

TST Issues Brief: Promoting Equality, including Social Equity¹

Introduction

Inequalities remain unacceptably high across all main dimensions of human life. Although economic inequalities can be difficult to measure, **inequalities in income and wealth** are clearly severe and have been widening globally². As for global wealth concentration, the richest 1% of the world's population now control up to 40% of global assets, while the poorest half owns just one per cent³. Income equality *between countries* is higher than that within a large majority of countries, such that individual incomes are still largely associated with a person's citizenship and location⁴. Income inequalities are also significant and growing *within many countries* and have become especially pronounced in Middle Income Countries and those which have moved out of Low Income status⁵. They have also increased recently in a number of developed countries⁶. However, some countries, including several in Latin America, have been able to reduce both economic and non-economic inequalities during the last decade.⁷

In terms of human development outcomes and related MDG targets, there is a more mixed picture. There are some areas of improvement, such as the gender ratio in primary school enrolment, access to mobile telephony and to treated bed nets. But **wide disparities have persisted** for many indicators **across groups of countries and regions**, with LDCs, parts of Africa and countries affected by or emerging from conflicts being furthest behind. Wide and often mutually reinforcing disparities are **also evident within countries**⁸, including in terms of: i) *rural/urban disparities*, as seen in widely differing rates of access to water and sanitation, maternal and child survival rates, access to quality education and reproductive health, child nutrition status; ii) *household wealth*, with, for example, children in the poorest quintiles twice as likely to die before age five as their counterparts in the richest households, and even more likely to be stunted; iii) *gender*, for indicators such as years of schooling, secondary and tertiary education, internet access, decent employment, earnings, social protection coverage, time spent on unpaid care work; iv) *ethnic minorities and indigenous people*; v) *migrant status*; and vi) *disability*⁹. The MDGs, in focusing largely on national averages, without addressing inequalities explicitly, may have led to perverse outcomes whereby already-marginalized groups have tended to be "left until last", thus exacerbating existing inequalities.

Widespread inequalities are also evident in access to natural resources and in terms of the impact of natural disasters and environmental hazards on different populations. These are often an

¹ This Issues Brief was co-authored by UNICEF, UN Women, UNDP and OHCHR, with contributions from UNEP, PBSO, DESA, ESCAP, IFAD, UN-Habitat, IOM, UNESCO, ILO, World Bank, UNAIDS, UNV, WFP, UNFPA, ITU, UNV, DPA, OHRLS, WTO and other agencies of the TST. It particularly complements the Issues Briefs on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and on Human Rights, including the Right to Development, among others.

² Isabel Ortiz and Matthew Cummins, 2011. *Global Inequality: Beyond the bottom billion – a rapid review of income distribution in 141 countries*. UNICEF New York. Note that a range of further references are available for this paragraph from UN, OECD and academic sources

³ UNRISD, 2013. *Inequalities and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. Geneva

⁴ Branko Milanovic, 2011. *The Haves and the Have-Nots*, Basic Books, New York

⁵ UNDP, 2013. *Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries*. New York

⁶ ILO, 2013, *World of Work report*, found that income inequalities rose between 2010 and 2011 in 14 of 26 advanced economies surveyed.

⁷ Nora Lustig, Luis F Lopez-Calva and Eduardo Lopez-Juarez, 2012. *Declining Inequality in Latin America in the 2000s*. Working Paper, Centre for Global Development

⁸ UNICEF databases at www.childinfo.org and other sources

⁹ Limited data are available on inequalities faced by disadvantaged minority groups, migrants and persons with disabilities – an indication of their marginalization. Global consultations in 2012-13 have generated a wealth of testimony from people among and working with these groups, available at www.worldwewant2015.org/inequalities

outcome of unsustainable management of natural resources and/or weakness in public policy (e.g. poor urban health and sanitation services), which work to the disadvantage of people who are already disproportionately dependent on the environment for their livelihoods. Imbalances in natural resource access are often worsened by insecurity of land tenure, including lack of recognition of collective tenure for rural communities – including indigenous peoples - and of equal inheritance rights and their practical implementation, especially among women. These are compounded by the impacts of climate instability and extreme weather events, which tend to fall most heavily on those with least resources to cope, including women and girls. And not least, the question of inter-generational equity, and the need for sustainable development to ensure essential resources and a habitable planet for future generations, is also urgent.

