



**WORLD
SUMMIT
FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Copenhagen
Denmark
6-12 March 1995

**Attacking
Poverty**

**Building
Solidarity**

**Creating
Jobs**

Towards a Society for All

How to strengthen social integration—ensuring that a society reflects and is responsive to the needs of all its citizens—is one of three core issues to be addressed by national leaders at the World Summit for Social Development, 6-12 March 1995 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

This backgrounder offers an overview of the issue. It draws on the January 1994 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General, the recommendations of an Expert Group Meeting held from 27 September to 1 October 1993, and other relevant studies.

A sense of deepening social inequalities worldwide, fragmenting societies, and polarizing population and income groups is more than just "perception", according to United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He reports that "the previously attained level of social security, and thus inclusion in society, is increasingly under threat".

The *Human Development Report 1994*, an annual study commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme, cites ten indicators which reflect a "weakening social fabric": homicides, rapes, divorces, births outside marriage, single parent homes, drug crimes, suicides, requests for asylum, numbers of prisoners and the percentage of juveniles in the prison population. These figures are increasing, especially in economically developed countries and countries in transition.

The irony is that evidence of social development and social deterioration often appear juxtaposed within the same societies. For example, the United States, ranking eighth highest on the Human Development Index, is simultaneously the aggregate leader in indicators of a weakening social fabric.

What is social integration?

What is a socially integrated society? The Secretary-General defines it as one that is "able to accommodate different and divergent individual and group aspirations within a flexible framework of shared basic values and common interests."

Seen in the context of sustainable human development, social integration is a synonym for greater justice, equality, material well-being

and democratic freedom that implies equal opportunities and rights for all.

Within society, it manifests itself as solidarity, interdependence, respect for cultural diversity, tolerance for non-mainstream life styles and the courage to replace dysfunctional systems (eg, slavery, apartheid) with more equitable ones.

In the words of the Secretary-General, the goal of constructive social integration is a "society for all" in which citizens feel that the state is responsive to their needs; one that promotes "development consistent with justice for the individual, harmony among groups and social cohesion."

It is clear that this goal cannot be achieved without successfully addressing the Summit's other two core issues of poverty and productive employment. In fact, the common thread that links all three issues is their "crucial importance for the development of individuals and societies," according to the Secretary-General.

Because most of the world's abjectly poor people live in the developing world, where they account for a third of the population, poverty is a major threat to social integration in these regions.

At the same time, poverty is increasing in industrialized countries—for example, more than 15 per cent of the population of some European countries live below national poverty lines.

Social integration is also threatened by the rising tide of unemployment and "jobless growth" which, if it persists, inevitably produces poverty. This downward spiral of social disintegration is characterized by marginalization of large portions of a society's population through



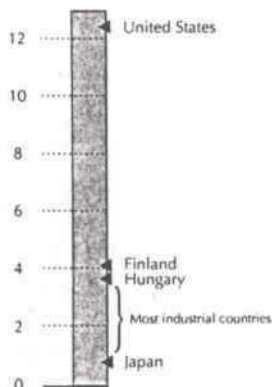
UNITED NATIONS



Profile of human distress in industrial countries

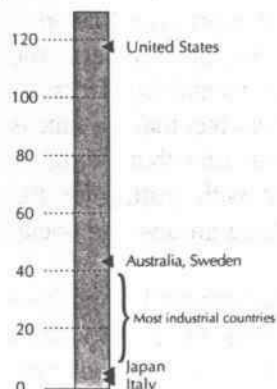
Murder

International homicides by males per 100,000 males



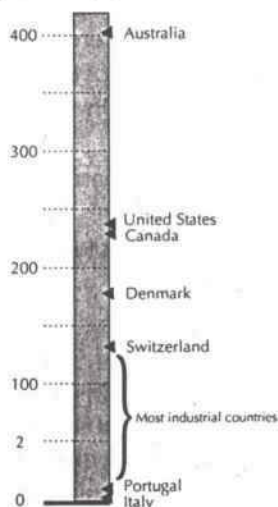
Reported rapes

per 100,000 women aged 15-59



Drug crimes

per 100,000 people



Source: Human Development Report, 1994, UNDP, p. 30.

exclusion and neglect, homelessness, and high crime and mortality rates.

Symptoms of Disintegration

Rapid, far-reaching change is a hallmark of contemporary society. In the realms of economics, technology, culture and social values, change is ironically one of the few "permanent" features of the world. Yet, although change has brought a multitude of improvements, one of its most adverse repercussions has been its tendency to marginalize, exclude and discriminate against groups and even entire nations.

