

## Four Case Studies on the Experience of SDC and its Partners in Supporting Socially Inclusive Local Governance

Sarah Byrne, Pascal Fendrich, Pascal Arnold (Intercooperation)  
and Andres Mejia Acosta (Institute of Development Studies)

*With inputs from*  
Ursula Läubli, SDC Bolivia  
Tirtha Sikder and Jens Engeli, Intercooperation Bangladesh,  
Tommaso Tabet SDC Bangladesh  
Marina Dimova, UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Elhadji Moutari Mansour HEKS Niger  
Corinne Huser, SDC  
Kuno Schläfli, SDC

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## 1. List of acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CBO	Community Based Organisation
DASCOH	Development Association for Self –reliance, Communication and Health, Bangladesh
EMPODER	<i>Empoderamiento de Pueblos indígenas</i> (Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples), programme supported by SDC Bolivia
FAM	Federation of Associations of Municipalities, Bolivia
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FOCAM	Fund for capacity building and technical assistance to municipalities, Bolivia
FORDECAPI	<i>Fortalecimiento de capacidades institucionales</i> (Strengthening Institutional Capacities), programme supported by SDC Bolivia
GEM	Gender Evaluation Methodology
GTZ	<i>Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i> , German technical cooperation organisation
IC	Intercooperation, Swiss foundation for development and international cooperation
ILDPA	Integrated Local Development Project, supported by SDC in Bosnia and Herzegovina
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LGI	Local government institution
MAS	<i>Movimiento al socialismo</i> , Bolivian political party/movement
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
miPRO	Methodology for Integrated Local Development Planning
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PASEL	<i>Programme d'Appui au Secteur de l'Elevage</i> (Livestock Sector Support Project), project supported by SDC in Niger
PCC	<i>Programa de Capacitación Ciudadana</i> (Citizenship Capacity Building Programme), supported by SDC Bolivia
PED	Political economy network of SDC
RS	Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
SAH	<i>Schweizer Arbeiterhilfswerk</i> , Swiss cooperation organisation
SCO-B	Swiss Cooperation Office in Bangladesh
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SLIM	<i>Servicios Legales Integrales Municipales</i> , Municipal Integral Legal Services, Bolivia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UP	<i>Union Parishad</i> (sub-district local government in Bangladesh)

## 2. Introduction

In the framework of SDC's Decentralisation and Local Governance Network (dlgn), a learning group has been established on the topic of social inclusion in decentralisation and local governance. The purpose of the learning group is to study how initiatives for social inclusion in local governance processes and institutions work and to assess good practices and lessons learned, as well as their potential for replicability. The learning project focused on the identification of approaches that favour inclusive participation in local decision making processes, integration of the interests of socially excluded groups in local policy-making and on methods aiming at strengthening local authorities capacities to assume their responsibilities for pro-poor policies.

The first part of the learning project compares donors' approaches in addressing social inclusion in local governance and identifies aspects of "what works on the ground" on the basis of a literature review and of a series of empirical case studies.<sup>1</sup> This document, the second component of the learning project, focuses on SDC's own practices and experiences in promoting social inclusion and empowering disadvantaged groups at the local level. To assist in engaging concretely with this experience, four case studies have been developed on four different types of social inclusion initiatives. The case studies were selected by the dlgn learning group on socially inclusive local governance, with an interest in learning from different types of interventions (projects, programmes), levels of intervention (national, local), different working contexts (four continents) as well as several good & innovative practices. The four case study projects or programmes are all working in the field of local governance or decentralisation, and through the elaboration of the case studies, have critically reflected on the issue of social inclusion in the contexts in which they are working and in the everyday practice of their project/programme and partners.

In particular, the case studies have looked into:

- An analysis of the dynamics of social inclusion/exclusion in the specific context in which the project/programme is working, how this is assessed and monitored
- How social inclusion is approached, its intervention strategy and activities
- Good practices that can be identified, and their success factors, as well as outstanding challenges and the potential for replicability.

The case studies were developed on the basis of a questionnaire completed by key informants associated with each project/programme, supplemented by follow-up exchanges by email or phone.

This document is structured as follows: first an overview of the four selected case studies is given, which outlines a) their working contexts and analysis of local social exclusion dynamics, b) intervention strategies and activities, and c) how change is monitored. This introduction is followed by a short reflection on the experiences of the four case studies, identifying successful and less successful elements, the reasons for these, and possibilities for sustaining and transferring these experiences. A series of preliminary conclusions are proposed, that assess the case studies' interventions at the level of actors, of organisations/institutions and of broader structures. The first part of the document concludes with a series of recommendations for practice. The second part of the document describes the four case studies in depth.

## 3. Overview of the four case studies

### 3.1. *The selected case studies*

The four selected case studies are<sup>2</sup>:

**ILDLP – Bosnia and Herzegovina:** ILDP (Integrated Local Development Project) is a joint initiative of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The project was launched in

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<sup>1</sup> Andrés Mejía Acosta, et al. 2011. "Inclusive Local Governance for Poverty Reduction: A Review of Policies and Practice" (Bern and Brighton: SDC, Intercooperation and the IDS)

<sup>2</sup> For the full case study, please refer to the relevant chapter later in the text (chapters 7 to 10).

2008 and will be completed in 2011. Local governments' capabilities remain weak in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, ethnic division remains a key feature of the country and socially excluded groups remain detached from public local policy consultations. In working with central level authorities and in direct cooperation with 24 municipalities, ILDP therefore aims to systematize inclusive local development planning and strengthen capacities of local governments and their socio-economic partners to successfully plan and manage local development processes. ILDP's approach can be divided in three components: 1. Elaboration of a harmonized methodology for local development planning 2. Support 24 municipalities in the application of the new methodology for strategic planning 3. Help local communities engage in the local planning process, in particular socially excluded and vulnerable groups. The project addresses the lack of coherent and harmonised strategic planning policy and practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while at the same time enabling socially inclusive policy formulation at the local level.

**PASEL – Niger:** The PASEL program (*Programme d'Appui au Secteur de l'Elevage / Livestock Sector Support Project*) is supported by SDC Niger since 1998 and is now entering into its sixth phase of implementation. The project has been implemented in three regions of the country and aims at improving the living conditions of rural communities. PASEL started in a context characterized by recurrent conflicts between pastoral and land farming communities. Lack of land and natural resources in Niger has translated into pressures on land use and land ownership. PASEL aims at working on the causes of tensions and reducing the potential of conflict between communities. While the project's objectives and methods have necessarily evolved over time, its approach can be summarized along the three following axes: 1. Support the development of local capacities to manage land resources and secure herders' areas and migration corridors 2. Ensure the viability of pastoral settlements and transit areas through the introduction of new techniques in stockbreeding and creation of basic infrastructures 3. Support pastoral organizations, women's groups and public institutions through capacity building activities.

**PCC & FORDECAPAPI – Bolivia:** The SDC Bolivia programmes included in this case study are the "*Programa de Capacitación Ciudadana*" (PCC, Citizenship Capacity Building Programme) and "*Fortalecimiento de capacidades institucionales*" (FORDECAPAPI, Strengthening Institutional Capacities). The particular components referred to, "Decentralization" in PCC and "*Empoderamiento de Pueblos indigenas*" (EMPODER, Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples) in FORDECAPAPI, have been part of SDC interventions for several years. Both programmes are developed around a human rights based approach, and thus support an integrated intervention from the state and civil society. The PCC works on building citizenship and strengthening an inclusive society that respects human rights and FORDECAPAPI, on the other hand, works on strengthening institutional capacities of state institutions for implementing inclusive and responsive policies.

**SHARIQUE – Bangladesh:** Sharique, which means 'partner' in Bangla, aims to empower disadvantaged groups and poor people to claim their rights and entitlements, and to access more responsive public services from local governments in Rajshahi and Sunamganj regions of Bangladesh. Similar to the rationale of PCC & FORDECAPAPI, Sharique works on "both sides" of the governance equation: both with local governments and citizens and their communities. The rationale is that with government drawing closer to the people on the one hand side, and more informed citizens on the other, new spaces are created for participation and thus influencing decision-making process at local level. Currently in its second phase, the project works in 130 Union Parishads (local governments) and 21 Upazila Parishads (local government at sub-district-level).

### **3.2. Working context**

In order to understand more about the dynamics of social inclusion that the projects/programmes seek to address in the localities in which they work, each of the case studies begin with an overview of the social inclusion context in their working area. This overview outlines the project/programmes' assessment of factors including a) who are considered to be socially excluded and how this functions in economic, social and political terms, b) measures taken to

address social exclusion through policy and legislative means and c) specific issues related to social inclusion in local governance. Though clearly working in very different social, political, economic and ecological contexts, several interesting similarities and differences can be highlighted between the four case studies:

**Different dimensions of exclusion overlap and reinforce each other: in each of the case studies, the overlapping of different kinds of exclusion was identified as a key challenge** – not only are people excluded on the basis of their ethnicity, gender, economic status or the locality in which they live, but often on several of these grounds at once. The implication is that social exclusion is a complicated practice stemming from a variety of power dynamics and requires a differentiated analysis. One example is the issue of dynamics between majority and non-majority communities: in Bolivia the indigenous people who were excluded from power are actually the majority of the population, in Bosnia and Herzegovina whether one is part of the majority ethnic community in a particular municipality is an important factor, in Niger a socio-economic cleavage overlaps with ethnic cleavages, which leads to “ethnicization” of a conflict over land use. Reinforcing exclusions calls for integrated approaches to social inclusion, and one that understands majority/non-majority as not only a numbers’ game. For example, **all of the case studies identified gender as a strong and persistent factor in social exclusion.**

**Amongst those who are considered ‘socially excluded’, different kinds of inclusion measures are implemented for different communities.** For example, in Bangladesh there are quotas in recruitment for the civil service (including local government administrators) for women and Adivasis (ethnic minorities), but not for other excluded groups such as religious minorities. There are reserved seats at local government elections (30%) for women, but not for other excluded groups. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, applicable law provides for the representation of ethnic minorities at the local government level, and such groups are generally represented in municipal councils, while other socially excluded people such as people with disabilities are rarely integrated within municipal councils and administration.

**In all of the four cases, local governments were characterised as being in the front line for implementing inclusive policies and delivering public services in an inclusive way.** For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina local governments are responsible for a wide range of services such as child care, primary and secondary education, social housing, and municipal utilities (such as water and sanitation). In Niger, the primary responsibility to deal with conflicts over land use has been granted to municipalities after their establishment. In Bangladesh, local governments are responsible for selecting beneficiaries for social transfers such as allowances for widows. Fiscal decentralisation is identified in the case studies as being key to ensuring that local governments have sufficient resources to effectively deliver these services.

**All four cases identified significant gaps between the legal and policy framework concerning social inclusion and the everyday realities of people belonging to excluded groups.** From Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Law on the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic Minorities, to Bolivia’s new constitution, Niger’s pastoral code, and Bangladesh’s Civil Service Recruitment Rules, a variety of legal and policy measures to address social inclusion are outlined in the case studies. However, in all of these cases implementation remains challenging for a variety of different reasons including entrenched interests in maintaining the status quo, organisational capacities (human and financial), etc. In other words, as the review on donor policies and practices on social inclusion (Mejia Acosta et al 2011) confirms, inclusive legislation and policies are necessary but not sufficient condition for effective change in this respect.

### ***3.3. Social inclusion strategy and activities at the SDC Country Strategy level***

The issue of social inclusion is prominently reflected in the **vision and strategic orientation** of SDC’s country strategies in Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bolivia and Niger. The review on donor approaches to social inclusion (Mejia Acosta et al. 2011) found that in SDC social inclusion is generally addressed through the “entry point” of a human rights based approach, local/good governance or as a transversal topic. This observation is also valid for the four SDC

case studies outlined here: in Bosnia and Herzegovina the issue of social inclusion is mainstreamed in all the 4 priority domains, whereas in Bangladesh and Bolivia it is mostly addressed within the (local) governance working/thematic area. Aligned with Niger's poverty reduction strategy, SDC's programme in Niger places an emphasis on improving the living conditions of the population with a focus on setting up governance mechanisms based on equity. Poverty reduction and social inclusion are embedded in all components of the programme. Social exclusion is expressed with reference to reducing inequality (Bolivia), to a vision of an equitable and inclusive society (Bangladesh), or in reference to a process of enabling vulnerable groups to get the resources and opportunities to fully participate in the country's economic, social and cultural life. (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

All four case studies mentioned **gender mainstreaming as an example** of a specific measure taken in favour of social inclusion. An example of a specific measure taken by SDC in Bolivia to integrate social inclusion issues in its programme is the implementation of gender as a transversal theme, which is reinforced by a special component in the PCC programme that promotes affirmative actions for reinforcing women's rights in the planned programme activities. In Bangladesh, SDC also implements specific initiatives with respect to gender equality: the Cooperation Office has gender guidelines comprising a gender partner platform (regular peer learning, info sharing, situational analysis, etc), GEM checklist for Credit Proposals, gender focal point, etc. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, good governance and gender equality mainstreaming are mandatory for all projects and programmes supported by SDC. In the PASEL programme of Niger, gender is to be considered as a transversal objective of the project. The programme also comprises specific support to economic activities that are usually under the competences of women.

With respect to **monitoring social inclusion**, only SDC Bolivia has specific analysis and monitoring tools that address social inclusion at the country programme level. SDC Bolivia analyses power relations and exclusion mechanisms through the instruments and methodology of "political incidence" [influence] (PED Network of SDC). These instruments include a mapping of actors that visualizes power relations and how to strengthen weak actors that are "allies" and how to deal with powerful actors that are not yet allies. SDC Bangladesh implements a comprehensive country strategy monitoring system that collects gender and poverty-disaggregated data, while not focusing specifically on the issue of social inclusion more generally. The Swiss Cooperation Office in Bangladesh does not have an overall comprehensive tool to analyze and monitor power relations and exclusion mechanisms, rather these issues have been analysed through specific studies.<sup>3</sup> While the monitoring tools focus on the overall portfolio, and not specifically on social inclusion, the indicators are disaggregated by gender and poverty (whenever possible). However, information on social inclusion is collected at the project level on the basis of several indicators (such as those used by Sharique outlined below). Likewise in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Niger, the SDC country programme monitoring system does not include specific social inclusion indicators; rather the contribution of SDC supported projects to social inclusion is monitored at the project level.

### **3.4. Social inclusion strategy and activities at the project/programme level**

The four case study projects/programmes implement a range of different activities, at both national and local levels, on the basis of their particular intervention strategies.

The primary objective of **ILD**P is to set the basis for a more inclusive and transparent local development in BiH through the building of responsive and efficient municipal governance. The programme thus works on integrating vulnerable groups and their needs into development processes and to work on strengthening their capabilities to participate in strategic planning. ILDP first supported BiH authorities to develop a standardized methodology for strategic planning sensitive to marginalized groups (the miPRO). The framework provided by the miPRO prescribes a

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<sup>3</sup> Marie Gilbrin. 2009. SDC Local Governance Programme, Poverty Study of Three Local Governance Projects (Dhaka, SDC). Copies are available from the Swiss Cooperation Office Bangladesh.

participatory and socially inclusive approach at all stages of the planning process and for the inclusion of a social development plan within the integrated local development strategy. Second, ILDP supported the implementation of the miPRO methodology in 24 BiH municipalities through trainings and capacity building activities, as well as a small grants scheme to support community-based organizations to effectively engage in the local planning process, particularly to raise the voices of socially excluded and vulnerable groups.

The **PASEL** in Niger aims at improving the living conditions of rural communities with special regard to the rights of pastoral communities. In this respect, a first objective of PASEL seeks to establish inter-community dialogue in order to work on the causes of conflicts and address the identified problems through a participatory process. In this respect, inter-community forums should allow to secure grazing areas and passageways for livestock migration and to build mechanisms for dealing with possible conflicts. These informal dispute settlement mechanisms have become formal through the establishment of the municipalities. A second key activity of PASEL is to work for the sustainability of pastoral settlements. This involves supporting the introduction of new techniques in livestock farming and working on guaranteeing rural populations' access to basic services (water, health, education for their children, etc.). A final key component of PASEL focuses on capacity development activities.

