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Practitioner's Guide:

Method:

Social Inclusion

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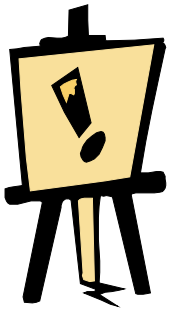
Social Inclusion

Brief Description



Social exclusion is generally defined as "the systematic and multidimensional deprivation (social, political, economical, and cultural) of certain groups within a society". These deprivations are typically interlocking and exist to some degree in all societies. Excluded groups lack access to opportunities, resources and services as well as voice and power to change their situations. As a social process deep rooted power relations as well as sociocultural institutions (understood as formal laws and policies, informal social norms, values, and beliefs) that enable or constrain human interaction lie at the core of social exclusion.

Social exclusion and its multidimensional facets can be addressed best through integrated approaches, consisting of a variety of activities and policies, as well as collaborations between different stakeholders, and making interventions at different levels. As such a crosscutting issue, social inclusion cannot be achieved by utilizing this method step by step. Rather it is achieved through awareness raising and a change of consciousness among, a) the practitioners to design, plan and implement activities more inclusively and b) among the beneficiaries to actively overcome barriers to social inclusion in the long-term. Since deep-rooted social norms and values can create barriers to inclusion it is difficult to bring expected social change in a short time span. Therefore, social exclusion requires a long-term strategic response on the part of all concerned stakeholders. They need to demonstrate a broad commitment to equality and human rights so that people's beliefs and values change for the better.

The social inclusion strategy aims to assist practitioners in

a) better understanding the complex processes of social exclusion and transformation and
b) in designing, implementing, and steering conceptualized and cross-cutting and targeted interventions to enable the most deprived and vulnerable groups of society to step out of the poverty circle and to improve their dignity, self-confidence, and socioeconomic status. In this regard, social exclusion is perceived as a cause and reinforcing factor of poverty at the same time. The notion of social inclusion, thus, functions as an entry point to work towards poverty reduction, equity and equality.

This method stems from the lively discussion among academia and practitioners on the concepts of social in- and exclusion and their linkage to other concepts such as poverty, inequality, deprivation and citizenship. The discussion gained momentum in the 1990s, initially picking up issues of social disintegration in Europe but soon incorporated consideration in southern contexts – albeit the transferability of the concept is still being critically discussed. It is worthwhile mentioning that manifold concepts and definitions of social in- and exclusion exist, depending on the contexts, as well as on ideological and theoretical perspective.

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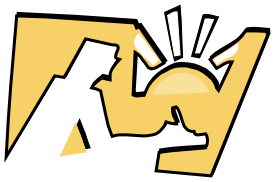
Proposed Main Users

Governments, line ministries, bi- and multilateral development organizations, NGOs, CBOs.

Purpose of the Method



Usually, exclusion is based on social identity (gender, ethnicity, caste, age, geographic region, economic status, etc.). People may be born into an excluded group or become excluded due to changes of circumstances (e.g. migration) and chronic process (e.g. poverty and unemployment). As much as individuals have different, overlapping, reinforcing and even contesting social identities, they are also entrenched in multiple levels of in- and exclusion according to the context that determines identities as privileged and others as deprived. Thus, we usually face a complex potential for privilege or deprivation. The concept of social inclusion should, therefore, not be conceptualized in a binary logic; that one is either included or excluded, nor that inclusion per se is good, or exclusion per se is bad. Rather, it should be seen that people are included or excluded in relation to different variables and the processes of in- and exclusion, these, are best recognized as a continuum with in- and exclusion at its poles. Social exclusion itself may have manifold characteristics. It can take place

- formally (by law) or informally (deep rooted informal social norms, values, beliefs);
- deliberately or unintentionally;
- self-imposed or imposed from the outside;
- hidden or visible; and
- in a variety of different arenas to differing degrees (individual, household / family, community, village, region, nation etc.).