Stocktaking

The General Assembly in its resolution of 21 December 2012 (A/RES/67/230) expressed its concerns regarding inequality as a challenge for the achievement of the MDGs and that efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals often take inadequate account of the impact of inequality on development. It convened an informal thematic debate entitled “The role of United Nations in promoting a new global human order” to address the issue of inequality on 8 July 2013.

Recent discussions on the nature of inequalities, in the global consultations facilitated by the UN Development Group and other analytical work associated with the UN and civil society partners, have seen a high level of **consensus around findings that are key to understanding and tackling the challenge of inequalities** for sustainable and inclusive development. These are elaborated below.

Inequalities are largely driven and sustained by structural factors - both globally and within individual societies. Globally, these factors include the international drivers of current unequal economic growth, such as: the persistence of barriers that limit opportunities to benefit fully from international trade; weak employment growth in many countries, especially since the 2007 financial crisis; lack of international regulation of corporate and financial activities, including executive compensation and taxation arrangements; volatile commodity prices and weakly regulated markets. At the national level and within societies, driving factors commonly include rapid technological change favoring the highly educated and skilled, the weakening of labour market regulation and institutions (minimum wages, collective bargaining, labour protection and access to training), the reduction in the scope and coverage of social protection systems and floors (child grants, disability allowances, pensions) and increasingly regressive tax systems. Inequalities can also result from serious underinvestment in or policy neglect of certain geographic areas, sectors and population groups. Many inequalities result from discriminatory laws, policies and attitudes, often culturally rooted, that exclude certain groups from equitable participation in community life and from the wider benefits of development. Long-entrenched discrimination and exclusion, as well as violence, insecurity and other denials of human rights, often create or exacerbate existing inequalities. The Global Thematic Consultation on *Addressing Inequalities* concluded that inequalities cannot be effectively and sustainably reduced unless their underlying causes are tackled¹⁰.

Inequalities are multiple-dimensional and intersecting in nature - spanning the economic, social, political, legal, cultural and environmental spheres. Intersecting inequalities reinforce the

¹⁰ UNICEF and UN Women, 2013, *Addressing Inequalities, Synthesis Report of Global Public Consultation*

deprivations faced by specific groups and individuals, and are closely related to marginal status in society – e.g. based on gender, ethnicity, location, age, disability and indigenous identity¹¹. Multiple inequalities are reinforced in turn by dominant ideologies, political and socio-economic marginalization, and, often, group stereotyping and various forms of discrimination and violence. Pervasive examples are the many forms of gender-based violence and the widespread denial to marginalized women and adolescents of access to services for the realization of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. In some cases, young people are also widely excluded from opportunities to fully participate in the social and economic life of their societies, despite an expansion of access to education. Exclusion, discrimination and violence not only have highly negative impacts on the development progress of the people affected and of their societies, but are also contrary to legal obligations under international human rights treaties and intrinsically objectionable on moral grounds, based on common notions of justice and fairness.

Inequalities of opportunity and of outcomes cannot be fully separated: poor outcomes undermine future opportunities. Where outcomes are highly unequal – for example in terms of educational and income status among poor families, women and other caregivers – there is strong evidence that these unequal outcomes are transmitted from parents to children, compromising life-opportunities in the next generation. The circumstances of birth, determined by pre-existing outcomes among adults, have highly significant impacts on the development of peoples’ capabilities from the earliest days and years of life, well before they reach school-going age¹². These impacts on capabilities - via poor health, stunting, the process of brain development and learning - are often cumulative, irreversible and lifelong¹³. In addition, learning achievement in schools in many countries often is so poor¹⁴ that schooling cannot fully reverse the inequalities of early life nor help to equalize opportunities and capabilities among young people.

