



**NOT JUST A NUMBERS GAME:
Ensuring the Excluded Get Counted in Poverty Monitoring**

**Report of a side event held during the 44th Commission on Social Development
United Nations, New York
10 February 2005**

Hosted by UNDESA, DFID, UNDP and HelpAge International

Background

In the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, governments launched a “global drive for social progress and development”, embodied in a number of commitments. These included: creating an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development; eradicating absolute poverty by a target date to be set by each country; social integration based on the enhancement and protection of all human rights; achieving equality and equity between women and men; and attaining universal and equitable access to education and primary health care. These commitments were echoed five years later in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Governments recognised in the Declaration that to address poverty, special priority needed to be “given to the needs and rights of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of poverty, and to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons”. Who is vulnerable and disadvantaged varies from one society to another but generally includes, as well as women and children, older persons and those with disabilities. Groups may also be systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity, caste, religion, sexual orientation, descent, HIV status, migrant status or where they live.

Reaching groups of people who are socially excluded is difficult. While such groups may be among the poorest of the poor, poverty reduction policies are likely to fail to benefit them unless specifically designed to do so. This side event at the UN Commission for Social Development focused on the need to strengthen the collection and analysis of statistics on excluded groups to ensure that they get counted in poverty monitoring and are assisted by poverty reduction strategies.

The key questions the organisers invited participants to consider were:

- Do the chronically poor really matter to policy makers?
- Why are most of the poor left out of poverty data?

The event was chaired by Mr. Jerry Banda, Statistics Division, UNDESA.

Presentations¹ were given by

- ❖ Lynn Bennett, World Bank: *Nepal Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment (GSEA): Some problems we faced and how we solved them – with a focus on data collection and analysis*
- ❖ Fiona Clark, HelpAge International: *Old age, poverty and exclusion in Bolivia*
- ❖ José Antonio Mejía, Inter-American Development Bank: *Data availability for measuring and monitoring excluded groups: Some notes for Latin America and the Caribbean*
- ❖ Lynn Macdonald, UNDP: *UNDP Statistical Literacy Project*
- ❖ Candace Miller, HelpAge International: *Using data to inform policies: Reducing poverty by supporting caregivers, people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA) and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)*

Key messages

1. Issues like empowerment or social exclusion are normally hard to grasp for policy makers, making interventions difficult. However, if something is not measured then it is not possible to alter the status quo. Therefore capacity to measure levels of social exclusion, and changes in these levels, and to analyse the linkages between social exclusion and poverty outcomes is absolutely essential to underpin robust poverty analysis and to further effective social change
2. A big part of social exclusion is invisibility. Small, marginalised ethnic and caste groups may be lumped together in a census in a category of 'other', making any data on them difficult to analyse in a meaningful way. Careful data collection and analysis is essential to document who is excluded and make them visible to policy makers; show why it matters for poverty reduction; show what helps to reduce exclusion; take appropriate action; and create accountability for change by tracking progress.
3. The importance of data on social exclusion needs to be made credible to economists and planners. 'Data stories' – or narratives with numbers behind them – can help to establish the links between exclusion and poverty and stimulate action for change at the national level. It is also important to share case studies – such as those presented from Nepal and Bolivia – among countries.
4. Often the required data has already been collected – for example, census data and household survey data include information on age, which generally does not feature as it should in poverty analysis – but it is not being analysed and used properly to illustrate what is happening with excluded groups. National level data that is collected by caste, ethnicity, etc. may not be analysed or made public if the issue is politically sensitive. It is then not used to inform policy-making either.
5. While there have been significant advances in the collection of data in household surveys and censuses that allows for disaggregation by ethnicity and race in Latin America and the Caribbean, this has not always translated into the use and dissemination of data, and the information is not usually part of the regular

¹ Copies of these PowerPoint presentations are available on request; word summaries are attached as appendices.

