

Towards social development in SIDS

Introduction

Since the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden in June 1972, there has been a pronounced shift away from a preoccupation with economic growth to a more integrated perspective, encompassing all matters relating to the development of the person¹. This expanded view of development has been crystallised through a series of UN Conferences held between 1985 and 2005². The participatory and consultative nature of these events has helped to build global consensus that economic growth is not a sufficient condition for the attainment of social development and cannot be sustained in the absence of social development and environmental protection. Equally importantly, the events have prompted the adoption of a more inclusive decision-making process at the national and global level involving state and non-state actors.

Conceptual framework

Notwithstanding the spate of events held over the past two decades on social development issues, global consensus on its definition has proved elusive. This reflects the numerous economic, political, cultural, religious and environmental variables that influence the social development process and the interplay between them. It is also reflective of the immense challenges that are involved in facilitating its attainment, especially in SIDS. There is a growing recognition that SIDS are inherently vulnerable by virtue of their small size, small populations, thin domestic markets, the absence of economies-of-scale, openness to international trade, high dependence on strategic imports and hence high exposure to price shocks of products such as energy³.

The essence of the challenge for development in general, and social planning in particular, is arriving at an appropriate conceptual framework that captures the role of each of these variables in the development process: in terms of their own characteristics; as aspects of a greater whole; and both in relation to the others and to the greater whole, of which they form part. To address this challenge, devising a set of indicators is helpful in illuminating the economic, social and environmental landscape. These indicators should cover such factors as the social behaviours, skills, attitudes, customs, traditions, systems, formal organisations, non-formal institutions, cultural values, beliefs, opinions, systems of thought, ideas, theories, and spiritual values) and the way in which they interact and influence each other to advance or impede the development process. Later in this chapter we examine some the challenges involved in establishing these indicators.

The main conclusion of development theory over the past five decades is that the human being must be placed at the centre of both the process (as agent) and ends (as beneficiary) of development. Society is discovering that providing maximum human choice to its individual members (regardless of their gender, origin, race, religion or other social distinctions) is the most effective means of releasing human energy, creativity and initiative for the maximum development of the citizenry. Economic planners now increasingly understand and accept that economic growth cannot be treated as an end in itself but as a means of enabling all individuals to live healthy, happy and rewarding lives. Social planners now understand that their policies must work in tandem with economic policy and must help to establish the ideal conditions for sustained economic growth. And both social and economic planners now recognise that their policies must draw on natural resources in a sustainable manner – that meets present day needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987)⁴.

Aggregating these perspectives, we propose, for the purposes of this chapter, a definition of social development as: *an integrative and participatory process that makes optimal use of the economic, financial, human, cultural, spiritual, and natural resources of a country to engender in citizens a sense of wellbeing and positive thinking and cohesion among them.* This definition is consistent with the post-modernist approach to development in general and social development in particular, in terms of the shift away from State-dominated planning and decision-making towards a more participatory approach involving civil society actors. It regards development as a process that should result in positive outcomes and impacts at the individual, household, and community levels. It also suggests that social development programmes have both a promotional and an intrinsic value, because, as will be established later, they seek to create appropriate conditions for economic development and broader opportunities for sharing in the results of economic performance. This is not to say that dealing with negative social, economic, cultural shocks and influences is not an essential part of the development process. The way a society interprets and responds to such shocks to its system determines its resilience profile and the outcomes of the development planning process.

The role of social policy

Social policy is generally regarded as a combination of implicit and explicit forms of state-facilitated intervention that directly affect wellbeing, social institutions and social relations⁵. Generally, these policies aim to:

- enable and empower as many people as possible to determine the things that affect their daily lives;
- promote collaboration and cohesion between people at all levels;
- engender a functioning 'civil society' in which people take their social rights and obligations seriously; and
- ensure that the necessary minimum of material and social infrastructure is established so that services can be provided to cover basic needs.

The goals of social policy

Social policy interventions should at a minimum target five overarching goals, namely: redistribution, production, reproduction, protection and cohesion⁶. We examine each of these in turn.

Redistribution

The redistributive aspects of social policy usually involve an explicit determination of the manner in which the benefits of economic growth, whether from national income foreign exchange reserves and other state assets such as land resources and capital will be distributed either along geographic, community or sector lines to spur additional or more balanced economic growth, to finance social welfare reforms and improvements, or to enhance the productivity potential of members of a society.