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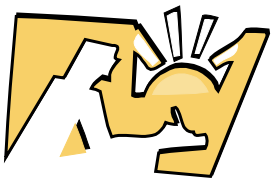
Purpose of the Method



Due to the multidimensional facets and processes that lead to social exclusion, deprived groups can't be identified by only a single criterion. Additional qualifications, criteria and further questions are essential, whether integration or inclusion is always desirable and how inclusion of ones may produce exclusion of others. For practitioners it is indispensable to thoroughly assess the context and to design the interventions appropriately. This method provides some guidance on this crucial task.

Its utilisation and potential results can be twofold:

a) **Mainstreaming social inclusion as a cross-cutting issue** so that

- institutional barriers to social inclusion within ones own organization are removed; marginalized groups take up decision making powers within "the system", and
- sector interventions in general do not reinforce social exclusion but become more oriented towards relief provision and equity promotion.

b) **Designing interventions that directly address social exclusion as a recognized socioeconomic development constraint**

- providing excluded groups access to assets, capabilities and opportunities so that they can sustain and improve minimum livelihood security and lay the foundation for upward mobility (economic / livelihood empowerment);
- providing space and opportunities so that excluded groups can develop voice, confidence and capabilities to engage on an equal footing with the socially and economically better-off people and to influence and hold accountable the institutions that affect them (social / mobilization empowerment);
- removing formal and informal institutional barriers to inclusion within the society, at the system and policy levels so that all groups in society gain equal access to development opportunities without discrimination in any form. This requires changes of the "opportunity structure" within groups and individuals seek to "exercise their agency" i.e. actively influencing and challenging socioeconomic power relations and the structural context that supports or constraints their development opportunities.

The process of social inclusion may be initiated and supported from outside. However, eventually it must become a process from within, which is owned by different power groups in the society (through a "coalition for change"), since deep rooted formal and informal social values, norms, beliefs and identities may need to be renegotiated during the course of social transformation.

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Advantages

- The method gives a provision for mainstreaming social inclusion within the project cycle and provides means for continuous monitoring and evaluation of a program to ensure active and quality participation of excluded groups and to strengthen the transparency and equity.
- The method establishes the rights of the excluded groups to benefit from the program, i.e. utilization of program outputs.
- The method helps clarifying the roles and working approaches, and identifying the characteristics of excluded groups. This supports a process of self-reflection and realization of the staff and helps them to become accountable towards the target groups and to act inclusively by responding appropriately.
- The method helps the local people and other relevant stakeholders understanding the concept of social inclusion. It contributes to the creation of pressure groups and coalitions for change at different levels to address issues of social inclusion. This contributes to mainstreaming in the general development process.
- Periodic reflection on the project outcomes decreases the likelihood of unintended negative impacts of project work (i.e. reinforcing and maintaining social exclusion), and makes early re-orientation possible.
- Socially inclusive development activities, even carried out in a small framework induce impact on economic and political level. Social inclusion often mobilizes "hidden resources" by empowering marginalized people, thus stimulating local markets, fostering peace and stability.

Limitations

- Since processes for social transformation address power relations, the distribution of entitlements and the construction of social identities may initially cause elites groups to hesitate to get involved with target population groups in program planning and not give importance to the need and priorities of these groups in policy planning.
- Due to the complexity and multidimensional facets of social exclusion the identified target groups may be heterogeneous in terms of social identity, geographical location, needs or capacity. As such, it may be difficult to design targeted programs to cater to all their specific needs and priorities.
- Since the target groups have limited assets and income generation potentials, the options for livelihoods improvement are restricted. Therefore, program interventions need to build on existing potentials to overcome specific and achievable constraints.
- The deep-rooted social norms, values and beliefs make it difficult to bring about expected social change in the short run. They can become a major obstacle to implement the strategy smoothly; most of these social structures will change only gradually over a long period of time, often beyond the scope of programs and projects.
- The effective implementation of the method depends on the implementer's capacity. It demands a high level of social and cultural sensitivity, a deep understanding of the respective context and the concept of social inclusion and its meaning. The implementation, moreover, relies on the good will of other stakeholders to closely cooperate, to increase funds specially targeted towards social inclusion, and to consider the trade-offs between efficiency and quick impacts on the one hand and long-term transformation of social systems on the other hand.

