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**FOLLOW-UP ON PRIORITY ISSUES IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT IN THE ESCWA REGION**

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Summary

This report argues that social inclusion policies targeting clearly defined social groups are critical to complement poverty reduction strategies and thus promote more equitable patterns of human development. The report examines the main characteristics of social exclusion, notably discrimination, deprivation and disempowerment. It draws upon field work conducted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in selected countries and identifies positive initiatives to tackle social exclusion in those countries. The report also discusses the issue of whether social exclusion is a static condition – in terms of a defined social group – or a dynamic social process. If social exclusion is seen as a manifestation of societal and institutional inequality, one clear policy option would be to address such inequality.

The ultimate aim of the report is to provide policymakers with a broad understanding of the needs and challenges facing excluded groups, and propose policy options that could be integrated into national development planning. Social inclusion policies are critical to combat social exclusion problems, but the final decision regarding the formulation and implementation of such policies rests with national Governments.

CONTENTS

I. THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

1.   Social inclusion is the process of reversing the discriminatory mechanisms embedded in society that place certain groups or categories of people at an unfair disadvantage and prevent them from benefiting from socio-economic development interventions and poverty reduction strategies, and from accessing available means for improving their lives.

2.   Poverty is not always the primary cause of exclusion from spheres of participation, opportunities and access to services. As such, poverty reduction strategies or programmes addressing the developmental needs of communities will not necessarily address the root causes and means of exclusion, nor the biased societal and institutional processes that lead to the vulnerability of certain groups. Social inclusion thus represents a concerted effort by the State and development actors to counter the effect and cross-generational impact of social exclusion. Social inclusion strategies aim to engage excluded members of society in a meaningful realization of their own empowerment, leading to greater social and economic participation and an improved quality of life.

3.   The inequity and inequality caused by social exclusion curtail the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction.[1] The economic growth of a whole society is slowed when geographic "pockets of poverty" or certain groups of people are unable to participate in economic growth and prosperity at a rate commensurate with the rest of the country. Ensuring equitable development requires identifying and addressing the cultural and structural causes which perpetuate these inequities. Social inclusion policies are vital to complement and maximize the positive developmental impact of poverty reduction strategies, and thus promote more equitable patterns of human development.

4.   To embark upon a national project of social inclusion, however, requires a comprehensive analysis of social exclusion at a national level. The best way to plan for greater social integration and inclusion in the region is, therefore, through a thorough investigation of socially-excluded groups.

II. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

A. DEFINITION

5.   Social exclusion can simply be defined as a rupture of social bonds, which reflects an emphasis on solidarity and the organic nature of society. More broadly, social exclusion can also be seen as "a process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live".[2] In this way, social exclusion is defined as the opposite of social inclusion. Social exclusion thus places someone at an unfair disadvantage in comparison with others similarly situated; it results in the curtailment of a person's social, economic and/or political rights, his or her ability to access goods and services, and to be an active member of society.

6.   The modern concept of social exclusion was first defined by René Lenoir, a French Government official, in 1974.[3] His definition covered some 10 per cent of the French population and included not only the poor, but also a number of other marginalized groups, including the disabled, the elderly, abused children and drug abusers. Further research in the 1980s and 1990s considerably expanded the scope and dimensions of social exclusion. One leading researcher has proposed that some of the conditions from which individuals or social groups may be excluded include "a livelihood; secure, permanent employment; earnings; property,

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[1] Kabeer, N. 2006. Social Exclusion and the MDGs: The Challenge of 'Durable Inequalities' in the Asian Context. *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*.

[2] See de Haan, A. 2001. *Social Exclusion: Enriching the Understanding of Deprivation*. Paper prepared for the World Development Report 2001 Forum on Inclusion, Justice and Poverty Reduction.

