



GLOBAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER
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Season's Greetings and Best Wishes to all in the New Year! Happy Holidays!

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The author is the United Nations Independent Expert on minority issues appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2011. Independent from any government or organization, she serves in her individual capacity. Ms. IZSÁK holds a Master of Law diploma from the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary

The planned deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, namely, 2015, is not far away, and the international community is already actively debating the shape and focus of the post-2015 development agenda. In the wake of the Rio+20 summit, when the issues of sustainability and inclusion began to get priority attention, it is essential to give further thought to concerns about rising inequality, which admittedly has many manifestations, both within societies and internationally. It is most important to assess the structural causes of inequality, as well as its detrimental impact on

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political, economic or social integration. In this article, I would like to draw attention to the situation of minorities and the impact of structural inequalities on them.

The evidence collected by independent monitors indicates that, in 2013, global progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals for disadvantaged groups, including the Roma, Afro-descendants, Dalits, and other marginalized ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, has been marginal at best and has not met expectations. Inequality gaps may have actually increased as the situation of some groups improved, while that of disadvantaged minorities has worsened or stayed the same. The impact of discrimination, social exclusion and economic marginalization on disadvantaged minority groups, as well as the challenges involved in finding solutions to existing barriers to socio-economic development, have by and large not been fully recognized by states or the international community. Without significant and wide-spread efforts to raise attention to the need for solutions that work effectively for disadvantaged minorities, the post-2015 development agenda strategies may continue to follow the same patterns, priorities and models that have so far proven to be flawed in their ability to address the development needs of disadvantaged minorities.

One of the major barriers in assessing and tackling such disparities is the lack of adequate data— for example, it is hard to find poverty-related data disaggregated by ethnicity, religion, language or gender. Quality statistics form a vital step in conceptualizing effective poverty reduction strategies, and it is therefore regrettable that, within donor-provided aid modalities relating to poverty reduction schemes, the collection of ethno-culturally disaggregated data is not uniformly supported. Political sensitivities may be one of the factors and should not be overlooked—a UNDP source states that “showing and analysing data on specific ethnic groups may be a sensitive issue”. In 2005, the UNDP publication *MDG Monitoring and Reporting: A Review of Good Practices* provided a recommendation that, “Wherever possible, disaggregated data should be used to highlight disparities across gender, ethnicity, geographical location, age or other dimensions of inequality”². But that recommendation has not been taken on board by many countries.

In a few countries, where such disaggregated data exist, they do reflect the inequalities between majority and minority groups. According to a recent analysis by the Pew Research Center of new census data in the United States³, the wealth gap between whites and minorities has continued to grow since 1984, when the census began tracking such data. Whites have, on average, 20 times the net worth of blacks and 18 times that of Hispanics. The recession that followed from late 2007 to mid-2009 took a far greater toll on the wealth of minorities than on that of whites. From 2005 to 2009, inflation-adjusted median wealth fell by 66% among Hispanic households and 53% among black households, compared with a 16% reduction among white households. As a result of those declines, the typical black household had just \$5,677 in wealth (assets minus debts) in 2009, the typical Hispanic household had \$6,325 in wealth, and the typical white household had \$113,149.

In Brazil, census data show that, in almost all fields of human development, sharp inequalities exist between whites or Asians and blacks. On average, white and Asian Brazilians earned twice as much as black or mixed-race Brazilians. Black Brazilians are much more likely to be poor and rarely reach the top levels of business or politics. Of the 16.2 million people living in extreme poverty (approximately 8.5% of the population), 70.8% are black. The average wages for black and mixed

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□ MDG Monitoring and Reporting: A Review of Good Practices (UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, Poverty Reduction Group, August 2005): p. 18.

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□ <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/>

race Brazilians are 2.4 times lower than those earned by citizens of white and Asian origin⁴.

In the United Kingdom, the disaggregated data reveal similar patterns. Around two fifths of people from ethnic minorities live in income poverty, twice the rate for white people. The income poverty rate varies substantially from one ethnic group to another. The highest rates are to be found among Bangladeshis (65%), Pakistanis (55%) and black Africans (45%). At 25-30%, the income poverty rate among Indians and black Caribbeans is lower compared to the other groups mentioned above but still much higher than the 20% rate among white people⁵.