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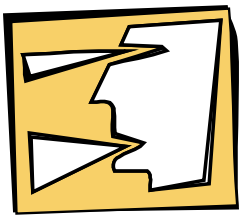
Social Inclusion

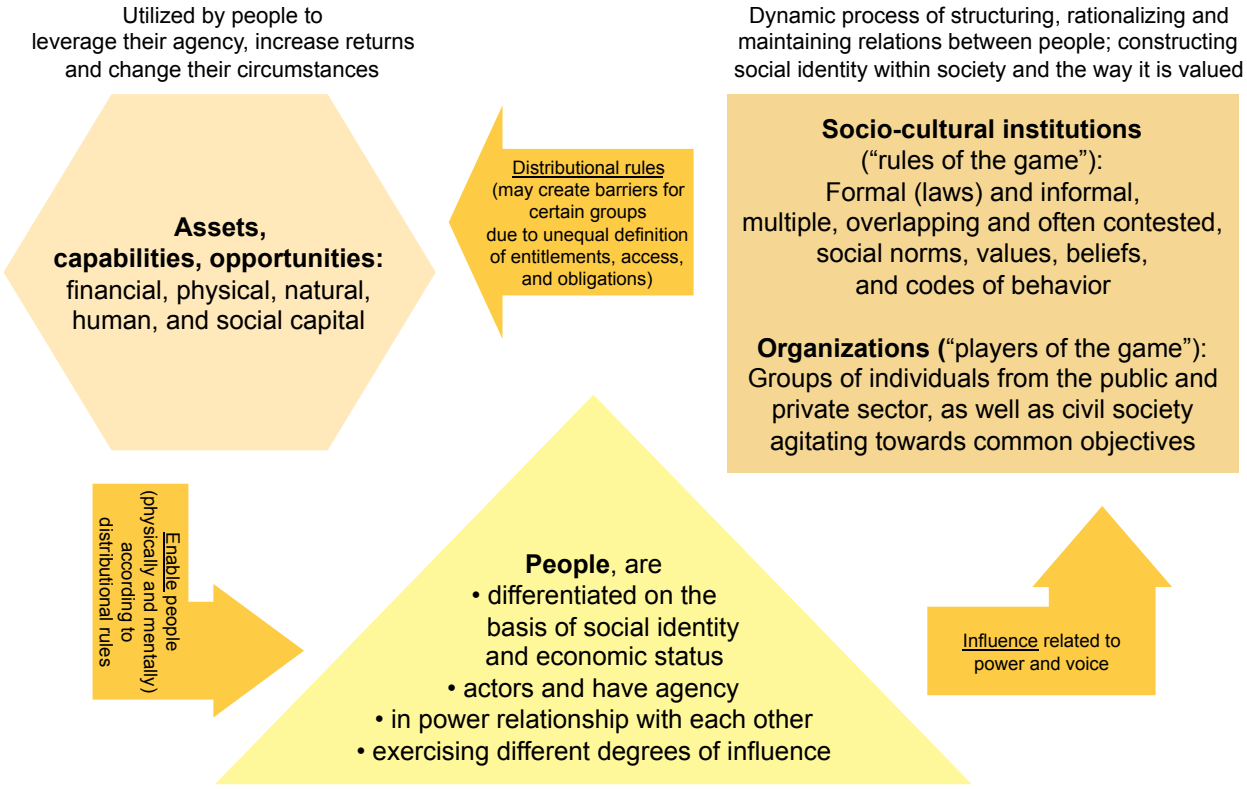
Principles & General Procedures



1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 sketches a rough outline of societies consisting of three domains described as a) people, b) sociocultural institutions and organizations and c) assets, capabilities and opportunities. According to the people's power concepts and principles, agency and voice are influencing and constructing institutions and organizations. Those regulate formally and informally the distribution of entitlements, access and obligations to assets, capabilities and opportunities. These in turn enable people to raise their voice and to "exercise their agency". "Exercising its agency" is a socioeconomic term of the capabilities to act and have impact as an individual. Excluded and deprived groups face many barriers that hinder them receiving equal entitlements and opportunities. The main barriers to inclusion refer to economic status, physical and mental abilities and social causes. Thus, only addressing poverty is not sufficient to overcome exclusion. People situated in the upper part of the power hierarchy tend to influence the institutions and organizations in their favor so that the return of assets, capabilities and opportunities may reinforce their social, political, economical and cultural status. However, this interplay is not static but dynamic and contested since less powerful groups also exercise agency, albeit to a lesser degree, thus constantly challenging the "rules" and "players of the game".