Who are the marginalized and excluded? They include:

- ◆ illiterate migrants moving from rural poverty to urban slums, their search for a better life often unattainable;
- ◆ unemployed teenagers hanging out on street corners, "looking for trouble" because they can't find worthwhile work;
- ◆ orphaned children, victims of ethnic conflict, subsisting in the nether world of refugee camps;
- ◆ elderly widows, struggling with too little money to make ends meet.

Exclusion

As with poverty, exclusion anywhere poses a threat everywhere, particularly when the numbers of these marginalized minorities attain critical mass. And their numbers are increasing.

Consider the elderly, one of the most vulnerable population groups: by the year 2025, the world's elderly population (people aged 60 or more) will number 1.2 billion, 14 per cent of the projected total global population. That means that this portion of the world population will have grown approximately by a factor of six, double the growth rate of the overall population.

Exclusion and discrimination are not only economics-driven. They are often based on racial, ethnic or tribal differences and may also be gender-based. Harvard economist Amartya Sen estimated that some 100,000,000 women are missing from the global population figures, most of them from South and East Asia, where female foetuses are routinely aborted after amniocentesis or ultrasound scanning.

Statistics from 43 developing countries reveal that mortality rates for female children between a few months and four years old

exceed those of boys in the same age groups. Even if they survive early childhood, discrimination against girls continues, fueling further societal marginalization.

Take education: of the 100 million children worldwide between the ages of 6-11 who do not attend school, 70 per cent are girls. Some 660 million people—two thirds of the world's illiterates—are women. And, although they are making progress, women as a group are still subject to varying degrees of discrimination in virtually every country of the world.

Ethnic conflict

All too often, institutionalized discrimination results in ethnic or racial violence and armed conflict, as societies disintegrate under the weight of their own prejudice. As the *Human Development Report 1994* revealed, of the 82 conflicts since 1990, 79 were within national borders.

Played out in both political and military arenas, these conflicts characteristically take a high toll of civilian casualties. Fully 90 per cent of war casualties since 1990 have been civilian as opposed to only 10 per cent at the beginning of the twentieth century. Those who survive often become refugees.

As case in point, the prolonged warfare in the former Yugoslavia has generated the largest refugee exodus in Europe since the Second World War. Another example is Tajikistan (in the former Soviet Union) where war has taken the lives of more than 20,000 citizens and made refugees of over half a million people, the equivalent of 10 per cent of the country's total population.

Yet another example is Africa, which accounts for one third of the world's refugee population. From April to August 1994, an estimated 50-66 per cent of the entire pre-war population of Rwanda (8 million) was either killed or forced to flee their homes due to ethnic conflict. Many who survived the slaughter fell victim to cholera and other diseases sweeping the refugee camps.

Migration

Whether because they are seeking a better life or because they are forced to flee from hostile political conditions or natural disasters, more people today are living outside their home villages, countries or regions than ever before. Although many migrants and refugees expect to

remain only temporarily in their host communities, increasingly, they are there to stay.

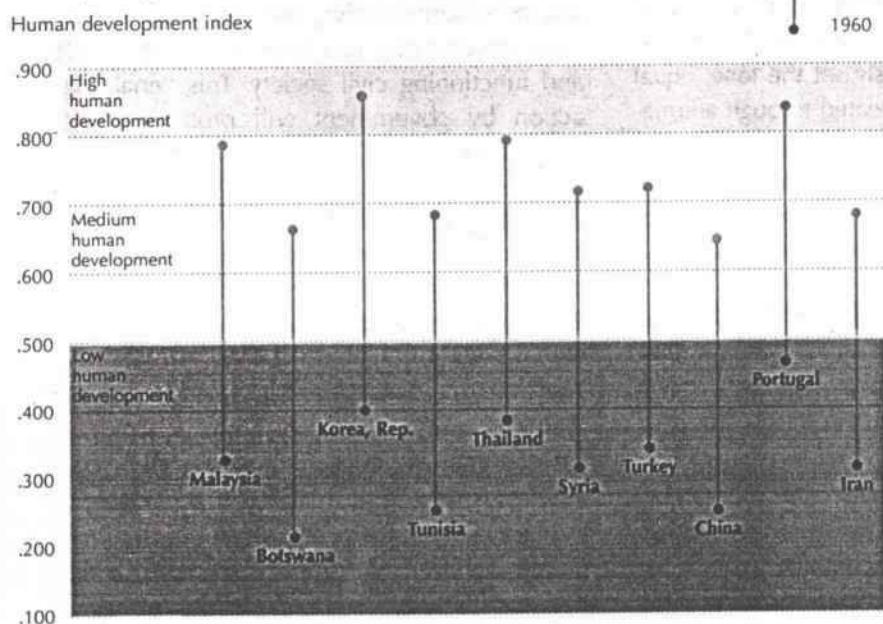
In search of work or higher wages, economic migrants often move to urban areas, leaving their families behind. Although the majority are men, in recent years economic migration rates for women have almost caught up, especially in southern and southeast Asia where more than 70 per cent of women migrants are under 25 years old.

