

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

LITERATURE REVIEW ON SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE ESCWA REGION

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Introduction

While the broad notion of social exclusion is relatively new in the literature of the ESCWA region, it involves social problems that have long existed, notably poverty, unemployment and various forms of marginalization. As a concept, it is most eloquently described in literature as nebulous, equivocal, polyvalent and polymorphous. It encompasses both the actual conditions of life of marginalized groups and the analysis of the causes of these outcomes and process through which they came to be. There is value-added in its multidimensional examination of causes, covering participation in development; access to services; distribution of gains and production; the relationship between and among communities and national society as well as international relations; and even an individual's subjective sense of isolation.

This review contains an overview and analysis of the concept of social exclusion and its mechanisms as found in the literature, and attempts to identify vulnerable groups as it applies to the region by identifying mechanisms (how, through what and by whom), and categories of social exclusion and vulnerability. It will serve as the entry point into a broader analysis aimed at measuring the processes and dynamics of social exclusion by identifying areas on which to focus subsequent research and raising preliminary questions requiring further analysis.

I. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The term “excluded” was originally coined in France in the 1970s in reference to social assistance, describing various categories of people left out of State contributory benefits. Such people were labelled “social problems” and were not protected by social insurance, particularly the young, the elderly, the disabled and single parents. Social exclusion initially referred to a process of social disintegration, a progressive rupture of the relationship between the individual and society. It later extended to incorporate those suffering multiple deprivations in worst affected locations. Since the late 1980s, the concept has become increasingly concerned with the problem of “new poverty” associated with long-term unemployment, unskilled workers and immigrants. Following the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 5-12 March 1995), the concept of social exclusion entered the development debate by several multilateral agencies, notably the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Department for International Development (DFID).¹ However, it is still novel to the development debate in non-industrialized countries.

The term has been interpreted in more than one way and, as other reviews on the issue indicate, it is highly variable in its meaning because it depends on different modes of thinking about society. Silver’s classification is found pertinent in the analysis of social exclusion as she describes three paradigms representing theories of society.² Her models essentially permeate existing literature on exclusion in Western Europe and North America and reflect different national notions of social integration. “Each of the three paradigms attributes exclusion to a different cause, and is grounded in a different political philosophy: republicanism, liberalism, and social democracy. Each provides an explanation of multiple forms of social disadvantage—economic, social, political, and cultural—and thus encompasses theories of citizenship and racial-ethnic inequality as well as poverty and long-term unemployment”.³

These three paradigms can be summarized as follows:

(a) The solidarity paradigm, which sees exclusion as a rupture in social bonds between the individual and society. Integration is based on organic solidarity; social order is constructed around common values and norms that are administered through mediating institutions and policies of integration. As such, exclusion is inherent in the solidarity of nation, race, ethnicity, locality and other cultural or primordial ties that delimit group boundaries. This model underpins the Republican State and relates to the French experience where the notion of exclusion originated;

(b) The specialization paradigm, rooted in the liberal state, was dominant in the United States of America where exclusion is tied to discrimination. Social exclusion results from individual behaviours and exchanges. Social order is formed through networks of voluntary exchanges between autonomous individuals with their own interests and motivations. Exclusion is caused by individual preference or due to the structures created by cooperating and competing individuals, markets and associations, among others. When group boundaries impede individual freedom to participate in social exchanges, exclusion takes the form of “discrimination”;

(c) The monopoly paradigm reflects societies with hierarchical structures that enforce restriction to access to goods and services for non-members of the dominant groups. Exclusion results from “social closures” when institutions monopolize scarce resources, create boundaries and perpetuate inequality. The “excluded are therefore outsiders and dominated at the same time”.⁴ This is “likely to offer significant

¹ Falling within the purview of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Department for International Development (DFID) manages that country’s aid to poor countries and works to get rid of extreme poverty.

² H. Silver, “Reconceptualizing social disadvantage: Three paradigms of social exclusion” in *Social exclusion: rhetoric, reality and responses*, eds. G. Rodgers, C. Gore and J. Figueiredo (ILO/UNDP, 1995).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

insights in the study of poverty and employment issues as it emphasizes agency and also does not posit a simple dualism between insiders and outsiders (as in the solidarity model in particular), but a complex hierarchy of inter-related inclusions and exclusions".⁵ This model underpins the existing Western European structure of society. The social democratic State embodies the balance of power and compensates through social protection.

These models were meant to represent three ideal types of society each composed of a particular mix of ideas applicable in various realities. In this sense, the process of social exclusion in terms of meaning, mechanisms and results depends on the reality of the society. Hachem applies these models in the case of Yemen, where the republican/solidarity paradigm applies at the macro level, as conceived by the excluder, through religion as the primary institution of integration in the country.⁶ Specifically, "Islam is the means of integration and is used to win consensus for its legitimacy... where social order is the individual's acceptance of common values and norms through mediating institutions".⁷ Islamic principles provide the "collective conscience" or a "national consensus". Moreover, Hachem points out to the monopoly model of exclusion at the micro level, as conceived by the excluded. Exclusion results from social closure when institutions and cultural distinctions monopolize scarce sources and create boundaries. Tribal affiliation and other cultural practices of exclusion are dynamic factors that influence social identity and networks between kinship and friendship of equals, which in turn influences access to land and employment.

A. DEFINITION OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Various definitions of the notion and process of social exclusion emerged from the literature. Differences in those definitions reflect the various social structures under which the phenomenon was analysed. Two conceptual definitions are selected that represent two aspects of exclusion, namely:

(a) "A process and a state that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights. It derives from exclusionary relationships based on power";⁸

(b) "Social exclusion is an accumulation of confluent processes with successive ruptures arising from the heart of economy, politics and society; gradually distances and places persons, groups, communities and territories in positions of inferiority in relation to centre powers, resources and prevailing values".⁹

In particular, Beall and Piron recapitulate common elements of definitions of social exclusion, namely:

(a) The definition of social exclusion refers to individuals, categories and/or groups;

(b) Exclusion is seen as a state of ill being and disablement, and of systematic disadvantage;

(c) Exclusion is founded on social relations. It is concerned with the excluded as well as with the excluder, thereby putting power at the centre of analysis. It is a feature of social structure of societies in which recurrent patterns of social relationships deny individuals and groups access to goods, services activities and resources which are associated with citizenship;

(d) Exclusion has an institutional dimension that involves organizations and processes that exclude;

⁵ C. Gore, "Markets, citizenship and social exclusion" in *Social exclusion: rhetoric, reality and responses*, eds. G. Rodgers, C. Gore and J. Figueiredo (ILO/UNDP, 1995).

⁶ M. Hachem, "Patterns and processes of social exclusion in the Republic of Yemen" in *Social exclusion: rhetoric, reality and responses*, eds. G. Rodgers, C. Gore and J. Figueiredo (ILO/UNDP, 1995).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ J. Beall and L-H. Piron, "DFID Social Exclusion Review" (Department for International Development (DFID), May 2005).

⁹ J. Estivill, "Concepts and strategies for combating social exclusion: An overview" (International Labour Office, 2003).

(e) Exclusion has a causal dimension. It looks at factors leading to poverty. It also looks at other forms of social disadvantage that lead to the inability of individuals to create livelihoods or claim their rights owing to, for instance, racial discrimination, religious intolerance, gender inequalities impinging on access to education and/or to the labour market;

(f) Exclusion is a multidimensional process where aspects of social disadvantages intersect, e.g. poverty and gender.

B. MECHANISMS OF EXCLUSION: HOW DO PEOPLE BECOME EXCLUDED

Scholarly work on social exclusion agrees that it can be analysed both as a state and as a process. Such analysis entails the various factors that lead to it, including social identities, resource allocation, power relations, and cultural and structural norms of societies.

As a condition or an outcome, it is a state where excluded individuals or groups are unable to participate fully in their society. Factors include the following:

(a) Social identity, such as race, ethnicity, caste, religion, gender and age;

(b) Social location, such as remote areas, stigmatized areas, war or conflict areas;

(c) Social status, including the health situation (disability, illness of HIV/AIDS and other stigmatizing diseases), migrant status (including refugees), occupation and level of education.

As a multidimensional dynamic process, it is governed by social and political relations, and access to organizations and institutional sites of power. Within that context, social relations and organizational barriers block the following: (a) attainment of livelihoods; (b) human development; and (c) equal citizenship.

