survey results are presented in a UNDP publication covering countries in transition (UNDP, 2011).

[17]  The African Social Development Index, introduced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 2015 and in its initial phase of implementation at the time of writing, illustrates disparities by sex and by place of residence (ECA, 2015). It combines indicators of neonatal mortality, child malnutrition, youth literacy, youth unemployment, income poverty and life expectancy after age 60.

The objective and subjective indicators of exclusion that can be obtained from existing sources should be disaggregated at least by age, sex, ethnic group, race, income level, place of residence, place of birth or nationality and level of disability. Data should allow for assessments of the combined effect of these factors, taking into account that the risk of exclusion faced by each individual depends on the combination of his or her characteristics and that many people belong to more than one disadvantaged group. Yet household surveys designed to be nationally representative frequently include few respondents from numerically small groups, including ethnic minorities, thereby often impeding essential decomposition analyses.

An additional challenge to measuring social exclusion is that the definitions used to classify a population by nationality and by migrant, ethnic or disability status vary across countries (box I.3 highlights the challenges and efforts to standardize data on disabilities in this regard). In addition, household surveys inevitably omit some groups at high risk of exclusion and poverty, such as homeless persons, people in institutions − including prisons, hospitals and refugee camps, among other such places − and mobile, nomadic and pastoralist populations. Many surveys are targeted at specific

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**Box I.3**

**Challenges and efforts to standardize data on disability across countries**

The number of developed and developing countries collecting data on disability has continuously increased over recent decades thanks in part to the increased attention being paid to addressing the rights of persons with disabilities and to ensuring their equal participation in society and their access to services. In spite of this increase in data availability, data on disability are still largely not comparable across countries for a variety of reasons. For one, there is a general lack of agreement among countries about what constitutes "disability" for measurement purposes in different cultural and environmental contexts. For another, the underlying classifications and methodologies applied in data-collection processes still vary greatly among countries, thereby hampering the comparability of international data. A review by the United Nations Statistics Division of disability questions in censuses of the 2010 round showed that, even among countries that had used the recommended guidelines, there were marked differences that have implications for data comparability (United Nations, 2013c). Another challenge regarding international comparability of data is that countries rely on different sources to generate data. While many countries use censuses, others rely on household surveys and still others on administrative sources, each with its own advantages and disadvantages for generating good-quality data on disability.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to galvanize the international community to work towards the compilation of high-quality fit-for-purpose statistics on disability. Under the Agenda, persons with disabilities are recognized as a vulnerable group and a commitment is made to enhance the capacity-building support extended to developing countries by 2030 in order to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data on disability. Capacity-building activities include more concerted efforts to assist countries to scale up their activities to generate and utilize high-quality statistics on disability.

age groups and cannot be used to analyse the situation of persons outside the age groups. In practice, also, household surveys typically underrepresent urban slum populations, those in insecure or isolated areas and atypical households − single-parent households, those headed by older persons with young children, large households with foster children or unrelated orphaned children, child-headed households and children cared for by neighbours as well as those in exploitative fostering relationships or in groups and gangs (Carr-Hill, 2013).  While population censuses do not omit homeless persons or any of these groups by design, they often underenumerate them, mainly because such people are difficult to reach. Global estimates of the number of homeless people are therefore highly unreliable, but national estimates suggest that homelessness is highly prevalent even in developed countries: in the United States of America, for example, close to 600,000 people were homeless on a given night in January 2014 (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014). In France, 141,000 people were homeless in 2012 (INSEE, 2013).  Overall, Carr-Hill (2013) estimated that, as a result of omissions and underenumeration, an estimated 300 million to 350 million of the people at highest risk of exclusion and extreme poverty may not be represented in household surveys in developing countries.