Inequalities matter not only for social justice, but also for reducing poverty and for development that is sustainable. Inequalities will need to be systematically addressed if the emerging aspirations of the post-2015 development agenda are to be realized for all. There are several major ways in which inequalities have hindered progress towards MDGs and have crucial implications for the new agenda:

- *The persistence of major inequalities makes the eradication of extreme poverty and the full attainment of universal (“zero-based”) goals especially challenging.* Inequalities, and the barriers associated with them, reduce *both* the efficiency of economic growth for income-poverty reduction *and* the efficiency of growth and public spending for improving social service coverage and social outcomes, including for survival, learning and nutrition¹⁵. A *combination* of stronger growth across countries and more equal income and consumption shares within countries is needed, if extreme poverty is to be eradicated¹⁶. And reducing inequalities by focusing public investments specifically on socially marginalized, low-income

¹¹ See Naila Kabeer, 2010, Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities. Institute of Development Studies, Univ. of Sussex

¹² Save the Children, 2012. *Born Equal: how reducing inequality could give our children a better future.* London

¹³ Martin Woodhead, Paul Dornan, Helen Murray, 2012. *What Inequality means for children: Evidence from Young Lives.* University of Oxford/Open University, UK

¹⁴ Lant Pritchett, 2013. *The Rebirth of education: Schooling ain't learning.* Center for Global Development

¹⁵ Save the Children, 2013. *Getting to Zero: how we can be the generation that ends poverty.* London

¹⁶ See Laurence Chandy et al, 2013, *The Final Countdown: Prospects for Ending Extreme Poverty by 2030.* Brookings Institution.

and deprived groups – who are mostly concentrated in rural and remoter areas and also in urban slums – and on countries with special needs, can unlock productive potential and accelerate progress for a range of development outcomes^{17 18}.

- *Inequalities in themselves tend to shut people out from opportunities.* Inequalities correlate closely with political marginalization, as well as underemployment, and are underpinned by various forms of discrimination and social exclusion. People and groups in such positions often have limited influence on public decision-making; may have weaker ability to access decent work opportunities, credit and information, and public services, such as good schools and health facilities; and may face higher barriers to using recourse and justice mechanisms.
- Inequalities and associated exclusions can also undermine *individuals' sense of well being, self-worth and aspiration*¹⁹ – leading, often particularly among young people, to resignation, poor learning and dropout, mental and psychological health problems and criminalization.
- Inequalities *increase the risk of violent conflict.* Horizontal inequalities among ethnic or other social groups – whether economic, political, cultural or related to access to justice, public goods or natural resources – can heighten grievances, increasing the risk of instability and violent conflict in diverse settings²⁰. Inequalities are also *a main driver of internal and international migration*: people forced to leave their home under the pressure of marginalization and discrimination may often resort to irregular migration and become victims of exploitation and abuse.
- *Inequalities harm not only the people who themselves are also most deprived, but also their wider societies* – by threatening the stability and sustainability of economic growth²¹; depriving countries of productive human capital and entrepreneurial talent, for example in cases of widespread exclusion of women and girls²², minority groups or persons with disabilities; undermining the ability of people living in extreme poverty to contribute to economic growth and environmental preservation; and reducing social cohesion and mutual trust as a basis for economic, social and political contracts. There is now wide consensus that empirical evidence does not support the idea of an inevitable trade-off between economic growth and equality. If anything, gross inequalities tend to hinder the robustness of growth, as well as its inclusiveness and its sustainability. The policy implications are significant: societies can reduce inequalities and improve the livelihoods of their poorest households while at the same time strengthening the resilience and sustainability of economic growth.