Kabeer asserts that while institutional rules and norms spell out particular patterns of inclusion and exclusion, they cannot cause them to happen.¹⁰ Specifically, it is social actors who “make up these institutions, the collectivities they form and interactions between them, which provide the agency behind the patterns” of rules, norms and asset distributions, which together help to spell out people’s membership of different kinds of social groups, thereby shaping identities and defining interests.¹¹ In other words, people are excluded by institutions and behaviour that reflect, enforce and reproduce prevailing social attitudes and values, particularly those of powerful groups in society.

Kabeer’s analysis, as well as other studies, distinguishes between three categories of such attitudes and social practices. These are based on whether they are conscious or unconscious, intended or unintended, explicit or informal, and are as follows:

(a) Mobilization of institutional bias (rules of the game) whereby a “predominant set of values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others” and those who “benefit are placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their vested interests”.¹² This mechanism operates without conscious decisions by those who represent the status quo.¹³ While gender is not a contractual condition for employment, it is a determining factor in the process (rules) of recruitment. The exclusion of minority groups by language barriers or of disabled people from services, markets and political participation through a lack of awareness of their needs or by social attitudes also fall within this category;

¹⁰ N. Kabeer, “Social exclusion, poverty and discrimination: towards an analytical framework”, *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 31, No. 4 (October 2000).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ For example, in terms of recruitment where a position is described as gender-neutral, but where a stereotypical regard to women as having the primary role as housewives sets them at a disadvantage against male candidates.

(b) Social closure, through which “social collectivities seek to maximize rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles”.¹⁴ Monopolization of certain opportunities is based on group attributes, including, among others, race, language, social origin and religion. On this point, Kabeer refers to the issue of “credentialism” that is broadly practised in developing countries and refers to the practice of demanding entry qualifications that outweigh the actual skills required for the job, and through membership of club-like associations. Based on this tactic, they enjoy salaries higher than merited.¹⁵ State institutions cause exclusion when they deliberately discriminate in their laws, policies or programmes. Moreover, in some cases, there are social systems that decide people’s position in society on the basis of heredity;

(c) Unruly practices, which refer to the gaps between rules and their implementation that occur in all institutional domains. Institutions unofficially perpetuate exclusion when public sector workers reflect prejudices of their society through their position; hence they institutionalize some kind of discrimination. For example, while Egyptian women married to non-Egyptian men are finally able to transfer nationality to their children owing to a change of law in 2004, in practice, Egyptian women married to men of Palestinian nationality do not benefit from this right. Kabeer further raises another crucial point regarding this category, whereby exclusionary outcomes in the public sector frequently take the form of unruly practices because of the particular character of public provisioning as institutional practice. While the private sector is primarily interested in profit maximization, and does not consider a role of meeting social needs and overcoming social exclusion, public service providers in the social domain are officially contracted for that role. This, according to Kabeer, is why “unruly practices as mechanisms of social exclusion are much more likely to apply in the public sector precisely because the official rules dictate otherwise”.¹⁶

Different forms of disadvantage give rise to different kinds of disadvantaged groups and destructive synergies are created between different kinds of disadvantaged. Estivill described the process to be “a chain of relatively distinct factors which together have an impact, up to a certain point in a continuous and repetitive manner, on the living standards of individuals, groups and spaces”.¹⁷

The material basis of exclusion relates to the lack of access to means of subsistence and is characterized by “circuits of denial and cumulative disadvantages... family origins, low levels of bad or non-existent schooling, scarce or poor vocational training, lack of employment, precarious or seasonal jobs, inadequate nutrition, low income, unhealthy or poor housing, ill health and chronic or repetitive diseases, the lack of social benefits and of access to public services, are usually the most fundamental elements of these circuits of impoverishment”.¹⁸ When a combination of those elements is lacking, it makes it difficult to escape from these circuits, thereby creating destructive synergies that underlie hard-core exclusion. Consequently, in considering poverty as a category of disadvantaged (defined by the lack of adequate material possessions), variations within the poor in the capacity to work, vulnerability and access to social networks create considerable differentiations, with some groups more disadvantaged than others.

C. THE NATURE OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The analysis of social exclusion needs to be on a multidimensional level covering social, economic, cultural and political situations. Such an approach can lead to an understanding of the various aspects and mechanisms that lead to a situation of being excluded from active life and social action in general. This multidimensional approach encapsulates the following:

¹⁴ N. Kabeer, op. cit.

¹⁵ *Wasta*, which refers to nepotism and favour in Arabic, prevails as a similar tactic of exclusion whereby influential relations determine “club” membership. Social closure in this context is a deliberate and open form of exclusion.

¹⁶ N. Kabeer, op. cit.

¹⁷ J. Estivill, “Concepts and strategies for combating social exclusion: An overview” (International Labour Office, 2003).

¹⁸ Ibid.

(a) From a political perspective, the issue refers to the rights of citizens, access to and enjoyment of these rights, and the multiple barriers associated with them;

(b) Within a social outlook, exclusion mainly originates in specific structures and rules when individuals and collective transgression is penalized. Exclusion is manifested in the form of lack of access to many material goods; lack of access to social, educational and health services; lack of access to social protection; and lack of access to participation in life-affecting decisions;

(c) Economic exclusion gives rise to the issue of employment, diversity of access to goods and services, urban/rural segregation. Additionally, it encompasses the aspect of spatial exclusion where disadvantages are based on both who you are and on where you live, including stigmatized, remote or isolated areas;

(d) Culture and technology form other factors to social exclusion where there is dominance of certain languages, cultural and consumption patterns; or to information technology, including the access to the Internet and computers, which increasingly have become a means of virtual inclusion in the global village;

(e) Self-exclusion is a form of exclusion that cannot be ignored given that it relates to the rights of groups to exclude themselves from some aspects of social or political life. It could be a condition for artistic or intellectual creativity, or a spiritual or religious life. On the other hand, suicide can constitute an extreme form of self-exclusion.

The challenging dynamic of social exclusion lies in that the several types of exclusion are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the different dimensions manifest themselves in a cumulative, parallel and complementary manner. Social exclusions as a concept reinforces a multidimensional regard to poverty by defining it as relative deprivation. Specifically, people are “relatively deprived if they cannot obtain, at all or sufficiently, the conditions of life—that is, the diets, amenities, standards and services—which allow them to play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the customary behaviour which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society. If they lack or are denied resources to obtain access to these conditions of life and so fulfill membership of society they may be said to be in poverty”.¹⁹ Consequently, the concept goes beyond economic and social aspects of poverty and embraces such political aspects as political rights and citizenship.

Taking into account the economic, social and political factor of developing countries, Hachem refers to three different approaches to social exclusion that are applicable in developing regions and were introduced by Wolfe, Faria and Gore.²⁰ These exclusions can be summarized as follows:

(a) Exclusion from livelihood, which refers to insecure employment and salaried workers in middle strata, and what positions individuals to marginal and precarious types of informal labour;

(b) Exclusion from social services, welfare and security, which refers to provision, access and affordability. Lack of access to services is linked to declining coverage and quality, malnutrition, family insecurity and obligation to contribute to family livelihood are issues of concern within this dimension;

(c) Exclusion from the consumer culture, which results from destitution, and an inability to satisfy basic needs of food and shelter; and that relate to felt needs of a consumer society, including, among others, package food and beverages, durable goods, house appliances and cars. Sentiments of exclusion can be present at any income level;

¹⁹ P. Townsend, “The International Analysis of Poverty” (1993), referred to by C. Gore, “Markets, citizenship and social exclusion” in *Social exclusion: rhetoric, reality and responses*, eds. G. Rodgers, C. Gore and J. Figueiredo (ILO/UNDP, 1995).

²⁰ Wolfe suggests a general framework of issues of exclusion that identify dimensions of exclusion based on “exclusion from what”. M. Wolfe, “Globalisation and social exclusion: some paradoxes” in *Social exclusion: rhetoric, reality and responses*, eds. G. Rodgers, C. Gore and J. Figueiredo (ILO/UNDP, 1995).

(d) Exclusion from political choice, which result from national and international political decisions that disregard popular choice, and is expressed through political apathy and lack of trust in political representatives. Ethnic and religious exclusiveness falls within this dimension;

(e) Exclusion from bases for popular organization and solidarity, where these organizations can represent a source of livelihood (such as trade unions and associations); state services, municipal services or voluntary channels; local community and neighbourhood; and religious and ethnic affiliation where solidarity becomes more important as other bases weaken;

(f) Exclusion from understanding what is happening, which relates to an inadequate access to information means and sources.