In taking into account these challenges and based on a review of the empirical literature, the present report contains an examination of three sets of indicators: those that measure access to opportunity, namely education, health services and infrastructure; those that measure access to employment and income; and those that measure participation in political, civic and cultural life. A relative approach is taken to exclusion: instead of defining thresholds under which individuals would be considered excluded or left behind, the report construes disparities in these indicators across selected social groups as symptoms or outcomes of the exclusion of those who are lagging behind or participating less (see figure I.2). While the main focus is therefore on the outcomes of exclusion, the report contains an exploration of the dynamic links among different indicators. Specifically, it examines how education and health affect access to resources across groups, as well as participation in political life. Also considered in the report are some of the key drivers of exclusion in all these dimensions, with a particular focus on discrimination.

As is often the case in studies on social exclusion, data availability determines the choice of indicators. In addition to being widely used in empirical analyses (Labonté, Haddi and Kauffmann, 2011), the indicators used in the present report have been selected because the underlying data are available and comparable across countries. They are therefore presented as a minimum set of indicators for a global analysis on the topic. Cross-country comparisons are often based on data for a limited number of countries and are meant to illustrate concrete aspects of exclusion, although the report aims at ensuring regional balance when possible.

The analysis relies on data from national population censuses when

Figure I.2
**Symptoms of exclusion**
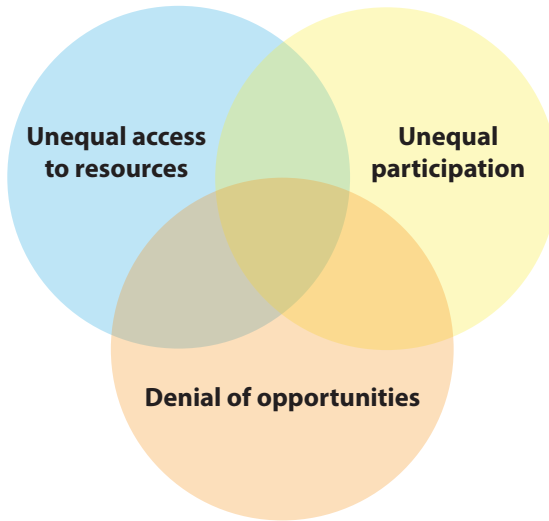


possible and complements such data with information from household surveys, mainly those under the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) supported by the United States Agency for International Development, and public opinion surveys, mainly the World Values Surveys (WVS) supported by the World Values Survey Association (Stockholm). Despite their focus on reproductive and other health issues, DHS surveys contain a wealth of socioeconomic information and can therefore produce a comprehensive picture of populations of reproductive age. In view of their coverage, consistency and comparability across countries, they are an exceptional source of information for cross-country analyses. WVS contain nationally representative samples from more than 90 countries. As such, they comprise the largest non-commercial, cross-national source of information on human beliefs and values. Opinion polls and values surveys are critical in assessing the role of some of the relational features and perceptions that bring about exclusion.

The evidence presented in this present report suggests that, while inclusiveness underpins the 2030 Agenda, conceptual and analytical work on what constitutes inclusion, as well as efforts to improve data availability to assess who is being left behind and how, are still needed. Measuring exclusion from a global perspective is challenging due to the multidimensional and context-specific nature of exclusion as well as the lack of comprehensive, standard data sources across countries and over time. Despite these limitations, the existing data allow for a meaningful analysis of key aspects of exclusion.

The report presents these data while illustrating data gaps. When possible, it also relies on country-specific research and case studies, which provide greater insight into the experience of exclusion in concrete country settings.

## C.  Social exclusion and major global trends

It is clear that the extent of social exclusion and the groups affected by it vary by context and over time. Historically, exclusion has sometimes been condoned and institutionalized by government, religious, community or other authorities. At other times, it has persisted unsanctioned among members of society in subtle, insidious ways. Even where racism and other forms of prejudice have been formally redressed, their legacies may continue to adversely affect the well-being of excluded groups.

While extreme examples of exclusion are too numerous to mention in this chapter, certain cases stand out in the context of the report. For example, multiple forms of slavery date from ancient history. In many cases, the exclusion of its victims has been so severe that individuals were viewed as property, while in other cases some degree of personal freedom may have been permitted in certain respects, such as family life. Slavery has often occurred in the context of plunder by victors of war and has largely affected religious, racial and ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, women and migrants. The legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, in particular, continues to be deeply felt in numerous countries, including in the form of racism. Among contemporary forms of slavery are labour and sex trafficking and domestic servitude, which particularly affect women, children, migrants and persons with disabilities.

