

Chapter IV **Social integration and social mobilization**

The term social integration is variously understood. Some see it as a positive process of including everyone, especially vulnerable groups, in the development process. Others see it as an unwarranted imposition of uniformity or external ideals and values, and a disrespect of sociocultural differences among people. In this chapter, social integration is understood as the processes addressing the social disparities and the exclusion of people who are denied equal access to the services, benefits and rights enjoyed by others in society. Such services, benefits and rights include access to education and health care, decent work, participation in economic, social, political and civic life, and strong social ties to the family, local community and voluntary associations, among other affiliations.

Globalization, or global integration, is moving at a rapid pace. However, not all countries or people are participating in or benefiting from the globalization process and the expanding opportunities in the global economy, in global technology, in the global spread of cultures and in global rule-making. According to a recent World Bank study, approximately 2 billion people, many of them from Asia and Africa, are currently excluded from enjoying the benefits that globalization brings (World Bank 2002).

But social exclusion is not just a by-product of globalization. Social exclusion is present as a feature of all societies when different rules and policies, formal and informal, enable some and constrain others in gaining access and entitlement to goods, services, activities and resources. Certain groups of people are denied opportunities which are open to others, for reasons of age, gender, lifestyle, belief systems, physical characteristics or health.

This chapter reviews the trends that are defining social integration in the ESCAP region. It highlights the urgent social problems that have an impact on social stability and social inclusion. It looks at the potential of programmes and policies designed to enhance the equality of opportunities, social integration and participation, through social mobilization. It also examines the provision of effective social service delivery structures to meet the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Finally, it discusses the role of national capacity-building and social capital investment, affirmative action measures and resource allocations, mobilizing the participation of civil society and the corporate private sector.

A. SOCIAL INTEGRATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

It is recognized that various societal processes, institutions and mechanisms have excluded people from fully participating in economic, social, cultural and political life. This refers to the process of social exclusion. In this context, social integration refers to policies designed to better “include” or integrate those who are excluded from development processes and opportunities. While disadvantaged groups are part of existing social networks, including families, households, clans, neighbourhoods, communities, schools and work units, there are certain patterns of integration in the global or local economic or social environments which are generating uneven or destructive outcomes for some individuals, groups or even countries.

The promotion of social integration was adopted as one of the three core goals of the Copenhagen Declaration adopted at the World Summit for Social Development. That commitment reads as follows: “We commit ourselves to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons” (United Nations 1995).

In the context of the Social Summit, social cohesion and solidarity are fundamental conditions of development and social progress; thus, efforts to develop and strengthen institutions and mechanisms encouraging social integration must be sustained. A well-educated, healthy, decently employed, socially protected citizenry contributes to the social cohesion of a country and imparts dynamism to all aspects of life and culture. By promoting inclusion and reducing deprivation, social development strengthens democratic institutions and processes, makes social and economic relations more harmonious and provides a firm foundation for achieving long-term development and prosperity.

Within the framework of the Social Summit, the members and associate members of ESCAP also committed themselves to promoting “social integration” as one of the three core themes (the other two being poverty alleviation and employment generation) in their adoption of the Manila Declaration on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region in 1994. That regional Agenda was a landmark consensus agreement on regional social development priorities and the means by which to achieve them. It refers to social integration as “the enabling of all social groups to live together in productive and cooperative harmony” (ESCAP 1995).

B. TRENDS DEFINING SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN THE ESCAP REGION

As requested by its members, ESCAP has conducted periodic reviews of progress made in the regional implementation of both the global and regional social development agreements. The review undertaken in 1997 noted that many Governments had set up inter-ministerial coordinating committees to devise and implement coordinated strategic national plans and actions aimed at achieving the social development targets and goals of the Social Summit. Governments also reported improvements in housing, education, employment and poverty reduction over the previous decades, in large part as a result of the impressive rates of economic growth registered in some countries in the region. However, in the most recent ESCAP review conducted in December 2001, many Governments noted

that several of the regional social development targets for the year 2000 and earlier had not been met. These included the targets of attaining education for all, health for all and shelter for all, creating a barrier-free environment for all and formulating an overall policy framework for basic social protection.

It was noted that many aspects of globalization relating to the increased movement of people within and across national borders, increased job opportunities and the rapid spread of information technology had provided more opportunities for people to improve their livelihood and quality of life. These improvements have helped to narrow existing disparities and foster progress in social integration. Yet experiences in this region suggest that many among those groups that are the traditional targets for social integration, namely, the poor, women, youth, older persons, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and indigenous people, are often not able to seize the new opportunities being offered because of existing barriers inherent in traditional sociocultural norms and practices or other development constraints.

The regional reviews also recognized that constraints to progress in meeting the social development goals include: (a) a lack of coherence in policy planning and implementation, (b) poor coordination, decentralization and devolution – social development goals and targets had not been properly disseminated and advocated across all levels of government and administration, national, regional and local, (c) an inadequate level of resources and budgets to meet social development and social protection needs, (d) a lack of consistency among government units in the allocation and utilization of resources to ensure the provision of basic services and targeted priorities aimed at poverty alleviation, social integration and employment promotion and (e) a lack of participation by the private sector, NGOs and other civil society organizations as partners in development, and called for giving more attention to such issues of governance as prerequisites for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of social programmes.

A number of trends towards increasing economic and political exclusion, and defining the context of social integration in the region, have already been discussed in previous chapters. Poverty in its different forms, growing inequalities and changing labour-market conditions are excluding people partially or wholly from sustainable livelihoods, decent employment, minimum earnings and consumption, and physical and human capital formation. In the following sections, additional broad outlines of trends affecting social integration will be reviewed.

1. Increased population movements

As globalization concentrates opportunity in certain regions and countries, and in particular economic sectors, one of the most obvious responses on the part of those most threatened with exclusion or marginalization is to migrate, whether within countries or abroad. Over the past few decades, this phenomenon has become an important element in the livelihood strategy of millions. According to United Nations estimates for the period 1995-2000, in the ESCAP region as a whole, emigration has reduced population growth by about 2 per cent. This is but one indicator of the

significant rate of migration. Looking at some individual countries, Australia has a net gain in population of 80,000 annually, while countries such as Bangladesh, India and Pakistan in South and South-West Asia have experienced the emigration of over 100,000 persons annually. Similarly, emigration rates are significant in China, Indonesia and the Philippines (United Nations 1997).

In recent decades, the majority of migrant workers from the region to the countries in West Asia have originated in India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand; more recently in the 1990s, most originated in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Since the 1980s, the newly industrialized economies of East Asia (including Japan) and South-East Asia began to attract migrant workers from the less prosperous countries in the region (Seetharam, Gubhaju and Huguet 2001).

As for rural-urban migration trends, in the ESCAP region as a whole, nearly 40 million people are added to the urban population each year, with about half, or approximately 20-25 million people, moving to urban centres in search of a better life. Nearly half of this urban migration is taking place in South and South-West Asia. The difference between East and North-East Asia (which includes China) and South and South-West Asia (which includes India) is striking. During the period 1990-2000, both subregions had approximately the same number of net rural-to-urban migrants, while in East and North-East Asia, the number is expected to increase by 50 per cent; in South and South-West Asia, it is expected to double by the period 2010-2020 (Seetharam, Gubhaju and Huguet 2001).