Overview of Proposals

¹⁷ See UNICEF, 2010. *Narrowing the Gaps to Reach the Goals*. New York

¹⁸ OHRLLS, 2013, *State of the Least Developed Countries 2013, Productive Capacity in the Least Developed Countries and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. New York

¹⁹ See Woodhead et al, op.cit

²⁰ Henk-Jan Brinkman, Larry Attree and Sasa Hezir, 2013. *Addressing horizontal inequalities as drivers of conflict in the post-2015 development agenda*. Mimeo

²¹ Andrew Berg and Jonathan Ostry, 2011. *Inequality and Unsustainable Growth: Two sides of the same coin?* IMF Staff Discussion Note

²² For example, women and girls may be prevented by their society and by cultural, linguistic and affordability barriers from accessing the Internet or owning a mobile phone. The ITU estimates that there were 200 million fewer women online than men by mid-2013.

The existing international commitments on advancing equality for all are extensive. They include the recognition of “the collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity” in the UN Millennium Declaration (2000); the deep concern expressed in GA Resolution 65/1 “*Keeping the Promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals*” (2010) regarding the challenge of “inequalities between and within countries”, which also committed to accelerating progress by “addressing the root causes of the inequalities, disparities and diverse forms of exclusion and discrimination affecting children”; and the reaffirmation by the Outcome Document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (2012) of “the need to achieve economic stability and sustained economic growth, promotion of social equity and protection of the environment, while enhancing gender equality and women’s empowerment, and equal opportunities for all, and the protection, survival and development of children to their full potential ...”.

These commitments are further underpinned by the set of widely, in most cases almost-universally, ratified UN treaties and conventions which are founded on the **human rights standards and principles of universality, indivisibility, equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability**. A clear view emerged during the UNDG-led global consultation on Addressing Inequalities that future responses to inequalities should be guided by human rights. This implies using human rights principles and standards to frame the way in which the post-2015 agenda integrates issues of equality, as well as social equity, as a concept of justice and fairness.

Among recent proposals specific to the post-2015 development agenda, *the report of the High Level Panel (HLP) to the Secretary-General* (2013), while emphasizing the role of national policy in finding answers to inequalities, proposed a transformative shift in development that would “**leave no one behind**”; as well as the **systematic disaggregation of relevant indicators** by multiple characteristics for all goals. It recommended that “targets will only be considered achieved if they are met for all relevant income and social groups”.

“We should ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities. We should design goals that focus on reaching excluded groups, for example by making sure we track progress at all levels of income, and by providing social protection to help people build resilience to life’s uncertainties.” – HLP Executive Summary

The HLP did not explicitly advocate substantive equality, which would require levelling-up measures. However, the Panel did call for the integration of equality of opportunity – and major aspects of its underlying drivers such as non-discrimination, recognizing the differentiated needs of women, men, girls and boys, and the elimination of violence - into *all* relevant goal and target areas across the dimensions of Sustainable Development. In some areas, universal approaches, using “100%” or “zero-based” targets, would amount to equitable aspirations. The Panel suggested that other targets may be “partial” in nature, where universal attainment by, say, 2035 is not yet considered feasible. Two main concerns have been expressed about this approach: the use of universal targets may still “leave to last” the worst-off groups, with inequalities continuing to rise. Secondly, partial targets can be met at national level without being met for the most deprived groups or areas within a country. **The use of additional or intermediate²³ targets to reduce inequalities has therefore been proposed to help ensure that no one is left behind and that inequalities are actually being addressed.** These

²³ See: Kevin Watkins (2013). *Inequality as a barrier to human development*. Overseas Development Institute, UK

could include targets to specify required rates of progress among nationally-identified deprived population groups, and/or targets to specify the extent to which inequalities between groups or locations should be reduced²⁴.