- tabulations published by statistical agencies. The process of disaggregation by ethnicity and race should be complemented by age and sex data.
6. Where data may be politically sensitive, there are ways of reframing the issues. For example, rather than focusing on culture or religion, the Nepal GSEA presented caste, ethnic identity and gender as social institutions – or the ‘rules of the game’ – that needed to be reformed to make progress.
 7. Statistical literacy, so that people understand the importance of data to support evidence-based policy making, is vital. It can also highlight data gaps. Users of data need to learn more about statistics so that they can make requests for the indicators that they really want. They have to know how to define an appropriate indicator and whether what they want to know is measurable. NGOs, for example, need to know their subject and what information they want so they can work with statisticians to include the right questions.
 8. This understanding has to go both ways, with users also understanding data collection agencies and their limitations and constraints. The lack of data on excluded groups is not only a question of oversight, but there are also technical, financial and methodological factors that influence the capacity of countries to gather information on some of these groups. For example, sample-based surveys have specific designs and thus not every topic can fit in one survey, and the inclusion of additional questions in a census to gather information on a particular group can be costly.
 9. The use of data should be promoted, with a clear plan for doing so. This could involve developing better ways to present and disseminate data and making statistics more accessible to users. For example, the Social Indicators & Equity Information System (EQxIS) disaggregates data by income quintile, gender, urban/rural and (when data is available) ethnicity and race and presents the information online with user-friendly graphics and tabulations of social indicators. It does not yet disaggregate by age.
 10. There is a need for a dialogue between the agencies collecting information and excluded groups so that the groups understand how the survey has the potential to assist them. Groups should also participate in fieldwork as this gives more credibility to data collection. The community should be involved in deciding what empowerment and social exclusion are.
 11. Understanding of exclusion should extend to who benefits or not from poverty reduction programmes. For example, many of the world’s over-60s – especially older women – live in chronic poverty. The data presented on poverty in old age in Bolivia illustrated that older people, and older women in particular, need to be included in all poverty reduction strategies if global poverty alleviation targets are to be achieved. The poverty that older women and men face is not just monetary but encompasses situations of extreme food insecurity, limited livelihood possibilities, gender based exclusion, exclusion from basic service provision and exclusion due to abandonment by family members and discriminatory policies against older people.

12. Work in Bolivia shows that strategies that aim to alleviate poverty must directly and specifically target older people and their family (especially in rural areas). Social protection, in the form of access to basic services and social transfers, support livelihood strategies of older people and their dependants. Securing documentation and information about rights are critical for older people to claim their entitlements, to health for example, and to prevent abuse such as property grabbing.
13. Disaggregated data is needed for devising national development policies since disaggregation may actually change results that are based on averages. It allows for more targeted and informed policy development and implementation and helps prioritise government funds and international aid, so that aid targets the poorest in the most effective ways. Disaggregated data is necessary to identify the impact of policies across sub-populations and show, for example, whether current policies are helping the most vulnerable.
14. While censuses have the greatest coverage, as they collect information by region, sex and age, they only take place infrequently. Not all data held at national level is derived from them. Since governments need up-to-date statistics for evidence-based planning and poverty monitoring, the potential of household surveys should be emphasised (although they have their own limitations).
15. Both health surveys and economic surveys collect important information. These should ideally be combined to provide the data required to identify the socially excluded. With indicators of health and well-being and measures of income and support, targeted policies and assistance that are based on actual needs can be developed and implemented. Income and expenditure data will be essential to have when implementing and evaluating social welfare assistance strategies. While data can identify vulnerable households, communities and regions current methods are lacking on recording the minimal supports families need to survive and what coping methods they use. Existing data sources, such as Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), could also become much more useful tools if future rounds of data collection included income and expenditure data, including sources of external support, to determine the budget that families are living on, what resources families need to avoid health or other problems, and to help identify vulnerable communities
16. This information could help create public policies that support families in the most efficient way and prevent negative coping strategies that impact health, survival and economic development. Analyses and presentation of data can and should be improved in order to understand the situation in households and be used as a tool for poverty reduction.
17. Data on HIV/AIDS is a good example. Further data disaggregation of already available national data should be instrumental in providing information to assist families affected by AIDS, and for social welfare assistance planning, and poverty reduction policies and programmes. It would be possible to disaggregate national household survey data (from DHS and MICS) to show household composition, including numbers of orphaned and vulnerable children, people living with AIDS, dependency ratios, age and gender of household head, income levels and socioeconomic status of these households.