It is recognized that migration has helped to ease the problem of poverty in some cases and meet the labour needs of the countries of both origin and destination. As countries increasingly welcome more highly skilled workers, more remittances are generated and there is also a greater possibility of technology transfer and enhanced skills formation. The demand for skilled migrants will also increase the migration chances of women, whose migration currently is largely a response to the demand for domestic workers and factory workers. However, long-term migration of some members can create family disintegration. So does more temporary migration, when virtually all able-bodied adults must make a living elsewhere, leaving grandparents to take care of children, as is increasingly the case in rural areas hard hit by economic crisis and adjustment.

Migration, as is the case with the revolution in communications technology, both integrates and divides. For the well-educated, or relatively affluent, migration is simply a means to improve life chances: for example, to obtain a better job or to enjoy more personal freedom or a different style of life. Receiving countries or cities generally welcome the transfer of wealth and knowledge inherent in this kind of immigration, although it signifies a loss for the societies and economies left behind.

Larger-scale migration by poorer people can imply greater impoverishment and disruption of existing forms of social organization in communities and regions of origin of migrants, particularly when most able-bodied members of households depart, leaving the young and the old to cope as best they can. Nevertheless, the potential for improving the level of living of migrants' families is also considerable, as remittances are sent home and invested.

Some migrants get ahead, and some find departure from their place of origin a form of liberation from oppressive obligations. In all too many instances, however, migration remains a harsh necessity – a last resort involving privation and, not infrequently, the danger of physical harm.

In receiving countries and cities, migration can create enormous problems of social integration and cultural adaptation, which are currently at the centre of the policy debate. The juxtaposition of people who often share neither a common language nor a common religion, or who have very different customs, makes unusual demands on human tolerance and understanding. The arrival of large numbers of “outsiders” also creates unusual strains on existing social services and local economies.

Note must also be taken of irregular migration and human trafficking. As national borders become more porous, the already substantial irregular migration in the region will likely increase. Those involved in irregular migration have established networks and migrant institutions across transnational spaces, thereby facilitating further flows. Such irregular migration is financially costly to the migrants and exposes them to a precarious existence where there is a lack of access to basic services and redress for any grievances.

Human trafficking, as a form of irregular migration including the buying and selling of humans for the sex industry, is currently one of organized crime’s fastest growing businesses (UNDP 1999a). As discussed in chapter II, trafficking has become an issue of growing concern in this region, especially in South-East Asia. It has been conservatively estimated that at least 200,000-225,000 women and children from South-East Asia are trafficked annually, a figure representing nearly one third of the global trafficking trade (IOM 2000). Traffickers prey on the economic vulnerability of their potential victims. Across Asia, millions of children, young women and men are lured from their homes and villages by sophisticated crime syndicates and forced into labour where the conditions are exploitative and even slave-like. Poverty is a critical “push” factor for many victims. In Asia, where cross-border trafficking in humans occurs on a large scale, many victims are forced to work in the sex industry, as well as in other illegal activities, under the threat of violence and intimidation.

2. Ageing of the population

The growth rate and structure of the population in the ESCAP region have undergone a substantial change over the past few decades. Several countries and areas, such as Hong Kong, China; Japan; and Singapore, have completed the demographic transition and reduced their fertility and mortality rates to low levels. Others such as the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Nepal and Pakistan still have very high fertility and mortality rates. There has been a substantial decline in the population growth rate, which, during the period 1990-2000, fell to 1.49 per cent. The growth rate is expected to decline further, that is, to 1.1 and 0.9 per cent annually, during the periods 2000-2010 and 2010-2020 respectively.

Fertility has dropped below the replacement level (2.1 births per woman) in several South-East Asian countries and in most countries in East and North-East Asia. At the same time, there have been massive reductions in both infant and under-five mortality rates. According to the 2001 ESCAP

Population Data Sheet, life expectancy at birth for males and females exceeds 60 years in all the subregions.

One implication of this demographic transition with declining fertility and mortality, owing to better health-care technologies and nutrition, is population ageing in the region. According to available data on ESCAP developing countries, between 1990 and 2000, the size of the population aged 65 or older increased by 3.35 per cent per year on average. The proportion of the population aged 65 and older is expected to more than double between 1995 and 2050 in almost all countries and areas of the ESCAP region (table IV.1); the major exceptions are Australia and New Zealand, where the proportion is already high.

Older persons risk being socially excluded in many ways. Those still able to work suffer diminishing returns for their labour. For many, the economic crisis has reduced, if not stopped, remittances from their urban offspring; the majority of the rural aged have no access to pension benefits because many have not been part of the formal employment sector, where there might have been some pension coverage. Moreover, public assistance benefits and related services that would be the last resort for many of the rural aged have shrunk or are unavailable. Even if the level of public assistance benefits had remained unchanged, it would not have been able to keep up with the cost of living increase in some countries. In recent years, some countries have taken steps to expand or upgrade public measures for the aged, and others are about to introduce social safety nets for the first time (ESCAP 1996b).

Other factors that compound the situation of older persons include the following: (a) the erosion of the traditional family and community support systems with the changing family structure, smaller nuclear families and increased mobility of their members, (b) increased rural-to-urban migration, (c) increasing proportions of educated older persons and higher expectations of extended participation and avenues for productive engagement and inclusion in societal and political processes and (d) greater pressure on social budgets and increases in fiscal demands, particularly to provide affordable, cost-effective and good-quality health and other social services, as well as income support for the older populations.

Table IV.1. Population aged 65 and older in selected countries and areas of the ESCAP region (by descending percentage change 1990 and 2000)

(Percentage of total population)

<i>Country or area</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000^a</i>	
	<i>(A)</i>	<i>(B)</i>	<i>(C)</i>	<i>(C) – (B)</i>
Republic of Korea	3.8	5.0	11.0	6.0
Hong Kong, China	6.5	8.5	14.3	5.8
Bhutan	5.4	4.8	10.5	5.7
Kazakhstan	6.1	5.9	11.2	5.3
Singapore	4.7	5.6	10.6	5.0
China	4.7	5.6	10.1	4.5
Sri Lanka	4.3	5.2	9.3	4.1