In reference to regional studies on social exclusion, Faria's studies in Latin America examine social exclusion by addressing "exclusion by what".²¹ It views social exclusion in a framework that integrates such loosely-connected notions as poverty, deprivation and lack of access to goods, services and assets, and the precariousness of social rights. Within the context of studies of social exclusion in Africa, Gore addresses the issue of "exclusion by whom", giving emphasis to the role of social identities and social order in processes of exclusion.²²

The difference of approach relates to the country sensitiveness of the concept, and results in different kinds of excluded groups given the varying ways of identifying social exclusion, whether exclusion from social membership or the social division of labour. In all cases, such differences are important in allowing traits to be recognized and provide insight on what is involved in the study of social exclusion.

²¹ V.E. Faria, "Social exclusion and Latin American analyses of poverty and deprivation" in *Social exclusion: rhetoric, reality and responses*, eds. G. Rodgers, C. Gore and J. Figueiredo (ILO/UNDP, 1995).

²² C. Gore, "Social exclusion and Africa south of the Sahara: A review of the literature" (International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS)/ILO, 1994).

II. SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE ESCWA REGION

Available literature on social exclusion includes findings of conceptual and empirical research in developing countries which have contributed to the understanding of both the theory and practice in the Arab region, including ESCWA members.²³ However, much literature also points to expected scepticism towards adopting the approach given its perception as a European cultural approach formulated to tackle long-standing social problems in the region and which in essence is not applicable. Within that context, the argument is that forms of exclusion must not be based on economic growth or distribution given that traditional societies did not develop economically/industrially as those in the West. Consequently, there are drawbacks in applying ideas concerning social exclusion based on economic and social experiences in post-industrial societies.

In Hachem's argument, social relations and economic growth in the West were strongly influenced by such important historical events as the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution and the separation of State and church.²⁴ Countries of the ESCWA region had a different history and did not go through the same differentiation of economy and society. By contrast, economies are embedded in forms of cultural integration and structural differentiation based on cultural identities; and social change is influenced by political change.

Hachem further emphasizes the importance of the political dimension in understanding processes of social exclusion given that "access to resources and entitlements are centred in distributive powers of the political system".²⁵ Social relations and networks maintain the process of membership and integration in society and establish networks that regulate access to social services, employment and social and political participation. In the case of Yemen and in developing countries in general, dualism is fundamental in understanding social change and economic development. The social culture in traditional societies is based on close personal relationships at the level of the family, the tribe and the communal group. Such structural norms bind the society and form the base from which values and laws are derived. In a transitional state, gradual change in structures of these societies results in shifts in the distribution of wealth as well as transforming membership from one that is based on personal relationship and the communal groups to one that is based on citizenship and membership to a broader national community.

This dualism in membership reflects dualism in the process of social exclusion as well. That is, it has a sociological aspect explained by social identities, and an economic one in terms of the economic system and development policies. Individuals and groups that are external to the social order or to the traditional legal code are most vulnerable to exclusion. In that sense, being marginal to society means being marginal to what constitutes society, including, among others, its laws, norms, customs and ways of thinking. Even if the rights of groups are nationally protected, exclusion is enforced by people's behaviour. On the other hand, social exclusion can be embedded in national development policies, arising from lack of access to resources and services to certain groups.

Within that context, lack of access constitutes exclusion from social rights and, therefore, from the development processes. This deprivation results in a downward mobility, poverty and marginal participation in society. The two mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. Hence, access to such development benefits as education or employment opportunities can depend on having access to either or both. Hachem further points out the compounded problem involving the lack of effective official representation, which creates yet another dimension of exclusion, namely, rights to effective political representation.²⁶ This raises issues of democracy, equality and participation.

²³ The International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS) conducted research in developing countries, including Yemen; and the Centre d'Études et de Recherches Économiques et Sociales (CERES) did conceptual research in Tunisia.

²⁴ M. Hachem, "Goals for social integration and realities of social exclusion in the Republic of Yemen" (IILS/UNDP, 1996).

²⁵ At the international level, these countries that are excluded from foreign investments lack the credibility to participate in the international market system. At the national level, poverty and deprivations increase and promote processes of exclusion. *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

It is already established that given the different interpretations of social exclusion, the concept needs to be defined in a way that is appropriate to a national situation in order to avoid superficial and unclear outcomes. The dual society approach could be relevant to some countries more than to others, particularly to transitional societies. Silver's work also could provide a map for conceptualizing the concept and put forward a framework.²⁷ However in all cases, further work is required to formulate theoretical models for the notion of social exclusion as embedded in the way the societies of region function culturally.

Moreover, as experiences and changes in the ESCWA region differ in many aspects, there could be a need to divide the region in the overall analysis according to cultural background or economic systems. For example, oil-producing countries share experiences in terms of social and cultural heritages that are manifested in a manner that is different from countries in other subregions. Equally, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic share socio-cultural and economic aspects, while Egypt and Yemen are experiencing problems relating to population growth and development.²⁸

The general understanding of social exclusion is closely related to mechanisms of marginalization, and can be associated with a lack of access to services and of participation. Unlike the case of industrialized societies where social exclusion is largely concerned with the "new poverty", it is related to an old problem in developing countries, namely: poverty, inequality, unemployment, deprivation and marginalization. While these issues are comprehensively covered in development programmes, there is a need to explore whether a social exclusion perspective could offer a new way to approach these problems.

Within that context, Gore suggests that the social exclusion approach is valuable and relevant for the following reasons: (a) it is descriptive of the state of affairs corresponding to relative deprivation; (b) it is analytical of processes of exclusion and the inter-relations between the different dimensions; and (c) it is normative in the sense that it raises questions related to the nature of social justice.²⁹ Moreover, it addresses emerging problems associated with globalization, including migration, dualism in the labour market and technological changes that increase the polarization of skills.

A. FACTORS OF EXCLUSION: DETERMINANTS

As indicated above, while there is ample literature on incidences of social exclusion in the Arab region, there is abundant work on the seemingly separate issues reflecting continuing social problems. Bédoui's research on social exclusion in the Arab region points to four social problems that are generally found in the development literature of the region, namely: illiteracy, gender inequality, unemployment and economic inequality, both internal and external.³⁰ Furthermore, empirical research suggests that there are other underlying attributes of the excluded groups that contribute to their marginalization and exclusion, including migration, structural norms and geographical location.

Moreover, at the macro level, factors of exclusion are associated with development and/or social order, including as follows: (a) lack of structural equilibria, which, in terms of uniformly distributed development, lies within the context of economic inequalities; unequal distribution of development, benefits and resources; and disparities in infrastructure and service provisioning; and (b) violations of rights, including human rights, social and political rights and the concept of citizenship.

²⁷ H. Silver, "Reconceptualizing social disadvantage: Three paradigms of social exclusion" in *Social exclusion: rhetoric, reality and responses*, eds. G. Rodgers, C. Gore and J. Figueiredo (ILO/UNDP, 1995).

²⁸ This suggested division was based on findings in the *Human Development Reports* by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) relating to the varying degrees of achievement across the region with regard to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in terms of universal primary education, gender discrimination and regional development discrepancy.

²⁹ C. Gore, "Markets, citizenship and social exclusion" in *Social exclusion: rhetoric, reality and responses*, eds. G. Rodgers, C. Gore and J. Figueiredo (ILO/UNDP, 1995).

³⁰ M. Bédoui, "Bibliographie sur l'exclusion dans les pays arabes du Maghreb et Machreq" (IILS, 1995).

This represents categories of disadvantages with the main factorial roles in the processes of exclusion. Complex interaction between various categories and attributes form mechanisms that lead to marginalization and poverty. Social exclusion is achieved through the continuation of those mechanisms and the inheritance of deprivation among generations; and the production of destructive synergies form vicious circles that are harder to escape with the passage of time and a fast growing population.

The case of Yemen

Social exclusion is associated with the marginalization of certain groups from social and economic development. As the process of development occurs, those that are left behind become trapped in a cycle of poverty and exclusion. Social exclusion is associated with a lack of access to goods and services, and of participation. In terms of exclusion by what and whom, it relates to structural norms, the traditional social order and the process of transition to a modern economy state.

Hachem defines the concept of social exclusion in a way which relates to the historical, social, political and economic context of Yemen. She also identifies the dimensions of exclusion, the groups most vulnerable to exclusion, and existing mechanisms that promote the processes of exclusion; and explains the concept of exclusion as being related to poverty, unemployment, and social integration, thereby providing an analytical application of the ideas of Silver's republican and monopolistic paradigms in a state of dual economy. On the one hand, closed personal relationships based on traditional norms and values occur at the level of the family, tribe or communal group. On the other hand, in an attempt to modernize, social integration became the national goal, and is pursued through the adoption of formal mechanisms such as national development plans.

