



# Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities

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## List of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FGM	female genital mutilation
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
HDI	human development index
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDP	internally displaced person
ILO	International Labour Organization
INDISCO	The Interregional Programme to Support Self-Reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples through Cooperatives and Self-Help Organizations
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MPCE	monthly per capita expenditure
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	purchasing power parity
SSA	sub-Saharan Africa
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WHO	World Health Organization

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**Cover Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: the Petronas Twin Towers and the luxury Radisson Hotel rise behind slum housing in the centre of the city.  
Photographer: Mark Henley/Panos Pictures**

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# Foreword

In September 2010, ten years after signing the Millennium Declaration and committing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), world leaders will convene at the United Nations General Assembly to take stock of how far they have come in delivering on their promises to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and ensure adequate education, health and gender equality for all. The gains that have been made with regard to these goals, as well as in reducing child and maternal mortality and halting the spread of diseases, are undeniable. Some of the poorest countries in the world have shown remarkable progress with scarce resources, demonstrating that political will is one of the primary factors contributing to development success.

This report on the MDGs and social justice argues that despite these gains, the focus on aggregate progress and the use of national averages to measure countries' performance disguises a picture of uneven achievement that is characterised by deep disparities between social groups. In every country in every region, people are being excluded from the opportunity to play an active role in social and economic development on the mere basis of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender and, often, location.

With the clock ticking rapidly to 2015, this report comes at a critical juncture for the MDGs. It aims to put the challenge of social inequality onto the 2010 MDG Review Summit agenda and to demonstrate that equity is just as important as

aggregate progress if we want the MDGs to be sustainable and address the root causes of insecurity and instability.

It also demonstrates that social exclusion and its resulting inequalities are not only rooted in the denial of people's social and economic rights, but are also inextricably linked to the lack of voice and participation of marginalised populations, thereby placing civil and political rights on a par with social and economic rights. It asserts that fostering the growth of democratic institutions like the media and the rule of law is instrumental in tackling exclusion and the denial of rights, while pushing for greater transparency and accountability on behalf of governments towards their citizens.

This report renews the call for social justice made by the Millennium Summit in the year 2000. It outlines policy recommendations and interventions that can be integrated into 2010–15 MDG Action Plans to tackle inequalities so that development benefits all groups in society. It calls on governments of rich countries as well as poor countries, and on citizens and civil society organisations to put the issue of social exclusion and inequality firmly at the centre of the fight against poverty and all efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

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**Advocacy Advisor**  
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# Executive summary

**A**t the start of the 21st century, 189 world leaders signed the Millennium Declaration and pledged to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – a set of eight benchmarks to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat major diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development by the year 2015. This commitment provided a ringing call to action to the international community to concentrate efforts on freeing men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising condition of poverty. The Declaration was based on a set of fundamental values that included **freedom, equality, tolerance** and **solidarity**, which together spell out a firm commitment to social justice as the guiding spirit of all efforts.

Unfortunately, the social justice agenda was lost in the process by which the Declaration was translated into an agenda for action centred on the eight MDGs and their targets and indicators to monitor progress. While the MDGs acknowledge the multiple dimensions of poverty, they pay very little attention to inequality or social injustice. They are largely formulated in terms which measure ‘average’ progress in relation to the goals. While these measures capture overall progress at global or national level, they do not indicate whether such progress has been broad-based or equitable.

**The persistence of intersecting inequalities undermines progress on the MDGs and betrays the promise of social justice contained in the Millennium Declaration**

The starting point for this report is that inequalities matter for the achievement of the MDGs. Inequalities matter at the macroeconomic level because they slow down the pace at which a given rate of growth translates into poverty reduction. They also matter for society at large because they generate high levels of social tensions, crime and conflict, with adverse effects for human wellbeing and progress. In addition, inequalities ensure that the poorer sections of the world’s population are generally bypassed by ‘average’ rates of progress on the MDGs.

This report argues that it is the socially excluded sections of the poor who are systematically left out or left behind from their countries’ progress. Their excluded status is the product of multiple and intersecting inequalities. Along with the economic deficits generally associated with poverty, excluded groups face additional discrimination on the basis of socially marginalised identities such as race, ethnicity, caste and sometimes religion or language, with gender cutting across these various groups. Socially excluded groups suffer from spatial inequalities; they tend to be concentrated in disadvantaged locations – remote and challenging rural terrains or overcrowded slum neighbourhoods. Social, economic and spatial inequalities in turn contribute to political exclusion; such groups are generally denied voice and influence in collective decisions that affect their lives.

It is the intersecting – and mutually reinforcing – nature of these inequalities that makes socially excluded groups harder to reach than other sections of the poor. It ensures that they do not benefit to the same extent, if they benefit at all, from national progress on the MDGs. It gives their poverty an enduring quality, lasting over a lifetime and often over generations.

This report brings together evidence from Latin America, South/Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa to demonstrate the relationship between social exclusion and the MDGs and to deepen understanding of its underlying dynamics. It focuses particularly on those countries for which data are available on how socially excluded groups are faring in relation to MDG-related objectives concerned with extreme poverty, children’s education and maternal and child health. These data support the main contention of this report: the persistence of intersecting inequalities undermines progress on the MDGs and betrays the promise of social justice contained in the Millennium Declaration.

Latin America continues to be among the most unequal regions in the world. These inequalities have strong ethnic, racial and spatial dimensions. Extreme poverty is much higher among indigenous and Afro-descendant populations compared with the white/Latino population in most countries.

Asia, as a region, is on track to meet the target on reducing extreme poverty, primarily due to

the extraordinary performance of China in recent years. However, this has been accompanied by increasing income inequalities in many of the region's countries, including China. It is also evident from the data that the decline in poverty has been uneven across different social groups: ethnic minorities remain over-represented in the poorest strata. Caste and religious differences are also reflected in unequal health, education and poverty outcomes.

Sub-Saharan Africa, as a region, is most off track in relation to the MDGs, but some countries in this region are among the most successful in the developing context when progress is measured in absolute terms. However, data on how socially excluded groups are faring in relation to the MDGs are, with the exception of South Africa, not readily available. Data for the countries covered in the report point to spatial, religious and ethnic variations in terms of progress on MDGs.

The evidence on the relationship between social exclusion and the MDGs reviewed for the report allows for two broad generalisations. The first is that the intersecting and mutually reinforcing nature of the inequalities which give rise to social exclusion helps to explain its persistence over time and its apparent resistance to the forces of change. The second is that these inequalities are not immutable; while progress on the MDGs in relation to excluded groups has been extremely slow and uneven, there is, nevertheless, evidence that it has occurred.

There are policy lessons to be learned from both these generalisations. Understanding the intersecting dynamics that reproduce social exclusion over time points to the domains in which policy must operate and the underlying causalities that it must address if progress on the MDGs is to be accelerated. Understanding the dynamics of change, and the role of policy in making change happen, provides lessons on what has worked in different contexts and how this can be adapted to address similar problems in other contexts.

The cultural dynamics of social exclusion – the systems of norms and beliefs that define some groups as inferior to others – do not merely promote discriminatory behaviour towards subordinated groups. Persistent reminders of their inferiority erode the self-confidence and sense of self-worth of members of these groups and their belief in the possibility of escaping poverty. High levels of substance abuse, criminality and conflict are often consequences of such frustration.

The economic dynamics of social exclusion operate through inequalities in the distribution of productive assets and livelihood opportunities. These economic dynamics can operate through



**Vietnam: minority hill-tribe woman with corn from her field, pauses on the road to Dien Bien Phu, near the Laos border. Tanks and other ordnance from the famous 1954 battle still litter the landscape. Photographer: Chris Stowers/Panos Pictures**

explicit norms such as legal restrictions on land ownership for specific social groups, and their confinement to predetermined, and generally stigmatised, occupations. Or they can operate through the discriminatory behaviour of others, making it harder for excluded groups to translate the assets at their disposal into sustained pathways out of poverty.

The policy dynamics of social exclusion reflect the availability, affordability and terms of provision of the basic services essential to the achievement of the social MDGs. There is a very clear spatial dimension to this dynamic: areas in which marginalised groups are located tend to be the most underserved by essential services. Financial constraints also constrain access. This was dramatically illustrated by the fall in utilisation of health and educational services when user fees were imposed as part of structural adjustment programmes.

There are also problems of quality and relevance of services. The failure to reflect the needs, priorities and constraints of marginalised groups in the provision of health and education, the language used to communicate, the behaviour displayed towards members of these groups – all of these shortfalls in the quality of service help to explain the poor pace of progress on the health and education objectives of the MDG agenda.

The political dynamics of social exclusion operate through the denial of the opportunity to socially excluded groups to participate in the collective decision-making processes of their community and society. Formal democratic processes are unlikely to be sufficient to overcome historically entrenched exclusions, particularly





Colombian boy from the mountainous indigenous region of Paletará peers through the window. The community has long been fighting for their rights to land and livelihood.  
Photographer: Luis Alfonso Ortega Fernandez

since these groups are often minorities in their society. The denial of political voice and influence to socially excluded groups in a society has often been a major driver of violent conflict, as these groups have no other forum to express their voice.

The intersecting dynamics of social exclusion, and their resilience over time, suggest that piecemeal policy efforts in relation to the MDGs are unlikely to have a discernible impact. The report makes a number of general policy recommendations for tackling inequality and social exclusion and then considers examples of more MDG-specific interventions which have worked in different contexts.

At the most general level, the construction of a more inclusive social contract between responsive states and active citizens offers the most enabling governance framework for the holistic approaches needed to tackle social exclusion. Such a contract would incorporate commitment to transparency, accountability, democratic participation and civic values as the basic foundation of the relationship between a state and all its citizens. These commitments would be given operational form in different policy interventions to address social exclusion.

Given their isolation from the mainstream of their society, the organisation of socially excluded groups and their mobilisation around self-identified needs, interests and priorities is a critical precondition for their participation in the construction of a new social contract. Such organisations can be built as a deliberate aspect of policy through the setting up of citizens'

committees, user groups of various kinds and consultative exercises. Or they may be built from below through the self-organisation of excluded groups or through the support of civil society intermediaries.

**A comprehensive policy on information is necessary if social exclusion is to be tackled through the MDGs.** States need to collect appropriately disaggregated data on all their citizens in order to track their progress – or failure to progress – as a result of development efforts. Such data need to be made widely available, to be subject to critical analysis and used to inform future policy directions as well as civil society advocacy efforts. Information policies should also produce information for excluded groups so that they are more knowledgeable about their entitlements and rights, and more confident about claiming them.

Different channels of information should also be used to address discriminatory attitudes and behaviour among the general public and to promote the values of tolerance, respect and solidarity. The media can be a powerful ally in the fight against discrimination and should be mobilised to educate, inform and entertain in ways that help to break down the barriers between excluded groups and the rest of society.

It is evident that recent patterns of economic growth have not always reduced, and have, in fact, exacerbated economic inequality and social exclusion. **Macroeconomic frameworks which promote broad-based growth and a general expansion of opportunities are much more likely to reach marginalised sections of society.** At the same time, growth on its own is unlikely to overcome the barriers that have held them back in the past.

**Inclusive patterns of growth will need to be supplemented by redistributive policies that can serve to directly address the intersecting dynamics of social exclusion.** Fiscal policies are an important instrument for redistribution. In terms of domestic revenue mobilisation, the redistributive potential of fiscal policies will depend on which sectors, groups and activities are taxed and whether taxes are direct or indirect, progressive or regressive. Taxation policies are likely to have greatest relevance to economic MDG objectives, as they have a direct bearing on livelihood activities. On the expenditure side, the allocation of budgets to different sectors and services and the distribution of social transfers and subsidies will have a direct bearing on the financing of social services and social protection measures of greatest relevance to poor and excluded groups.

**Legislation against discrimination is an important signal of state commitment to social**

**justice and it can provide advocate groups with the support they need to take action.** However, where social inequalities are deeply entrenched, more positive action may also be necessary. Many countries have sought to take affirmative action on behalf of excluded groups in order to break with past patterns and to set new precedents for the future. Affirmative action may take the form of reserved places for members of excluded groups in economic, political and educational systems or they may operate through recognition of the explicit rights of minority groups.

**Economic exclusion has been addressed through a variety of means intended to strengthen the resource base of excluded groups.** Land reform and land titling programmes are important routes for transferring assets to excluded groups. Labour regulations provide formal protection against the exploitation of vulnerable workers, but they are most likely to be enforced when workers are sufficiently organised to exert the necessary pressure. Microfinance has helped to overcome some of the limits of formal financial services, but has not proved effective in reaching the most marginalised or promoting graduation out of poverty. Microfinance service provision needs to be supplemented with other supportive services as well as pathways into the mainstream financial sector.

**The spatial concentration of many socially excluded groups lends itself to area-based development.** Economies of scale may allow various aspects of spatial disadvantage to be addressed simultaneously and cost-effectively. These include transport and communication, water and sanitation, social service infrastructure and the provision of services.

**Improving the outreach, quality and relevance of basic social services is a critical precondition for achieving the social MDGs.** The abolition of user fees, and social transfers to offset costs or provide incentives to take up services (children's education, maternal healthcare), are powerful mechanisms to address this. The report points to various examples of how services can be made more relevant and user-friendly to men, women and children from excluded groups, including recruiting and training staff from excluded communities, relying on female staff in gender-segregated societies, ensuring services are provided in languages understood by those who need them, the use of mobile schools and clinics. What these various policy options share in common is that they seek to address some aspect of the underlying dynamics of social exclusion.

**Social protection measures have assumed increasing importance in promoting livelihoods and**



**Niger: The Fulani are nomadic people who have travelled and settled across the African continent. Many Fulani in Niger live as their forefathers did, maintaining their traditional culture.**  
Photographer: Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

**hence improving the resilience of poor people in the face of crisis.** Those found to be most beneficial to excluded groups include conditional and unconditional transfers, often targeted to children, the elderly or the poorest sections of society. The conditionality associated with transfers may relate to work obligations, to encouraging women to make use of maternity services or to ensuring children go to school and for health checkups. Social transfers clearly have a redistributive effect, but where they are provided on a transparent, regular and predictable basis, they have also been found to have important developmental impacts. These include the increased capacity to participate in local labour markets, to upgrade skills and knowledge, to invest in productive assets, to access credit, along with multiplier effects in the local economy.

**There is sufficient evidence from across the world that addressing social exclusion through the MDGs can be achieved, but not through a 'business-as-usual' approach.** The experiences of progress reported by different countries and analysis of the policies that have worked suggest a number of key principles that can serve as the basis for broader strategies to address exclusion.

**The importance of a rights-based framework** Social exclusion entails the denial of full personhood and full citizenship to certain groups on the basis of who they are, where they live or what they believe. Efforts to overcome exclusion should be located within the broad structure of rights, including the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights and the international conventions on civil and political rights and on social, economic and cultural rights. These provide an internationally agreed basis on which to tackle the violation of the basic rights of such groups.

### **Building tolerance and solidarity among citizens**

While responsive states and actively engaged citizens are essential to building a more democratic society, relations between citizens are as important as the relationship between states and citizens. Social exclusion is partly perpetuated by the discrimination that citizens practise against each other. Legislating against the practice of discrimination, along with educating, informing and challenging long-held prejudices, is an essential aspect of building democracy.

### **Getting the right balance between equality and difference**

Broad-based or universal policies to promote equality of opportunity, and special provision for those who have been systematically excluded in the past, can work successfully in tandem. Universalist approaches are essential to building a sense of social solidarity and citizenship, particularly critical for excluded groups. At the same time, the fact that it is their 'difference' from the rest of the poor that has led socially excluded groups to be left behind or locked out of processes of growth and development suggests strong grounds for plurality and diversity within universal frameworks of provision.

### **Beyond amelioration to transformation**

It is quite possible to meet the basic needs of poor and marginalised groups without strengthening their capacity to do so themselves, thereby leaving their longer-term vulnerability intact. Addressing the root causes of social exclusion and adopting integrated and transformative approaches are necessary in order to shatter the resilience of social exclusion.

### **Group-based exclusion requires group-based solutions**

Related to this is the inadequacy of policies that target individuals or households in tackling problems that are essentially collective and group-based. Individual solutions may leave

marginalised groups more isolated and impoverished than before. The need for more collective approaches introduces another route through which 'difference' may have to be built into the design of policies.

### **A new social contract for an interconnected world: states, citizens and MDG 8**

The problems of poverty and social exclusion are not purely national in their causes or consequences. They are the product of structural inequalities at the global level. This is not adequately acknowledged in the MDGs. While MDGs 1 to 7 concern objectives to be achieved by developing countries, MDG 8 encompasses the relationships between developed and developing countries. Not only does it fail to address the unequal nature of these relationships – as manifested in aid, trade and debt – but it is also the only MDG with no targets or indicators to monitor any form of progress.

It is extremely unlikely that developing countries will be able to achieve growth, prosperity and social justice without greater attention to building greater solidarity, a genuine partnership of equals, at the global level. This should constitute the central platform for the post-2015 successor to the MDGs. However, in the run-up to 2015, rich countries should prioritise a number of actions to accelerate the pace of progress:

- Honour the commitment to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP).
- Recognise and support the role of civil society organisations in mobilising excluded groups, holding governments to account, and transforming power relationships.
- Provide support for a universal social protection floor that allows marginalised groups to cope with risk, invest in their future and lobby on their own behalf.
- Promote fairer trade relations, with special attention to the needs of the working poor in the informal economy.
- Hold corporations and the private sector to account for socially responsible investments.
- Strengthen government capacity and commitment to the international human rights framework.

# Introduction: the fundamental values of the Millennium Declaration

# 1

The Millennium Declaration was signed in 2000 by 189 of the world's leaders on behalf of the international community. It represents a promise to coordinate and accelerate efforts to 'free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty' by 2015.<sup>1</sup> It is based on a set of fundamental values that include freedom, equality, tolerance and solidarity. Together, these spell out a firm commitment to social justice as the guiding spirit of the Declaration.

## Social justice and the Millennium Declaration

'Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice... The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured... Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most... Human beings must respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity.'

(Millennium Declaration 2000, para. 6)

Unfortunately, this commitment to social justice was not carried over into the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which sought to give actionable content to the Declaration through a number of objectives, targets and indicators. The MDG agenda has been welcomed for its integrated and multi-dimensional approach to the challenge of poverty reduction – one that addresses income deprivation, deficits in human capabilities, and lack of access to basic services such as health and education. Its major limitation is the failure to incorporate concrete measures on equality and social justice.

'The integrated treatment of multiple disadvantages – the "more than poverty" element of social exclusion – is already a major element of the development agenda. The Millennium Development Goals demonstrate a recognition that a whole package of areas of progress is required, and that poverty, although of crucial importance, cannot be tackled in isolation...'<sup>2</sup>

The measures used to monitor progress on the MDGs are couched in terms of national

'averages' and 'proportions'. For example, two of the indicators for measuring progress on the key goal of eradicating extreme poverty (MDG 1) are halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who live on less than \$1 a day and those who suffer from hunger. Such indicators capture overall progress at global, regional and national levels, but they do not show whether this progress has been equitable. Only one indicator under MDG 1 touches on inequality: the share of the national income that goes to the poorest income quintile. But this is also the measure that features least frequently in MDG reports.<sup>3</sup> MDG 3 deals explicitly with gender equality (in education, paid work and political participation) but does not address how the most deprived women might fare within overall progress on these indicators.

This report takes, as its starting point, the growing body of evidence that *inequality imposes costs on society*. It imposes costs *at the macroeconomic level*, because it slows down the pace at which a given rate of economic growth translates into poverty reduction.<sup>4</sup> And it imposes costs *at the societal level*, because of its impacts in terms of social tensions, crime, violence and

'Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice...' (Millennium Declaration 2000, para. 6). Photographer: Barbara Cheney





Two Mauritanian girls look shyly at the camera in their home village in the sparsely populated desert area between Senegal and Mauritania.

Photographer: Layla Saad, MDG Achievement Fund

conflict, and their knock-on effects on investments in both human and economic capital.<sup>5</sup>

The costs of inequality mean that the poorest sections of the world's population are generally bypassed by 'average' rates of progress on the MDGs. This report contends that deprivation is not randomly distributed. Rather, it disproportionately affects certain groups that face discrimination on the basis of their social identities. These groups are harder to reach than the rest of the poor population, giving their poverty an enduring quality and undermining the pace of progress on the MDGs.

'Sometimes poverty arises when people have no access to existing resources because of who they are, what they believe or where they live. Discrimination may cause poverty, just as poverty may cause discrimination...'<sup>6</sup>

This report aims to bring together evidence in support of this argument and to deepen our understanding of the processes that perpetuate the systematic exclusion of certain social groups. While it recognises that social exclusion is evident in wealthy OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries as well as in the transitional economies, our focus is on developing regions, specifically Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South/Southeast Asia. Progress on the MDGs within these regions and countries has been far from uniform. There has been more progress in some countries than others, and on some goals than others. We will analyse examples of such progress in order to

draw out lessons for promoting the MDGs as a pathway to social justice.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, the problems of social exclusion in relation to certain groups manifest themselves in a dearth of data about their situation. There are very few references to the effects of intersecting inequalities in most of the MDG reports. A great deal of the discussion in this report is, therefore, necessarily dictated by the availability of data. We focus, first, on countries that show marked evidence of the category of inequalities that we are interested in. Second, we focus on those countries for which we have disaggregated data that reveal the extent of these inequalities. These are not necessarily the countries with the most marked forms of inequality. Indeed, some of the most unequal countries have very little data because they are affected by conflict (or have been until recently).

Third, even where countries have disaggregated data, they may not give uniform coverage to all the MDGs. As a result, we will be focusing primarily on the MDGs dealing with income poverty, health and education, the most consistently addressed in the disaggregated data. Despite these limitations, the countries selected are sufficiently diverse and offer sufficiently robust evidence on patterns of exclusion to support the key contention of this report: *the persistence of intersecting inequalities undermines progress on the MDGs and betrays the promise of social justice contained in the Millennium Declaration.*

'Data from wealthy OECD countries show that regardless of levels of *per capita* GNP (gross national product), higher levels of inequality within a society are associated with higher levels of crime, violence, obesity, mental illness, prison populations, teenage pregnancies and anxiety. Equality, in other words, is better for everyone.'<sup>8</sup>

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the phenomenon of intersecting inequalities, the exclusions they give rise to, and their relevance to the MDGs. Section 3 tracks patterns of equality in the Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and South/Southeast Asia regions in relation to selected MDGs. Section 4 examines some of the factors which explain the persistence of these inequalities, while Section 5 focuses on the policies and interventions that hold out the promise of transformative change. Finally, Section 6 draws out some broad principles for the promotion of equality, including the values of tolerance and solidarity spelt out in the Millennium Declaration.