Protection

The protectionist aspects of social policy usually involve a clear indication of the interventions that the State will undertake and those it will promote to protect the more vulnerable actors in the economy and society (people who are poor, young, elderly, or physically challenged) from the vagaries of the market. Some of the more common state interventions such as pre-emptive savings through social security schemes have been found to have a positive impact on economic and social development by encouraging capital formation, which in turn is used to finance social development programmes. Historically non-state actors as individuals, co-operatives, churches, corporations and philanthropic organisations have played an incisive role as advocates, innovators and as providers of aid, social assistance and social services, and continue to do so.

Production

Enhancing the productive potential of members of a society should be the centrepiece of any social or economic policy. This position is justified in part by the established linkages between unemployment and underemployment and other negative social phenomena such as poverty, disease, crime, violence and environmental degradation; as well as the positive linkages between high employment levels and strong economic performance, especially in sectors such as health, education, housing, and social services. For this reason, some social development policies expound labour market policies that aim at job creation and career fulfilment through the establishment of a high quality and responsive education system that supports the needs of a knowledge-driven society; and an adaptable and flexible workforce that possesses the skills sets required in a competitive global economy. In addition, the production aspects of social policy should aim at ensuring that shocks or disruptions to the productivity of the economic system are minimised or eliminated. Sound investments towards the establishment of public health and cost-effective health care systems, including efficient strategies to combat the spread of communicable and non-communicable diseases; as well as the adoption and implementation of comprehensive disaster risk management (CDRM) strategies, should be essential elements of the production aspects of social development policy.

Reproduction

This aspect of social policy is usually concerned with, and influenced by wide-ranging social, economic, cultural and religious issues, factors and concerns, including the reproductive rights of women and men; poverty, homelessness, gender and age-related sensitivities and biases, gender-based violence, constraints to increasing the participation of women, the availability of affordable childcare services, levels of educational achievement and teenage pregnancy. Further, social policies should also be concerned about adapting to shifts in the dependency ratio.

Cohesion

While the policy interventions described above are critical to promoting social development, in several countries, notably in Europe, there is growing support for the view that social development does not guarantee social cohesion. Social cohesion is defined by the Council of Europe as ‘... the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all of its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization’⁷. The Canada Council on Social Development (CCSD) defines it as ‘... the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity’⁸. It is regarded as being centrally about the willingness of people to co-operate and engage in voluntary partnerships; and it is manifested directly in socially-cohesive activities such as participation in formal and informal social networks, group activities and associations and participation in civic life (CCSD, 2000).

The general objective of cohesion policy is to facilitate the involvement of all communities, countries and regions in the growth effort and to give all people the chance to contribute to development. The cost of not pursuing a vigorous cohesion policy, to tackle racial and cultural tensions and disparities in income and access to resources, is measured not only in terms of a loss of personal and social well-being but also in economic terms, in a loss of the potential real income and higher living standards. Given the interdependence inherent in an integrated economy, these losses are not confined to the less competitive countries and regions or to individuals who are not working or who are in unproductive jobs, but affect everyone (COE, 2003).

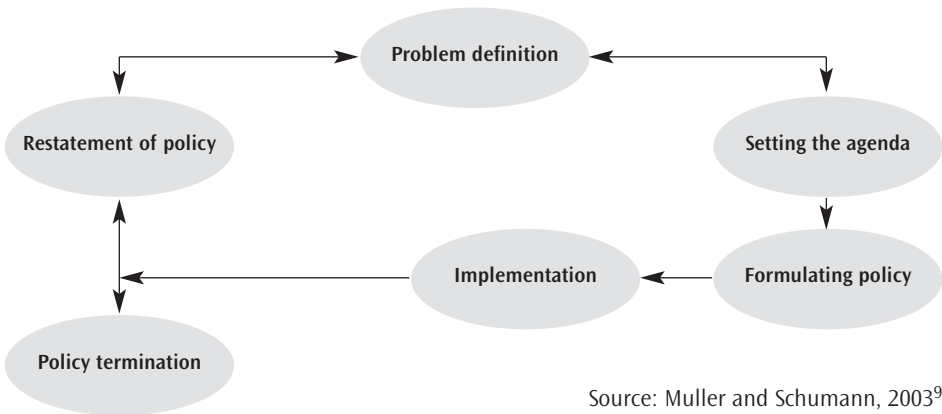
Designing social policy

A recurring cautionary note in much of the literature is that the goals of social policy should be approached in an integrated manner and that no one goal should be pursued at the exclusion of others as this might undermine the pursuit of a chosen goal. UNRISD observes that a focus only on the distributive functions of social policy would ultimately be economically unsustainable; while a focus only on the productivist approach would generate social and political instability that would undermine the growth objective.

