

THE SOCIAL CHALLENGE IN DEVELOPMENT. FROM ECONOMIC TO SOCIAL POLICIES

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INTRODUCTION

The world is going through changes unimaginable only a few years back. Well established socio-political paradigms have crumbled, and accepted development models are in doubt. The concept of development itself must be revisited within the conflicting views of a "new world order" still not well understood. This environment of change presents tremendous challenges.

In the developing world, change places new demands on resources, human and financial, that are already stretched thin. However, this is neither exclusively an issue of availability of resources nor purely an economic phenomenon. Underdevelopment continues to be deeply rooted in poverty. Its impact on the capacity of individuals and societies to assume a leading role in their own change remains the main obstacle to achieving equitable and sustainable development.

The underlining human development issues of today are both, achieving an ethical distribution of the available wealth, and an equitable access to the benefits of growth. The generation of a new development ethos, as the foundation of a new polity, is the core social challenge developing countries face in the road towards the next century.

A refurbished discourse about development emphasizes the availability and better use of resources, both natural and economic, as keys to poverty eradication and alleviation efforts. To an extent, these concerns reflect the myriad of problems affecting countries in the South.

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However, it is the persistent accumulation of wealth among a few, nationally and internationally, and the unequal distribution of the benefits of growth, that continue making development unsustainable.

The paradox of the 1990s is that the current changes in the world economic order tend to reinforce rather than to make the disparities disappear. "Despite economic growth, most ... countries face severe social problems. ... In other words, recent progress has not generated more opportunities for the poor. Nor has it distributed benefits more efficiently" (Esquel, 1993: 2). If the policies and adjustments to combat poverty do not go beyond the predominant neo-classical economic interpretation of development, the solutions to be found are likely to have limited impact on the pervading inequities affecting the growing disadvantaged sectors of society.

This scenario raises some critical questions about what needs to be done to build a new basis for sustainable development in the twentieth first century. There is a need to better understand, (1) how, on what basis, and with what effects decisions about the re-distribution of social resources are made and implemented; (2) how to improve public policy-making in general and social policy-making in particular to achieve a greater impact on the well-being of individuals; and (3) what new forms of governance must be set in place to enhance social participation, consolidate democracy, and have a long lasting impact on eliminating poverty and facilitating human development.²

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it discusses the need to revisit some of the assumptions of the predominant international discourse as a means to move towards a new ethical notion of development which can be socially sustainable. Second, it argues in favour of addressing social and human development concerns at the forefront of development economic policies and programs in the 1990s. The article also serves as an introduction to a collection of papers addressing the new social challenges faced by three countries of Latin America in

² Human development "is a process of enlarging people's choices," of creating "a conducive environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives in accord with their needs and interests" (UNDP, 1990: 1).

particular and the region as a whole. These papers are the outcome of an extensive consultation to identify priorities that could guide social policy research for sustainable development in the region in the years to come. A common thread to these papers is their concern with strengthening developing countries' social policy-making and social program delivery capacities to reach the poor more effectively.

THE SHIFTING OF INTERNATIONAL AGENDAS

New Trends and Questions

New international economic alliances, socio-political conflicts, breakthroughs in information technology, and the application of scientific innovations in new fields of human activity are making geographical boundaries and even the concept of nation-state lose their traditional rigidity. Development fashions and slogans that have proven to be futile when it comes to bridging the gap between North and South, are being replaced by new ones of yet unknown meaning and implications.

Northern driven international agendas in environment, education for all, market liberalization, and transfer of technology represent only a fraction of the new precepts reaching the developing world as a result of the geopolitical interests of industrialized countries. In most cases, these new "action programs" come with price tags which are well beyond the resources available both in the North and the South. However, the complex net of international political pressures on which the interests they serve rest, not only re-directs the actions of international organizations, lending institutions and donor agencies prompt to jump into the latest politically correct wagon, but also risks creating new forms of development conditionality with dreadful social impact for the poor.