Colonization has also created various forms of exclusion. In Africa, the arbitrary delineation of national borders by Western powers served to both separate individual ethnic groups and join different groups together (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2011).  Colonial powers further tied legal status to a hierarchy of ethnic and racial groups, privileging some over others (Mamdani, 2001). The legal system of apartheid in South Africa was also, in part, an outgrowth of colonization. Colonization additionally had devastating effects on the world's indigenous peoples, against whom mass atrocities had been committed. Many indigenous peoples continue to live amid long-standing conflicts or hostility with governments, dominant population groups and industries. They have been subject to displacement and dispossession of their lands and resources, marginalization, denial of their cultural rights and of their voice in political processes.

In many ways, the world has become less and less tolerant of social exclusion. However, major trends in climate change, demographic change and globalization have affected exclusion and continue to affect it. Globally, the number of climate hazards caused by droughts, extreme temperatures, floods and storms has increased (World Meteorological Organization, 2014).

Social exclusion increases vulnerability to environmental shocks, which, in turn, render affected individuals and groups more susceptible to exclusion, as described in box I.4 (United Nations, 2016a).

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### Box I.4

### Social exclusion, climate change and natural disasters

Social exclusion increases exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards and disasters in several ways. Certain groups, such as indigenous peoples, are more likely to live in rural areas and to be reliant on natural assets, such as forests, bodies of water, or fish or livestock, to sustain their livelihoods and meet their basic needs; all such assets are heavily affected by climate and weather events (Olsson and others, 2014; World Bank, 2010). Other groups often inhabit areas and housing structures that are highly exposed and susceptible to natural disasters, such as urban slums and other informal settlements, marginal areas prone to floods, landslides and mudslides, and areas where the infrastructure is lacking or weak (Arnold and de Cosmo, 2015; Ghesquiere and others, 2012). At the same time, excluded groups often lack the means to access insurance, credit and other productive resources that could help them to buffer against (as well as recover from) shocks and invest in adaptation (Ribot, 2010; World Bank, 2010). Exclusion also frequently entails limited political participation and clout, such that excluded groups may lack influence over resource allocation and representation in policies and strategies related to environmental protection and disaster prevention and management (Ribot, 2010). For persons with disabilities and older persons, gaps in accessibility can be a significant challenge, for example in obtaining information about risk and in evacuating in the event of a disaster.

The effects of natural hazards and disasters similarly tend to cause disproportionate harm to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups (Ghesquiere and others, 2012). They are more likely to be affected by injury, illness or death, damage to homes, workplaces and essential infrastructure, and by limited or absent public services and the availability or affordability of water, food and other consumption items. Socioeconomic factors and geographic location may increase risk for climate-sensitive health outcomes (Balbus and Malina, 2009). In four cities in the United States of America, for example, between 1986 and 1993 blacks were found to have a higher prevalence of heat-related mortality than whites (O'Neill, Zanobetti and Schwartz, 2005). Worldwide, women are more likely than men to be killed by natural disasters (World Health Organization, 2014).

Insecurity and destruction following disasters affect livelihoods and prevent children from attending school, thereby reducing productivity and income and creating irreparable learning gaps among young people. In parts of Bolivia with a high incidence of disasters, gender disparities in primary education achievement widened following a natural disaster, while other education indicators also deteriorated, as they did, too, in similar areas of Nepal and Viet Nam (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2011). Following a disaster, some children and youth are typically kept home from school to help their families cope. Human capital is further weakened by injury and illness and the separation or displacement of families and communities. By deepening inequalities, disasters also risk contributing to civil unrest and conflict (Ghesquiere and others, 2012).

