



Maitreyee

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Dear HDCA Members,

Last year, we devoted two issues on the multi-dimensional aspect of poverty. How to measure such dimensions such as shame or dignified employment? How to choose the relevant dimensions in given context? This *Maitreyee* goes further and explores the relational aspect associated with each dimension of poverty. If a person is treated with humiliation when seeking health care in a public hospital because of her belonging to an ethnic minority, shame ceases to be an individual characteristic and becomes inherent in the person's relationship to a group – her ethnic group – and the relationship of that group to another – the ethnic majority.

As the articles in this issue discuss, poverty is deeply relational. Women of dark skin all over the world are much more likely to be below the income poverty line, less educated and to have less political voice than men of pale skin. Capability deprivation is often linked to how a person situates herself within a given group and in relation to other groups. This relational aspect of poverty has been coined in the concept of social exclusion. As all the contributors of this issue point out, the concept first emerged in the European context and was initially used in industrialized countries. However, the concept is receiving increasing attention in the context of poverty analysis in non-Western European contexts too.

In a book which compares four approaches to poverty – income, capability, social exclusion, and participation, Frances Stewart, Barbara Harriss-White and Ruhi Sahi discuss the contribution of the social exclusion literature to 'defining poverty in the developing world'. Naila Kabeer examines the implications of social exclusion for development policy. Andrey Ivanov and Suzanne Milcher conclude the 'Insights' section by exploring the links between social inclusion and human development.

'In the Practice' briefly describes the indicators of social exclusion used by the European Union – these are known as 'Laeken indicators', and illustrates how the concept of social/exclusion has been used as a grid of analysis for the assessing human development in the Croatian National Human Development Report 2007.

We hope that this *Maitreyee* issue will anticipate some of the discussions of the 2008 HDCA conference in New Delhi which has for theme 'Equality, Inclusion and Human Development'. Registration for the conference is now open on www.hd-ca.org.

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Insights

Defining Poverty in the Developing World: Social Exclusion¹

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The concept of social exclusion (SE) was developed in industrialised countries to describe the processes of marginalisation and deprivation that can arise even within rich countries with comprehensive welfare provisions. It was a reminder of the multiple faces of deprivation in an affluent society. The concept now forms a central aspect of EU social policy; several European Council decisions have adopted strategic goals and political processes aimed at countering the risk of poverty and social exclusion. The concept of SE has been gradually extended to developing countries through the activities of various UN agencies (especially the International Labour Institute), and the Social Summit (Clert 1999).

The definition of SE is contested (Hills et al. 2002). The EU defines SE as a ‘process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live’ (European Foundation 1995: 4). This echoes the earlier work of Townsend who defined deprivation as referring to people who ‘are in *effect excluded* from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities’ (Townsend 1979: 31; our italics). Somewhat more precisely, Le Grand has defined SE as occurring when a person is excluded if he/she is (a) resident in society; (b) but for reasons beyond his/her control cannot participate in normal activities of citizens in that society; (c) would like to do so. Others have argued that a person is excluded if conditions (a) and (b) hold, whether or not they actually desire to participate or not (Barry 1998).

Atkinson has identified three main characteristics of SE: *relativity* (i.e. exclusion is relative to a particular society); *agency* (i.e. they are excluded as a result of the action of an agent or agents); and *dynamics* (meaning that future prospects are relevant as well as current circumstances) (see Atkinson 1998; Micklewright 2002). Room concurs with the relational and dynamic aspects and adds three others – the multidimensionality of SE; a neighbourhood dimension (i.e. that deficient or absent communal facilities are in question); and that major discontinuities are involved (Room 1999).

The dynamic focus and an emphasis on the processes that engender deprivation are distinguishing features of this approach, compared to the approaches reviewed earlier. It has been noted for example that SE is ‘a dynamic process, best described as descending levels: some disadvantages lead to some exclusion, which in turn leads to more disadvantages and more exclusion and ends up with persistent multiple (deprivation) disadvantages’ (Eurostat Taskforce 1998: 24). While the other approaches can study causes and interconnections between different elements of deprivation, such investigation is not part of the process of identifying the poor. In contrast, the *definition* of SE typically includes the process of becoming poor, as well as some outcomes of deprivation.