[3] Lenoir, R. 1974/1989. *Les Exclus: Un Français sur Dix*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

credit or land; housing; minimal or prevailing consumption levels; education, skills, and cultural capital; the welfare state; citizenship and legal equality; democratic participation; public goods; the nation or the dominant race; family and sociability; humanity, respect, fulfilment and understanding".[4]

7.   A central area of academic debate is whether poverty should be considered as one of the main elements of social exclusion or as a completely separate issue.[5] Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen has made a key contribution to this debate by stressing that the social exclusion paradigm has a clear focus on the relational roots of deprivation.[6] He clearly distinguishes between the intrinsic importance of exclusion or deprivation in its own right and the fact that exclusion is not necessarily impoverishing, but can lead to poverty. Sen has also introduced the concepts of passive and active exclusion. For example, passive exclusion may occur when an economic crisis forces people out of work, whereas active exclusion occurs when immigrants are refused citizenship or full political rights.

8.   This raises the question of whether being socially excluded is a static condition (in terms of a defined social group) or a dynamic social process.[7] If socially-excluded groups are treated as a condition and as a static phenomenon, the response is often to focus on the group itself, with the danger that it can be seen as part of the problem. However, if the social exclusion of a particular group is seen as a manifestation of societal and institutional inequalities, the natural response would be to work towards addressing such structures and institutions. This would target the various processes of exclusion, as opposed to the excluded groups themselves, and indicates that working on altering structures and institutions can lead to the transformational change required to address problems of social exclusion.

B. MAIN DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

9.   The main determinants of social exclusion range from the institutional (for example, lack of reporting systems or lack of a comprehensive policy for excluded groups), to the legal (lack of citizenship or lack of legal protection for migrant workers), to the cultural (ethnic discrimination or stigma) and the attitudinal (gender bias). These represent factors that, often in combination, play a definitive role in creating and perpetuating social exclusion.

10.   Social exclusion is used here as an overarching term that encompasses the following three social processes: discrimination, deprivation and disempowerment. These are elaborated as follows:

        (a) Discrimination refers to the social, institutional, legal or cultural processes that differentiate unequally between people according to such involuntary attributes as sex, religion, ethnicity, disability, illness, language, citizenship status or location. Discrimination may erect barriers to social mobility and prevent access to such social services as health care or education, to political participation and entry into the labour market;

        (b) Deprivation covers not only material deprivation resulting from the inability to satisfy basic needs or to provide for oneself and one's family, but also diminished rights to such basic social services as education and health, and a lack of acknowledgment of those rights. An excluded person may be deprived of standardized general knowledge, such as that provided in public schools, deprived of shelter or the ability to form a proper home, and deprived of belonging to a community;

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[4] See Silver, H. 1995. Reconceptualizing Social Disadvantage: Three Paradigms of Social Exclusion in *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric, Reality, Responses.* Edited by Rodgers, G., Gore, C. and Figueiredo J. Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies.

[5] De Haan, A., op. cit.

[6] Sen, A. 2000. Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny. *Social Development Papers No. 1*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

[7] See Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). 2008. *Social Exclusion in the ESCWA Region*. Beirut, ESCWA. Available at http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetings/editor/Download.asp?table_name=eventDetails &field_name=id&FileID=1386.

(c) Disempowerment is a diminished agency whereby a person or a group, due to discriminatory processes and/or conditions of deprivation, is restricted from effecting changes in their living conditions, or in the public sphere of the community as a whole. In such circumstances, disempowerment is related not only to a perception of non-belonging, but also to a lack of social cohesion in the social fabric of a community.[8]

11.   Affected groups tend to have problems in common, but do not necessarily share the same determinants and characteristics. Historically disadvantaged minorities, unsettled populations and persons with special needs or reduced health are all examples of socially-excluded groups that face structural discrimination. Whether they are excluded on the basis of their appearance, ethnicity or through inadequate healthcare policies that prevent them from leading fulfilling lives (such as persons with disabilities or those living with HIV/AIDS), their conditions of exclusion manifest in similar ways. These include a lack of access to social services and goods, unemployment or underemployment, lack of access to State institutions and dire poverty.

12.   Women and children, while not distinct or homogeneous groups, also face disproportionate disadvantage in certain societies and under certain conditions, in which they are considered minors lacking the ability to access rights and resources, thereby rendering them more likely to be excluded. Gender is often a differentiating marker in access to goods and services, the construction of power relations between individuals and the structure of such dominant institutions as marriage and the family. In the ESCWA region, many personal status laws (for example, divorce or the transmission of nationality) institutionalize such gender biases, a pattern of social exclusion that is perpetuated by the low representation of women in national parliaments and other decision-making institutions.