However, minorities-related poverty is not only income-based. Aggregate human development indicators for minorities are similarly consistently lower than those for non-minority groups. Gaps exist in access to education or health care, along with discrimination in access to employment, equal wages and credit, weaker or lacking participation in political and other decision-making processes, including in development planning to articulate their specific needs. Minorities have weaker access to land or lack such access entirely and have less security in land rights; living in regions where there are fewer public services or employment and the lack of knowledge of dominant languages are examples of challenges experienced by minorities globally. As is rightly emphasized in the *Synthesis Report of the Global Thematic Public Consultation on the Post-2015 Development Agenda* focusing on inequalities⁶, there is considerable evidence that inequalities in one structural domain increase the likelihood of inequalities in others. If there is an opportunity for improvements in one domain, the chances of progress are often undermined or rendered inaccessible by simultaneous intersecting disadvantage in another. Such intersecting and mutually reinforcing inequalities are often rooted in historical relationships and continue to be reproduced through discrimination in the social, economic, environmental and political domains.

Beyond territorial poverty

In the press, Paimandó-Choco is often called the "poorest town in Colombia". Explaining their failure to help the inhabitants, the authorities often refer to difficulties in reaching that remote area. But many local people believe that there is more to it than the long distance from the capital. It came as no surprise that most of inhabitants of this poorest town were Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples. Their most elementary needs remained unmet in terms of health, basic sanitation, education and so on. The only transportation route and the way to get in or out of the town were through the Quito river. People who live there think that they have been neglected and abandoned simply because they did not belong to a majority ethnic group. And that situation is typical where indigenous and Afro-descendants communities are concerned. When their leaders meet authorities, they usually request help with very "rudimentary things" like access to adequate sewage and sanitation. Indigenous women leaders raised their concerns about access to modern birth control, which used to be ridiculously inconsistent - one month the pharmacy received pills, and the next time women were offered injections. Why this indifference, this attitude? They blame their ethnic origin and minority status.

But in most cases, when civil society organizations raise their voice and pressure the national government about the situation in such communities, the main arguments used by the officials smack of mere excuses - those regions are not accessible for government programs, and poverty in those areas is due to geography, not the result of structural discrimination.

Source: Journey to the poorest town in Colombia by Alfredo Molano Bravo. <http://www.soho.com.co/zona-cronica/articulo/viaje-al-pueblo-mas-pobre-de-colombia/32284>. August, 2013

Information contributed by Ms. Martha Piedad Mosquera Figueroa

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□ <http://www.censo2010.ibge.gov.br/>

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□ <http://www.poverty.org.uk/reports/ethnicity.pdf>

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□ www.worldwewant2015.org/file/299198/download/324584

Caste discrimination affects approximately 260 million people worldwide, the vast majority living in South Asia. Dalit communities, in particular, suffer discrimination and exclusion in many walks of life. There are districts where literacy levels are lowest among Dalit girls, at 25%, compared to the national average of 43% for the female population. In the Mushahar Dalit community, barely 9% of women are literate⁷.

Only 13% of children in Africa have access to primary education in their mother tongue, compared to 62% of children with such access in East Asia and the Pacific, a region with an even higher diversity of languages than Africa⁸.

According to a 2012 regional Roma survey, between 70% and 90% of the Roma surveyed report living in conditions of severe material deprivation. As a result of the high school dropout rate among Roma children, their attendance beyond primary school is dramatically lower than that of the majority population. In southeastern Europe, for example, only 18% of Roma attend secondary school, compared with 75% of the population at large, and less than 1% of Roma attend university.⁹

The above data show how members of certain minorities lag behind in equality and eventually in the development of their potential as a result of their minority origin. However, the problem is that conventional poverty analysis often misses such trends for minorities because the focus is placed on the individual or household levels rather than on groups, and on material measurements of poverty rather than on the social dimensions. That is especially so in national censuses, where questions on ethnicity, mother tongue, religious affiliation and so on are often asked but are used for statistical purposes only, without attempting to see the bigger picture and link the results with other data, such as income level, literacy, educational attainment, unemployment, experiences of discrimination or geographical location. Let us recognize that poverty often has a territorial face and that people belonging to the same social class tend to live together. Following that logic, it would be a wise approach for governments to identify the most disadvantaged micro-regions in their countries, implementing massive and targeted intersectoral development projects in those areas. In that case, there is a high likelihood that such projects will also reach minority communities, which tend to be among the poorest. At the same time, monitoring tools need to be in place in order to ensure that all in need benefit equally from such programs. Such a policy approach could also be more acceptable and enjoy greater support by majority communities, which usually do not oppose investment into "poor areas" but often loudly object to the expenditure of public money on certain selected minority groups. Winning the support of the majority for projects targeting minorities might also be a precondition for sustainable success.