Hachem identified four groups, namely:

- (a) Ethnic minority (*akhdam*): Exclusion is based on their physical features, and given occupation. Structural norms and discrimination by the dominant society constitute the primary mechanism of their exclusion;
- (b) Day labourers (*muhammashine*): They are excluded because they do not 'fit' in urban social networks;
- (c) Returnee emigrants from the Gulf: Often inhabitants of remote villages, they represent an explicit form of territorial/spatial exclusion.

The underlying attributes of the excluded groups that contribute to their exclusion include: emigration as a common denominator among the returnees and the day labourers; structural norms and the social identity as a basic source of excluding the ethnic minority; and the geographic location of inhabitants of villages as it impedes their integration with the remaining parts of the country.

Hachem identifies factors that facilitate and constrain the ability of the State to deliver such basic rights as education, health and social security to all citizens. Among these are administrative inefficiencies, weak organizations, lack of priority setting and of accountability and planning, a wrongly focused structure of expenditure. Equally, the slow growth (stagnation) which limits the country's financial resources available for social expenditures, coupled with low income at the household level which limits the ability of the poor to pay for services.

Source: M. Hachem, "Goals for social integration and realities of social exclusion in the Republic of Yemen" (IILS/UNDP, 1996).

Given the different natures of social exclusion, a thorough framework of analysis needs to enquire into the situation of excluded groups, excluding causes and excluding forces, thereby addressing the issues of "exclusion from what", as well as "exclusion by what" and "by whom" (see table below).

THE DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

<p><i>Livelihood</i></p> <p>Employment (include skills and education) Income Purchasing power and consumption</p> <p><i>Social provisioning</i></p> <p>Education Health care</p> <p><i>Citizenship and rights</i></p> <p>Social participation Right to organization Political representation Civil rights</p>	<p>In relation to</p> <p><i>Social identities</i></p> <p>(Gender, age, ethnicity, religion, nationality, race, class) and <i>disadvantages</i> (gender, disability, illiteracy, no-skills... etc.)</p> <p><i>Geographic location</i></p> <p>(Physical proximity or accessibility to services and markets)</p> <p><i>Structural norms</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social and communal relations - Structural interactions with gender, ethnicity, religion, class ... - Social and economic inequalities - Attitude with immigrants and refugees (as outsiders)
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Those dimensions can set the frame of investigation into the situation of each group within the given categories. Annex I provides examples of how the various categories can be investigated within the different dimensions of social exclusion.

1. Illiteracy

Despite efforts by Governments of the region aimed at eliminating illiteracy, rates remain high, particularly among women. According to the *Arab Human Development Report 2005*, half of all women in the Arab region are illiterate, which corresponds to the lowest rate of female education in the world.³¹

In several oil-producing countries, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, illiteracy is higher for girls than boys, while 100 per cent literacy rate has been reached or will be attained by 2010 in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Less developed countries, including Yemen, and countries with large populations, including Egypt, have the highest relative rate of deprivation. The access to education of women is below that of men by a factor of three-quarters. Along with differences between countries, reports on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of each of those countries depict significant disparities between areas within each country and between social strata of each area.

In Egypt, while female illiteracy is higher among women in both urban and rural areas, it is concentrated among the poor owing to financial shortage, inadequate distribution patterns and decline in interest among the poor for education, particularly in rural areas. This in turn can be attributed to two reasons, namely, the low quality of education and the increasing household cost of education.

In Lebanon, regional disparities are highlighted in terms of literacy achievement. Illiteracy is high in deprived regions owing to deteriorating economic standards. The finding of the MDG report on Lebanon

³¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *The Arab Human Development Report 2005*, which is available at: www.mediterraneas.org/doc/AHDR2005.pdf.

correlates between education and poverty, which is also correlated with the absence of infrastructure and services, population density, lack of employment and child labour. Additionally, the report identifies such vulnerable groups as the elderly, the disabled, unemployed and households headed by women.

Illiteracy is a multifaceted process. Illiterate persons are excluded from active life, social life and opportunities to change. On this issue, Bédoui establishes the causal relation by comparing different indicators, namely: (a) unemployed, where 60-80 per cent of the unemployed are illiterate; (b) women, where 40-60 per cent of unemployed women are illiterate; and (c) children of illiterate parents, who face more difficulties in integrating in schools given the significant educational discrepancy between home and school.³²

Unemployed illiterate groups for instance were given priority in the social exclusion analysis of Tunisia. Similar analyses need to be conducted for other illiterate groups suffering from other disadvantages, including women, particularly those in rural areas; persons with disability; and children of illiterate families, who are susceptible of falling into a vicious circle.

Given that knowledge is power, the lack of knowledge or of access to it forms a type of exclusion from understanding. Illiteracy prevents people, particularly women, from knowing their legal and political rights, thereby excluding them from participating in decision-making. The vicious circle of social exclusion implies the two relations between cause and effect, which is why it is equally important to address the socio-economic factors that hinder access to education and to real-time communication means, including geographic location, structural norms and gender discrimination.

2. Unemployment

While unemployment does not in itself constitute exclusion, it bears a relationship to exclusion in the sense that there is a process of exclusion associated with, namely: (a) the increasing length of the unemployment period; (b) the limited personal capabilities of the unemployed, which hinder integration; (c) the loss of family support, which can help a person to face the unemployment situation; and (d) growing isolation from public life. Bédoui further illustrates the common traits of unemployment, found in most countries and makes the following observation: "The importance of unemployment rates in rural areas in comparison with those in urban areas; the latter has the tendency to increase faster; unemployment affects essentially the youth; unemployment affects essentially the illiterate and persons with lower levels of education; there is a strong under-evaluation of the woman's active role".³³

Unemployment constitutes a particular effect of exclusion among the Arab youth. Related work by ESCWA reveals that rates of unemployment range from 10-19 per cent, of which almost 60 per cent are first-time job seekers.

Unemployment is already high in the region; and new entrants, with first degrees and high education, are increasingly unable to gain productive employment and are forced to join the informal sector. This can be largely attributed to the inability of economies of the region to create new job opportunities to accommodate the annual increase of job seekers, and the lack of consistency between gained educational background and the required skills at the job level. One serious consequence of youth unemployment and insecurity is the demoralizing aspect, which undermines social cohesion and leads to such social problems as crime, drug abuse, vandalism, religious fanaticism and general alienation in the vicious circle of poverty.

While rising unemployment among the non-educated is of concern from a poverty perspective, from the multidimensional perspective of social exclusion, economic inequalities, discrimination against women, geographic location and urban/rural migration exacerbate the incidence of unemployment, thereby increasing

³² M. Bédoui, "Bibliographie sur l'exclusion dans les pays arabes du Maghreb et Machreq" (IILS, 1995).

³³ Ibid.

social exclusion.³⁴ In addition, work by ESCWA has highlighted illiteracy and inadequate education and/or limited skills as representing a significant challenge to institutional changes.

Moreover, literature draws the attention to a future threat of marginalization owing to a new class of “pseudo literacy”. Essentially, those who lack technological ICT and linguistic skills are denied access to the changing economy and to information concerning the labour market, job vacancies and training requirements. ICT is heavily concentrated in cities and is less accessible in rural areas. In addition, issues of the digital divide between areas raise the issue of services and labour opportunities.

The informal economy is becoming the main resort for most job seekers, especially youth and first-time jobseekers. Social relations become their refuge and its role becomes formative. Social ties and networks, relations of reciprocity and familiar and communal solidarity, including ethnic and religious affiliation, are therefore sought to facilitate access to work and secure income sources.

In order to examine the most excluded groups under unemployment, there is a need to analyse the impact of social disadvantage, particularly for disabled and illiterate persons, and to investigate how social identities and structural norms play leading roles in providing social support for jobseekers. In particular, it is important to examine youth; how they facilitate or hinder access to informal or formal labour; and how access to livelihood is hindered in different geographic location in the light of availability of opportunities, proper training, ICT and support systems.