In the two SDC Bolivia programmes described in this case study (**PCC & FORDECAPI**), the objective is to promote social inclusion through supporting the exercise of individual and collective rights, in particular political rights – the intervention strategy bases itself on the human rights based approach. In the case of FORDECAPI, the programme intervenes and promotes dialogue whilst strengthening the capacities of the national government for inclusive public policies. In the intervention logic of the PCC programme, exercising rights, especially political rights, and being an informed citizen is a way to promote social inclusion. Furthermore, gender is mainstreamed in all interventions, especially, promoting women's participation in strategic and operational local planning processes and training of women members of municipal governments. The programmes implement specific measures and activities in order to address social inclusion in local governance processes.

The objectives of **Sharique** are, firstly, to strengthen local government capacities to manage public affairs in a more effective, efficient and transparent way, and to ensure that they are more responsive and accountable to the community, especially the poor, women and marginal groups. At the same time, the project aims at the empowerment of the poor and poorest with special regard to women and marginalised (or disadvantaged) people so that they become aware of their rights and are able to claim those rights and entitlements. The intervention strategy of the project is to work on both sides of this equation to sensitise and empower rights holders and duty bearers within the given legal framework.

To summarise, the activities supported by the projects/programmes to implement the above-outlined strategies to effect socially inclusive local governance can be grouped as follows:

**Socially inclusive local development planning:** in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bangladesh a key component of their strategy in support of socially inclusive local governance is to ensure that local development planning involves the participation of excluded groups and is responsive to their needs and interests. This includes both participation in the various committees involved in the planning, as well as separate consultations/ focus groups with members of excluded groups. These plans are also followed-up with monitoring and budget review meetings. In Bolivia, special municipal budgets for women's' and young peoples' needs have been institutionalised in partner municipalities through programme support.

**Support in excluded groups' access to services:** the projects/programmes also work in quite a concrete way to support excluded groups in accessing local public services. For example, the FORDECAPI programme in Bolivia facilitates the exercise of the right to identity (birth certificates, identity documents). These documents, given out by local governments and decentralised state institutions, permit access to other rights, such as the exercise of the right to political participation (voting), access to land, etc. In Bangladesh, through the support to participatory local governance,



the selection of beneficiaries for safety net programmes (eligibility for programmes like "food for work" as well as for pensions for widows, among others) is considered to be fairer, with such benefits being allocated more on a needs basis than purely a patronage basis. ILDP's key focus is to support the integration of marginalized groups and their specific needs into development planning. Their participation in the definition of development plans should then lead to ensure them access to key services. The approach of PASEL is different and the programme provides direct support for communities' access to key services. The observation that nomad communities were discriminated as concerns their access to key infrastructures such as wells or electricity led PASEL to provide direct financial support for the establishment of these types of infrastructures.

**Budget support:** in some cases, the projects/programmes have supported specific components of local government budgets or have invested in particular infrastructure. For example, in Bangladesh, based on the performance of the local government in improving its governance, the project gives some grants to the local government as part of its annual budget. This grant is intended to give the local government the flexibility to invest in addressing the needs of socially excluded groups. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, ILDP funds a small grants scheme to support projects of community-based organisations working on structured participation of the most vulnerable groups (the grants are co-funded by partner municipalities).

**Capacity building activities:** all of the case study projects/programmes included a capacity building component which has a dual focus on both strengthening the capacity of government actors (at national and/or local level) to deliver socially inclusive governance, as well as strengthening the capacities of excluded groups to participate actively, raise their voice, organise around common issues, etc. For example, one of the main focuses of the PCC (Bolivia) is the strengthening of the capacities of local authorities and their technical staff for providing an efficient and effective access to public services to excluded groups. ILDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina supports the work of civil society organisations and their capacity to effectively engage in local policy formulation and raise the voices of socially excluded groups. Sharique in Bangladesh has developed a specific "speak-up" training module to capacitate women in raising their voices in public hearings and debates, and provides some accompaniment support to women local government councillors. In Niger, capacity-building activities come as a direct follow-up and as way to ensure sustainability of all programme's interventions (control committees for securing passageways, introduction of new techniques in the field of agro-pastoral activities, etc.)

**Institution building:** in addition to strengthening the capacities of local organisations, the projects/programmes support the establishment of institutions and networks. For example, SDC in Bolivia has supported the institutionalisation of FOCAM, a fund for capacity building and technical assistance to municipalities – which organises governance ratings among municipalities (among other activities). The programme PCC strengthens Municipal Integral Legal Services, municipal centres that deal with domestic violence, and FORDECAP supports the establishment of local roundtables on gender violence. A further important component of institution building is the support to the institutionalisation of a human rights unit within the police force. In Niger, PASEL first supported the creation of "informal" institutions through the creation of control committees designed to deal with potential conflict about grazing areas and agriculture lands. The programme then supported the setting-up of land commissions, which were established by law and gradually replaced informal institutions created under the roof of PASEL.

**Dialogue promotion:** In Niger, creating the conditions for dialogue to take place between the communities constituted a key activity of PASEL for reducing tensions and conflicts. Inter-community forums were not only able to create consensus on the identification of the problems and on the expression of relevant remedies, they created institutionalised spaces for dealing with potential tensions. Conflict over land in the project areas is significantly reduced as one of the main outcomes.

**Engagement with institutions and in policy development at the national level:** in addition to their work to support socially inclusive governance at the local level, the case study projects/programmes had a strategy of engaging with policies at a national level. In other words,

they seek to promote change through connecting interventions at different levels, rather than focusing just on the local level. For example, SDC in Bolivia facilitated the nationwide consultation process on the law on jurisdictional boundaries, which regulates the competences of the formal and community (indigenous) justice systems. FORDECABI and PCC work directly with the relevant ministries (Justice, Autonomy), as well as the Federation of Municipal Associations (FAM). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the definition of the methodology to be applied for inclusive development planning was defined in a working group gathering 30 representatives of all relevant institutions and organisations from all levels, while the consultation process involved about 200 additional representatives from sectoral state and entity institutions, from the cantons, practitioners from the municipal level, associations of municipalities and representatives from the non-governmental sector and international organisations. The methodology has been endorsed by both entities' governments as the methodology to be followed by local governments for development planning.

### **3.5. Data collection and monitoring change**

The four case studies define social inclusion differently and collect data and monitor change with different levels of thoroughness. In general, the focus is more on quantitative and objective indicators (rather than qualitative and subjective).

**ILD** in Bosnia and Herzegovina uses a broad definition of socially excluded groups which includes returnees, displaced persons, Roma, elderly, women, youth and persons with disabilities. Considering that it operates within 24 BiH municipalities that differ in size and characteristics, the range of socially excluded groups varies within each locality. ILD's approach therefore supports a comprehensive situation analysis of the local situation at the beginning of the planning process. This preliminary phase aims at identifying and mapping all relevant and interested actors that should be involved in the planning. A specific focus is also given to the situation and conditions of access to health care, social protection, the pension system and education. Data collection thus already allows identification of vulnerable groups and their specific needs. In order to assess the changes that took place as a result of the planning process, ILD would refer to the integrated local development strategy, adopted by the Municipal Council/Assembly, where concrete projects are planned for implementation. In the long-run, changes that actually happened at the local level can be captured via the set mechanisms for local strategy monitoring that are performed on a yearly basis, a monitoring process in which the local community also takes part.

**PASEL** collects objective data to monitor its impact. The initial observation that pastoral communities were discriminated against concerning access to basic infrastructures and services such as wells, electricity or health centres as well as increasing inter-community conflicts relating to land use explain the objectives and design of the project. In this respect, socially excluded groups are identified according to their economic activity. The reduction of conflicts between pastoral and agricultural communities, the number of migratory corridors rehabilitated the number of pastoral settlements rehabilitated and the number of children benefiting from established schools in these settlements serves as central indicators of the success of the programme.

Both of the programmes **PCC & FORDECABI** have defined specific socially excluded groups that they work with. FORDECABI works with indigenous groups as its main beneficiaries. The criteria for the selection of intervention areas are on those that cannot exercise their rights for different reasons. PCC focuses its work on women and young people, strengthening their political participation and influence in public policies whilst mobilising them locally and nationally with competitions, campaigns, training and direct contributions to implement small initiatives. Both programmes have collected valuable data about the situation of socially excluded groups.

- For example, FORDECABI promotes specific investigations about highly vulnerable indigenous people (Guaraní, Yuqi, Araona) and especially about the minority of the Afrobolivian population, who are not considered as original indigenous peoples and for that reason are often rendered invisible. Thanks to the influence of FORDECABI, they have been especially recognized in the new constitution.

- PCC, for its campaign “Watch out for Gender Violence”, conducted an investigation about the Municipal Integral Legal Services (SLIMs), centres for the attention of women suffering from violence, which has provided data about the number of women suffering from violence and the number and quality of SLIMs that are functioning in the country and what institutional weaknesses need to be tackled.

**Sharique** does not work with a formal specific definition of social inclusion or exclusion, but identifies socially excluded groups (referred to as marginalized groups in the project literature) that it works with in its working area. These include: Adivasis, women, economically poor people and people living in geographically isolated areas. The project collects a variety of information on the situation of socially inclusive decentralization and local governance. Sharique collects data on social inclusion as part of its regular monitoring. Indicators it monitors include, for example:

- How many citizens from the excluded groups participated in different planning meeting of the local governments, or
- How much the demands of excluded groups were finally considered in local development plans. In this case, project partners analyse the information given in the UP budgets, including the allocation of the UP budget in favour of women and extremely poor people by a) first identifying the types of projects/activities which were thought of benefiting either women and or extreme poor only, then b) identifying the budgets that were for these projects and then c) dividing the total UP budget by the budget for these special projects.

## 4. Reflection on experience

Each of the four case studies covers a series of reflections on the project/programme’s experience, including identified good practices, significant changes, challenges, etc. A few key points are outlined in this section, for a more thorough analysis please refer to the individual case studies (chapters 7-10).

### 4.1. *What has been successful, and less successful?*

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the introduction of the miPRO standardized methodology proved relevant as a way to sensitize municipalities to take into account the concerns of vulnerable groups when conducting strategic planning and as a way to structure their approach in development planning. The governments of both entities today officially recommend its application by LGs. Project facilitation to implement it has revealed welcomed and necessary. The participation of project staff in support activities proved useful in order to create new dynamics and increased the confidence of marginalized groups to express their concerns and needs. In this respect, one particularly successful aspect of the implementation strategy was also to support socially-excluded groups to voice their needs via concrete projects into local development strategies adopted by municipal councils (e.g. participation of their representatives in the planning bodies, focus group discussions, small grants to local CSOs, etc.). The introduction of a small grant scheme attached to the development planning process also provided incentives and support for community-based organizations to engage in the process and for the planning processes to bring tangible results. ILDP is still being implemented and it is still difficult to see how sustainable its results may be. One clear shortcoming is that project successes remain limited to the project’s area. This means that despite the endorsement of the development planning methodology at entity level, its approach did not have the spill-over effect that could have been expected.

The most visible results of **PASEL** relates to inter-community forums and to the rehabilitation of migration corridors. The programme has managed to establish a constructive dialogue between the involved communities. PASEL’s facilitation of the process proved necessary in order to bring the communities together and positively influence a context characterized by mistrust. All forums have showed that communities converged in terms of diagnosing the problems and defining possible ways to address it. PASEL and the involved populations were able to rehabilitate about 3000 kilometres of corridors for migration and to set-up follow-up mechanisms that ensured their

sustainability. Corridors are now clearly indicated and the rights of migration recognized. The reduction of conflicts in the project's regions reflects that a consensus was achieved and emerges as a key indicator of the success of the programme. The programme was also successful in adapting its approach to the decentralization process that took place during its implementation and in integrating the newly created municipal structures. PASEL's work to ensure the viability of pastoral areas through the introduction of new techniques and the rehabilitation of infrastructures has also shown positive results in reducing the vulnerability of pastoral communities. The support given to the creation of infrastructures has however shown mixed results. It has for instance showed limited impact on the issue of access to education and it seems that other socio-economic factors would need to be considered for positive results in this regard. Overall, and while PASEL approach has showed some very tangible results, a key shortcoming remains that the latter developments have remained circumscribed to the project area. The central level has remained rather marginal in the whole process. While it has endorsed PASEL as a national approach to manage conflicts on pastoral areas and corridors, it has showed limited leadership in supporting further implementation.

In the programmes supported by SDC **Bolivia**, the most successful aspects of the implementation strategy for socially inclusive local governance, can be identified as: 1) Strengthening of capacities for municipal development with a strategic vision for better local public service provision with specifically developed instruments like the institutionalization of FOCAM, a fund for capacity building and technical assistance to municipalities; 2) Promotion of citizens' participation with co-responsibility and facilitating putting their concerns and needs on the agenda, especially with regards to the participation of women and young people and their influence in municipal programmes and budgets, 3) Communication and information are crucial instruments for participatory municipal development and for citizen's participation: an informed civil society can participate in public affairs and make use of their political rights. Less successful aspects have been: 1) in the beginning the handing over of financial resources for implementing actions to organisations of socially disadvantaged groups without the necessary strengthening of their capacities in a long term process. A better support and follow up would have permitted more effective results in the long term. 2) Not giving enough time and resources to support and accompany the implementation of local initiatives of women and young people and knowing and deciding when is the appropriate moment and which is the appropriate support, in order that such initiatives encouraged by these programmes can become sustainable in the future.

As outlined in the case study, Sharique in **Bangladesh** has a number of good practices in supporting the effective integration of socially excluded groups in local decision making and priority setting processes, and also has some experience with practices that did not work out as hoped. A good practice example is the ward-level planning exercise implemented with the UP and with the public, with a particular emphasis on the participation of excluded groups. In many cases this active participation of excluded groups was sparked by their participation in the local self-governance assessment supported by Sharique – in this way empowerment for participation in one process has a certain "trickle-over" effect. The demands of excluded groups are now considered and retained in the final ward and UP plan and, on average, 20-30 % of the UP budget is now assigned to projects that benefit women and poor people directly. Sharique also reports significant improvement in the participation of women members in UP decision-making processes due to Sharique's support to women UP members. However, a measure that proved to be challenging was the participation of members of socially excluded groups in different UP committees: this was difficult to manage because participation in these committees requires a lot of time, and time during the day, time which members of socially excluded groups cannot spare as they struggle to earn a living. Additionally, a certain level of education (literacy) is perceived to be necessary to engage actively. Consequently, there is a lot of absenteeism from the representatives of excluded groups in these meetings.

#### **4.2. What are some outstanding challenges in working on social inclusion?**

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, mainstreaming social inclusion in local strategic planning remains an ongoing process and ILDP's contribution has remained limited in several aspects. The overall capacity of local governments and civil society organizations to address social inclusion in an effective manner remains insufficient. Community-based organizations still lack experience, resources and critical mass of supporters at the local level, which, in result, places them at the periphery of public and social life and prevents practical results of their efforts. The ability of LG to articulate social inclusion with other development related objectives remains limited. Social inclusion it is still considered by LGs as a separate chapter without being sufficiently connected /articulated with the overall plan and other objectives. ILDP so far has had limited impact at the country level. While the standardized methodology is officially supported, there is a lack of horizontal and government implemented policies that encourage social inclusion at the local level. Positive results of the project are circumscribed to the 24 supported municipalities. It is however worth mentioning in this context that promotion of social inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina still takes place in a very difficult context characterized by mistrust inherited from the past.

In **Niger**, the case study underlines the positive results initiatives based on dialogue promotion and facilitation can have but also shows that limited progress on inter-community dialogue is achieved without external facilitation. The central government has shown limited commitment to enforce applicable law that protects the rights of vulnerable groups and only a rhetorical commitment to promote inter-communities dialogue. In this context, decentralized structures are recent and remain with limited capabilities. It is also important to note that the process of decentralization may further put the interests of nomad communities at risk if their specific needs are not properly taken into account. Decentralization may leave nomad communities in a situation of permanent minority at municipal level, since they are organized according to broader geographical areas. The territories that are of relevance for nomads in fact spread across various municipalities and departments.

There remain several challenges the programmes are facing in improving social inclusion in local governance and decentralization in **Bolivia**. These include trends in the current political transformation that make it necessary to continue supporting initiatives of young people, women and the network of local promoters and communicators that directly contribute to, and influence, public policies that take into account the specific needs of these groups. A further challenge is the strengthening of local authorities' capacities for a better response to the demands of the civil society, and to socially excluded groups in particular. Fiscal issues are also key to ensuring equitable access to public services for people living in different parts of the country. Here the challenge is to strengthen a municipal representation at national and departmental levels that manages to generate concurrent investments and the elaboration of a new equality orientated fiscal pact.