13.   In addition to inequality between citizens, many in the ESCWA region will be unable to access the developmental benefits of poverty reduction programmes and the Millennium Development Goals because they lack citizenship or are undocumented. This is an issue of particular concern in a region with considerable long-term and short-term refugee populations and a significant migrant labour force. Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan and Egypt all have long-term, intergenerational communities of Palestinian refugees, most of whom have never known Palestine. More recently, refugees from Somalia and Iraq have been displaced across the region, creating pockets of poverty, despair and alienation.

14.   These groups and categories tend not only to be poor, but also to suffer burdens and disadvantages related directly to their group identity or social status, rather than their economic status. In other words, their group identity or social status places them at a disadvantage in comparison with others similarly situated, resulting not only in further economic deprivation, but also in disempowerment. It is as a direct result of the intersection of poverty as generally conceived and the discrimination that they face on the basis of their group identity or status that they become differentiated, even among the poor, and less able to be active members of the societies in which they live.

III. PRELIMINARY ESCWA FINDINGS ON SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE REGION

A. SOCIALLY-EXCLUDED GROUPS

15.   In order to identify the parameters of social exclusion, ESCWA selected three diverse categories of countries in the region: a highly populous country with a diversified economy, represented by Egypt; a conflict-affected society, represented by Lebanon; and a least developed country, represented by Yemen. Following the literature reviews and field work carried out in Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen, three studies were

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[8] For a more comprehensive definition and analysis of these processes, refer to ESCWA, ibid.

conducted to analyse policy gaps in, and challenges to, the inclusion of one excluded group per country.[9] In Egypt, street children (both girls and boys) were selected to represent vulnerable citizens; in Lebanon, migrant domestic workers (mostly women) were chosen to represent vulnerable non-citizens; and in Yemen, the disabled (men, women, girls and boys) were selected to represent persons with special needs.[10] This section provides a summary of these case studies.

1. *Street children, Egypt*

16.   It is estimated that there are some one million street children in Egypt. The most vulnerable are those who live on the streets, make their living on the streets and are unable or unwilling to go home.[11] Despite efforts based on the concept that street children are vulnerable or at risk and therefore in need of protection, the prevailing view is that they are in reality delinquents from very poor backgrounds with uncaring parents. Government protection policies are thus often based on a punitive and legalistic approach. These children are uneducated, exploited in subsistence jobs, rarely seek medical attention, are severely undernourished and most are illiterate. They also lack access to basic social services and goods. Drug addiction is a marker of life on the streets and severely diminishes the possibility of improving the life chances of such children. They lack a safe and nurturing home, the loss of which is not supplemented by effective State intervention.

2. *Foreign domestic and migrant workers, Lebanon*

17.   Despite the heavy reliance on foreign workers in the ESCWA region, this category of workers remains largely unprotected. Foreign domestic workers in Lebanon often experience non-payment of wages or lower payments than agreed, poor working conditions (including long working hours and a lack of weekly breaks and holidays) and restrictions on their freedom and mobility. It is common for employers to withhold their passports, and verbal, physical and sexual abuse are not uncommon; a number of such cases have led to severe injuries and even death. Foreign workers also include men from Arab and African countries, who sometimes enter Lebanon illegally and work in low-paying jobs as doormen, petrol station attendants or cleaners. Existing legal frameworks do not provide practical legal protection to foreign labourers, meaning that they are unable to rely on Lebanese labour legislation for protection or to address employer-employee disputes.

3. *Persons with disabilities, Yemen*

18.   A person with a disability is any person with physical impairment to their motor, hearing or visual functions, mental and/or intellectual impairment, and/or multiple impairments. When individuals with different forms and levels of functioning encounter barriers or are excluded from health services, education, employment, public services and infrastructure, they are disabled. In Yemen, the disabled remain largely invisible, spoken of either with derision or pity. They face social stigma, are viewed only as victims and are commonly ostracized. Disabled persons are also excluded from a normal childhood, often deprived of schooling or explicitly rejected from schools unable to meet their needs, and are later excluded from the full range of employment opportunities available to others. The lack of a comprehensive social policy for the disabled results in a lack of appropriate public schools, accommodating physical infrastructure and disabled-specific training programmes, and means that they are left totally dependent on their families, compounding the conditions of poverty within which the disabled all too often live.

