Understanding and Tackling Social Exclusion

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Understanding Social Exclusion
More than 300 million Indigenous Peoples around the world experience systematic racism and oppression including Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Nations and Native American’s in north and south America, Europe’s Roma people and many others. Their land has been stolen and their cultures and languages undermined. Severe poverty and poor access to basic needs and services including food, housing, health care, education, water and sanitation are more common than in non-indigenous populations.
“Hidden in the back corners of the world is a population of millions of ‘nobodies’: **Citizens of Nowhere**, forgotten by governments, ignored by census takers, amongst the world's poorest and the most **disenfranchised**. They often have no right to schooling, health care or property ownership. They can’t vote or travel and have few advocates. Human rights groups focus on the abuses they suffer not the root causes: their statelessness.

Seth Mydans, International Herald Tribune  April 1st 2007
Dalits or ‘broken people’ are The Untouchables caste in Indian. Around 166 million Dalits are live in prescribed areas denied basic human rights such as property ownership and not allowed to use public services such as wells and temples. Stringent sanctions apply if ‘rules’ are broken including physical abuse. Dalits live in severe poverty doing the dirtiest menial jobs.
Inequality and Poverty

• **Globally 2001:**
  – 1% own 40% of world’s wealth; 50% own 1%.
  – 1 billion people living on less than US$1 a day.
  – 2 billion on living on less than US$2 a day

• **Sub-Saharan Africa:** half population living on less than US$1 a day: ‘a normal life….’

• **Bangladesh:** 50% poor, 31% chronically poor and 25% extremely poor

• **UK:** 2004/5 3.4 million children living in relative poverty

• Compounded by disability, mental illness, etc....
Are these the contours of social exclusion?

Maybe not the right ones—the concept is contested:

- Multiple definitions exist and different actions flow from them

- A European concept that’s spread around the world. Some resistance when other concepts have greater salience e.g.
  
  - Human rights;
  - Poverty and basic needs
  - Income inequalities
  - Social cohesion and social capital
  - Sustainable development
  - Etc.,........

• But in general there are two broad approaches to definition
1. The shopping list approach!

Describes a STAT experienced by particular groups of people – indigenous peoples, the poor, the marginalised, the mentally ill, people with disabilities – who are excluded from:

- a livelihood;
- secure, permanent employment;
- earnings;
- property, credit, or land;
- housing;
- minimal or prevailing consumption levels;
- education, skills, and cultural capital;
- the welfare state;
- citizenship and legal equality;
- democratic participation;
- public goods;
- the nation or the dominant race;
- family and sociability;
- humanity, respect, fulfilment and understanding’ .......etc
The shopping list approach has...

**Advantages:**
- It moves the focus away from shortage of money as the problem of poverty;
- Recognises the wider profound consequences of poverty on psychological, social and cultural levels;
- Re-energised action for greater equity

**Disadvantages:**
- It is just another way of labelling and stigmatising disadvantaged groups;
- Problem is presented as dichotomy – included or excluded – unequal inclusion is invisible?
- Can’t deal with situations where majority are poor
The main disadvantage is shopping lists have ‘no investigative advantage’

They don’t reveal causes
2. A relational approach focuses on...

- **Processes driven by unequal power relationships:**
  - Across four dimensions - economic, political, social and cultural
  - At different levels: individual, households, country, global regions.