There are divergent views on whether the recommendations of the HLP sufficiently addressed the tackling of inequalities. Recommendations from the global thematic consultation on Addressing Inequalities and a number of other proposals have called for the new Agenda to *go further, by including a self-standing goal on inequalities*²⁵. Such a goal would, on various formulations, include targets on global and national income distribution²⁶, as well as targets on eliminating social discrimination among groups suffering from intersecting inequalities and/or reducing the gaps between specific disadvantaged groups and the rest of the population²⁷. An income-based inequalities target, together with complementary social equity targets – e.g. on access to decent work, wage share of GDP, human development outcomes and elimination of multiple forms of discrimination - could also be included within a broader goal relating to poverty and inequalities. Targets on *global income inequalities* have also been proposed, such as reducing the global Palma ratio or that each country reaches at least the next World Bank income category by 2030²⁸. International inequalities could also be addressed through a strengthened set of targets and indicators for a more equitable global system in relation to trade, investment, debt relief, technology transfer and global governance.

A further way in which inequalities can be tackled is by using *monitoring systems, such as dash boards, which incorporate disaggregated targets and specified indicators relevant to deprived groups and areas*. These can help ensure a consistent focus on addressing inequalities in policy-setting, programme design and progress reviews, including local and municipal institutions in partnership with civil society. Methods for the practical measurement of inequalities include strengthening current household surveys and vital registration systems with more extensive disaggregation of data and data collection on poorly-covered populations. These could progressively be combined with tracking, performance and progress monitoring using “new data” from, e.g., crowd-sourcing, social audits and citizen report cards, thereby enhancing participation and accountability. An enabling environment ensuring access to information, freedom of expression and the right to association would be essential for inclusive and effective participation in such social accountability mechanisms.

Further attention is needed to methods by which concerns for intergenerational equity can be taken into account by the new Agenda. The Sustainable Energy for All initiative²⁹ is an example of a “universal” approach which addresses both poverty and aspects of sustainability, in the context of natural resource limits. This could be extended to “target mixes” in goal areas such as sustainable water and sanitation for all, food security and nutrition for all³⁰. Targets directly focussing on

²⁴ See Edward Anderson, 2013. *Inequality Measurement and Options for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. Paper commissioned by OHCHR, which contains a detailed discussion of these and other options.

²⁵ For example: Lars Engberg-Pedersen, 2013. *Development goals post 2015: Reduce Inequality*. Danish Institute for International Studies

²⁶ Options for assessing national income distribution include the Gini coefficient, the Palma ratio (the income share of the top 10% to the bottom 40%), general entropy indices, and Atkinson’s inequality measures.

²⁷ See Edward Anderson, op cit.

²⁸ Sustainable Development Solutions Network Leadership Council (2013): *An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development (Report for the UN Secretary-General)*

²⁹ <http://www.sustainableenergyforall.org>

³⁰ See: Claire Melamed and Emma Samman, 2013. *Equity, Inequality and Human Development in a Post-2015 Framework*. UNDP Human Development Report Office, New York

environmental preservation or damage reduction would also have positive inter-generational equity effects.

Ways Forward – Options for how to address inequalities in the post-2015 agenda

With growing socio-economic inequalities and the concentration of deprivation in geographic sub-areas and among identifiable population groups, it is essential that the post-2015 agenda fully address disparities and promote equity-focussed policies and measures that tackle both the manifestations of inequalities and their structural drivers, while focusing both on the people and countries which are furthest from achieving internationally agreed development goals. As discussed earlier, such policies and measures should be underpinned by human rights standards and principles, including of equality and non-discrimination.