One of the legacies of social policy reform, globally, over the past three decades is the entrenchment of integrative, consultative and participatory approaches to policy formulation. The adoption at national level of these approaches, which have been at the core of the history of democratic political theory, has not been a straightforward matter. In some coun-

tries it continues to generate much tension between elected representatives in Government, who perceive that they have the ultimate mandate from the electorate to effect policy, and the voice of Unelected people in civil society whose advocates call for citizens to have a say in what options are taken and what priorities are set in any development policy. Generally, however, there is a growing recognition that as Government representatives do not understand all the questions and do not have all the answers so the direct participation of citizens can help to produce more effective policies. In many countries non-state (non-governmental) actors have become integrally involved in fashioning social policy.

Figure 11.1. The policy cycle



Source: Muller and Schumann, 2003⁹

The content of social policy

The eventual scope, content and direction of social policy should be dependent on the results of the analysis that informed the policy; and the quality of the analysis is highly dependent on the quality of the data that is available. Instructively, many social policies aim to establish or improve the collection, collation and interpretation of data on social phenomena. Some of the challenges involved here are reviewed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Financial and economic considerations

Sustainable growth is the result of multiple interlinked factors, including a country's stock of physical, human and environmental capital and the efficiency and fairness with which it is formed and used. Efficient capital formation depends on the quality of the macroeconomic, structural, social and environmental policies and institutions (WB, 2006)¹⁰. Thus, it is critical that the knock-on effects of social, economic and environmental policy are carefully analysed, in time, space and degree of impact, to ensure that: (a) the desired results are achieved; and (b) any unintended consequences are quickly addressed. Economic policy must also ensure that investment (public and private) is spatially balanced. In this regard, Governments carry a special responsibility to move public investment and social assistance programmes into depressed areas as well as promote private investment in such areas.

Another important social consideration in economic policy is to ensure that there is equality of access to essential 'public goods' such as water resources. Many countries have designed water policies and strategies which usually describe the manner in which water will be allocated among competing uses (domestic, industrial, touristic and commercial), while ensuring that the preservation or the regeneration of environmental assets is not compromised: others have yet to do so.

A sector which increasingly is attracting the attention of economic and social policy analysts alike is the housing sector, which typically accounts for 2 per cent to 8 per cent of the gross national product and plays a key role in the profitability of financial and insurance companies, and in the labour market – it absorbs a sizeable number of skilled and unskilled workers (World Bank, 1993)¹¹. A number of policies affect housing provision, including the regulation of infrastructure, the regulation of land and housing development, the organisation of the construction and materials industry, security of tenure, and the quality of institutional arrangements (such as those relating to the land registration and titling, physical planning and development control).

Poverty alleviation

Many countries have social policies aimed at alleviating or eradicating poverty in its various dimensions. Poverty is regarded by them as the root of many other socio-economic problems facing both individuals and societies. It has many socio-cultural strands including:

- a) *Lack of opportunity*: low levels of consumption and income usually relative to a national income poverty line; this is generally associated with the level and distribution of human capital and social and physical assets, such as education facilities, housing, transport, land, and market opportunities, that determine the return to those assets.
- b) *Low capabilities*: little or no improvement in educational performance and health status indicators among a particular socio-economic group.
- c) *Low level of security*: exposure to risk and income shocks that may arise at the national, local, household or individual level.
- d) *Empowerment*: the capability of the poor and other vulnerable groups to participate in, negotiate with, change and hold accountable the institutions that are accountable for their wellbeing.¹²

The more popular classifications of poor people include those that are influenced by the causes of poverty and those that are framed by their ability to meet their basic needs. The profile of poor people which has been captured in many UN documents points to: low educational levels and skills, with lesser accessibility to secondary schooling; poor housing and environmental conditions; limited access to potable water; high levels of malnutrition, especially among children in poor households; high levels of unemployment in the formal sector; and lack of self dignity and self worth.