There is a proven correlation between horizontal inequalities and existing conflicts along ethnic, religious or linguistic identity lines. The persistence of inequalities and the growth in the inequality gap can be a destabilizing factor, in particular where the government is seen to be failing to address those issues (or causing them). Conflict prevention is one reason why monitoring poverty alleviation among persons belonging to minorities is crucial: if some socio-economic schemes are successful for the majority groups but not for minorities, inequalities will increase and tensions will rise. In that

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□ http://idsn.org/fileadmin/user_folder/pdf/New_files/UN/IDSN_Forum_on_Minorities.pdf

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□ UNDP, Human Development Report 2004 (New York, NY: UNDP 2004): p. 34, Figure 2.4.

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□ Expert paper prepared by UNICEF on Ending discrimination against Roma children, referred to in the Council of Europe report "Ending discrimination against Roma children"
<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewPDF.asp?FileID=19545&Language=EN>

sense, inclusive participation strategies for poverty reduction have shown themselves to be proven and effective conflict prevention measures as well.

The findings of a survey commissioned by my predecessor, Ms Gay McDougall, demonstrated that only a handful of countries devote particular attention to minorities in their MDG reports¹⁰. Even in the cases where minorities are mentioned, there is a lack of discussion on *where*, *how* and, crucially, *why* minorities are experiencing disproportionately high levels of poverty and other serious inequalities. Women belonging to minority groups remain particularly vulnerable and are often invisible.

In my opinion, the post-2015 framework must be based on human rights and the principles of equality, non-discrimination and participation¹¹. It would be crucial to establish specific targets for states on the inclusion of minorities in various spheres of life, while the participation of minorities should be increased through determined action. The collection of disaggregated data on ethnicity, religion, language, etc. and on intersectional discrimination needs to become a permanent feature of national statistics, providing an opportunity for monitoring the status of minorities and their progress in the new post 2015 development framework. Dedicated institutional attention to the situation of minorities at the national level, such as establishing designated ministries, focal points, ombudspersons, commissions and other similar activities, could make a difference in overcoming the entrenched discrimination and disadvantages facing such groups.

The failure to fully include minorities in society means not only that governments are not honoring their human rights commitments and obligations, but also that societies are missing out on economic developments and the benefits of such inclusion. The World Bank studies have shown how the inclusion of minorities could automatically lead to an increased GDP¹². The entire society loses when certain groups are left out of development. The perennial and self-perpetuated disadvantages of minorities are morally wrong, economically counterproductive and politically dangerous, and the sooner bold actions are implemented to improve the situation, promoting their full integration, the more benefits societies could reap in the longer run.

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the ICSW Management Committee.

➤ **The Global Coalition for the Social Protection Floors spreads its wings**

The core team of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors held its meeting in Berlin, Germany, at the end of November 2013 at the invitation of the Freidrich Ebert Foundation. The ICSW is one of the founders of the Coalition and has actively participated in core group activities since its inception, including the above meeting.

Created in summer 2012, the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors is open to NGOs that are representatives of their constituencies and that agree to the Coalition's principles and aims. Operating within a worldwide network structure but without any formal headquarters or secretariat, the Coalition

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□ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/113/05/PDF/G0711305.pdf?OpenElement>

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□ The recommendations are in line with those appearing in the *Synthesis Report of the Global Thematic Public Consultation on the Post-2015 Development Agenda* on addressing inequalities

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□ http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/Economic_Costs_Roma_Exclusion_Note_Final.pdf

seeks to communicate with international organizations such as the UN and the ILO, the Social Protection Inter-Agency Coordination Board and other relevant organizations, as well as contribute to international and regional forums. Based on the principles of inclusiveness, non-discrimination and mutual respect, the Coalition relies on collective output and solidarity in formulating negotiating positions. The main aims of the Coalition are as follows: to promote international debates on Social Protection Floor (SPF) issues and raise awareness of International Labor Conference Recommendation 202; to create a platform for learning experiences among civil society organizations worldwide, including the development of appropriate tools; to collaborate with national and regional social protection platforms and/or coalitions, where they have been established and promote the SPF objectives; and to advocate for the formation of inclusive coalitions, where they do not yet exist, aimed at promoting the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection floors.