3. Gender inequality

In terms of social relations and institutional dynamics, literature on gender seeks to demonstrate that women are oppressed through the particular operations of gender relations, and that power relations between the sexes are what makes women’s experience gendered. According to the findings of the *Arab Human Development Report 2005*, “women have far fewer opportunities than men to acquire essential capabilities and to utilize them effectively on a broad front”.³⁵ They are also more widely deprived of their civil and human rights than men. In human development terms, such deprivation is seen as “the main characteristic of the marginalization of women”.³⁶

Equally, MDG reports depict a persisting traditional outlook on the role of the women in society and the workforce mainly as a mother and housewife, which adds to traditional stereotypes with regard to women’s ability to work. Traditional and cultural factors constitute additional constraints to the education of girls. In Egypt, gender inequality is significant among the poor, and poverty exacerbates gender disparities in schooling and literacy.

While unemployment is a serious problem in the region for both sexes, especially among first-time jobseekers, it is more acute among women. There is still discrimination in terms of the employment of women in both the public and private sectors of the economy. New industries that tend to be capital intensive rather than labour intensive have created jobs that go mostly to men. Moreover, when employed, women are grouped in such professions as teaching and health care where salaries and social prestige are comparatively lower than those of other professions. The traditional role of women as housewives and home carers impinges on their equal opportunities. However, even when employed, women tend to suffer the double burden of work outside and inside the house, which can leave them chronically fatigued.

In terms of political choice and rights, laws and practices in the region continue to discriminate against women in a number of important respects, including personal status, particularly in the areas of marriage and divorce; employment and participation in public life; inheritance; and nationality. Moreover, they are

³⁴ The World Bank, “Reducing vulnerability and increasing opportunity: social protection in the Middle East and North Africa”, *World Bank Orientation in Development Series* (2002).

³⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *The Arab Human Development Report 2005*, which is available at: www.mediterraneas.org/doc/AHDR2005.pdf.

³⁶ Ibid.

inadequately protected against domestic and other forms of violence, thereby leaving women without legal recourse for security and wellbeing.

Generally, personal status laws across the region still do not give women the right to divorce without the consent of their husbands. Moreover, the so-called “honour” killings are still invoked as a defence for men killing female relatives. According to reports by Amnesty International, dozens of women were administratively detained without charge or trial in Jordan in 2006. Some of them, including victims of rape, women who had become pregnant outside marriage and women accused of extramarital sexual relations or of being prostitutes, were believed to be held to protect them from members of their family and community. Some were detained after serving prison sentences; others had not been convicted of any offence.

This highlights the different categories of concern in terms of illiteracy, unemployment, structural norms and geographic location. However, the gendered nature of their experience puts them at further risk of vulnerability. Women are susceptible to becoming excluded groups in terms of inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power for the following reasons:

- (a) Historic and cultural factors and prevailing male culture;
- (b) Higher reproductive rates;
- (c) Scarcity of jobs, which induces preference for male workers;
- (d) Employment and wage discrimination, whereby the wage gap between men and women increases as the level of education decreases;
- (e) Laws that hinder women from working, such as requiring permission to travel, and weak support services such as day cares and available transportation.

Bédoui maintains that important legislative dispositions were taken to reduce gender inequalities in Arab countries regarding relations between men and women.³⁷ The indicators include reforms made with regard to, among others, the age of consent, polygamy, electoral and political participation, mandatory education and access to modern kinds of paid work. However, all these liberating reforms have their limits in a society where one Arab man out of two cannot read or write.

4. *Geographic location*

Spatial exclusion is another aspect of exclusion where disadvantage is based on the geographic location of groups, and their physical proximity to services and markets. People living in remote areas are often prevented from participating fully in national economic and social life. MDG reports depict substantial regional disparities in several countries, including, for example, Egypt and Lebanon, where poverty and social exclusion are correlated with the absence of infrastructure and services, lack of employment, school drop outs and child labour, all of which constitute forms of social disadvantages that lead to exclusion. The report in Lebanon specifies that the most vulnerable to poverty are those who are in most need of services, including the elderly, people with disabilities, women-headed households and unemployed youth. In Egypt, female illiteracy and health problems are most prevalent in lesser-developed areas.

Rural women represent one of the region’s most vulnerable groups. Few women own land, which limits their ability to obtain credit for agriculture. They lack access to technologies in terms of house appliances that could ease their house chores. Other attributes are the low priority given to countryside, poor housing, sanitation and infrastructure, potable water and health care. Girls are often required to drop out of school to help in chores and to serve their brothers. Moreover, there is little attention made to development programmes targeting women working in agriculture and in other income-earning activities, including, for example, sewing, food processing and craftwork.

³⁷ M. Bédoui, *op. cit.*

The lack of ICT from rural areas in Lebanon, for instance, accentuates their social exclusion given the issue of non affordability and language/education obstacles.

Economic inequalities between regions are created by limited access to markets; impeded access to people with special needs, including the disabled and elderly; and little technological advancement. Moreover, disparities in human development become more evident in terms of education and living conditions, which reflect different dimensions of exclusion. The role of the political system is crucial given that political representation, development priorities and agricultural development programmes become more relevant in the context of effective social participation.

5. *Economic inequality*

Economic inequality is considered here as distinct from poverty. In the context of social exclusion, the excluded can be determined by the individual's level of income or consumption, or by the position in society in relation to social membership at the group, community and/or national level; and by how this membership affects access to goals and services, employment, safety nets and entitlements.

This problem has been looked at in literature through various perspectives and from different angles, in order to determine the causes. Bédoui divides the factors that contribute to a general deterioration in the economic and social situation in the Arab region into two sets, namely: (a) external factors based on the terms of foreign exchange, as in prices of primary and accessory exported goods, which affects the commercial equilibrium in importing countries; and (b) internal factors that relate to internal development policies and an increased spending rate of the population.³⁸

In a generalized market society and in order not to sell out to cheap labour, the solution for Arab society is to resort to the informal economy and to networks of kinship and "alliances of reciprocal rights and duties", including, for example, gift-giving, "that structure familiar and communal solidarity".³⁹ Two different economies are growing at different speeds, namely, the national economy and the informal economy.

Hachem, on the other hand, described the dual economy system in the Arab region as a reflection "of a state of transition in which traditional beliefs and practices endure and conflict with efforts to transform society into a modern State".⁴⁰ Structural and cultural norms are challenged by "modern" State mechanisms of integration as the application of national policies for social and economic development entails changing traditional structures of these societies, which in the end results in a shift in the distribution of wealth and the realignment of individuals and groups supporting or opposing various economic policies.

Beall and Piron draw a distinction between inequality of outcomes and inequality of opportunities. Inequalities of outcomes include differentials in educational attainment, access to health facilities or in income. Inequality of opportunities constitutes a key aspect in inequality between different groups of the population, including, for example, on gender, ethnic, religious or nationality lines. This type is generally referred to as "horizontal inequality", more considered from a multidimensional perspective.⁴¹ The studies also show that discrimination and the social exclusion caused by it are factors contributing to inequalities of outcomes. For instance, wage discrimination can be based on qualification differences or on discrimination. Discrimination can either be institutional (rules of the game), informal (unruly practices) or indirect (social closure, group discrimination). As such, drivers of social exclusion whether social, cultural, political, institutional or economic are equally drivers of inequality.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ M. Hachem, op. cit.

⁴¹ J. Beall and L-H. Piron, "DFID Social Exclusion Review" (Department for International Development (DFID), May 2005).

According to the *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, the Gulf States are particularly dependent on a large immigrant population as a cheap labour workforce. The number of foreign workers in the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) constitute more than two-thirds of the total population of that subregion. They are generally excluded from citizenship, denied formal democratic rights, and are often excluded in official census data and surveys. However, they are the most affected by poverty and lack essential services. In the United Arab Emirates, migrant workers are prohibited from bringing their family members into the country with them unless they earn at least 3,000 United Arab Emirates dirhams a month, or \$816 United States dollars, which is beyond the scale of most such workers given that the majority are employed in menial, low paid jobs and struggle to earn one-third of that wage. Additionally, the United Arab Emirates and some other Arab countries have passed legislation aimed at barring immigrants from owning any property, no matter how long they have lived in the country.⁴²

Amnesty International reports that women migrants in domestic service are especially vulnerable according to reported cases in Kuwait and Lebanon; and face multiple discrimination on grounds of their nationality, gender and economic and legal status resulting from discriminatory legislation and practices and exclusion of domestic workers from the protection of labour laws. In Lebanon, the contracts for such migrant women effectively restrict exercise of their rights to freedom of movement and association by forbidding them from changing employers. Moreover, they face exploitation and abuse by employers, including excessive hours of work and non-payment of wages. In Kuwait, they can suffer gender-based violence, including rape by employers or their associates. Exclusion is manifested in the lack of recourse given inadequate protection by law and the prevailing climate of impunity for perpetrators of crimes against migrant domestic workers.