Poverty alleviation strategies must be tailored to suit the particular socio-economic circumstances that exist at the national, community and household level and to help the poor to identify their strengths and to use these strengths to propel themselves out of poverty. There is also broad agreement on the positive correlation between the efficiency and sustainabil-

ity of economic growth and poverty reduction, especially income poverty. Other factors found to increase the efficiency of growth in reducing poverty are investments that increase access by poor people to housing and utilities such as water, sanitation, electricity and other services from infrastructure; and measures that ensure market access for rural producers, investments in productivity-increasing agricultural technologies and labour market regulations that create attractive employment opportunities for poor workers (World Bank, 2005)¹³.

The nexus between unemployment, underemployment and poverty, crime and environmental degradation warrants closer attention. In many countries, especially SIDS, contractions in employment have been experienced that have been linked to globalisation and an accompanying push for competitiveness in the traditional labour-intensive economic sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and the public sector through sectoral efficiency reform. The ability of poor people to participate in economic growth depends on the extent to which such growth is driven by productivity increases in sectors where a large number of poor people have been working and can work in decent jobs; how much growth translates into job creation and how well poor people are equipped to take advantage of such job growth. Against this background, the World Bank cautions social planners to consider where poor people live; how they earn their income and what constrains growth in those areas. They also need to consider the constraints to the inter-sectoral mobility of poor people, such as those with low skills and who lack education or lack access to capital, infrastructure or market outlets (World Bank, 2006).

Health considerations

For the reasons already stated, social development is of crucial importance for the state of a society's health, which has been defined by WHO as a '... condition of complete physical, mental and social well-being'. Social development programmes need to be integrated into the preventive and curative health policy of a society (WHO, 1946). Health considerations cut across all the main goals of social policy, directly and indirectly. Weak or ineffective health care delivery systems can:

- a) seriously impede the productivity of the workforce as well as the educational achievement of children;
- b) undermine the integrity of social security systems by placing an inordinate burden on social security funds to cover illnesses, thus reducing the contribution that these funds can make to capital accumulation and infrastructural development; and
- c) increase child mortality and reduce life expectancy rates.

It is against this background that the management of the spread of HIV/AIDS has begun to warrant special attention in all social policies and social development programmes. Over the past two decades, the epidemic has come to be seen as a development problem, because it strikes at the heart of the development process as well as prospects for development. In many countries, infection rates are highest in the 15–44 age cohort – which is the largest and most active group in the labour force. In addition, HIV/AIDS poses a real threat to social cohesion in homes, creating many orphans, and in the workplace and in communities.

Health can also be affected by policies that have little to do with health care or services such

as environmental pollution, insecurity and instability (whether caused by unemployment, poverty or violence, economic regulation or deregulation), contaminated water and poor sanitation, changing family structures, increased urbanisation and low educational achievement. This reality strengthens the case for an integrated and participatory approach to the formulation and implementation of health policy in particular and development policy in general. As countries pass through stages of economic and social transition so the pattern of health and disease changes and the more developed countries are beset increasingly with health problems of non-communicable disease and accidents linked to tobacco use, alcohol abuse, nutrition, and lack of physical exercise and the risks of urban life, especially the use of high speed transport.

Education

The consensus amongst social analysts is that the education system in the 21st century must meet the rapidly growing demand for adaptable workers who can quickly acquire new skills and can readily cope with stresses and shocks in society. Education, like health, underpins virtually all aspects of human development. It has long been established that higher literacy facilitates poverty reduction because it increases the share of the population that can take advantage of better employment opportunities created by growth while providing entrepreneurs with a larger pool of skilled labour. In recent times SIDS, especially those in the Caribbean have had to contend with an additional challenge: the displacement and replacement costs associated with the migration of trained teachers to more developed countries such as the USA. Increasingly, many SIDS in the Caribbean and Pacific regions have regionalised their education strategies as a means of overcoming the supply-side challenges identified earlier.

As effective as these regional approaches have been, there are many educational challenges that demand national responses, especially those that are aggravated by economic performance, poverty, gender inequities, juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and underachievement especially among boys. Some of the more common recommendations in social policy for reforming the education sector include:

- Increasing investments on primary, secondary and tertiary education to achieve wider access to higher quality education that prepares people to work in a continuous learning process and keep up with changes in technology and new market demands.
- Encouraging stronger private sector involvement in critical education and training activities, especially in areas such as enterprise development, computer literacy and science and technology.
- Increasing investments in technical and vocational training, especially for young people.
- Upgrading teacher training facilities, with special attention given to developing science, mathematics and language arts teachers.
- Establishing access points to the global information network in schools, post offices and community centres.