In **Bangladesh**, several outstanding challenges are identified in the case study. One issue is that the strategy of 'positive discrimination' is required to address the issue of social inclusion. But it is not easy for the elected councillors to follow this strategy as they claim that to them all 'voters' are equally important, regardless of their social identities and positions. Another challenge to inclusion is that the representatives of local governments belong mainly to the elite, which plays an important role in decision-making processes, as does the prevalence of patron-client relations in society. A further significant challenge to more inclusive local governance and decentralization is that increased demands for local government services follow the increased participation of the socially excluded groups in local governance processes. As local governments, insufficiently provided with human and financial resources, are hardly in a position to address these increased demands, a new tension has grown between 'demand and supply'. A more proactive disclosure of information (such as budget information) by UP could contribute to reducing this tension.

### 4.3. To what extent and under what conditions are these experiences replicable?

Some elements of **ILD**P's approach towards inclusive development planning (multi-level consultation for the definition of a planning methodology, support to the implementation of this methodology) can be easily replicated. The agreed methodology offers a set of practical tools for enabling socially inclusive policy-formulation: requirement for socially-sensitive situation analyses, inclusion of a social development plan within local strategies, the use of focus groups discussions as a way to link specific groups to the planning process, the introduction of small-scale grant scheme to mobilize community engagement in the planning process. **ILD**P's experience however emphasizes the need for adequate facilitation support from external actors. Furthermore, one needs to bear in mind that the **miPRO** is a rather elaborated and complex methodology and therefore needs to be implemented in a context of sufficient institutional capacities. Compatible with EU standards, its replication may be most suitable for countries in EU accession process / EU partnership process.

**PASEL** proposes a relevant and simple approach for dealing with inter-community conflict, where mistrust and lack of knowledge about the other's specific needs is at the base. Dialogue, the creation of both formal and informal mechanisms for dispute settlements and supporting the implementation of the solution agreed by the communities are keys to **PASEL**'s approach and successes. Given its focus on establishing dialogue between communities that do not trust each other, it is clear that such a project needs time for successful implementation. The project staff has to invest time in order to convince local communities representatives and other (traditional) leaders about the usefulness of the approach. But the latter play a pivotal role in the success/failure of the approach. The use of "*animateurs relais*" proved as a successful and easy to replicate methodology for spreading the use of new techniques and creating local expertise on them.

Both of **SDC** Bolivia's governance programmes **PCC & FORDECAP**I have transferable experiences and practices in social inclusion in decentralization and local governance. Specifically, in **FORDECAP**I there are good practices for the promotion of the rights of minority groups and influence in national policies and international mechanisms. In the context of the new territorial structure given in the new constitution, **FORDECAP**I plans to take up the issue of implementation of human and minority rights at decentralised levels of governance as well. In **PCC** there is transferable good practice in promoting specifically the participation and influence of women and young people in municipal and national policies, as described in detail above, and in strengthening the national association of municipalities. In Bolivia, the National Federation of Associations of Municipalities unites the 9 departmental associations of municipalities. This is a powerful means of influencing national policy from the meso level and representing issues more strongly and effectively than individual municipalities would be in a position to do.

**Sharique** staff considers that the experiences and good practices generated through the project can be effectively transferred, with some important conditions. These conditions are: 1) Intervention strategies with approaches that focus on demand and supply side (not to create an imbalance), 2) Openness and awareness towards social inclusion (i.e. legal framework, political dialogue), 3) Key aspect – existence or possible creation of participatory spaces (this should be legally sound especially when working in local governance, 4) A genuine willingness for social inclusion – both a strong demand from the public and aligned incentives of political elites - linked to concrete actions (service delivery), and 5) Existence of certain conditionality to assure take up of demands and needs of excluded groups.

## 5. Conclusions

As we outlined in the introduction, this document is the second component of a learning project on socially inclusive local governance. The first component of this learning project included a comparative desk review of documented case studies of how initiatives to promote socially inclusive local governance processes actually work "on the ground" (Mejia Acosta et al, 2011). This review concluded with the identification of three "success factors" in supporting socially

inclusive local governance. In order to facilitate comparison, we structure our concluding comments about the four case studies of SDC experience around the same factors:

**Principal actors and stakeholders:** The review of selected initiatives suggests that stakeholders can attain a more inclusive provision of services when they articulate efforts through *horizontal networks*, rather than asking central governments to provide local services through traditional *vertical lines of authority*. Horizontal networks refers to the coordination of government and non-government efforts working across different policy priorities or different stages of the policy process. Examples cited include “management committees” elected to supervise the implementation of projects funded through participatory budgeting. The inter-community forums supported by PASEL in Niger, to bring different conflicting parties to the table to discuss about access and use of natural resources, are a good example of such an initiative. Further examples of such horizontal networking include ILDP’s working group for defining the methodology to be applied for inclusive development planning, which consisted of 30 representatives of all relevant institutions and organisations from all levels, as well as SDC Bolivia’s support to FAM (the association of municipalities). Another key factor identified in the review is that social stakeholders’ mobilisation to demand an effective and inclusive provision of services is matched by the interests of political stakeholders, for example if campaigns for re-election can be based on effective service delivery. This working also on political incentives is key to Sharique’s approach of working on “both sides of the equation” and looking for “win-win” opportunities. As the case study explains: A challenge to inclusion is that the representatives of local governments belong mainly to the elite, which plays an important role in decision-making processes, as does the prevalence of patron-client relations in society. However, this can be a two-way street, as patrons need the votes of their clients in order to be elected and these relations can be harnessed to improve the accountability of local government.

**Organisational capacity and institutional arrangements:** An important dimension of “success” of social inclusion initiatives in local governance processes is the existence of *legal provisions* to protect fundamental rights and prevent discrimination in the provision of services. A closely related factor is the existence of *effective organisational capacity* to uphold those rights and implement the strategies, especially when taking into account the role of political organizations. All four case studies identified the gap between legal provisions and their implementation as a key issue. One of the reasons cited for the lack of implementation is lack of capacities: both human and financial. At least three of the cases cited SDC’s engagement on legal provisions at the national level (Niger, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina) as part of their work on social inclusion and all four case studies have a strong capacity building component (including training to local government councillors and administration, municipal associations, citizens’ groups, particularly groups of socially excluded people).

**Structural environment:** A third factor for success identified by the review, in addition to the nature of individual incentives and organisational capacity, was the role played by the structural environment in which the initiative takes place. The analysis of structural factors is necessary to identify long term opportunities and constraints that exceed the scope of project interventions, for example, whether a political regime is democratic or not, whether countries have benefited from natural resource revenues or not, etc. In comparison to their focus on actors and stakeholders and on organisations and institutions, the four case studies placed less emphasis on the structural environment. Awareness of the structural environment contributes to the analysis of the type of intervention that is appropriate (for example, Sharique’s focus on demand and supply of local governance), and this analysis seems to be comprehensive (particularly in the case of Bolivia with the well developed political influence analysis) but actually working on this broader structural environment may be beyond the scope of the projects/programmes as they are presently defined (for example, working in a territorially limited area). An exception in this case may be the intervention of PASEL in Niger, which goes right to the core of the tensions in the country between more mobile and more settled social groups. However, the case studies in Niger, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bangladesh all cited that a drawback of their approach was that it is limited to

particular territorial “islands” where the projects are implemented and that influencing beyond these is challenging.

## 6. Recommendations

On the basis of the four case studies, we would like to highlight several initial recommendations that can be drawn from the experience of FORDECAPI/PCC, ILDP, PASEL and Sharique:

- **The importance of working on “both sides”:** Each of the case studies highlighted the importance of working in tandem with both local government authorities and citizens/civil society, in order to support both the “demand and supply” of socially inclusive local governance. In this sense, the human rights based approach can be an important method for planning interventions strategically and for assuring access to fundamental rights for citizens whilst strengthening the capacities of the government at different levels for respecting and fulfilling these rights.
- **Addressing social inclusion through concrete issues:** the four case studies’ strategies for addressing social inclusion involved working with local governments and citizens/civil society on very concrete issues such as local development planning, access to land and access to local public services. This may be contrasted with a more campaigning approach seeking to mobilise people around certain issues (although this approach is also implemented in Bolivia).
- **Integrating social inclusion throughout project/programme interventions:** the case studies show that “mainstreaming” social inclusion in all the different project/programme interventions can be an effective method. In this way social inclusion is part of the “regular business” of the project, rather than being limited to a specific sub-component. The case study of Sharique is particularly telling in this respect.
- **Combining different kinds of interventions – but including a capacity building component throughout:** A wide variety of different interventions in favour of socially inclusive local governance are implemented by SDC and its partners in these four case study projects/programmes. A common element that runs throughout is that all interventions are accompanied by a capacity-building element: for example, the definition of a local development planning methodology in Bosnia and Herzegovina is accompanied by capacity building for local government staff and civil society in carrying out the planning in a socially inclusive way.
- **Practicing what you “preach”:** The case study projects/programmes were sensitive to the issue of social inclusion, in particular gender equity, within their own internal organisation and in the selection of partners. This also is connected to implementation: communication is greatly facilitated by staff who speak local languages and are conversant with local culture. The case studies speak to the effectiveness of intercultural and gender mixed project teams.
- **Working simultaneously at different levels:** Though the projects/programmes focused on different levels of intervention, each also sought to widen its influence either vertically or horizontally to other levels of governance – for example working both directly with partner municipalities, with inter-municipal associations and with central government ministries. In this way, the projects/programmes sought to influence a variety of different actors and power-holders. However, this proved to be challenging for the case study project/programmes to implement and a certain tension remains between the territorial orientation of project working areas and the initiative to “scale-up” influence.
- **Working with/through existing structures:** The projects/programmes are challenged by the issue of how to deal with the existing power structures in addressing social inclusion, or to what extent these can be challenged directly. Here the approach differed slightly, with some being more accommodative (seeking a win-win approach), whereas others sought to



tackle the issue more directly (through the human rights based approach, or affirmative action), for example.

- **Basing interventions on a well-thought analysis of the local situation:** The case study interventions are all based on a thorough analysis of the local (political) context, including an analysis of who are the influential actors (how they can be brought on board, or not alienated) and what are the causes of social inclusion (including the reinforcing dynamics of different forms of exclusion). On the basis of this analysis of power and inclusion/exclusion dynamics specific interventions (rather than “out of the box”) were elaborated, for example the dialogue forums in Niger, which led to more tangible results.

## 7. Case study: ILDP, Bosnia and Herzegovina

By Marina Dimova (UNDP) and Pascal Fendrich, Intercooperation

### 7.1. Background

The Integrated Local Development Project (ILDP) is a joint initiative of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The project was launched in 2008 and will be completed in 2011. It is implemented by UNDP, in close cooperation with the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Republic of Srpska (RS) Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Governance and both entity Associations of Municipalities and Cities.

The project works with 24 BiH local governments and aims to systematize inclusive local development planning and strengthen the capacities of local governments and their socio-economic partners to successfully plan and manage local development processes. ILDP is organized along 3 main components:

1. Creation of a harmonized methodology for local development planning.
2. Support to the 24 municipalities in the application of the new methodology for strategic planning.
3. Help local communities engage in the local planning process, where special attention is placed on including the voices of socially excluded and vulnerable groups.

Social inclusion and sustainable development are key aspects in the methodology of the project and are embedded as transversal themes in the three above components.

### 7.2. Context

**Ethnic division constitutes a key feature of contemporary BiH and a strong root of social exclusion.** BiH is composed of 3 main ethnic groups: Bosniaks (48%), Serbs (37%), and Croats (14%). The Law on the Protection of Rights of Ethnic Minorities identifies 17 minorities. The war has significantly affected inter-communities relations. While in pre-war times BiH was so ethnically mixed that in about 80 % of municipalities no single ethnic group had an absolute majority, the war has led to large populations displacements. The majority of cities in BiH today have one dominant ethnic group making up nearly 90 percent of the city's population. The three constitutional groups in BiH (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) are socially included within their areas and exclude peoples from other ethnic backgrounds. Minority refugee returns have been disappointing, in large part due to opposition from the leading ethnic political parties in those areas. The war has led to destroy social trust between communities and trust in one another.

**Despite increasing growth rates, around a fifth of the population of BiH finds itself below the general poverty line.** The UNDP's 2007 Human Development Report for BiH (*Social Inclusion in BiH*)<sup>4</sup> suggests that over 50% of the population suffers from at least one form of exclusion, whether in terms of access to health, education, other public services or participation in society. 22% of the population experiences some form of extreme exclusion<sup>5</sup>. Groups such as minority returnees, displaced persons, Roma, the elderly, youth, and people with disabilities have far more difficulty in accessing public services and participating in political life. Women have less favourable positions in society and their level of participation in the labour market is among the lowest in Europe. Women enjoy only half the chance of finding employment as compared to men.

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<sup>4</sup> *Social Inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina – National Human Development Report 2007*, UNDP Report, p.9, available at: <http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=36&RID=63>

<sup>5</sup> This refers to peoples without income, communication at their home (e.g. telephone), health insurance and who did not complete primary education.

**Research carried in 2006 established a direct link between the position of constituent peoples from ethnic minorities and their social exclusion and poverty<sup>6</sup>.** It was found that the minority population is usually poorer, which in turn confirms that being of a minority ethnicity is a dominant factor of social exclusion. Roma are even more disadvantaged as they are an ethnic minority throughout BiH<sup>7</sup>. High unemployment rates, discriminatory treatment as concerns access to the labour market, combined with low education levels, are the main determinants of their poverty and social exclusion.

**The constitutional framework of BiH formally ensures participation of all citizens in the political process.** The constitution inherited from the peace settlement does however not support inter-ethnic interactions and rather contributes to perpetuate ethnic divisions. Both the BiH Constitution and Election Law reproduce “ethnicization” and the territorial nature of political participation.

**Legislation and policies express high standards in preventing discrimination.** The Law on the Protection of Rights of Ethnic Minorities adopted in 2003 guarantees equal rights of 17 ethnic minorities according to international standards. In 2010, the government developed and adopted a Revised Strategy<sup>8</sup> to address the needs and rights of returnees, refugees and IDPs. The adoption of a law on gender in 2003 determines that gender equality shall prevail everywhere within the country. Social inclusion is furthermore one of the six goals defined in the Country Development Strategy of BiH (2008 – 2013). A separate Social Inclusion Strategy was developed in 2010, with the support of SDC. It draws emphasis on access to employment, education, health protection, pension policy, and on the improvement of position of persons with disabilities and of families with children. These formulated standards however do not materialize in concrete terms and implementation reveals problematic.

**Finally, BiH comprises an active NGO fabric.** While most of them still lack experience, professionalism and access to policy making, NGOs are numerous and often provide key social services. Gender related organizations are in this respect the most active organizations and engage in lobbying for policy-making.

**With respect to local governance, in general relevant entity laws do not directly articulate social inclusion as an underlying principle and legal responsibility of local governments in BiH.** Local governments nevertheless stand in the front line for implementing inclusive policies as they exercise responsibilities in the fields of child care, primary and secondary education, social care and welfare, culture, sports, social housing and urban planning, municipal utilities (sanitation, sewage treatment, water supply). But local governments in BiH remain relatively weak and constrained in terms of legal competencies<sup>9</sup>. Fiscal decentralization has remained limited. Insufficiently funded mandates are a common problem and the unequal distribution of resources across municipalities further exacerbates it. At the state level, there is no adopted strategy on local self-government and there is still an overall lack of initiatives to address local development challenges in a joint and systematic way. While in the RS the government has adopted a strategy for the development of local self governments (2010 – 2015), such policy guidance is missing in the FBiH.

**The legislative framework however provides for the participation of members of ethnic minorities at local government level.** While ethnic minorities are generally represented in municipal councils, other socially excluded groups, such as persons with disabilities, are rarely integrated within municipal councils and administration. Women are highly underrepresented within a majority of municipal council/assemblies. Socially excluded groups remain detached from local public policy consultations. Mistrust between communities seems to accentuate this phenomenon.

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<sup>6</sup> See: *Social Inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina – National Human Development Report 2007, op.cit.*, p.65

<sup>7</sup> Estimates on Roma population in BiH range from 60,000 (Council of Europe) to 120,000 (estimated by Roma organizations).

<sup>8</sup> Formally results from for the Implementation of Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, by the extensive formal competences and informal powers of both entities.