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[9] This work has been carried out as part of the contribution by ESCWA to a United Nations interregional initiative to strengthen social inclusion, gender equality and health promotion in the Millennium Development Goals, started in 2006 and involving all five United Nations regional commissions.

[10] A more comprehensive report containing 36 case studies, as well as best practice and lessons learned, was also produced by ESCWA in 2008. See ESCWA, op. cit.

[11] See United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2005. *Children Beyond Boundaries of Protection: An In-depth Study of Street Children In Greater Cairo*. (Only available in Arabic). Available at: http://www.unicef.org/egypt/media_3360.html.

B. TRIGGERS, ENABLERS AND MANIFESTATIONS

19.   Excluded groups can be classified broadly into four categories: vulnerable non-citizens; vulnerable citizens; persons with special needs and reduced health; and disadvantaged minorities and unsettled populations. By viewing social exclusion as experienced by the above groups, it may be helpful to categorize the various factors contributing to social exclusion in terms of triggers for exclusion; enablers of exclusion; and manifestations of exclusion. Policies addressing the manifestations of exclusion will not necessarily address the triggers for exclusion. However, it is also evident that exclusion takes many forms and involves a combination of processes: institutional, legal, cultural and attitudinal.

20.   As such, reforming State institutions – and even social institutions – through legal means alone will not address issues of stigma, bias and discrimination. The term "policy" must therefore combine both short-term and long-term aims, and the design of policies and programmes must focus on both output and impact. Government policies aimed at addressing social exclusion should be accompanied by social transformations that address discrimination, deprivation and disempowerment. Furthermore, the implementation of such policies should be supported by civil society.

21.   The emphasis on the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) is related to the form and content of social exclusion as seen in the initial findings of the ESCWA study. Deprivation cannot be understood in isolation from processes of discrimination and disempowerment, and the three often feed into each other. Discrimination cannot be addressed by legal means alone, and disempowerment cannot be "handed down" through policies. Combating exclusion requires socially equitable State intervention and an active environment for civil society participation.

Triggers, enablers and manifestations of social exclusion

Triggers for exclusion
- Lack of legal status
- Lack of social, civil, political and economic rights
- Ethnic discrimination
- Lack of legal protection for migrant workers and refugees
- Lack of a safe and nurturing home
- Homelessness
- Social vulnerability of women
- Lack of a comprehensive policy for people with disabilities
- Lack of a comprehensive policy for health provision and lack of proper health services
- Stigma associated with identity

Enablers of Exclusion
- Lack of reporting systems
- Lack of recourse systems
- Lack of an awareness of rights
- Lack of adequate family support
- Legal and institutional invisibility of non-citizens, coupled with a narrow concept of citizenship

Manifestations of exclusion
- Lack of access to social services and goods
- Exploitation in the workplace
- Fear of, or lack of trust in, State institutions
- Unemployment
- Lack of education
- Lack of political participation
- Lack of organization at the community level or lack of potential for community growth

IV. TOWARDS SOCIAL INCLUSION

A. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

22.   Despite the heterogeneity and different geographical contexts of the three groups in the ESCWA study, a number of common themes appear throughout the analysis, which may be significant for other cases in the region. These themes are similar in the ways in which they are understood, approached and addressed.

1. *Societal attitudes*

23.   Societal attitudes toward socially-excluded groups are generally variations of disengagement; when confronted by socially-excluded persons in public spaces, many people tend to "look the other way". In all three cases studied by ESCWA, there is a tendency to view the groups as disadvantaged and not to recognize them as persons of equal worth and individuals with rights.

24.   As a result, domestic foreign workers are widely perceived as women of different and inferior value, who are only in the country to fulfil a function and have no claim to any rights. They are approached solely in a legalistic way, often simply at a contractual level. Similarly, street children are treated as delinquents and/or vulnerable groups that need to be protected from themselves, often leading to a punitive and legalistic approach. Persons with disability are also often ostracized and treated with derision or as impotent victims, resulting in a charity or "welfare" approach.