# Intersecting inequalities and social exclusion

# 2

## 2.1 Relevance to the MDG agenda

‘Human diversity is no secondary complication (to be ignored or introduced ‘later on’): it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in inequality.’<sup>9</sup>

As the key indicators to measure progress for MDG 1 suggest, poverty has been largely understood in terms of *individual deprivation*. The conventional approach to the measurement of poverty is based on the economic characteristics of individuals or individual households – primarily their income or wealth. The subsequent ranking of households by these characteristics gives rise to what has been described as a ‘vertical’ model of inequality.<sup>10</sup> The focus on the national income share of the poorest 20 per cent (the poorest quintile) of the income distribution that features in MDG 1 is derived from such a model.

The literature on social exclusion, on the other hand, takes *group-based disadvantages* (or ‘horizontal’ inequalities<sup>11</sup>) as its entry point into the discussion of inequality. These disadvantages are products of social hierarchies which define certain groups as inferior to others on the basis of their identity. Such hierarchies are created through cultural norms and practices which serve to disparage, stereotype, exclude, ridicule and demean certain social groups, denying them full personhood and equal rights to participate in the economic, social and political life of their society.

‘[Social exclusion is] the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live.’<sup>12</sup>

The identities in question may take different forms in different societies, but the more enduring forms of poverty in most contexts are associated with identities that are ascribed from birth, such as race, caste, ethnicity – as well as religious beliefs when they are in a minority. Gender cuts across these inherited identities, so that within most groups, women are subordinate to men. However, unlike most socially subordinate groups, women are distributed fairly evenly across different economic classes, so that gender on its own does not constitute a marker of poverty. It is the intersection of gender with

economic and other disadvantages that explains the intensified nature of the disadvantages faced by poorer women and girls.

Identity-based inequality intersects with other forms of inequality to define social exclusion. Its intersection with *economic inequalities* – the fact that socially excluded groups face particular barriers in gaining access to resources and opportunities – means that those most likely to be left behind in national progress on the MDGs are disproportionately drawn from ethnic and religious minorities, from racially disadvantaged groups and from the lowest castes. Women and girls from these groups are frequently at a greater disadvantage.

Social exclusion also frequently entails *spatial inequalities*, consigning culturally devalued and economically impoverished groups to inhabit physically deprived spaces. Spatial disadvantage in rural areas tends to be associated with remoteness, ecological vulnerability, low levels of agricultural productivity, a meagre resource base

**A child being weighed by the village health volunteer while the district nurse supervises in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Photographer: Sophie de Caen, MDG Achievement Fund**





**Yunnan Province, China: members of the Bai ethnic minority, who traditionally wear blue clothing. Photographer: Jeremy Horner/Panos Pictures**

and weak integration into the national economy. In urban contexts, it is associated with poor-quality housing and sanitation, inadequate services and infrastructure and, very frequently, with subcultures of criminality, violence, drug dependence and squalor.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, there is an *inter-temporal dimension* to social exclusion. The intersecting inequalities that constitute social exclusion, and the cumulative disadvantage they entail, explain why it persists over time (see Box 2.1). Social exclusion denies the groups who experience it the ‘normal’ escape routes out of poverty, reinforcing inequalities over people’s lifetimes, and often over generations.

## **2.2 The regional history and geography of social exclusion**

The exclusion of certain groups on the basis of socially ascribed identity generally has deep roots in a country’s history. In some countries, it is tied up with experiences of colonisation – frequently accompanied by the genocide of indigenous populations – and with slavery, war and conflict, as well as the continued practice of discrimination into the present day. In others, it is linked to concepts of superiority-inferiority drawn from religious or cultural beliefs.

In the Latin American context, race and

ethnicity, involving categories of white, indigenous, black and mixed race, are the key markers of social exclusion. There are more than 50 million indigenous peoples and more than 120 million individuals of African descent (Afro-descendants) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), comprising around 33 per cent of the population.<sup>14</sup> These groups are not uniformly distributed across the region. For instance, more than 25 per cent of the population of Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru and Ecuador are indigenous, while more than 25 per cent of the population in Panama, Brazil, Nicaragua and almost all the Caribbean countries are Afro-descendants. They make up just 6 per cent in Uruguay and have a negligible presence in Argentina.

There is a spatial dimension to social exclusion within countries as well.<sup>15</sup> In each country except Brazil, over 45 per cent of the indigenous or Afro-descendant population live in rural areas.<sup>16</sup> Indigenous groups tend to live in the more remote and hard-to-reach parts of their countries, often pushed out of more productive areas by non-indigenous groups.<sup>17</sup> Afro-descendants live mainly along coastal areas of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and the Caribbean Sea, and in urban areas.

Across the Asia region, social exclusion reflects ethnic, tribal and indigenous identities, but religion

and language also feature in some countries. As in Latin America, indigenous ethnic minorities in Asia are often located in remote geographical areas. And as in Latin America, this location has not always been a matter of choice. The mountain ranges that stretch from Afghanistan to the Gulf of Tonkin have long been a refuge for indigenous communities who have, for various reasons, occupied a marginal position in relation to the dominant majorities in the valleys and plains.

Ethnic and indigenous groups make up around 8 per cent of the population in China, 10 per cent in Vietnam, 8 per cent in India and 37 per cent in Nepal. They are to be found in the poorest areas: rural areas of China's western region; the remote, usually upland, mountainous areas of northern and central Vietnam; the hilly and forested regions of India, Bangladesh and Nepal.

In India, spatial concentration means that indigenous minorities or *Adivasis* comprise a much higher proportion of the population in some states than others. More than 80 per cent of indigenous minorities are found in nine states in central-western India: Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Most of the rest are in the north east of the country.



Women selling clothes in Soweto on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Photographer: Barbara Cheney

suffer from the carving up of the continent by colonial powers in 1884 with scant regard for existing social, political, ethnic and linguistic contours. As a result, the political geography of the region, which has more countries than any other region of the world, has long been characterised by regional and civil armed conflicts. Added to these deep historic divisions is a physical environment that is characterised by long distances and low population density.

In countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe, where colonial powers had a strong presence, intersecting inequalities have a strong racial dimension. More pervasive across the sub-continent are social cleavages associated with ethnicity, frequently reinforced by geographical location and distance from main urban centres. Religion itself may not necessarily be a driver of exclusion unless it intersects with ethnic or regional disparities.

**Social exclusion also frequently entails spatial inequalities, consigning culturally devalued and economically impoverished groups to inhabit physically deprived spaces**

In addition, India and Nepal, with predominantly Hindu populations, are characterised by a caste hierarchy that goes back many centuries. Caste is closely intertwined with an occupational hierarchy that assigns menial and ritually polluting occupations to the lowest 'untouchable' castes or *Dalits*. *Dalit* groups comprise 17 per cent of the population in India. They tend to be more geographically dispersed than indigenous groups, but around 80 per cent live in rural areas.<sup>18</sup> Nepal's population is divided between a Hindu majority (58 per cent as of 2001), *Janajatis* (indigenous minorities) (37 per cent), and religious minorities, mainly Muslims (around 4 per cent).<sup>19</sup> Around 12 per cent of the population is made up of *Dalits*.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to more than 2,000 distinct ethnic groups characterised by different language, culture and traditions, and, sometimes, religious beliefs. Ethnic groups in Africa vary in size from millions of people to a few hundred thousand, and are often associated with a specific territory. Much of the region continues to

**Box 2.1 Intersecting inequalities and the persistence of social exclusion**

Social exclusion is the product of intersecting inequalities:

- The cultural devaluation of certain groups, deeming them inferior to others in ways which undermine their sense of self-worth and agency
- Their disadvantaged position in the distribution of valued resources, services and opportunities within their society
- Their location in places where their efforts yield poorer returns
- The denial of voice and influence in the decisions that affect their lives and their communities
- The mutual interaction between these inequalities, which leads to their persistence over time.



# 3 Intersecting inequalities and the MDGs: the regional picture

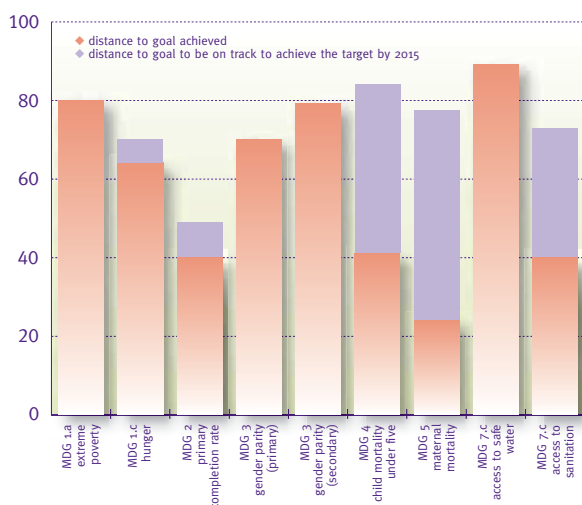
A global overview of progress on the MDGs shows that the world is closer to meeting some goals and targets than others (see Figure 3.1). It is on track in relation to extreme poverty, gender parity in primary and secondary education, enrolment and access to safe drinking water. But there is still some way to go to achieve goals and targets relating to universal primary education completion rates, access to sanitation, and the proportion of people living in hunger. It is most seriously off track for meeting the objectives relating to under-five child mortality and maternal mortality.<sup>20</sup> The MDGs discussed in this report thus include one on which there has been considerable progress (MDG 1: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger), one where there is some way to go (MDG 2: achieving universal primary education) and two that remain a major challenge (MDG 4: reducing child mortality, and MDG 5: improving maternal health).

The global picture is useful in drawing attention to some of the more intractable dimensions of poverty facing the world community. A more disaggregated picture is necessary to establish how different countries, and socially excluded groups within them, are faring. As we have noted, measuring ‘average’ progress at the national level tends to conceal major inequalities at the sub-national level.

It is also important to note that even though countries may be off track in terms of progress relative to global MDG targets, they have nonetheless made considerable progress in absolute terms, measured as overall progress. This is particularly the case for sub-Saharan Africa, where a recurring theme in policy discussions is that it will be ‘off target’ for every one of the MDGs by 2015.<sup>21</sup> Comparing overall absolute progress on the MDG goals with relative progress in relation to MDG targets puts this ‘Afro-pessimism’ in perspective.<sup>22</sup> It reveals that:

- 11 African countries featured among the 20 top countries in terms of absolute overall progress on the MDGs but only 3 countries featured in terms of relative progress
- 6 Asian countries featured among the 20 top performers in terms of absolute progress and 4 featured in terms of relative progress
- 3 Latin American countries featured among the top 20 performers in terms of absolute progress and 9 featured in terms of relative progress.

**Figure 3.1 Global progress on achieving the MDGs**



Source World Bank (2010) *Global Monitoring Report: The MDGs After the Crisis*

**Table 3.1 Absolute and relative overall progress on the MDGs: top 20 achievers**

Top 20 Absolute progress	Top 20 Progress relative to MDG targets
Benin	Ecuador
Mali	China
Ethiopia	Thailand
Gambia	Brazil
Malawi	Egypt
Vietnam	Vietnam
Uganda	Honduras
Nepal	Belize
India	Nicaragua
Cambodia	Armenia
Bangladesh	Kazakhstan
Honduras	Sri Lanka
Mauritania	Cuba
Ghana	Mexico
China	El Salvador
Burkina Faso	Benin
Rwanda	Chile
Nicaragua	Malawi
Guatemala	Gambia
Togo	Guatemala

Source ODI (2010)<sup>22</sup>

### 3.1 Progress on the MDGs in Latin America

Latin America, as a region, falls into the middle-income category. Historically, it has been one of the most unequal regions in the world, with the poorest income quintile earning around 3 per cent of the total regional income.<sup>23</sup> But progress is evident. Poverty declined from around 44 per cent in 2002 to 33 per cent in 2008, while extreme poverty declined from 19 to 13 per cent.<sup>24</sup> Most countries in the region are on track to meet the goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015, but a few of the least developed countries lag behind: Bolivia, Haiti, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay.

There are grounds for cautious optimism with regard to equity of progress on the MDGs, as there is evidence of a marked decline in income inequality between 2000 and 2007 in 12 out of 17 countries for which data are available.<sup>25</sup> These include many of the countries with a high percentage of socially excluded groups, such as Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia and Mexico.

### 3.2 Social exclusion and the MDGs in Latin America

Historically, Latin America has been one of the most unequal regions of the world... but there are grounds for cautious optimism with regard to equity of progress on the MDGs.

‘The concepts of social exclusion and inclusion emphasize how the benefits of development, social interaction networks, and political participation are distributed inequitably... Social exclusion manifests itself in Latin America most clearly in persistent unequal income distribution, which gives rise to poverty that is worse than the region’s level of development would suggest.’<sup>26</sup>

Latin America is one of the few developing regions that has systematically collected and synthesised data disaggregated by ethnicity in relation to the MDGs. These allow some degree of comparison across the region, from which some general patterns can be discerned:

- **While moderate and extreme poverty have decreased, extreme poverty remains higher among indigenous people and Afro-descendants than among the white population in many countries** (see Table 3.3 on page 18 and Figure 3.4 on page 19).
- **Ethnic identity remains associated with inequalities in enrolment rates at all levels of education, although there is some narrowing of ethnic disparities in many countries for primary education** (see Table 3.4 on page 19). The

### Box 3.1 Institutional coverage of deliveries in Bolivia

In Bolivia, estimated to have one of the highest maternal mortality ratios in Latin America, a high proportion of deliveries do not take place within institutions. Table 3.2 shows that less than half of deliveries happen in healthcare facilities in 52.5 per cent of municipalities classified as ‘majority indigenous’.

**Table 3.2 Institutional coverage in municipalities where indigenous people are a majority, minority or moderate proportion of the population, Bolivia, 2006**

Percentage of deliveries that occurred in a health facility	Minority indigenous (under 33%)		Moderately indigenous (33–66%)		Majority indigenous (over 66%)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
<50%	22	44.9	14	26.4	116	52.5
≥50% <70%	11	22.4	19	35.8	58	26.2
>70%	16	32.7	20	37.7	47	21.3

Source Adapted from UDAPE/CIMDM (2006) *Progreso de los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio, Cuarto Informe asociados al Desarrollo humano, La Paz, Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD)*

broad-based expansion of basic education is one of the key factors behind the decline in income inequality in the region.<sup>27</sup> In some countries, though, group-based inequalities remain high (between indigenous and non-indigenous groups in Bolivia, for example, see Table 3.5 on page 19).

- **Children from indigenous groups are more likely to die than those from non-indigenous groups** (see Figure 3.2 on page 18). According to the most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru and Brazil, children of indigenous origin were also between 1.6 and 2.5 times more likely to be undernourished than children of non-indigenous origin.
- **Gender and ethnic inequalities intersect with economic status to keep indigenous women from low-income households at the bottom of the hierarchy in education (see Figure 3.3 on page 18) and health.** Maternal mortality is generally much higher among indigenous communities, particularly those in remote areas, where it can be two or three times the national average. For instance, in Ecuador in 2003, the national maternal mortality rate was 74.3 per 100,000 live births, whereas it was 250 per 100,000 among remote indigenous communities.<sup>28</sup>

● **Spatial inequalities intersect with ethnicity.** Table 3.6 (page 19) demonstrates the intersection between spatial inequality, ethnicity and education in Mexico. The poorest southern states (for example, Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero), home to around 75 per cent of the country's indigenous peoples, report far lower levels of education. These states also reported maternal mortality ratios that were higher than the

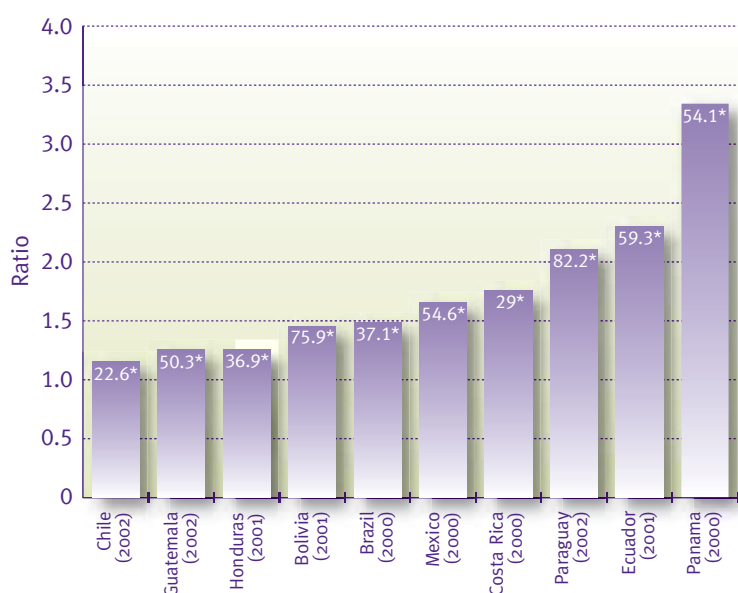
national average.<sup>29</sup> In Guerrero, for example, the rate was 128.2 deaths per 100,000 live births – nearly five times the rate in the more developed northern state of Nuevo León (26.9 per 100,000).<sup>30</sup> There has, however, been an overall decline in maternal mortality rates which these states, with the exception of Guerrero, participated in, which is discussed further below.

**Table 3.3 Poverty incidence (MDG 1) by household *per capita* income in selected Latin American countries**

Country	Year	1 USD per day			Official extreme poverty line		
		White	Non-white	Total	White	Non-white	Total
Bolivia	1997	14.8	45.3	28.7	27.8	57.5	41.3
	2002	16.6	37.1	27.7	25.5	45.8	36.6
Brazil	1995	4.7	12.7	8.3	17.7	40.9	28.2
	2002	5.1	10.6	7.6	17.7	38.0	27.0
Chile	2000	3.4	9.4	3.5	4.5	3.1	4.5
Colombia	1999	15.2	24.1	16.2	20.5	31.0	21.7
Ecuador	1998	29.0	61.0	30.3	16.0	38.9	16.9
Guatemala	2002	11.4	31.5	20.0	14.3	39.1	24.9
Mexico	1992	10.7	53.3	12.8	No figures available		
	2002	12.3	40.9	13.9	14.5	47.9	16.4
Nicaragua	1998	24.5	46.0	24.9	17.0	37.7	17.5
	2001	15.0	35.0	15.8	14.5	33.9	15.2
Panama	2002	9.3	54.7	12.4	19.2	74.4	23.0
Paraguay	1995	2.7	24.3	11.8	4.8	24.5	13.1
	2001	2.2	17.3	9.9	5.0	24.9	15.2
Peru	2001	14.6	26.9	19.5	18.7	33.5	24.6

Source Busso *et al.* (2005)<sup>14</sup>

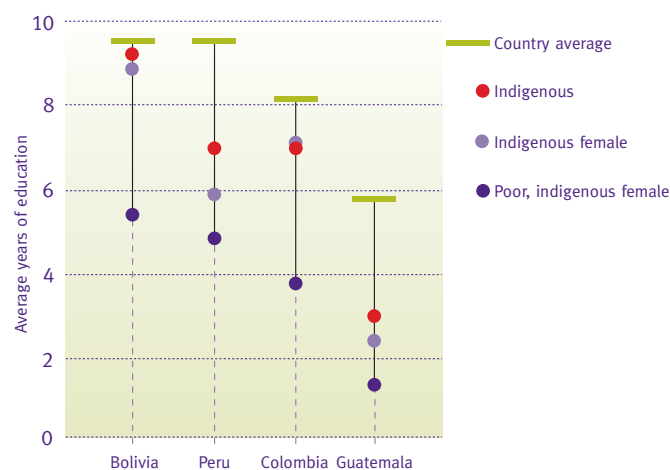
**Figure 3.2 Ratio of indigenous to non-indigenous infant mortality rate, 2000–02, selected Latin American countries**



\*Indigenous infant mortality rate

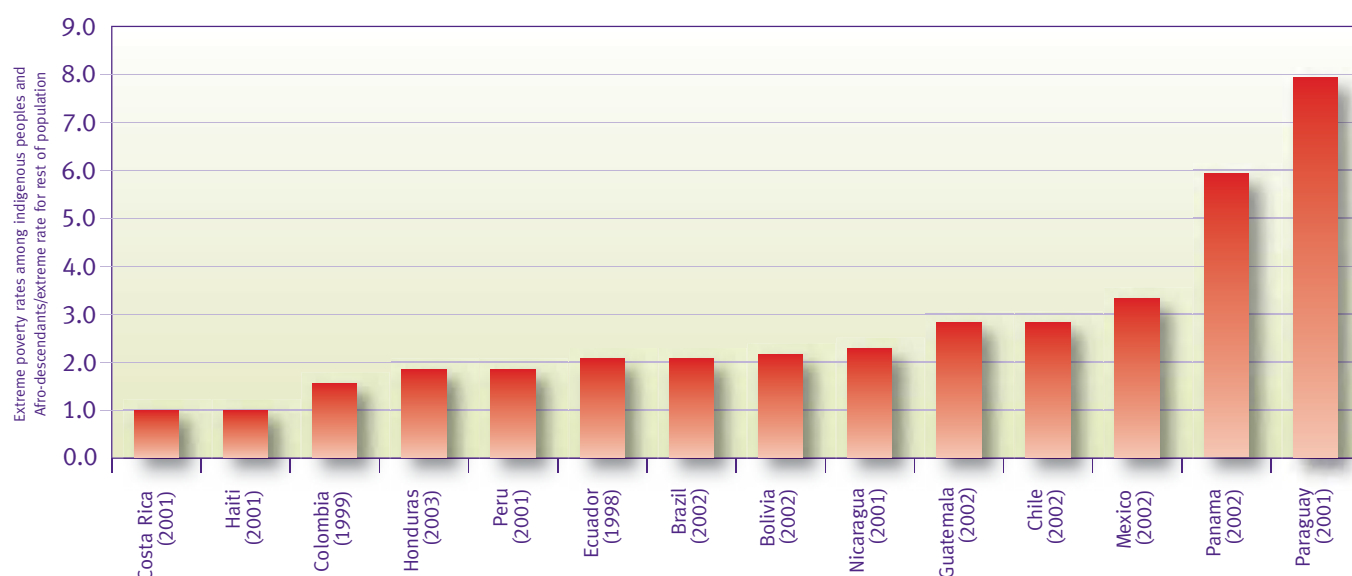
Source Del Popolo, F. and Oyarce, A. (2005) 'América Latina, Población Indígena: Perfil Sociodemográfico en el Marco de la Conferencia Internacional sobre la Población y el Desarrollo y de las Metas del Milenio', *Notas de Población no. 79*, Santiago de Chile: CELADE

**Figure 3.3 Average number of years of education for indigenous people aged 17–22, selected countries**



Source UNESCO (2010)<sup>107</sup>

**Figure 3.4 Latin America (14 countries): extreme poverty rates among indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, as a multiple of the rate for the rest of the population (dollar-a-day line)**



Source Machinea J.L.; Bárcena, A. and León, A. (2005) *The Millennium Development Goals: A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective*, Santiago, Chile: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe

**Historically, Latin America has been one of the most unequal regions of the world**

**Table 3.5 Comparing years in education of indigenous and non-indigenous groups in Bolivia**

Average years of education (population 15+)	2000	2007 (provisional)
National	7.7	8.7
Indigenous	6.0	7.2
Non-indigenous	9.7	10.5

Source Data from Unidad de Análisis de Políticas Sociales y Económicas (UDAPE) [www.udape.gov.bo/](http://www.udape.gov.bo/), accessed 30 June 2010

**Table 3.4 Primary school enrolment rates in selected Latin American countries**

Country	Year	White	Non-white	Total
Bolivia	1997	0.95	0.90	0.93
	2002	0.95	0.93	0.94
Brazil	1995	0.93	0.87	0.90
	2002	0.97	0.95	0.96
Chile	2000	0.99	0.98	0.99
Colombia	1999	0.90	0.89	0.90
Ecuador	1998	0.92	0.87	0.92
Guatemala	2002	0.88	0.77	0.83
Mexico	1992	0.94	0.81	0.93
	2002	0.97	0.98	0.97
Nicaragua	1998	0.84	0.82	0.84
	2001	0.89	0.81	0.89
Panama	2002	0.98	0.85	0.96
Paraguay	1995	0.92	0.86	0.89
	2001	0.95	0.91	0.93
Peru	2001	0.96	0.97	0.97

Source Busso *et al.* (2005)<sup>14</sup>

**Table 3.6 Education indicators by region, Mexico, 2005**

	Fewer than 4 years of education (%)
National average	11
Disadvantaged southern states	
Chiapas	26
Guerrero	19
Michoacán	14
Oaxaca	16
Veracruz	20
Selected northern and central states	
Baja California	6
Distrito Federal	3
Mexico	6

Data for population aged 17–22.  
Source UNESCO (2010)<sup>107</sup>

### Box 3.2 Distribution of income and extreme poverty in Brazil

Brazil experienced a steep decline in the level of extreme poverty among Afro-descendants between 1993 and 2005. But Afro-descendants still comprise 74 per cent of households in the bottom income decile (while white people comprise just 27 per cent), and only 12 per cent of the top decile (white people comprise 88 per cent). The intersection of ethnic and spatial inequalities is very marked in Brazil: eight of the ten poorest states are in the north east, which has the highest concentrations of Afro-descendants, while three of the four states in the south east are among the five richest in the country. In addition, the intersection of ethnicity, gender and class inequalities means that white men generally earn the highest wages for any given level of education, while black women earn the least (see Figure 4.3 on page 32). Race, gender and location were among the key predictors of poverty in 1981, and remained so in 2001.