Environmental considerations

A sound physical environment is the foundation of all forms of development. Neither economic nor social development is possible on a degraded environmental base. This is especially the case in SIDS, where there is heavy reliance on the tourism sector to provide jobs, national income and foreign exchange; and on rural agriculture to provide food and sustenance to growing populations. The salient lessons from the robust discourse on sustainable development over the past three decades is that the environment and the economy cannot be treated as separate domains and that one impacts and defines the other. The challenge for Governments and the private sector is to ensure that the policies, projects and programmes used to spur economic growth and social development are 'respectful' of the 'natural' limits to such growth. Thus, a mix of preventative and precautionary policies and strategies (including the use of tools such Environmental Impact Assessment – EIAs) are required to predict the possible negative environmental impacts of economic policies and investment projects; to abate these impacts; and/or avoid them altogether. Further, continuous monitoring of the physical environment is required to identify imminent or long-term environmental changes; to quantify their economic and social impacts; and to plan, test and implement effective adaptation and/or mitigation responses.

Addressing the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups

Women

The importance of promoting the equal rights and human dignity of women has been a recurring and prominent theme in numerous global agreements including the Charter of the UN to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Declaration on the Right to Development. Empowering women and facilitating their full participation in the decision-making process and access to power and resources are increasingly being embraced by Governments and the international community as vital to the success of virtually all development strategies, especially those dealing with economic growth, poverty reduction, environmental protection and social justice.

The high number of single, female households in many SIDS means that the position of women has a significant impact of the social fabric of these countries. While the participation rate of women in the workforce has increased in many SIDS women still tend to have high unemployment rates, encounter greater barriers to entering work, earn lower wages and perform a high proportion of insecure, vulnerable and/or unpaid jobs (DFID, 2007)¹⁴. In approaching these issues, social policy should seek out any underlying cultural factors and recognise that removing some of these factors may require a long-term approach involving intensive public education and awareness programmes. In some countries, the introduction of policies such as, equal pay for equal work have had the unintended effect of creating discord within the family and community, necessitating extensive mediation and in some cases a withdrawal of the policy. However, there is increasingly broad consensus within the international community that women's education should be given the highest priority in social and economic policy.

Youth

Perceptions of youth in developing countries range from one extreme where they are generally regarded as the essence of a country's current and future dynamism; to the other extreme where they tend to be viewed as social liabilities. Most social policies reflect the former view and seek to ensure that young people can become dynamically integrated into the development process, assuming the role of protagonists in driving the changes that countries inevitably will have to process within the framework of a knowledge society (Rodriguez, 2003)¹⁵.

Like so many aspects of social policy, youth development is a shared responsibility involving parents, families, communities, the school system and the State. For this reason, providing for young people in social policy presents considerable challenges. Identifying positive roles for the multiple actors in the home, community and the wider society in the socialisation process is considered to be the easiest part of the challenge. However, managing the socialisation process and ensuring its consistency is where real difficulties arise.

At a minimum, social policy should aim to achieve youth development through education, employment, health, sports and recreation. It is critical that the interventions pursued in each of these domains be integrated and properly targeted and that youth dynamics are carefully monitored and understood over time and in the context of various societal influences (internal and external). Often the best insights into youth policy are provided by young people themselves. Thus, social policy should aim to promote regular consultation and discussion with young people within the home, school, community and society. It should aim to provide trained counselors within schools and the community to help young people to understand and manage their emotions. It should also aim to provide adequate sporting, recreational and talent building facilities and programmes in areas such as music, arts and drama.

The elderly

The steady improvements in mortality and life expectancy rates made possible by enhancements in medical care have helped to give greater prominence to the needs of elderly people in social policy. Catering for them presents numerous challenges especially in developing countries where the infrastructure for geriatric care is lacking and where the traditions of family care of elderly people are quickly disappearing. The viability of social security programmes especially in SIDS is being threatened by an increasing burden of claims for pension, gratuity, sickness and invalidity benefits from rapidly ageing populations.

Progressive social policies seek to identify positive roles for the elderly in the development process, including as mentors to troubled youth and as advisers and consultants to Government. Many countries have extended the compulsory retirement age partly out of a recognition that people are living longer, healthier and more active lives, partly because they wish to retain the skills, experience and institutional memory of the elderly for longer periods and partly in response to the raising of the statutory retirement age in line with concerns about the costs of pensions policies. This move has also helped to avert the collapse of social security systems by extending the period of compulsory contribution as well

as delaying the pay-out of terminal benefits. Also, keeping elderly people healthy for as long as possible reduces the strain on limited health resources and extends their capacity for continued effective activity in work and in the social setting.