18. There is a need to recognise that the 'implementation' gap is not just due to weak institutional capacity but that there may be resistance to change among those in power. Institutions such as gender, caste and ethnic exclusion are deeply embedded. Age as a 'social construct' may and does exclude but acknowledgement that this is happening is a slow process. It is important to have credible reform champions in government for policy reform. Donors may also make inclusion part of the conditionality for funding.
19. Data collection is not an end in itself to combat exclusion. Work has to take place at multiple levels to tackle social exclusion. Policy research needs to be linked to a range of instruments. There cannot just be a framework and theory; there also needs to be simultaneous action on the ground.
20. Work in Nepal illustrates that caste-based disparities at the local level can be reduced by development interventions that deliver livelihood empowerment – through access to education, income earning and asset accumulation opportunities – and mobilisation empowerment through media exposure and membership in groups.
21. Questions may be included in national surveys due to external pressure without an understanding of why this data needs to be collected. It is important for countries to know why they are asking a particular question and how the data can be used, particularly since the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) includes an agreement to help all low-income countries prepare national statistical development strategies by the end of 2006. Donors will then only fund statistical requirements as identified by countries.
22. Integrated national survey programmes are needed that regularly produce statistics to guide policy. A platform has been provided by the International Housing Survey Network (IHSN) for the harmonisation of existing survey instruments so that, for example, DHS and MICS are not carried out in the same year. The IHSN brings survey producers, sponsors and users together to foster better use of survey data for policy-making and monitoring.
23. Partnerships and alliances are very important – both within government, with NGOs, academics, activists and stakeholder groups and among donors with different comparative advantages.

Appendices

Nepal Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment (GSEA): Some problems we faced and how we solved them – with a focus on data collection and analysis; Lynn Bennett

Nepal is a small, donor-dependent country that has a fledgling democracy but a deep caste, gender and feudal hierarchy. The political context is volatile, including a Maoist insurgency for the last 10 years. While used to thinking about gender discrimination due to donor pressure, the government (predominately 'high-caste' males) was sensitive about ethnic and caste issues and resistant to admitting discrimination.

The low status of women, indigenous people and Dalits was defined/justified by the Hindu caste system and concepts of ritual impurity. The GSEA, on the other hand, presents caste, gender and ethnicity as institutions or the 'rules of the game' that limit the access to assets and capabilities, and the voice and influence, of these three groups. Hence, all three are seen as unequal citizens.

Hard evidence was needed to show policy makers that social exclusion is linked to poverty outcomes. Existing national level data sources collected data by caste and ethnicity but this was never analysed or made public. The GSEA therefore reanalysed the 2001 Census, National Livings Standards Survey (NLSS II) and other surveys to document caste, gender and ethnic disparities in economic, human development and political poverty. With agreement from Dalit and ethnic minority groups, the 103 social categories that were being used were reorganised into seven main social groups. This categorisation was also endorsed by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), which agreed to use it in the 2003/4 round of the NLSS II. This reduced the 'other' category from 20% of population in NLSS I to just 1% in NLSS II.

GSEA also carried out a Measuring Empowerment and Social Inclusion (MESI) study of one adult female and one adult male in 1,000 households in 60 villages, plus in-depth case studies of four villages in the sample. This provided a better sense of how caste, gender and ethnic social exclusion operate on the ground. A lot of time was spent finding out what villagers thought about empowerment and social inclusion in order to develop meaningful indicators. The study looked at individual and group agency and at the opportunity structure that either supports individual agency or suppresses it and renders it ineffective. Regression analysis showed that caste and gender explained 33% of variation in the Composite Empowerment and Inclusion (CEI) Index, gender explained 7%, while caste/ethnicity alone explained 26%. However, caste-based disparities at the local level can be reduced by development interventions that deliver livelihood empowerment (through access to education, income earning and asset accumulation opportunities) and mobilisation empowerment (through media exposure and membership in groups).

A big part of social exclusion is invisibility. Careful data collection and analysis is essential to document who is excluded and make them visible to policy makers; show why it matters for poverty reduction; show what helps to reduce exclusion; and create accountability for change by tracking progress. At the national level, inclusion is now one of the four pillars of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Part of GSEA follow-up work is also to work with sectoral ministries to get key performance indicators in donor-supported projects disaggregated by caste, gender and ethnicity.