2. *Lack of data for evidence-based policymaking*

25.   A major prerequisite for addressing all these issues is knowledge of the particular situation of each of these diverse groups. Little is known about them; even official counts are based on estimates. The significant difference between the lowest and highest estimates of street children in Egypt – 17,000 and 2 million respectively – is testimony to the unreliability of most existing data. The same applies to persons with disability in Yemen, where estimates range from 695,000 to 1.2 million. The number of female migrant domestic workers in Lebanon is estimated at 125,000.[12]

26.   Very little research exists on the profiles of the three groups, their backgrounds, their views on their own lives and the attitudes of society towards them. There is even less research on how their situation is addressed at policy, planning, legislative and delivery of programmes and projects levels. Such in-depth research is an important prerequisite for evidence-based policymaking. The lack of more reliable data reflects a general lack of research capacity, in part due to the methodological difficulty of reaching and counting these elusive groups. Irrespective of the cause, however, the lack of data makes it easier to continue "looking the other way" and harder to formulate and implement effective policies to tackle social exclusion.

B. NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

27.   All three countries are signatories to a number of United Nations conventions to protect the specific rights of the three groups studied. Egypt, for example, has ratified the key conventions relating to the situation of street children, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Similarly, Lebanon has signed the International Labour Organization conventions on decent work and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (albeit with certain reservations).

28.   Most ESCWA member countries have signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and half these countries – including Yemen – have also ratified the Convention. It marks a

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[12] Jureidini, R. 2001. *Female Workers in Lebanon.* Geneva: International Labour Organization. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/infoservices/report/report05.htm.

paradigm shift in attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities by moving away from viewing them as objects of charity or medical cases, towards considering them as individuals who are capable of claiming their rights, making their own decisions in life and being active members of society. The Convention has contributed to raising awareness of issues relating to the rights of persons with disabilities in the region, with the active support of many member country Governments. The most important regional outcome has been the declaration by 22 Arab countries of the Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities, 2004-2013.

29.   While the signature and ratification of such conventions is important, effective commitment to the issues in question lies in their translation into policies, procedures and legislation, and their implementation through programmes and projects adequately funded with dedicated resources. The promulgation of national strategies is a key step towards ensuring institutional engagement in social inclusion.

30.   It is important to note that recent positive changes have occurred in the three case studies. In Egypt, for example, newly introduced legal amendments ensure that street children as are now considered to be children at risk. Once implemented, this will represent an additional opportunity for protecting the rights of children. In Lebanon, a new unified contract was introduced in March 2009 that defined responsibilities for both employers and workers, securing increased rights for the latter. In Yemen, the past few years have witnessed the entry into force of a number of laws for the protection and rehabilitation of persons with disability. The most recent such initiative is a comprehensive review of laws and by-laws based on the newly-ratified Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

C. THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

31.   In all three cases reviewed by ESCWA, CSOs play an important role in assisting with the provision of services and advocacy for street children, domestic migrant workers and persons with disability. Their principal strength lies in their ability to complement State policies and to supplement services which may be lacking. They have recently begun to play a stronger advocacy role, organizing widespread campaigns and working with Government bodies to promote awareness and advocate for change.

32.   In working with street children and persons with disability and, to a lesser extent, with migrant domestic workers, many local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide much-needed services, but face limitations in both scale and capacity. In essence, these organizations cannot – and should not – replace what should be provided by the State.   There are a number of well-established disabled persons' organisations (DPOs) in Yemen, which are the main service providers to their constituents. Their credibility and legitimacy are rarely challenged and, despite their limited means, they are considered parastatal organizations. A similar pattern is seen in Egypt, with direct and dedicated work carried out by NGOs.

33.   In both cases, however, DPOs and NGOs face similar challenges. First, their work lies mainly in urban areas, leaving the rest of the country short of services. Second, their expertise is located in such interventions as protection and rehabilitation, with very little involvement in prevention or working with wider structural societal inequalities at the national level. Last, but not least, while a growing number of DPOs and NGOs have begun to adopt advocacy as part of their mission, few have expertise in this area. NGOs lack the resources needed to present evidence-based arguments or alternative visions and approaches. They have not yet built systematic mechanisms to approach policymakers or contribute to the decision-making process through hearing sessions in Parliament or communication channels at the ministerial level, for example.