Kyrgyzstan	5.8	5.0	9.0	4.0
Thailand	3.5	4.3	8.1	3.8
Indonesia	3.3	3.9	7.6	3.7
India	4.1	4.3	7.6	3.3
Uzbekistan	5.1	4.0	7.1	3.1
Tajikistan	4.5	3.8	6.8	3.0
Tuvalu ^{b,c}	5.1	5.9	8.9	3.0
Pakistan	2.9	2.9	5.8	2.9
Samoa	3.0	3.9	6.8	2.9
Malaysia	3.7	3.7	6.6	2.9
Bangladesh	3.6	3.8	6.5	2.7
Myanmar	4.0	4.1	6.8	2.7
Turkmenistan	4.3	3.8	6.5	2.7
Viet Nam	4.8	4.8	7.5	2.7
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2.8	3.0	5.6	2.6
Taiwan Province of China	4.2	6.1	8.6	2.5
Fiji	2.8	3.3	5.7	2.4
Nepal	3.0	3.5	5.9	2.4
Maldives	4.2	3.3	5.3	2.0
Philippines	2.8	3.5	5.5	2.0
Nauru ^{b,c}	1.2	1.4	3.3	1.9
Afghanistan	2.5	2.9	4.7	1.8
Azerbaijan	3.4	3.1	4.9	1.8
Papua New Guinea	1.6	2.4	4.1	1.7
Solomon Islands	2.9	2.6	4.2	1.6
Mongolia	3.0	4.0	5.6	1.6
Cambodia	2.9	3.0	4.4	1.4
Vanuatu	2.9	3.6	5.0	1.4
Tonga ^b	3.3	4.2	5.1	0.9
Cook Islands ^b	4.6	4.7	5.0	0.2
Kiribati ^b	3.6	3.4	3.5	0.1
Micronesia (Federated States of) ^b	3.5	3.7	3.6	-0.1
Average:				2.7

Sources: Country sources; World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2000* (CD-ROM); United Nations, *World Population Prospects, The 2000 Revision, Internet web site*; and South Pacific Commission, *Pacific Island Populations Revised Edition 1998*.

^a Estimated data using United Nations medium variant projections.

^b Based on census year (Cook Islands – 1981, 1991, 1996; Kiribati – 1979, 1990, 1995; Marshall Islands – 1980, 1988, 1999; Federated States of Micronesia – 1980, 1989, 1994; Nauru – 1983, 1992; Tonga – 1976, 1986, 1996; Tuvalu – 1979, 1991).

^c Data under column heading 2000 refer to 1997 estimates for the following age groups: 0-14, 15-59, 60+.

3. Women in development

In recent decades, the issues of gender equality and empowerment of women have been given increasing attention in national and regional development efforts. This has come about, to a large extent, as a result of the impetus given and the commitments made by a succession of international

meetings and conferences since the declaration of the first International Women's Year in 1975. The momentum of action in this area by Governments and NGOs has accelerated, as is evident in the reviews of progress made, most recently at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in 1995, and the special session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2000.

The efforts at promoting and integrating the role and status of women in development have led to the following achievements, among others: greater de jure equality, closer gender parity in school enrolment ratios in many countries, increased participation in the labour market and business, better recognition of women's unpaid work and initiatives to quantify such work in alternative national and domestic accounting systems, and increased political participation. Important mechanisms and institutions have been established, such as equal employment laws, revisions to inheritance, property and succession laws and other family laws to accord women equal rights in matrimonial and family affairs, national machineries to advocate and coordinate strategies and plans for women's empowerment and gender equality in the household, economy and polity, national policies and action plans to integrate women in development at all levels, measures to prevent or penalize discrimination in employment practices, sexual harassment at places of work and violence against women.

Gender-related Development Index (GDI) values have been calculated based on three major achievements in human development, namely, a long and healthy life as measured by life expectancy at birth, knowledge as measured by the adult literacy rate and gross enrolment ratio, and a decent standard of living as measured by the estimated earned income adjusted to account for inequalities between men and women (UNDP 2001a). The GDI values between 1994 and 1999 improved in 20 of the 25 ESCAP countries for which data were available. The other five countries lost some ground. Among the 25 countries as a whole, the GDI increased by an average of 9.1 per cent.

In the context of globalization, with greater political and cultural awareness there is increased expectation regarding the attainment of human rights and women's rights, among others. Globalization has led to an unprecedented increase in women's NGOs and networking for mutual support and dialogue. These movements have catalysed women's advocacy of gender dimensions in the outcomes of international, regional, national and local forums concerning various development issues. They have also promoted the role of women in building a culture of prevention and peace.

Yet many obstacles remain, blocking fuller social participation for women because of legal and customary barriers, including family and labour laws, and deep-rooted sociocultural perceptions and practices. In many developing countries, gender disparities are still prevalent in indicators of health, literacy, education, income and employment. Women face difficulties in elections and appointment to public office, retaining guardianship rights over children and receiving fair judgement as victims of domestic and sexual violence.

The integration of women in the development process remains a key policy issue for sustaining social development. Based on studies that suggest a positive relationship between access to social services by poor women and girls, with improvements in overall family and community well-being, the empowerment of women and gender equality are integral to social policy considerations in

national agendas. Public policy can encourage the decision-making roles of women, including in political leadership, and enhance conflict management and resolution in the globalizing world. It can also support the use of international and national legal instruments and agreements to attain greater integration of women in development processes.

4. Prevalence of people with disabilities

In the region, the major causes of disability are poverty-related. About half the developing countries in the region are at risk of nutrition-related disabilities (stunting of mental and physical development) associated with food deficits. By far the greatest number of chronically undernourished people, 515 million (of the global 1996 total of 800 million) are found in South and South-East Asia; their numbers are expected to increase to approximately 680 million by the year 2010. Other major causes of disability include road accidents, population ageing and the processes of modernization and urbanization, which can cause disabling illnesses, such as depression, alcohol dependence and schizophrenia.

Lack of adequate data has been and still is one of the most significant factors leading to the neglect of disability issues. In many ESCAP developing countries, the data collected do not reflect the full extent of disability prevalence.

It is estimated, however, that there are 600 million persons with disabilities worldwide and two thirds of them live in the Asian and Pacific region. In this region, there is deep-rooted stigmatization of disability and discriminatory practices against people with disabilities. Thus, persons with disabilities comprise one of the most marginalized groups in the Asian and Pacific region; they are generally excluded from mainstream development opportunities. Women and girls with disabilities are the most excluded, including from mainstream gender equality programmes. Recent World Bank estimates suggest that people with disabilities may account for as many as one in five of the world's poorest. Disability limits access to education and employment, and economic and civic participation. Poor people with disabilities are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty and disability, each being both a cause and a consequence of the other.

Rapid advances in the field of ICT, an important aspect of globalization, affect persons with disabilities both positively and negatively. Rapid ICT development has given rise to unanticipated problems for certain disabilities. For example, the transformation of the Internet from a text-based medium to a multimedia environment has widened the digital divide for persons with visual impairments. Graphical web pages can be a barrier unless they incorporate accessible web design. However, the development of speech synthesizers for use with computers and text magnifier programmes has increased employment for people with visual impairment in computer programming, clerical occupations and general administration. Deaf persons can overcome some communication barriers through the use of e-mail, and persons with loss of the use of their upper limbs can operate a computer using voice navigation software. Technologies are thus facilitating access to various activities not previously possible for disabled persons. Policy measures are needed to include the access and training needs of disabled persons in mainstream ICT policies and programmes.

Governments in the ESCAP region have achieved significant improvements in their legislation, policy and planning concerning persons with disabilities during the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002. However, there still exists a gap between the recent legislation and policy measures and the de facto situation of persons with disabilities in the community owing to the lack of, or weak enforcement of, such measures at the national and subnational levels. In particular, access to education by children and youth with disabilities has largely been limited, although major international campaigns to improve education for all children, youth and adults, including those with disabilities, were launched in the 1990s.