Old Age, Poverty and Exclusion in Bolivia; Fiona Clark

Bolivia is South America's poorest country, with 29% of the population living on less than a dollar a day. A large proportion of the population works in the informal sector. While poverty is found in both urban and rural areas, the rural populations face severe marginalisation and poor access to services, with 80% unable to meet their basic needs. There are substantial inequalities between rich and poor, urban and rural and the *mestizo* and indigenous population – 72% of Bolivians classify themselves as indigenous or from an ethnic group.

The population is undergoing a rapid ageing process. The oldest are often staying behind in the rural communities while the young migrate to the cities. A 2004 study of 25 rural municipalities found that 15-20% of their total populations was over the age of 60, way above the national average of 7%. The so-called 'dependency ratio' in rural households is particularly high, increasing the vulnerability of household members. But , development efforts in rural areas tend to focus on children and young mothers, as well as education and health for infants and young children, to the detriment of a growing and ever poorer and more marginalised sector of the population.

More than 63% of older people in Bolivia live in poverty, compared to 58.6% for the general population. Additionally, approximately 14% of older people live alone (17% in rural areas), and 9% of the older people that classify themselves as head of households are raising their grandchildren alone, often with little or no support from the parents or other family members. The poverty that older people face is not just monetary but encompasses situations of extreme food insecurity, limited livelihood possibilities, exclusion due to abandonment by family members who have migrated to urban areas, and discriminatory policies. Older women, who make up 62.7% of the older people population (85% in rural areas), face increased levels of social exclusion and discrimination than men. Approximately 8 out of every 10 rural older women are illiterate.

There is a modest public health insurance scheme for all over 60s not covered by other schemes and a universal non-contributory cash transfer pension for those 65+, as well as discounts on electricity, water, public transport and property tax. However, these public policies and programmes are not reaching the poorest older people, particularly those in rural areas who speak only an indigenous language. Sixteen percent of older people either lack identity documentation or have errors in the documents they have, and therefore cannot prove that they have a right to claim these entitlements. Many older people are unable to travel to the larger urban centres to seek treatment due to poor roads and the high cost of transportation. Discriminatory behaviour by health staff also deters older people from seeking medical treatment. In addition, rural older people travelling back home with the pension money are often the victims of assault, or are forced by family members to hand the money over to them.

Recent programmes implemented by HelpAge International and its partners have shown poor levels of understanding by government officials at all levels of the existence of the laws and programmes favouring older people, the procedures for their implementation and the rights of older people to these entitlements.

For more information contact Help Age International at www.helpage.org or the Latin American Regional Development Centre, Calle Ricardo Mujia 277, La Paz, Bolivia; Tel. +591 2 2410583; Fax: +591 2 2410957.

Data availability for measuring and monitoring excluded groups: some notes for Latin America and the Caribbean; Jose Antonio Mejia

There are many excluded groups in Latin America and the Caribbean – including indigenous groups, Afro descendants and people with disabilities – on whom very limited data are collected and used.

In particular, collecting disaggregated data by ethnicity and race in household surveys and censuses is a new experience for many countries, and the amount of data varies from country to country. Countries with the longest experience are those with the most visible indigenous populations. These have mostly used language as a proxy to identify indigenous individuals (the prevalent form of identification until the late 1990s). Countries with a racially diverse population have mostly collected data on race and ethnicity using a self-identification question in their surveys regularly.

In their most recent census, 17 countries have at least a question of self-identification that would permit the disaggregation of data by ethnic/racial groups and seven countries have both a language and a self-identification question. Seven countries include language and/or self-identification questions in their regular household surveys.

Of the census questionnaires available at MECOVI, six countries include at least a question about disabilities at the household level and fourteen at the individual level. Peru did not include any questions. El Salvador has not done a census yet. Honduras collected data as part of its regular survey (EPHPM) in September 2002.

However, some countries have responded to external pressure without really buying into the importance of collecting data to characterise excluded groups. In addition, the regular collection of data has not always translated in its use and dissemination. The information may be collected but it is not usually part of the regular tabulations published by statistical agencies. There needs to be more involvement of excluded populations in the data collection process, not only in the definition of the questions or categories but also in the field work and in the use of the data.