Figure 1: Process of social transformation



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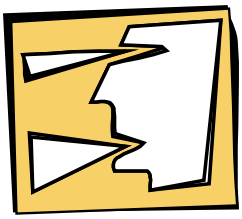

Against the background of the framework, interventions addressing social exclusion may use all three domains (see figure 1) as entry points in order to overcome inequality and inequity:

a) Empowerment measures may address the livelihood assets as well as mobilisation capabilities of the excluded groups;
b) The removal of institutional barriers on the other hand may create more favorable social-cultural structures so that the empowered groups can exercise their acquired agency and voice more effectively.

2. Capacity Development and General Principles

The following steps and procedures aim to build and strengthen the capacities within the program to ensure social inclusion becoming a cross-cutting issue in the project cycle management and to avoid that social inclusion is unintentionally undermined through capturing of development benefits by local elites at the cost of the deprived. Furthermore, the program needs to be aware how inclusion may also produce exclusion. A clear policy statement and transparent performance is required to improve the quality, credibility and accountability of the program. Thus, it is enhancing its acceptance and eventually its efficiency.

As a cross cutting issue social inclusion should be embedded in social analysis, organizational and institutional analysis, planning process, implementation, monitoring and reporting. Therefore, and to mainstream social inclusion in the program, gaps in the organizational policies should be identified and redesigned so that it will become more inclusive. This is best achieved, through broad representation of excluded groups in the planning and decision-making process. Additionally, the program also should build the capacity of the staff and assess periodically whether their attitude and working style are adequate to deal with the process of social inclusion. On the beneficiary level, the program needs to keep in view possible transformations of informal power relations, decision making procedures, social norms, values, beliefs and practices. These aspects are periodically evaluated through review and impact monitoring and – if needed – addressed accordingly. In general, the following steps represent the main milestones in an iterative process.

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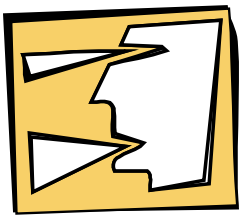

Step 1: Social analysis and definition of target groups

Social analysis is about the question of how social processes and relations reinforce deprivation and exclusion and how disadvantaged groups actually participate in development. It is not the question whether one group participates or not but how they are participating and becoming placed at a disadvantage. As mentioned earlier, the types and impacts of social inclusion vary according to identity, situation and context. Therefore, it is essential to identify the existing power relations in the area of work and anticipating how the planned interventions will affect these. Since informal institutions are deeply embedded in the area's social and historical context, outsiders may have difficulties to thoroughly uncover and understand them. Therefore, participatory approaches and tools should be used for analysis.

The following guiding questions may shed some light on the complex processes of exclusion:

- Concerned groups and arena of exclusion: Who is being excluded? Who loses? In which arena (individual, household, community, region, nation, etc.) does he or she loose?
- Types of exclusion and systematic barriers: Manifestations and levels of exclusion? What kind of access and entitlements are being denied? What are the impacts?
- Processes of exclusion: What kind of organizational and institutional barriers are the excluded facing? How do they counteract and "exercise their agency"?
- Power structures, hierarchies of exclusion and actors: Who does what? Who gains? Who gets what?

However, while some forms of social exclusion are relatively easy to measure, others are quite difficult to asses since multiple and overlapping identities can lead to complex patterns of in- and exclusion. Therefore, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for the analysis of social exclusion is deemed necessary.

On the basis of the analysis, the program clearly defines its target groups in consultation with local stakeholders and the concerned groups. An accurate and transparent definition and targeting of the beneficiaries is indispensable, otherwise better off groups will capture the provided resources. The program intervention area should be selected by considering correlating factors of social exclusion such as poverty, food shortage, and geographical location.