The physically-challenged

Over the last three decades there has been wider recognition of the importance of fully integrating physically-challenged people into the development process. This recognition has been accelerated and reinforced by compelling images from global events like the Paralympics which have emphasised the fact that in the many cases, people with disabilities are only partially incapacitated, and are still capable of making outstanding contributions in sport and thus in other aspects of social life and the broader process of social development. This view is increasingly reflected in national social policies. Some policies have gone as far as declaring any form of discrimination against persons with disabilities as a crime. The more common features of social policies include the provision of special education facilities and programmes for the visually-handicapped, including the provision of Braille textbooks in schools and libraries; requiring that ramps, elevators and other measures be provided in all public buildings and business places; the provision of incentives to businesses to hire persons with disabilities; and the provision of budgetary support to associations and groups that cater to the needs of physically-challenged persons.

Implementing social policy

The implementation of social policy, like all other national policies must be treated as a shared responsibility involving numerous actors in many domains including the State, the family, the private sector, civil society and the international community.

The role of Government

The success of all development efforts ultimately depends on the quality of governance in country or region. From the viewpoint of social development, the essential elements of governance are accountability to the state's citizens and application of the principles of justice and effectiveness of state work. Four main types of state institutions are needed for the smoothest possible social development. These are:

- Political institutions: because they are used for governing the state and provide the legal foundation and supervisory authority over the implementation of political measures for solving specific problems.
- Legal institutions: because they provide for justice and therefore play an important role in every functioning society.
- The public service: since public service represents the state for people in their day-to-day lives, it should work professionally and efficiently as well as being accessible and accountable.¹⁶

Earlier in this chapter, we noted the importance of adopting a consultative and participatory approach to policy formulation. If this principle is fully embraced and practised, it becomes much easier for the various actors to accept their respective roles in implementing

the policy and thus raises significantly the likelihood that the objectives of the policy will be achieved. However, it is critical that the initiators of the policy – usually the State – fully appreciate that consultation and participation cannot be treated as light switches to be turned on and off at the whim or fancy of Government officials. Further, because of the integrated nature of social policy, a firm and irrevocable commitment to these twin principles is required if the legitimacy and integrity of any development policy is to be achieved and maintained.

The disposition adopted by state actors in the policy process is also a critical consideration. Once the policy process is set in train, it is highly advisable that Government officials assume the role of facilitators of the process, and limit their involvement to providing essential information on the main drivers of the policy; the resource limitations being experienced by the Government; and the broad expectations of the Government regarding the goals and objectives that the policy should achieve. Other principal tasks of Government in implementing social policy include:

- a) providing leadership;
- b) establishing effective public sector institutions with full accountability, and transparent decision-making;
- c) mainstreaming social issues and concerns in national strategies for sustainable development;
- d) promoting consultative and participatory decision-making in the policy design and implementation process;
- e) using appropriate legal and financial instruments to balance economic development priorities with impacts on social structures, livelihoods and the environment; and
- f) protecting the constitutional rights of the public (especially of the poor).

The role of civil society

Civil society organisations (CSOs) i.e. all non-state organisations such as the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in which people come together to satisfy certain needs, pursue goals and take an active part in state affairs, help to fill a critical gap between citizens in the community and the State. Schmitt opines that CSOs are an essential element of social development, because they help to:

- convey the concerns of citizens to the state;
- ensure that the work of the Government brings about real improvement in the circumstances in which people live and promotes their interests;
- ensure that the bureaucratic system does not pursue its own interests, but works in the best interests of the citizens;
- preserve cultural values on which a functioning society is founded; and
- provide the stage on which the various ethnic, religious and cultural actors in society learn to develop understanding for one another and to live in harmony.¹⁷

Additionally, CSOs can play a key role in:

- a) monitoring the responses of government and the private sector to the demands of consumers;

- b) enabling the poor and other marginalised groups to determine their livelihoods and gain access to essential and appropriate services;
- c) disseminating information and knowledge within communities about new sustainable livelihood approaches;
- d) monitoring the impact of the policy through indicators and monitoring systems; and
- e) assessing the relevance and effectiveness of social development indicators.