SE also contrasts with the two previous approaches in making a social perspective central – that is to say SE is socially defined. For example, Burchardt et al. define exclusion as occurring if an individual ‘does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives’ (Burchardt et al. 2002: 30). Moreover, SE is often a characteristic of groups – the aged, handicapped, racial or ethnic categories – arising from discrimination (overt or not) against particular groups. The relational and group emphases open up a different policy

¹ This is an extract from Frances Stewart, Barbara Harriss-White and Ruhi Saith (eds) *Defining Poverty in the Developing World*, 2007, reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

agenda from the individualistic approaches – e.g. policies addressed to groups, such as eliminating discrimination and various forms of affirmative action. While other approaches can be extended to include these considerations, such as for example the recent developments in the studies of vulnerability in a monetary perspective, SE is the only approach where these considerations play a constitutive role.

Multidimensionality is an intrinsic feature of SE. Indeed, in general being deprived in *more than one*, and perhaps many, dimensions is a key feature of SE, which raises aggregation issues similar to those of CA. Furthermore, there can be causal connections between different dimensions of exclusion, e.g. between employment and income; housing and employment; formal sector employment and insurance. SE generally is found to have a strong connection with monetary poverty. For example, lack of monetary income is both an outcome of SE (arising from lack of employment) and a cause (e.g. of social isolation and low wealth).

In order to apply SE empirically to particular societies, these rather general statements about SE need to be interpreted more specifically. The precise characteristics of SE tend to be society-specific, since they identify exclusion from *normal* or *key* activities. The concept of SE thus necessarily involves a *relative* approach to the definition of poverty. In industrial countries the indicators adopted in empirical work normally include unemployment, access to housing, minimal income, citizenship, democratic rights, and social contacts.

The application of the concept of exclusion to developing countries raises difficult issues. Characteristics of SE are likely to be different from those in developed countries. On the one hand, the defining features noted by Atkinson and Room are clearly highly relevant. But, on the other, it is difficult to identify appropriate norms to provide the benchmarks of exclusion, since exclusion from formal sector employment or social insurance coverage tends to apply to the majority of the population. Lack of formal sector employment or social insurance coverage therefore does not imply exclusion from normal social patterns or relationships. However, to the extent that the normal may not be desirable, what is ‘normal’ may not be satisfactory in defining the benchmarks of exclusion. Consequently, there is a serious problem in deciding what would be appropriate SE characteristics. A further complication is that exclusion is part of the social system in some societies, as with the caste system. Various solutions to the interpretation of SE in particular societies are possible: one is to take norms from *outside* the society, e.g. from developed countries. Some of the work on the marginalisation of whole societies in the process of globalisation implicitly does just that (Room 1999). Another is to derive the characteristics through consultation in participatory approaches. A third approach is to derive the characteristics empirically, by exploring what structural characteristics of a population (such as race, or caste, or region where one lives) are empirically correlated with multiple deprivations defined in other approaches.

For copyrights reasons, the whole section on social exclusion could not be reproduced. The introduction of the book, from which the above is taken, is available publicly at <http://www.palgrave.com/PDFs/0230516726.Pdf>.

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Social exclusion and its implications for development policy¹

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The concept of social exclusion is of relatively recent origin. It gained currency in the European context in response to rising unemployment and income inequalities which characterised the closing decades of the 20th century, a period of considerable economic and social dislocation as countries sought to deal with the challenges of globalisation on their labour markets, welfare states and prevailing ideas about citizenship. 'Social exclusion', as the definition offered by the European Union suggests, represents the other end of the spectrum to 'full participation'. It is 'the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live'.

Since the Social Summit in 1994, there has been increasing attention paid to the usefulness of the concept to concerns with poverty, inequality and social justice in the developing country context. However, the transferability to the different, and increasingly differentiated, context of developing countries was not immediately clear. There were question marks about the relevance of a concept formulated to describe the persistence of poverty in contexts characterised by general prosperity to contexts where the majority, or a significant minority, were poor. There were also concerns that the concept would be imported thoughtlessly to simply re-label long-standing, locally developed approaches to social problem. Consequently, the value-added of the concept of social exclusion had to be demonstrated before it could be incorporated into the lexicon of development policy. What would it add to the understanding of poverty, given that the characterisation of poverty had progressed considerably from earlier income-based approaches to a greater recognition of its multidimensionality?