Although all countries are susceptible to natural disasters and climate change, developing countries have less financial and institutional capacity to manage natural catastrophes and adapt to climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2012; World Bank, 2010). Between 1970 and 2008, more than 95 per cent of lives lost due to natural disasters were in developing countries, which also suffered greater economic losses as a proportion of GDP than did developed countries (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2012). Indeed, climate change is expected to intensify social exclusion and threaten development gains in both developing and developed countries (Olsson and others, 2014).

One aspect of the evolving global society that is changing the nature of social exclusion is urbanization. Cities are focal points of economic growth, paid employment and social mobility. On average, urban residents have better access to education, health care and other basic services than rural residents, as illustrated in chapter III.[18] Cities also offer a more diverse and open social milieu than do villages. Nevertheless, they also create new axes of exclusion (World Bank, 2013). For one thing, income and wealth in urban areas are more unequal than in rural areas. High levels of wealth and modern infrastructure coexist with areas characterized by severe deprivation and lack of services, creating a strong divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and intensifying the social exclusion of the latter.

In parallel with urbanization, declining fertility rates combined with increasing life expectancy have led to population ageing across countries. The process of population ageing is projected to accelerate rapidly in the coming decades, especially in developing countries.[19] Where employment creation and gains in productivity, growth and public investment and savings have not preceded population ageing, and where social protection systems are not in place and robust, greater numbers of older persons are being put at risk of social and economic exclusion. Not only do they face the prospect of lower incomes and poorer health, but they are also at risk of losing their independence and becoming limited in their ability to make decisions that affect their well-being.

Although international migration is not a new phenomenon, a growing number of people choose or are forced to migrate. Likewise, an increasing number of countries receive international migrants. In recent years, the dangerous journeys of large numbers of refugees and migrants and the harsh conditions they endure once they reach their destination have made headlines around the world. While the settlement and social inclusion of migrants has long polarized politics across countries and in international forums, the issue is now at the forefront of public debate. Migration itself separates families and fractures social networks, even though improvements in ICTs and in transportation are increasingly enabling migrants to keep in contact with their communities of origin. International migrants are vulnerable to coercion, exploitation and substandard labour conditions and benefits. They often suffer from discrimination and are confined to the margins of the societies in which they live.

Countries that receive migrants differ significantly in the ease with which they allow migrants to obtain employment, qualify for public benefits, become citizens and vote in national and local elections. Provisions for the

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[18]    See also United Nations (2013a).

[19]    Data from the United Nations Population Division. Available from: https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/ (accessed in April 2016).

acquisition of citizenship, for instance, tend to be more restrictive where migration is conceived of as a temporary phenomenon than in countries where long-term or permanent migration has traditionally been the norm. In most countries, however, a common response to the recent large flows of refugees and migrants has been to tighten immigration policies, criminalize irregular migration and erect barriers to prevent migrants' entry. Experience shows that these measures, however, do not fully deter migration; rather, they lead to the marginalization and social exclusion of migrants, reinforce hostility and discrimination against them and ultimately undermine socioeconomic stability.

Finally, technological change and ICTs in particular can serve as critical channels for social inclusion. They connect people with information sources and opportunities that may otherwise be inaccessible or poorly accessible, such as public services, legal rights, skills training, jobs and markets. The internet and mobile phone texting, for instance, enable individuals, including members of marginalized groups, to consult with medical professionals and receive reminders to take essential medication (World Bank, 2016). Further, digital ICTs foster connection among family and friends as well as social networks that enable people to organize. They also foster public transparency and accountability. Yet vast inequality in access to such technologies, referred to as the "digital divide", also perpetuates exclusion and widens disparities in many respects, as illustrated in chapter III. In addition to creating new divides, ICTs can worsen exclusion through, for example, the spread of misinformation, as well as digital crime and censorship.

In sum, some global trends have been favourable to social inclusion while others have served to foster social exclusion. Under the status quo, there is no evidence that the world will overcome exclusion. Rather, this social ill must be addressed directly if mankind is to actually leave no one behind. Success in doing so will require that people of good will support the efforts of excluded communities and people to be included. It also will require personal bravery and persistence as the process typically involves deep social change. But it is the right thing to do.