The role of the private sector

The dynamism of the private sector is critical to accelerating the pace and deepening the impact of social development. Consequently, social policies should provide a more direct and involved role for the private sector in assisting in innovation and the management and expansion of existing social services provided by Government, through various approaches such as contracting-out, management concessions and direct investment. Social policy should require and encourage the private sector to adopt sound corporate governance practices based on deep corporate values and strong social responsibility which should include exemplary environmental stewardship. In some cases the private sector has taken a lead, especially in the technical development of environmental services and utilities and in the funding of innovation in social, health and education policies, programmes and research either directly or through linked charitable foundations. The principles of such traditional corporate social responsibility are now coming again into the headlines with shareholders holding boards of management to account for their performance in these fields, especially through private sector initiatives in environmental accounting.

The role of the citizen

In any policy process, the centrality of the citizen in helping to attain the objectives of the policy must be acknowledged and re-affirmed in the policy itself. The citizen must be seen as playing a proactive role in articulating his or her needs in relation to his/her livelihood priorities. This will help to inform decisions regarding the allocation of resources, as well as assist in improving livelihood prospects and reducing risks and uncertainties. The citizen is also expected to take full responsibility for arming themselves with appropriate information to guide decisions, whether at corporate level or at that of the individual or community, regarding personal and social development.

The role of the international development community

In recent times, the international development community has demonstrated a growing commitment to help developing countries achieve their minimum social development goals and objectives. The most recent example of this commitment is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which have helped to provide a focus and context for international development assistance as well as a set of universally-accepted indicators of social development. The international community will be better able to contribute to the attainment of national development objectives that are presented in a clear and predictable environment in which co-ordinated interventions can be made and received. More specifically, the international development community should be invited to assist in:

- supporting good practice and providing guidance to the private and public sector on efficient and sustainable service provision;
- providing targeted financial and technical assistance;
- assisting the public sector to compile and disseminate accurate information about social services;
- supporting the institutions that provide training and education;
- encouraging the growth of the indigenous private sector; and
- sharing more effectively the existing knowledge that can contribute to meeting various human development challenges.

Monitoring and evaluating the impacts of social policy

Several social development indicators have emerged over the last two decades, reflecting the lack of consensus on a definition of social development. A full examination of these indicators is not possible here and so this section provides only a brief review of three of the more prominent indicators that have a bearing on the arguments and observations made in this chapter, namely the MDGs, the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Social Cohesion Indicators.

The Millennium Development Goals

The MDGs were adopted in 2000 by world leaders as a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century. Responding to the world's major challenges and to calls from CSOs, the MDGs promote poverty reduction, education, maternal health, gender equality, and aim to combat child mortality, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. The MDGs also function as a set of universally accepted indicators of progress towards the attainment of the social development goals and targets described in Table 11.1 on the following page.

A 2006 Global Monitoring Report (GMR) prepared by the World Bank has revealed that while the world is still far from achieving the MDGs, they are helping to influence social policy as well as to provide an acceptable system of indicators for monitoring social development at the national and international level. In countries where the MDGs have been exceeded, new targets have been set and supporting policy interventions are being implemented. In other countries (especially in SIDS) the global goals and targets are being supplemented with others related to the specific issues of the BPOA and the Mauritius Strategy and its 19 priority thematic areas not adequately covered in the MDGs.

The Human Development Index (HDI)¹⁹

The HDI is a comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standard of living for countries worldwide. It is also a standard for measuring wellbeing, especially child welfare. It is used to determine whether a country is developed, developing or underdeveloped and also to measure the impact of economic policies on quality of life. The HDI measures the average achievements in a country in three basis dimensions of human development:

- a long and healthy life as measured by life expectancy at birth;
- knowledge as measured by the literacy rate (with two-thirds weight); and the

Table 11.1. Millennium Development Goals and targets¹⁸

Goals	Targets
1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<p>T1 Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than \$1 per day.</p> <p>T2 Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.</p>
2 Achieve universal primary education	T3 Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.
3 Promote gender equality and empower women	T4 Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education at all levels by 2015.
4 Reduce child mortality	T5 Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five.
5 Improve maternal health	T6 Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio.
6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	<p>T7 Halt/reverse the spread of HI/AIDS.</p> <p>T8 Halt/reverse the spread of malaria and other diseases.</p>
7 Ensure environmental sustainability	<p>T9 Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources.</p> <p>T10 Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.</p> <p>T11 Achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.</p>
8 Develop a global partnership for development	<p>T12 Develop further an open, predictable, non-discriminatory trading system.</p> <p>T13 Address the special needs of the LDCs.</p> <p>T14 Address the special needs of land-locked countries and SIDS.</p> <p>T15 Deal with the debt problems of developing countries.</p> <p>T16 In co-operation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.</p> <p>T17 In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.</p> <p>T18 In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.</p>

combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (with one-third weight); and

- a decent standard of living as measured by the log of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita at purchasing power parity (in US\$).