This article argues that the primary value-added of a social exclusion perspective lies not so much in the 'naming' of a new problem but in offering an integrated way of looking at different forms of disadvantage which have tended to be dealt separately in the development studies literature. In particular, it captures the experience of the certain groups and categories in a society of being somehow 'set apart' from others, of being 'locked-out' or 'left behind' in a way that the existing frameworks for poverty analysis had failed to capture. Consequently, it has insights to offer such analysis beyond those offered by these frameworks. It also allows a

¹ This is a condensed version of a background paper entitled 'Social Exclusion, Concepts, Findings and Implications for the MDGs' commissioned by DFID in 2005. The paper has been edited by Séverine Deneulin.

bridge between the concept of poverty, which focuses on absolute levels of deprivation, and that of inequality, which is concerned with distributional issues. Social exclusion helps to highlight inequalities in the distribution of deprivation of the poor.

A social exclusion perspective draws attention to the experience of those individuals and groups who, in addition to their poverty, face discrimination by virtue of their identity, undermining their capacity to participate in the economic, social and political functionings of their society on equal terms. In addition to capturing the interplay between economic deprivation and social discrimination, the concept of social exclusion introduces a spatial dimension. Spatial disadvantage may lie in the remoteness and isolation of a location which makes it physically difficult for its inhabitants to participate in broader socio-economic processes or it may operate through the segregation of urban environments and the subcultures of violence, criminality, drug dependence and squalor which often characterise the territorially excluded neighbourhoods (Beall, 2002). Spatial disadvantage is not entirely divorced from its resource and identity dimensions since it is usually culturally devalued and economically impoverished groups that inhabit physically deprived spaces.

The analytical 'value-added' of the social exclusion perspective is that it allows insights from the literature on group identity, cultural devaluation and social discrimination to be applied to the analysis of economic deprivation. Thus we find that in many contexts, the extreme or the chronic poor are not 'just like' the rest of the poor, only poorer or poor for longer, but are additionally disadvantaged by 'who they are', aspects of their identity which set them apart from the rest of the poor. It also helps to make sense of why some sections of the poor find it harder than others to transform the resources at their disposal, including their labour, into wellbeing outcomes.

Social exclusion can be explained as an institutionalised form of inequality, the failure of a society to extend to all sections of its population the economic resources and social recognition which they need in order to participate fully in the collective life of the community. The analysis of social exclusion is thus concerned with institutional rules, relationships and processes through which resources are distributed and value is assigned in a society, focusing particularly on the mechanisms by which 'access' and recognition is granted or denied. Thus, social exclusion does not entail a binary model distinguishing between those who are 'in' and those who are 'out', but refers instead to the disadvantaged terms of the participation of socially excluded groups in economic, social and political life. Such disadvantage is manifested in a myriad different ways. For instance, it may operate through:

- High levels of exploitation so that socially excluded groups are to be found working in the worst paid jobs in the harshest working conditions and in the most insecure margins of the informal economy;
- Asymmetrical patron-client relationships in which members of excluded groups exchange their labour, loyalty and independence in return for protection and security from more powerful sections of society;
- Resort to criminal, illegal or stigmatised activities in the face of the barriers faced by excluded groups in accessing socially recognised forms of livelihood;

Examples of social exclusion abound in different parts of the world. Ethnicity, caste and race constitute the most empirically documented examples of *group-based* exclusion in the development literature. Other forms of exclusion may revolve around specific attributes of people who may share little in common apart from the discrimination they face. These will clearly vary in different contexts, but age, gender, migration, illness and disability and stigmatised occupations recur frequently in the literature dealing with excluded categories. Leprosy in particular has had near-mythical status as synonym for social exclusion of an extreme kind (Silla, 1998). More recently, HIV/AIDS has emerged as a new form of stigma-

related social exclusion. Gender constitutes another specific form of categorical exclusion in conditions of poverty.

