Summary of the discussions

Leave no one behind – Discrimination, Exclusion, and the 2030 Development Agenda

Wednesday, 22nd June 2016, SDC, Berne

With:

Eglantina Gjermeni, Minister of Urban **D**evelopment, Republic of Albania

Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, Senior Research Associate at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, former UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

Elizabeth Stuart, Research fellow at the Overseas Development Institute

Nils Weidmann, Professor of Political Science at the University of Konstanz, Germany

Introduction by **Thomas Greminger**, Ambassador, Deputy Director-General SDC
Moderation by **Isabelle Jacobi,** Head "Echo der Zeit", SRF

The panel of experts addressed in particular the implications of leave no one behind for the 2030 development agenda, the challenges of identifying and reaching those "left behind", and the political obstacles of prioritizing such groups, including implications for international cooperation:

What does "Leave no one behind" mean and who are those left behind?

"Leave no one behind" is viewed as a paradigm shift in development. It is also a departure from the MDGs that put the focus on averages. "Leave no one behind" requires a focus on the poorest and on the persistent pockets of poverty and there is a need for early action. There are five

> **"Leave no one behind is the transformative element of the Agenda 2030. It is not attached to any goal but sits above all goals." (Elizabeth Stuart)**

concepts beneath the idea of "leave no one behind": extreme income poverty; income inequality; horizontal inequality; intersecting inequality and multidimensional poverty. Experts highlighted the serious data gaps: around 350 mio. individuals are missing and left out from standardised household surveys. More efforts need to be made to identify and involve those at the margins of data collection and to complement standard tools. Policy makers and development partners also need to go beyond

> **"In urban development, we have to go and ask vulnerable groups about their needs. We think we know, but we don't." (Eglantina Gjermeni)**

the community elites and refrain from considering participation as pro forma exercise. It was further noted that civil society plays an important role in bridging between government and communities.

How can those left behind be reached?

The discussion highlighted the political dimension of those left behind. On the basis of internet use analysis, researchers found that ethnic minorities not belonging to ruling majority groups were

disproportionately excluded from internet services. The reasons, which are of political nature, require political solutions, and simple market liberalisation will not remedy said exclusion patterns.

> **"Why is the internet failing to deliver its full potential? It brings us back to the inclusion / exclusion aspects."** **(Nils Weidmann)**

Social protection programmes have been described as the "quiet revolution" and identified as critical for reaching those left behind. It was noted that developing countries in particular have introduced social protection programmes on a massive scale, reaching around 1.9 billion people. Questions were raised with regard to the conditionality in cash-transfer programmes, for example, and whether or not they deliver the intended benefits and have led to unwanted effects, such as increased time constraints on women. It was noted that targeting approaches should not be seen as incompatible with universal coverage. Rather, universal schemes can be topped up with targeted measures for specific groups. Also, it was highlighted that no matter whether you use the term affirmative action, which is sometimes controversial, or progressive universalism: It is essentially about lifting up people more quickly and not focusing on averages.

For such programmes to be sustainable, a revenue base has to exist in developing countries, in particular through establishing appropriate fiscal policies and collecting revenues from business activities of international corporations active in these countries. It was also stressed that taxation alone is not sufficient to reach the most vulnerable and that democracy and accountability mechanisms are central to make sure resources are allocated properly.

> **"Global consensus is needed to introduce taxation of the multinational companies on the profits they currently avoid paying" (Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona)**

What are the implications for international cooperation?

The imperative of „leaving no one behind" requires a paradigm shift and will only happen if the agenda will be implemented as a reference point in the North, as well as in the South.

Having people participating efficiently in the programmes is very difficult and it does not happen spontaneously. Development practitioners have to introduce participatory mechanisms more consistently. We tend to approach and include the elite to those living in poverty, instead of integrating the most vulnerable from the start. From theory to practice, time should be dedicated for developing appropriate participatory mechanisms and make sure they are implemented in a way that allows the empowerment of people.

It will be important to identify the pockets of poverty and exclusion at national and at local level. In doing so, we will face technical, but also political issues. Policies can drive exclusion, and international cooperation has to take it into account and propose counter measures. Sustainable improvement of the living conditions without working on the democratic spaces, whereas repression is currently increasing, will not be feasible. International cooperation should intensify its support of trade unions, independent media, women organisations and democratic processes. Technical answers are not enough to tackle the Sustainable Development Goals.