From another perspective, socially excluded groups often do participate albeit on unequal terms. This is illustrated most clearly by exploiting the powerlessness of excluded groups and at the same time reinforcing their disadvantaged position. Such a situation is referred to by Kabeer as adverse incorporation.⁴³

From the above discussion, the notion of exclusion poses the following questions: inequality of what, and inequality among whom. For instance, on what basis are groups differentiated in society, and who are the most disadvantaged?

The formation of excluded groups could be based on, among others, the following:

- (a) Social identities, including ethnicity and nationality;
- (b) Social status, including, for example, the disabled, the elderly and the illiterate;
- (c) Geographical location in terms of physical access to such services as education and health or to markets; or in terms of general access, including restriction to land ownership, credit possibilities (for small-medium enterprises, for example), or required social support and relational ties;
- (d) Unequal legal rights among groups, including migrant workers, refugees and women.

6. *Structural norms*

Structural norms represent social closures which reflect inclusion and exclusion processes. This category is inextricably linked to social inequalities and hence social justice. In Yemen, Hachem explained how access to land and employment are influenced by kinship and friendship between equals and, consequently, people who lack these means face barriers to their livelihood.⁴⁴

⁴² R. Stevens, "UN report on Middle East catalogues widening inequality", *World Socialist WebSite* (International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), 12 September 2002), which is available at: www.wsws.org/articles/2002/sep2002/mid-s12.shtml.

⁴³ N. Kabeer, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ M. Hachem, *op. cit.*

With reference to literature on the issue in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Saudi Arabia, Joseph argues that countries tend to build on existing family tribal and clan structures.⁴⁵ What is meant by family varies significantly among countries, social classes, and rural/urban and religious/ethnic communities. What seems consistent is the presence of patriarchy. Arab patriarchy has been forceful, in part, because of its rooting in kinship. Its impact has been profound because kinship permeates all domains, all spheres of life, including the private/public, state/civil, society/kinship, and governmental/non-governmental. Through legislation, regulation of courts, and State practices, countries separate between the arenas of the “State”, “civil society” and the “domestic”.⁴⁶ Structural norms, in that sense, create a category of excluded persons when persons who do not have social ties or solidarity affiliation are marginalized. This has been found as a leading attribute of explicit forms of social exclusion in the case of Yemen, with the inclusion or exclusion of individuals based on their genealogies. Additionally, it is more dominant in rural areas and represents a determinant for access to livelihood.

Other forms of social disadvantages that contribute towards and feed into destructive synergies include social attitudes and discrimination based on ethnic, racial, gender, religious, age characteristics or against people with stigmatized diseases, chronic illness or disability.

Equally, the Kurdish population in the Syrian Arab Republic suffers from identity-based discrimination, including restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language and culture. Tens of thousands of Syrian Kurds remain effectively stateless. As a result, they are denied full access to education, employment, health and other rights enjoyed by Syrian nationals, as well as the right to nationality and passport.⁴⁷

Among countries in the ESCWA region, only Egypt and Yemen are parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Long-standing refugee communities within the region continue to face discrimination and denial of their human rights by Governments in host countries. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon remain barred from working in certain professions, despite some easing of restrictions, and face other limitations severely affecting their rights to education and adequate housing. Refugees in Yemen face poor economic conditions and a lack of work opportunities. Within that context, there have been reports of rapes of refugee women, and of the justice system failing to ensure access to justice for victims.

From Joseph’s argument, structural norms outline the relationship between the individual and the State as well as the individual and the society.⁴⁸ Relations go beyond social and economic aspects to encompass political rights and citizenship. Further research on this relationship within the regional context is required at the meso level of social institutions in order to understand the modes of differentiation, including social attitude, rules of entitlement and rules of game, and the citizenship rights and privileges. Such research can help to identify those who are excluded within those systems.

7. Migration

Migrant status does not constitute a reason for exclusion. The process of exclusion by migration occurs through the time-deepened breakage of social ties and loss of social support, continuing precarious living conditions, and lack of legal and political rights and security in either or both the country of immigration and country of origin.

Migration can be either legal in the form of family reunification, seasonal or under short-term employment contracts, or illegal. Migration studies in the ESCWA region distinguish Arab migration within the region as a very special type of migration. Essentially, it is different from international migration, given that it is generally for employment and not permanent settlement, with the exception of the forced Palestinian

⁴⁵ S. Joseph, “Gender and citizenship in the Arab world” (University of California/UNDP, 2002).

⁴⁶ These can equally be called the arenas of Government, non-government and kinship. Ibid.

⁴⁷ Amnesty International, *Annual Report 2006*, which is available at: <http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/index-eng>.

⁴⁸ S. Joseph, “Gender and citizenship in the Arab world” (University of California/UNDP, 2002).

mass migration in 1948, 1956 and 1967. As such, they have a temporary character, which is why integration of migrant workers in the countries of employment and their societies is not made possible legally, economically or socially. On the other hand, even sending countries in the region suffer shortages in terms of policy and structures for re-integrating their returning migrants and their families in their home countries in terms of providing services, housing and employment.

Additionally, social identities and communal ties that continue to constitute effective support systems in the Arab region are compromised by emigration and are replaced by precarious living conditions. Adverse combinations of migration on the socio-economic axes lead to the exclusion of migrant groups in host or home countries. While urban and rural migration is caused by declining employment in agricultural sectors, it has often resulted in a transfer of rural poverty to urban poverty.⁴⁹

Moreover, wars and conflicts or changes in labour-demand contribute in this process given that they result in the return of expatriates and the abrupt reduction in remittances, thereby leading to a loss of a vital source of income and livelihood for families in sending countries. Migrants returning en masse can face difficulties in terms of reintegrating in their home countries in cases of long stays abroad, owing to a loss of family and social relations.⁵⁰

Migration has its impact on rural women as well and foremost. The extensive out-migration of males aged 20-40 years causes rural areas to become increasingly populated with women and their dependent children. Their vulnerability increases with the increase of divorce, adultery, polygamy and juvenile delinquency. Another perspective concerns Arab countries receiving migrants, particularly those in the GCC, where a reliance on imported human resources tends to increase the social isolation of some women given the fewer employment opportunities, thereby reinforcing their traditional roles.

Based on the above, there is a need to understand whether migrants constitute an excluded group and, if so, what it is they are excluded from. Moreover, are these migrant groups more disadvantaged than others and how do the different elements of deprivation combine to form destructive synergies?

Within that context, various elements contribute mutually to a process of exclusion from social integration and security, namely:

- (a) Refugees do not benefit from social provisioning, including access to such social services as health care and education for their children, and living conditions and consumption (housing and purchasing power);
- (b) Social attitudes impede chances for improving their livelihoods;
- (c) Legislation doesn't protect migrant groups and refugees as a result of cultural norms within the host community or the migrant community, and a lack of legal recourse.

8. *Violations of human rights and the concept of citizenship*

Relational ties override rights. Joseph argues that a basis for citizenship practices and relational rights requires citizens to embed themselves in family and other sub-national communities, including religious sets, ethnic and tribal groups, in order to gain access to the rights and privileges of citizenship. This structure represents closures and a consequence of this type of exclusion results in individuals who do not fit in any community (for given or chosen reasons) and who inevitably become marginalized.

⁴⁹ The World Bank, "Reducing vulnerability and increasing opportunity: social protection in the Middle East and North Africa", *World Bank Orientation in Development Series* (2002).

⁵⁰ In the case Yemen, returning migrants and rural migrants were marginalized upon arriving in large cities owing to a slow economy, an overwhelming influx of unskilled labourers and an absence of social relations and, consequently, of social safety nets.

An example of this issue relates to the confiscation of the nationality of as many as 6,000 members of the al-Ghufran branch of the al-Murra tribe in Qatar between October 2004 and June 2005, based on their tribe of origin and on the grounds that they were nationals of other countries. That led to their exclusion from citizenship rights and privileges in terms of obtaining residence, jobs, health care, education and means of livelihood. Some were reportedly forced to leave Qatar to seek resettlement in neighbouring countries, or detained in order to induce them to do so, despite guarantees in the new national constitution against the deportation of Qatari nationals. In terms of human rights, that type of action represents a violation of inalienable rights, because measures were taken against the group based on their social origin.