**Several BiH local governments nevertheless show a pro-active attitude, for instance as concerns support to persons with disabilities, in addressing youth unemployment or social housing.** Some municipalities have also introduced gender commissions. In general, municipal budgets allocate resources to support local civil society organizations and comprise social care assistance. These resources however are scarce and insufficient to meet the level of demand. These pro-active policies are not systematic and are rather observed on a case-by-case basis. The overall capacity of local governments to address social inclusion in an effective manner remains insufficient.

### **7.3. Social inclusion in project practice**

**The principle of social inclusion is mainstreamed in all the 4 priority domains of the SDC Strategy for BiH 2009-2012** (RoL and Democracy, Economy and Employment, Health, Basic Infrastructures). The SDC for instance supports a variety of projects in the domain of Rule of Law and Democracy such as the “Juvenile Justice Program”, “Community Policing Project” or “Support to Justice Reform-Prosecution”, where HRBA and equal access of vulnerable groups and civil society are emphasized. The ILDP project is included within the latter cluster. In the field of employment, the Youth Employment project directly targets social inclusion. Such is also the case in the field of health through the support to mental health. In addition, good governance and gender equality mainstreaming are mandatory for all projects and programs supported by SDC. SDC has also provided direct support to the establishment of the Social inclusion Foundation in BiH, the Country Development Strategy and the Gender Action Plan.

**The SDC programme monitoring system does however not include specific social inclusion indicators.** Contribution of SDC supported projects to social inclusion thus has to be monitored at projects’ level.

**The primary objective of ILDP is to set the basis for a more inclusive and transparent local development in BiH through building responsive and efficient municipal governance. Social inclusion is a guiding principle for ILDP’s implementation.** This translates into the need to fully integrate vulnerable groups and their needs into development processes and to work on strengthening their capabilities to participate in strategic planning. Furthermore, social inclusion in local development planning places an increased focus on key areas such as social protection, education and training, child poverty and social protection of families, access to services and labour market participation. Reflecting the limited inclusion of marginalized groups into municipal institutional structures, participation of minorities and other vulnerable groups remains also limited in development planning activities. There is no systematic approach to promote their participation and integrate their concerns into strategic planning processes. Local governments make no specific effort to consult with socially excluded groups. Community-based organizations lack experience, resources and a critical mass of supporters to efficiently voice the concerns of marginalized groups.

**Given its objective to promote inclusive creation of local development strategies, the project uses a broad definition of socially excluded groups which includes returnees, displaced persons, Roma, elderly, women, youth and persons with disabilities.** Considering that it operates within 24 BiH municipalities which differ in size and characteristics, the range of socially excluded groups varies within each locality. ILDP’s approach therefore supports a comprehensive situation analysis at the beginning of the planning process (see below).

**The first component of the project is to provide local governments with a standardized methodology for strategic planning sensitive to marginalized groups (the miPRO).** ILDP further undertakes specific activities in order to support its implementation in 24 municipalities.

**The framework provided by the miPRO prescribes a participatory and socially inclusive approach at all stages of the planning process.** Strategic planning should start with an analysis of the local situation. This preliminary phase aims at identifying and mapping all relevant and interested actors that should be involved in the planning. A specific focus is also given to the situation and conditions of access to health care, social protection, the pension system and

education. Data collection thus already allows identification of vulnerable groups and their specific needs. The local development teams, which are tasked to design the development plan, should include all interested parties. This means representatives of the economic, social and public services sectors and includes elected officials, administrators, representative of public organizations, private sector, NGOs and local communities, while taking into account gender equality (*guide, page 16*). The miPRO emphasizes transparency and gender equality at all stages of its implementation.

**In addition, the miPRO contains specific provisions for the development of a social development plan.** The latter draws again emphasis on the need for a detailed situation analysis which includes identification of potentially vulnerable groups and their specific needs. The miPRO further recommends local governments to organize focus group discussions and workshops with priority target groups in order to identify the needs and plan the improvement of priority services. ILDP 24 partner local governments developed a 5-year Social Development Plan within their integrated local strategies. This inclusive planning process leads to the formulation of social priorities and to the identification of lists of projects to address the needs of socially excluded and vulnerable groups and to the setting-up of socially sensitive indicators. These indicators are then to be used by the local administration for annual and multi-annual monitoring of the strategy progress and implementation.

**The municipality of Prnjavor provides an example of the positive impact of this approach.** The preliminary socio-economic analysis led to the identification of several target groups and their specific needs in various areas. Through the involvement of the representatives of these groups (representatives of national minorities, youth and persons with special needs), a number of projects were identified and embedded into the social development plan addressing these needs (i.e. systematic approach to Roma housing issues, national minorities' festival, day care centre for children with special needs, support to social housing of the youth).

**In addition to supporting the development of the miPRO methodology, ILDP supported activities in 24 BiH municipalities in order to implement the miPRO blueprint and to promote social inclusion and strengthen the capabilities of local governments (LGs), vulnerable groups and their representatives.** Trainings and technical assistance were for instance given to LGs in the field of design of social policy and interaction with civil society. In 2010 project activities focused on encouraging equal participation of men and women. This led to the organization of trainings and public discussions, which were in average attended by 41 % of women.

**ILDP supported a series of focus groups meetings with some of the most vulnerable categories (tailored to the needs of each municipality).** These meetings were meant to link marginalized groups to the planning process and to lead to the identification of needs, priorities and project ideas to be reflected into the long-term development strategies. 18 focus group meetings were organized by local planning teams, where 190 participants (including returnees, displaced persons, Roma, women, youth) took part. The municipality of Duboj Istok provides a good example of how direct support and participation of project staff may help marginalized groups participate in development planning. On the occasion of focus group discussions, women from the local community expressed that they were completely excluded from previous public and policy-making events. They further signaled that ILDP's external facilitation had given them the courage to actively participate. After meetings with the local women and identification of their needs and ideas, the local planning team ensured that these ideas are reflected in the local strategy. As a follow up initiative, the group of women decided to create their own association and work together to better express their views and initiate joint activities for the benefit of their community. The municipality is also ready to help them get organised and the project is included in the 2011 action plan of the local strategy.

**ILDP supports the work of civil society organizations and their capacity to effectively engage in local policy formulation and voice-out socially excluded groups.** In cooperation with partner municipalities, ILDP organized a small grant scheme to support projects of

community-based organizations working on structured participation of the most vulnerable groups (returnees; minority groups, IDPs, vulnerable groups and persons with disabilities, women, etc.). A Call for projects of local organizations was launched by ILDP in cooperation with each partner municipality. As a result from a competitive process, 29 projects were selected within partner localities, aiming at encouraging citizens' participation and enabling socially excluded, vulnerable and community groups to get engaged in the creation of local development strategies. These local initiatives were carried out by community-based organizations, where the total financial assistance for the projects amounted to 120,000 USD and was co-funded by the municipalities. A variety of community-based organizations – women's associations, youth associations, organizations representing persons with disabilities, returnees and minorities, environmental protection organisations and culture and sports organizations – implemented projects which promote the strategic planning process and apply various mechanisms to directly engage target groups and communities into the strategy creation. For instance, the project of the organization "Kuca nade" ("House of Hope") in the Municipality of Odžak aimed at introducing the needs of children with disabilities and of their parents into the elaboration of the local strategy. A series of focus group meetings and discussions with target groups resulted in a list of needs and priorities to be tackled. This led to the development of projects for the improvement of the quality of life and care of children with disabilities which were included in the Social Development Plan of the municipal local strategy.

**It is of particular relevance to mention that capacity building and training activities for local organizations were organized prior to and during the miPRO implementation.** ILDP organized a series of information and networking events, where all non-governmental organizations from the partner municipalities were invited in order to inform them about how they could contribute to municipal development planning. Such an approach expanded the scope of community-based organizations that got engaged in the initiative and opened possibilities for networking. Training and guidance on how to mobilize local communities, how to strengthen interaction between civil society and local government and on project cycle management were provided to partner organizations throughout the process of realization of their initiatives.

The following photos illustrate different aspects of the local development planning process and participants.



**“Participatory strategic planning process at the local level (SWOT analysis)”**; ILDP photo records, 2010.



**“Persons with disabilities and youth get engaged in local policy-making”**; Photo: non-governmental organization *Kajak Kanu Klub*, Dobož Istok; Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010.

#### 7.4. Reflection and analysis

**As the project is still in its implementation phase it is difficult to precisely assess what sustainable changes were introduced by ILDP.** An initial assessment includes:

- In a context of limited experience in social inclusion processes, the introduction of the miPRO standardized methodology proved relevant as a way to push municipalities to take into account the concerns of vulnerable groups when conducting strategic planning. The governments of both entities today officially recommend its application by LGs.
- The introduction of a social development plan designed in cooperation with local communities and vulnerable communities within the development agenda represents the most visible change resulting from the project work. Thus, the project strategy has proven useful in bringing to the fore and raise awareness on the social implications of strategic planning and in encouraging local governments to devote more attention to the needs and problems of socially excluded community groups.
- ILDP's implementation has also been successful in raising the capacities of partner local governments and community-based organizations on the matters and importance of social inclusion.
- One particularly successful aspect of the implementation strategy was also to support socially-excluded groups to voice out their needs via concrete projects into local development strategies adopted by municipal councils (e.g. participation of their representatives in the planning bodies, focus group discussions, small grants to local NGOs, etc.). Understanding of their needs and their inclusion into strategic plans helps channel donors' support and thus bring tangible results. The participation of project staff in support activities proved welcomed and useful in order to create new and positive dynamics. It for instance increased the confidence of marginalized groups to express their concerns and needs.
- The project approach contributed to strengthen the position of non-institutional actors in strategic planning. Observations showed that in many cases socially excluded groups and NGOs were engaged into policy formulation for the first time. This allowed for an understanding of their rights and for a pro-active role.

**Despite these successes, mainstreaming social inclusion in local strategic planning remains an ongoing process and ILDP's contribution has remained limited in several aspects:**

- The overall capacity of local governments and civil society organizations to address social inclusion in an effective manner remains insufficient. This is particularly valid for community-based organizations, which lack experience, resources and critical mass of supporters at the local level, which, in result, places them at the periphery of public and social life and prevents practical results of their efforts.
- The ability of LG to articulate social inclusion with other development related objectives remains limited. While ILDP's approach allowed to include social inclusion considerations into strategic planning, it is still considered by LGs as a separate chapter (which responds to the needs identified on a case-by-case basis) without being sufficiently connected /articulated with the overall plan and other objectives (economy, environment, etc.).
- The ability of LGs to translate the social agenda into development results also remains limited. Additional support is needed to bridge policy formulation with policy implementation in a context of limited financial resources.
- Limited impact of the project at the country level. While the standardized methodology is officially supported, there is a lack of horizontal and government implemented policies that encourage social inclusion at the local level and that could articulate with local development plan and social development plans. Positive results of the project are circumscribed to the 24 supported municipalities.

- Support to cross-referencing and consistency between national and local development plans is the only sign of vertical coordination and integration. Consistent articulation between central and local levels' development and social policies remains limited.
- Further efforts are needed in the field of gender equality. There is still insufficient level of understanding on the importance of this principle and a prevailing dominance of men in local leadership functions (despite the fact that gender equality commissions within local governments were part of the strategic planning process).
- Altogether, the level of awareness and understanding of the social inclusion principle within local communities remains low. The prevailing highly politicized and ethnically tense environment continues to affect successful and meaningful application of the idea of social inclusion. In that light, a multi-stakeholders' support is still needed at the local level conducive of a more favourable environment where social inclusion is better rooted into communities' mentality.

**Is this experience transferable?** The miPRO, together with all the materials, is a very detailed and comprehensive system for the promotion of a standardized methodology for inclusive spatial planning. It was already shared with a Croatian municipality, which is planning to use it in the process of revision of its local strategy. Wider sharing of the miPRO with other countries in the Balkans region will be done in early 2011. The following elements and practices related to social inclusion could be described as most sustainable and "transferrable" to other contexts:

- Horizontal mainstreaming of the principle of social inclusion in the legal and institutional framework that postulates local development strategic planning. In this respect the miPRO, which offers a set of practical tools enabling socially inclusive policy-formulation, provides a useful approach, which would however need to be adapted to a new local context.
- Socially-sensitive situation analysis, development goals and the Social Development Plan within local strategies, as well as the use of focus groups discussions as a way to link specific groups to the planning process can here be referred to as good examples transferable to various contexts, considering adequate facilitation support from external actors.
- One however needs to bear in mind that the miPRO is a rather elaborated and complex methodology. Compatible with EU standards, its replication may be most suitable for countries in EU accession process / EU partnership process.
- The special intervention (small-scale grant scheme) aiming at encouraging participatory planning process and voice out socially excluded and vulnerable groups in the decision-making, which was developed and applied by the ILDP in close partnership with local governments showed very good results and again served to mobilize community engagement in the planning processes. This instrument could also be replicated in other local development contexts and fine-tuned to target specific socially excluded groups.
- Key actors that determine the success of the project are first the mayors of municipalities who need to support the entire process and thus give legitimacy to its innovative approach. The local municipal coordinators that are in charge of leading the process are also central in communicating with communities, enabling interactions, productive dialogue and thus inclusion of the various groups.

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## 8. Case study: PASEL, Niger

By Elhadji Moutari Mansour (HEKS) and Pascal Fendrich (Intercooperation)

### 8.1. Background

**SDC's Program in Niger is organized along three priority axes: local governance, local infrastructure and support to agricultural and livestock production.** Governance and gender are included as transversal objectives of SDC's work in Niger. The PASEL Program (*Programme d'Appui au Secteur de l'Elevage / Livestock Sector Support Project*) started its activities in 1998 and is now entering into its sixth phase of implementation. PASEL started in a context characterized by recurrent conflicts between pastoral and land farming communities. Lack of land and natural resources in Niger has translated into pressures on land use and land ownership. Farmers' populations have increasingly settled on lands on which livestock used to graze or migrate. Public policies implicitly supported these developments and allowed for discrimination against the nomadic pastoral communities. In addition to difficulties in accessing lands for livestock and in organizing livestock migration, pastoral communities found themselves with restricted access to basic services such as water, education and health centres.

**The project was implemented by SDC Niger<sup>10</sup> in 3 regions of the country. It aims at improving the living conditions of rural communities with special regard to the rights of pastoral communities.** This implies working on the causes of tensions and reducing the potential of conflict between communities. The project's approach supports dialogue between the relevant parties and actions to address the identified problems. While the project's objectives and methods have necessarily evolved over time and competences gradually transferred from project staff to local institutions, the priority objectives of PASEL could be described as the following:

- Support the development of local and regional capacities to manage natural resources and to secure herders' areas and mobility. This involves the rehabilitation and securing of passageways used for livestock migration.
- Ensure the sustainability of pastoral settlements through the introduction of new techniques. This further involves ensuring rural communities' access to basic services (water, health, education for their children, etc.), with a specific focus on the needs of pastoral communities.
- Implement capacity development activities for pastoral organizations, public institutions and women's groupings.

**As is the case for other SDC projects in Niger, governance and gender are transversal themes of PASEL.** These objectives are for instance reflected in the support given by SDC to formal and informal institutions to manage land issues and to specific initiatives for the support of women's groups.

### 8.2. Context

**Niger is considered as one of the poorest countries in the world, with 60 per cent of its population living under the poverty rate (70 percent in rural areas). The limited resources available make the situation particularly difficult for vulnerable groups.** In practice societal discrimination against women, ethnic minorities, children and persons with disabilities is visible and their specific needs are not taken into account in public policy formulation. This translates into limited access to public services, limited access to political participation and economic life.

**With the livelihood of more than 80 per cent of its population based on the primary sector, a main cause of social exclusion in Niger relates to the socio-economic cleavage of the country and to the tense relationship between land farming communities, which are**

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<sup>10</sup> SDC implemented PASEL until the end of the fifth phase of the project. The project is now implemented by a consortium of local and international NGOs (consortium VSF – SNV – CESAOP/PRN).

**sedentary, and livestock farming communities, which are nomad populations.** These socio-economic differences overlap with ethnic differences. Land farmers are mainly from the Hausa and Djerma ethnic groups, which are sedentary and make respectively about 55 and 22 percent of the country's population. Tuaregs, Arabs, Peuls and Toubous are ethnic minorities whose economic activities focus on livestock farming. Both socio-economic groups have different ways of organizing community life and different needs, especially concerning land use. Whereas farmers are sedentary and make intensive use of the soils, herders are nomads and migrate with their livestock according to available pasture and following seasonal changes.