Nowhere, is this becoming more evident than in the follow up attempts to the UNCED meeting in 1992. Lewis T. Preston, President of the World Bank has indicated that "because of its close linkage with poverty, we are also increasing our focus on environmental issues: establishing a

system of assessment to address environmental aspects of Bank-supported operations; supporting free-standing environmental projects; ... and ... helping countries put in place national environmental action plans" (1993: 4). Attempts such as this are taking place while countries are still adapting to the conditions and effects of economic adjustment programs.

In the context of changing economic and geopolitical circumstances worldwide, there is a number of basic facts and questions that must be revisited: what is the new role of the State; are communities capable of playing long lasting roles in their own development; are existing basic social institutions and systems able to respond effectively to basic human development needs; in what areas of social activity can governments be most effective; what is the value of social innovations that work when they are replicated in diverse cultural settings; how feasible are holistic approaches to science and knowledge utilization; how can the effectiveness of development aid be improved; and what is the social the cost and impact of, for example, new environmental dogmas.

This complex array of development issues must be better understood if a balance in the relationships between economic growth, equity, and satisfaction of basic needs is to be achieved. The underlying issue, however, is one of basic ethical principles guiding the new interaction between governments and the civil society.

The Costs of Aid

The last twenty years of development efforts have taught valuable lessons. One of them is that the large amount of resources invested through aid flowing to the South has not been without a cost to developing countries. In fact, development aid has been a profitable investment which has contributed as much to maintaining the standards of wealth of industrialized countries, as to eradicating poverty in the developing world.

Development in the 1980s was not led by a social notion of policy reform, but by a market driven economic ideology of growth. Adjustment programs, justified by placing economic management

efficiency as the building block of development, reversed the traditional North-South development link making industrial countries net recipients of financial resources. "From the onset of the debt crisis in 1982 through 1990 ... each and every month, for 108 months, debtor countries of the South remitted to their creditors in the North an average six billion five hundred million dollars ... in interest payments alone. If payments of principal are included in the tally, then each of the 108 months ... witnessed payments from debtors to creditors averaging twelve billion four hundred and fifty million dollars ..." (George, 1992: xiv). In the process, Southern countries have no option but to deflect national resources away from key social sectors.

There is also growing evidence that the aid efforts of developed countries, donors and international organizations have not paid sufficient attention to the processes of social policy-making which constitute one of the pillars of economic development and growth strategies. Some concerns about the negative impact of economic adjustment programs, and the most recent focus on sustainable development strategies which integrate environmental, social and economic policies have brought these issues once again to the forefront. Little is known, however, about the implications of these attempts to add yet another concern, the environment, into the balance between economic and social priorities.

IN SEARCH OF A SOCIAL AGENDA IN DEVELOPMENT

Who Sets What Policy Directions?

Entangled in the fuzzy net of the international political agendas of the day, many aid agencies, international organizations, and governments continue to pay lip service to the dramatic social crisis eroding developing societies as a result of economic liberalization and conditions of unequal international competitiveness. In the meantime, a deteriorating "social side" of development resulting from the impact of market driven economic growth on the human well-being, remains not fully addressed by development actions. This failure to see beyond the relationship between economic policies and growth, perpetuates and may even deepen the gaps

between those who have and those who do not. "Today, the increasing trends towards market-oriented economic and social policies again threaten to divide the struggle of the poor from those of working people" (CCCB, 1988: 318).

The 1980s marked an important shift in the perception of international development priorities worldwide. A neo-liberal approach to correct macroeconomic disequilibria, conditioned development in the South to adopt fiscal and financial policies, driven by a market-oriented ideology, which have had an immense social cost.³

In 1986, the Roundtable on Development: the Human Dimension, pointed out that "the economic and social costs of the adjustment process ... are under no circumstances justifiable or acceptable, even under the pretext of promoting growth" (UNDP, 1986: 5). This implies that "the human costs of the current processes are unacceptable from a humanitarian perspective. Nor can they be accepted from an economic perspective" (UNDP, 1986: 6).