The meeting in Berlin discussed several new proposals and activities. One of them was how the SPF could be integrated as a stand-alone objective in the post-2015 development framework, for which the eradication of poverty remains the overarching goal. A report of the working group on mapping the activities of civil society organizations on social protection (Who is doing What and Where) was discussed. While the mapping exercise has been important for discussing ideas, providing examples and case studies, and identifying focus groups to develop national dialogues on SPF, much more still needs to be done in that area. The other development was a signature campaign run by the NGO Committee for Social Development in New York (linked to Facebook and Twitter), which succeeded in collecting over 15,000 signatures in support of the SPF.

The meeting agreed that there is a need for the wider inclusion of new Coalition members, particularly from developing countries, and for better coordination of activities between the core group and within the entire Coalition, including establishing different focal points for each geographical region. Monitoring the activities of the Coalition members on SPF conceptualization and implementation should become a priority. The website of the Coalition will be established in the near future.

➤ **The 6th session of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals: ICSW speaks up**

On 13 December 2013 the ICSW was provided with an opportunity to address the 6th session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals on issues of global governance and human rights. The ICSW statement underscored that, in a larger sense, good governance at the global level is similar to good governance at the regional, national, provincial and local levels, in that it is characterized by the same principles--representativeness, coherence, effectiveness, accountability and transparency. To make the participation of civil society representatives meaningful in the definition and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, it is highly desirable to adopt mechanisms and allocate resources to increase the capacity of all citizens and stakeholders in decision-making, especially women, people living in poverty, children, youth, and older people – particularly of the global South.¹³

Civil society at large, including non-governmental organizations, social movements, informal alliances, and community-based organizations should be recognized as key partners in identifying issues, informing policies, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Establishing mechanisms and allocating resources to ensure the full participation of all citizens and stakeholders, including through capacity-development, requires the collaboration of governments and the UN system. Building on the model of the **Civil Society Mechanism** of the FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which involves a sophisticated system of balanced civil society representation

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□ UN-NGLS Policy Brief #5. Recommendations on Global Governance

<http://bit.ly/NGLSglobalgovernanceOWG>

aimed at promoting a truly meaningful participation, including input into negotiation and decision-making, could be useful in bringing together civil society and local authorities.¹⁴

It would be especially helpful if that could occur at the regional level as well as at UN HQ. The adoption of those recommendations by the General Assembly in this one context might even also spill over into other UN silos.

Human rights and good governance support each other: when one is diminished or lacking, the other must necessarily suffer. Adopting a human rights framework for the post-2015 development agenda will provide a firm foundation for policies to attack all the dimensions of poverty and for good governance policies as well.

➤ **Useful resources and links**

Solutions to End Child Marriage: *Summary of the evidence*

According to a study released by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), there are nearly 70 million child brides worldwide, typically forced to wed at an early age. Having conducted a systematic review of programs that measured a change in knowledge, attitudes and/or behaviors related to child marriage, ICRW identified programmatic strategies used to delay or prevent child marriage.

For more details: <http://www.icrw.org/publications/solutions-end-child-marriage-0>

Good Jobs and Social Services: How Costa Rica Achieved the Elusive Double Incorporation

Few developing countries have succeeded in simultaneously providing good jobs and access to social services for all. This publication of the United Nations Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) reviews Costa Rica's experience as one of the few successful exceptions. The authors [Juliana Martinez Franconi](#) and Diego Sánchez Ancochea concentrate on the essential role of the state in expanding public employment, promoting small firms and cooperatives, and creating generous and universal social services. The publication concludes with eight lessons for policy makers and development practitioners.

For more details please go to:

[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpPublications\)/110BB7FDD22E4AF7C1257BC900485755?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpPublications)/110BB7FDD22E4AF7C1257BC900485755?OpenDocument)

Dear readers of the Global Cooperation Newsletter!

The ICSW Management Committee is planning to revamp the existing ICSW Website, making it better—more updated and user-friendly. We would like to ask your opinion on what your preferences would be regarding the new Website. What would you like to see there compared to the existing version?

Please send your views and suggestions to icsw@icsw.org

Kind regards,
ICSW Management Committee

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□ Ibid

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