**In order for these two logics to coexist, a 1961 law divides Niger's territory into two distinct zones.** According to this division the southern part of the country is reserved for land farming and the north for livestock farming. Agriculture is thus forbidden in the northern part and compensation for potential damages resulting from livestock grazing and/or migration cannot be claimed in this part<sup>11</sup>. Such an organization actually allows for complementarities between the two economic activities. While livestock remains in the north of the country during the winter season, migration of livestock then takes place after the harvest and graze on the residue, thereby preparing the soil for future agricultural use.

**However, demographic pressures and droughts have increased pressures on land and have prevented the above logic from being sustainable.** In need of additional lands, farmers have increasingly settled on lands in the northern part of the country and have encroached on passageways reserved for livestock migration, reducing their size or making some portions disappear. While illegal, these developments were nevertheless encouraged by the central government, which declared the lands to be owned by the ones that make use of it. Livestock farming was in this respect not recognized as a valuable economic activity and thus as a valuable way to make use of the soil. This difference of treatment led to increasing lands in the north being used for agricultural purposes. This competition over land translated into growing conflicts between herders and farmers since the 1990s on the issue of migratory corridors as well as on questions relating to the damages done to agriculture by livestock, with public authorities officially supporting the arguments of the farmers. Herders are faced with compensation claims even in the northern part of the country. Tensions turned into violence on a regular basis. Herders being part of specific ethnic communities, this has further led to an "ethnicization" of the conflict. As concerns the socio-economic cleavage of the country, applicable law forbids farmers to establish their economic activities on lands that are reserved for livestock grazing. Practice however shows that pastoral communities suffer important discrimination and have difficulties having their rights protected.

**Discrimination towards nomad communities is further reflected in their limited access to basic infrastructures and services such as water, education or health.** As opposed to sedentary communities, and due to the limited size of pastoral settlements, the specific interests of nomad communities are not taken into account in planning the location of wells, for instance, or health centres, which are funded by the central government. Pastoral communities furthermore do not have automatic access to natural resources. Nomads are only rarely given free access to public wells and/or are forbidden to take water for their livestock.

**Formally, the Constitution of Niger prohibits discrimination based on sex, social origin, race, ethnicity, or religion. Niger having an ethnically mixed population, the creation of "special constituencies" allows for a number of seats to be reserved to ethnic minorities in the parliament.**

**Pastoral communities have increasingly organized themselves in order to lobby the government and defend their interests.** Linked with pressures from international donors and projects such as PASEL, these efforts have contributed to a revision of the pastoral code in 2010<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> This division of Niger's territory follows a practice already in place during colonial time, the first "zoning" of the country and the setting-up of a limit for agriculture dates from 1953.

<sup>12</sup> It is however worth noting that the pastoral code was adopted during a transition phase in Niger, following the coup d'état of February 2010. It had been unsuccessfully submitted to the parliament on previous

This revised law first reaffirms the division of the country in two distinct zones according to the law of 1961. The principle that forbids agriculture in the zone devoted to pastoral activities is repeated. Most importantly, the law recognizes livestock farming as an economic activity and as a valuable way to make use of land. Pastoral communities are further recognized with a right of “priority usage” of lands in pastoral areas. This represents the end of a formal discrimination based in customary law and a critical step for the defence of herders’ lifestyle and particular needs. Effective implementation of this new law remains to be monitored.

**A process of decentralization was launched in the 1990s and became effective in 2000s, with the new territorial division entering into force in 2001 and with local elections taking place in 2004.** The latter however may put the interests of nomad communities further at risk if their specific needs are not taken into account. Decentralization should organize Niger into municipalities, departments and regions. Such a governance structure should integrate and cohabit with traditional leaderships<sup>13</sup>. This territorial organization may however leave nomad communities in a situation of permanent minority at municipal level, since they are organized according to broader geographical areas. The territories that are of relevance for nomads in fact spread across various municipalities and departments. It is further worth noting that PASEL started its activities in 1998 and thus in the absence of a decentralization framework. In addition to working with traditional local leaderships, the project thus had to adapt and work on including new institutional partners into its approach (see below).

**At present, pastoral communities do not fully participate in local elections.** Most of them are not even considered as electors because of their mobility. They are represented in local assemblies but in a minority situation, which does not allow them to efficiently defend the interests of the groups they represent.

### **8.3. Social inclusion in project practice**

**PASEL aims at improving the living conditions of rural communities with special regard to the rights of pastoral communities. The main activities of PASEL are organized along three priority axes:**

**1. A first objective of PASEL is to facilitate inter-community dialogue and support the development of local and regional capacities to manage natural resources and to secure migration of livestock.** In this respect, supporting processes that aim at securing grazing areas and passageways for livestock migration has formed a core activity of PASEL and one of its most successful through the several phases of the project.

**PASEL has focused its activities on the main migration corridors of Niger, on international corridors that cross Niger and allow migration from and to Benin, Burkina Faso or Nigeria for instance.** In a preliminary phase, the project worked on identifying the most important and conflictual sections of corridors and on identifying relevant local actors (local population including farmers in the area of the corridor, local authorities, herders making use of the corridors, etc.). Relevant parties are then invited to participate in forums in order to discuss the issue. These discussions should allow for an agreement on the exact itinerary of the corridor and on what measures should be taken in order to rehabilitate it. The latter is then marked out with signals (stones usually, while agricultural lands are protected by hurdles).

**In order to ensure a follow-up and the sustainability of the rehabilitated corridor, PASEL then support the setting-up of control/follow-up committees.** The latter should include an

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occasions. The special circumstances surrounding the adoption of the pastoral code already set doubts about its implementation.

<sup>13</sup> Without entering into details, these territorial units superpose themselves to territories recognized in customary law (sultanates, provinces, cantons and pastoral zones). In the absence of municipalities, traditional leaderships have been the dominant sources of power at the local level in Niger. It is worth noting that land issues were a main prerogative of traditional leaderships under the authority of the state. Decentralization did however not transfer competences over land issues to municipalities. If the competence remains at central level, traditional leaders have kept a prominent role in the management of land issues.

equal representation of land farmers and herders and deal with claims on possible infractions. In this context, PASEL organizes socio-juridical forums in order to discuss how to deal with potential infractions. Emphasis is laid on mediation and conciliation as conflict solving methods.

**It is further worth noting that the role of the project has evolved over the phases of its implementation, moving from active mediation to a role of facilitator and supporter.** Furthermore, the responsibility of securing pastoral areas and migration corridors has gradually been transferred to the structures provided in the rural code, the land commissions and the permanent regional secretariats of the rural code of 1993. Through its activities, PASEL has supported the setting-up of more than 200 land commissions (departmental land commissions, municipal land commission and “basis land commissions” (active at the village level)<sup>14</sup>. These land commissions have gradually taken the responsibilities of the control committees that had been set up by the project. These commissions and the permanent secretariats have received several trainings on spatial planning, introduction of new technologies such as GPS, property rights transactions and conflict management. They now have taken the lead in organizing inter-communities forums and securing migration corridors.

**So far, PASEL has supported the works of 47 inter-community forums.** All forums have allowed building consensus on the nature of the problems and on the necessity to address the issue. This further led to the rehabilitation of about 3000 kilometres of corridors.

**2. A second key objective of PASEL is to work for the sustainability of pastoral settlements. This involves supporting the introduction of new techniques in livestock farming and working on guaranteeing rural populations’ access to basic services (water, health, education for their children, etc.).** Ensuring the sustainability of pastoral settlements combines several purposes. It first offers the choice to nomad communities to turn to agro-pastoral activities, the use of new techniques allowing for instance to reduce the obligation of livestock migration. These areas also constitute places of settlement for the part of the community that does not migrate (children, elderly, etc.). Ensuring the viability of pastoral settlements, which can serve as transit areas for other pastoral communities, further ensures the access to basic services of migrating communities along their itinerary. It thus works on reducing the potential of inter-communitiyconflicts.

**The promotion of new techniques in livestock farming is mostly based on the introduction of techniques promoted by APSS (*Association pour la promotion de l'élevage en zone Sahélienne et Soudanienne*).** This organisation focuses on techniques to harvest hay and on the use of available tools in this respect. It furthermore insists on the conditions to preserve it and store it. The construction of hay barns with local materials was in this context promoted. Project evaluations have shown that this promotion of new techniques has been very successful in improving the living conditions of communities. The preservation of good quality hay for instance helps increase milk production and face uncertainties related to climate. Evaluations further insist on the need for promoted techniques to be as simple as possible in order for them to be easily applied and replicated. Diffusion of new techniques is then ensured through the identification of “*animateurs relais*”, who have successfully applied new techniques and can serve as reference points at the local level.

**Linked with the viability of pastoral areas, PASEL also focused on supporting the development of infrastructures and basic services in pastoral settlements/transit areas<sup>15</sup>.** Support to the construction of wells, schools or primary health centers allow to make these settlements sustainable and to stabilize communities. They are further used by other pastoral communities when migrating. PASEL has so far rehabilitated about 115 transit areas. This has

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<sup>14</sup> These decentralized land commissions are supervised by the National Secretariat of the Rural Code. De jure membership of land commissions should ensure representations of all parties at all levels (public authorities, representatives of the communities, religious leaders and women representatives).

<sup>15</sup> “Transit areas” are usually along a particular migration corridor. They are about 12 km from one another, which equals the distance travelled by a flock in a day.

come with the construction of an almost equivalent number of hay barns. The creation of specific infrastructures for nomads has helped reduce conflicts between farmers and herders.

**3. A final key component of PASEL focuses on capacity development activities. The main focus is to support the work and inform pastoral organisations in order for them to better promote and defend their interests.** The strengthening of pastoral NGOs has for instance increasingly helped for administrative recognition of their transit areas. Herders' organisations are also active in ensuring that nomad communities are not left out of the decentralization process and attached to municipalities in order for them to exercise their civil rights.

**This capacity-building component also includes specific gender related activities.** PASEL engaged in supporting the activity known as "*élevage de case*" ("house stockbreeding"), which refers to the livestock that is attached to the house for family consumption, and which is an activity usually undertaken by women. The project supported the creation of women's groups, which gather women of pastoral organizations that are partners of the project. The activities have been to support them in reconstituting their livestock (affected as a result of the food crisis for instance) through the technique known as "*habbanaé*"<sup>16</sup>. With the support of the project, these groups acquire livestock and should organize the rotation of animals. PASEL has been able to support about 100 women's groups to reconstitute their livestock. In addition PASEL supported the introduction of new techniques and the construction of related infrastructure. Furthermore, trainings, on cheese production for instance, were organized and study tours to similar women's groupings organized. While the support to "*habbanaé*" has been successful and has allowed women groupings to generate new revenues, these groups still have difficulties organizing their work. Their sustainability is not ensured. As well, their participation in specific "*habbanaé*" groups has led to a diminished participation of women in pastoral organizations.

**Finally, capacity development activities also target specific institutions, such as municipalities, land commissions or even traditional leadership structures.**

#### **8.4. Reflection and analysis**

**The most visible results of the project relates to inter-community forums and to the rehabilitation of migratory corridors.** PASEL has been able to support a dialogue between the two socio-economic groups. All forums have actually showed that communities converged in terms of diagnosing the problem and defining possible ways to address it. PASEL and the involved populations were able to rehabilitate about 3000 kilometres of corridors for migration and to set-up follow-up processes that ensured their sustainability. Corridors are now clearly indicated and the rights of migration recognized. The reduction and almost disappearance of conflicts in the project's regions reflect that a consensus was achieved and emerges as a key indicator of the success of the programme.

**The project approach has been successful in establishing dialogue and building confidence between the involved communities.** It was thus successful in changing the atmosphere of inter-communities debates, where mistrust previously was a key obstacle. Each community now has an improved understanding of the interests of the other.

**The project's approach was key to its success at the community level.** It allowed for the creation of spaces for dialogue on shared resources, mutual understanding and for the elaboration of institutions, mechanisms that allow for equitable access to resources. This framework of discussion and the facilitation of the project defused underlying mistrust and conflicts between nomads and sedentary leaderships and communities.

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<sup>16</sup> "*Habbanaé*" refers to a traditional solidarity practice of the Peul community. It implies making a female animal available to somebody for a certain period of time or number of births, while allowing that person to keep the newly born animals. This practice is now used by other communities. It is traditionally used by herders as a strategy of integration and for facilitating their mobility in order to develop relations with sedentary populations that are on migration itineraries.

**The actions of PASEL to strengthen the viability of pastoral areas through the introduction of new techniques and rehabilitation of infrastructures have also shown positive results in reducing the vulnerability of pastoral communities.** The introduction of new techniques such as hay harvesting and storing leads to better protection of pastoral communities against climate hazards. By being rather simple and relying on local capacities and material, ex-post field visits have already witnessed replication of these techniques by herders that were not involved in the project. As well, the rehabilitation of basic infrastructures in transit areas and pastoral settlements allow proximity to primary health. The construction of wells in pastoral areas has also helped reduce conflicts with sedentary communities. Finally, pastoral organizations are today better organized to defend their interests, while being aware of the specific interests of agricultural populations. Support to “*habbanaé*” allowed women groupings to generate new sources of revenues.

**Despite these successes, some aspects of the project’s interventions were less successful.** For example, the support given to the creation of infrastructures in nomad settlements has helped to make them viable but has showed limited impact on the issue of access to education. The question of financial resources of families was left untouched by the project. However, it seems that the latter represents a key consideration for families when deciding to send their children to school.

**Results are mixed concerning PASEL activities that supported groups of women in livestock farming.** On the one hand, the support given to “*habbanaé*” activities has provoked clear interests from participants. On the other hand, the sustainability of these activities is not yet ensured. As well, the gathering of women in additional but specific groups may lead to a decrease of women’s participation and influence in broader pastoral organisations.

**While PASEL approach has showed some very positive and tangible results, these positive developments have remained circumscribed to the project area.** The central level has remained rather marginal in the whole process. While it has endorsed PASEL as a national approach to manage conflicts on pastoral areas and corridors, it has showed limited leadership in supporting further implementation. Pressures from local and international NGOs have led to the adoption of new rural code in 2010, but implementation may be problematic as the new code mainly restates already applicable law. Furthermore, while the state level has the final authority as concerns spatial planning, it shows no leadership on the issue.

**Concerning replicability, PASEL and its approach have showed interesting successes in mitigating conflicts between communities and bringing an atmosphere of dialogue and institutions for conflict management.** The project proposes a set of replicable tools for dealing with inter-communities conflict, where mistrust and lack of knowledge about the other’s specific needs is at the base. Facilitating dialogue formed a simple but successful activity to ensure that pastoral and agricultural activities can cohabit.

**Results of the project appear sustainable but could be jeopardized if demographic pressures increase and/or climate conditions would further push land farmers to seek new lands in the north of the country.** Such developments could result in furthering land pressures and reemphasizing competing interests. It is unclear to what extent current institutions could deal with such a situation, take decisions and enforce them.

## **8.5. Concluding remarks**

**It is interesting to see the gradually changing role of PASEL along the phases of the project, as it moved from active mediation to transfer competences to institutions supported by the project.** It is furthermore worth noting that the combination of tools and activities supported by the project (securing migration corridors and ensuring the viability of pastoral settlements) reflects a vision where communities are left with the choice of their economic activities and lifestyle. The project supports both communities willing to continue pastoral activities

according to the tradition of migration and pastoral communities inclined towards agro-pastoral activities and possibly a more sedentary lifestyle. PASEL thus does not take a choice on the long-term viability of nomad pastoral activities. The support to womens' groupings follows a similar type of logic. PASEL focused on supporting activities that are usually undertaken by women. This was able to generate visible and widespread interest and allowed women of the community to increase their resources.

**An additional characteristic of PASEL relies in the “simplicity” of some of its activities.** In a context where most of the population is illiterate, PASEL used techniques that are simple and easy to replicate. The identification of “*animateurs relais*” reveals as a successful method for spreading good practices.

**Given its focus on establishing dialogue and building confidence between the communities that did not trust each other, it is clear that such a project needs time for successful implementation.** Project staff needed to invest time in order to convince local communities and public authorities and traditional leaders about the usefulness of the approach. In this context, project staff underlines that traditional leaders were the key actors to be convinced and with whom agreement needed to be sought in priority.