Although the access of disabled persons to rehabilitation services, training and employment is still limited, a shift from the traditional institution-based approach to community-based approaches, and policy action to integrate disabled persons into mainstream programmes in vocational training and employment services promise improved access to those services. Strong regional advocacy and the spread of technical knowledge and skills in promoting barrier-free design among policy makers and technical personnel responsible for the construction of public facilities and public transport have helped to raise awareness and reduce barriers in the built environment in many developing countries. Many countries and areas of the ESCAP region have developed access codes and begun to enforce them.

During the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, self-help organizations of persons with diverse disabilities have established strong regional networks. Disabled persons are no longer considered just beneficiaries of social services; rather, with appropriate training, they have become agents of change in many communities, including in terms of accessibility. In some countries, cross-disability organizations of disabled persons have influenced the enactment of a national legislation and policy development concerning disability. Disability issues have been gradually shifting from a welfare approach to a broad human rights approach that is fast gaining ground as a common policy area in promoting social integration of vulnerable groups in the region. Initiatives are being taken to elaborate on an international convention on the rights of people with disabilities and are expected to be a major area of regional efforts beyond the current Decade.

5. HIV/AIDS epidemic

HIV/AIDS has become a key issue for human security in the Asian and Pacific region. While the epidemic was late in coming to the region, there is growing concern over the marked increases registered in some of the world's most populous countries. More than 60 per cent of the world's population lives in the ESCAP region, where some of the fastest growing epidemics are located. At this time, the relatively low HIV prevalence rates in the region are deceptive, as low rates in the populous Asian and Pacific region, except for South-East and East Asia, still translate into massive numbers of people infected.

Until recently, only Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand had documented significant nationwide epidemics. Globally, however, India is second only to South Africa in the number of people living with HIV/AIDS, that is, 3.5 million. In China, Ministry of Health data indicate that HIV infections

rose by 67.4 per cent in the first six months of 2001 compared with the previous year. It is estimated that China could have as many as 10 million people living with HIV/AIDS by 2010, if prevention programmes are not scaled up. Table IV.2 outlines the countries in the region with the highest adult HIV prevalence rates as of 2000.

Table IV.2. Countries in Asia and the Pacific with the highest adult HIV prevalence rates, 2000

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Rate (%)</i>	<i>Number</i>
1.	Cambodia	4.04	210 000
2.	Thailand	2.15	740 000
3.	Myanmar	1.99	510 000
4.	India	0.70	3 500 000
5.	Malaysia	0.42	48 000
6.	Nepal	0.29	33 000
7.	Viet Nam	0.24	99 000
8.	Papua New Guinea	0.22	5 200
9.	Brunei Darussalam	0.20	<100
10.	Singapore	0.19	3 900

Source: UNAIDS country fact sheets, June 2000.

The main modes of HIV transmission in the region are through heterosexual sex and injecting drug use. The most vulnerable group are young people below the age of 24 years, who account for more than 50 per cent of new infections.

In large parts of the region, HIV/AIDS prevention programmes are poorly funded and resourced. Small-scale projects tend to be scattered and do not acquire the scale and coherence required to halt the rapid spread of the epidemic. A central concern is the serious political hurdles to prevention, as issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, including commercial sex, drug use and men who have sex with men, still remain taboo, and even criminalized, in many parts of the region.

There is a need for Governments, civil society groups and the private sector to focus urgent attention on building political commitment and partnerships in the region for the adoption of multisectoral responses to combat HIV/AIDS. There is also a need for them to assess the socio-economic consequences of HIV/AIDS and its impact on poverty; expand HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support programmes; and address the stigma and discrimination faced by the more than 7 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the region.

6. Crises and adjustments

It is clear that the 1997 financial crisis and the more recent global economic slowdown made it more difficult for countries to sustain their previous gains in achieving the regional targets on social development and integration. The economic and social outlook in the region was much bleaker after mid-1997 than had been the case in 1995, when the regional and global social development commitments were made. Official development assistance (ODA) and FDI in the region have declined, as have economic growth rates in most countries of the region. Loans made available during the financial crisis by multilateral agencies have been used chiefly to assist the recovery of the private sector. Furthermore, the conditions on the loans often impeded Governments' ability to fund basic social services such as health and education. In the context of the harsher external environment, the onus of responsibility fell on Governments to promote social development through their own programmes and budgetary allocations.

Processes in globalization and the financial crisis set back achievements in poverty reduction and employment promotion and curtailed the efforts of many countries to realize their commitments to reducing social disparities. Other vulnerabilities emerged, threatening societal cohesion and the functioning of individuals, families and communities. For instance, privatization of publicly-funded health and education services has shifted the burden of providing such services to the household sector; it is often women who, as care providers and educators of young children, have seen an increase in their work burden.

Even prior to the 1997 crisis, the level of national spending on health was low in the region. Only Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Samoa spend more than 5 per cent of their GNP on health, which is one of the Health for All strategy's global indicators for resource allocation. This situation suggests that alternative sources for health-care financing will be needed if expenditures on health are to come close to matching the region's health needs. For some countries, government spending on health had been falling in the 1980s and 1990s and the financing gap has often been filled by out-of-pocket payments.

There is evidence from several countries of deterioration in the health status of vulnerable, low-income populations, particularly when social protection does not cover the entire population. In China, for example, the share of health spending from the government budget (excluding government health insurance) decreased from 32 per cent to 14 per cent between 1986 and 1993 (United Nations 1999). In 1993, it was reported that out-of-pocket payments accounted for 26 per cent of total health spending in rural areas and 16 per cent in cities (World Bank 1997). There is a similar trend in the Philippines, where out-of-pocket payments increased from 45.8 per cent of the total expenditure on health in 1991 to 49.4 per cent in 1995. During the same period, the percentage of health spending by the Government decreased from 36.5 per cent to 33.3 per cent (Philippine National Health Accounts, 1991-1997). A sharp decline in government financing of health services in Mongolia during the economic crisis in 1991-1993 resulted in many maternity homes being closed. A survey conducted jointly by the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Population Fund in mid-1993 revealed that only 52 of the 371 maternity homes that had existed at the end of 1990 were still functioning (Nymadawa 1999). The maternal mortality ratio jumped from 120 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 240 per 100,000 in 1993 (it subsequently dropped to 158 per 100,000 in 1998). However, maternal mortality in rural areas is twice as high as in cities. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the

government budget was the single source of health-care financing for many decades, but during the recent reform period, government participation in health-care financing has decreased significantly. According to data from the Ministry of Health, government financing decreased from 31.6 per cent of total health spending in the period 1994-1995 to 11.5 per cent in the period 1997-1998. Declines in government funding have led to public hospitals in many countries being given financial autonomy. Because they receive fees for payment, in order to increase revenue, many health service providers have generated demand for inappropriate but profitable health services or products, especially pharmaceuticals and high-technology diagnostic services.

