

Briefing Document

Leave no one behind – discrimination, exclusion and the 2030 development agenda

Wednesday, 22 June 2016, 14:00 – 16:00 (followed by refreshments)

SDC, Freiburgstrasse 130, Berne (Room A2023)

Traverse Events

Traverse is an SDC platform for public debate on current and controversial topics related to international cooperation. High-profile guests from the fields of science, politics, economy, society and culture are invited to discuss current issues from a wide range of viewpoints. Traverse also provides an opportunity to air differences of opinion and get involved in critical debates with the public. Participants include staff of the SDC and other federal offices, as well as representatives from the scientific, cultural, political, and economic communities, NGOs, and interested members of the public.

Background

“As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavor to reach the furthest behind first.”

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The adoption of the 2030 development agenda centers on the pledge to “leave no one behind”. This promise is viewed as a paradigm shift as it 1) recognizes the fundamentality of a person’s human dignity, and 2) prioritizes those furthest behind. In other words, the implementation of the 2030 development agenda should deliver benefits first to those who are at the margins of society, including due to discrimination and exclusion. It goes without saying: in order for that promise not to remain hollow, governments as well as development agencies have to tackle major challenges.

The first challenge relates to the identification of those who are “left behind”. Standard data collection methodologies tend to give governments and development agencies only limited information on the number of those who are living on the margins of society, on the joint characteristics they may share, and on the specific obstacles they face.

Obstacles may differ among individuals belonging to the same group. In other words: we may know very little about individuals who face multiple deprivations and a one-size-fits-all approach in identifying them will not work. Power relations and political interests and influence differ from one society to the next and at the same time are central to identifying those on the margins and informing development approaches to tackle obstacles they face. It is important to go beyond “averages” and assess data without biases or any type of discrimination.

The second challenge relates to the political dimensions of exclusion and discrimination. Deeply entrenched prejudices and attitudes are often found alongside discriminatory laws, policies, or practices that result in disadvantages for some groups. These include disadvantages with regards to accessing resources and services, as well as participation in decision-making. In other words, leaving



certain groups behind may be the result of deliberate policies or actions, rather than coincidence or lack of awareness. Tackling exclusion and discrimination and focusing on those left behind therefore are not simply technical or methodological exercises but highly political undertakings. As such, they are also likely to generate resistance from those who may fear losing certain privileges.

The third challenge relates to policy implications and the ways governments and development agencies should reach out to those furthest behind. Policy instruments such as targeting and affirmative action aim to fast-track inclusion and equality with regards to opportunities and results. Affirmative action aims to make up for historic discrimination and exclusion. Development agencies and governments have used them widely with the intention of boosting development indicators for marginalized groups. These policy options do not come without pitfalls: some have questioned the legitimacy of making entitlements available for certain groups only whereas these should be viewed as universal. And they have cautioned against the risks of lacking broader societal support for such benefit. Others again are of the view that such approaches are counterproductive in the sense that they reinforce existing prejudice and stigma against those meant to be benefiting and may even create tensions among different groups within society.

In short, there are no easy answers and these questions are undeniably relevant to the work of development cooperation agencies as well as governments. SDC has experience in promoting equality, inclusion and empowerment in different regions. “Leaving no one behind” demands to resist the quick wins. It requires addressing power relations and inequalities of opportunities and outcome. Identifying what population groups are not included in programmes, reaching the most vulnerable and tackling the root causes of discrimination and exclusion requires tailored approaches, takes time and calls for substantial funding.

Relevant questions

Against this background and in light of international discussions and experiences from different regions, the panel of experts will address in particular the following questions:

- 1) Who are those “left behind”? What characteristics do they share? And what obstacles do they face?
- 2) How can we identify those left behind? What are challenges in doing so and how can these be overcome? To what extent do prejudices and societal attitudes act as obstacles to identifying these groups properly?
- 3) How should development agencies deal with discrimination and exclusion that is the result of deliberate policies? And the lack of political will to address these?
- 4) What approaches should best be pursued to ensure that no one is left behind? Are targeting or affirmative action policies suitable? What advantages or pitfalls do these entail?

We are looking forward to a lively debate!

Panelists:

Eglantina GJERMENI



Eglantina Gjermeni is Minister of Urban Development of the Republic of Albania. Prior to her appointment to Cabinet, she was a Member of Parliament and directed the non-governmental Organization “Gender Alliance Center for Development” for 10 years. Before entering politics, she pursued a successful academic career and worked as a Professor and Lecturer at the University of Albania’s Faculty of Social Work, where she taught courses on Gender and Social Work. In 2015, she was appointed Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work at the University of Tirana, Albania. She holds a PhD in Social Work from that University as well as a Master’s Degree from the

Grand Valley State University in Michigan, USA.

Magdalena SEPÚLVEDA CARMONA



Magdalena Sepúlveda is Senior Research Associate at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. From 2008 to 2014 she was the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. Ms. Sepúlveda’s 20-year career has focused on the intersection of poverty, development and human rights and has bridged research and activism. She has worked as a researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, as a staff attorney at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, as the Co-Director of the Department of International Law and Human Rights of the United Nations-mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica and as a Research Director at the International Council on Human Rights Policy, in Geneva. Ms. Sepúlveda is a Chilean lawyer who holds a Ph.D in International Law from Utrecht University in the Netherlands, an LL.M in human rights law from the University of Essex, and a post graduate diploma from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

Elizabeth STUART



Elizabeth Stuart is a research fellow at the Overseas Development Institute, where she leads the institute’s work on the Sustainable Development Goals. Previously she has been director of policy and research at Save the Children, head of Oxfam International’s Washington DC office, and lead Oxfam GB’s work on trade. Elizabeth is a former national newspaper and radio financial journalist, and has an advanced degree in international politics from Birkbeck College, University of London.

Nils B. WEIDMANN



Nils B. Weidmann is Professor of Political Science at the University of Konstanz, Germany. Previously, he has held postdoctoral appointments at the Centre for the Study of Civil War, Peace Research Institute Oslo (2011-12); the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University (2009-10); and the Jackson Institute, Yale University (2010-11). He received a M.Sc. in Computer Science from the University of Freiburg (Germany) in 2003, a M.A. in Comparative and International Studies from ETH Zurich (Switzerland) in 2008 and a Ph.D. in Political Science from ETH Zurich in 2009. His research has been published in the American Political Science Review, the Journal

of Politics, International Organization, International Studies Quarterly, the Journal of Conflict Resolution and the Journal of Peace Research.

Moderator:

Isabelle JACOBI



Isabelle Jacobi has headed “Echo der Zeit”, the Swiss radio’s political analysis broadcast, since 2012. She has been with the Swiss radio SRF for the past 17 years, three years as a free-lance correspondent in New York. She studied Journalism at Pepperdine University, California, and holds a Master’s Degree in English and American Literature alongside History and Theatre Sciences from the University of Bern. She further holds a Business Certificate from Columbia University. She will become Swiss Radio SRF’s correspondent for the United States based in Washington D.C. as of 2017.