During the implementation of the program other criteria on social exclusion might be added as they become apparent. In order to promote social cohesiveness, the program should assess crucially whether targeting deprived groups solely may create social tensions.

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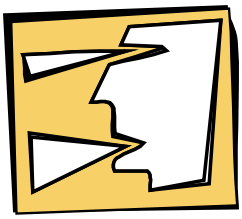

Step 2: Preparation of the inventory record, disaggregated baseline data and indicators

In case, the program is supposed to work closely with the beneficiaries, the program team should prepare the inventory of the socially excluded community members within the project area. This step helps a) identifying the need of the excluded groups, the type of social barriers and deprivations they face, b) designing appropriate interventions and defining the arena of intervention, c) making necessary budget allocation, d) defining roles and responsibilities, and e) developing support mechanisms without reinforcing stereotypes and maintaining practices of social exclusion.

Disaggregated baseline data allows progress to be monitored and change relating to specific groups to be tracked over time. Disaggregating indicators according to relevant dimensions such as gender, age, ethnicity, etc. should also cover the aspects of economic status, access to health, education and the degree of political participation and voice.

Indicators for measuring transformation of deep-rooted informal social norms, values and beliefs and changes in power relations are to be measured best through qualitative methods. Questions may be raised on the excluded groups' access or restriction to public space; their knowledge of rights and procedures; their confidence while accessing services and exerting rights; their ability to make decisions about their own life and to influence the decisions of others at different levels.

Step 3: Organizational preparedness and awareness

This step aims to remove institutional barriers for social inclusion within ones own organization and to develop and strengthen capacities for rolling out targeted interventions.

a) **Awareness raising and capacity development of staff, partners and beneficiaries:** Program staff, partners and beneficiaries are oriented on the concept of social inclusion, as well as relevant processes and tools to enable them to roll out the inclusion process as cross-cutting issue in all program activities. The staff's positive attitude and their responsiveness to the concerns of the target groups are important for accelerating the inclusion process. Orientation to the beneficiaries may include mass meetings and discussion on the importance and benefits of social inclusive policies and activities for the society as a whole.

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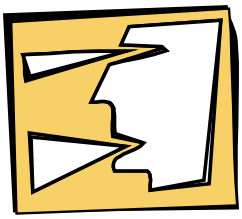

b) **Inclusive policy on staff recruitment:**
The staff profile should represent the degree of social diversity, representation and access to resources and power that is envisaged as the outcome of program interventions. Greater internal diversity promotes not only the program's credibility but might also help to deliver services more effectively, since information may not only tend to be based on information from traditional elites. A disaggregated staff profile, therefore, allows checking the organization's status and allows for corrections in this regard. Based on its performance an inclusive staff policy (comprising policies for targeted recruitment, internal promotion and capacity building) should be developed. Furthermore, the issue of social inclusion (objectives, responsibilities, competencies) should be integrated into the terms of reference of key personnel. Partner organizations should be motivated to conduct similar inclusion audits and reviews. The challenge, therefore, is to address deep-rooted norms, values and beliefs that reinforce exclusionary attitudes among the program's staff and partners.

c) **Inclusive portfolio, program and budget planning and design:**
Barriers to social inclusion vary according to situation and context. Requirements, constraints and potentials of the excluded groups need to be addressed accurately in program designing and budgeting. For this purpose, project designs, documents and budgets need to be revisited and revised through an inclusion lens. The following questions need to be raised:

- What kind of implications will project activities have?
- Whom is the project working with?
- Who is doing what kind of work?
- Who is accessing what kind of resources?
- Who is making the decisions?

The aim is to ensure and clearly promote opportunities to the excluded groups and specify incentives and mechanisms to overcome barriers to social inclusion in program plans and policies. Therefore, the policy and program review should reveal that:

- the terminology is specific about the target group,
- different needs and interests of the target groups are outlined,
- interventions are focused on specific target groups, and
- social power relations are examined and resources, decision making power and privileges are redistributed in favor of the target groups in order to overcome inequality and inequity.