In many developing countries in the region, economic crisis and adjustment have simultaneously promoted a deep reduction in government expenditure on administration, regulation and the provision of general services, ranging from health and education to the maintenance of roads and other vital infrastructure. The quality of public administration and social services has often dropped markedly, as staff were laid off and salaries cut. Once again, such action reinforces a public perception of incompetence on the part of the State. When services are subsequently privatized, this type of action may improve their efficiency. Nevertheless, the introduction of fees simultaneously reduces the coverage of the programmes involved and sharply lessens access to them on the part of low-income families.

The progressive segmentation of social services (some of which become private and others subject to new criteria of means testing and targeting) is in fact related to an important change of direction in social policy during the past few years. Not only in the region but also over wide areas of the world, the very idea that Governments have the obligation to finance minimum welfare benefits for all citizens is being challenged on both economic and ideological grounds.

In many industrialized economies, the concept of citizenship has long implied not only the enjoyment of certain legal and political rights (and the acceptance of corresponding obligations in those fields), but also the collective assurance of social rights or entitlements (such as child care, education, health and assistance in unemployment and old age). It institutionalizes a kind of social solidarity which protects those afflicted by illness and unemployment or rendered vulnerable by disability or old age.

The ideal of ensuring a general minimum of social services for the entire population has been adopted by many developing countries and some progress has been made towards realizing it. However, there is currently a clear retreat from this position in both developed and developing countries, as universalism is replaced by a residualist emphasis on targeting public assistance only towards the neediest, while leaving the provision of general social services more frequently to the private sector.

7. Civil conflicts

The 1990s have witnessed a series of civil wars, and communal and social conflicts in the Asian and Pacific region, which includes some of the world's most ethnically diverse nations. Deep rifts and

destruction of lives and property and social upheavals have arisen from these conflicts. According to UNHCR, the number of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and others of concern amounted to 7.3 million in Asia alone in 1999 (table IV.3). Beyond these statistics are human beings who have had to flee their homes or have been forced out of them by civil war, ethnic strife and violations of human rights such as in Afghanistan, East Timor and Sri Lanka. Many, including women and children, suffer from shortages of food, shelter, and medical attention or lack of protection from human rights abuses. According to United Nations estimates, there were over a million displaced people in Afghanistan prior to 11 September 2001. Tens of thousands of refugees from Sri Lanka are currently living in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

The numbers of internally displaced persons have been climbing over the past decade, as conflicts within States have become more prevalent than those between States. More people forcibly displaced from their homes are remaining in their own countries in refugee-like conditions.

Table IV.3. Indicative number of refugees and others of concern to UNHCR by region, 1998 and 1999

<i>Region of asylum/residence</i>	<i>Refugees^a</i>	<i>Asylum seekers^b</i>	<i>Returned refugees^c</i>	<i>Others of concern</i>			<i>Total population of concern</i>
				<i>Internally displaced^d</i>	<i>Returned IDPs^e</i>	<i>Various^f</i>	
(a) Population end-1998							
Africa	3 270 860	63 350	1 296 770	1 592 200	1 100	60 670	6 284 950
Asia	4 744 730	27 610	317 180	2 037 100	180 400	167 720	7 474 740
Europe	2 667 830	576 900	285 500	1 306 300	266 600	1 109 420	6 212 550
Latin America and Caribbean	74 180	360	7 860	–	–	20 000	102 400
North America	659 800	645 600	–	–	–	–	1 305 400
Oceania	74 310	5 200	–	–	–	–	79 510
Total	11 491 710	1 319 020	1 907 310	4 935 600	448 100	1 357 810	21 459 550
(b) Population end-1999							
Africa	3 523 250	61 110	933 890	640 600	1 054 700	36 990	6 250 540
Asia	4 781 750	24 750	617 620	1 724 800	10 590	149 350	7 308 860
Europe	2 608 380	473 060	952 060	1 603 300	370 000	1 279 000	7 285 800
Latin America and Caribbean	61 200	1 510	6 260	–	–	21 200	90 170
North America	636 300	605 630	–	–	–	–	1 241 930
Oceania	64 500	15 540	–	–	–	–	80 040
Total	11 675 380	1 181 600	2 509 830	3 968 700	1 435 290	1 486 540	22 257 340
(c) Annual change (percentage)							
Africa	7.7	–3.5	–28.0	–59.8	95 781.8	39.0	0.5

Asia	0.8	-10.4	94.7	-15.3	-94.1	-11.0	-2.2
Europe	-2.2	-18.0	233.5	22.7	38.8	15.3	17.3
Latin America and Caribbean	-17.5	319.4	-20.4	..	..	6.0	-11.9
North America	-3.6	-6.2	..	..	..	..	-4.9
Oceania	-13.2	198.8	..	..	..	..	0.7
Total	1.6	-10.4	31.6	-19.6	220.3	9.5	3.7

Source: UNHCR, *Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR: 1999 Statistical Overview* (Geneva, July 2000).

- ^a Persons recognized as refugees under the 1951 Convention or the 1969 OAU Convention, in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; persons granted humanitarian or comparable status and those granted temporary protection.
- ^b Persons whose application for refugee status is pending in the asylum procedure or who are otherwise registered as asylum seekers.
- ^c Refugees who have returned to their place of origin during the past two years.
- ^d Persons who are displaced within their country and to whom UNHCR extends protection and/or assistance in pursuance of a special request by a competent organ of the United Nations.
- ^e Internally displaced persons who have returned to their place of origin during the past two years.
- ^f Other groups of concern to UNHCR.

8. Participation in economic, social, cultural and political processes

On a positive note, globalization has contributed to the strengthening of peoples' organizations, including the poor themselves and civil society in general. Until the recent past, in countries characterized by authoritarian rule the kind of independent association necessary to constitute a civil society was generally proscribed. In many countries, people pursued their interests through channels controlled by the Government. This situation is changing markedly, as steps are taken to strengthen democratic political systems and as economic crisis reduces the capacity of many Governments to influence and maintain representation and control. Increasingly there are new openings for citizens' initiatives in the transition to democracy. Such initiatives are being encouraged by the international development community, which is currently committed to strengthening NGOs by channelling an increasing proportion of available funds for aid and relief to that sector.

Certain aspects of globalization greatly favour the creation of new associations and interest groups in societies. Worldwide networks of like-minded people, linked by modern communications, offer support and resources. This is particularly visible in fields such as environmental protection, equality for women and human rights. International links are also being forged between some trade union and farmers' organizations in countries in the global network, as they collaborate to meet the challenges from the potential downsides in the internationalization of production. A plethora of business associations search for partners in well-established and fledging market economies. Neither democracy nor development can be achieved without effective organization of people to pursue common interests, and the awakening of civil society in many parts of the region will foster development efforts.

A combination of institutions, laws, procedures and norms which allows people to express their concerns and protect their interests within a predictable and relatively equitable context forms the basis for effective participation. Efficient administration of public resources is an additional element in this definition. Political and administrative systems must increasingly support a balanced response to the participation demands of their citizens. The problem is partly ethical and partly structural. Inefficiency, neglect and corruption have destabilized some Governments around the region. But at the same time, even the most honest and efficient political systems have had to confront the enormous difficulties created by globalization, market integration and slow growth.