Moreover, on the issue of citizenship, the “fact that most Arab State constitutions claim the family as the basic unit of membership in the political community implies that it is a person’s status as a member of family that qualifies them for citizenship. Practices and discourses of citizenship reflect patriarchal connectivity in political, economic, religious and social cultures”.⁵¹

Under that justification, women are not allowed to pass their citizenship on to their children or to their spouses. Specifically, citizens “have to belong to a male-defined kin group to belong to a religious sect, to belong to the nation, to acquire the rights and responsibilities of citizenship”.⁵² In the United Arab Emirates, women cannot pass on their nationality to their children if their spouses are foreign nationals. Consequently, these children suffer serious restrictions on their residency, employment and education rights. They are considered migrant workers for employment purposes and required to pay higher fees for higher education.

Social and political rights form a fundamental aspect in the process of understanding social exclusion. Mechanisms of exclusion through violations of human rights are manifested in situations of conflict, and violations of freedoms of opinion and expression. Bédoui notes a certain crisis of confidence that characterizes some Arab societies and of the quest for new balances to respond to the contemporary situation.⁵³ This issue leads to concerns regarding governance. Moreover, there could be concerns about the influence of civil society as it plays the role of defender of interests and providers of services and channels for advocacy and focal points for social participation. Within that context, the *Arab Human Development Report 2004* identified three critical conditions for a successful political reform centred on good governance and protection of freedoms, namely:

- (a) Respecting key freedoms of opinion, expression and association in civil society, both civil and political society;
- (b) Accepting the principle of participation as the essence of the democratic process of all forces in society. The exclusion of any important societal force contradicts the essence of democracy and can lead to civil strife;
- (c) Respecting the principles of universal human rights by all reform actors. Legal and institutional provisions must safeguard minority rights.

This goes in parallel with the lesson learned from the experience of the West by distinguishing three stages in achieving those rights, namely: by defining civil rights, including personal freedoms, mobility and property freedoms; political rights, including the right to assembly, association, free speech and participation; and eventually achieving social rights, including social protection and integration.

Generally, the literature warns of the impact of political exclusion as a leading cause of conflict and insecurity in many parts of the world. Excluded groups who suffer from multiple disadvantages of unequal rights are denied a voice in political mainstream and feel marginalized, have access to fewer jobs and enjoy few community facilities and services, thereby raising the threat of territorial or identity-based gangs.

⁵¹ S. Joseph, op. cit.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ M. Bédoui, op. cit.

Hazardous urban zones are created where residents become even more socially and economically excluded on the basis of where they live. Youth are mostly affected by continuing occupation and recurring wars and internal conflicts in the region, thereby driving sources away from socio-economic development and creating a general state of trauma. Additionally, most documentation on women concerns the aspects of exclusion and social rights, and exclusion and political rights. Women in Iraq and Palestine endure a double burden of suffering given that they are more vulnerable to deteriorating humanitarian conditions.

Within a development policy analysis, social institutions associated with citizenship are a central issue to social exclusion and requires examination into how relationships between markets and citizenship affects people.

B. DISABILITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Disabled persons, already a vulnerable group, are strongly hit by the multiple processes of social exclusion, which is the reason they merit additional consideration. In various researches, an inextricable link has been consistently established between poverty and disability, which is most prevalent in rural communities that suffer from poverty, lack of basic services and negative socio-economic and environmental conditions. Similarly, there is a correlation between social exclusion and disability. After the onset of disability, barriers to health and rehabilitation services, education, employment and other aspects of economic and social life can trap individuals in a life-long vicious circle of deprivation, thereby leading to poverty and exclusion.

Social and economic exclusion of individuals with disabilities is created within public services and can be primarily attributed to the lack of incorporated approaches that promote their integration. Arab countries tend to focus only on medical approaches, while an integrated approach could promote a friendlier environment through infrastructure and civil and other rights, including, for example and among others, easy access to public toilets, pavements, crossings and telephones. Physical and cultural barriers discriminate against persons with disabilities. Families tend to hide kin with disabilities to protect them from or avoid the social stigma associated with disability. Their access to education, rehabilitation services and job opportunities becomes restricted and, in some cases, even prohibited. Another barrier to integration in society lies in inaccessible infrastructure to schools, health or employment. Broken pavements, narrow stairs and heavy traffic are just some examples of an environment that impedes the mobility of the disabled. In terms of education, published data reveal that some 95 per cent of disabled persons in the overall Arab region are excluded from education, owing to the lack of special-needs education programmes and community-based rehabilitation programmes.

In the discussion of social exclusion, socio-economic and cultural factors can also contribute to cause disability or impairment. Poverty can cause impairment in cases of malnutrition, and lack of sanitation and immunization. Illiteracy and modest education can cause unnecessary problems when families, particularly mothers, lack necessary awareness. Equally, armed conflicts and political unrest constitute causes.

The literature brings the attention of another form of disability that affects the mental situation of the population and distinguishes between those clinically ill and those who suffer from general mental stress. Poverty, conflicts and wars, and instability in the region take a toll on the mental health of people. Moreover, other psychological factors, including the lack of social support, no income, low self esteem and stress have an impact on health and cause chronic stress.

C. THE TWO-WAY RELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MDGs

In general, social exclusion explains why some groups of people remain poorer than others, are less economically or politically involved, or benefit less from services. In relation to the MDGs, these issues are addressed through the Goals whether in terms of combating poverty, empowering women, providing health services and universal education and creating the environment for quality living (see annex II that illustrates the relation between social exclusion and MDGs).

D. EXCLUDED GROUPS OF THE REGION

As the literature showed and discussed above, societies develop mechanisms to mitigate occurring social disadvantages through formal and informal means. Formal mechanisms are established by Government intervention and instruments are laid by national policies for development and social protection. In terms of informal means, individuals and groups seek to reduce the impact of adverse shocks through informal labour, relationships based on reciprocal practices, and resort to kinship networks and families. While this kind of support is characteristic to the Arab region, like all systems of support, it is not sufficient.

Governments face a challenge in terms of providing social protection owing to the limited sources and unstable security situations in the region, and of allocation. Specifically, societies need to reach a consensus on the population groups on which Government assistance will concentrate, which requires thorough analyses, updated information and developed management systems. Within that context, in modern societies, “exclusion is embedded in national development policy through lack of access, unequal distribution of development benefits, State inability because of bureaucracy, poor planning, financial constraints, unavailability of skilled personnel and clientalism”.⁵⁴

From an economic perspective, vulnerability refers to the poor and those who are prone to poverty, namely, “individuals who face the risk of human capital loss as a result of factors as diverse as an economic slowdown, adverse weather, disease, or changes in the demand for different types of labour and capital following structural reforms”.⁵⁵ In particular, vulnerable groups within the economic context of the region include the following:

- (a) The poor who are unable to engage in high-risk, high-return activities and are likely to be marginalized from access to basic infrastructure and social services;
- (b) Children in low-income households who face the risk of entering informal labour markets prematurely;
- (c) Small landowners who remain exposed to unanticipated changes in weather and fluctuations in prices;
- (d) First-time jobseekers and low-skilled workers who face the risk of unemployment;
- (e) The elderly who lack access to sustainable health insurance and pension systems.

Within that context, “hard-core social exclusion occurs when principles of unequal access in different institutional domes reinforce, rather than offset, each other, creating situations of radical disadvantages”.⁵⁶ Consequently, in terms of social exclusion, there is an implication of those who are excluded and of those who are excluding them. In other words, social relations, processes, strategies of livelihood and other socio-cultural and traditional dynamics must be examined to understand how those vulnerability groups become excluded. Social exclusion approach can be applied in various ways, which leads to different kinds of excluded groups.

This review serves to provide a first insight into processes of social exclusion in the ESCWA region, and these groups reflect different contexts of different societies, including as follows:

- (a) National minorities, including ethnic, religious and linguistic, that face discriminatory attitudes and behaviour, which reflect prevailing attitudes of dominant or more powerful groups;⁵⁷

⁵⁴ N. Kabeer, op. cit.

⁵⁵ The World Bank, “Reducing vulnerability and increasing opportunity: social protection in the Middle East and North Africa”, *World Bank Orientation in Development Series* (2002).

⁵⁶ N. Kabeer, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Ethnic, racial and gender were common elements in many previous studies undertaken in developing countries.