Statistics on life expectancy, literacy, enrolment and achievement levels and GDP per capita are already standard features of Statistics Bureaux in many countries, leading some developmentalists to question the true value-added of the HDI. For they are not all included in MDGs. It has been argued that the cross-country comparison of human development which the HDI is meant to provide is of limited value given the indeterminable number of causal factors involved at the national level and the background structural difference including that of employment, housing, infrastructure, food security, equity, good governance, and social and environmental conditions.

Indicators of social cohesion

As was noted earlier in this chapter, the evolution of social cohesion indicators has been driven by the need to capture progress towards the creation of a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity. The European System of Social Indicators (under construction) has so far identified the need for indicators for the following 'life domains': population, household and family, housing, education and vocational training, labour market and working conditions, health, income, standard of living and consumption patterns. The CCSD has identified five major economic conditions (and accompanying indicators) that impact socially cohesive activity as follows:

- a) distribution of income;
- b) income polarisation;
- c) poverty;
- d) employment; and
- e) mobility.

A common concern in all the indicators is to measure the direct and indirect effect of economic conditions on the ability of individuals to earn an adequate income and the importance of addressing disparities in income. The concern is well placed as theoretically, income disparities suggests that buying power is not in the hands of the majority to induce the production of the quantities and types of goods countries need for survival²⁰.

Conclusion

Social development is both a critical contributor to and a direct beneficiary of sustained economic growth and environmental protection. Consequently, development planners and, in particular, social planners are encouraged to adopt an integrated approach to the management of the social policy cycle, taking full account of the redistribution, protection, production, reproduction, population and cohesion goals of social policies and programmes within the economic, social and environmental spheres.

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Notes

- 1 The Conference produced a Declaration on the Human Environment, an Action Plan for the Human Environment and a Resolution on Institutional and Financial Arrangements. The Action Plan contained 109 recommendations spanning six broad issues: human settlements, natural resources management, pollution of international significance, educational and social aspects of development and the environment, and international organisations.
- 2 These events include: Social Development (Copenhagen, 1985); Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); Human Settlements (Istanbul, 1996); Environment and Development (Rio, 1992); The Millennium Summit, (New York, 2000); World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) and the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (Mauritius 2005).
- 3 See Briguglio, 2004: *Economic Vulnerability and Resilience: Concepts and Measurements*.
- 4 World Commission on Environment and Development: *The Brundtland Report*, Oxford University Press, 1987.
- 5 After the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Research and Policy Brief 5.
- 6 UNRISD, op cit; also see Springer, C, (2006) *Economic Resilience and Social Cohesion: The Case of Small Island States in the Eastern Caribbean*.
- 7 Website of Council of Europe: http://www.coe.int/T/E/social_cohesion/social_policies
- 8 Social Cohesion Research Work Plan March 1997, Policy Research Sub-Committee on Social Cohesion of Canada.
- 9 From *Teaching Politics*, Ranger Muller and Professor Dr Wolfgang Schumann. (www.dadalos.org/politik)
- 10 <http://www.worldbank.org.ieg>
- 11 *Towards a New Housing Policy Agenda: The Instruments of an Enabling Housing Policy Agenda*. World Bank, 1993.
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- 13 *Pro-poor Growth in the 1990s: Lessons and Insights from 14 Countries*. World Bank, et al., 2005.
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- 16 Karin Schmitt, Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development. http://foundation.novartis.com/en/publications/sustainable_development/social_development.htm
- 17 op cit.
- 18 Source: http://www.undp.org/mdg/tracking_targetlist.shtml
- 19 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Development_Index
- 20 Basic needs may be interpreted in several different ways: as minimum specified quantities of such things as food, clothing, shelter, water, sanitation; as the satisfaction of consumers' wants as perceived by the consumers themselves; or as embracing individual and group participation in the formulation and implementation of projects and in some cases political mobilisation.