The commitments made at the Social Summit have presented a key opportunity for policy makers and development planners to embark on a new development path, one that demands a shift to a more people-centred, equitable, community-based and participatory focus. The “new” strategy for sustained development entails incorporating social concerns into economic policies and investments into concrete and measurable terms; it requires generating more tangible opportunities and benefits, particularly for hitherto disadvantaged and vulnerable population sectors. It further means creating an inclusive sociocultural milieu and social, economic and political institutions that are open and responsive to the participatory requirements of all the people.

This approach was reaffirmed in the Phnom Penh Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific, which called on all Governments in the region to recognize fully and support the crucial role of major groups and to promote their active participation in sustainable development. The Governments recognized that these major groups, including community-based organizations, NGOs, industry, agriculture and business associations, have the capability of delivering social services, often in partnership with Governments, and also of relieving the heavy pressure on government resources. Special attention should be paid to the mobilization of youth and women as partners in ensuring sustainable economic and social development for them. Governments were also urged to promote partnership among Governments, business and major groups in these efforts (ESCAP and others 2001e).

C. SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

This section reviews the actions taken by the major interdependent actors, that is, Governments, NGOs and civil society, including the private business sector, in social mobilization. It highlights some outcomes of social mobilization efforts in the policy and programme measures implemented by the various actors, as reported in various United Nations and ESCAP publications, and recent country reports.

1. Governmental actions

Over the past decade, Governments in the region have initiated a number of measures towards realizing the goals and objectives of the Social Summit. Reports from 22 Governments that responded

to a 1997 ESCAP survey and subsequent reports from several regional forums revealed that many Governments have incorporated social development goals and targets in their overall national development plans and policy documents. Many have formulated and implemented comprehensive social development programmes either sectorally or intersectorally. More than half the respondents had developed and operationalized comprehensive plans for the purpose of poverty alleviation and employment expansion or for expanding opportunities or benefits for women, youths, people with disabilities and workers. For example, some countries revised existing laws and regulations or introduced new legislation to strengthen or upgrade measures for vulnerable groups. Viet Nam revised its legislation based on the 1991 strategy for socio-economic stabilization and development by the year 2000. The Republic of Korea replaced its Livelihood Protection Act, which had been in effect until 1999, with the Basic Livelihood Security Law of August 1999, which took effect in October 2000. Further, it introduced the Basic Law for the Development of Youths in the early 1990s and the Basic Law for the Development of Women in 1996 and revised its decades-old Child Welfare Act in 2000.

Countries in the region also made institutional arrangements and established focal points and coordinating bodies to supervise and monitor governmental and non-governmental social development activities. Some countries took steps to devolve legislative and administrative control and power closer to the people by introducing autonomous local government systems and deployed the functions, responsibility and personnel necessary for the more effective delivery of basic social services to the local grass-roots level of administration.

Governments also defined the target population with respect to each of the areas of social concern within the framework of the regional Agenda and established time-bound achievement targets to ensure cost-efficiency and maximum programme impact. In that connection, Governments carried out surveys to collect data disaggregated by age, sex, ethnic group and poverty level. Bangladesh, Fiji, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Niue, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam had organized and were establishing social development information systems.

Activities directed at poverty reduction received the highest priority, as was evident from the indicators used to measure progress in the implementation of the Agenda. The indicators included access to education, health and other basic services, income distribution, informal sector participation, rural development, poverty incidence, caloric intake and malnutrition, and employment (the most frequently used of the indicators).

Some countries identified their own indicators for assessing social integration as the regional Agenda offered few indicators on this issue; the indicators include distribution of assets, access to services, the status of women and children, including violence against them, women's participation in economic and political processes at the national and local levels and children displaced by armed conflicts. The lack of development of indicators in this area could be attributed partly to the fact that poverty reduction indicators are assumed to subsume achievements in social integration.

Among the more dominant poverty alleviation programmes are those aimed at expanding employment opportunities because employment is recognized as an essential strategy of poverty alleviation. Promotion of labour-intensive industries, subsidies to employers through periods of

financial crisis, subsidized job retraining programmes, promotion of job-sharing arrangements and tax benefits to venture industries were among the support measures for employment expansion in the business/industrial sector. Improving the terms of credit for promoting small and medium-sized industries and low-interest business loans for self-employment were also emphasized. Governments as well as the private sector contributed to and often collaborated in those efforts.

The provision of subsidized childcare facilities and services to promote women's participation in the economy and subsidies to employers to open up job opportunities for persons with disabilities are of particular interest from the perspective of social integration. For example, in the Republic of Korea an extensive training programme on the use of computers and the Internet was offered cost free to housewives and other interested groups over a period of two years or more. Such an initiative served well to reduce the extent to which women and others without the opportunity to become computer-literate would have become alienated and excluded from the emergent socio-economic mainstream.

Box IV.1. Community-based systems of support: The Human Dignity Initiative

In recent years, it has become apparent that some of the shortfalls of traditional social safety nets can be avoided by incorporating community-based mechanisms into the formulation and implementation of social systems of support, including social safety nets. An example of this approach is the project "The Human Dignity Initiative: community-based safety nets as tools for human development", started by ESCAP in 2000. The project aims at strengthening community-based systems of support through social mobilization and the building of partnerships with local governments and other stakeholders as a tool to counteract the negative impact of globalization.

Phase I consisted of community development pilot projects in five poor communities in the Bangkok area in collaboration with the Urban Community Development Office. The pilot projects were formulated on the basis of strong participation by all concerned so as to develop a sense of ownership among stakeholders, particularly community members. The issues tackled in each community were identified by the community members to ensure that these activities responded to actual needs of the people. The strategies for implementation were based on a needs and resources assessment carried out at all levels: community, NGOs, government and international organization. While communities retained control over the formulation and implementation of the activities, including evaluation and monitoring, all elements of the projects were implemented through partnerships that included the community members, an NGO, local government representatives and ESCAP. The pilot projects were successful in establishing a process of empowerment through participation where each community had control over its own development. In addition, they demonstrated modalities to articulate community-based informal systems of support with local government policy formulation and implementation which increase the impact, coverage and cost-efficiency of policies aimed at providing social services.

The project will now be replicated in countries of South-East Asia with a view to formulating a policy framework for incorporating community-based systems of support into the mainstreaming of social services provision by local governments.

Source: Human Settlements Section, Population and Rural and Urban Development Division, ESCAP.

Poverty alleviation measures for the rural sector were fairly extensive as well. Diversification of cultivable and marketable crops, the introduction of crop improvement technologies, promotion of agro-business such as through value added agricultural products, improved marketing infrastructure (including across-the-board governmental purchase of certain crops), subsidies and tax reductions for cross-border agro-trade, waiving of rural household debts and land reclamation projects represented such measures.

For the poor and the jobless, public assistance, public works, job retraining (in some countries with cash subsistence allowances during the training), support to self-help centres, cost-free access to medical services, education grants for the children of families on public assistance, small business loans, etc. were variously found in the region. The expansion or revision of existing social security systems or their fresh introduction were also reported.