**Table 3.7 Brazil: percentage of the population living below the extreme poverty line by race**

	1993	2005
Afro-descendants	15	6
Whites	4.9	2.5

**Table 3.8 Brazil: distribution of the poorest 10% and the richest 1% by race (2005)**

	Poorest 10%	Richest 1%
Whites	26.5	88.4
Afro-descendants	73.5	11.6

Source Adapted from IPEA (2007) *Millennium Development Goals: National Monitoring Report/Coordination*, Institute for Applied Economic Research and the Secretariat for Strategic Planning and Investment

Mexico City: Alfredo (26) sells candy at a busy intersection to support his family. He has four children and lives in Mansion Mazahua, a crumbling colonial building which is home to 42 families of Mazahua Indians. Forced to migrate to the city in search of a livelihood, they live in cramped conditions in the earthquake-damaged building. Photographer: Aubrey Wade/Panos Pictures



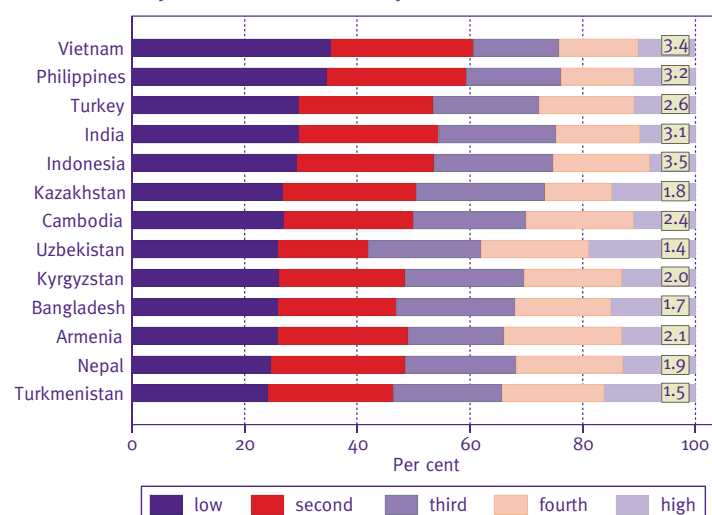
### 3.3 Progress on the MDGs in Asia

*The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010* suggests that the Asia-Pacific region as a whole is on track to achieve the target on extreme poverty, despite the setbacks resulting from the global economic crisis. This is primarily due to the extraordinary performance of China. Many countries in the region have achieved major reductions in income poverty at the aggregate level as a result of strong economic growth, but some have seen a significant increase in income disparities. The poorest 20 per cent of the region's population have seen their share of the national income drop steeply. Between 1990 and 2004, it fell from 7.2 per cent to 6.7 per cent in South Asia, and from 7.1 to 4.5 per cent in East Asia. Out of 20 countries, 14 saw their Gini index, which measures how unequal a country is, rise, while only 6 saw it fall.

Growing inequalities within the region have focused attention on the need for inclusive growth. The 2007 UN ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) report on the MDGs attempts to examine progress 'beyond national averages'.<sup>31</sup> Figure 3.5 illustrates the implications of rising income inequality for child mortality. It shows the ratio of under-five mortality rates between the poorest and richest quintiles in selected countries. In all the countries included, the poorest 20 per cent of the population account for more, sometimes considerably more, than 20 per cent of child mortality.

However, the ESCAP report only concerns income, gender and rural–urban inequalities, testifying to the dearth of available data that are disaggregated by ethnicity.

**Figure 3.5 Under-five mortality rate by wealth quintile and the ratio of poorest to richest quintile**



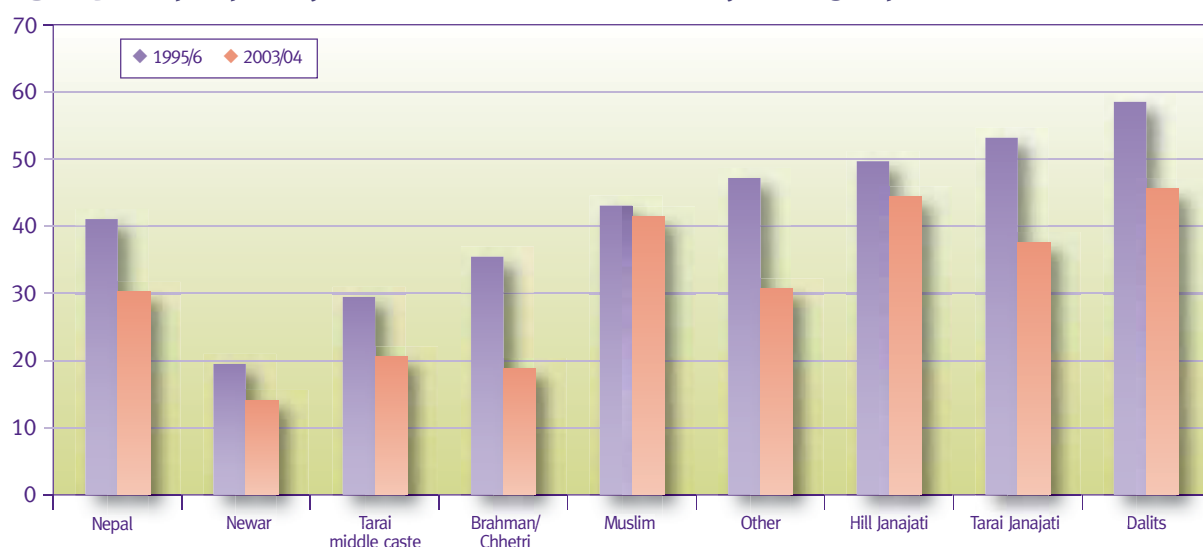
Source ESCAP/ADB/UNDP (2007)<sup>31</sup>

**Table 3.9 Comparison of child malnutrition: eastern and western China (%)**

Year		Eastern provinces	Western provinces
1992	Underweight	15.1	21.4
	Stunting	33.6	42.7
1998	Underweight	8.3	18.3
	Stunting	16.9	29.4
2000	Underweight	9.1	19.9
	Stunting	14.2	27.6
2005	Underweight	5.8	12.5
	Stunting	10.7	16.3

Source Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and United Nations System in China (2008) *China's Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals: 2008 Report*

**Figure 3.6 Nepal: poverty Head Count Rate (HCR) trends by social groups**



Source Constructed using 2005 data from Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics, cited in the *Nepal Human Development Report* (2009)

### Box 3.3 Poverty and social inequality in India

India is one of the many countries in the region that has experienced economic growth accompanied by poverty reduction, but enduring and sometimes rising inequality. As Table 3.10 shows, poverty has been falling between 1993 and 2004 for all social groups, but has been systematically higher among *Dalit* (scheduled caste, or SC) and *Adivasi* (scheduled tribe, or ST) groups, and, to a lesser extent, the Muslim minority. The geographical concentration of *Adivasis* in certain states of India, such as Bihar and Orissa, means that incidence of poverty in these states is much higher than the national level. Caste, ethnicity and geographical inequalities reinforce one another and create pockets of extreme poverty impacting certain groups: for example scheduled castes and tribes living in Orissa have a poverty incidence of 74 compared to 'other Hindus' (non-SC or ST) living in Assam state with a poverty incidence of only 5.

Table 3.10 Poverty incidence for different social groups, selected states in India

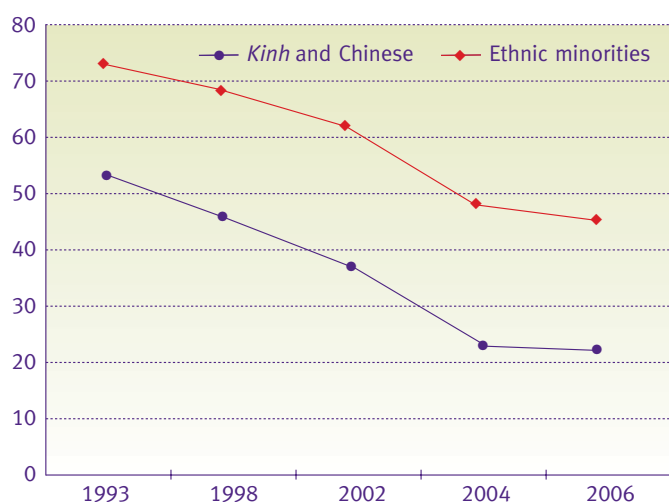
States Urban	Total		All Hindus		Hindus SCs/STs		Other Hindus		Muslims		All others	
	2004–	1993–4	2004–	1993–4	2004–	1993–4	2004–	1993–4	2004–	1993–4	2004–	1993–4
	05	05	05	05	05	05	05	05	05	05	05	05
All India	29	33	27	31	46	51	22	26	44	47	16	23
Bihar	42	34	38	31	70	52	33	26	57	46	4	29
Assam	7	8	5	6	7	14	5	5	13	22	4	0
Andhra Pradesh	34	38	32	37	48	47	27	35	49	49	22	26
Gujarat	18	28	16	25	21	42	15	22	34	47	2	23
Rajasthan	27	31	26	28	48	47	18	23	39	56	7	14
Tamil Nadu	28	40	29	40	50	57	25	36	24	46	21	34
Orissa	50	41	49	40	74	57	42	35	51	68	51	24

Source Government of India (2006) *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community in India*, Sachar Committee Report, [http://zakatindia.org/Files/Sachar%20Report%20\(Full\).pdf](http://zakatindia.org/Files/Sachar%20Report%20(Full).pdf), accessed 15 August 2010

*Dalit* boys work feeding granite blocks into stone-crushing machines by a quarry. Photographer: Mark Henley/Panos Pictures



**Figure 3.7 Percentage of adult population who have not completed any education, Vietnam**



Although educational outcomes are improving for all groups in Vietnam, the gap between the *Kinh* and Chinese majority and ethnic minorities persist.

Source *Vietnam Development Report 2008: Social Protection*, Joint Donor Report to the Vietnam Consultative Group Meeting Hanoi, 6–7 December, 2007

### 3.4 Social exclusion and the MDGs in Asia

‘Developing Asia is now embracing inclusive growth as a key development goal because of rapidly rising income and non-income inequalities, leading to increasing concerns that the benefits of Asia’s spectacular GDP growth are not being equitably shared, which could derail the growth process itself...

Inclusive growth is growth with equal opportunity that emphasizes both the creation of and equal access to opportunities for all... the latter [inequalities due to differences in individual circumstances] is often reflective of social exclusion associated with market, institutional, and policy failures.<sup>232</sup>

There are no systematic data on identity and group-based inequalities that span the whole of the South and Southeast Asia region. We can therefore only elicit trends and patterns from the country-level data available. It must be emphasised that Asian countries have very diverse and sometimes contrasting experiences. However, there are some general observations worth noting:

- **Caste, ethnic and religious inequalities are evident in education and health outcomes.** In India, *Dalits* (scheduled castes, SC) and *Adivasis* (scheduled tribes, ST) have lower education levels. In Nepal, despite improvements in overall literacy rates from 23 per cent in 1981 to 54 per cent in 2001, 52 per cent of Hill *Dalits*, 47 per cent of Tarai *Dalits*, 48 per cent of Muslims and

### Box 3.4 Child health inequalities in India and Nepal

In India, there have been reductions in under-five mortality across all social groups (Table 3.11). But scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and ‘other backward castes’ (OBC) continue to suffer much higher than average rates of under-five mortality. The gap between rates of mortality among scheduled tribes and ‘others’ increased between 1992 and 2006.

Nepal’s steady progress in reducing under-five mortality has been accompanied by widening inequalities: the ratio of under-five mortality rates between the poorest and richest quintiles rose from 2.8 in 1997 to 3.4 in 2002. Only 23 per cent of children from the majority *Kinh/Chinese* community were underweight (‘wasted’) compared with 34 per cent of children from ethnic minorities in the northern mountains, and 45 per cent in the central highlands and coastal areas.

Table 3.12 shows that the *Newars* (an indigenous caste group) had the lowest rates of child mortality, followed by the *Brahman/Chhetri* castes. *Dalit* and *Janajati* groups reported the highest rates of child mortality.

**Table 3.11 India: under-five mortality rate for different social groups, 1992/93 to 2005/06**

	Under-five mortality				Total
	SC	ST	OBC	Others	
1992/3	149.1	135.2	NA	111.5	109.3
1998/9	119.3	126.6	103.1	82.6	94.9
2005/06	88.1	95.7	72.8	59.2	74.3

Source National Family Health Survey, 1, 2 and 3, India

**Table 3.12 Nepal: early childhood mortality rates, 2006**

Caste/ethnicity and regional identity	Infant mortality	Under-five mortality
<i>Brahman/Chhetri</i>	59	76
Tarai/Madhese other castes	64	86
<i>Dalit</i>	68	90
Newar	36	43
<i>Janajati</i>	59	80
Muslim	68	
All hill/mountain groups	58	77
All Tarai/Madhese groups	65	84
All Nepal	55	68

Source Bennett, L.; Dahal D. and Govindasamy, P. (2008) *Caste, Ethnic and Regional Identity in Nepal: Further Analysis of the 2006 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey*, Calverton, Maryland, USA: Macro International Inc.



### Box 3.5 Intersecting ethnic and spatial inequalities in Vietnam and China

There is a marked spatial dimension to ethnic disparities in Vietnam. Ethnic minorities have to travel further to get to a school or marketplace, are further away from all-weather roads and are less likely to have access to improved water and sanitation facilities. This partly explains why educational attainments and health indicators remain lower among ethnic minority groups, although they have been improving. Ethnic disadvantage varies according to location; ethnic minorities living in the lowlands have seen rapid poverty reduction, while those in the northern mountains, the central highlands and the south and north central coasts remain in extreme poverty.

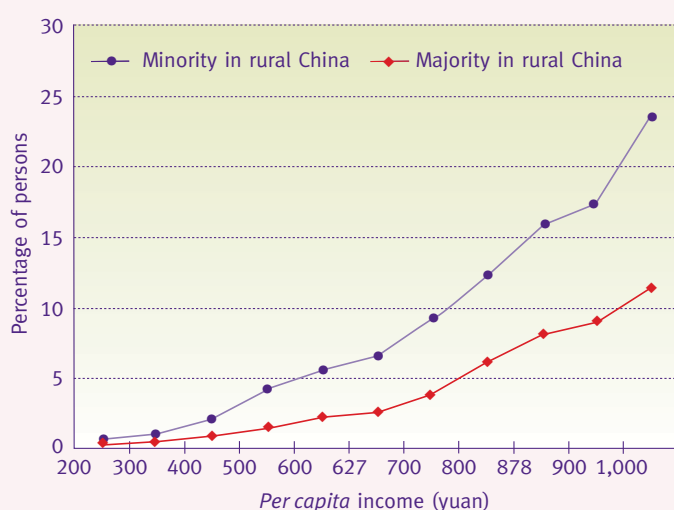
In China, ethnic minorities, who are largely concentrated in the western region, remain at a clear disadvantage; they comprise 8.4 per cent of the population, but accounted for 46 per cent of people living in extreme poverty in 2003. It is likely that the association between ethnicity and location is driving ethnic differentials in income. Figure 3.9 shows that within the western region, there are no significant differences in poverty rates of ethnic minority and majority groups. This is in contrast to the aggregated poverty distributions shown in Figure 3.8. Regression results confirm that differences in location, size of household, the head of household's age and education, and party membership explained much of the ethnic differences in poverty.

**Table 3.13 Access to public services among different groups in Vietnam**

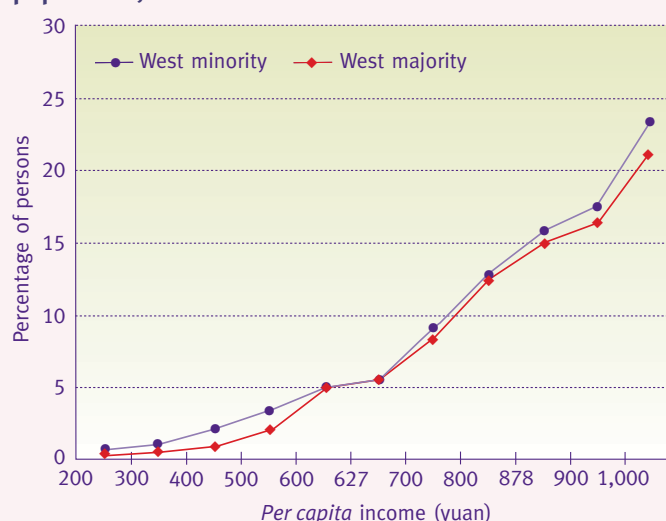
	Travel time to lower-secondary school (minutes)	Travel time to market (minutes)	Within 2 km of an all-weather road (% of population)	Access to improved water sources (% of population)	Access to improved sanitation (% of population)
<b>2006</b>					
<i>Kinh</i> and Chinese	12	9	91	87	43
Ethnic minorities	25	32	80	55	7
Vietnam	15	13	90	82	38

Source *Vietnam Development Report 2008: Social Protection*, Joint Donor Report to the Vietnam Consultative Group Meeting Hanoi, 6–7 December, 2007

**Figure 3.8 Rural China: distribution of poverty among ethnic minorities and the majority population, 2002**



**Figure 3.9 Western region of rural China: distribution of poverty among ethnic minorities and the majority population, 2002**



Source Gustafsson, B. and Sai, D. (2009) 'Temporary and Persistent Poverty among Ethnic Minorities and the Majority in Rural China', *Review of Income and Wealth*, Series 55, Special Issue 1: 588–606

30 per cent of Hill *Janajatis* had never been to school, compared with just 12 per cent of the upper castes.<sup>33</sup> Similar patterns can be seen in child mortality rates (see Box 3.4 on page 23).

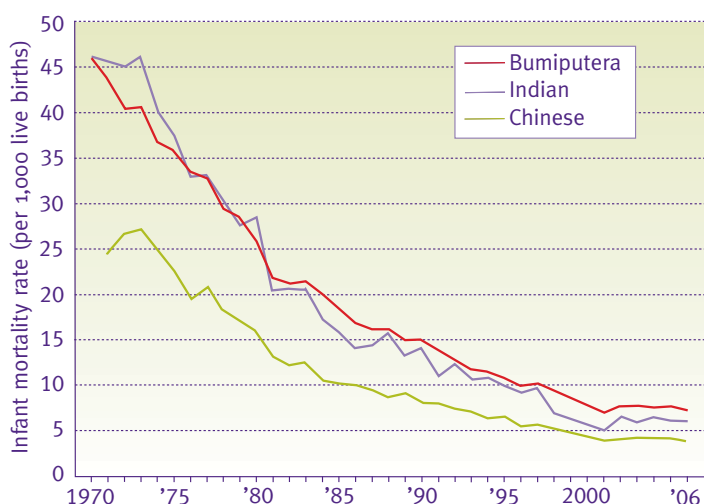
- **Rapid economic growth and declining poverty levels in the region have not reduced inequalities. In some countries, inequalities between social groups have increased.** This is often because the pace of poverty reduction has been slowest among socially excluded groups. In India, poverty remains higher among *Dalit* and *Adivasi* groups despite overall poverty decline (see Box 3.3 on page 22). Nepal has seen a steep increase in inequality over the past decade. The overall decline in poverty between 1995 and 2003 varied from 46 per cent for the upper caste *Brahman/Chhetri* groups, to 10 per cent for *Janajatis* living in the hills and 6 per cent for Muslims (see Figure 3.6 on page 21). In Vietnam, poverty among ethnic minorities has declined at an average rate of 2.6 per cent a year over the last decade compared with 3.4 for the majority *Kinh/Chinese* community. In China, one in three people lived in poverty in 1990, but with rapid rates of growth, this has declined to less than one in ten.<sup>34</sup> However, this has been accompanied by growing income inequalities, reflected in a rise in its Gini index from 35.5 in 1993 to 41.5 in 2005.<sup>35</sup>

- **Geographical location reinforces ethnic inequalities.** Available data suggest that the location of certain social groups is central to their failure to benefit from economic growth and development (see Box 3.5 on Vietnam and China). China has managed to substantially reduce its maternal mortality ratio between 1996 and 2005, from 64 per 100,000 live births to 48,<sup>36</sup> but it remains much higher in the poorer, rural western provinces. And within the western region, 87 per cent of maternal deaths were among ethnic minority groups;<sup>37</sup> this may partly be explained by the fact that women in these groups have less access to health services. Rates of decline in child malnutrition between 1992 and 2005 have also been much slower in China's western provinces, with large disparities remaining (see Table 3.9 on page 21).