(b) Residents of areas remote from power centres, whereby exclusion is determined by the physical proximity to services and markets. Most destructive synergies of exclusion are formed when various social disadvantages are combined in areas that are comparatively distant from services. For instance, when disabled persons, the elderly and women-headed households do not have access to health services, education and the labour market, this leads to the downfall into the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion;

(c) Disabled persons are excluded from social participation as a result of stereotypes and ignorant attitudes, in addition to the lack of adequate public policies and services. They risk further exclusion when informal support diminishes, particularly when they grow older, thereby drawing them into a vicious circle of poverty;

(d) Migrants face inferior employment opportunities and have limited access to social services even as they lose the safety nets provided by kinship networks in the areas or countries of origin. Rural migrants in urban cities face further obstacles to livelihood and are more susceptible to exclusion, while worker migrants suffer exclusion in terms of their adverse incorporation into host communities;

(e) Domestic workers endure degrading treatment, hard and unjust working condition without having a choice of legal recourse given their exclusion from national labour laws and regulations;

(f) Long term refugees are structurally denied access to the labour market owing to national legislation or occupation, or they may have no access for a prolonged length of time. In many cases, they tend to rely almost exclusively on informal support. However, given their state of dispersion and dispossession, they have a weakened kinship relationship and support is very low;

(g) Women experience exclusion of a gendered nature that exacerbates their situation of vulnerability. For instance, many female-headed households have no access to public services or employment as a result of material poverty, geographic location or other socio-cultural barriers. Discrimination intersects with exclusion to disadvantage girls, thereby impeding their education and development;

(h) Illiterate persons enjoy fewer opportunities and, moreover, illiterate parents create a discrepancy between formal and familiar education, which renders it more difficult for their children to integrate in schools and more broadly in society.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUGGESTED THEMES FOR ANALYSIS

Human development and social cohesion are measured by indicators for consumption, purchasing power and social provisioning, including education and health. While social exclusion as such is measured through these indicators, given that it encompasses social rights and equal participation in socio-economic development, other indicators need to be found for social participation, right to organization and political representation.

Indicators of social exclusion are oriented towards people or institutions. Consequently, there is a need to gather data on social and economic aspects of living standards relating to the following: (a) income poverty and human poverty, including access and feasibility of services, education, health, transport and infrastructure; (b) governance; (c) social order and power relations; (d) distribution of development benefits; and (e) social security.

A partition of the region for the purpose of analysis could reflect the types of excluded groups under study. The Human Development Indicators can assist in this sense, for instance in considering disadvantaged groups based on gender, illiteracy and/or economic inequalities. MDG reports for Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen, among the reports studied for this review, all indicate grave regional disparities in terms of human development with regard to the prevalence of illiteracy, gender discrimination and poverty. Moreover, MDG reports indicate the almost total elimination of illiteracy in oil-producing countries, which ideally eliminates illiteracy as a category of exclusion, or excludes the countries where there is no social exclusion because of illiteracy.

The empirical study conducted in Yemen sets a good example on how to initiate analysis of the problem, given that it aimed primarily at obtaining direct information relating to the issue of exclusion from identified groups and from policymakers. Questions covered the dimensions of exclusion, namely, demographics, employment and income, living conditions, access to social services, social and political representation and the perception of the role in society by citizens.

In order to avoid uncertain or superficial analysis, it is equally imperative to study and understand the society to find causes and roots of social exclusion. Attention must be given to the way social institutions, political rights and economic processes interact to generate better livelihoods, social justice and social cohesion. Qualitative research is vital and must be complemented by secondary data, including anthropology and sociology studies as well as economic and human development indicators. Within that context, there are a number of questions to raise concerning the identification of socially-excluded people, namely: which groups in society encounter barriers in attaining access to basic services; which groups encounter barriers to the labour market; which groups encounter barriers in realizing their rights; and which groups have marginal participation and representation in society.

Some recommend a bottom-up participatory process that could allow an initial understanding of what constitutes social exclusion in a country and who are considered most vulnerable, starting with data gathered from various concerned and interested groups, including related governmental ministries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with marginalized groups. Moreover, as Bédoui suggests, there is a need to analyse available information from programmes running on the various social phenomena that constitute causality factors to social exclusion, including, among others, illiteracy, gender inequality and unemployment.⁵⁸

Multi-disciplinary research teams, including sociologists, anthropologists and economists need to be formed in order to explore the variety of processes involved through the different disciplinary perspectives. Data is to be collected on processes of social exclusion, the social status of excluded groups and their perception of exclusion. The informed selection of excluded groups under examination within this new approach will reflect the priorities of these teams, thereby locating most disadvantaged groups by using insight from the literature review. The identified excluded groups will provide valuable information on how they face barriers to access to social and economic participation, whether they chose to exclude themselves, how they perceive their role in society and whether they encounter different degrees of exclusion.

⁵⁸ M. Bédoui, *op. cit.*

Annex I

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

An example of how the various categories are to be investigated within the different dimensions of social exclusion is set forth below.

Exclusion from livelihood:

- How illiteracy affects livelihood (their living conditions, access to work, education of children);
- How gender discrimination impedes women from work, other sources of income or decent living conditions;
- Regarding economic inequalities, structures and norms, what are the terms of access to labour market and rules of entitlement that impede access to livelihood;
- Whose livelihood is obstructed by lack of rights and citizenship, access to labour, land ownership, enterprises or other means of income.

Exclusion from social provisioning:

- Does illiteracy hinder access to health and other services directly or indirectly, and does it form obstacles to educating children;
- Which geographic areas receive the least social provisioning and how are people's lives affected;
- Distribution of service provision in the context of economic inequalities within different or same geographic areas: which groups benefit the least from social services and what are the obstacles;
- Do migrants (and refugees) lack access to social services, including health care and education for their children, and what are their living conditions (housing and purchase power);
- Access to social provisioning as citizenship rights and privileges: which groups within a country or a region do not benefit from those rights.

Exclusion through violation or lack of citizenship rights:

- Does illiteracy prevent people from understanding their rights or their ability to claim them;
- Are women protected by civil rights and legal recourse;
- Does the breach of civil rights constitute barriers to social participation, for example the right to organization and affiliations;
- Which among the unequal groups lack rights, for example legal rights of worker migrants (as unequal groups), especially women worker groups (as a sub-group).

Exclusion owing to to geographic location:

- Does the prevalence of illiteracy in distant areas arise from a difficulty with regard to access to education;
- Physical access to the market: vulnerability of women in rural versus urban areas, and the effect of regional disparities in terms of human development and access to services and markets and in creating economic inequalities.

Exclusion formed and perpetuated by structural norms:

- What is the influence of structural norms on preventing children from education, especially girls;
- Seeking the informal labour through kinship, family, reciprocity relations: does this social support alleviate the state of exclusion of the excluded group;
- The perceived role of women in the family and society in terms of access to livelihood, services and rights: how do social norms play a role in excluding disadvantaged women;
- Anthropological study is required to understand the structural patriarchal norms and their effect on citizenship.

Annex II

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS*

Millennium Development Goal (MDG)	Links to social exclusion
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<p>Axes of social exclusion operate alongside and reinforce poverty and inequality.</p> <p>Social relations and institutions prevent access to livelihood opportunities and the benefits of trade and growth.</p> <p>They can also threaten the impact or reach of poverty reduction strategies.</p>
2. Achieve universal primary education	<p>In addition to poverty constraints, exclusion on the basis of identity or location can restrict access to education and other services.</p>
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	<p>While gender discrimination is not synonymous with social exclusion, it intersects with it to disadvantage further girls from excluded groups.</p>
4. Reduce child mortality	<p>Exclusion affects access to health care, with health outcomes varying according to race, ethnicity and gender.</p>
5. Improve maternal health	<p>Exclusion is a process that includes intergenerational dynamics that can have a particular impact at different stages of the life cycle.</p>
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	<p>Stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS leads to exclusion and self-exclusion.</p> <p>Location affects susceptibility to malaria and access to treatment.</p>
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	<p>Exclusion by virtue of location is critical in terms of the environment and access to basic needs and services.</p> <p>Other environmental issues where social exclusion is particularly relevant include environmental and public safety, particularly in cities, as well as the environment and war/conflict nexus, particularly in its impact on natural resources and rural livelihoods.</p>
8. Develop a global partnership for development	<p>There is a close link between globalization and exclusion, as well as the terms of inclusion that are skewed against poorer nations and regions with fewer resources.</p> <p>A global partnership implies that social exclusion is not confined to relations between citizens and the State but involves regional exclusion and a range of development and other organizations at the global level.</p> <p>A global perspective on exclusion is closely linked to economic exclusion and inclusion in the benefits of growth and trade.</p> <p>A global perspective on exclusion is implicitly and explicitly politically charged.</p>

* Jo Beall and Laure-Hélène Piron, “DFID Social Exclusion Review”, May 2005, p. 26.