There is little doubt now that the overall development impact of these measures will be felt well into the 1990s. However, a gap remains between the rhetorical recognitions of the dramatic impact of the pervading poverty in the South and the steps taken to addressing the problem. In the midst of a worldwide process of economic globalization, developing countries continue to struggle to strengthen a capital base for establishing competitive models of industrialization that could give them the room to enhance popular participation in decision-making and achieve greater social equity in a context of prudent environmental management (George, 1992: 171).

The combination of new development trends, increased globalization of the international economy which includes new trade liberalization models, and the formation of a strengthened

³ In the case of Latin America, the Inter-American Development Bank indicates that this approach focused primarily on "the adoption of monetary, financial and fiscal measures and the liberalization of the production apparatus, with a view to opening up the economies and allowing competitive and market forces to become the major mechanisms to ensure an improved allocation of resources" (IDB, 1993: 1). However, the same organization recognizes that "in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population, ... there is today more poverty in the region than at the beginning of the 1980s" (IDB, 1993: 1). This perception is reinforced by the assessment of the UNDP which argues that income distribution in the region is worse than in the rest of the developing world (UNDP, 1990).

coalition among industrialized countries to monitor a global political and economic scenario, have serious policy implications for most developing countries. "As we enter a world of open economies and globalized markets it is more important than ever that our countries define their own policies. Unless this is done, it is highly probable that increasingly, economic and political policies will be dictated from abroad. This trend affects some of the most crucial issues: the environment, the illicit traffic in drugs, disarmament, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and poverty" (Zumbado, 1993: 6).

Two Views of the Same Problem

The predominance of an economic rather than human development approach persists in conditioning developing countries to drastically restructure their economies as a means to establish appropriate incentives for economic growth. However, developing countries are often left with no options but to shift available resources away from social programs that are not perceived to have an immediate economic payoff.

"In a market-oriented society, human beings and social relations are largely defined in terms of the demand and supply forces of the marketplace. Economic and social policies are generally subjected to such market criteria as what is most "profitable," "productive," "competitive," and "efficient." Under these conditions, human labour, human needs, and services tend to be treated as commodities to be bought, sold, or exchanged in the marketplace" (CCCB, 1988: 318). In the attempts to explain the devastating micro impact of macro economic adjustment policies resulting from this approach, the argument continues to be made that despite the social costs, the overall result is still positive in the Pareto optimal sense that losers are compensated by the winners, still leaving a net gain.⁴

Missing is the understanding that without human development economic growth cannot begin,

⁴ "Considerable uncertainty remains about the human impact of adjustment, because of the analytical and methodological difficulties of measuring the effects of adjustment on the poor and on the social sectors" Behrman and Deolalikar, 1991: 292). However, the reality of the negative effects on the poor are visible in most countries.

and even less be sustained. "Reductions in expenditures on the social sectors ... will have long-term negative and sometimes irreversible effects on the productive potential of those economies" (UNDP, 1986: 7). Depriving large sectors of the population of equitable opportunities to access education, acceptable standards of health and nutrition, and the conditions for personal development that can lead to productive employment is economically inefficient, and short sighted in the long-term. "There is a requisite minimum of social spending below which it is impossible to prevent socioeconomic deterioration and degradation" (IDB, 1993: 31).

Poverty in some countries is reaching new depths and the gaps between rich and poor are becoming wider. The absolute number of poor people in many developing countries has increased dramatically. In many others the traditional middle class is disappearing and the number of families under the poverty line has grown compared to fifteen years ago. In some regions, like Latin America, this has assumed dramatic proportions.

In practice, adjustment policies dealing primarily with economic variables have ended in no more than maintaining the financial solvency of governments at best, and reducing the power of key sectors of the population to afford the goods and services required for maintaining minimum levels of well-being at worst. Central to this neo-liberal approach dealing with the development crisis has been the weak capacity of the State to govern and provide for the well-being of the population. Moving from State-centered policies towards market-oriented ones, creates a "perverse association (between the State and the economy) that privatises extraordinary profits and socializes all losses" (Portantiero, 1992:19). Under the prevailing trends of economic globalization promoted by industrialized countries, new forms of trade, economic protectionism, capital flows, and capital accumulation are set among the first public policy priorities. One of the immediate outcomes is the relegation of social policy concerns to a secondary place.