34.   In Lebanon, one NGO working with migrant domestic workers has recently launched an awareness campaign for the rights of foreign domestic workers. A group of attorneys and journalists in the country has also established an Afro-Asian Migrant centre with the aim of documenting how migrants are viewed in the law and the media, with the longer-term aim of providing such workers with legal support.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

35.   When designing and initiating social policy, ESCWA advocates a process based on three essential interrelated pillars: vision, consensus and implementation.[13] Vision entails both a conviction in social equity and the political will to implement integrated social policy. Strong leadership, a robust regulatory public office, transparent governance at the central and subnational levels, and institutional checks and balances are all essential to ensure a fair social dividend for all. A shared consensus requires institutional space and mechanisms to enable both the dialogue and checks and balances vital to ensuring participation by citizens in equitable development. It is the space that citizens, communities and their governing bodies occupy when actively forging a common understanding of human development for all. Effective and responsive implementation employs a comprehensive approach to the way in which people are involved with, receive and benefit from social services. Embracing an overall vision of development that focuses on enhancing productivity, social well-being and long-term social cohesion, social service provision addresses social problems within the greater context of economic development planning.

36.   The following list of recommendations is based upon these three pillars and represents the initial steps in creating social policy mechanisms dedicated to encouraging social inclusion at the national level. These policy options for consideration by Governments are ultimately aimed at treating the socially excluded as full members of society and addressing the root causes for their exclusion.

37.   First, there is a need to define socially-excluded groups in all ESCWA member countries, based on criteria drawn from both national and international sources. This should be accompanied by research designed to reach a better understanding of the situation of socially-excluded groups, including: (a) quantitative data at national level, including data disaggregated by sex, age and ethnic group where applicable; (b) qualitative and quantitative research to examine the links between poverty, inequality, exploitation, violence and exclusion; (c) qualitative research to understand the everyday lives of socially-excluded groups, based on their own perceptions and reflection of their own experience; (d) qualitative research to understand societal and Government attitudes towards socially-excluded groups; and (e) policy level research examining the effectiveness of policy planning, as well as legislation, institutional arrangements and budgetary allocation targeting excluded groups.

38.   Second, Governments should consider establishing a framework for partnership between public office holders responsible for socially-excluded groups, the civil society organizations working with them, and representatives of such groups in order to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each. This includes the role of public office holders in shaping social inclusion policy, monitoring the performance of policy and programmes for the socially excluded and creating space for effective civil society participation. In addition, there is a need to map those CSOs active in social inclusion, including their mandate, capacity, service delivery, location and areas of expertise.

39.   Third, there is a need to build consensus on national priorities for addressing social exclusion. This could include measures to prepare and equip CSOs to take part in a policy dialogue on social inclusion and to monitor the impact of public policy and programmes on the socially excluded. In addition, the media should be actively engaged in raising awareness and ensuring that the voices of the socially excluded and those who represent them are all heard effectively.

40.   Fourth, Governments are encouraged to implement and monitor all national and international commitments to conventions relating to the equal rights of all their citizens. Efforts should also be made to target non-citizens, where applicable.

41.   Fifth, Governments should further consider creating or nominating a policy level entity responsible for advancing the rights of excluded groups, which would link the various non-governmental actors with

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[13] ESCWA. 2008. *Integrated Social Policy Report II: From Concept to Practice*.

policymakers and decision-makers, thus establishing clear channels of communication and mechanisms of accountability in the sectoral ministries. Such an institution could have the following mandate and functions: (a) to define objectives and targets; (b) to develop strategies; (c) to place socially-excluded groups in the mainstream at the planning, policy and strategy levels in all line ministries; (d) to develop mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of legislation and policy in support of the interests and needs of socially-excluded groups; (e) to recruit staff who are committed to and have expertise in social inclusion and related cross-cutting issues; (f) to build the capacity of specialist and line ministry staff to address the needs of socially-excluded groups in all their diversity more effectively; and (g) to establish strong links and coordination with concerned groups and CSOs in order to achieve the transformational change required to address problems of social exclusion.

42.   Finally, there is a need to allocate adequate resources – from national, regional or international sources – to address the needs and interests of socially-excluded groups in order to promote more inclusive, equitable and cohesive societies throughout the ESCWA region.