### Focus on Malaysia

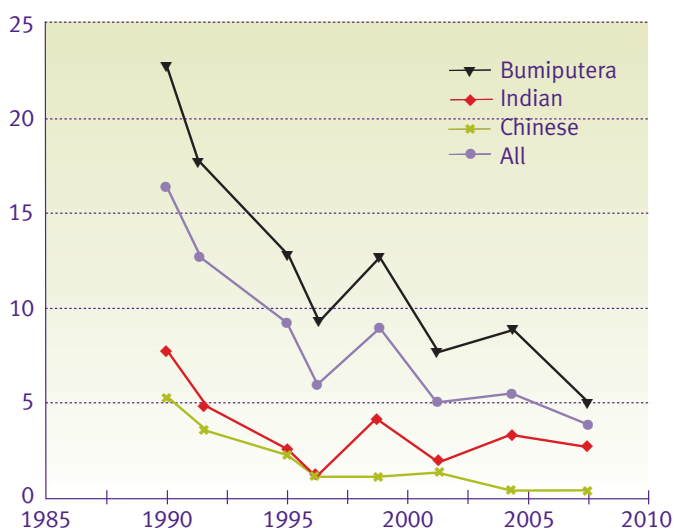
Malaysia's experience stands in contrast to the trend of growing inequality across the Asia region, as it has succeeded in reducing ethnic inequalities. According to national measures, poverty decreased by 78 per cent between 1990 and 2007. According to dollar-a-day estimates, poverty incidence is currently around 2 per cent. Poverty has always been higher among the majority ethnic

**Figure 3.10 Malaysia: infant mortality rate by ethnic group, 1970–2006**



Source <http://chengfansoon.com/> as of 23 May 2010

**Figure 3.11 Malaysia: poverty Head Count Rate (HCR) trends by ethnicity**



Source Malaysia Department of Statistics, [www.statistics.gov.my](http://www.statistics.gov.my)

community, *Bumiputera* ('sons of the soil'), and this is still the case, but it has actually declined more rapidly among this group (see Figure 3.11). As a result, differences in poverty rates between the *Bumiputera*, the ethnic Indian and the ethnic Chinese populations have decreased. There has been a decline in Malaysia's Gini index from 49 in 1984 to 38 in 2004, while the poorest quintile's share of national income increased from 4.5 per cent in 1992 to 6.4 per cent in 2004.

Malaysia has also achieved progress on the other human development indicators.<sup>38</sup> Infant mortality rates declined steadily between 1970 and 2006 for all ethnic groups, and there has been a decline in ethnic differentials (see Figure 3.10). Nevertheless, the *Bumiputera* continue to have higher infant mortality rates.



**Namibia: Ella, a washlady from the minority Herero ethnic group. Photographer: Barbara Cheney**

### **3.5 Progress on the MDGs in sub-Saharan Africa**

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of poverty in the world.<sup>39</sup> It is also, after Latin America, the region with some of the most unequal countries in the world.<sup>40</sup> Regional conflicts, the legacy of structural adjustment and the HIV and AIDS pandemic have left large swathes of the continent poorer than ever, with a population-weighted poverty gap of 42 per cent for SSA as a whole, including South Africa.<sup>41</sup> The proportion of people living in extreme poverty has not declined much from its 1980 level, but this masks protracted deterioration during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, as well as marked improvements since the late 1990s. The proportion of people living in poverty fell by around 7 percentage points between 1996 and 2004.<sup>42</sup>

Regional aggregates, however, disguise significant progress at country level. As noted earlier, some SSA countries are among the best performers in terms of absolute progress on the MDGs. While only one country featured among the top ten performers for progress relative to global MDG targets, six are among the top ten in terms of absolute overall progress, which has translated into real changes in the lives of millions of people.

The region also has the highest levels of child mortality in the world, with rates highest in West

and Central Africa.<sup>43</sup> Across the region, while rates are not declining fast enough to reach the MDG by 2015,<sup>44</sup> the rate of reduction from 2000 to 2010 has improved compared with 1990 to 2000.<sup>45</sup> The region also has the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world, accounting for more than half of all maternal deaths globally. There are not enough data to monitor progress on this indicator.<sup>46</sup>

### **3.6 Social exclusion and the MDGs in sub-Saharan Africa**

‘Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times – times in which the world boasts breathtaking advances in science, technology, industry and wealth accumulation – that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils.’ (Nelson Mandela, ‘Make Poverty History’ speech in Trafalgar Square, London, 2005)

With the notable exception of South Africa, data on the relationship between ethnic identity and poverty in Africa are not consistently available and are rarely up to date. In some countries, region or location is used as a proxy for ethnicity. For this reason, it is important to be cautious when discussing group-based inequalities. However, available data on selected countries suggest the following:

### Box 3.6 The intersection of spatial, ethnic and religious inequalities in Ghana and Nigeria

The importance of indigeneity in the Nigerian Federation, which confers affirmative action in the public sector and citizenship rights, has deterred internal migration to the extent that less than 5 per cent of people from ethnic groups concentrated in the north live in the south. Ethnic and religious divides therefore tend to coincide with and reinforce geographical ones. In Nigeria, the population in the less developed northern regions is predominantly Muslim and from the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. The population in the richer southern regions is largely Christian, Yoruba and Igbo being the main ethnic groups.

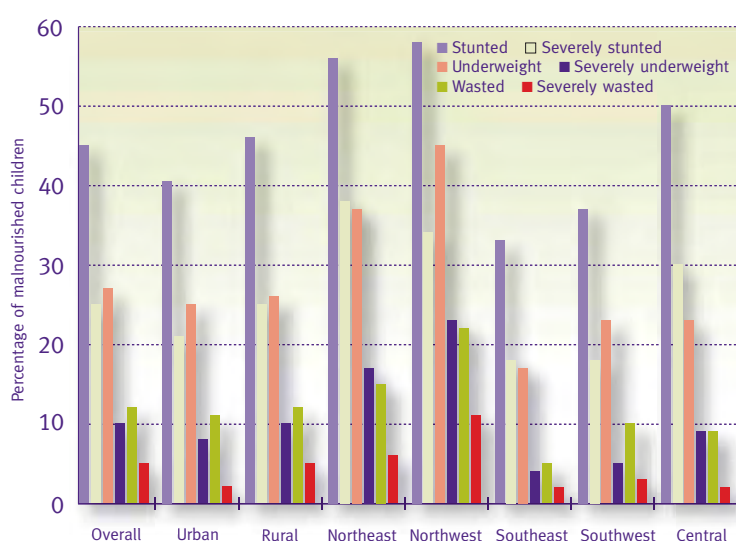
Ghana, unlike Nigeria, has high rates of internal migration, which has resulted in considerable mixing of ethnic groups: 35 per cent of northern ethnic Ghanaians live in the south. As a result, data from 2008 on the distribution of wealth show a marked spatial rather than ethnic pattern to inequality.

Source: Mancini (2009)<sup>49</sup>

- **Ethnicity is linked to poverty, health, and education outcomes.** A study conducted in the 1990s using data for 11 SSA countries confirmed that ethnic inequalities in child mortality persist, and have been increasing (see Box 3.8 on page 29).<sup>47</sup> Other studies have revealed that ethnicity is linked to different health and education outcomes in a number of African contexts. In Kenya, less dominant ethnic groups fall well behind in terms of immunisation levels, and ethnicity dramatically stratifies under-five mortality rates. Among the Mijikenda/Swahili ethnic groups, for example, 27 per cent of births have a skilled attendant present, compared with 71 per cent of Kikuyu.<sup>48</sup> In Nigeria, child mortality rates are lower for the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups. This may be the result of higher educational attainment among Yoruba and Igbo women, but ‘it may also signal privileged access of these powerful groups to healthcare, as well as reflecting different cultural practices and beliefs towards child and maternal health across ethnic groups’.<sup>49</sup>

- **Spatial inequalities between developed and less developed regions within countries are central to and reinforce inequalities between social groups.** Data often focus on regional differences, which in many cases overlap with ethnic and religious identities. In Nigeria, the northern, predominantly Hausa–Fulani states have higher levels of poverty than the southern, predominantly Yoruba and Igbo states (see Table 3.19 on page 29). Child mortality rates are also considerably higher in northern areas

Figure 3.12 Prevalence of child malnutrition by residence, Nigeria



Source Omilola, B. (2010) ‘Patterns and Trends of Child and Maternal Nutrition Inequalities in Nigeria’, *IFPRI Discussion Paper* 00968

Table 3.14 Nigeria: childhood mortality rates by residence

Zone	Child mortality
North Central	62
Northeast	126
Northwest	139
Southeast	64
South South	58
Southwest	32

Estimates are for deaths per 1,000 children age 12–59 months. Source National Population Commission (NPC) [Nigeria] and ICF Macro (2009) *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008*, Abuja, Nigeria: National Population Commission and ICF Macro

Table 3.15 Socioeconomic indicators for selected regions in Ghana (%)

	Incidence of poverty (1999)	Literacy: % literate (1998)	Access to health services (1997)
Greater Accra	5	76	78
Ashanti	28	64	43
Northern	69	13	18
Upper West	84	20	8
Upper East	88	20	20
<b>National</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>37</b>

Source Adapted from Langer *et al.* (2007)<sup>51</sup>

(see Table 3.14)<sup>50</sup> and maternal mortality rates are almost ten times higher in the north than in the south. This largely reflects differential access to healthcare: for example, in the north west, only 25 per cent of pregnant women use

### Box 3.7 Focus on South Africa

South Africa represents an extreme case of intersecting inequalities given its ‘infamous history of high inequality with an overbearing racial stamp’.<sup>58</sup> This, ironically, is why it has the most comprehensive data on intersecting inequalities in the region. The post-apartheid government’s determination to monitor progress in tracking inequalities means that the data are also up to date.

The country is well on track to meet all the MDGs and has already met a number of them.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, deeply entrenched inequalities persist. While poverty has fallen during the post-apartheid period, it remains acute for the African and coloured populations. Income inequalities that were already substantial appear to have increased further, from a ratio of around 66 in 1993 to 70 in 2008.<sup>60</sup> The majority African population was, and has remained, at the bottom of the income hierarchy. In fact, its position has slightly deteriorated: Africans earned 13.0 per cent of white income in 2008, compared with 15.9 per cent in 1995.

The impact of gender and race on poverty is illustrated by data for 1993, 2000 and 2008 (Table 3.16). While for each of these years, the incidence and share of poverty was higher for Africans than the rest of the population, both incidence and share of poverty was consistently higher for African women than men. A similar pattern prevailed in the coloured population, although differentials were less marked.

Equalising educational opportunities has been a major thrust of the post-apartheid government and, by 2006, more than 98 per cent of children were in primary education – an increase of 1 per cent since 2002. However, racial differences persist: for instance, 86 per cent of white 9th graders in 2002 had reached grade 12 by 2005, while only 29 per cent of Africans and 42 per cent of coloureds had done so.<sup>61</sup>

Infant and under-five mortality rates have declined between 1998 and 2003, from 45.4 to 42.6 per 1,000 live births and from 59.4 to 57.6 respectively.<sup>62</sup> But infant mortality risk is four times higher among black African children than white children, even after controlling for demographic factors such as the mother’s age and the timing and number of births.<sup>63</sup> There has also been a decline in maternal mortality rates from 150 to 124 per 100,000 live births between 1998 and 2002, although this is still considered high for a middle-income country like South Africa.<sup>64</sup>

**Table 3.16 South Africa: individual level poverty by race and gender (poverty line R515 per capita per month)**

	Population			Head count			Poverty share		
	1993	2000	2008	1993	2000	2008	1993	2000	2008
African female	0.40	0.41	0.42	0.72	0.66	0.68	0.51	0.50	0.52
African male	0.36	0.38	0.38	0.66	0.61	0.60	0.42	0.43	0.41
Coloured female	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.32	0.32	0.36	0.02	0.03	0.03
Coloured male	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.29	0.30	0.35	0.02	0.02	0.03
Indian/Asian female	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
Indian/Asian male	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.12	0.09	0.19	0.00	0.00	0.00
White female	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.00
White male	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.00

Source Leibbrandt *et al.* (2010)<sup>58</sup>

**Table 3.17 Estimates of annual per capita personal income by race group in 2000**

Year	White	Coloured	Asian	African	Average
<i>Per capita income in constant 2000 Rands:</i>					
1917	13,069	2,875	2,894	1,184	3,946
1936	19,212	3,000	4,443	1,462	5,359
1956	30,494	5,158	6,668	2,627	8,541
1975	49,877	9,688	12,687	4,289	12,696
1995	48,387	9,668	23,424	6,525	12,572
2000	56,179	12,911	23,025	8,926	16,220
2008	75,297	16,567	51,457	9,790	17,475

Source Leibbrandt *et al.* (2010)<sup>58</sup>

**Table 3.18 Relative per capita personal incomes by race group (% of white level)**

Year	White	Coloured	Asian	African	Average
<i>Relative per capita personal incomes (% of white level):</i>					
1917	100	22.0	22.1	9.1	30.2
1936	100	15.6	23.1	7.6	27.9
1956	100	16.9	21.9	8.6	28.0
1975	100	19.4	25.4	8.6	25.5
1995	100	20.0	48.4	13.5	26.0
2000	100	23.0	41.0	15.9	28.9
2008	100	22.0	60.0	13.0	23.2

Source Leibbrandt *et al.* (2010)<sup>58</sup>

### Box 3.8 Ethnic inequalities in child mortality in Africa

A World Health Organization (WHO) study using survey data from 11 countries in Africa (Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia) revealed that ethnic inequality in child mortality spread in sub-Saharan Africa through the 1980s and 90s. Children of Ashanti women in Ghana were at that time about 20 per cent less likely to die than other Ghanaian children. In Niger, where child mortality levels are among the highest in the world, the mortality rate around 1990 for under-fives was 242 deaths per 1,000 in Djerma, compared to 353 per 1,000 elsewhere. A range of other socioeconomic inequalities between ethnic groups were also identified. In most countries there are large disparities in schooling between ethnic groups. In Ghana and Uganda, 84 per cent of Ashanti and 95 per cent of Baganda women

received some education, compared with 60 per cent of all others. Location of residence and differential use of child health services appeared to be linked to child mortality inequalities; particularly striking is the highly disparate uptake of immunisation services between ethnic groups. This suggests that, along with policies to reduce economic disparities among ethnic groups, 'child survival efforts in African countries should pay special attention to disadvantaged ethnic groups and the locations in which they are concentrated'.<sup>56</sup> We lack data to see whether the efforts of the past ten years have reduced these inequalities; however, the study's conclusion is echoed in a recent *WHO Bulletin*, which pointed out that, in many cases, 'ethnic, educational and regional variations were more pronounced than the disparities by wealth level'.<sup>57</sup>

Source: Brockerhoff and Hewett (2000)<sup>47</sup>

Table 3.19 Nigeria: states with the highest and lowest shares of poverty, 2006

10 states with highest incidence of poverty			10 states with lowest incidence of poverty		
State	Geographical location	%	State	Geographical location	%
Jigawa	North	95.0	Bayelsa	South	20.0
Kebbi	Northwest	89.7	Anambra	South	20.1
Kogi	Central	88.6	Abia	South	22.3
Bauchi	North	86.3	Oyo	Southwest	24.1
Kwara	West	85.2	Imo	South	27.4
Yobe	Northeast	83.3	Rivers	South	29.1
Zamfara	Northwest	80.9	Enugu	South	31.1
Gombe	Northeast	77.0	Ogun	Southwest	31.7
Sokoto	Northwest	76.8	Osun	Southwest	32.4
Adamawa	East	71.1	Edo	South	33.1

Source Adapted from Langer *et al.* (2007)<sup>51</sup>

clinics, compared with 85 per cent in the south east.<sup>51</sup> The interaction between ethnicity, gender and location means that Hausa females from poor rural households have the lowest levels of education. In Ghana, the north has also fared worse than the south historically. Table 3.15 (on page 27) shows that in 1999 in the Upper East region, the poverty rate was around three times higher than in the Ashanti region, some 17 times higher than in Greater Accra, and more than twice the national average. Literacy, primary school enrolment and access to electricity and health services were also very low in the northern regions. In Kenya, the North Eastern regions, home to the Somali and Swahili (largely pastoralist) groups, have much higher unemployment than other provinces. And while almost every child in Central province attends primary school, only one in three does in the North Eastern province.<sup>52</sup> Literacy rates in Ethiopia also vary enormously by region; in rural areas, the

highest self-reported literacy rate is observed in Tigray (36 per cent) compared with just 8 per cent in the Somali region.<sup>53</sup>

- **Inter-ethnic and regional conflicts can be fuelled by and exacerbate socioeconomic inequalities.** When inequalities in wealth, access to services or political power coincide with group differences, ethnicity may become an axis around which disadvantaged groups mobilise, sometimes violently.<sup>54</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire, ongoing civil war, which is partly fuelled by the cultural and political marginalisation of mainly Muslim northerners, has led to a sharp decrease in economic growth and increase in poverty levels. The north–south divide is likely to be increasing – particularly as state education and health services are no longer supplied in the rebel controlled north.<sup>55</sup> The issue of exclusion and conflict is discussed further in Section 4.5.

# 4 The intersecting dynamics of inequality: why social exclusion persists

The preceding discussion makes two general points about the relationship between progress on the MDGs and social justice. First, the intersecting and mutually reinforcing inequalities that lead to social exclusion are deeply entrenched in the historical structures and everyday practices of societies. This makes them remarkably resistant to change. Second, despite this apparent intransigence, these inequalities are not, in fact, immutable. Change is evident in every region, though more rapidly in some

contexts than others, and more rapidly in relation to some MDGs than others. This should guard against any pessimism about future progress.

## 4.1 The cultural dynamics of exclusion

*Processes of cultural devaluation are key mechanisms through which social exclusion is perpetuated over time.* The effects of exclusion can work in silent and invisible ways that can nevertheless have a profound impact on those who are excluded. Or they may work in ways that are visible and noisy, with negative spillover effects within the larger society.

Cultural devaluation is sometimes embedded in law (see Box 4.1 on Nepal). However, while legal protections are important to tackle social exclusion, they are not sufficient. The Indian Constitution (1949), for example, acknowledges the need to counter the historical disadvantage experienced by *Dalit* and *Adivasi* groups. Nevertheless, the everyday practice of discrimination continues to undermine the self-worth and agency of excluded groups.

In Nepal, a recent attempt to measure the extent of empowerment and inclusion by social group, using a variety of indicators, found that the upper castes scored twice as high as *Dalits* with regard to knowledge about rights and procedures, confidence in accessing services, exercising rights, social networks and local political influence. While 90 per cent of the upper caste groups had never faced any restrictions or intimidation (the 10 per cent exceptions were women), 100 per cent of *Dalit* respondents had experienced some degree of restriction on entering certain public spaces, and 20 per cent reported high levels of harassment, intimidation and restriction. In addition, women from the upper castes scored higher than women from *Dalit* and *Janajati* groups. Not surprisingly, upper castes scored significantly higher (46) on a composite index made up of these indicators, with *Janajati* groups scoring 36, and *Dalits* 25. Combining caste and gender placed *Dalit* women at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Figure 4.2).

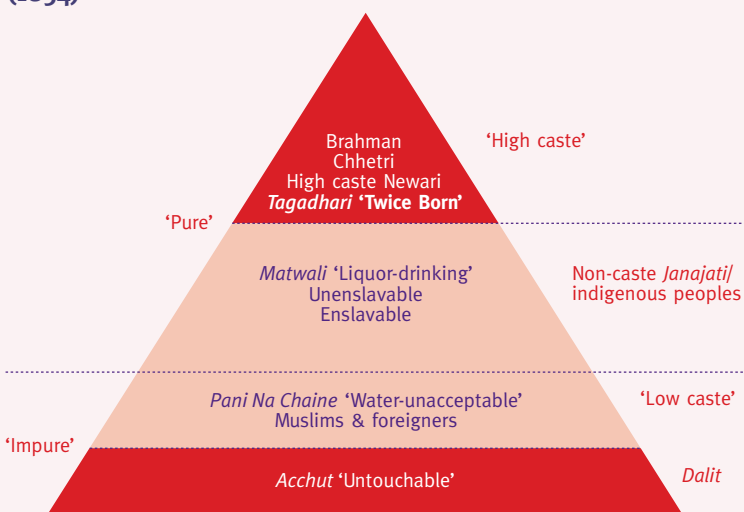
Caste and ethnic identity accounted for 33 per cent of variation in scores, while gender accounted for 7 per cent. Of particular interest to policymakers was the finding that ten years of education was associated with a 19 per cent

### Box 4.1 The caste system in Nepal

The 1854 Muluki Ain (Country Code) in Nepal formalised the caste system into law, granting different social groups differential privileges and obligations according to their position in the caste hierarchy. The characteristics associated with each group signalled the respect – or lack of – they were accorded by their society. The ‘pure’ *Brahmans/Chhetris* were at the top of the caste pyramid; *Janajati* (indigenous peoples) were underneath, followed by the low caste or ‘impure’ *Pani Na Chaine*, with *Dalits* (untouchables) at the bottom of the pyramid.

Nepal’s new Constitution (1990) declares that all citizens are equal ‘irrespective of religion, race, gender, caste or ideology’. But inherited inequalities continue to affect the lives and life chances of those groups at the lower end of the hierarchy.

Figure 4.1 The Nepal caste pyramid according to the Muluki Ain (1854)



The area showing the different groups in the triangle does not represent population size. Dark red shows the Hindu caste groups. Source World Bank/DFID (2006) *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal*

increase in the score and that membership of a local development association led to a 5 per cent increase. Other positive factors included contact with the local women's development office, holding office in an association, and exposure to the media.