Social exclusion has a direct impact on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals. Considering poverty, one finds, for instance that, in Bolivia the 'non-white' population is 2.2 times as likely to be in households below the \$1 per day per capita poverty line and 1.4 times as likely to be below the national poverty line. As might be expected, the greater poverty of socially excluded groups translates into poorer levels of health, particularly when their poverty is combined with spatial disadvantages of remoteness and lack of infrastructure and social services. Maternal mortality rates in India are highest in tribal areas. In Bangladesh, Chowdhury et al. (2002) report that the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where most of Bangladesh's tribal groups live, had a much lower immunization coverage of children under 12 months than the national average: 22% compared to 54%. Educational outcomes are also negatively affected by social exclusion. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Lucas estimates that scheduled castes in the relevant age groups were 1.7 times as likely not to be in attendance at primary school. They were 1.7 times as likely to be illiterate. In Peru, available studies suggest that ethnicity continues to play a role in differentiating children's access to education.

Social exclusion poses a challenge to conventional approaches to poverty reduction policies. Socially excluded groups have been made invisible in 'normal' forms of data collection which tend to define 'the poor' simply by their assets and income. However, socially excluded groups are less likely than the rest of the poor to benefit from the 'normal' processes of economic growth because not only do they own fewer resources of various kinds than other sections of the poor, but they also find it harder to translate their resources into income because of the discrimination they face in markets for labour and commodities. Socially excluded groups are likely to be denied access to 'normal' forms of social provisioning, whether these are provided through private provision or by the state. They are unlikely to have the means necessary to purchase these services in the market place while the discriminatory attitudes prevalent in society at large are often reproduced by state officials responsible for service provision. Finally, socially excluded groups are generally less likely to participate in 'normal' models of democracy. Particularly where they constitute a minority, there is no incentive for political parties competing for power to take their interest in to account since they neither represent enough votes nor enough organisational clout to exercise a great deal of influence. Nor are they likely to have the resources necessary to compete for political office.

Policy responses to social exclusion therefore need to address the multiple and overlapping disadvantage that it represents. Responses should include:

- Improving statistics in order to better estimate the extent to which the socially excluded among the poor systematically report lower levels of income and capabilities than others;
- Changing cultural norms and values which lead to the persistent discrimination against excluded groups through the educational system, the media, public campaigns and setting up a legal framework which discourages discriminatory behaviour and strengthens the civil and political rights of excluded groups;
- Incorporating special provisions to address the multiple disadvantages associated with social exclusion and to break the inter-generational transmission of poverty that it has often entailed (such as special attention to geographical or group targeting);
- Changing the attitudes of those responsible for policy delivery and creating mechanisms which allow those who have a stake to participate in their design; and
- Promoting civil society networks which help to mobilise socially excluded groups and which build their alliances with other organisations fighting for rights and social justice.

As we have tried to demonstrate in this paper, it is the marginalisation of socially excluded groups, their inability to influence the processes of decision-making in their society, which partly explains why they remain poor over extended periods of time.

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Social Inclusion and Human Development¹

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Throughout the last two decades, the international development actors have witnessed a growing concern about poverty, marginalization and various forms of deprivation. Two concepts stand out prominently in this regard: human development and social inclusion. Both are not substitutive but complementary, addressing in-depth specific aspects of poverty understood as a multidimensional challenge. What unites the two is their focus on people which is put at the centre of the policy focus in an attempt to achieve the ultimate goal of improving their opportunities and realizing their capacities.

Social inclusion has been promoted especially by the European Union (EU), which it defines as a 'process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live'.

Thus, social inclusion is understood as both a relative concept where exclusion can only be judged by comparing the circumstances of some individuals (or groups or communities) relative to others, in a given place and at a given time; and as a normative concept which places emphasis on the individual's right of 'having a life associated with being a member of a community'.

In order to achieve these rights, inclusion policies have to address institutional inefficiencies, which derive from exclusionary acts by agents based on power and social attitudes and result in multiple disadvantages based on gender, age, ethnicity, location, economic, education, health status or disability, etc. Social inclusion policies correct negative outcomes of policies, be it intentional (systematic discrimination) or unintentional ones (failure to recognise differential impact of policies on individuals or groups).