**A final remark concerns the ability of the project to adapt to a changing institutional environment.** PASEL started its activities in the absence of a decentralization framework and was able to adapt its approach and support the emergence on new structures provided by the decentralization framework (e.g. land commissions).

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Contact : Elhadji Moutari Mansour: '[bucoheks@gmail.com](mailto:bucoheks@gmail.com)'

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## 9. Case Study: PCC & FORDECAPI, Bolivia

By Ursula Läubli (SDC) and Sarah Byrne (Intercooperation)

### 9.1. Background

**This case study shares the experience gained through two complementary programmes implemented by SDC in Bolivia.** The overall goal of SDC's governance working area in Bolivia is the promotion of a democratic culture for the preservation of peace and the respect for human rights. The programmes implemented in this working area and referred to in this case study are the "*Programa de Capacitación Ciudadana*" (PCC, Citizenship Capacity Building Programme) and "*Fortalecimiento de capacidades institucionales*" (FORDECAPI, Strengthening Institutional Capacities). The particular components referred to in this case study, "Decentralization" in PCC and "*Empoderamiento de Pueblos indígenas*" (EMPODER, Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples) in FORDECAPI, have been part of SDC interventions for several years. The PCC is implemented by the SAH (*Schweizer Arbeiterhilfswerk*) and FORDECAPI by a national coordinator (currently 1 person) in close collaboration with SDC.

**These programmes are both conceptualized in terms of the "human rights based approach" and based on the hypothesis that good governance is a product of an integrated intervention from the state and civil society.** Consequently the PCC works on strengthening an inclusive society that respects human rights and FORDECAPI, on the other hand, works on strengthening institutional capacities of state institutions and supports the implementation of the National Human Rights Plan for more inclusive and responsive politics that respond to the needs of society, especially its most vulnerable sectors.

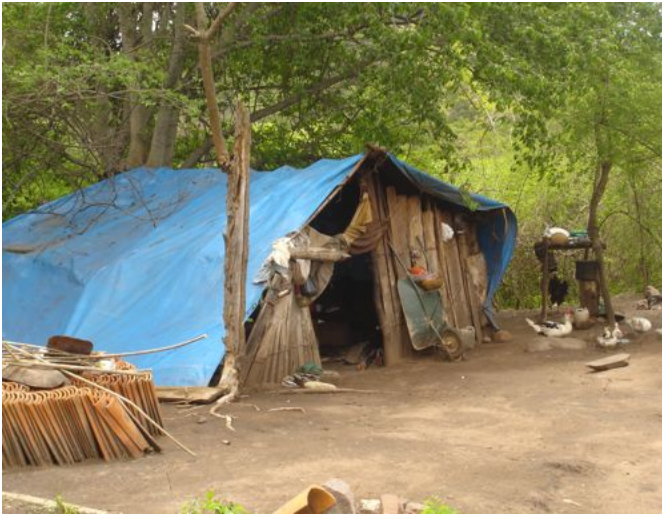
### 9.2. Context

This section outlines the main issues related to social inclusion in Bolivia, with specific reference to local governance and decentralization.

**Social exclusion in Bolivia is reflected in economic, cultural, political and geographical terms, and often these various exclusions overlap, such as in the case of Bolivia's indigenous peoples.** The 60% of the population in Bolivia that define themselves as indigenous have historically faced discrimination on many fronts. For example some indigenous groups have difficulties in access to land and the legalization/regularization of land holdings. There are still around 1'000 Guaraní families held in a situation of bonded labour. At the international level the Bolivian state has faced criticism for this and has been urged to take immediate measures to abolish this form of slavery. With the new Constitution in 2009, there has been a revaluing of cultural issues and traditional languages and Bolivia has become an officially secular state. In practice however, this revaluing has not been easy, as many indigenous people, especially the young ones, want to "modernize", while others think that it is a strategy for dominating access to state resources. It is also feared that referring too strongly to traditions risks women's rights.

**With respect to the status of women, the existing legal framework and public policies to protect women from violence and discrimination are not effectively implemented.** There are alarming rates of violence against women and an urgent need for public awareness campaigns, for strengthening the institutional capacity of the responsible bodies to fight impunity, and guaranteeing adequate treatment of victims by officials in charge of investigations.

**In geographical terms, Bolivia is a vast country and the indices of extreme poverty coincide with the rural areas where the living conditions are very harsh (high altitude, frequent droughts).** The coverage of state services in remote areas is very poor. For example, with respect to the coverage of justice services, only 180, or 55%, of Bolivia's 327 municipalities have a judge; only 76, or 23%, have a prosecutor; and only 11, or 3%, have a Public Defender. This severely reflects on the access to formal justice for rural poor. In rural areas, and increasingly more so in urban areas due to rural-to-urban migration, indigenous justice is commonly practiced.



Housing of a recently liberated Guarani family



Guarani children

**The election of the first indigenous president in 2005 and the approbation of a new constitution by popular vote in 2009 represent significant steps in addressing social exclusion in Bolivia.** Although the marginalised indigenous majority gained voting rights and land reform after an insurrection in 1952, the years of military dictatorship severely constrained the expression of political rights. Following the end of the dictatorship in 1982, there was a democratic opening. However it focused on a neoliberal market model and an elite of *mestizos* (people of mixed indigenous and European descent) dominated politics and took important decisions. The new constitution of 2009 was drafted by the indigenous majority of the population, incorporating their demands and active participation in decision-making on political, economic, and social questions that affect them directly. The expectations of the indigenous people towards “their” government are high and not all Bolivians feel represented by the current government, especially the *mestizos* and the urban middle class. A deep polarization among the different sectors of Bolivian society persists and there are few channels for dialogue, consensus building and negotiation between the different groups.

**The new constitution includes very progressive guarantees of social, cultural and economic rights (such as a guarantee of the right to autonomy and self-governance for indigenous people) and constitutes the basis for a more equal society. However its implementation is complex, so it will be some time before we can assess the extent to which the new constitution really affects social inclusion.** In order to implement the provisions of the new constitution, an enormous quantity of new laws is needed. An example is the relationship between formal and community (indigenous) justice systems. The new constitution gives both systems equal hierarchy. A new law on jurisdictional boundaries has been elaborated and regulates the competencies of both systems to prevent confusion and ensure respect of human rights (SDC facilitated the nationwide consultation process). In the process of updating the legal framework in line with the new constitution, a challenge is that, in the past as today, most reforms and legal provisions have not been properly implemented and accompanied by the necessary budgetary and human resources to ensure an effective application. An example of a discrepancy between constitutional rights and common practice is that projects for the exploitation of natural resources that affect indigenous people should, according to the constitution and international treaties (ILO 169), be designed and executed in consultation with indigenous people affected to obtain their free and informed consent, but this is not the case. The implementation of all the rights guaranteed in the new constitution, and the social change that would result, comes with a high potential for social conflict.

**Several specific measures are being taken to address social exclusion through law and policy means.** As mentioned above, the constitution, which proclaims Bolivia as a multiethnic and pluricultural country, is the basis for a more inclusive society. Nevertheless, the proclaimed rights are still not effectively exercised as the country is in a deep process of re-foundation. It is crucial to strengthen mechanisms for publicizing and disseminating the new laws and citizen's rights. The recently approved new law on racism and discrimination is an example of a specific measure. Another example of an important change is the lifting of some discriminatory criteria (height, social conditions and fiscal aspects) that earlier excluded indigenous people to embark on a career in the National Army and Police.

**Social movements are particularly active on the issue of social inclusion in the political area, both inside the parliament and outside.** Different social organisations are represented in the new Plurinational Assembly and in the cabinet. The name of the assembly itself is telling of the new re-imagination of the Bolivian state. However, the capacities of the new representatives are often limited and some of them have had only limited access to education. As the governmental movement "MAS" (*Movimiento al socialismo*) has the majority, it takes for granted that their proposals are representative and especially those that are gathered from social movements come through without consultation with the opposition or indigenous groups that are not part of the governmental coalition. Indigenous people's organizations in particular play an important role in the political life of Bolivia and the current indigenous president came to power through them. The most important sectoral indigenous organizations, such as the national women's movement, are part of the official party (MAS). There is a conflict between indigenous people's organizations of the highlands (MAS followers) and the indigenous people's organizations of the lowlands. Another social group that is struggling for representation are people with disabilities, who continue to be neglected by the government. Demonstrations, strikes and blockades continue on all levels and are the principal means of pressure and protest, leading in some cases to acts of violence.

**With respect to decentralization and local governance, the new territorial structure of Bolivia foresees the creation of indigenous autonomous units on the basis of pre-colonial existence, which recognize the traditional forms of indigenous organization and its functioning based on traditions and culture.** At the time of writing it has not yet been clearly defined whether these autonomous units could be defined on a territorial basis or on an identity basis, or a mix of both. In a national referendum, 12 indigenous autonomies applied for this status and complied with the requirements. In all but one place it received the majority of votes of the citizens. A consequence of these measures of local self-governance is some confusion between different local governance systems – for example the relationship and hierarchy in decision-making between a municipality (territorial unit) and an identity based autonomous unit. This is a potentially conflictual issue, one which the future new Plurinational Constitutional Tribunal is mandated to regulate. In addition to these measure of "self-governance", the traditionally excluded groups are now part of the government and the Plurinational Assembly itself, as mentioned earlier. However, this continued reference to "traditional" governance systems risks to exclude women and young people. At the local and national level for the Assembly, there are quorums for women candidates (50% in the lists) to be respected in local elections; but in practice the elected women are then often substituted by their male deputies.

**Access to local public services can be challenging for socially excluded groups due to the minimal presence of the state in rural and remote areas, a lack of capacities on the part of local government authorities and a risk of clientelist politics taking over local decision making processes.** Although the constitution proclaims that access to public services is free, in practice this only applies to a small part of the Bolivian population. In remote rural areas, access to the nearest governmental office, which can be as far as 400km, is complicated and expensive. For example, the right to education is guaranteed but often in an area of 20km there is no school, therefore it makes it difficult to access this service. Guaranteeing access exceeds the possibilities of the government due to the large area of the country. With respect to the local authorities, the majority of leaders of the 327 municipalities are themselves of rural and indigenous background. Their contribution to local development is important but can only make a difference if their

representative status is accompanied by the necessary technical capacities. However these are often lacking due to deficiencies in the educational system. Currently also, political influence is dominating to the detriment of a long-term development agenda. Participative planning processes guarantee the participation of the local actors in the definition of development projects and the municipal budget. Furthermore, public audits are held where the authorities inform in a transparent manner about the progress. However, where the local government is in the hands of the government party the social control risks to become clientelist.

### **9.3. Social inclusion in programme practice**

This section outlines how the programmes described in this case study define, analyse and address social inclusion in local governance and decentralization.

**The issue of social inclusion is prominently reflected in the overall SDC Bolivia country programme.** Indeed, social inclusion is part of the overall objective of the Cooperation Strategy of Bolivia 2008-2012: the reduction of poverty and *inequality* and creation of opportunities for the economical, social, cultural and democratic development of Bolivia. An example of a specific measure taken by SDC to integrate social inclusion issues in its programme is the implementation of gender as a transversal theme. In both governance programmes described in this case study, gender is successfully integrated as a transversal theme. This is reinforced with a special component in the programme PCC that promotes affirmative actions that are implemented by different partners of the programmes for reinforcing women rights in the planned programme activities and with specific actions (for example an awareness campaign for gender violence that reinforces and articulates with ongoing actions).

**SDC Bolivia has specific analysis and monitoring tools that address social inclusion.** SDC Bolivia analyses power relations and exclusion mechanisms through the instruments and methodology of “political influence” (PED Network of SDC). These instruments include a mapping of actors that visualizes power relations and how to strengthen weak actors that are “allies” and how to deal with powerful actors that are not yet allies. With respect to monitoring social inclusion, SDC Bolivia is currently elaborating the monitoring system for the country programme and will reflect specifically on that question. However, the MERV, which is carried out twice a year, contains fields of observation in the social area such social conditions, education, cultural condition (religion, ethnicity) and focuses on conflictual issue of national cohesion. Furthermore, the regular monitoring of the two governance programmes directly contributes to the monitoring of the Cooperation Strategy as it refers to national and international indicators and human rights and the implementation of recommendations from international human rights forums. Both programmes have collected data on these topics, which is available, and which identifies results and impacts generated with each initiative supported in the participating municipalities. The indicators refer to the quantity and quality of training and services given and the improvement of technical capacities. For example:

- “One third of the municipalities have better governance ratings thanks to the FOCAM (Fund for capacity building and technical assistant to municipalities), or
- “At least in 30 municipalities, the basic public services are improved thanks to popular planning processes and social control”.

**In the two programmes described in this case study, the objective is to promote social inclusion through supporting the exercise of individual and collective rights, in particular political rights – the strategy bases itself on the human rights based approach.** In the case of FORDECAP, the programme intervenes and promotes dialogue whilst strengthening the capacities of the national government for inclusive public policies. Therefore, social inclusion is reflected directly in the objective and the outcomes of the programme logframe: e.g. reestablishment of labour rights for highly vulnerable peoples, access to justice for groups in situation of vulnerability (indigenous groups, Afro-Bolivians, women and children). Working with these groups of beneficiaries is a way to facilitate that they can exercise their rights, which permits them to reach social inclusion. In the intervention logic of the PCC programme, exercising rights,

especially political rights, and being an informed citizen is a way to promote social inclusion. With the support of this programme, the municipal governments of the 9 Bolivian departments (decentralised territorial units) develop a common agenda for their representation at national and departmental level for the promotion of concurrent investments. This permits all municipal governments, small and big ones, rich ones and poor ones, to be included at departmental and national level with their vision. Furthermore, gender is mainstreamed in all interventions, especially, promoting women's participation in strategic and operational local planning processes and training of women members of municipal governments.

**Both programmes have defined specific socially excluded groups that they work with.** FORDECAPI works with indigenous groups as its main beneficiaries. The criteria for the selection of intervention areas are on those that cannot exercise their rights for different reasons. PCC focuses its work on women and young people, strengthening their political participation and influence in public policies whilst mobilising them locally and nationally with competitions, campaigns, training and direct contributions to implement small initiatives.

**Both programmes have collected valuable data about the situation of socially excluded groups.** For example, FORDECAPI promotes specific investigations about highly vulnerable indigenous people (Guaraní, Yuqi, Araona) and especially about the minority of the Afro-Bolivian population, who are not considered original indigenous peoples and for that reason often are rendered invisible. Thanks to the influence of FORDECAPI, they have been especially recognized in the new constitution. PCC, for its campaign "Watch out for Gender Violence", conducted an investigation about the Municipal Integral Legal Services (SLIMs), centres dealing with domestic violence, which has provided data about the number of women suffering of violence and the number and quality of SLIMs that are functioning in the country and what institutional weaknesses need to be tackled.

**The programmes implement specific measures and activities in order to address social inclusion in local governance processes.** For example, FORDECAPI/EMPODER facilitates the exercise of the right to identity (birth certificates, identity document). These documents, given out by local governments and decentralised state institutions, permit the access to other rights, such as the exercise of the right to political participation as a citizen, access to land, etc. PCC promotes the exercise of women's rights through participation in development processes and access to justice by strengthening municipal centres for attending women and a private network of lawyers with a social and ethical attitude that voluntarily defend social cases.

**These activities are implemented in both cases through partners at both national and local levels.** With respect to FORDECAPI, the component EMPODER is executed directly within the Bolivian Ministry of Justice by a small project team of one national coordinator, one administrator and one communicator, with close support from the FORDECAPI coordinator. The project has three offices in different regions of Bolivia with a total of 10 local project staff members. In the current last phase of EMPODER, the objective is to institutionalize the project at national level and institutionalize the local offices as a model for government work in close cooperation with indigenous people in vulnerable situations. PCC develops its activities for strengthening municipal capacities in alliance with the Ministry of Autonomy, the Federation of Association of Municipalities (FAM), 9 departmental Associations of Municipalities (the members of FAM) and with at least 40% of the municipalities of Bolivia. It also works with a network of local communicators and promoters to promote citizen's participation from within the civil society.

**Both projects also work directly with local authorities on social inclusion related issues.** In FORDECAPI/EMPODER, the 3 local offices facilitate dialogue with local authorities and strengthen their capacities to promote the inclusion of vulnerable sections of the society, including people with disabilities and the establishment of a local round table against gender violence. Indeed, one of the main focuses of PCC is the strengthening of local capacities (of local authorities and their technical staff) for an efficient and effective access to public services for excluded groups and their participation in development.

