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## **The African Social Development Index**

### **Measuring human exclusion for structural transformation**

#### **Executive summary**

Despite two decades of fast and sustained economic growth, Africa is yet to translate its economic gains into meaningful social development outcomes. Profound inequalities persist in many countries, and growth has not been sufficiently inclusive and equitable for all segments of the population. As a result, exclusion has become a challenge for Africa's future development, and there is wide recognition that Africa's transformation will only be successful and sustainable if it is also inclusive – ensuring that each and every individual reaps the benefits of growth and participates in the social and economic development of the country.

The African Social Development Index (ASDI) to measure exclusion in Africa is proposed in response to a special request from member States of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) that an African tool be developed to capture the continent's current and specific social challenges, while helping them to develop more inclusive and equitable policies. It is built on an important premise that social development should be reflected in improved human conditions. Too often, the focus is on measuring the contextual elements of social development, such as improved service delivery or increased investments in social sectors, which are expected to have a positive impact on livelihoods. Translating these contextual factors into concrete outcomes at an individual level, however, comes with challenges. Following a life-cycle approach, the ASDI aims to measure the impact of social policies on human exclusion in six key areas: survival, health, education, employment, productive income and decent life. One of its key features is that it can provide

\* The Specialized Technical Committee replaces the Conference of African Ministers of Economy and Finance (CAMEF) and the Conference of African Ministers of Integration (COMAI). The Specialized Technical Committee brings together ministers of finance, monetary affairs, economic planning and integration.

measurements across time and can be disaggregated by gender and geographical location, thus helping to capture patterns of exclusion and inequality within and between countries.

The Index has been developed for and together with ECA member States through a highly consultative process, taking into account Africa's current and emerging social challenges. It is a simple, intuitive policy tool that African countries can use to plan and improve the effectiveness of their social policies. As such, it is intended to enhance Africa's capacity to develop policy options that can contribute to the building of more inclusive and equitable societies on the continent.

In this sense, the ASDI provides an effective policy tool for African countries to accelerate their progress toward inclusive development and set the agenda for social transformation on the continent. As a monitoring mechanism, the ASDI can be instrumental in increasing regional and global commitments to social and human development, through instruments such as the African Social Policy Framework and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. It also dovetails with the priorities spelled out in the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Common African Position on the post-2015 development agenda, where the issues of inequality and exclusion have been given prominence.

## **Introduction**

### **The paradox of growth in Africa**

1. Over the last decade or so, African countries have experienced unprecedented economic growth and have shown resilience in the face of the global downturn that has affected most of the world's economies. Growth on the continent has averaged over 5 per cent – with some countries posting 7 per cent to 11 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) growth in recent years. Despite this remarkable stride, the continent is yet to transform its economies and achieve the level of social development registered in other regions. Indeed, growth has not been sufficiently inclusive and equitable for all segments of the population. The continent is still fraught with vertical and horizontal inequalities caused by differences in factors such as income, ethnicity, gender, age and disability. Unemployment, especially among young people, is deepening, while basic social services remain highly inadequate and inaccessible to many people across the continent.

2. The dominant view is that Africa has for a long time focused on economic growth with the expectation that improvements in social development would follow. Yet the region is facing its strongest challenges in meeting the needs of its most vulnerable and excluded groups of the population. Poverty is still rampant in many regions, and vulnerable employment is widespread, especially among women and youth. In 2012, youth unemployment reached 84.9 per cent for women and 70.6 per cent for men in the region, a gap that has widened over the past two decades (International Labour Organization, 2013). Poorer children in Africa are also about two and a half times more likely to be underweight than children in the wealthiest 20 per cent of households, and young adolescents from the poorest households are up to three times more likely to be out of school than those from the richest households (United Nations, 2012). Such forms of inequality need to be tackled, as they are likely to impair long-term development. At the same time, limited social protection in many countries exacerbates the exclusion of the most marginalized groups of the population. These groups, in addition to having limited access to social and economic opportunities, are also more vulnerable to external shocks, reducing their productive capacities and pushing them further into poverty and exclusion.

3. Ensuring equitable and inclusive growth in Africa has therefore become an urgent development priority and a condition for building more sustainable and cohesive societies. There is, however, a technical gap in measuring the impacts that policy actions and strategies are having on individual livelihoods. Policy interventions based on aggregate figures are not conducive to optimum decision-making, and the absence or inadequacy of relevant data and monitoring mechanisms in social areas leads to weak policy formulation and planning.

### **Need for an inclusive structural transformation**

4. Social development has emerged as a central plank of economic development on the continent. The need for an inclusive and transformative growth strategy has been firmly expressed by African leaders (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), 2013). This takes on further resonance in the context of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the emerging post-2015 development framework, whose vision is anchored on the priorities of a sustainable and inclusive transformation.