More specifically, inequalities could be addressed in the post-2015 agenda through:

- 1) Setting tailored targets and disaggregating data in order to address inequalities within all goals, targets and indicators:** Disaggregation of data will help measure the gaps between social and economic groups and identify who is being left behind. Setting targets to reduce these gaps (e.g. in health and education outcomes, in incomes and employment) will ensure that the most deprived are not “left until last”. This will further help to focus attention on and address direct and indirect discriminations between groups that underpin inequalities. Data should be disaggregated by at a minimum by age, sex, location, ethnicity, income quintiles and disability. Other highly disadvantaged groups could be identified through national specification (e.g. caste, indigenous peoples, migrants, etc.), based on fully consultative processes and taking account of the standards of ratified human rights instruments and treaties³¹. The disaggregation of data will depend partially on availability but, where data are currently limited, improving data coverage and dissemination may be necessary, as part of a wider “data revolution”, to cover important gaps. It will be important that data is disaggregated both for indicators on access (e.g. to health care services, education and employment) and also on outcomes (e.g. child and maternal mortality, stunting, healthy life expectancy) among different groups. Targets should be set in a way that inequalities are progressively reduced and minimum standards raised over the time period of the goals, rather than leaving the reduction of inequalities to the end. This can be done by setting *additional or intermediate*³² *targets to reduce inequalities and raise floors focusing* on the rates of progress of identified deprived groups, or on the reduction of specific inequalities³³.
- 2) Integrating a focus on inequality throughout all the goals, targets and indicators.** This would mean prioritising inequality in the choice and design of goals, targets and indicators, choosing goals, targets and indicators that directly reflect specific dimensions of income and non-income inequalities (e.g. a poverty Goal could have a more explicit focus on reducing income inequalities and inequalities between groups, e.g. gender-wage and nutrition gaps). Indicators should also enable the monitoring of progress in enabling the full, active and

³¹ See: UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2013. *Statistics and Indicators for the post-2015 Development Agenda*, New York. This provides very useful guidance on disaggregation.

³² See: Kevin Watkins, op cit.

³³ See: Edward Anderson, op cit.

meaningful participation of disadvantaged groups in decision-making and the accountability of decision-makers to them, as measures of the extent to which human rights standards on the quality and inclusiveness of development processes are being met.

- 3) **Incorporating a self-standing goal on reducing inequalities:** In addition, it would be useful to include a self-standing goal that focuses on inequality issues. As others have suggested, this could include a focus on global and national income inequalities as well as addressing the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and social practices. It could also encourage *a range of policy and programme options* to promote greater equality and social equity – ranging from empowerment of excluded groups to legal reform, resource transfer programmes, land reform and affirmative and anti-discrimination measures in the economic, workplace, educational and political spheres (such as secondary school stipends for girls) – which have shown success in different contexts³⁴.
- 4) **Incorporating monitoring tools that focus attention on addressing inequalities:** The MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) and Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (MoRES) help to *identify bottlenecks to including the most disadvantaged groups and actions for eliminating the barriers that exclude them*. Such tools support the design of tailored, country-and-context-specific strategies, based on local, disaggregated data and information, and on analysis of trends among deprived populations and of the capacity gaps that need to be addressed for the fulfilment of their rights. The monitoring of exclusion and discrimination by these tools can be carried out with the participation and co-leadership of those who are themselves most affected. In addition, international human rights mechanisms can be engaged in ways that support and provide guidance to the addressing of inequalities and discrimination in the context of national development policies, strategies and budgets.
- 5) **Integrating a focus on addressing inequalities for sustainability:** This could include systems and coherent cross-sectoral measures that build *resilience against shocks and ensure the protection and rights* of specific groups at risk from insecurity, denial of or insecure access to natural resources, disasters, conflict, gender-based and other forms of violence, e.g. through the introduction of legal and institutional mechanisms that empower and build the capacities of marginalized people in decision-making over natural resources; and through measures to ensure transparency, equity and the integration of social and environmental sustainability concerns in policies for the use of land, water and other key assets.
- 6) **Incorporating a focus on inclusive and sustainable economic growth and more equitable global and national economic systems:** This could include measures for reducing inequalities on a global as well as inter-country scale, and in terms of national development:
 - *At the Global level, more equitable* international economic systems could imply a strengthened set of targets and indicators that cover measures such as: the abolition of tax havens; stronger regulation of global finance; more needs-based allocation of development finance; improved market access opportunities and trade capacity-building initiatives; job-friendly economic growth strategies; and incentives for innovation, access and diffusion of

³⁴ See the *Addressing Inequalities Consultation Synthesis Report* for further examples.

technologies, including reforms to intellectual property regimes where needed, for example to ensure access to essential medicines. Such targets and indicators should give due attention to countries with special needs and could be integrated into an overall goal on Global Partnerships.