The Latinobarometer carries out regular surveys in 17 countries in the Latin American region. The 2000 round included a question about which groups were most discriminated against in their country. Most answers pointed to three groups: Afro-descendants, indigenous people, and 'the poor'. Respondents in countries with large proportions of Afro-descendants and indigenous people – Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala and Panama – were most likely to name one of these three groups. In Argentina and Uruguay, countries with a more homogenous ethnic composition, the poor were perceived to be the most discriminated against group. What is telling is that those who believed that ethnic groups were most discriminated against believed that they faced such discrimination in all spheres of life: at work, in school, in political parties, and in the justice system (police and courts).<sup>66</sup>

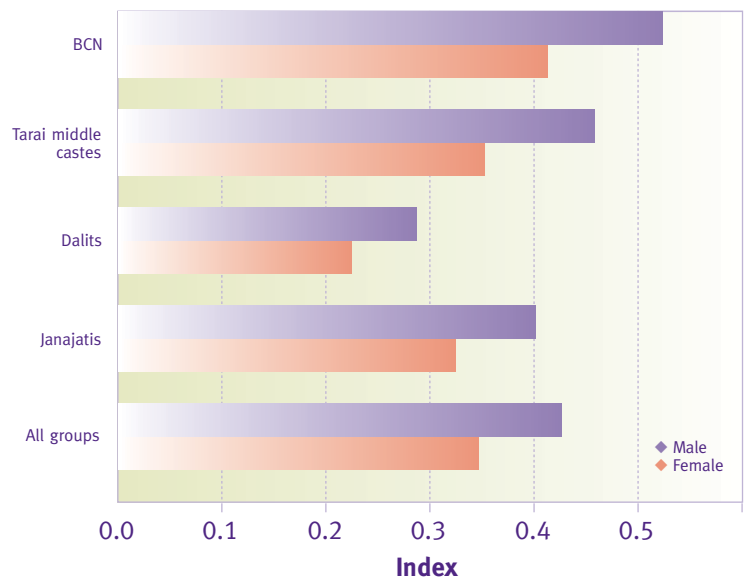
Evidence from some countries highlights the frequently documented and mutually reinforcing link between social exclusion and harmful addictions. In Sri Lanka, for example, restricted options for progress in life may explain the high levels of alcoholism among the predominantly Indian Tamil labourers in the plantation sector, one of the 'silent' consequences of exclusion. This

### Processes of cultural devaluation are key mechanisms through which social exclusion is perpetuated over time

was in turn seen by the labouring community as a major cause of their poverty, indebtedness and social stigma. In South Africa, higher levels of alcoholism and substance abuse in the coloured population (both men and women) suggest that the experience of exclusion is not a uniform one.<sup>67</sup> The DHS (2003) reported that 9.1 per cent of adolescent women in the coloured population group reported harmful levels of drinking in the past 12 months compared with just 1.1 per cent of black African adolescent women. Western Cape is reported to have one of the highest rates of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in the world. This may account for the higher levels of infant and child mortality among the coloured population noted in the recent DHS.<sup>68</sup>

Intersecting inequalities are also often associated with higher levels of crime and drug-

**Figure 4.2 Nepal: composite empowerment and inclusion index (CEI) by gender/caste/ethnicity**



Source Bennett, L. *et al.* (2006) 'Negotiating Social Change: Gender Caste and Ethnic Dimensions of Empowerment and Social Inclusion in Rural Nepal', in R. Alsop, M. Bertelsen and J. Holland (eds), *Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Implementation*, Washington D.C.: World Bank

related violence (see Box 4.3 on page 32). It has been estimated that in urban Colombia, crimes were most likely to be committed by people from households with a *per capita* income below 80 per cent of the national average. Surveys from urban South Africa show that patterns of crime vary by class and race. While the wealthier quintiles were more likely to report crimes without injury, it was the poorest and predominantly black population in informal settlements and townships who suffered the brunt of violent crime.<sup>69</sup>

Group violence, riots and civil war are some of the more extreme consequences of social exclusion. Studies of conflicts in different regions of the world point to the recurring significance of group-based disadvantage as a factor.<sup>70</sup> Social

### Box 4.2 Why social exclusion persists: internalising inferiority

A telling experiment from India found that *Dalit* school children performed as well as children from other caste groups in solving puzzles in exchange for payment when caste identities were concealed. They performed less well when their caste identities were revealed, and even less well when the children playing the game were segregated into separate caste groups.<sup>65</sup> If such a finding can be generalised, it suggests that the 'internalisation' of ascribed inferiority has a powerful effect on the capacity of excluded groups to respond to economic opportunities.

Source: Hoff and Pandey (2004)<sup>65</sup>



### Box 4.3 Social exclusion and violent crime: life in the favelas of Brazil

Studies carried out in 1969 and 2002 in the same *favelas* (slums) in Rio de Janeiro revealed that in 1969, what people feared most was forcible relocation by the housing authorities of the military dictatorship. By 2002, their biggest fear was dying in the crossfire between police and drug dealers or gangs.

Sixteen per cent of those interviewed in 1969 said that crime and violence were what they disliked most about living in the city, while in 2002, 60 per cent gave this answer. While the population of the *favelas* was, and continues to be, racially mixed, black people are less likely to leave: half of the black people interviewed in 1969 still lived in the *favelas*, compared with just a third of the white people.

Source: Perlman, J.E. (2004) 'Marginality: From Myth to Reality in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, 1969–2002', in A. Roy and N. AlSayyad (eds), *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books

exclusion does not inevitably lead to conflict, but it significantly increases its likelihood. A report by the Indian government into the long-standing Naxalite insurgency, which affects 125 districts spread over 12 states, found that the movement's main support comes from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It also found that while there are many districts with high concentrations of *Dalits* and *Adivasis* which did not have a Naxalite presence, it was generally the case that areas of Naxalite influence had a higher than average proportion of *Dalits* and *Adivasis* in their populations. The issue of social exclusion and conflict is discussed in greater detail in Section 4.5, 'The political dynamics of exclusion'.

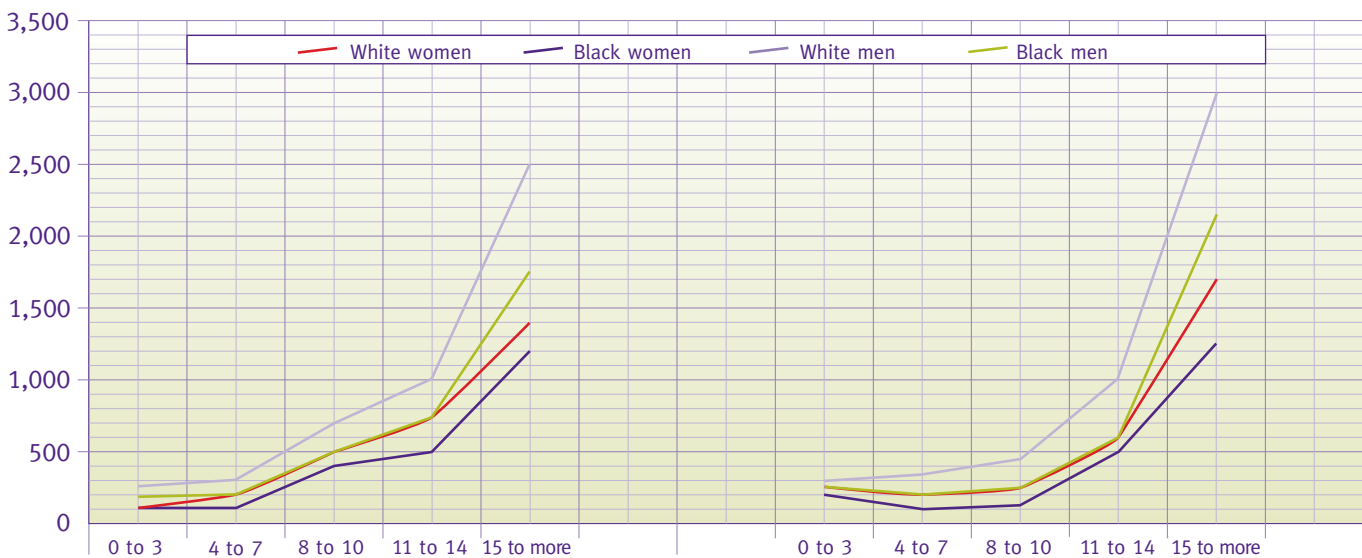
### 4.2 The economic dynamics of exclusion: asset inequalities

The poverty of socially excluded groups is frequently mediated by cultural norms and practices. In some cases, excluded groups are not permitted to own or buy land because of who they are. This has long been the case for the 'untouchable' castes in India and Nepal, and even today, the vast majority of people belonging to these castes are landless.

In other cases, ethnicity differentiates the amount and quality of land people own. In Peru and Ecuador, for instance, indigenous groups had landholdings that were between two and eight times smaller than those of non-indigenous groups.<sup>71</sup> And only 13 per cent of all irrigated land in Ecuador was in the hands of indigenous farmers. In Vietnam, ethnic minorities are heavily dependent on farming and most own some land. However, their land is on sloping terrain and yields just one crop a year. The majority *Kinh* group is more likely to own irrigated land and perennial crop land.

Indigenous people are more likely to be dispossessed of their land because their customary tenure systems may not be recognised by law. Non-recognition of customary land arrangements for forest dwellers and upland people has been a major factor in their impoverishment.<sup>72</sup> Forest departments have traditionally held police and judicial powers, in addition to administrative powers, to enforce tight state controls over forest lands. This has resulted in forest dwellers being treated as criminals or squatters on their own land; in some

Figure 4.3 Brazil: pay levels by gender, ethnic group and years of schooling, 1992 and 2002



Source Machinea J.L.; Bárcena, A. and León, A. (2005), *The Millennium Development Goals: A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective*, Santiago de Chile: United Nations



countries (Thailand, for example), forest dwellers are not recognised as citizens.<sup>73</sup>

In some countries, indigenous people have been dispossessed or displaced by large-scale mining ventures, the expansion of the agricultural frontier, and other infrastructure projects from which they cannot expect to benefit.<sup>74</sup>

The greater poverty of excluded groups may not be simply a matter of fewer assets but also of lower returns on their assets. One study from India<sup>75</sup> decomposed the differences in the poverty rates of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and others, and found that half of the difference could be attributed to group characteristics such as education, occupation, demography and location. The rest could be attributed to the effect that these characteristics had on the probability of being poor. Another study emphasised the importance of location as well as education in differentiating returns by ethnic identity, while it was largely differences in returns in relation to education that mattered for caste.<sup>76</sup>

#### 4.3 The economic dynamics of exclusion: disadvantageous livelihoods

The nature of livelihoods may also be a basis for social exclusion and a barrier to the reduction of extreme poverty. In many parts of the world, indigenous groups pursue a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life that is regarded as 'inferior' by the rest of society. In Thailand, for instance, the

Sudan, near Gereida, South Darfur: a nomadic family travelling by camel. Eleven months ago the village of Kulaykili was attacked and destroyed by *Janjaweed* militias. The black population, mainly farmers, have fled and nomads of Arab origin have moved in. Photographer: Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures

#### Box 4.4 The *Kamaiya* system in Nepal

The *Kamaiya* system is a bonded agricultural labour system practised in the western lowlands of Nepal. It is almost entirely concentrated among the Tharus, a low caste ethnic group. A *Kamaiya* binds himself and his family to cultivate a landowner's land in return for an annual payment. While in principle this system is based on a voluntary contract, in practice, the *Kamaiya* often becomes deeply dependent on the landowner. He lives in a hut on the land, which means the landowner is also landlord. As the debts are inherited from father to son, some *Kamaiya* families are tied to the same landlord for generations. What differentiates this from other bonded labour systems, though, is that if the *Kamaiya* is unable to repay his loans at the end of the contract period, the landlord can exchange his *Kamaiyas* with another landlord who is willing to repay the *Kamaiya's* debt. This sales transaction makes this system similar to slavery. Surveys have estimated there are about 15,000 *Kamaiya* households, with 46 per cent of *Kamaiyas* being homeless. Besides adults, there are roughly 13,000 children working under this system. The Government of Nepal abolished the *Kamaiya* system in 2000, but thousands of former bonded labourers are still living from hand to mouth with no means to support themselves or their families.

See 'Bonded Labour In Nepal', *The South Asian*, 18 April 2005, accessed 4 August 2010 at [www.thesouthasian.org/blog/archives/2005/bonded\\_labour\\_in\\_nepal.html](http://www.thesouthasian.org/blog/archives/2005/bonded_labour_in_nepal.html)



Indigenous women and children from Colombia gather to discuss issues of food security, nutrition and health in their communities. Photographer: David Parra

reliance of the Hmong, Akha, Lahu and Lisu on swidden agriculture in upland forested areas is perceived to signify their ‘uncivilised’ way of life, in contrast to the settled wet rice cultivation practised by lowland villagers. In East Africa and the Horn of Africa, the pastoralist livelihoods of some ethnic groups have long been the basis of their exclusion from mainstream development efforts.

In other cases, social exclusion is associated with the cultural assignment of excluded groups to the worst-paid and most demeaning jobs. The Hindu caste system in India and Nepal assigns the lowest castes to the removal of night soil, sweeping, garbage collection and other jobs that

are considered to be menial, degrading and dirty.

More generally, a combination of discrimination and lower levels of educational attainment keep socially excluded groups confined to lower-paid work and more exploitative working conditions. In Vietnam, for instance, migrants from ethnic minorities earn half as much as those from the *Kinh* majority, are far less likely to have a work contract, and are far less likely to receive help in finding a job.<sup>77</sup> In Peru, white workers were more likely to be found in the higher hourly income quintiles than indigenous workers, and were more likely to be professionals, technicians and executive staff. In South Africa and Brazil, Afro-descendant and indigenous populations reported higher levels of informal employment. Moreover, in every employment category, hourly earnings were highest for white workers and lowest for black workers.<sup>78</sup>

The interaction between gender and ethnic inequalities generally places women from ethnic minorities at the bottom of the income hierarchy: for example, indigenous and Afro-descendant women in Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala and Peru were more likely to earn ‘poverty wages’ (\$1 an hour, purchasing parity power (PPP) adjusted) than either men from their ethnic group or men

**Table 4.1 Time to reach nearest health facility in north and south Ghana (% of respondents)**

Time to reach nearest health facility	National average	Average South	Average North
30 minutes or less:			
Rural	52.9	45.5	15.1
Urban	52.9	79.3	51.4

Source Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) Survey, 1997 Main Report, Ghana Statistical Service, Accra Ghana, cited in Langer *et al.* (2007)<sup>51</sup>

**Figure 4.4 Pastoralists facing extreme education deprivation**

Percentage of population aged 17–22 with fewer than two years of education and percentage of children of primary school age not attending primary school, by gender and membership of selected pastoralist groups, latest available year



Source UNESCO (2010)<sup>107</sup>

and women from the rest of the population. In Brazil, Afro-descendant women earned the least, while white men earned the most for each level of education (Figure 4.3 on page 32).

Lack of access to financial services, or access on extremely usurious terms, has been a major constraint for poor and excluded groups everywhere. In India, Pakistan and Nepal, the prevalence of bonded labour is a stark indicator of the unfavourable terms on which such groups obtain credit (see Box 4.4 on page 33, on Nepal’s *Kamaiya* system). They are disproportionately drawn from lower caste and ethnic minority groups. Such forms of indebtedness tend to serve as a mechanism for the inter-generational transmission of poverty, since the children of bonded labourers often become bonded labourers themselves.<sup>79</sup>

In Latin America, only a small fraction of indigenous households were found to have access to formal (or informal) credit; non-indigenous households had two to three times more access to credit.<sup>80</sup> Evidence from Peru suggests that education increases the likelihood of indigenous people obtaining credit, mainly through better access to information. But most indigenous people lack education. In rural Ecuador, more indigenous business owners are deterred from seeking a loan due to high interest rates than non-indigenous business owners – 36 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. Further, interest rates for formal credit were higher for indigenous businesses and farms.<sup>81</sup> In Vietnam, access to formal credit does

not vary much by ethnic group. But ethnic minorities tend to utilise smaller loan facilities (tied to specific activities) provided by the Vietnam Bank for Social Policies, while the majority group are more likely to take advantage of the larger loans offered by the Vietnam Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

#### 4.4 The dynamics of exclusion in service provision: access and quality

The poor, more than any other group, rely on basic public services to meet their needs for health and education. The failure of such services to address their needs is a major factor in explaining the uneven pace of progress on relevant MDGs. Unequal spatial distribution of services, and the costs, quality and relevance of the services on offer, are some of the aspects of this failure.

In India, the most important source of variation in the *per capita* state provision of doctors, nurses and teachers in rural districts is religion and caste; the higher the percentage of *Dalits* and Muslims in the district population, the lower the provision of medical and educational services.<sup>82</sup> Nigeria reports large disparities in antenatal care between the north and the south.<sup>83</sup> Only 4 per cent of women in the north east received care from a doctor compared with 52 per cent of women in the south west, while only 8.4 per cent of mothers in the north west delivered in a health facility compared with 73.9 in the south east. Women from the north cited lack of money, distance to facilities and concern

that there were no drugs available as the main reasons they did not deliver in a health facility.<sup>84</sup> In Ghana, too, there are differences between the north and the south in the utilisation of healthcare facilities, albeit less pronounced; one in four children in the Northern region are delivered at a health facility compared with four out of five in the Greater Accra region.<sup>85</sup>

In Vietnam, compared to a national figure of 17 per cent in 2002, 33 per cent of women in the north east, 65 per cent in the north west and 40 per cent in the central highlands gave birth with no assistance from qualified health workers.<sup>86</sup> Reluctance to seek help from male health workers and the difficulties of recruiting women to work in remote mountainous areas, together with financial constraints and the distances involved, were largely responsible for these outcomes.

Financial constraints are also a major consideration for poor people. The imposition of user fees for social services by large numbers of African countries in the context of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 1990s led to a dramatic decline in the use of education and health services, while in the case of health, the frequency of catastrophic expenditure increased.<sup>87</sup>

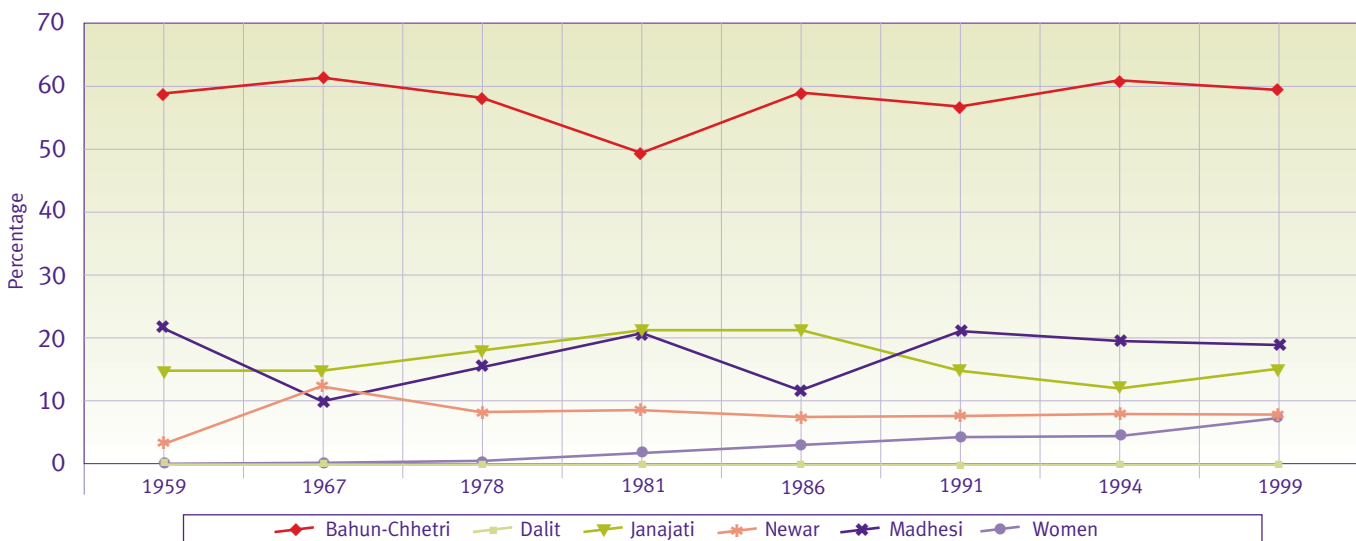
Finally, the quality of service provision matters. A study of skilled attendance for childbirth in rural Tanzania found that ethnicity, education and household assets were important predictors of service uptake. Social positioning, past experience, entitlement, shame, and self-identity reinforced some women's preference to deliver at home. Some had experienced substandard treatment, or been turned away from health facilities and felt humiliated.

'Health facilities were public spaces and what occurred there became a matter of public knowledge; social standing was diminished when poverty was made evident. Other features that could put women at risk for mistreatment were ethnicity or family. A stigma on Pogoro and other groups (typically enacted by persons from more urban areas such as facility providers) increased susceptibility to substandard treatment.' (Spangler *et al.* 2010: 7)<sup>88</sup>

In Latin America, belonging to an indigenous group or being monolingual in an indigenous language constitutes a barrier to access to healthcare in at least five of the region's countries (Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru). In Colombia, racial and ethnic disparities in health status and access to healthcare were largely explained by differences in socioeconomic characteristics, employment status, type of job and geographical location. In Brazil, utilisation of maternity-related services was found to be related to education and household resources, as well as location. Households in rural areas and in the poorer north and north east were less likely to make use of such services. Social exclusion thus worked through the interaction between race, poverty and location.

In South Asia, religion and caste affect the uptake of maternal health and delivery services, along with household wealth status and women's education.<sup>89</sup> Acts of discrimination against *Dalits* are reported in the public health services, along with prejudice towards religious minorities. This includes avoidance by health workers,

**Figure 4.5 Nepal: ethnic/caste and gender representation in Parliament, 1959–99**



Source Lawoti, M. (2002) 'Defining Minorities in Nepal', *Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies* 2.1: 20–52



Children in the Saloum Delta in Senegal hold up their catch. Communities in this area depend largely on the rich marine and estuary life for their livelihoods. Photographer: Sebastian

particularly paramedics and nursing staff, of physical contact with *Dalits* and reluctance to visit *Dalit* households. In turn, both real and anticipated discriminatory behaviour on the part of health workers deters *Dalits* from using health providers, particularly for services that involve physical contact, such as giving birth.<sup>90</sup>

Teachers in India are also predominantly upper caste and bring their caste prejudices into the classroom. *Dalit* children are expected to run errands and are assigned menial tasks such as sweeping and cleaning the classrooms. Higher rates of teacher absenteeism were reported in areas where children were mainly from *Dalit* and tribal communities. In West Bengal, for example, teacher absenteeism was 75 per cent in such schools compared with 33 per cent elsewhere. Such treatment has particularly negative effects because *Dalit* children are likely to be first-generation learners.

In sub-Saharan Africa, pastoralist livelihoods are closely associated with specific ethnic groups. These are among the most excluded from education services. In many cases, national education systems have failed to offer relevant curricula, provide appropriate textbooks and respond to the realities of pastoralist livelihoods, which involve

children travelling for long periods to tend cattle.

National educational curricula can reinforce exclusion in other ways. Classical educational models assume the existence of a monolingual and mono-cultural student based on the idea of homogeneity of beliefs, culture and language. In Mexico, indigenous children fared worse within the educational system, particularly those in

#### Box 4.5 Intersecting ethnic, religious and political inequalities in Sudan

In Sudan, intersecting inequalities underpin poverty and poor life chances. Around 50 per cent of the population in the northern region live in poverty, compared with more than 90 per cent of those in the south; and 62 per cent of children in the north are enrolled in primary education compared with 20 per cent in the south. Maternal mortality is more than three times higher in the south than the north. This has led to the longest civil war in Africa. The death toll from the conflict, which began in the early years of independence, is estimated to be 5 million. A peace agreement signed in 2005 included provisions to address the south's political exclusion and the socioeconomic inequalities between north and south, but fundamental grievances have not been addressed.