5. Inclusive growth is a key driver of social development. At the 1995 World Summit on Social Development, held in Copenhagen, world leaders acknowledged the importance of social inclusion and integration to achieving sustainable development worldwide. For the first time, there

was a shift from a simple model of deprivation to a holistic one of human poverty, social exclusion and participation. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in 2012, global leaders renewed their commitment to promote social integration through more cohesive and inclusive societies.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in the aftermath of the Rio Conference, the need to tackle social exclusion as an objective *per se* has started to gain much resonance in development discourse.

6. At the regional level, African Governments have also become increasingly aware of the centrality of social inclusion in the continent's development agenda. This is reflected in the Windhoek Declaration and in the 2008 Social Policy Framework for Africa, the latter of which has been instrumental in advancing the priorities of the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme in social and human development across the continent. African countries have also undertaken actions to tackle specific social issues, using platforms such as the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Ouagadougou Plan of Action, the Abuja Declaration and the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing.

7. For a number of reasons, however, the implementation of these commitments has not led to the desired outcomes. First, until recently, the challenge of social inclusion, and how it could be addressed and incorporated into national development plans and strategies was not generally understood (ECA, 2009). Second, social inclusion has, so far, not been explicitly dealt with in any of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, capacity gaps persist and mechanisms for assessing social inclusion in Africa are lacking, leading to inadequate statistical follow-up and social policy formulation.

8. To respond to these challenges, member States requested the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), during the second session of the Committee on Human and Social Development, held in 2011, to develop the African Social Development Index, as a tool for monitoring social outcomes and improving their capacity to implement appropriate inclusive policies. The Index also responds to the ongoing debate on the global and regional post-2015 development agendas, where the role played by social inclusion and equality in development has been given prominence.

### **A new paradigm for inclusive development**

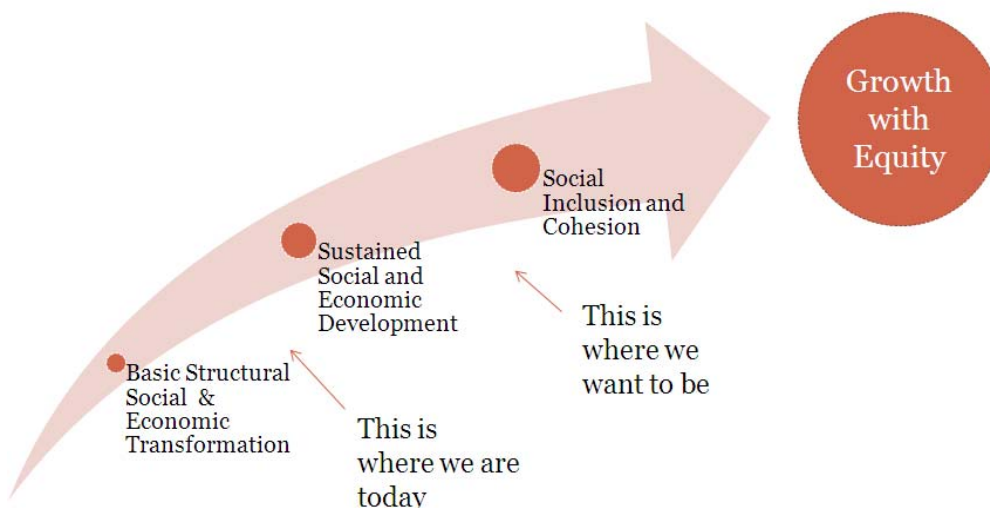
9. Human exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon whose contours are difficult to define, unless a clear framework is established on how it should be assessed and what aspects should be covered in that process. There is a clear recognition, however, that, notwithstanding strong economic growth, exclusion in any society is more likely to deter human and social development. This is indeed what the continent is currently experiencing, with sustained economic growth yet an inability to ensure an inclusive and equitable distribution of the benefits of that growth across its populations. More so, evidence is showing that the pace of progress towards inclusive development in Africa is too slow and that the drivers of that process are too limited to meet the needs of its populations. This increases vulnerability to external shocks, particularly for the poorest groups of the population. It is therefore critical to ensure that these groups play an active role in the development process, so as to accelerate the transition toward more sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Inclusive society was defined as "a society for all, in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play". Such a society is based on the fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, human rights and freedoms. It should also be equipped with appropriate mechanisms that enable its citizens to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and shape their common future (United Nations, 1995).

Figure 1

**From basic structural transformation to growth with equity**



10. The lack of a transformative effect of economic growth on social and human development has been brought to the fore in recent policy debates (ECA, 2013b). In its report, entitled “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development, Report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, the United Nations High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda recommended that the new agenda should be guided by the vision of “eradicating extreme poverty once and for all in the context of sustainable development”. While envisioning the post-2015 development agenda as universal, the Panel has proposed that it should be driven by five major transformative shifts: (a) Leave no one behind; (b) Put sustainable development at the core of the agenda; (c) Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth; (d) Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; and (e) Forge a new global partnership.