Opinions about how to deal with social reforms⁵ to combat poverty and underdevelopment are

⁵ "Social reform is defined as a process contributing to human development through the combination of policies and instruments aimed at efficiently involving all individuals in the growth process, in the context of a general improvement of their well being" (IDB, 1993: 1).

reflected by two views. In one of them, a predominantly economic argument maintains that the poor in developing societies can only be helped if countries break the barriers impeding opening the path towards general economic expansion in an efficient way, following the steps of developed nations. This argument promotes a shift in the responsibilities of the State to provide for human development. Guided by a philosophy of free enterprise, it places the responsibility of development on the private sector and on the poor themselves, claiming that micro political and economic participation and self-help approaches can overcome inefficiencies in government and structural inequalities in society. It focuses on two ways of action: "first, the building momentum towards the private sector as a preferred provider of a range of services and opportunities; and second, the devolution of decision-making control and authority from the federal to the state and local governments" (Watkins and Watkins, 1987: 16). Implicit in this view is the notion that in societies that have achieved higher levels of economic development with the State disengaged from the social sphere, the poor automatically enjoy greater equity in the distribution of wealth and receive a greater share of the benefits of growth.

The other view argues that by recognizing that the lack of political participation is one of the main causes of inequality and poverty, corrective measures like democratization, re-distribution of political power at various levels, and direct community involvement, will open the gate to the poor to access available wealth (Ascher, 1984). Little is known, however, about the social, cultural and organizational factors that may obstruct effective participation at the local and community levels, and about the structural difficulties that may exist among local government to manage social development programs.

These views risk, first, placing the achievement of short-term targets of economic growth as the primary goal of development, with the well-being of individuals and their capacities to carry out change being subsidiaries of economic and political decisions, and second, creating the illusion that an efficient State is the one that discharges all its responsibilities for correcting social inequalities to local levels of government.

The Changing Role of the State

The challenge of development in the 1990s is to bring into the center of the scenario new ways to ensure human development over the long-term. This requires revisiting some of the basic assumptions about economic development and the governance of society. There is an urgent need to place at the center of current development concerns the capacity of national and local governments and communities to design policies and implement measures that position economic interests at the service of social priorities.

There is a growing realization that "public policy is not synonymous with government provision, since there is clearly a role for local authorities as well as community action to help target scarce resources" (Ahmad, 1991: 106). The belief that effective social reforms which may contribute to human development are an essential complement to economic reforms and the maintenance of democracy, requires focusing on the alternatives to reform and modernize the State.

A new social agenda in development requires a fundamental re-thinking of the existing forms of governance, and the identification of new roles of the State that can generate enhanced forms of popular participation and social consensus. "Crisis does not always mean catastrophe. It means that old ways of thinking and acting are breaking down. While today's crisis has both economic and political causes, at its root it has a crisis of values. It challenges us to invent a new political culture with new forms of collective actions, which in turn could lead us to new modes of understanding" (Portantiero, 1992: 17).

Reforming the State, however, cannot stop at facilitating new forms of social participation. There are areas of responsibility that a reformed State must retain within a framework of improved efficiency. These include the "solution of social issues, the general financing of the actions of economic agents and the preservation of the operations of markets in terms that will prevent the concentration of economic power and the exclusion of the participation of all economic agents" (Iglesias, 1992).