The IDB's Social Indicators & Equity Information System (EQxIS) disaggregates data by income quintile, gender, urban/rural and (when data is available) ethnicity and race. It provides the elements to visualise the gaps between some excluded groups and the rest of the population. It offers an accessible interface with graphics and tabulations of social indicators; disaggregations by income groups, geographical areas and ethnic background; information available for 20 countries, beginning in 1990, with more than 80 household surveys processed; and meta data and transparent methodology.

Next steps would be the inclusion of excluded groups in all the data collection processes (not only in question definition); and the promotion of the use of data, with a clear plan to do this. It should be recognised that censuses are a tool to design samples, and not all data has to come from them. The potential of household surveys (with their own limitations) should be emphasised. In addition, the needs of data collection agencies have to be understood as well as those of data users.

More information is available on the EQxIS website: www.iadb.org/xindicators

UNDP Statistical Literacy Project: What are we doing to address social exclusion? Lynn Macdonald

The aim of the statistical literacy project of the UNDP is to make data more accessible to a wide range of users and enhance statistical capacity and literacy. It delivers training to a variety of stakeholders across government and civil society to support evidence-based policy-making and evidence-based advocacy.

The training includes a textbook, exercises, projects and resource material. The lectures are in 15 modules covering policy process, indicators, meta data, monitoring the policy process, diversification and communication.

One link between social inclusion and statistical literacy is that more information raises the confidence of stakeholders and gives them a larger voice. Statistical literacy also helps identify, define and monitor appropriate, additional indicators (to measure what you really want to know); identify the impact of policies across sub-populations (are current policies helping the most vulnerable?); and highlight data gaps.

Disaggregated data is needed for devising national development policies since disaggregation may actually change results that are based on averages.

A programme to develop statistical literacy is being undertaken in Tanzania. This has included database development and a regional workshop (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania) with 14 country trainers from Tanzania. The project has been integrated into the wider monitoring and evaluation programme and partnerships have been developed in country (VPO, REPOA, NBS, UNICEF, UNDP)

In 2005 four workshops were held at sub-national level that trained 50 officials from 50 different civil society organisations and 60 planners and economists from 60 different municipal, town and district councils. The coverage so far is two zones out of seven and 10 districts out of about 50. Six seminars for local government and CSOs and five one-day seminars for high level officials are planned in 2006.

For more information contact lynn.macdonald@undp.org

Using Data to Inform Policies: Reducing poverty by supporting caregivers, people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA) and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)

Reducing poverty by supporting caregivers, PLWA and OVC requires that national data be collected and disaggregated by age, gender and socio-economic status, particularly in high prevalence nations. Anecdotal reports and qualitative studies show that caregivers are overburdened with responsibilities and that older persons and other economically disadvantaged persons provide care to PLWA and OVC. However, indicators of health and well being, and measures of income and support, are needed to develop and implement policies and assistance that are based on actual needs and at a level that reduces poverty and helps prevent poor health.

National household surveys collect nationally representative data that usually fall into two categories: health surveys and economic surveys. Ideally these would be married in order to link essential economic and health data. For example, the Survey on Orphans and other Vulnerable Children in Rural and Urban High Density Zimbabwe 2004/2005 used standard household survey methodologies along with new indicators developed by UNICEF and UNAIDS to provide important insights into the situation of caregivers, OVC and PLWA. However, because the data was not fully disaggregated and lacked additional indicators, many important questions remain unanswered.

This and other surveys (DHS, MICS) provide insights into demographic shifts in household composition, the growing orphan population and, where it is collected, HIV prevalence data. They also identify the existence of vulnerable families. Still, the data do not reveal either the minimal supports that families need to survive or the coping mechanisms that they use to survive. With this data, public policies could be created that support families in the most efficient way and that prevent the negative coping strategies that impact health, survival and economic development.

The key gaps and challenges in data collection and analyses fall into three categories: (1) The lack of data disaggregation of key indicators by age, gender and household socioeconomic status; (2) The lack of key indicators, such as measures of care and support, income and expenditure data, and measures of use, access and satisfaction with public sector services; and finally, (3) The lack of more frequent data collection in high prevalence areas and longitudinal data.

For more information contact Help Age International at www.helpage.org or Candace Miller at candace_miller@post.harvard.edu.