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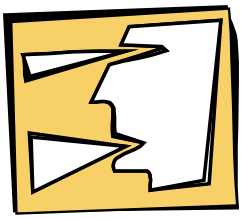

However, the objective of social transformation is only likely to succeed with additional and targeted financial investments, in concert with targeted program activities, while inclusive budgeting will promote greater impacts. The allocation of funds should be specific, where funds are going directly to the excluded groups, e.g. targeted subsidies or cash for work. At least they should be supportive, where budget is spent on activities that support indirectly improved livelihoods and increased social inclusion, e.g. training and advocacy on social inclusion for decisions and policy-makers. It should not be neutral towards social inclusion, where funds are spent on activities that do not support social inclusion neither directly nor indirectly.

The sharing of results of the inclusion review across other agencies and partners, furthermore, can help building a body of knowledge how to address exclusion in different sectors.

Step 4: Impact monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting formats should be reviewed so that they capture all relevant information on social inclusion. For this,

a) clear and disaggregated outcome indicators have to be developed on the basis of the baseline data,
b) direct accountability for achieving the inclusion objectives need to be assigned, and
c) additionally, process monitoring of social changes should become an integral part of management information system.

Continuous reflection and follow up among staff, partners, management and beneficiaries is also necessary to assess whether the excluded groups have and continue to benefit from the program. Additionally, gaps should be identified in policy, criteria, programming, and implementation. Flexibility should be embedded in the project implementation to ensure effective and timely corrective actions making policy and programs more inclusive.

Step 5: Active participation of the excluded groups

Active and meaningful participation in each stage of the project cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation) by deprived groups helps challenge entrenched power relations and overcoming deep-rooted social barriers to equal access to assets. Furthermore, it helps making the program and its interventions more transparent, accountable and responsive to the target groups needs. Awareness raising and capacity building support in the course of the program helps to ensure high quality participation of the target groups. Assumed the project addresses its needs and priorities, the target groups will likely take ownership of the program and over time take the initiative for further improvements in their situation.

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3. Target Interventions Directly Addressing Social Inclusion

Targeted measures can be either bottom-up or to top-down oriented. Combined approaches, will likely be most effective. Some possible interventions are outlined below.

3.1 Empowerment

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional and dynamic process, encompassing all spheres of life. It enhances the deprived groups' assets and capabilities to challenge and engage in existing power structures and to hold accountable the institutions that uphold and reinforce discrimination and exclusion. Local development groups or community based organizations have shown great potentials to support and orchestrate this process. Generally, empowerment can be of two kinds:

a) Economic / livelihood empowerment: The socially and economically excluded target groups usually lack skills, exposure, opportunities, and resources for sustainable livelihoods improvement. The existing social barriers lead to economic deprivation, which reinforces other dimensions of exclusion. Therefore, the improvement of livelihood assets (financial, physical, natural, human, and social capital) is essential. A support mechanism of the program should link newly acquired knowledge and skills to income generation activities. Through economic empowerment the deprived groups are supported in achieving at least a minimum base of livelihood security, increasing the return to their labour, and building human and social capital. Hereby, they become enabled to "exercise their agency" more effectively and to strive towards upward mobility.

b) Social / mobilisation empowerment: Formal and informal systems of values and meaning are generally taken for granted. With "the common way of doing things", identities may become disempowering if they are negatively or less valued than other sections of society in daily social interactions. In this context, the process of social mobilisation assists the target groups reflecting and analyzing the systemic causes of their deprivations and social exclusion as well as the potential opportunities to overcome them. In doing so, empowerment aims to enable the target groups to "exercise their agency" and to act on their own behalf. This is facilitated through changes of internal self-perceptions and the realization of the power of solidarity and collective action. In this regard, the groups need to become aware and understand how social identity is defined and valued by dominant social groups, and that inequity is maintained and reinforced by formal and informal regulations and norms. Based on this realization process, the excluded can actively start to negotiate new "rules of the game". Social mobilisation support provides platforms for the excluded groups to raise their voice and choice, and to build capacities as well as linkages to other stakeholders working towards social inclusion. Some of the enabling activities include training and awareness raising, participation in groups, vocational and skills training, networking, and involvement in decision making processes.