- *At the National level*, *goals, targets and indicators* could emphasise inclusive and sustainable economic growth processes that directly address inequality e.g. through macroeconomic and fiscal policies that prioritize real income gains at the “tail end” of the income distribution (e.g. earned-income tax credit; VAT exemptions on basic food and clothing); decent job creation leading to full employment; policies to support fair rewards to labour, including the protection of informal work and ensuring effective compliance with minimum wage, collective bargaining and anti-discrimination legislation; widely accessible infrastructure, including energy and information technology; domestic and care services to support and redistribute unpaid care work; progressive, gender-sensitive land reform programmes and equitable, transparent distribution of productive resources; formal recognition of the multiple values of traditional lands and natural resources for livelihoods and cultures; sustained investment and enabling policies for sectors where poor families are concentrated, such as smallholder agriculture; and the promotion of enterprises owned by and employing women, young people, persons with disabilities, indigenous and disadvantaged minority groups.

- 7) **Stepping up well-focused public investments in people’s capabilities which have powerful equalizing as well as poverty-reducing effects, as a central component of sustainable development.** These include³⁵: early childhood nutritional, income and parent support interventions among low-income families; quality, pupil-oriented, inter-cultural, compulsory and free basic education; access to sexuality education and reproductive health information and services for adolescents and young people; protection of children against all forms of violence and the empowerment of girls and young women; civic engagement mechanisms and pathways to promote the social inclusion of people who are disconnected from community life and to enable them to build societal networks, social capital and self-worth; well-designed, progressively-universal nationally-defined social protection floors and broader systems, including resources transfers that prevent social exclusion and ensure that all people have access to essential goods and services, including affordable and nutritious food; improved water and sanitation, which have major impacts on disease reduction, as well as on labour burden reduction particularly for women and girls; universal-access public health and disease-eradication measures; quality infrastructure in remote, rural and urban slum areas, including roads, mass sanitation and energy; gender-responsive anti-discrimination legislation and policies, including in the labour market; extending banking and credit access to poorer and excluded groups; and investment in skills, knowledge and supporting technologies to meet new challenges in agriculture and other production sectors.
- 8) **Tackling the structural drivers of inequalities, beyond equality of opportunity and access to basic services alone.** *These underlying drivers* – often including legal or social-cultural discrimination, biases in public investments and access to resources, human insecurity and

³⁵ Many of these pro-equity public investments are discussed in more detail in other TST Issues Briefs.

protection failures - *will need also to be explicitly addressed in each context*. Policies for tackling exclusion, for example through fully-inclusive education, will be key. Levelling-up and protection measures may also be needed, linked to the dismantling of specific forms of socio-cultural discrimination and exclusion, for substantive equality to be achieved.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that at global, as well as national and sub-national levels, *the specific ways in which targets are formulated and indicators used for the new Agenda, and the methods adopted for their measurement, including disaggregation by key characteristics*, will play a central role in *providing incentives* to address inequalities. These features will guide investments in data, the focus of policy discussions and progress reviews, and the analysis of interim and final targeted outcomes from an equality and social equity perspective.

At the same time, *effective and participatory accountability mechanisms* will be needed to underpin the full implementation of measures to promote equality. *Increasing peoples' access to information* about service delivery performance standards, budget decisions, the use of public funds and corporate business practices, including through the use of information and communication technologies and online services, can empower deprived populations and help address underlying factors of accountability, transparency and participation, with strong impacts for more equitable and inclusive development.