**The programmes both practice social inclusion in the hiring of their own staff and in selecting partner organizations.** With respect to FORDECAPI/EMPODER, the project team is intercultural as it is composed of indigenous people of the following ethnicities: 3 Guaraní, 1 Quecha. This is important since for working in rural areas, local language skills and understanding of local culture are essential. The programme coordinator of FORDECAPI is one of the two women programme coordinators of SDC programmes (total 8). PCC promotes gender equity in its team, which consists of 50% of women experienced in communication and municipal development.

#### **9.4. Reflection and analysis**

This section comprises a reflection and analysis of the principle achievements and outstanding challenges of the case study programmes, and of SDC Bolivia, in addressing social inclusion in local governance and decentralization.

**Although the intervention strategy of FORDECAPI is implemented at national level, through the 3 local offices programme staff can work directly with local authorities on social inclusion issues in local government.** Indeed, this articulation of the local and national level is a value added of the intervention strategy. In the current context of crucial new laws and competencies being drafted, the programme is constantly analysing and redefining certain intervention strategies, reacting to opportunities (e.g. facilitation of consultation processes for laws that concern indigenous people) in order to have more impact and reach sustainable interventions.

**In the PCC, the intervention strategy has permitted the formation of several networks (women, local social mobilisers and communicators that represent the local population) that intervene directly with the local government in favour of the rights and needs of socially excluded groups as a way of public influence.** The strategy has been successful in establishing networks of “change agents” that intervene in favour of citizen’s participation. A challenge not yet completely resolved is how to work in this way in very remote communities, where the participation of young persons, women and indigenous communities in municipal development has yet to be reinforced.

For addressing social inclusion in decentralization and local governance, **the most successful aspects of the implementation strategy** outlined in section 3 above, can be identified as: 1) Strengthening of capacities for municipal development with a strategic vision for better local public service provision with specifically developed instruments like the institutionalization of FOCAM, a fund for capacity building and technical assistance to municipalities; 2) Promotion of citizens’ participation with co-responsibility and facilitating putting their concerns and needs on the agenda, especially with regards to the participation of women and young people and their influence in municipal programmes and budgets. This is implemented through local social mobilisers and communicators, inputs for local policies and the institutionalisation of the necessary public budget to implement measures, 3) Communication and information are crucial instruments for participatory municipal development and for citizen’s participation: an informed civil society can participate in public affairs and make use of their political rights.

**Less successful aspects** have been: 1) in the beginning, handing over financial resources for implementing actions to organisations of socially disadvantaged groups without the necessary strengthening of their capacities in a long term process. A better support and follow up would have permitted more effective results in the long term. 2) Not giving enough time and resources to support and accompany the implementation of local initiatives of women and young people and knowing and deciding when is the appropriate moment and which is the appropriate support, in order that such initiatives encouraged by these programmes can become sustainable in the future.

Based on the experience of SDC Bolivia, **good practice in supporting social inclusion in decentralization and local governance** includes: 1) Working complementarily with civil society and the state at different levels and plan, implement and review all interventions that way, 2) Strengthening the capacities of the government at all levels is crucial, so that it can answer efficiently an effective to the demands of the society, 3) Affirmative actions to reduce the gender gap and other social gaps.

The **most significant changes in social inclusion in decentralization and local governance** resulting from the initiatives of SDC Bolivia's governance programmes outlined here are:

- The participation of citizens in local processes that do not belong to any organised group, which benefits and democratises local governance.
- Groups that before because of “cooperative process” often were not visible, like women and young people, are now actively participating in local governance processes. These groups are the real beneficiaries of special projects designed based on their needs, for example leading to institutionalising a special municipal budget for women's and young peoples' issues, or strengthening local centres that take care of victims of gender violence. As SDC is not working on the level of individual beneficiaries but more and more rather on a “meso” level with institutions that represent our beneficiary groups, it is important to look very closely at who decides for whom and that this is really in their interest and according to their needs. This means taking a close look at matters of internal governance, that “leaders” who were empowered do not abuse their power to speak on behalf of their constituency. This is especially important in the Bolivian context, where social groups risk being instrumentalised for political ends.
- A change attitude has been promoted in key actors that are now sensitive to the needs of vulnerable social sectors of their municipalities and are involved in looking for solutions.

**There remain several challenges the programmes are facing in improving social inclusion in local governance and decentralization.** These include trends in the current political transformation that make it necessary to continue supporting initiatives of young people, women and the network of local promoters and communicators that directly contribute to, and influence, public policies that take into account the specific needs of these groups (rather than a social movements that speaks for them in a “cooperative” way, or even instrumentalises them). A further challenge is the strengthening of local authorities' capacities for a better response to the demands of civil society, and to socially excluded groups in particular. Fiscal issues are also key to ensuring equitable access to public services for people living in different parts of the country. Here the challenge is to strengthen a municipal representation at national and departmental levels that manages to generate concurrent investments and the elaboration of a new equality orientated fiscal pact.

According to SDC Bolivia's experience, the **key actors to influence** in order to achieve effective change in social inclusion in decentralization and local governance are the Ministry of Autonomy (formerly the Ministry of Decentralisation), FAM Bolivia (Federation of Departmental Municipal Associations), local governments (national coverage), community organizations known as local vigilance committees, and NGOs. SDC has particular influence in this area due to its good reputation being the lead agency in the successful implementation of the Law of Popular Participation that was enacted in 1994. SDC is considered to be the legitimate lead agency of the bilateral and multilateral donor landscape in Bolivia for issues of indigenous rights and policy dialogue in this area, which it started to promote more than 10 years ago, at a time when this issue was not on yet on the agenda in Bolivia.

**Both of SDC Bolivia's governance programmes have transferable experiences and practices in social inclusion in decentralization and local governance.** Specifically, in FORDECAPI there are good practices for the promotion of the rights of minority groups and influence in national policies and international mechanisms. In the context of the new territorial structure given in the new constitution, FORDECAPI plans take up the issue of the implementation of human and minority rights at decentralised levels of governance as well. In PCC there is transferable good practice in promoting specifically the participation and influence of women and young people in municipal and national policies, as described in detail above, and in strengthening the national association of municipalities. In Bolivia, the National Federation of Associations of Municipalities unites the 9 departmental associations of municipalities. This is a powerful means of influencing national policy from the meso level and representing issues more strongly and effectively than individual municipalities would be in a position to do.

## 9.5. *Concluding remarks*

**Overall, we can say that, while in Bolivia indigenous people are increasingly empowered, what remains lacking is the promotion of a responsible citizenship.** Therefore empowerment interventions should emphasize that citizens not only have rights but also duties. This awareness has only recently developed in Bolivia. The “human rights based approach” is a useful tool to work with this revised empowerment approach. Additionally, based on the experience of SDC Bolivia, access to justice is a powerful way to reach social inclusion and it is hoped that SDC, in the process of the elaboration of the new “Südbotschaft”, reflects thoroughly about this and the integrality of governance. It should also be reflected in the different SDC networks in governance, as for example social inclusion is directly related with human rights and the specific network on human rights and fragile states.

## 9.6. *References*

For more information, please refer to:

[www.padem.org.bo](http://www.padem.org.bo)

<http://www.cooperacion-suiza.admin.ch/bolivia/>

[http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Projects/Decentralisation\\_and\\_citizen\\_participation\\_in\\_Bolivia](http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Projects/Decentralisation_and_citizen_participation_in_Bolivia)

For copies of publications produced by SDC on these issues, and for an updated selection of references, please contact Ursula Läubli at [ursula.laeubli@sdc.net](mailto:ursula.laeubli@sdc.net)

Another starting point is the recent Human Development Report focussing on inequality and social movements: PNUD. 2010. *Los cambios detrás del cambio: Desigualdades y movilidad social en Bolivia* (El Informe Nacional sobre Desarrollo Humano). Available at [http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/latinamericathecaribbean/bolivia/name\\_15332.en.html](http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/latinamericathecaribbean/bolivia/name_15332.en.html)



## 10. Case study: Sharique, Bangladesh

By Tirtha Sikder, Jens Engeli and Sarah Byrne (Intercooperation) and Tommaso Tabet (SDC)

### 10.1. Background

This case study shares the experiences of Sharique, Local Governance Programme, in supporting socially inclusive local governance and decentralization. Sharique, which means 'partner' in Bangla, aims to empower disadvantaged groups and poor people to claim their rights and entitlements, and to access more responsive public services from local governments in Rajshahi and Sunamganj regions of Bangladesh. The rationale is that with government drawing closer to the people on the one side, and more informed citizens on the other side, new spaces are created for participation, thus influencing decision-making process at local level. The expected result of communities taking their own decisions is a more appropriate provision of local public services and infrastructure, contributing to better living conditions and economic growth. The project works in 130 Union Parishads (local governments) and 21 Upazila Parishads (local government at sub-district-level) in Rajshahi and Sunamganj regions. Currently in its second phase, the project is funded by SDC and implemented by Intercooperation in partnership with 6 local NGOs.

### 10.2. Context

This section outlines the main issues related to social inclusion in Sharique's working areas (Rajshahi and Sunamganj regions of Bangladesh), with specific reference to local governance and decentralization.

**In the context of Rajshahi and Sunamganj, the main social groups that face exclusionary practices are women, ethnic minorities, religious minorities and economically poor people, particularly the so-called extreme poor.** Bangladesh in general is still considered as one of the countries with the highest levels of gender discrimination and patriarchal structures imbedded in all levels of society. Women suffer from gender-specific discriminations, such as early marriage practices, gender-based violence, biased inheritance and property laws, restriction of mobility and access to services, participation in public spaces etc. The ethnic minority group living in this region are Adivasis (indigenous people). There are five or six Adivasi communities in Sharique's working area, the biggest communities being the Santal and Oraon. In this region, Adivasis generally do not formally own land (see below), but rather subsist on day labour in the agricultural sector. Recently, some public lands have been leased to Adivasi families by the government. In Sharique's working districts, there are also two religious minorities: Hindus and Christians. The largest minority group in the region are the Hindus (approximately 10% of the population in Rajshahi region). Economically poor and extremely poor people make up a large part of the socially excluded people in the region. Sharique categorises poor and extremely poor people on the basis of several indicators, for example the quality of their house, land ownership, food security, etc.

**In Sharique's working areas, social exclusion is strongly reflected in economic terms, in particular in discriminatory practices in access to land, employment and markets.** For example, laws about succession and inheritance discriminate against women. A Muslim daughter gets a share of her family's land, but disproportionate relation to her brother(s). Since land remains the main livelihood base for families in Bangladesh, this disproportionate distribution of land between men and women has a lot of implications of disempowerment for women. Adivasis also face exclusion from land ownership: although living in the same region for centuries, many did not formally register their land ownership and consequently are subject to evictions from, and encroachments on, their land. Now, many Adivasis are officially landless. Recent government schemes allocate some public land (*khas* land) to Adivasi families (as individual holdings), but this is only merely a lease of the land with many utilization restrictions, not a transfer of ownership. Lack of land ownership also leads to exclusion from government agricultural and non-agricultural service inputs (seeds, fertilizer, etc), as well as exclusion from access to credit (landless people being a credit risk according to lenders). In terms of the employment sector, the wage rate for

women and Adivasis are much lower than other groups. Since their employment scope is narrower (confined movement, and less diversity in skills), their wage is severely manipulated by the employers.

**Social exclusion is also reflected in cultural terms, for example in access to education in indigenous languages and in religious practices.** In Rajshahi, most of the Adivasis have their own indigenous language. In particular, elderly people and the less educated among these communities do not speak, or speak very little, Bangla or English. In schools, Adivasi children first have to learn Bangla and then English, a disadvantage compared to their Bangla-speaking peers that leads to low enrolment in education and high dropout rates. Rajshahi and Sunamganj both have Hindu communities; in Sunamganj there are many Hindu majority and Hindu only villages, whereas in Rajshahi the situation is one of co-existence between Hindu and Muslim communities. In places where the two communities co-exist, there is discrimination in terms of religious practices such that Hindu religious events requiring music and public (amplified) prayers have to be stopped if they overlap with a Muslim prayer time or religious event

**Particularly in Sunamganj, due to its remote territory, social exclusion is reflected in physical terms such as a lack of communication and transportation infrastructure.** Sunamganj district has one of the weakest communication and transportation networks in Bangladesh due to government neglect and a lack of investment. The district is highly vulnerable to different kind of natural hazards such as flash floods, monsoon floods, cold waves etc. The impact of these natural hazards on people's livelihoods is exacerbated by a lack of infrastructure, preparedness and willingness by the official bodies.

**In Bangladesh socially excluded groups have formed representative organizations with the agenda of seeking recognition and equal representation, among other demands. For example,** there are a number of women's organizations active in advocating for more political entitlements of women. Some of these organizations are a kind of political party advocating for women friendly legislations and policies and there are also some groups who are basically NGOs and working on the same issues. There are also a number of organizations of ethnic minorities active in advocating for more political entitlements, including land rights, and recognition of their language in state affairs and education. A key agenda for these groups is their official recognition as Adivasis/indigenous people and not, as the government and major political parties label them, "special ethnic group". There are also a couple of organizations of religious minorities (Hindus, Buddhists and Christians) that advocate for rights, especially more representation in parliament, in the government, in the bureaucracy and most importantly for better security in the society.

**Quotas in recruitment in the civil service and reserved seats in elections are policy measures in favour of the inclusion of excluded groups in governance processes and government institutions in Bangladesh.** Quotas for the recruitment of women (10%) and Adivasis (called "Tribal", 5%) are implemented in Bangladesh's civil service recruitment. However, no quotas are in place for religious minorities and though relatively better educated, Hindus are relatively underrepresented in these institutions. Nevertheless, this system can be considered relatively successful as it ensures the presence of women and Adivasis in the public workforce and some representation in the business of the state. The senior management and strategic positions (particularly in the armed forces and diplomatic service) however remain in the hands of dominant groups. Further challenges to the quota system are that it is nevertheless not easy for members of excluded groups to have access to the pre-requisites, in terms of quality of education, that would be necessary to qualify for such jobs. Additionally, there remains some scope for political influence in the process, which works to the detriment of excluded groups. There is also a reservation system for women representatives in the national parliament, wherein 45 seats are reserved for women representatives who are selected by the elected members of parliament. Women's groups are now lobbying that this be changed to a system of direct election to reserved constituencies.

**At the local level, a system of direct election of women candidates to a reserved 30% of the seats has been in place since 1997, and has been relatively successful in making a connection between women representatives and their constituency.** Indeed, women's

representation is the only social inclusion issue included in the national decentralization strategy and Local Government Act, which does not mandate specific measures for other groups. There are also several challenges to this system, for example women candidates rarely contest the non-reserved seats, especially the chair position, in the election of local government institutions. Besides, those women are elected face challenges in managing their time as they are generally expected by their families and society to continue to perform household responsibilities as before, in tandem with their new official responsibilities. Local government, especially Union Parishads, remains mostly represented by the group of traditional rural elites. The local administration, on the other hand, is pre-dominantly represented by the privileged section of the society, who are necessarily not a traditional elites but who have had access to quality education.

**Access to local public services is limited for members of excluded groups, as are the resources available to local governments.** For example, even though primary education is free in Bangladesh, and the learning materials are provided, extreme poor children cannot access school education services, because their families engage them in income generating activities. Extreme poor families also cannot access health care services, because of the involved costs (both for treatment and medication). Given the resources available to them, local governments cannot do much on the issue of extreme poverty beyond relatively limited schemes for assisting families, such as providing scholarships, or transportation assistance to pregnant women.

**However, local governments can play a role in monitoring the services delivered by other government agents and ensuring that they are delivered in a fair and effective way.** There are a variety of different safety net schemes provided by different central government departments and local governments are tasked with selecting genuine beneficiaries. By ensuring selection of a fair list of eligible beneficiaries, local governments can contribute to increasing the access of the excluded groups. In Sharique's working area, local governments also hold coordination meetings with the public services agencies on a bimonthly basis, where their service qualities are monitored and the access of the excluded group is discussed. Furthermore, local governments have 13 standing committees who are also supposed to monitor the performance of public institutions like schools, community clinics etc. These standing committees are composed of elected representatives and appointed members of civil society.