2. Civil society organizations

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have played an important role in social development during the past decade. Many government initiatives such as those cited above could not have taken place without the collaboration of CSOs. These organizations have articulated and advocated the need for action, and they have collaborated with the public sector in undertaking necessary actions. Collaboration has occurred in employment, labour-management relations, rural development, social service delivery, human rights and other fields.

The growth of CSOs worldwide and in the region, in numbers and quality, their solidarity and extensive and multilevel networking have made them an influential force in the development arena. During the 1990s especially, they have been effective advocates of human rights issues, women's empowerment, consumer protection and environmental protection, among other areas. Globalization has accelerated rapid CSO networking and the reach of these networks to the grass-roots level. For example, people's organizations in Malaysia are known to have led the consumer protection movement in the region, which has become institutionalized by way of official establishments created for the purpose. Consumer rights and protection are increasingly a part of normative business/industrial practices. Numerous civic groups and organizations are at the forefront of environment monitoring and restoration. They have been highly effective as pro-environment pressure groups and advocates. Many public and private sector development projects of some scale, with negative environmental projections, were halted at the blueprint stage because of the interventions of such groups.

The success achieved by a number of NGOs in the family planning field is well known. Their work has had a significant impact on overall development outcomes. Organized labour also has a record of successful self-mobilization efforts to protect workers' rights and join the political

mainstream in some countries in tripartite partnerships with employers and government. Non-governmental women's organizations have also been highly active in recent decades. Indeed, the United Nations gender initiatives are in large part the outcome of CSO activism that has spanned decades.

The achievements of CSOs in the Asian and Pacific region and their activism owe a great deal to their increasing exposure to the various international instruments, such as the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conventions and protocols dealing with racial, gender and minority issues, and people's right to development. Perhaps the most important underlying factor has been the growth of people's participation itself. With better education, people can tap better and wider sources of information and knowledge and, with better health, participate productively in personal, social, economic and political life. With improved and independent economic resources, they can make more informed choices and have more control over their lives and rights.

In general, the activities of many CSOs in the region have shifted from a welfare and human service to a more rights-based orientation. This shift is indicative of their increasingly urgent demand for people's fuller integration into all the economic, social, political and cultural processes that affect their daily lives.

3. The private sector

Experience in the region suggests that, with regard to the private business sector, the notion of "social contract" has had a slower start than in the more developed regions. The private sector in much of developing Asia and the Pacific has been more preoccupied with business operations and survival than public interest and its role in social development.

There are, however, notable examples of public-private partnerships over recent years aimed at promoting social development efforts. Individual philanthropists and religious organizations have also had important and pioneering roles to play in the provision of private education and charity and promoted capacity-building of children and youth, and sustained the lives of the destitute, the ill or the oppressed.

More recently, some private sector corporations have combined business interests with public service and collaborated with Governments in public interest projects. For example, in the Republic of Korea, local corporations have collaborated with the Government in providing cost-free computers and Internet training. It is fairly widely acknowledged that such training programmes have greatly contributed to the spread of successful e-businesses among women and their entry into venture electronics industries as entrepreneurs and employees. In Mongolia, a foreign private sector concern has supported the establishment, maintenance and operation of extensive online information networks, including the provision of hardware, office space, personnel costs and utility charges. In many countries, business sector charitable foundations regularly contribute to voluntary social service activities, non-governmental welfare funds, educational establishments and childcare facilities.

Members of some business concerns, as a group, “adopt” poor families, child-headed households, elderly people in institutions or disabled children, and often enter into ongoing personal relationships with them.

“Business for Progress” in the Philippines is a pioneer in sustained and systematic collaboration with social agencies for community-based poverty reduction programmes, among others. The Thailand Business Initiative for Rural Development, which is popularly known as T-BIRD, is well known in the region for its pioneering initiative in mobilizing business corporations to set up manufacturing enterprises (for example, in garment manufacture and shoemaking) in rural areas in Thailand to generate employment and stem rural-to-urban migration. These private corporations have helped to ensure wider coverage and delivery of social services to meet the needs of the poor in the more remote areas of the country, usually with the support of the Government in terms of physical infrastructure or tax and other fiscal incentives.

There are also private sector business concerns that have placed their entire management systems on a cooperative footing by making their employees co-owners of their businesses. These actions on the part of the private sector constitute and contribute to country-wide social mobilization efforts for social integration and the improvement of livelihoods and social well-being, particularly among vulnerable groups.

4. Action on resource mobilization

Apart from public allocations from domestic resources for social development, developing ESCAP countries have variously resorted to bilateral and multilateral aid, user-fees, private sector participation, self-help schemes, loans, seed money or CSO funding. Resource mobilization at the national and local levels has been constrained by the fact that allocation to the social sectors is sensitive to macroeconomic fluctuations. “Social spending has been used as an instrument of adjustment to balance the fiscal accounts. Hence, it suffers a high degree of instability, which hampers its utilization as a long-term instrument” (ESCAP 1997b). Nevertheless, there has been a modest increase in national budgetary outlays for social development in some countries registering two-digit increases as a percentage of the total national budget between the periods 1992-1993 and 1996-1997. Special funds, including bi- and multilateral sources, have also been created for social sector programmes, such as primary health care, education, housing and family planning. NGOs dedicated to mobilizing social-purpose resources from the public at large and the private sector through annual campaigns and from special donations have also been established by law.

Related to resource allocation, but also important in its own right, is the issue of decentralization. Opening social, economic and political opportunities at the local levels allows for greater participation by all. In a number of countries in the region, particularly in East and South-East Asia, decentralization has been initiated and motivated by the need to improve service delivery to large populations and the recognition of the limitations of central administration.

The specific services to be decentralized and the type of decentralization will depend on economies of scale affecting technical efficiency and the degree of spillover effects. In practice, not all services need to be decentralized in the same way or to the same degree. The nature of most local public services requires a government role in ensuring the provision and standards of services, but it does not automatically require the public sector to be responsible for the delivery of all services. According to the World Bank (2001a), at least five conditions are important for successful decentralization:

- (a) The decentralization framework must link, at the margin, local financing and fiscal authority to the service provision responsibilities and functions of the local government so that local politicians can bear the costs of their decisions and deliver on their promises;
- (b) The local community must be informed of the costs of services and service delivery options involved and the resource envelope and its sources so that the decisions they make are meaningful. Participatory budgeting, such as in Porto Alegre, Brazil, is one way to create this condition;
- (c) There must be a mechanism by which the community can express its preferences in a way that is binding on the politicians so that there is a credible incentive for people to participate;
- (d) There must be a system of accountability that relies on public and transparent information, which enables the community to monitor effectively the performance of the local government and react appropriately to that performance, so that politicians and local officials have an incentive to be responsive;
- (e) The instruments of decentralization, the legal and institutional framework, the structure of service delivery responsibilities and the intergovernmental fiscal system, must be designed to support the political objectives.

Fulfilling these goals by promoting stronger local-central government linkages or having local governments improve upon the central government's record is a challenge, but it is achievable. Successful decentralization is closely related to observing the design principles of finance, following clear assignment of functions, informed decision-making, adherence to local priorities and accountability.