- **That create a continuum of inclusion/exclusion**
  - with unjust distributions of resources, capabilities & rights i.e. Inequalities

- **Ultimately preventing societies from:**
  - Meeting and going beyond basic needs for all;
  - Creating participatory and cohesive social systems,
  - Valuing diversity
  - Guaranteeing peace and human rights
  - Sustaining environmental systems
Tackling Social Exclusion
Relational approach emphasises action on:

- **Drivers of inequality** not conditions experienced by particular ‘entrenched excluded’ groups

- **Operating at and across different levels** – individual, country, global region;

- **Along and between different dimensions** – social, economic, cultural, political,

But must recognise:
- **Global diversity:** concept not equally salient in all countries & regions

- **Still potential for stigma**
A typology of actors and actions to address exclusionary processes

- **Multi-lateral agencies/donor agencies/countries and pan-regional bodies**
- **The state**
  - Universal Rights Based Approach
    - Hybrid
    - Selective/targeted
      - Hybrid
    - Conditional transfers and market based approaches
  - Policy development and co-ordination
- **NGOs and Community**
  - Social movements
  - Facilitated community Engagement in policy and action
  - Action by NGOs

**Private sector and market processes:**
Service Provision, Employers and wider Corporate Social Responsibility
1. Government responsibility

- Governments must take primary responsibility for:
  - ensuring human rights and basic needs of all citizens are met and protected;
  - Providing accountable/transparency political & legal systems;
  - Promoting/supporting civil society action and community empowerment and engagement.
  - Providing/enforcing frameworks for other actors

- Evidence that:
  - Universal publically funded provision of essential services (health-care, education, water, sanitation and social protection) have had significant impacts on social cohesion and population health in OECD countries;
  - Means tested selective services are associated with high costs and low uptake and do not contribute to social cohesion

BUT
The rise of targeting and conditionality

- Globally state policies have moved from universalism, through targeting to conditional inclusion for poor people;

- **Conditionality** is antipathy of inclusion but if we must have it then only:
  - In framework guaranteeing human rights
  - In context of universal essential services & socially acceptable living standards
  - When there is convincing evidence that conditions are necessary to achieve intended outcome;

- **Conditionality is likely to be less stigmatising & more conducive to cohesion & collective action if:**
  - located at the level of communities and/or groups
  - prioritized by target communities and/or groups
  - Administered through participative mechanisms
  - Conditions are readily able to be met
2. Civil Society and Social Movements

• **Accessing the wisdom of experience**: more appropriate sustainable actions e.g. micro credit, Tenant’s management of social housing, etc

• **In and against the state**: advocating for social and economic reform in context of weak/reluctant state e.g. Indigenous people’s movement, labour movement

• **A challenge to professional power**: people may be poorly educated but they’re not ignorant.....
Community wisdom, action and the ‘Cod’s Head Soup

Recognising lay expertise in disadvantaged communities
WOMEN'S INSTITUTE
"FOR HOME AND COUNTRY"

! ! !

RECIPE NO 1
COD'S HEAD SOUP
- COD'S HEADS
- WATER
- SALT
- THYME
- BUTTER

EH... WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REST OF THE COD.... ?

BERT BIRO '06
The necessary conditions for genuine delegation of power and control to ‘ordinary’ people include:

• transparent, accountable & participative political and legal systems
• adequate resources;

• Organizational and professional structures and cultures that enable power sharing;

• Community engagement and empowerment must include agenda setting as well as the design, implementation and evaluation of action to address inequality;

• There must be a more robust challenge to negative stereotypes and prejudice of poor people begin by auditing our language!
What your tongue young lady!

• We need to ask people if they like:
  – Their children described as ‘stunted;
  – Labels such as vulnerable, excluded, marginal
  – Being told they are health ‘illiterate’
  – Etc........

• Unthinking language reinforces deep seated prejudices about the undeserving poor
My take home message:
always look beyond headlines!

- Social exclusion has a ‘feel good’ flavour but the ‘reality’ is problematic

- Meanings drive action: restrictive shopping list approach can lead to restricted action

- From an equity perspective problematic:
  - it is stigmatising
  - it is associated with conditional inclusion
  - it is ineffective and divisive

- If goal is social justice and equity then:
  - define social exclusion in process terms
  or
  - Find a better concept to inform action.
Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.

A person is a person because of other people

Final Report on WHO website:

www.who.int/social_determinants/knowledge_networks/final_reports/en/index.html