

## COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

### UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

#### Working Group on Social Inclusion

##### Declaration of principles and the importance of cities:

We can take as our basis the remarks made by Habitat in the State of the World's Cities 2006/7 report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and urban sustainability. In dealing with MDG 1, a number of points are made in the report on how cities can play an important part in achieving the MDGs:

- Cities can act as catalysts in reducing poverty and generating wealth and the economic opportunities required to enable the MDGs to be achieved.
- Urbanisation indices are linked to income levels and high standards in indicators such as health and education. It is more likely that the MDGs will be achieved in cities. In addition, urban economic growth lays the foundations for each city to be able to contribute to attaining the MDGs, particularly in the area of poverty reduction.
- Cities and irregular housing are always the “first step” away from rural poverty. The rural poor move to the city, where there are more job opportunities and better services, such as health and education.
- Poverty is shifting to cities. In the next 20 years, more than 95% of the population will grow up in the poorest regions of the world. This will occur in urban areas and, as a result, cities will become the places where poverty is predominantly concentrated in the coming years.
- Malnutrition, hunger and disease are becoming increasingly frequent in shanty towns, especially in developing countries. As hunger in cities is directly related to income (rather than agricultural output), the urban poor are more vulnerable to income-dependent hunger than their rural counterparts.

## The concept of exclusion and social inclusion policies

It is today accepted that social inequalities can no longer solely be measured by means of economic and financial criteria, although such criteria remain crucial, both analytically and politically. There are other factors that the traditional concept of poverty does not encompass, such as job insecurity, poor education and training, disability and dependence, the burden of care work in the home and discrimination on the grounds of gender, the fracturing of community relations, the breaking of the ties of affection and the fissures in society based on ethnicity and culture.

It is possible to define social exclusion as the process whereby certain individuals and groups are systematically blocked from acceding to positions that would allow them to subsist independently in levels of society determined by the institutions and the values of a given context.<sup>1</sup>

This definition demonstrates the diverse, dynamic and process-related reality of social exclusion. Situations of exclusion may vary depending on education, demographic characteristics, social prejudices, corporate practices, public policies and other grounds. The factors behind this are varied—gender, age, ethnic origin, disability, type of home and social class—in keeping with the greater complexity of the structure of society today. Social exclusion also manifests itself in numerous ways: failure at school, job insecurity, weak ties of affection, poor housing and excessively frequent illnesses, to mention but a few examples, are situations that tend to occur frequently in the lives of people who are socially excluded.

Within this theme, it is our intention not only to examine the issue of social exclusion but also the policies of social inclusion, which will result in us pondering on the issue of the foundations of an inclusive society. Individual growth requires us to participate fully in three key areas of the social dynamic:

- Finance and income, which presuppose a connection with employment and the range of tasks that make one socially useful and subject to the redistribution implemented by the public powers-that-be.

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<sup>1</sup> Castells, Manuel (1998), *La era de la información. Economía, sociedad y cultura*, vol. 3. Madrid: Alianza Editorial (1st edn. 1997), pp. 97-99. For a more detailed view, see: Instituto de Gobierno y Políticas Públicas de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (2003), *Un paso más hacia la Inclusión Social*, Madrid, Ed. Plataforma de ONGs de Acción Social; and Subirats, Joan (ed.) (2004), *Pobresa i exclusió social. Una anàlisi de la realitat espanyola i europea*, Barcelona, Fundació La Caixa.

- Politics and citizenship, which involve an ability to participate politically, as well as effective access to social rights.
- Relationships and bonds, which are closely linked to the relations of reciprocity inherent in the family and to community-type social networks.

A possible list of inclusive public policies might include:<sup>2</sup>

1. The universalisation of social services and basic incomes.
2. Better quality employment and efforts to combat exclusion from work.
3. The promotion of social housing and the integral regeneration of neighbourhoods.
4. Social and health policies that are integral and preventive in character.
5. Community and integral education policies and policies to combat the digital divide.
6. Citizenship and interculturalism.
7. Gender equality.
8. Cradle-to-grave policies: infancy, teenage years and the elderly and vulnerable.
9. The promotion of community networks involved in social action.

### Proposed core themes

In order to implement these policies, we could pursue the following core themes in our work in the Committee on Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy (CSIPD):

- Integrated work on social policies, which requires as its starting point a holistic view of social problems.
- Transversality in arriving at responses, thereby cutting across the boundaries between the various agents, in the authorities or otherwise, that work with people. The themes of health, education, social assistance, childhood, youth, etc. all need to be tackled in a co-ordinated manner by the authorities to ensure that social policies have a greater impact.
- Participation of the beneficiaries, meaning that the various social agents and professionals need to implement an all-encompassing inclusion policy in order to fully involve citizens in the requisites of an inclusive society. This is especially important if we bear in mind the fact that excluded people are not a single body with a political voice, in

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<sup>2</sup> Subirats (2004), p. 146.



other words, they are not a unified collective that can be mobilised to demand all kinds of goods or rights.

- Links between institutions, which will allow national, regional and local policies to combat hunger and poverty to be co-ordinated.
- Combating hunger and poverty by pursuing goal 1 of the MDGs and its targets, which are, between 1990 and 2015, to reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
- Protecting public services in cities as a principle so that the majority will benefit.