Source: Swearingen, M. (2010) 'Group Inequality and Conflict: Some Insights for Peacebuilding', *Peace Brief 28*, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace

disadvantaged rural areas.<sup>91</sup> However, bilingual indigenous children (who could speak Spanish as well as their own language) fared almost as well as non-indigenous children, and considerably better than indigenous children who could not speak Spanish. Thus, language barriers operate within the educational system in ways that may not be easy to observe.

#### 4.5 The political dynamics of exclusion

When group-based inequalities are reproduced in the exercise of political power and access to public institutions, they undermine the confidence that different sectors of the population have in the government's ability to rule fairly. Excluded groups are often minorities, and there is often little incentive for political parties to take their interests into account.<sup>92</sup> When the economic prospects of such groups are undermined by uneven development, when differential access to essential services persists, and when political opportunities for voice and influence are denied, grievances emerge and often spill over into conflict (see Box 4.5 on page 37, on Sudan). Ethnic or group conflicts are almost universally associated with political inequalities, and frequently related to educational and income inequality.<sup>93</sup>

In Mexico, the Zapatista uprising can be traced to a long history of exploitation, exclusion and injustices towards the indigenous population, and is rooted in the intersecting inequalities experienced by indigenous people, based on ethnic identity, location and poverty. The proportion of the indigenous population in the state of Chiapas, where the movement began, was over three times that of Mexico as a whole: the proportion of people on incomes below the minimum wage was nearly three times that of Mexico as a whole, while the proportion of people on high incomes was less than half the national rate.<sup>94</sup> Illiteracy in Chiapas is twice the national rate, and indigenous people had substantially lower school attendance and incomes than the rest of the state's population. They had been excluded from land reform efforts and consigned to poor and ecologically vulnerable land. For years, organised resistance in the state was met by political repression. The adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) after a long period of worsening conditions as a result of neo-liberal policies provided a major impetus to the uprising.

In Nepal, *Brahmans* and *Chhetris* maintained

around 60 per cent presence in the legislature right through the period from 1959 to 1999, the last decade of which included the first ten years of multiparty democracy in the country (see Figure 4.5 on page 36). *Dalits* were almost entirely absent right through this period, while women were hardly represented, regardless of caste. Civil service positions were also disproportionately drawn from *Brahman/Chhetri* groups (83 per cent) and the upper castes held virtually all positions in the judiciary.<sup>95</sup> Poverty, caste and ethnic identity combined with persistent political exclusion, even after the introduction of democracy, to give rise to several years of civil conflict by the end of the 1990s.

**When group-based inequalities are reproduced in the exercise of political power and access to public institutions, they undermine the confidence that different sectors of the population have in the government's ability to rule fairly**

In Uganda, the main economic, cultural and political divisions are between the largely Bantu-speaking population in the centre-south and the non-Bantu speaking population in the north. The centre-south has consistently performed better than the more peripheral areas of the country, especially the north, and received the lion's share of public resources. The north is markedly poorer than the centre-south; average incomes are broadly twice as low and social services substantially worse. However, northern ethnic groups are in the minority, and can only attain power through alliances, vote-rigging or violence. This explains why the first 25 years of the country's 40 years of violent conflict was mainly instigated by northern politicians in power against southern privileged elites.<sup>96</sup>

All post-conflict societies suffer from diminished resources. Eight of the ten countries with the worst human development index (HDI), and eight out of ten countries with the lowest gross national product (GNP) *per capita*, have had major civil wars in the recent past, with causality working in both directions.<sup>97</sup> These are likely to feature prominently among countries that are most off track in relation to the MDGs, although they are also characterised by poor data for monitoring progress.

# The MDGs as a pathway to social justice: equalising life chances

# 5

**'We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want...'**  
(Millennium Declaration 2000, para. 11)

The Millennium Declaration held out the promise of social justice, in a world where the right to development would be a reality for everyone. But this promise evaporated as the values and principles of the Declaration were translated into the eight MDGs, and the corresponding targets and indicators. The failure to retain an explicit commitment to equality, tolerance and solidarity in the formulation of the MDG agenda has led to an uneven pace of progress on achievements, with persisting inequalities between different social groups. Unless the MDGs are adapted to the realities of intersecting inequalities and social exclusion within the different regions, they may not only fail to provide a pathway to a more just society, but may even exacerbate existing inequalities. Using national averages to measure progress encourages going for the 'low hanging fruit' – that is, helping those who find it easiest to graduate out of poverty.<sup>98</sup>

The rest of this section deals with policies and interventions that have been found to work in different contexts as the basis for crafting more equitable approaches to the MDGs. The first set of recommendations deal with the general policy environment. The first of these deals with the political dimension of change, the missing element in the MDGs. It highlights the need to work towards new social contracts between states and their citizens in order to lay the foundations for more democratic and inclusive societies. At the heart of such contracts are responsive and accountable states, on the one hand, and responsible and active citizens, on the other. Such contracts do not come into existence by fiat. They have to be constructed over time through mutual interactions between state and citizens. The recommendations contained in the rest of this section can be seen as part of this interactive process. They will both help to strengthen accountability relationships between states and citizens as well as to pave the way for further policies to build a socially just society.

Other more general recommendations deal with the need for a stronger knowledge base and

public information about social exclusion in order to develop well-grounded policy responses as well as the importance of enabling macroeconomic frameworks to pursue such policies. These general recommendations are followed by more specific ones focusing on the poverty-related MDGs and then the social MDGs.

## 5.1 Responsive states, active citizens: towards a new social contract

**'We resolve therefore... to work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries.'**  
(Millennium Declaration 2000, para. 25)

While the MDGs focus attention on *what* states must do (deliver education and health services, promote livelihoods), the political commitments of the Millennium Declaration provided a clear message about *how* they should do it: through inclusive political processes and genuine participation.<sup>99</sup> However, this was yet another message that was lost in the Declaration's translation into key development goals.

The focus on politics is rooted in recognition of the power dynamics that reproduce social exclusion over time. Socially excluded groups have had little voice or influence in shaping the policies that affect their lives and life chances, and hence remain on the margins of development processes. If the MDGs are

**Nepal, Karnali Zone: school children learning to write.**  
Photographer: Peter Barker/Panos Pictures







**‘We resolve therefore... to work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries.’ (Millennium Declaration 2000, para. 25)**

**Photographer: Barbara Cheney**

to deliver on the promise of inclusive politics, systematic attention has to be given to expanding the democratic space for interaction between the state and its most excluded citizens.

### **The key role of the state**

*Experience has made it clear that the state has a critical role to play in promoting the MDGs as a pathway to social justice. The private sector undoubtedly has an important contribution to make because of its central role as an engine of growth. But driven as it is by profit considerations, it is unlikely to take a lead in promoting social justice. Civil society is also indispensable because of its ability to mobilise against injustice and hold the state and private sector accountable. But it, too, represents specific interests and cannot speak for society as a whole. However flawed the state might be, it is the only institution that has a mandate to respond to claims for social justice by all its citizens.*

Many contemporary examples of progress in driving social transformation and reversing historical inequalities have been led by the state although in most cases, citizen mobilisation has helped to drive the agenda. Examples include

South Africa, China and Malaysia. In Latin America, the reversal of long-standing inequalities has been largely effected by leftist governments, some of them led by people from ethnic minority communities who have themselves benefited from the expansion of educational opportunities in recent decades.<sup>100</sup>

### **Decentralisation and democratisation of local government**

‘To obtain the benefits of active citizen engagement across the whole MDG framework, both for people themselves and through more effective policymaking, there are some key accountability building blocks that must be in place. These include substantial freedom of information, transparent budgets, participatory policymaking and the political “space” to allow civil society organisations to operate without draconian restrictions. These measures can ensure that women and men in poverty – whose views are too often overlooked – are able to direct the anti-poverty plans in poor countries.’<sup>101</sup>

Some of the building blocks necessary to build more responsive states have been touched upon in the preceding discussion; they include freedom of the press, the right to information, and transparent or participatory budgeting and decentralised decision-making. *There has been an increasing emphasis on decentralisation, bringing decision-making closer to disadvantaged groups, as a key route to greater state responsiveness.* As the part of government closest to the people, the local state certainly has the *potential* to promote more effective state–society relations. But there are no *a priori* reasons why more localised forms of governance should be more democratic or inclusive than other levels.<sup>102</sup> Competing interests clustered around local resources and power bases can act as much to exclude as to include, and power exercised at the local level can be more concentrated, elitist and sometimes more ruthlessly applied than at the centre.<sup>103</sup>

Decentralisation is therefore a measure that should be recommended with caution and not put forward as a panacea. *Decentralisation works best in the context of a strong, central state with the confidence to devolve resources as well as responsibilities, and when the local state encounters a vibrant and well-organised civil society that can engage effectively with policymakers.* It must, therefore, be accompanied by efforts to democratise local government, while recognising that on technical and political grounds, certain problems must still be addressed at higher levels. *It must also be accompanied by efforts to build the capacity of all sections of local society to engage with decision-making processes at different levels of government and to hold governments accountable.*

### Increasing the capacity and political agency of excluded groups

*The active engagement of socially excluded groups can be initiated by state action.* In 1996, the government of Kerala launched the People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning. It aimed to devolve significant resources and authority to the *panchayats* (village councils) and municipalities, and also mandated village assemblies and citizen committees to plan and budget local development expenditures. Nearly one in four households attended village assemblies in the first two years of the campaign, and the assemblies continue to draw large numbers. Many citizens have received training in planning and budgeting.

In addition, the redesign of institutional incentives and new mobilisation efforts meant that women accounted for 40 per cent of the participants in village assemblies – much higher

than elsewhere in India – while the participation of *Dalits* has exceeded their representation in the population.<sup>104</sup> A large survey of key respondents found that 'disadvantaged groups' were the main beneficiaries of targeted schemes. It also led to the widespread view that elected representatives had become more responsive to the needs of local people.

*Capacity for political participation can also be built by engaging communities in the design and management of community development projects, building in mechanisms to reach excluded groups.* The Kecamatan Development Program in Indonesia is an example of a successful attempt to increase the political agency of marginalised groups through community-driven development. It allocates grant money at sub-district level, for which several groups of villagers (two of whom must be women) compete for funds on the basis of presentation of a formal sub-project proposal. Procedures, institutions and norms are largely decentralised, focusing on joint problem solving, inviting broad public participation and scrutiny, and occurring in a more or less continuous and institutionalised way. A recent study found that the programme helps marginalised groups to cultivate access to more constructive spaces and procedures for addressing project and non-project conflicts. Results include not only basic facilities but also a new style of group representation.

*Finally, the capacity for collective action can be built from below.* Mobilisation by marginalised groups has been promoted through a wide variety of channels, including social movements, NGOs, faith-based organisations, women's groups and trade unions, and self-organisation by the groups in question. Various examples of these efforts – and their relevance to the MDGs – have been touched on at different stages of this report. While not all of these organisations are equally inclusive or effective, many have acted as a

### Box 5.1 Making everyone count: collecting census data on excluded groups in Latin America

The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) is supporting regional initiatives to incorporate race and ethnicity into national census reports, civil registries, and household surveys through its Everyone Counts programme. In 2001, the IADB, with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the World Bank, launched the Program for the Improvement of Surveys and the Measurement of Living Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean to improve survey and measurement tools to assess living conditions. As a result of these initiatives, most countries in the region now collect data on the indigenous population, and 9 out of 19 Latin American countries collect census data on Afro-descendants.

powerful force for change on a range of inequalities. In India, for example, civil society groups, in collaboration with progressive political parties, succeeded in getting the Indian government to recognise the right to information, the right to food and the right to work. These rights have then been used by civil society to improve the implementation of public policy and to hold service providers accountable (see Box 5.2).

### 5.2 Strengthening information policies to tackle exclusion

'Strategies [to combat social exclusion] are dependent on the attitudes society as a whole adopts towards those it excludes. Very often, the first response... is denial and concealment of its existence... One of the first conditions for the formulation of strategies to address exclusion is... to bring it to the surface, make it visible and give it recognition.'<sup>105</sup>

*A first step in efforts to tackle social exclusion is to acknowledge that the problem exists; the second step is to act on the information. Unless governments know who is being left out of*

**Bamako, Mali: a meeting at the Centre for Treatment, Activities and Counselling for People living with HIV/AIDS (CESAC), which is the main organisation working with AIDS patients in Mali. Photographer: William Daniels/Panos Pictures**



progress on the MDGs, and why, they cannot address the problem. This report has highlighted the difficulties of obtaining accurate and consistent information on excluded groups. This absence of data often arises from governments failing to recognise the significance of social exclusion. In other cases, it may result from a deliberate policy not to acknowledge inequality, as in the case of Myanmar.

There may be other reasons too. The post-genocide government in Rwanda, for instance, has pursued a policy of promoting national unity and reconciliation by highlighting factors that unify Rwandans, and controlling factors that may be 'divisive', which includes banning any reference to ethnicity. This makes it extremely difficult to track progress on the MDGs in relation to the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa populations, or to monitor the differential impact of policies on these groups. In other contexts, data are specifically disaggregated by ethnicity or race, as in South Africa, where the post-apartheid government has retained reference to 'historically disadvantaged groups' specifically in order to track progress on social, economic and political indicators.

International agencies and governments need to improve methods to collect and disaggregate data so that they can monitor whether excluded groups are benefiting from progress in relation to the MDGs. The level of disaggregation is key. Equity-adjusted indicators can play an important role in tracking progress. National averages give equal weight to all quintiles in measuring progress. Adjusting national statistics for disparities can be done by weighting quintile-specific values to accord greater importance to progress in the lower quintiles.<sup>106</sup> This can be done not only for income but also for education, health and the other MDGs. The UNESCO report, *Reaching the Marginalized*, which is concerned with the education levels of socially excluded groups, monitors progress based on equity-adjusted educational indicators.<sup>107</sup>

*Disaggregated data must then be analysed to establish the extent and causes of inequality and the impact of policy on excluded groups. Data should also be disseminated to the relevant constituencies, including civil society groups, to enable them to fulfil their lobbying role.* For instance, a recent paper in *The Lancet* has called for more detailed analysis to understand why a number of countries, such as Egypt and Rwanda, have had considerable success in reducing maternal mortality – one of the MDGs that is proving more difficult to achieve.<sup>108</sup> Without such analysis, governments will not find it easy to make progress on this MDG, and civil society

groups will not be able to lobby for the necessary changes in policy.

*A broader set of information policies will be needed to change public attitudes and perceptions.* Much of the discrimination associated with social exclusion revolves around, and is reproduced by, the general public's prejudices and preconceptions about socially excluded groups. Research and statistical documentation, along with the education system, the media and public campaigns, can help to influence public discourse.

The media should be mobilised to educate, inform and entertain in ways which break down some of the barriers that separate socially excluded groups from the rest of society. A free press is one of the cornerstones of democracy, and the media play a critical role in disseminating information, raising awareness and advocating for policies that can bring about change. The power of cable and satellite television has begun to transform gender relations in the South Asia context, challenging the acceptability of domestic violence, questioning the devaluation of women and increasing their capacity for agency.<sup>109</sup>

*Information policies for excluded groups are as important as information policies about them.* Research into why certain groups systematically fail to utilise social services or claim their entitlements stresses a lack of awareness among those groups about availability and terms of access. *The importance of the right to information is being increasingly acknowledged in legislation in countries like India and Bangladesh, and in draft legislation form in Ghana.* Knowledge about rights, entitlements and the rules that govern service provision can build the awareness of excluded groups and strengthen their ability to claim such rights and services. It can also result in desirable policy outcomes: for instance, the Thai government's mass media campaign, urging respect for women and safer sexual practices is credited with reducing the incidence of AIDS to a point where the country can now consider a fiscally viable treatment programme.<sup>110</sup>

### 5.3 Macroeconomic policies and redistributive growth

A country's national macroeconomic framework provides the broader context in which policies to achieve the MDGs are pursued. It influences the pace and pattern of economic growth as well as the distribution of resources and opportunities between different productive sectors and sections of the population. Economic growth can provide an enabling environment for promoting the

#### Box 5.2 The Right to Information in India

In 1996 the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) was launched in India, spurred by a network of grass-roots organisations campaigning around local development issues. Largely thanks to their efforts, a far-reaching Right to Information (RTI) Act was implemented in 2005. This Act requires all central, state and local government institutions to meet public demands for information and has become an important tool for transparency and accountability in the day-to-day functioning of government.<sup>111</sup>

The right to information and collective action has been used to ensure the proper implementation of government programmes aimed at assisting the most vulnerable and disenfranchised people, including the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Delhi. The PDS provides essential commodities – basic food grains, sugar and kerosene – at affordable prices to poor, marginalised urban dwellers. Officially, PDS cardholders are entitled to claim these at PDS outlets each month – in practice, however, many are turned away from outlets, told that the food grain had run out or simply refused their quota. A complaint from a woman in a low-income settlement that she had not received her entitled food grains for three months prompted a local campaigning organisation, Parivartan, to use the Right to Information to investigate the PDS operation. Scrutiny of the local PDS records revealed that 87 per cent of PDS wheat and 94 per cent of rice had been sold on the open market. The complainant herself had been listed by the shop owner as receiving her quota; a thumb print by her name in lieu of a signature.

Parivartan mobilised the media and rallied local residents to use their RTI to check PDS records for all the shops in the area. Over 300 people publicly filed applications to view their records, despite threats of violence and bribery. The result was a marked change in shopkeepers' attitudes. Following the 2005 RTI Act, Parivartan has been pushing for institutionalisation of public scrutiny of PDS records. This localised small-scale campaign shows the potential the RTI has for opening up dialogue and negotiation, giving voice to the most marginalised, and enabling bottom-up accountability.

See Pande, S. (2008) 'The Right to Information and societal accountability: the case of the Delhi PDS Campaign', *IDS Bulletin* 38

MDGs as a pathway to social justice, but only if it generates an adequate level and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

However, the neo-liberal macroeconomic framework that has shaped the pace and pattern of growth in most countries in recent years has done little to challenge the intransigent inequalities that give rise to social exclusion. Greater attention to redistribution is necessary. *Redistribution can occur through growth.* Broad-based, employment-centred patterns of growth that bring about major structural transformations of the economy provide favourable conditions for addressing social exclusion. Investments in agricultural productivity will help large sections of the marginalised poor who continue to rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. But they have to be accompanied by the expansion of employment opportunities

outside agriculture and the pathways that will enable these groups to take advantage of them.

‘Sustained and equitable growth based on dynamic structural economic change is necessary for making substantial progress in reducing poverty. It also enables faster progress towards the other Millennium Development Goals. While economic growth is necessary, it is not sufficient for progress in reducing poverty.’<sup>112</sup>

However, even broad-based growth is unlikely to be sufficient on its own to break historically established cycles of inequality. *Pro-poor growth has to be combined with redistributive policies if the MDGs are to benefit excluded groups.* The Latin American experience provides one example of a policy approach that combines ‘growth with prudent redistribution.’<sup>113</sup> Brazil has achieved a significant reduction in historically established patterns of inequality, despite moderate levels of growth, because of the state playing a proactive role in redistributive policies.<sup>114</sup>

‘Latin American countries which have managed to reduce inequality have continued to emphasize orthodox objectives: macroeconomic stability, fiscal prudence and the preservation of free trade and financial flows. Where they have made a break with past orthodoxy is in their reliance on managed exchange rates, greater mobilisation of domestic resources, neutral/countercyclical fiscal policies and an active role for the state in the field of labour and social policies.’<sup>115</sup>

#### 5.4 Progressive fiscal policies

Government budgets are a particularly powerful macroeconomic policy instrument for ensuring that redistributive growth leads to greater, more equitable progress on the MDGs. Taxation has particular relevance for addressing economic inequalities, while public expenditure can be used to redress social inequalities.<sup>116</sup> Both the levels and composition of these instruments will determine their effectiveness. Developing countries generally do not devote enough effort to mobilising domestic tax revenues compared with wealthier countries, and consequently remain far more dependent on external finance. Developing country governments should prioritise strengthening their tax systems – for example, investing in administrative capacity, closing tax loopholes and expanding the tax base.

From a redistributive perspective, the composition of taxation matters. Direct taxes on



Almost half of Peru’s population is of indigenous origin, the great proportion of which live in poverty. These groups have consistently lower access to health, education and livelihood opportunities, setting them at a clear disadvantage from non-indigenous populations.  
Photographer: Jorge Villar Fernandez

income, profits, property and capital gains hold the greatest promise for economic redistribution and poverty reduction. Exempting all property below a certain value from taxation or using a progressive rate of income tax are obvious means for realising redistributive potential. Indirect taxes such as value-added taxes, can be progressive if there are exemptions for basic necessities, such as food, and higher rates for luxury items. Fuel taxes can be differentiated to impose higher taxes on fuels used by the wealthy. Where socially excluded groups are geographically concentrated, the regional balance of taxation could be altered.

The level and composition of public expenditure will have a particular bearing on the

social MDGs. While the overall level of public expenditure represents the government's capacity for influencing the MDGs, it is the composition of this expenditure that will make a difference to socially excluded groups. *Reaching socially excluded groups will require higher levels of spending than for the rest of the population.*

*In addition, fiscal mechanisms can be designed to direct resources to excluded groups and regions.* Indonesia has used the elimination of a subsidy on fuel, which benefited the more affluent in society, to finance a targeted cash transfer programme for the poor. Mongolia introduced a windfall profits tax in 2006 in order to benefit from historically high copper and gold prices to enable it to meet its social commitments. However, it was forced to rescind the tax in the face of fierce opposition from the mining corporations. The Bolivian government has so far had more success with its direct hydrocarbon tax.

*Governments can use equity-weighted transfer rules to achieve more redistributive public expenditure patterns.* Successful examples come from India and Brazil (see Box 5.4).

*Governments should respond positively to the growing momentum for greater transparency in budgetary processes, facilitating analysis of how expenditure affects different social groups.* Over the past decade, initiatives to promote gender-responsive budget analysis, for example, have been introduced in more than 60 countries. This enables an assessment of the extent to which public finance management is gender-sensitive and whether policy commitments to gender equality are matched with resource allocations.

*Greater transparency of budgetary processes can also be promoted through greater public participation.* Participatory budgeting (PB) seeks to encourage active citizenship and hence ensure more equitable public spending and greater government transparency and accountability. Pioneered by the Workers' Party in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, PB allows citizens to have a direct say in how municipal budgets are spent. There are many initiatives underway in developing regions based on the PB principle of citizen participation in decisions about allocation of public finances.

Studies have found that the PB process, when effectively implemented, can bolster social capital, trust and mutual cooperation,<sup>118</sup> encourage communities to become conscious of new ways to challenge poverty and inequality,<sup>119</sup> promote greater transparency and reduce clientelism, accelerate redistribution of public resources, and lead to more intelligent civic investment.