The concept of social inclusion complements that of human development in many ways. Both are people-focused and go beyond material well-being. Human development stresses the significance of education, access to adequate social services (health and education in particular), environmental sustainability, guarantees for basic political freedom, gender equality and respect of citizens' rights. Restriction in any of these is perceived as detrimental

¹ This is an edited version of an 'HD Insight', an online publication for the Human Development Report networks, January 2008. These can be accessed at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/nhdr/support/insights/editions/>.

to human beings' freedom of choices. Social exclusion can similarly be understood as 'capability' deprivation that goes beyond income deprivation. In fact it is difficult for a country to claim high levels of human development if social exclusion persists.

Social inclusion adds the institutional dimension of exclusion (the agents, institutions and processes that exclude) to the human development concept. A social inclusion perspective can thus help sharpen the strategies for achieving human development by addressing the discrimination, exclusion, powerlessness and accountability failures that lie at the root of poverty and other development problems. Both concepts are complementary in policy respect with human development bearing stronger focus on 'what' needs to be achieved and social inclusion on 'how' it should be achieved.

Policy frameworks for human development and social inclusion depend very much on political will, except in the EU where member states have agreed to reduce poverty and social exclusion by 2010 and this obligation is being monitored by a common measurement framework (the Laeken Indicators). Outside of the EU, the MDG framework (adapted to national or local contexts) could be used to monitor both, human development as well as social inclusion policy outcomes. For that purpose however, MDG targets and indicators need to reflect national and local priorities and challenges.

Although from different perspectives, both social inclusion and the human development framework address issues of marginalization and exclusion. Hence, it seems logical to expect that indicators used will be semantically and contextually close. Indeed, both social inclusion and human development indicators put strong focus on poverty, employment, education, health and civic and political participation. Social inclusion, being a relative concept emphasizes inequality measures.

Given the richness of these challenges and the variety of their determinants, no single indicator can grasp the challenges adequately. This is why social inclusion and human development indicators (as well as nationalized MDG indicators) are not substitutive but highly complementary and should be seen as different shades of a complex multidimensional reality.

Both frameworks also share similar challenges regarding availability of data. Since exclusion happens at local or community level, disaggregated data by location and characteristics, such as ethnicity or disability is a prerequisite for monitoring progress towards social inclusion. However, such data often does not exist at all or is being considered too difficult or sensitive to collect. Going beyond national averages is the real challenge of relevant social inclusion and human development monitoring.

Social inclusion will likely become more prominent in international development efforts by providing the space to address difficult issues of social discrimination, inequalities and social fragmentation. By emphasizing the individual's right of a decent quality of life, it raises further attention for human development and directly helps improving human development opportunities. Innovative work on measurements and data can bring both concepts even closer in the future.

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In the Practice

European Union indicators of social exclusion

The European Union has agreed a core set of poverty and social exclusion indicators which are regularly produced for every EU country on a comparable basis. These are known as the 'Laeken Indicators' and can be accessed at <http://www.poverty.org.uk/summary/eu.htm>

	Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By age and gender - By work status - By household type - By housing tenure - Poverty line - Persistent poverty - Poverty gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poverty rate by threshold - Absolute poverty - Poverty rate before social transfers - Gini coefficient - Persistent deep poverty
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional cohesion - Long term unemployment rate - Jobless households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long term unemployment share - Very long term unemployment rate
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not in education or training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low educational attainment
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life expectancy at birth - Self defined health status 	

Details of each indicator can be found on the above website.

Further information on the use of the Laeken indicators can be found on the Social Inclusion website of the European Commission:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_inclusion/

Tackling Social Exclusion in Croatia¹

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Although there is no generally accepted definition for social exclusion, it is by and large taken to be a multi-dimensional phenomenon which weakens the relationship between the individual and the community. The weakening of this relationship can have economic, political, socio-cultural and even spatial impacts. The more ways in which this relationship is impacted, the more vulnerable an individual becomes. Exclusion is most commonly visible in the labour market, the most essential social services, human rights, and the social safety net. Social exclusion is often linked to unemployment and poverty, but can be caused by any number of factors.

¹ This is an extract from the section 'Social Exclusion in Croatia' from the 2007 National Human Development Report *Unplugged: Faces of Social Exclusion in Croatia*, pp. 21-22.