However, applying these principles in practice has not proven to be simple. Country circumstances differ, often in subtle and complex ways; consequently, the policy and institutional instruments that establish decentralization have to be shaped to the specific conditions of individual countries.

Box IV.2. The experience of the participative budget in Porto Alegre, Brazil

The history of conceiving and executing public budgets in Brazil is marked by serious deformations related to power concentration, resource waste, political affairs and corruption. In Porto Alegre, this history has been changed. Seven years ago, City Hall created an innovative and revolutionary system to formulate the municipal budget.

In this system, named the participative budget, it is not technicians and government leaders who, locked inside their offices, decide on the collection of taxes and the spending of public money. It is the people, through a debate and consultation process, who define and decide on the amounts of income and expense, as well as where and when the investments will be made, which are the priorities and which are the plans and actions to be developed by the Government.

The participative budget system has proven that the democratic and transparent administration of resources is an effective way to avoid corruption and mishandling of public funds. Despite certain technocratic opinions, popular participation has brought about efficient spending, effective where it has to be, resulting in public works and actions of great importance to the population. Since its beginning, the projects decided by the participative budget system represent investments of over \$700 million, mainly in urban infrastructure and in upgrading the quality of the population's life.

The participative budget system has also proved that having effective tools of participation and the commitment of the Government in doing whatever the people decide is essential to cut the bureaucratic barriers that separate the society from the State, forming an active and mobilized citizenship. In Porto Alegre, today, the citizens know and decide on public issues, transforming themselves, therefore, into agents of change to better their own future.

The participative budget system is known by 60 per cent of the population, according to public opinion research, and millions of people participate actively in the process through meetings, regional conventions or specific thematic assemblies.

Currently, throughout Brazil there are at least 70 cities that are establishing the participative budget system, based on the experience of Porto Alegre.

Source: UNESCO, Management of Social Transformations Programme, <http://www.unesco.org/most/southa13.htm>.

D. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

It is recognized that situations vary in different countries. Nevertheless, there are broad outlines in the region leading towards greater social exclusion which make the efforts of Governments, CSOs and the private sector in meeting the Social Summit commitment of promoting social integration more critical.

As a first principle of action, social policy should act on the structural determinants of income distribution and poverty: education, employment, nutrition, wealth distribution and demography, as well as on their associated gender and ethnic dimensions. These factors are the key to breaking the intergenerational transmission of inequality and exclusion.

A second principle, closely related to the first, is that for social integration to be a sustained and successful process, policies themselves must be integrated. Underpinning this principle is the rationale that unless social sector policies themselves and economic and social policies are integrated, any policy will be inadequate for solving the major social and economic problems in the current era of globalization.

When economic and social policies are not coordinated, suboptimal policy choices are the result. Lack of coordination and integration of social and economic policies contributes to, among other things, adverse social impacts of policies for macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment and the transition to a market economy. This can lead not only to excessively high social costs but also to the failure of the economic policies themselves through the social conflict, political instability and other social upheavals that can result.

With the general principles stated, an inclusive society can be promoted through the development and implementation of policies that promote social integration on the basis of a human rights and entitlements framework. This type of framework reflects a society that respects the rights of its people to development and full participation.

Social integration is a difficult objective to attain. Many Governments in the region have enacted policies and programmes to bring communities together, reduce deprivation, eliminate discrimination and increase mutual understanding. There is a need to strengthen policies and programmes to promote self-mobilization of the poor and disadvantaged groups and their effective participation in community and national affairs. This is necessary if they are to be socially, economically and culturally integrated on a sustainable basis. In that connection, the poor themselves must be enabled to select one (or more) tangible and achievable goals towards which they are willing to work. Such involvement and participation in decision-making and identification of their own needs will be a key determinant and outcome of social mobilization and integration efforts. Governments, the private sector and civil society need to work jointly to identify the causes of vulnerability and address social exclusion at the community level. CSOs are particularly well placed to accomplish this task: they are ubiquitous.

NGOs should be partners in development. Evolving clear working partnerships between the government and NGO sectors, through an ongoing coordination mechanism, will go a long way towards promoting non-confrontational communication and cooperation between them. It is necessary, however, to caution against compromising the role and functions of NGOs through co-optation.

The private sector contribution is also essential to tackle effectively the complex and deeply embedded problems of social exclusion. Drawing the private sector particularly into disadvantaged areas is essential in view of the important linkages between both the private sector and access to employment, and private sector services and people's capacity to improve their quality of life. The private sector can:

- (a) Facilitate and attract resources (expertise, skills and funds) otherwise not available or in short supply (e.g., financial management, legal advice, training support and external funds);
- (b) Introduce different perspectives, best practices and techniques (e.g., results-driven project and programme planning and management);
- (c) Exploit sources of influence (e.g., helping to persuade other companies to lend support to partnership activities);
- (d) Act speedily to address social issues with fewer bureaucratic constraints or independently of local politics.

Effective and sustained partnerships involving the private sector in the inclusion process could be promoted through:

- (a) Developing a framework for good practices of private sector involvement in social inclusion to make clear the various ways in which the private sector can play a role in the process;
- (b) Promoting more joint ventures between business, local authorities and community-based organizations in the provision of social sector services for area regeneration;
- (c) Engaging more specialist labour-market intermediaries, combining the employer-focused expertise of recruitment agencies and the client-centred knowledge and trust relationships of local employment and training initiatives;
- (d) Encouraging the private sector to take more of a lead role in drawing in other private sector players to appropriately develop and deliver certain social development interventions;
- (e) Promoting active contributions by businesses and their staff as a significant part of the excellence model in quality management.

Related to corporate responsibility but also in their own right, the media have a key partnership role and contribution to make to social development in general and social integration in particular. The media disseminate information on sources of assistance and have both a powerful influence on people's attitudes and perceptions and a weighty responsibility to contribute to improved social well-being. Media attention needs to turn away from the insurmountable differences that divide peoples and countries and focus on good practices whereby these differences can be overcome. There is an urgent need to focus on the positive use of existing and rapidly emerging media technologies to foster

hope and promote social integration. The media have a responsibility to help people to understand that diversity, often a source of conflict, can also be a powerful and enriching resource for social development. An important beginning would be to eliminate stereotyping based on religion, culture, gender, race, class, nationality and ethnicity from media programming. The media can focus on constructive, unifying and cooperative undertakings that demonstrate humanity's capacity to work together and build on tangible successes with social integration, including best practices in promoting racial, religious, national and ethnic unity. The media can also increase awareness of government, private sector and NGO policies, programmes and services and increase people's access to those services in times of need and crisis.

The potential for societal tensions, intersectoral and inter-group conflicts are unavoidable facets of rapid socio-economic and cultural change. To reduce conflict and vulnerability, it is essential to promote measures for social cohesion and support mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of differences, both within and between countries.

In developing and implementing policies and programmes, all external and domestic development actors need to accord respect to indigenous knowledge, traditions and coping strategies. Culturally appropriate methods should be developed, taking into account people's language, culture, seasonal movements and related factors. Communities should be granted full access to and benefit from their own community resources.