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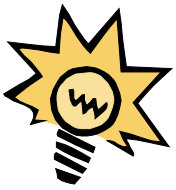
3.2 Scaling up empowerment measures

The emerging pressures "from below" must be scaled up and supported by complementary efforts so that the voice of the empowered reaches the concerned institutions and organizations. Additionally the intellectual resource base of the deprived groups needs to be lifted.

a) **Strengthening and forming of strategic coalitions for change** should be sought between
   i) different excluded movements to form a larger and common agitation towards general equity and equality, and
   ii) excluded and better off groups / agents of change (from civil society, government, donor community, etc.) to join hands in the transformation process of society.

b) **Linking local development and community groups to formal service providers** so that they can
   i) voice their demands;
   ii) claim their rights; and
   iii) gradually widening their access to entitlements and resources.

c) **Develop an intellectual resource base among the excluded groups.** Scholars from the excluded group should be systematically supported in producing intellectual resources regarding the demands of the deprived sections of society in order to influence the public discourse and policy debate and to actively participate in the coalitions for change.



3.3 Policy influence, reform and advocacy

The issue of social exclusion must also be addressed "from above" both at the structural level (governance structure) and by specific policies (formal rights and regulations) to change the "opportunity structure" and for sustainable transformation of the society towards equity and equality. Changing structures and policies from above usually becomes a long-term endeavour due to limited government capacities and elite resistance to the loss of privileges and identity.

a) **Support of legal changes:** Legal and political support for revising the legal framework with a social inclusion lens in order to ensure equal citizenship rights and access to institutions and resources for all groups in the society.

b) **Affirmative action, e.g. through awarding of scholarships:** To support increased diversity of those who make critical decisions in the civil service, political representation and educational sector supports the changes of formal rules and regulations as well as changes of informal norms, values and practices within organizations.

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c) **Revision of the partners' sector plans, policies and programs** in an attempt to identify whether and to what extent they address, reinforce, reduce or maintain social inequality and inequity. This includes, among others, an analysis and assessment of the following:

- The incorporation of social inclusion in the process of **public resource transfers** (e.g. access to physical resources like land, water, forests).
- The inclusiveness of **budgeting** in order to review the social inclusion implications of the resource allocations and expenditures (refer to section 2, step 3). Increasing civic involvement in the allocation and use of public resources on the local level helps to make expenditures more specific and supportive towards inclusion and enhances greater transparency.

d) **Improvements in monitoring capacity of sectoral ministries** in order to enable the government to systematically monitor the linkage between expenditures and outcomes as well as tracking the impacts of policies and programmes. Hence, it is necessary that the ministries also report on a disaggregated database according to the findings of social analyses. This becomes even more important in the context of Sector Wide Approaches (SWAps). Additionally, social accountability mechanisms such as public audits should be integrated in monitoring routines of the line ministries to further promote social inclusion.

e) **Development of capacity and institutional mechanisms at all administrative levels** (national – local) and sectors for more effective and coordinated implementation of social inclusion as cross-cutting issue (e.g. formation of commissions for social inclusion, assignment of focal points, development of action plans and clear responsibilities to achieve the declared objectives).

f) **Support for good governance** as well as the freedom of the media and the right of association to establish a conducive environment for social inclusion.

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Links

GSDRC – Governance and Social Development Resource Centre: Social Exclusion:
http://www.gsdrc.org/go/topic-guides/social-exclusion

Siyanda – Mainstreaming Gender Equality:
http://www.siyanda.org/docs_gem/index_implementation/pf_coretext.htm

Related Methods

Gender Mainstreaming:
http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=47

Rural Road Construction Strategy:
http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=83

Construction of "Green Roads" through Community Based Organizations in Nepal:
http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=83&cat=example1

Agricultural Income Promotion in Food Insecure Remote Rural Areas in Nepal (Food For Work - FFW)
http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=53&cat=example2

Learning Centres in Nepal (Certifying Community Mobilisation)
http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=75&cat=example3

Participatory and Conflict Sensitive Impact Monitoring (Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment)
http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=60&cat=example2

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