Equally important is the implementation of effective changes in government management at all levels, beginning with the central government itself: "while there cannot be an efficient State without good government, good government is impossible without an appropriately reformed State" (IDB: 1993: ii). This requires decentralization; restoring confidence in the capacity of the State to manage public finances and spending; establishing accountability mechanisms; and enhancing its capacity to integrate social and economic policies. The relationship between economic and social policies is not a sequential one. Developing societies cannot afford to address macroeconomic and economic growth issues first, in isolation, and only later to deal with social and human development issues.⁶

Towards an Integrated View of Development

The lack of an integrated view of social and economic development makes development unsustainable over the long-term, by not placing the capacity of human beings at the center of social, scientific and economic change. The issue is not whether economic growth is a necessary component of development, but whom this economic growth is expected to serve. There is little doubt about the existence of a wide spread fiscal crisis. "What is open to question is the idea that the crisis can be resolved by dismantling social welfare policies. ... The roots of the fiscal crisis are to be found not in excessive social policies, but in other subsidies traditionally offered by ... governments" (Portantiero, 1992: 18).

The call to give social policies an equal strategic dimension as macroeconomic policies, by no means implies that current development strategies ignore in their discourse the individual as an ultimate target of their strategies. On the contrary, almost without exception in the discourse

⁶ Although most international financial organizations, including the IMF and the World Bank, are beginning to recognize the centrality of the "social side" of development, they still pursue a sequential rather than integrated approach to economic and social policies. The Managing Director of the IMF indicated that "economic growth and the implementation of sound macroeconomic policies are necessary conditions for social progress, and above all, for the reduction of poverty" (Camdessus, 1993: 2). The President of the World Bank argued that "a two-track approach is required for effective poverty reduction. First, there must be a pattern of efficient, long-term growth in which the poor can participate through their labour. Second, there must be investment in health, education and other social services so that the poor can respond to the opportunities created by growth" (Preston, 1993: 2).

of international development strategies as well as in the intentions of national development plans, the well-being of people is set as an ultimate goal. What is not always present, however, is the understanding of how such goal will be achieved in measurable terms. In practice, "priority in planning for development is still given to the economics rather than social matters of development projects" (Houghton, 1987: 14), making it practically impossible to identify the various degrees of impact of development plans on the poor.

Development strategies too often refer to the poor as an abstract homogenous notion which permits categorizing individuals as falling below a statistical line defined in economic terms. This view not only ignores the complexities and differences present in this sector of the society, but also places individuals at the recipient end of macroeconomic and political goals which may eventually translate into modernization, progress, scientific advancement or greater access to wealth. This approach has serious long-term implication for developing countries where the means and infrastructure to identify target groups, monitor the delivery of programs, and evaluate their impact is almost absent in the current State structure, and non-existent in the private sector or at the community level in a degree that could provide significant input into policy processes.

As industrialized countries move progressively towards a model of national development which implies dismantling the remaining aspects of a Welfare State, countries in the developing world are led to seek similar social development alternatives at a tremendously high social cost. Some of the results are the reduction of State social investments, the growing privatization of social services, and the setting of various models of user fees perceived by many as a feasible way to maintaining the provision of social benefits to the most needy. By taking steps such as these in the social arena, other liberalization measures are complemented, including "less-restrained free enterprise, thus reduced government intervention in the economic system, privatization of government-owned enterprises, encouragement of foreign investment through the maintenance of advantageous interest rates, and the reduction or elimination of trade barriers" (Irving and Rose, 1989: 142).

However, the aims of this framework are limited by short-term objectives and focused on the delivery side of a market driven social system not prepared to question the interfering role of existing patterns of capital accumulation on resource allocation. Social policies become thus only an additional component of a wider system of supply and demand regulated by the capacity of specific groups to deliver and acquire differential types of services, often localized and isolated by income boundaries. Primary health care, basic education, child care programs, the provision of shelter, and welfare options become in practice all de-universalized in their supply and competitive in their demand, or simply subsidiary to the most pressing political goals of the day. "The large differences that exist in social policy effort between industrial nations ... and Third World countries ..., covary with substantial differences in the level of benefits per capita or per recipient of social policy provisions, and with enormous differences in coverage ratios" (Schmidt, 1989: 642). The effects of current shifts in the provision of social benefits away from the State, will bring a progressive weakening of the already precarious social safety net upon which low-income sectors depend for their survival.