**In Sharique's working area, due to project interventions, members of socially excluded groups actively participate in direct consultations and participatory processes held by the local government – in this way at least some of their priority issues are represented.** In Sharique's working area all UPs hold public meetings, including excluded groups, to decide on their ward (village-level) plans and UP plan and budget. They also do the same while reviewing the progress of the annual plan and budget expenditures. The structures and methods that are followed in ward and UP planning guides the process to make sure that at least some priority issues of the socially excluded groups are retained in the final UP plan and budget. Furthermore, community based organizations (including the representatives of socially excluded groups) also hold participatory self-assessment exercises on the functionality of the local government. In Bangladesh as a whole, this kind of participation hardly takes place, as it requires a lot of sensitization and capacity building work, which the government is unlikely to undertake.

### **10.3. Social inclusion in project practice**

This section outlines how Sharique defines, analyses and addresses social inclusion in local governance and decentralization.

**The issue of social inclusion is prominently reflected in SDC's country programme in Bangladesh, as well as in the local governance strategic note outlined by the COOF.** The strategic objective of SDC's country strategy 2008-2012 is "Improved well-being and economics, social political participation of the poor and poorest and future generations, based on enhanced employment and income and improved access to services, opportunities and decision making processes." To reach this aim, SDC prioritises its cooperation within the two thematic areas of

Employment and Income (E&I) and Local Governance (LGov). The following are the outcomes expected of the governance portfolio (of which Sharique is a part)

- Outcome 1: Poor and poorest groups of citizen are empowered to negotiate their interests and take their responsibility in accessing public services;
- Outcome 2: The capacity of local government improves to deliver services in an inclusive, participative, accountable and transparent manner;
- Outcome 3: Policy reform promoted which address pro-poor issues and creates favourable conditions for broad participation of different actors

**SDC Bangladesh implements a comprehensive country strategy monitoring system that collects gender and poverty-disaggregated data, while not focusing specifically on the issue of social inclusion more generally.** The Swiss Cooperation Office in Bangladesh does not have an overall comprehensive tool to analyze and monitor power relations and exclusion mechanisms, rather these issues have been analysed through specific studies, such as the 2009 study analyzing power and social inclusion in local governance services (for more info, see the references at the end of this document). Further, Projects like SHARIQUE and DASCOH have tools relating to the problematic, in a more “technical” and “thematic” perspective (for example, related to water and sanitation issues or to exclusion/inclusion of poor and poorest in local public life). With respect to country strategy monitoring, the data for respective indicators are mainly collected from the partners’ monitoring systems, and are analyzed and compiled in the annual SCO-B report. While the monitoring tools focus on the overall portfolio, and not specifically on social inclusion, the indicators are disaggregated by gender and poverty (whenever possible). The country strategy monitoring tool is described in a concept note available from the Cooperation Office (contact [tommaso.tabet@sdc.net](mailto:tommaso.tabet@sdc.net)).

**SDC also implements some specific initiatives in the field of social inclusion, in particular with respect to gender equality.** The Cooperation Office in Bangladesh has gender guidelines for the office, comprising a gender partner platform (regular peer learning, info sharing, situational analysis, etc.), GEM check list for Credit Proposals, gender focal point, etc. At the office level, there is a gender policy and a gender workforce policy is under preparation. At a project level, there are a few initiatives specifically focusing on women’s empowerment: for example, RUPANTAR (see the SDC Bangladesh website for more info); an upcoming project on Women’s Leadership network (horizontal and vertical women’s leadership networking for capacity development and agency); and an upcoming study on “Gender, Power and Politics” at Upazila level that shall “advise” on new lines of action.

**Social inclusion in local governance and decentralization is a key working area for Sharique, an aim reflected in the project’s overall objectives and in specific log frame components.** The objectives of Sharique, are, firstly, to strengthen local government capacities to manage public affairs in a more effective, efficient and transparent way, such that they are more responsive and accountable to the community, especially the poor, women and marginal groups. At the same time, the project aims at the empowerment of the poor and poorest with special regard to women and marginalised (or disadvantaged) people, that they become aware of their rights and entitlements, and are able to claim them. The project works on both side of this equation to sensitise and empower rights holders and duty bearers within the given legal framework. Consequently, social inclusion is referred to in different outputs and outcomes that the project is working towards, and is measured through different indicators including, for example,

- “Percentage of funds in the UP budget allocated to projects benefiting the extreme poor”.
- “Degree to which the women have been able to have their rational demands considered in ward planning meetings.”
- Degree to which the Adivasis have been able to have their rational demands considered in ward planning meetings?
- Degree to which the *extreme poor (bottom 25%)* have been able to have their rational demands considered in ward planning meetings?

**Sharique does not work with a formal specific definition of social inclusion or exclusion, but identifies socially excluded groups (referred to as marginalized groups in the project literature) that it works with in its working area.** These include: Adivasis, women, economically poor people and people living in geographically isolated areas. This latter group refers to people living in the Haor area, which is a large low-lying area that becomes flooded during the monsoon. The area can remain flooded for at least 6 months of the year, meaning that people can cultivate only one harvest during the dry season – a harvest that remains at risk due to early flash floods. Fishing is the traditional livelihood means of people living in this area. Due to their geographical isolation and precarious livelihoods, Sharique considers people living in the Haor area to be marginalized.

**The project collects a variety of information on the situation of socially inclusive decentralization and local governance.** Sharique collects data on social inclusion as part of its regular monitoring. Indicators it monitors include:

- How many UP offices are re-located into Union territory from other urban locations.
- Improvement of participation of female members in UP decision-making processes.
- How many citizens from excluded groups participate in local self-governance assessments.
- How many citizens from excluded groups participated in different UP planning meetings.
- How much the demands of excluded groups were finally considered in ward and UP plans.
- How many representatives of excluded groups are included UP special committees.
- Percentage of UP budget for projects benefiting women or poor people directly.

Project partners also analyse the information given in the UP budgets, including the allocation of the UP budget in favour of women and extremely poor people by a) first indentifying the types of projects/activities which were thought of benefiting either women and/or extreme poor only, then b) identifying the budgets that were for these projects and then c) dividing the total UP budget by the budget for these special projects. Project staff visit UPs and analyse their budgets in particular, but the project does not maintain recorded analyses of the budgets of all 130 partner UPs. Rather than undertaking a typical social audit, Sharique supports six monthly participatory budget review exercises in public.

**Sharique implements a range of activities in favour of socially inclusive local governance through integrating social inclusion aspects in all phases of the process.** Several of these activities are outlined below:

- *Local self-governance assessment:* It is an exercise with mainly the excluded groups and held at their nearest location which evaluates the functionality of their local government (UP). Participants themselves communicate their assessment results to the Ups, which has started a process of speaking up about governance issues.
- *Ward Planning:* Unlike in the past, now the UP plan starts at the ward level and in public. The project ensures that all the citizens, especially the excluded groups are invited and encouraged to participate. Sharique advises the ward councillor to organize the exercise in such a time and location which is convenient for the excluded group to participate. The project also encourages the CBOs to make sure that citizens of the excluded groups participate in the ward planning meeting and ensures that the UP follows a participatory methodology in planning. Sharique provides coaching to the ward councillors and his/her team on how to explore the voices of voiceless people. The excluded groups participate in separate group exercises so than they can put their opinion independently. The actions of addressing the women, indigenous communities and extreme poor are also considered as one of the criteria in the process selecting the list of priorities.
- *UP central planning:* The same attention is given at the central planning exercise to make sure that the voices of the excluded groups are included, and in particular whether the choices of the excluded groups are considered as priorities in preparing the UP's annual development plan.

- *Participatory budget review meeting:* The same type of exercise is followed to evaluate the progress of UP plan implementation on half yearly basis.
- *Implementation and monitoring of UP plans:* The project makes sure that the UP includes representatives from the UP communities in its different special committees (which have a provision to include/co-opt general citizens). In this process, the representatives of the excluded groups are included in the UP's 13 standing committees that are responsible for overseeing the different sectors (education, health, etc). This process makes sure that the representatives of the excluded groups are also included in different project implementation and supervision committees.
- *Participation of female councillors:* Sharique provides some accompaniment support to the UP to institutionalize a practice of including the voices of female councillors in the decision-making process of UP.
- *Co-financing to UP budget:* Based on the performance of the UP in improving its governance, the project gives some grants to the UP as the part of its annual budget. It should add to the UP's ability to choose and undertake some schemes for addressing the needs of the socially excluded groups.
- *The project provides training on the aspect of gender and diversity:* For example, Sharique developed a 'speak up' module to capacitate women in raising their voices in public hearings and debates, and also introduced participatory gender analyses.
- *Poverty mapping and power analyses:* The project is piloting poverty sensitisation and mapping with UP councillors and civil society members as well as the use of a 'power sensitisation and analysis' module to raise awareness about the multidimensionality of poverty and power and their implications on participation, inclusion, accountability and transparency.



Poor and extreme poor women participating in ward-level planning (Photo: Jens Engeli)



Women inquiring about the details of a posted tax assessment (Photo: Jens Engeli)

**Sharique practices a gender inclusive policy in hiring staff and selecting partners.** The project always mentions in its job postings that women candidates are encouraged to apply and will get preference, and this is implemented in the process of recruiting staff. As a result, the project's pool of staff has fairly good gender balance: Project Officers (6M, 6F), Finance Officer (1M,1F), Regional Coordinator (2M), Driver (2M, 1F), Finance Manager (1 F), Deputy Project Coordinator (1M), Project Coordinator (1F), Advisor (1M). Out of Sharique's 6 partner NGOs, women head two. Sharique does not take other aspects of identity into account in hiring staff and

selecting partners. The project makes sure that the entire staff has adequate sensitivity to the issue of gender and diversity. Besides, the project also makes sure that its entire front line staff has sufficient skills in facilitating participatory processes.

#### **10.4. Reflection and analysis**

This section comprises a reflection and analysis of the principle achievements and outstanding challenges of the case study project, Sharique Local Governance Programme, in addressing social inclusion in local governance and decentralization.

**Through the emphasis on social inclusion in local governance and decentralization, Sharique staff and partners can point to several achievements resulting from its focus on social inclusion in the whole planning cycle as well as specific targeting in all citizen based activities (e.g. local self-governance assessment).** In this very challenging context, the most significant changes observed by project staff include:

- UP (local government) offices in Sunamganj were re-located into rural areas from urban locations, which now offers better access for the socially excluded groups
- Significant improvement of participation of women members in UP decision-making processes due to Sharique's support to women UP members.
- Many citizens from the excluded groups became active in local governance through their participation in the local self-governance assessment supported by Sharique.
- Significant numbers of citizens from the excluded groups turn out to participate in different planning meeting of UPs every year.
- Demands of excluded groups are now considered and retained in the final ward and UP plan and, on average, 20-30 % of the UP budget is now assigned to projects that benefit women and poor people directly.
- Proactive information disclosure by the UP (budget, list of beneficiaries etc) led to higher transparency and decreased patronage and corruption
- Representatives of excluded groups are now included in UP special committees.
- The selection of UP safety net beneficiaries (eligibility for programmes such as "food for work", as well as for pensions and allowances for widows, among others) is considered to be much more fair, with less chance of safety net benefits being distributed purely on a patronage basis

**Nevertheless, there remain some significant challenges to implementing socially inclusive local governance and decentralization.** One issue is that the strategy of 'positive discrimination' is required to address the issue of social inclusion. But it is not easy for the elected councillors to follow this strategy as they claim that to them all 'voters' are equally important, regardless of their social identities and positions. Another challenge to inclusion is that the representatives of local governments belong mainly to the elite, which plays an important role in decision-making processes, as does the prevalence of patron-client relations in society. However, this can be a two-way street, as patrons need the votes of their clients in order to be elected and these relations can be harnessed to improve the accountability of local government (as shown in the study on "rude accountability" listed in the references). Engaging the private sector and big NGOs (essentially micro-finance institutions) on the issue of socially inclusive local governance has also proven to be a challenge as local governments, Sharique's implementation partners, have little direct influence over these organizations. A further significant challenge to more inclusive local governance is that increased demands for local government services follow the increased participation of socially excluded groups in local governance processes. As local governments, insufficiently provided with human and financial resources, are hardly in a position to respond to these increased demands, a new tension has grown between 'demand and supply'. A more proactive disclosure of information (such as budget information) by the UPs could contribute to reducing this tension.

**The project's implementation strategy, with its work directly with local governments, makes tackling the social inclusion issue a challenge – as there is a tension between working both with and somehow against the current power structures.** In other words,

Sharique has found it more challenging to address the “supply side” of socially inclusive local governance in its work with local government representatives than the “demand side” with its work with citizens. The issue of social inclusion is connected to the existing power structure of the society, which is difficult to influence through this approach of working with and through the existing structures (of local government and of power, which are mostly overlapping). At the same time, the project believes that its successes in social inclusion nevertheless result out of this specific focus on local governments in all its activities and process facilitation – a certain consistency in partnership. A key to this success has been the project’s win-win approach – working on both sides of the equation - in increasing the participation of the socially excluded groups in the affairs of UP and sensitizing local government bodies. At present, the project does not have any strategy to enhance the representation of the socially excluded groups in the structure of UP or to promote their candidacy as UP councillors, as this is a highly political area. In the upcoming UP election Sharique will focus, for the first time, on voter education. The project engages at voter and community level, since engaging with (and promoting) particular candidates (and political parties) – even those from excluded communities – could be perceived as partisan, and therefore politically risky. However, all the other interventions around inclusion do of course contribute to a stronger position and awareness of these excluded groups that should/will result in (i) their casting of votes for their preferred candidate(s), and (ii) some persons will hopefully stand as candidates (especially women – there are a few good examples).

**In terms of the capacities of partner organizations for addressing social inclusion, Sharique tries to select partners that already have adequate capacities in this field.** In order to assess this, the project checks the following aspects:

- if the partner has a formal gender policy in place.
- if the partners’ vision and mission are related to poverty reduction.
- if partner has a long practice of staff recruitment with clear gender preference.
- if partner has a gender segregated monitoring system.
- if partner’s staff are well trained in gender inclusive development.
- if the partner’s staff are sensitive to women’s rights and the rights of poor people.

Sharique also seeks to build on these capacities through the introduction of different (mandatory) training modules for the staff of the project as well as partner organization staff to support them in acquiring capacity and awareness around social inclusion issues.

**As outlined above, Sharique has a number of good practices in supporting the effective integration of socially excluded groups in local decision making and priority setting processes, and also has some experience with practices that did not work out as hoped.** A good practice example is the ward-level planning exercise implemented with the UP and with the public, with a particular emphasis on the participation of excluded groups. According to project staff, this appears to be most meaningful activity for the excluded citizens to be included. A measure that proved to be challenging was the participation of members of socially excluded groups in different UP committees: this was difficult to manage because participation in these committees requires a lot of time, and time during the day, time which members of socially excluded groups cannot spare as they struggle to earn a living. Additionally, a certain level of education (literacy) is perceived to be necessary to engage actively. Consequently, there is a lot of absenteeism from the representatives of excluded groups in these meetings.

**Sharique staff consider that the experiences and good practices generated through the project can be effectively transferred, with some important conditions.** These conditions are:

- Segmented structure of society with general tendency to exclusion
- Intervention strategies with approaches that focus on demand and supply side (not to create an imbalance)
- Openness and awareness towards social inclusion (i.e. legal framework, political dialogue)
- Key aspect – existence or possible creation of participatory spaces (this should be legally sound especially when working in local governance), without creating parallel structures
- A genuine willingness for social inclusion linked to concrete actions (service delivery)



- Existence of a certain conditionality to assure take up of demands and needs of excluded groups

### 10.5. Concluding remarks

Social inclusion figures as one of the key principles in local governance. The experiences of Sharique outlined above show some good practices and successful approaches. However, local governance and decentralisation *per se* are highly challenging endeavours in often controversial contexts and structures. Myriad interests of different groups and power wielders work often rather towards social exclusion than inclusion. Therefore, a pragmatic but focused approach towards social inclusion is necessary that targets both sides of the equation – the local government bodies and the citizens – by working in the existing structures. The creation of participatory spaces and thus direct interaction of local governments with excluded and disadvantaged groups plays a key role for change and thus success.

### 10.6. References

For more information, please refer to:

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Additional as yet unpublished documents from Sharique may be obtained from Tirtha Sikder at [tirtha.sikder@intercooperation-bd.org](mailto:tirtha.sikder@intercooperation-bd.org) or Jens Engeli at [jens.engeli@intercooperation-bd.org](mailto:jens.engeli@intercooperation-bd.org)

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