In 2006, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Croatia conducted a national research on the quality of life and the risk of social exclusion. The quality of life concept was selected because it attempts to quantify the overall well-being of a society while focusing on individuals. It also uses both objective indicators (living conditions, income, employment, housing, etc)² and subjective indicators (satisfaction with family life, working conditions, work-life balance, quality of public services and institutions, health conditions, security of immediate environment, optimism about the future etc). The UNDP national survey was based on the first quality of life Pan-European survey launched in 2003³ to support common EU objectives on social policy. The UNDP survey facilitated an appropriate comparison between Croatia and the EU Member States, which provided a baseline for establishing developmental priorities.

The research consisted of three components:

- a) The Quality of Life Survey (with a sample of 8,534 respondents; representative at the county level);
- b) Survey on social welfare service providers;⁴ and
- c) Focus group discussions with 20 social groups considered to be at risk of social exclusion.

The focus groups included individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, the homeless, returnees, single parents, children without parental care, victims of domestic violence, Roma, sexual minorities, the elderly, people with low education levels, and youth with behavioural difficulties. Most of these groups were less likely to be represented in a national survey sample because they have no registered residence or live in illegal settlements, welfare residential institutions and shelters.

According to the three dimensions of social exclusion⁵ used in the survey, one in ten Croatians is socially excluded (11.5%). This is approximately the same percentage of Croatians (11%) that were found to be poor in the 2006 World Bank Living Standard Assessment, which points to the tight correlation between poverty and social exclusion. However, in terms of self-perception, 20% of Croatians believe they are socially excluded.⁶ Social exclusion is directly correlated with education, gender, and living environment. People with primary education or less and even those with only secondary education are socially excluded more frequently (61.3% and 37.1%, respectively). Women are twice as likely to be socially excluded than men (66% as opposed to 34%), while rural dwellers are three times as likely to become socially excluded (75%) than urban dwellers (25%).

[...]

The research conducted by the UNDP indicated that the most vulnerable groups in Croatian society are people with primary education or less, people above 65 years of age, women, and unemployed youth. Further examination of focus groups demonstrated that people with physical and mental disabilities are particularly marginalized especially with respect to their participation in the labour market, access to social services, opportunities to

² European Quality of Life Questionnaire was used with the permission of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

³ Pan-European survey includes the EU25 and the three candidate countries – Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey.

⁴ Representatives of 200 social service providers were asked about their working conditions and job satisfaction, relationship with the users, cooperation with other institutions and perceptions of the usefulness of their work and willingness to participate in community based services.

⁵ In order to be considered socially excluded, respondents had to be deprived in the following three dimensions: economic (income per household member is below 60% of median), labour (the unemployed), and socio-cultural (absence of social participation or tertiary sociability, e.g. non-involvement in voluntary, humanitarian, religious, political organisations or activities).

⁶ This includes respondents who completely or somewhat agreed with the statement: 'I feel left out of society'.

enjoy independent living (i.e. outside of institutions), and the freedom to make personal choices. Together with single parents, people with special needs most frequently mention that their lives would be significantly improved if they had a personal assistant available.

Programme of activities following the Report (from UNDP Croatia website)

About one-fifth of Croatian citizens perceive themselves as socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion, according to UNDP's most recent National Human Development Report for Croatia, *Unplugged: Faces of Social Exclusion* presented in February 2007. The groups most at risk of social exclusion include people with physical and intellectual disabilities, returnees, the Roma and Serb minorities, long term unemployed, youth, single parent families, homeless, old people and prisoners.

The Social Inclusion programme provides support to social groups and individuals who are at risk of social exclusion and to those who have difficulties in achieving their civic, political and social rights. Through this programme, UNDP assists the Croatian central and local governments to effectively address social exclusion through data gathering, public debate and a transparent decision making process in social policy. The overall aim is to assist in the development and implementation of more inclusive and strategic social policies that target vulnerable social groups.

The programme embraces four groups of activities:

- 1) local level data gathering and analysis of the quality of life and risks of social exclusion throughout Croatia as a basis for regulating social policies;
- 2) promoting transparency in decision-making processes in social policy and participation of beneficiaries of social services;
- 3) promotion of public debate at the national level on the scope and consequences of social exclusion, and
- 4) support to volunteerism and local development initiatives with a focus on the most vulnerable and isolated social groups, people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, youth, returnees and members of minority groups in particular the Roma and people living with HIV/AIDS.

More information about the social inclusion programme can be found at

<http://www.undp.hr/show.jsp?page=51978>