A new perception of development oriented towards reducing poverty by emphasizing the importance of social policy reforms needs to come to the realization that there is a fundamental difference between economic growth and human development. The later is not a direct outcome of the former in societies where social inequality is deeply rooted in the ethos of the polity and on cultural, gender and ultimately class differences. Ignoring such differences may lead to continued focus on economic policies in the expectation that their effects will trickle down and result in better living conditions, which in turn may end in the development of human capacities to carry out or influence social change.

In most developing countries, the emphasis on new forms of capital management without a State capable of regulating and correcting social imbalances risks widening even further the gaps in terms of access, quality and content of social policies, making them more selective in the short-term and less effective over the long-term. Changes in the provision of social services in basic health care and education, housing, sanitation, and child care without the capacity to determine the scope of social policy strategies and their specific beneficiaries can reduce even further the

groups that can benefit from, and place others outside, the coverage of key programs. Over time, this will leave a greater proportion of the poor unprotected and with fewer opportunities to influence decision-making processes.

If the poorer sectors do not have the participatory options to influence the public policy base of development strategies, key target groups, including women, children, indigenous people and the elderly will be left outside the actions and regulations to set and reach social goals, weakening even further the popular base of democracy, and the impact of strategies to address human development and redistributive actions. Thus, social policies, become vulnerable in their attempt to improve the development conditions of a society and prevent a wider social crisis (Silver, 1980: 17). By focusing on the capacity of societies to respond more fully to social demands, social policies and social policy-making are not reduced to residual effects of economic decision (Schmidt, 1989), and basic ethical principles of fairness in the allocation of social resources becomes part of the equitable development equation (Ismael, 1987).

There is little doubt that the changes needed in the perceptions of the "social side" of development and in the approaches of international organizations and governments to address social issues, are not only real, but are here to stay. Still largely undefined, there seems to be consensus that they are an integral part of a complex emerging new world order, with fewer and fewer ideological boundaries and very permeable geographical and economic borders. If this is the case, there is then an urgent need to find new approaches to address and solve the pervading issues impeding human development and perpetuating poverty. A new social policy agenda for research and action must be found to make development sustainable.

CONCLUSION

There is a growing feeling that social policies and programs formulated from a predominantly economic perspective and without due regard for human development have not succeeded in combating poverty. More often than not, policies to respond to crisis situations or to address

the basic needs of key target population groups have provided sectoral constrained alternatives, irrelevant provision programs, and ultimately contributed to entrenching patterns of powerlessness among key sectors of the population. In practice, from a policy stand point, meeting the social side of development has led to the adoption of reactive rather than strategic decision-making processes. At the national level, they have often lacked a comprehensive and systemic approach to integrate the outcomes of the social, cultural, economic and political processes by which individuals and groups can advance in their growth. In human development terms, decision-making processes have not contributed to the enhancement of the capacity to identify, organize, acquire, generate, and use knowledge for development. Nor have they enhanced people's choices to improve individual and collective capabilities to achieve higher levels of well-being, and the improvement of conditions to participate in local and national settings.

Moving towards an integrated view of social policies implies addressing them in a non-sectoral way and as a multi-dimensional series of political processes and actions designed, planned and implemented by key social institutions and actors to respond to basic needs over the long-term. In such a context, the aim of social policies is comprehensive rather than exclusive. They are designed, formulated and implemented primarily to generate the human development conditions that will improve the standard of living of the population, redistribute wealth, and facilitate the attainment of personal development and economic well-being.⁷ From a human development perspective, social policies thus approached, involve the strategic interaction of national and local level decisions across sectors and systems, programs and innovations. Ultimately, their purpose is to establish the human foundations on the basis of which other development policies and actions can take place.