### Box 5.3 Progressive hydrocarbon taxation in Bolivia

In Bolivia, the government has introduced a number of fiscal transfers based on a direct hydrocarbon tax. Two of these are directly redistributive. One is the Juancito Pinto programme, which targets districts with high dropout rates and low school attendance. The other provides minimum income support. The rest of the tax goes in block grants to sub-national governments and is not particularly redistributive, since it favours better-off gas-producing areas.<sup>117</sup>

### 5.5 Legal policies and affirmative action

Constitutions and legal systems provide the overarching structure for outlawing discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, ethnicity and religious beliefs. *However, legal equality has to be backed by explicit provisions for enforcement if it is to translate into practice.* A number of countries have adopted explicit affirmative action policies to deal with intersecting inequalities. India has perhaps one of the longest track records in reserving quotas for members of tribal and *Dalit* communities in public education and employment, as well as political quotas for women and these groups in local government.<sup>120</sup>

Other countries have opted for affirmative action in response to social mobilisation by disadvantaged groups, which has often spilled over into conflict. Post-apartheid South Africa's Constitution provides a strong framework for promoting equality, including economic and social rights. It has also introduced affirmative action in public and private sectors that prioritises race and gender. Post-conflict Nepal has taken a series of affirmative action measures

### Box 5.4 Using equity-weighted transfer rules to spend more on excluded groups

In India, until 2007, district population size was the main criterion for estimating need. Now, a new formula has been adopted which attaches more weight to social indicators in district-level indices of need. While differences in education spending per child in deprived and advanced districts were negligible in 2005/06, by 2008/09, districts in the bottom quartile of the education development index were receiving twice as much per child as those in the top quartile.

In Brazil, the federal government uses two levers to equalise public social spending. First, it sets regulatory standards to establish national benchmarks for *per capita* spending. The norms are weighted for equity, favouring rural over urban areas and indigenous minorities over the rest of the population. Second, states whose tax revenues leave them below the stipulated threshold are eligible for complementary federal financing. In 2008, nine states in the poorest north and north east regions received this financing.

Source: UNESCO (2010)<sup>107</sup>

### Box 5.5 Affirmative action in Nepal

The post-conflict Interim Parliament in Nepal has stipulated that approximately one-third of all parliamentarians are women, and each ethnic group and the hitherto unrepresented *Dalit* caste are represented in proportion to their shares in the total population. Proportional representation was introduced for the first time, with minority inclusion quotas alongside the traditional first-past-the-post system (240 members were elected via first-past-the-post, whereas the other 335 were directly elected through a proportional representation system). The parties fielding candidates for the proportional race were obliged to put forward candidates on closed lists in accordance with their share of the population (the source is the electoral law). That, combined with selection of minority group candidates for the first-past-the-post race on the list of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), made the Constituent Assembly the most inclusive state institution in Nepal's history.

to ensure that the exclusions of the past are not reproduced in the present.

Malaysia is frequently held up as a country in which affirmative action policies seem to have worked (see Box 5.6), and there has been a systematic decline in ethnic disparities over time. But it is important to note that its success stemmed from the simultaneous pursuit of affirmative action and structural economic change.<sup>121</sup> Had growth been the sole focus, only those with productive resources would have gained, and thus social inequalities may have increased, resulting in renewed conflict. At the same time, had the state only focused on redistributing existing wealth, excessive burden on the minorities would have rendered affirmative action politically and economically unfeasible.

The use of affirmative action by an economically disadvantaged but politically dominant ethnic majority was not so successful in the Sri Lankan case. While income disparities between the Sri Lankan Tamil and Sinhala communities were not large, the former had enjoyed privileged access to education and government jobs since colonial times. The replacement of English with Sinhalese as the official language, the use of educational quotas

### Box 5.6 Affirmative action in Malaysia

When Malaysia became independent, the majority *Bumiputera* community were at severe economic disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the Chinese minority. Broadly democratic institutions soon gave the *Bumiputera* an entrenched political majority. Serious ethnic riots in 1969 led to the adoption of the New Economic Policy, which had a strong focus on correcting economic imbalances. It introduced quotas, targets and affirmative action with respect to education, land ownership, public service employment and ownership of quoted companies.

and regional investment policies achieved the goal of addressing Sinhala disadvantage, but the drastic reversal of group inequalities left the Sri Lankan Tamils feeling that they could never expect equality of treatment. The conflict was spurred by the apparent lack of any political avenues through which to resolve their grievances.<sup>122</sup>

The constitutional reforms that took place in Latin America in the 1980s were in response to the growing tide of social mobilisation against repressive military governments. The active participation of indigenous and black organisations within these movements led to the greater incorporation of anti-discrimination strategies in the campaigns of mainstream political parties. The constitutional reforms recognised the multi-ethnic nature of these societies and, in some cases, acknowledged the specific rights of indigenous peoples.

Colombia, Peru and Venezuela have political quotas for ethnic minorities, and specifically for indigenous peoples.<sup>123</sup> A number of universities in Brazil have introduced quotas for Afro-descendants. Local governments, such as those in Brazil and Uruguay, have set up special departments for Afro-descendant issues.<sup>124</sup> None of these countries has designed political quotas for ethnic minority women, whose representation in the national legislatures of Latin America continues to be especially low. However, all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean now have a ministry or department dedicated to women's empowerment, and several have a women's ombudsperson or someone within that department dedicated to gender issues.<sup>125</sup> Peru has set up a human rights ombudsman to help enforce the rights of indigenous people.

Debates continue about the desirability of affirmative action. Such policies may meet with vigorous opposition from previously privileged groups, leading to the outbreak of conflict. And if they are not time-bound, they can serve to reinforce the salience of identity as a factor in public life. At the same time, proponents emphasise that the greater representation of historically disadvantaged groups in public life could not have come about without such action. In India, where it has been in operation for several decades, quotas have succeeded in creating a middle class of *Dalits*, something that is missing in neighbouring Nepal.



Mato Grosso, Brazil: the Movimento dos Sem Terra (MST – Brazil's Landless Workers Movement) camp on the Bordolandia farm, located between the municipalities of Bom Jesus do Araguaia and Serra Nova Dourada. Photographer: Eduardo Martino/Panos Pictures

### 5.6 Land reform

The MDG objectives on extreme poverty and the livelihoods of the poor require policy action on the economic front. *Governments need to play an active role in promoting the fairer distribution of productive assets in favour of poor and excluded people – for instance, through the reform of property rights.* Land is critical in rural economies because it is a precondition for access to water, grazing rights, residential security and other resources. There is, of course, a natural limit to what can be achieved through radical land redistribution in densely populated countries like India. However, even where there is not enough land to benefit all sections of the poor, land reform can have the effect of damping down the monopoly bargaining power of large landlords. But as land reform is likely to be a long-term and challenging process, other measures should also be explored.

*Land legislation should be revised to secure longer-term tenancy arrangements, and resolution of disputes regarding interpretation and enforcement of land rental arrangements.* Where tenant protection has been vigorously implemented by the state, as in West Bengal, it has led to a rise in productivity.<sup>126</sup> Elsewhere, poor and

marginalised groups have had to engage in collective action to press for recognition of their claims.

*There is also a need to recognise different landholding patterns among indigenous people.* The new Land Law in Vietnam, for instance, provides for land allocation practices that accommodate communal land use patterns and also joint titling

#### Box 5.7 Tackling institutionalised racism in Brazil

In Brazil, the growing power of Afro-Brazilian groups within the Workers' Party contributed to the open promotion of the goal of racial equality. In the mid-1990s, President Cardoso publicly acknowledged that racism existed in the country, opening the way for public policies to deal with the problem.

Led by Lula da Silva, the Workers' Party came to power in 2002 on a platform of 'Brazil without racism'. It stated that policies for the promotion of equality of opportunities and treatment should not be limited to the activity of isolated agencies within the government, but should be the responsibility of government as a whole in accordance with the legal provisions.

A Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality was set up in 2003 as an advisory body to the Presidency with the mission of promoting racial equality and protecting the rights of ethnic and racial groups.



## Box 5.8 Land rights campaigns in India

*Ekta Parishad*, a federation of community-based organisations in India, campaigns on land rights across eight states. It believes that granting rights to small pieces of land for the landless poor, thereby reducing their dependence on casual wage labour, is critical to breaking the cycle of poverty. However, even where the poor have legal entitlement to land, they are not able to claim it.

In December 2005, an assembly of representatives of landless groups agreed a set of demands on land and livelihoods. If the government of India would not meet those demands by October 2007, 25,000 landless people would march (*padayatra*) to Delhi to highlight their plight.

They developed three specific demands around land reform in order to mobilise people for action to create fairer policies for the most vulnerable groups:

- Establish a National Land Authority to provide a clear statement of land utilisation in India, identify the lands available for redistribution and strengthen pro-poor laws
- Establish fast-track courts to settle past and future conflicts related to land
- Establish a single window system so that farmers can resolve land issues easily and freely, without wasting time, money and energy.

In October 2007, 25,000 landless people, many of them *Adivasis* and *Dalits*, gathered to walk together to claim their rights. They walked almost 350km from Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh to Delhi, marching for almost a month. They highlighted their plight from state to state, raising public and media interest in their cause.

Faced with growing public attention and pressure, the government agreed to speak to the representatives. The Minister of Rural Development came to the assembly ground and announced that the government would agree to their demands. A National Land Reform Commission was created to develop policies on land reform. It is now headed by the Prime Minister.

Source: Christian Aid (forthcoming)<sup>99</sup>

to include women. The Sarawak Land Code grants the native customary land regime a special status in recognition of the link between indigenous identity and indigenous land. However, government attempts to modernise native agriculture, without due attention to differing local circumstances, have left the *Dayaks*, the indigenous people of Sarawak, worse off. Properly designed approaches to land rights require guidelines for implementation that ensure effective protection of the land rights of indigenous people.

In Latin America, indigenous groups have been active in demanding recognition of indigenous territories and collective land rights. A review of the new constitutions and agrarian codes put in place in a number of Latin American countries since the late 1980s shows that they have made considerable gains.<sup>127</sup> Land regularisation programmes for indigenous people

have also been used throughout the region, though they vary widely in their effectiveness.

Programmes for Afro-descendant rural communities, modelled largely on the recognition of indigenous communities' collective rights, have also been implemented in Colombia, Brazil and Ecuador. Since 1993, *Ley* (Law) 70 has recognised Afro-Colombian communities, seeking to protect their territories and strengthen their rights. The Brazilian government has recognised these lands since the 1988 Constitution, but actual titling and thus legal recognition and support was stalled until 2001, with the beginnings of affirmative action.<sup>128</sup> Ecuador passed a similar law in 2004, with policies and strategies for the development of Afro-Ecuadorian communities.<sup>129</sup>

Latin America has also made considerable progress in the legal recognition of women's land rights. This has been achieved through a combination of women's own mobilising efforts, the transition to democracy in many countries in the region, and the impetus provided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

## 5.7 Promoting livelihoods, decent work and access to credit

MDG 1 – reducing extreme poverty – was amended in 2005 to include access to 'productive and decent employment', since it is obvious that for most people, poverty cannot be structurally addressed without also creating opportunities for decent work. Generating sustainable employment is ultimately a matter for the macroeconomic policy framework. *However, governments can take action to improve the equitable functioning of labour markets with sector-wide minimum wage provisions and the promotion of core labour standards across all sectors.*

While many countries have broad civil protection against discrimination, as well as specific labour legislation, implementation and enforcement is generally weak.<sup>130</sup> The relevant ministries and monitoring bodies are poorly funded and have limited expertise. The use of civil suits to compel enforcement or to compensate victims of discrimination is not widespread in most developing countries. In any case, in many developing countries, most poor people work in the informal economy, putting them outside the purview of labour regulation.

*Organisations for informal workers provide important models for creating dialogue between employers, informal workers and governments in ways that more traditional trade unions have often failed to do.* They have also succeeded in getting legal protection for their members, despite their

**Table 5.1 Collective land rights in new constitutions and agrarian codes**

Country	Recognition of indigenous land claims Constitution	Code	Recognition of collective indigenous lands	Recognition of customary law	Possibility of privatising collective land
Bolivia	1994	1996	Yes	Yes	No
Brazil	1998	No	No	No	No
Chile	No	Yes (1993)	No	No	Yes (1979); No (1993)
Colombia	1991	1994	Yes	Yes	No
Costa Rica	No	–	–	–	–
Ecuador	1998	1994	Yes	Yes	Yes (1994); No (1998)
El Salvador	No	–	–	–	–
Guatemala	1998	–	Yes	Yes	No
Honduras	No	1992	Yes	No	–
Mexico	1992	–	Yes	Partial	Yes
Nicaragua	1987	–	Yes	Yes	No
Peru	1993	1995	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source Deere and León (2001)<sup>127</sup>

informal status. Development organisations have worked with dispossessed tribal groups in Orissa, India, who had been forced into bonded labour, to take up resources offered under government rehabilitation schemes and to organise themselves to bargain with their landlords. Sankalp, in Uttar Pradesh, supports the self-help organisation of tribal mine workers in forming worker co-operatives and applying for mine leases as a tool against child and bonded labour. Social mobilisation efforts in these areas have resulted in children being sent to school and adults starting up their own literacy classes. Self-help organisations have also encouraged these groups to get more involved in the running of local schools in order to counter teacher absenteeism.

*Promoting the skills and productivity of marginalised groups is essential if they are to escape poverty.* The IADB has been funding ‘demand-driven’ training and employment programmes in a number of Latin American countries to address poor labour market performance among ‘low-income, high-risk’ youth. These programmes consist of short-term traineeships oriented towards basic work skills and practices, followed by an internship, which allows participants to gain valuable experience in a formal sector job. Evaluations report that, while their impacts vary across countries, women and younger cohorts have benefited in terms of increased likelihood of employment. There was also some evidence of a positive impact in terms of quality of employment among those who found jobs. The first job experience has been found to be significant to longer-term job performance and earnings potential.<sup>131</sup>

The outreach and design of agricultural extension services could be considerably

improved to better meet the needs of indigenous farmers. Women farmers in particular are persistently excluded from such services.<sup>132</sup> Research has endorsed the *broad-based public provision of agricultural extension services but suggests that some degree of targeting may be necessary to tailor services to local needs.*<sup>133</sup> However, geographical targeting only partly addresses the problem if extension services are disproportionately taken up by majority groups living in areas with ethnic minority concentrations. Specific interventions and programmes targeted geographically at poor areas need to be appropriately tailored to the problems and needs of ethnic minority households.

*Microfinance initiatives have made some headway in delivering financial services to the poor.* Many non-governmental organisations and even governments (for example, India) have been involved in pro-poor lending programmes.

### Box 5.9 Informal workers organise to claim rights

The Self Employed Women’s Association in India has been working with women workers in the informal economy – both waged and self-employed – since the 1970s. It combines a trade union approach to engage in collective bargaining on behalf of its members with a co-operative approach to promote their livelihood strategies.

It has more than 700,000 members spread across a number of states in India and lobbies the government to win legal recognition of members’ rights, including minimum wage legislation. It played an important role in the government’s adoption of the Social Security for the Unorganised Sector Act. It has also been active at the international level and is one of the founding members of a global network of women workers, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), which collects data, conducts research and engages in advocacy on behalf of its members. They were an active force behind the adoption of the ILO Convention for Homeworkers.



A young Colombian girl from the mainly Afro-descendant area of Quibdó in Colombia's Chocó Department. The MDG Fund programme on nutrition and food security is working with schools to ensure children are aware of, and have access to, a healthy diet. Photographer: David Parra

However, the vast majority of them are concentrated in Asia. In the South Asian context, group-based lending of the kind pioneered by Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, and the self-help group model pioneered by organisations like MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) and PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) in India, have been found to be more successful in reaching poor and excluded groups than individual lending.<sup>134</sup> One study in India found that the poor comprised 43 per cent of borrowers under a group-based approach compared with 15 per cent under individual lending approaches. Thirty-five per cent of their members were from *Dalit* and *Adivasi* groups, compared with 32 per cent for individual lending programmes. They also performed considerably better at reaching women: 95 per cent, compared with just 35 per cent for individual lending programmes.

The kind of group-based approach used can also make a considerable difference to outcomes. Studies from South Asia suggest that organisations which specialise in the minimalist microfinance approach do very little to empower their clients, often women, in terms of participation in their wider community or in politics.<sup>135</sup> In the Bangladesh context, it has been found that savings-led group strategies have been more successful in generating impacts in community and political participation than mainstream credit-led approaches.<sup>136</sup> *It is important to combine microfinance provision with a range of supportive services, including livelihoods training and market access, if clients are to graduate out of poverty.*

## 5.8 Investing in infrastructure and area development

The spatial concentration of poverty and social exclusion means that certain areas of a country face intersecting development deficits – in terms of infrastructure, services, markets – which set them apart from the rest of the country. These areas may be remote rural locations or urban slum neighbourhoods. National, sector-specific or targeted group approaches are unlikely to have much impact on their situation. *A more comprehensive area development approach will be necessary to deal with the structural causes of disadvantage as well as tackling immediate problems.* These can encompass roads, public transportation and household utilities such as water, sanitation and electricity and social services.

The area development approach is more effective because it allows governments to act simultaneously on a number of inequalities and to benefit from the resulting synergies. For instance, the construction of transport infrastructure not only contributes to economic activities and poverty reduction but also improves the access of women and children to schools and health services. *A decentralised approach and attention to local governance becomes increasingly important for area-based development, given the evident limitations of centralised, top-down systems of planning, budgeting, implementation and administration.*

The Northern Mountains Community Development Project in Vietnam is a multi-sectoral decentralised project to assist 1 million rural poor people, 85 per cent from ethnic minority groups, in one of the country's poorest regions. The project used a participatory approach to build infrastructure and social services in the region: this included schools, commune health stations, roads, improved water supply, new irrigation schemes and agricultural extensions services. In addition, evaluations of the first phase suggest that average household income in the area more than doubled between 2004 and 2007.<sup>137</sup> The project is now in its second phase.

The proposed Mexico Indigenous People's Development Project is another example of area-based development directed at socially excluded groups. This will involve infrastructure sub-projects in water, sanitation, electrification and rural roads. In addition, indigenous people's participation will be built into the project with a view to 'building social capital' for development.

Indigenous groups have often been subject to forcible and disruptive resettlement to make way for large-scale infrastructure projects that they

have not been consulted about and are unlikely to benefit from. Indigenous people represent a special case for resettlement because of their deep attachment to ancestral lands. In many cases, smaller projects can yield higher returns. However, large infrastructure projects are likely to be undertaken if their gains are considered to outweigh their costs. If resettlement is deemed necessary, it needs to be designed in direct consultation with those affected and should be planned to improve their living standards, physical security, productive capacity and income levels. They need to be offered a direct and commensurate share of the benefits of the main project. In irrigation projects, they can receive title deeds and actual use of irrigated lands as part of their compensation. In some countries, indigenous groups have been trained as forest management experts and forest guards, and they continue to live in the forest protection zone created with the construction of a hydroelectric complex.

### 5.9 Extending basic services to all groups

Labour remains the most abundant asset of poor and socially excluded groups. Investments in their human capital and human capabilities have been found to contribute to people's survival and wellbeing, as well as providing an important escape route out of poverty and social exclusion. Such investments are central to the social MDGs.

#### Providing physical access

*Making social services more inclusive will require action on the various constraints that exclude poor people.* Physical access is the first policy challenge. Directing services to areas that are under-served by service providers can be combined with a strong element of demand mobilisation to determine the shape and form of services. In India, the Educational Guarantee Scheme in Madhya Pradesh guarantees state provision of a primary school to children in areas where there is no such facility within a kilometre, within 90 days of receiving a demand from the community. Eligible communities must have at least 40 learners in the 6–14 age group, but in tribal areas, only 25 learners are necessary. Evaluations suggest that tribal areas have benefited disproportionately from this provision and that there has been a sharp reduction in the numbers of out-of-school children in these communities.

In terms of healthcare, governments have to find ways of connecting excluded groups with qualified professionals, particularly in rural areas. Gonoshasthya Kendra, a health-based NGO in Bangladesh, adopted the barefoot doctor model from China to train female paramedics to

provide healthcare outreach to the poor. It was extremely successful in bringing down maternal mortality rates in the areas it served. In Indonesia, doctors had to complete compulsory service in health centres for five years, with shorter periods for more remote areas, before they could obtain a lucrative civil service post. This increased the number of doctors in health centres by an average of 97 per cent from 1985 to 1994, with gains of more than 200 per cent for remote rural areas.

Malaysia and Sri Lanka have achieved substantial reductions in maternal mortality rates by making competent professional midwives and supervisory nurse-midwives widely available in rural areas to assist in deliveries at home or in small rural hospitals. In Afghanistan, roving extension clinics visit sparsely populated areas to provide care locally or help with transportation to better facilities when required. Transportation or transport subsidies are used to enable emergency visits to hospital in Bangladesh.

In China, there have been substantial reductions in maternal mortality in the poorer, rural western provinces as a result of targeted government interventions.<sup>138</sup> The most outstanding performance was in Yunnan, one of the poorest and most remote provinces, where the maternal mortality ratio declined from 149 in 1989 to 101 per 100,000 live births in 1998.<sup>139</sup>

#### Making healthcare affordable

Affordability is the second policy challenge. In the light of the dramatic impact of the imposition of user fees, a number of African countries have now abolished fees or phased them out, replacing the

**India, Jaipur district, Rajasthan: in the village of Dhani Bagaria a Dalit woman works in front of her home putting down a new layer of mud as a young girl gathers firewood.**

**Photographer: Mikkel Ostergaard/Panos Pictures**





A social worker in the northern Tigray region of Ethiopia gathers data and information on community health conditions. The role of rural social workers is critical to ensuring that all citizens are accounted for in national interventions to achieve the MDGs. Photographer: Sophie de Caen, MDG Achievement Fund

lost income from pooled funds (e.g. public subsidies, insurance and pre-payment schemes). This has resulted in substantial increases in service utilisation, particularly by the poor. In Uganda, for instance, the abolition of user fees led to a sudden, dramatic and sustained uptake of health services.<sup>140</sup> Similarly positive responses were reported in relation to the abolition of school fees in Kenya and Malawi. The pooling of resources has the potential to build solidarity across the system, allowing some degree of cross-subsidy.

‘Pre-payment and pooling institutionalizes solidarity between the rich and the less well-off, and between the healthy and the sick. It lifts barriers to the uptake of services and reduces the risk that people will incur catastrophic expenses when they are sick. Finally, it provides the means to re-invest in the availability, range and quality of services.’<sup>141</sup>

**Making services relevant and representative**  
However, the increased demand for schooling and health services has drawn attention to the

importance of investing in the quality and relevance of services, particularly from the point of view of socially excluded groups. Recruiting and training service providers from these communities is an important means of signalling state commitment to more inclusive services and helps bridge the social distance between mainstream services and excluded groups. It also helps to build parental involvement and community support. Mongolia has experimented with the establishment of pre-school units using the traditional *gers* (a type of yurt) as training centres during the summer. Teachers are nomads, moving with their families and stock, together with a group of households involved in pre-school education programmes. In India, the Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (RLEK), together with the *Van Gujjars* (indigenous forest nomads) in Uttaranchal, have devised an innovative approach whereby local teachers migrate with the community and implement a culturally adapted curriculum.