Economic migration may bring privation, even physical danger, as well as a cultural backlash when groups who often share neither a common language nor a common religion or culture are thrown together, straining existing social services as well as human tolerance.

Most problematic is migration that involves political refugees. The current human tidal wave of more than 23 million refugees and others in similar predicaments, along with another 26 million internally displaced persons, is swelled by armed conflicts, political instability, violations of human rights and persecution.

Many societies are becoming increasingly multi-cultural as a result of migration. This fact is potentially positive, with the possibility of greatly enriching the receiving societies, but it may equally lead to greater misunderstanding, confrontation and anxiety.

The top ten performers in human development, 1960-92



These ten countries have made the most progress in human development over the last three decades.

Source: Human Development Report 1994, UNDP, p.96

Crime

Societies threatened by rapid increases in crime are often characterized by a burgeoning fear of victimization felt by ordinary citizens. Often the response to this fear is to withdraw from contact with the community, behind high walls or barred windows. Increasing fragmentation of the physical environment into "safe" and "risky" areas creates distances among residents which lead to misperceptions, distrust and eventually, social disintegration.

Frustrated at diminishing legal opportunities, crime seems to offer a tempting path to affluence and power. Especially amid the near-anarchy of severe social disintegration, such as that being experienced in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, crime proliferates.

For a handful of entrepreneurs, versed in the sophisticated niceties of marketing and money laundering, illegality may pay off big—at least in the short run. The total annual turnover of organized transnational crime is judged to be in the vicinity of \$1,000 billion.

Global trade in drugs has also become an illegal goldmine, raking in estimated profits of some \$500 billion annually, an amount which exceeds the GDP of many of countries. It is estimated that, in the United States and Europe alone, \$65 billion a year from the sale of cocaine, heroin and cannabis is available for money laundering and black market investment. This illegally acquired wealth only serves to exacerbate the already yawning chasm between the very rich and very poor in the world.

The Vision

Thus threatened, how do we transform the vision of a "society for all" into reality? This is the challenge of the Social Summit. Even at this early stage, the Secretary-General's report has identified certain criteria, including:

- ◆ an "enabling environment";
- ◆ fulfillment of basic human needs (eg, health, shelter);
- ◆ literacy and primary education for all;
- ◆ economic growth with social justice;
- ◆ respect for, and protection of, diversity
- ◆ equal opportunities for all;
- ◆ accurate, timely information for all so that

citizens can fully participate in their societies;

♦ a means to measure and monitor social development over time.

Setting New Priorities

The real goal is not merely to integrate a social dimension into the development process, but to *redefine* the very concept of development so that it truly becomes socially relevant. That means setting new priorities.

First of all, it will be vital to bring governments closer to the people, humanizing their bureaucracies and making them more responsible and responsive to their citizens.

Within countries, governments have prime responsibility for assuring overall human security by ensuring an environment which encourages sustainable economic growth, increases the number of productive jobs, guarantees social safety nets, and empowers the disadvantaged.

Governments have a very powerful means at their disposal: the power to redistribute economic and taxation burdens which can discourage exorbitant income differentiation and target needy portions of the population through well-defined social programmes. For example, progressive taxation, if not excessive, can be effective in creating socially supportive incentives.

Governments also must take "preventive action" against social exclusion. They must pass, and enforce, legislation to ensure equal rights for all and to respect diversity. Where discrimination has previously set the tone, equal opportunities must be created through affirmative action and similar policies.

Government is not the sole actor when it comes to promoting social integration. It must work with the private sector and civil society.

Socially Responsible Businesses

The role of the private sector in promoting social integration is clearly evolving and it is likely to take on added importance in the years to come. Gone are the days when clear distinctions could be made between the role of government and the role of private companies in promoting social and economic well-being. Increasingly, there is a need for partnership between private the public institutions to ensure quality and choice in the goods and services people require.

This is where a growing sense of corporate social responsibility comes in. As experts at a 1993 meeting in The Hague put it, "in order to survive, private enterprises will have to change from a model based on maximizing profit to a model which emphasizes social responsibility and accountability to the community. Through the vehicle of private sector initiatives, the focus of productive employment must shift from profit towards people".

An Engaged Civil Society

Equally important for promoting social integration is the community of non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, professional associations, labour unions, cooperatives, community groups and other social networks which make up civil society. Such organizations often provide the means and the structures for people to express their aspirations, meet their needs, represent their interests and participate in local and national decision-making. They may also provide the forum for various interest groups to reconcile their differences democratically and peacefully, thus avoiding conflict and potential social disintegration.