This implies moving from a remedial approach to one in which social policies become pre-

⁷ In a policy framework, human development is a social process that manifests itself through the critical stages of an individual's life in the transition from birth to adulthood and the productive integration in society. It occurs in formal, nonformal and informal settings, cutting across topical problem-areas and issues. Socially, it is not the outcome of single sectoral actions or programs, but the result of integrated actions to satisfy basic needs.

requisites for other broader development actions. This, however, is easier to say than to achieve. To place social policies at the centre of the development agenda requires looking carefully at the social policy-making processes and the conditions required to make them more effective and efficient. Research that could lead to an understanding of **how, through what processes, by what means, and with what degree of success** social policy decisions are designed, applied, and evaluated becomes of great importance.

There is an urgent need to address issues dealing with the institutional capacity of societies to formulate and implement effective social policies. However, most developing countries lack the appropriate institutional social policy frameworks to design, apply, monitor and evaluate social policies and programs. They also lack the human, methodological and information resources to identify key target groups, assess priority needs, and measure efficiency in the delivery of programs. Strengthening policy-planning and management capacities at various government levels becomes a priority if decentralization in decision-making is to be successful. The design and evaluation of training programs and methods adapted to national and local conditions is a primary concern in this context.

Economic globalization is changing traditional ways of designing and implementing social policies. The new international economic environment places additional demands on governments already under domestic pressure for greater political participation and self-directed development strategies. This makes it even more difficult to formulate and implement locally-responsive, long-term social policies. There is a need to identify key research entry points. These may include the social and cultural impact and the viability of macro adjustment policies, the social and political dimensions of integration strategies, and the changing role of governments in policy-making.

Democracy as the basis for social governance is central to equitable social policy-making. However, globalization is challenging the traditional relationships between the State as a political and welfare institution and the civil society. Autonomous civil institutions are irreversibly changing the political process in many countries with far-reaching impacts on democratization,

development, human rights, and policy-making. There is a need for research to identify the role of civil institutions in defining social policy agendas, influencing public policy-making, and providing alternative models for the provision of social services. Research is also required to assist policy-makers and practitioners to identify successful innovations which enhance popular participation in policy-making, and to explore mechanisms for democratization and local participation.

Equally important are the planning means to operationalize equity. Issues of policy relevance and equity in access, use and outcome of services are fields in need of further exploration. This implies, in turn, setting national and local avenues for policy and program management; identifying mechanisms to increase popular participation in policy decision-making; exploring options for the financing of social programs and innovations; and developing indicators to assess degrees of impact and success. Applied multidisciplinary research on the content, planning, management, and outcomes of policies to meet basic needs, and fostering policy innovations to promote human development, and encourage grassroots solutions to poverty can play a critical role.

Enhancing participation in social policy decisions requires knowing more about the political viability of new policy initiatives and building on opportunities for developing social consensus not only at the national level but also at the level of local governments and communities. Understanding the interplay of cultural, economic, and institutional factors becomes crucial to setting viable social policy frameworks which are relevant to the needs of key target groups.

Developing countries urgently need to develop mechanisms to tap resources in cost-effective ways to maintain basic social services for the poor. This requires understanding existing social resource systems, their use, and the innovations that can be developed to complement them. It also requires paying greater attention to the relevance, quality and accessibility of services, particularly where rapid urbanization is taking place. Research should identify cost-effective and innovative financing to provide and deliver programs and services, explore the feasibility of partnerships among public, private, non-government and community sectors, assess equitable

means of cost recovery that do not jeopardize access to services, and examine the impact of resource redistribution among groups at risk. Research should also enhance the understanding of the social, economic and spatial factors affecting social services, and it should assist governments to incorporate the criterion of quality into social programs and to develop appropriate policies. This will entail developing low-cost methods of identifying groups at risk and monitoring social programs.

In addition to strengthening the conditions for effective social policy planning at various government levels, which may imply the development and adaptation of instruments and planning tools and the development of the capacities to use them, means must be put in place for policy monitoring and evaluation. This implies bringing into the social policy processes modern technology for developing reliable baseline information; adapting and applying methodologies for policy analysis; and establishing systems for follow-up and control of programs implementation.

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