Reliance on women community health workers in countries where there are restrictions

on women's mobility in the public domain have made a considerable difference to maternal health. Initiatives in Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh have raised awareness of health conditions, addressed taboos and created demand for reproductive health services, enabling women to claim their health rights. In Nepal, which had extremely high maternal and child mortality rates, women health workers have been instrumental in improving health outcomes because of their proximity to the community. Health services offered in local languages or by women doctors have also proven to be effective.

Public action and community mobilisation can play an important role in extending services to socially excluded groups. In Mexico, for example, mobilisation by women's reproductive health groups in collaboration with a research institute that focused on budgetary analysis highlighted long-standing inequalities in federal support to the poorest states, which had the highest rates of maternal mortality. In Bolivia, India and Nepal, community mobilisation through participatory women's groups helped to improve birth outcomes in poor rural communities. Initiatives included setting up women's organisations, developing women's skills in identifying and prioritising problems, and training community members in safe birthing techniques.

In Bolivia, community mobilisation led to a decline in perinatal mortality and an increase in the proportion of women receiving prenatal care and starting to breastfeed on the first day after birth. In Nepal, the same approach led to a reduction in neonatal mortality and an even larger and statistically more significant effect on maternal mortality rates. In the Indian context, where the intervention was carried out in two states with high proportions of *Adivasi* groups, it was associated with a dramatic fall in neonatal mortality rates.

### Extending access to education

In the field of education, nurturing women teachers in Pakistan and Afghanistan has had some success, such as chaperoning girls to school and back, assuring their physical security but also accommodating conservative notions of 'propriety'.<sup>142</sup> For older girls, school sanitation (including running water and privacy) is an issue. Enclosed toilets can help address parents' notions that their menstruating daughters should not attend school. In caste-divided communities, sharing a water tap at school or eating meals together can help tackle discriminatory attitudes learned at home or in the wider community.<sup>143</sup>

### Box 5.10 Mobilising around maternal mortality in Mexico

During the 1990s, women's groups in Mexico came together around the issue of maternal mortality, supported by international initiatives, including the MDGs. In 2001, the government launched *Arranque Parejo en la Vida* (A Fair Start in Life, or APV), a programme focused on women during their childbearing years and children under two years old, as part of its commitments to meeting the MDGs. However, maternal mortality rates among indigenous groups remained high.

In 2002, *Fundar*, a research institution that specialised in budgetary analysis, was asked to do an assessment of government policy around maternal health. They formed a coalition with a diverse group of women's organisations, including those with expertise in reproductive health, and in media relations. One important partner organisation was *K'inol Antzetik* ('Land of Women' in the Mayan language).

The coalition's research found that rates of maternal mortality varied widely between states, and that public funds were not being spent in areas with the highest rates. Even after successfully campaigning for greater allocation to APV in the 2003 budget, they found huge inequalities in expenditure across states. For example, in 2003, Chiapas (with a maternal mortality rate of 93.2 per 100,000 live births) was allocated 980,192 pesos for APV, while Nuevo León (with a rate of 28.5) received 23,968,069 pesos.

In addition, allocated funds were not being spent; in Chiapas, which received its highest ever budget allocation in 2003, only 45 per cent of the resources had been spent. The coalition used their research findings to campaign for policy improvements, and the results were publicised through media campaigns and public meetings.

The success of the coalition's campaign was, in part, linked to its international element; the fact that the United Nations repeatedly endorsed the reduction of maternal mortality, and that the Mexican government was a signatory to several international initiatives, gave the cause both social and political legitimacy, giving the coalition a moral lever in its engagement with government. It helped place the issue of safe delivery firmly on the policy agenda and in 2009 and 2010, a number of states have seen a dramatic decrease in maternal mortality rates (see Box 5.11).

Source: Layton *et al.* (2007)<sup>29</sup>

There is now increasing recognition of the need for bilingual education for minority groups, initially providing instruction in the mother tongue, and gradually moving on to the mainstream language. Studies suggest that the implementation of this education model can improve the performance of minority language groups, increasing enrolment rates, improving educational results and reducing gender gaps in schooling, thus increasing the likelihood of learning the mainstream language.

The Brazilian government has created a law (10.639) to teach about the history of Africa and Afro-Brazilians. It has also begun a national school textbook programme to substitute books depicting racist stereotypes with those that promote the diversity of Brazilian society. In India, schoolbook

### Box 5.11 Reducing maternal mortality in Mexico

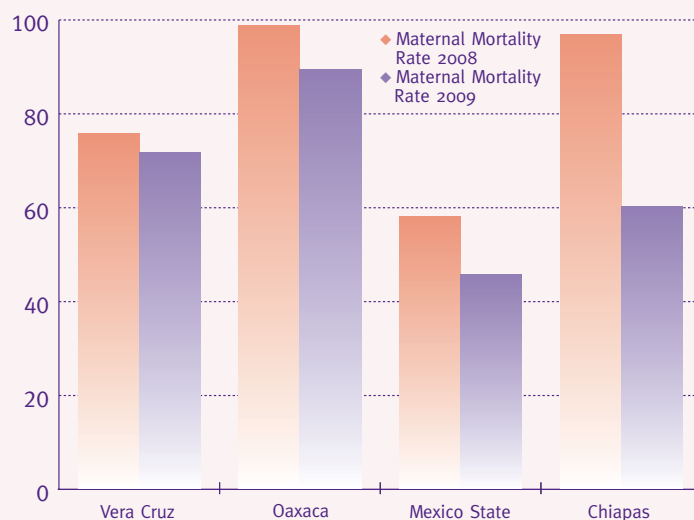
Figure 5.1 shows a significant reduction of maternal mortality in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, between 2009 and 2010. This has been spurred by several state-level policies:

#### Working with indigenous midwives

In Chiapas, 56 per cent of all pregnancies/deliveries are handled by (mainly indigenous) midwives. The collaboration with indigenous midwives has been critical in reducing maternal mortality: without their inclusion in interventions, the likelihood of indigenous women using the health services is very remote.

- 1,000 of the most active midwives received capacity building focused on various aspects of reproductive health such as clean delivery and how to detect ‘alarm signs’.
- These women were given an essential midwifery tool kit with stethoscope, gloves and special scissors for cutting the umbilical cord and cell phones connected free of charge to their closest hospital and clinic.
- A new ‘Hospital of Cultures’ has been opened offering regular training that integrates scientific and traditional knowledge. This initiative has led doctors to accept and work with the traditional indigenous practice of vertical delivery.

Figure 5.1 Maternal mortality rates, selected states in Mexico



Source Subsecretaria de Prevencion de la Salud (2010) ‘Strategia Integral para Acelerar la reduccion de la Mortalidad Materna en Mexico’, power point presentation

- 17 ‘Motherhood Houses’, staffed by both doctors and indigenous midwives, have been established. Instead of returning to their villages, women can stay there when close to delivery, to ensure they can return to the hospital in time.

#### Working with community networks

Over the past five years, networks of health committees have been established with the participation of the mayors of the 118 municipalities. These committees know about pregnancies in their area.

- Some 3,000 rural health auxiliaries, who are elected by their communities and have already been active for some years, have received training and health kits. They identify pregnant women in the community and give them the necessary information for a healthy pregnancy.
- Links are maintained with local NGOs to ensure that information and advice is consistent.

#### Working with hospitals

Fifty per cent of hospital admissions are for obstetric care. Between 2009 and 2010, over US\$50 million was invested in hospital infrastructure.

- 17 new hospitals have been built, each with 60 beds, some of which are reserved for women. Hospitals will be supported by smaller clinics, *Basicos Comunitarios*, who will deal with less urgent cases and follow up.
- 138 health centres have opened across the state, each with a live-in doctor, Monday to Friday.
- To support hospital transfer, the state government has purchased an ambulance for each municipality. State helicopters may also on occasion do emergency rescues in rural areas.

#### Working at the national level

- The Health Secretary has coordinated with the System for the Integral Development of the Family (Dif) to ensure that, in indigenous areas, all pregnant women receive a nutritional package with vitamins, iron and other supplements. This has helped to improve the health of newborn babies and to reduce child mortality.
- There is a national agreement on ‘Agreement of Urgent Obstetric Care’ which obliges all clinics to attend to urgent pregnancy cases free of charge regardless of health insurance coverage.
- This has been supported by the national programme ‘Health Pregnancy’, started in 2009, which allows women to deliver at a hospital free of charge, if they come for pre-natal care.

Source Interview with Secretary of Health, State of Chiapas, Mexico (James Gómez Montes), 31 July 2010

examples of famous *Dalit* personalities are gradually being recognised as a tool to create pride and address prejudice. Behaviour-change communication in general is an under-utilised tool that could be used to great effect, notably in schools, health institutions, and public offices.

#### 5.10 Inclusive social protection

Social protection has emerged as a critical component of development policy in response to the recurring financial crises that have

accompanied the process of globalisation. Social protection policies for the poor include social transfers (in cash and in kind) as well as public works programmes, school-feeding programmes and community-based insurance schemes. They are now estimated to reach over 150 million households in poor countries and benefit around half a billion people.<sup>144</sup>

The emerging literature on social protection emphasises its redistributive potential and its synergy with development objectives.<sup>145</sup> Its

redistributive potential rests on its success in reaching poor and marginalised groups, as well as design mechanisms to guard against leakage and high administration costs. Where they have been well designed, social protection measures have helped to make development efforts more inclusive on a variety of fronts. Indeed, as long as they are well targeted towards the very poor, social protection measures are likely to benefit socially excluded groups because they comprise a disproportionate share of the poor.

### Targeted schemes can be effective in reaching socially excluded groups

This is the case, for instance, with Mexico's conditional cash transfer programme, *Oportunidades*, where mothers in low-income households receive monthly cash transfers on condition that their children attend school and health clinics. As a well-targeted programme, it has benefited indigenous peoples disproportionately, although it is still not reaching some of the poorest indigenous communities who need it most but are hardest to reach. Indigenous children in families or communities that are receiving the transfers are as likely as non-indigenous children to remain in school, and the programme has been successful in closing gender and ethnic disparities in education.

In Brazil, 21.7 per cent of Afro-descendant families (based on the recipient race) received the *Bolsa Familia* (family grant) compared with 8.7 per cent of white families, which reflects the racial differences in levels of extreme poverty.<sup>146</sup> Unconditional cash transfers in the form of the child support grant in South Africa, and social pensions in Brazil, South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana, have also effectively targeted poor and excluded groups. Indeed, the old age pension in South Africa is regarded as the most effective social programme in targeting and reaching economically vulnerable groups, and is the primary source of income for older people who would otherwise be living in abject poverty.

The newly enacted National Employment Guarantee Scheme in India is a self-targeted programme with strong inclusive elements built into it. It requires that a third of jobs should be reserved for women and crèches provided where there are more than a certain number of women on a scheme. It also stipulates that some of the infrastructure projects should be used to promote land improvement and other assets for socially marginalised groups. Early evaluations confirm high levels of participation by women, *Dalits* and *Adivasis*. The scheme works best in areas where there are civil society organisations able to mobilise those groups who are entitled to participate.



**Afro-descendant children from the coastal areas of Colombia's Chocó Department where infant mortality rates are double the national average, with 60 per cent of children aged 1–4 suffering from anaemia. The Chocó has the lowest social indicators and is home to thousands of internally displaced people due to Colombia's national conflict. Photographer: David Parra**

### Positive direct and knock-on effects

What is important to note in the emerging literature on social protection is not only the ability of well-designed programmes to reach some of the most excluded groups, but also their potential to generate a range of positive direct and knock-on effects. This broader developmental impact helps to offset some of the concerns around the affordability of redistributive policies.

For instance, the use of public works to build local infrastructure has been found to generate strong multiplier effects in the local economy and in terms of access to social services. Pensions for older people in South Africa and Namibia have had the knock-on effect of improving children's nutrition and education, as well as female labour force participation among African households.<sup>147</sup> The regularity of the pension has also eased access to credit and provided a stimulus to local trade.

Social protection schemes also have the potential to address other aspects of social exclusion. In Andhra Pradesh, India, the willingness of the state government to engage with women's self-help groups in managing a nationally mandated school-feeding programme ensured that many lower caste women were employed to work as cooks, and that many of the children who benefited were from the lowest castes.

In rural Malawi, a cash transfer programme directed to women through bank accounts issued them with smart cards containing their personal and bank account details. This achieved a degree of financial inclusion for thousands of rural families who had previously been excluded from





An afterschool centre in the township of Katatura, Windhoek, Namibia. Photographer: Barbara Cheney

financial services. Evaluations also revealed that the women who received identity documents and/or smart cards felt strongly empowered by the legal recognition that these documents represented. In focus group discussions, several women stated passionately that, before the project, it was as if they did not exist in the eyes of the state, but now that they had their ‘papers’, they had an identity and the government could no longer ignore them.<sup>148</sup>

Similarly, the citizenship potential of the *Bolsa Familia*<sup>149</sup> is illustrated by the views of female beneficiaries drawn from ‘a Brazil that is poor, non-white and with scarce social mobility opportunities’. For these women, receipt of the transfers constituted their first contact with the state. The need to obtain documents such as birth certificates and identity cards in order to register and apply for the *Bolsa Familia* brought home to them their membership of a larger social entity beyond their immediate community. As one of the managers put it, it ‘caused a *revolution*, an overturning of awareness of the social space that they can seek to belong to...’<sup>150</sup>

The contribution that social protection

schemes can make to social cohesion has also been explored through studies of cash transfers in the post-conflict context of Colombia.<sup>151</sup> Here, women’s regular participation in various activities required by the programme (meetings, training courses, visiting health centres) contributed to building trust within the community, as expressed by their willingness to invest in public goods that would benefit all members.

Several states have now institutionalised social protection as a basic right. In some countries, such as Thailand, this has taken the form of universal provision: what started out as the ‘30 baht scheme’ to provide access to healthcare for informal workers had expanded into universal coverage by 2002, the culmination of a 27-year process which began with a low-income scheme for the poor. Elsewhere, it has taken the form of a ‘social guarantee’ approach, which seeks to incorporate the commitment to access, quality, continuous revision and participation and redress within service provision.<sup>152</sup> The Regime of Explicit Guarantees in Health in Chile is an example of an approach that has been conceived within such a framework.

# Conclusion: key concerns and principles

# 6

**'We resolve therefore to respect fully and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...'**  
(Millennium Declaration 2000, para. 25)

Ethnically diverse societies do not have to be ethnically divided societies. Cultural or religious differences only harden into exclusion and conflict when there is systematic discrimination – when people are denied resources, recognition and representation because of who they are, what they believe or where they live. The persistence of historically established patterns of exclusion and the conflicts that they generate can give rise to a deep sense of despair and hopelessness. However, there are enough examples of progress, many of which have been touched on in this report, to suggest that change is possible if we learn the lessons of history. A range of practical policies and interventions has brought about change in different parts of the world. This leads us to suggest a number of key concerns, principles and recommendations that can provide the basis for continued efforts to tackle social exclusion.

## Using a rights framework to tackle social exclusion

Social exclusion entails the denial of full personhood and full citizenship to excluded groups. The first principle, therefore, relates to the importance of locating efforts to overcome social exclusion within the broad framework provided by the International Bill of Human rights. This includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two Conventions adopted on the basis of that Declaration, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Although these provide a highly abstract normative framework, they uphold the importance and indivisibility of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and enshrine the commitment to equal worth and dignity of all human beings that is the underlying rationale for tackling social exclusion.

How this is translated into actionable policies may involve many different elements: the constitutional enshrinement of rights, the use of the law, the provision of social guarantees, the strengthening of inclusive democratic process, and the systematic right to information and

transparency. Other human rights conventions, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which requires states to report on progress in promoting gender equality, help to buttress the Universal Declaration.

## Engaging citizens in change

A second principle stems from concerns relating to the question of citizenship. A great deal of the literature revolves around a *vertical* model of citizenship – one that focuses on democratising relationships between states and their citizens. But the social exclusion literature brings home the need to complement this with a *horizontal* view of citizenship – one that stresses that the relationship *between* citizens is at least as important.<sup>153</sup> It is not the state alone that is responsible for tackling the barriers of discrimination. The agenda for change must also focus on citizens themselves, particularly those whose attitudes and prejudices serve to perpetuate discrimination on an everyday basis. The principles of tolerance and solidarity spelt out in the Millennium Declaration are, in other words, essential in any agenda to promote equality.

## Getting the right balance between equality and difference

The third principle relates to the challenge of balancing equality and difference. In other words, to what extent can broad-based or universal policies to promote equality of opportunity be combined with making special provision for those who have been systematically excluded in the past? While these are often treated as mutually incompatible approaches, they can, in fact, work successfully in tandem. Universalist approaches are essential to building a sense of social solidarity and citizenship, particularly critical for excluded groups. Universal coverage also gives privileged groups more of a stake in policy outcomes, a greater willingness to contribute to them, and hence the greater possibility of redistribution through cross-subsidies from the affluent to the poor.

At the same time, the fact that it is their 'difference' from the rest of the poor that has led socially excluded groups to be left behind or locked out of processes of growth and development suggests that 'universality' should



Women in a desert village between Mauritania and Senegal play the traditional rhythms and dance to the music that is an integral part of their culture. Photographer: Layla Saad, MDG Achievement Fund

not be taken to imply ‘uniformity’. There are strong grounds for plurality and diversity within universal frameworks of provision.

To date, targeted programmes have generally served as a means of compensating for government weakness in delivering universal services rather than as a means of addressing exclusion. The achievement of ‘inclusion by design’<sup>154</sup> will need careful thought, with attention to building in incentives to promote such outcomes. Targeted programmes may end up marginalising some groups just as much as poorly implemented universal approaches if they rely on ‘labelling’ practices that reinforce stigma.<sup>155</sup> In the final analysis, the greater the

participation of excluded groups in the design of programmes and in the political decision-making processes that affect their lives, the less necessary it may be to address their problems in isolation from the rest of the population.

#### Achieving transformative change

A fourth principle is the need to go beyond ameliorative approaches that address the symptoms of the problem to transformative approaches that address its root causes. It is quite possible to meet the basic needs of poor and marginalised groups without strengthening their capacity to do so themselves, thereby leaving their longer-term vulnerability intact. Addressing

the causes of social exclusion means breaking the processes by which disadvantage is reproduced over time and across generations. There is scope here to explore multi-pronged approaches that address different dimensions of disadvantage.

### Group-based exclusion requires group-based solutions

A fifth principle stems from the inadequacy of policies that target individuals or households in tackling problems that are essentially collective and group-based. In fact, individual solutions may leave marginalised groups more isolated and impoverished than before. The need for more collective approaches introduces another route through which ‘difference’ may have to be built into the design of policies. This report has provided a variety of examples that emphasise the power of numbers and the importance of solidarity.

### A new social contract for an interconnected world: states, citizens and global governance

The MDGs have provided a major impetus for coordinating national and international efforts to reduce poverty and promote human development. They have helped to mainstream the fight against poverty in the policies, plans and programmes implemented across different regions of the world. But they fell short of the social justice agenda spelt out by the Millennium Declaration. This report has examined the structural factors that give rise to deeply entrenched and intersecting inequalities and the persistence of social exclusion. It has put forward a number of strategic policy options that can help to transform the MDGs into a pathway for social justice.

These are not options to be pursued in isolation. The multidimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion requires such options to be pursued as part of a broader agenda of social transformation. This calls for a new social contract between states and citizens. The report has touched on various policies and interventions that can contribute to building more responsive states and active citizens.

What has been left out of the discussion is the role of the international community, which is also critical for the more equitable achievement of the MDGs. The problems of poverty and social exclusion are not purely national in their causes or their consequences. They are the product of structural inequalities at the global level. Yet this is not acknowledged in the MDGs. While MDGs 1 to 7 concern objectives to be achieved by developing countries, MDG 8 encompasses the relationships

between developed and developing countries.<sup>156</sup> It concerns global partnerships: between governments (including multilateral institutions), the corporate sector and global civil society organisations. Not only does it fail to address the unequal nature of these relationships – as manifested in aid, trade and debt – but it is also the only MDG with no targets or indicators to monitor any form of progress. MDG 8 has been criticised for singularly lacking ‘vision, bark and bite’.<sup>157</sup>

‘Responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally. As the most universal and most representative organization in the world, the United Nations must play the central role.’

(Millennium Declaration, para. 6)

It is extremely unlikely that developing countries will be able to achieve growth, prosperity and social justice without greater attention to building greater solidarity, a genuine partnership of equals, at the global level. This should constitute the central platform for the post-2015 successor to the MDGs. However, in the run-up to 2015, rich countries should prioritise a number of actions to accelerate the pace of progress:

- Honour the commitment to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7 per cent of GNP.
- Recognise and support the role of civil society organisations in mobilising excluded groups, holding governments to account, and transforming power relationships.
- Provide support for a universal social protection floor that allows marginalised groups to cope with risk and invest in their future.
- Promote fairer trade relations, with special attention to the needs of poor farmers, traders and workers, particularly those in the informal economy.
- Hold corporations and the private sector to account for socially responsible investments.
- Strengthen government capacity and commitment to the international human rights framework.

# Further information

## The United Nations MDG Achievement Fund

The United Nations (UN) MDG Achievement Fund was created in December 2006 with a generous contribution from the government of Spain in fulfilment of its aid commitments in relation to MDG 8 (developing a global partnership for development). With almost \$700 million invested in 128 programmes in 49 countries around the world, the MDG Achievement Fund is currently the largest global fund dedicated to achieving the MDGs. We work closely with national governments, citizens and civil society organisations to tackle poverty and inequalities and speed up progress on the MDGs. The MDG Fund represents a unique initiative of the United Nations that brings together more than 22 UN agencies and programmes, building on the strength of each to deliver effective multisectoral interventions that improve the lives of poor and marginalised citizens.

[www.mdgfund.org](http://www.mdgfund.org)

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## Project information

This report has been financed by the MDG Achievement Fund and produced by the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, in the belief that shedding light on the systematic injustices faced by women, men, young people and children around the world can ignite our conviction to embark on a collective fight against poverty and for the equitable achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It has been prepared in the lead-up to the MDG Review Summit to be held at the UN General Assembly in September 2010 in order to place the issue of social exclusion and inequalities firmly on the agenda. It outlines a set of policy recommendations and interventions that governments in poor and middle-income countries can use to tackle social exclusion and inequality in their efforts to achieve the MDGs. The report provides both a substantive input as well as an advocacy tool for the Summit and its follow-up in the years up to 2015.

# Endnotes

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