To be able to function effectively, the organizations of civil society may need the active support of government. By decentralizing responsibilities and authority, by guaranteeing freedom of association and organization, and by ensuring active, two-way communications, governments can promote a lively, active and functioning civil society. This "enabling" action by government will promote social integration.

Vision to Reality

"No one goes through life alone. All of us are created within, and influenced by, networks of social relations which provide us with our identity and establish a framework for our actions." The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development's report on social integration stressed that people live and pursue their goals within a structure of institutions, ranging from families and households to schools, street gangs, sweatshops, stores and offices in which they work.

On a more general level, their opportunities in life are affected by the larger economic and political context, ranging from bartering for

"No man is
an island...."

John Donne



food to betting on the stock market, from decisions of tribal councils to those of international tribunals.

As of the end of 1994, the United Nations numbered 184 Member States, actually made up of several thousand "nations" or "peoples". In this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural patchwork world, a flexible, socially responsive framework which supports civilized cultural change while, at the same time, fostering respect for tradition is crucial to sustainable human development.

Social integration, states the Secretary-General's Report, should be very clearly and firmly based on "a platform of principles built on respect for human dignity, individual freedom and equality of rights and duties."

Empowering the UN

There is a pressing need for the world community to recognize its common heritage. Due to

the increasing interdependence between nations, many proposals for social integration and a socially just global system of governance can be implemented only at the international level. Here the United Nations has a unique and vital role to play.

Convened by the United Nations, the Social Summit will produce a Declaration and a Programme of Action aimed at alleviating and finally eradicating extreme poverty, at creating adequate productive employment for an increasing population and at enhancing social integration. The Social Summit will endorse an agenda for social development—but that is only the beginning.

Empowering the United Nations to meet this challenge effectively means paving the way for "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" as envisaged almost fifty years ago in the United Nations Charter.

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Facts about Social Integration

Signs of Social Progress

- ◆ Average life expectancy in developing countries has increased from 40 years in 1950 to 63 years in 1990;
- ◆ Fertility rates are falling in every region except Africa and it is estimated that the annual number of births in the developing world will have peaked by the year 2020;
- ◆ Despite population growth and high infant mortality rates in a few countries, the absolute number of child deaths worldwide is falling;
- ◆ From 1960 to 1990, education spending in the developing world rose from 2.2 per cent to 3.4 per cent of GNP; female literacy increased in all regions of the world, actually doubling from 18 per cent to 36 per cent in the least developed countries between 1970 and 1990.
- ◆ Economically, since the Second World War, average real incomes in developing countries have more than doubled; since 1990, the world economy is gradually reviving from recession, as evidenced by a growth rate increase from 1 per cent in 1993 to a projected 2.2 per cent for 1994 and 3 per cent for 1995.
- ◆ Since 1987, global military spending has declined at a rate of 3.6 per cent a year, resulting in a cumulative theoretical "peace dividend" of \$935 billion between 1987 and 1994.

Symptoms of Social Disintegration

Social Exclusion

- ◆ It is estimated that fewer than 10 per cent of the world's total population participate fully in the political, economic, social and cultural institutions that shape their lives. The poor, women, the disabled, the elderly, minorities and rural dwellers are most marginalized;
- ◆ Political power remains centralized, especially in the developing world where, on average, less than 10 per cent of national spending goes to local governments.

- ◆ In the USA, real benefit spending per old age pensioner declined by 40 per cent between 1987 and 1990 while the unemployment rate for blacks was twice that for whites;

Discrimination

- ◆ Women comprise an estimated 66 per cent of the world's illiterates and 70 per cent of the world's poor; Asia alone has 374 million poor rural women, more than the population of western Europe;
- ◆ An estimated 100,000,000 women are missing from the global population, most of them from South and East Asia, where female foetuses are often aborted after amniocentesis or ultrasound scanning;
- ◆ In the non-US corporate world, women hold only 1 per cent of top management positions; one study predicted that it would take 475 years for women to reach equality with men as senior managers;
- ◆ Indigenous people, 300 million in over 70 countries, often face severe discrimination and violence: for example, in Canada, they are six times as likely to be murdered as other Canadians; in Venezuela, the 10,000 surviving Yanomami may face extinction, victims of economic and environmental exploitation;
- ◆ Racial discrimination is reflected in the disparity between blacks and whites in South Africa, which in 1993/94 was four times as great as in the United States based on life expectancy, per capita income and the human development measurement scale.

Violence and Abuse

- ◆ The United States leads the world in violence with the highest incidence of murders (over 12 per 100,000), reported rapes (150,000 in 1993) and child death by gunshot wounds (7,000 in 1992); another estimated 3 million American children are chronic victims of abuse and neglect;
- ◆ Children everywhere are vulnerable victims of violence. In Brazil, home to an estimated 200,000 street children, four youngsters a

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