11. This new paradigm is also reflected in regional initiatives that have placed sustainability and inclusiveness at the core of a development agenda for Africa, including the African Union’s Africa Agenda 2063, and the Common African Position on the post-2015 development agenda (ECA, 2013). In this context, the economic transformative agenda seems to be well defined, with four essential and interrelated processes: a declining share of agriculture in GDP and employment; a rural-urban drift that stimulates the process of urbanization; the rise of a modern industrial and service economy; and a demographic transition to lower birth and death rates, associated with better health standards in developed and urban areas (ECA, 2013b). However, there is recognition that the human and social development impacts underpinning this process require further elucidation.

12. One of the key components of this framework is the need to address the excluded groups that underpin a balanced transformative agenda. This would provide the basis for redressing country-specific exclusion patterns through effective policy formulation at both national and subnational levels. As part of this effort, ECA has proposed a new paradigm for the social transformation of Africa, where eliminating human exclusion is at the centre of inclusive development. In this context, human exclusion can be defined as the reflection of economic,

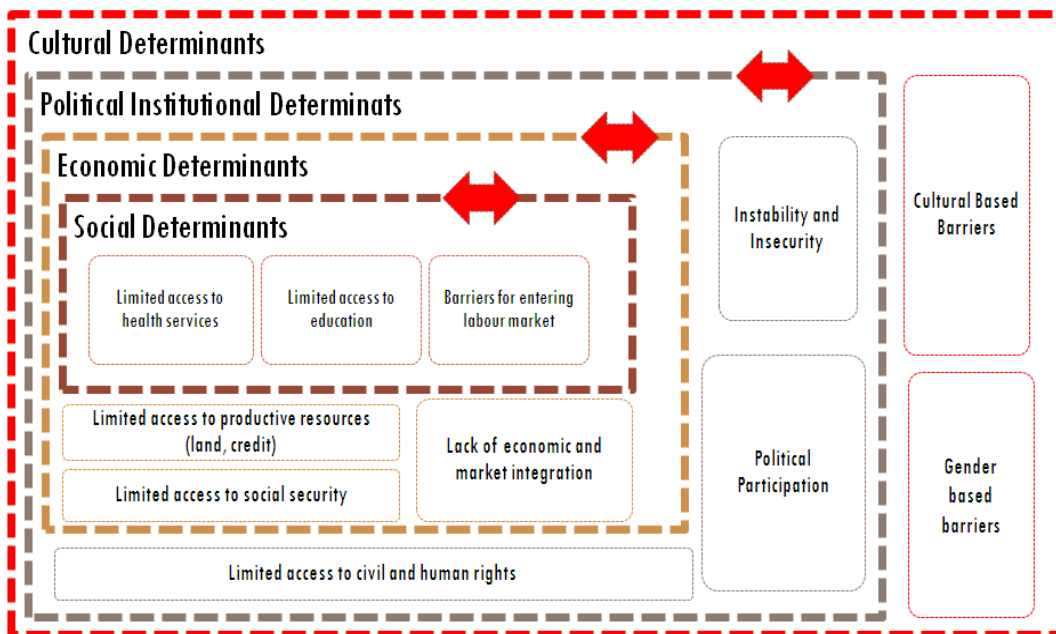
political, institutional and cultural barriers that are manifested in deprived human conditions and that limit the capacity of individuals and societies to grow with equity and foster social and economic transformation.

### Key drivers of human exclusion

13. Exclusion is structural and needs to be prioritized for growth to be sustained and peace to be maintained. Exclusion also skews development dynamics, economic opportunities and job creation, leaving the economy with a narrow base and higher vulnerability to external shocks. In addition to its economic effects, exclusion, whether based on income, gender, spatial, political or other social factors, has critical social costs. Indeed, the drivers of exclusion are often determined by the interaction of a series of contextual elements, as illustrated in figure 2.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2

### Determinants of exclusion



- Social factors include elements associated with access to basic social services, such as health, education, and social security.
- Economic factors take into account access to productive resources, including land and credit, and the degree of economic and market integration.
- Political-institutional factors encompass government policies and programmes aimed at solving instability and insecurity, and ensuring political participation and access to civil and human rights.

<sup>2</sup> For more details, see also ECA (2014).

- Cultural factors define the norms and surroundings in which a person lives in terms of cultural or gender-based barriers.

Within this framework, the overall depth of human exclusion ( $HE^*$ ) is therefore defined as a function of the levels of social ( $SE^*$ ), economic ( $EE^*$ ), institutional and political ( $IPEN^*$ ) and cultural exclusion ( $CE^*$ ). As a result, the depth of human exclusion may be expressed as:

$$|HE^*| = f(SE^*, EE^*, IPEN^*, CE^*)$$

## **The African Social Development Index**

### **A. Conceptual framework**

14. The new paradigm for inclusive development presented above is based on the premise that exclusion can have different manifestations at different stages of a person's life. This is built on the assumption that the risk of being excluded is not static but rather dynamic, and that countries need to define and implement policies that address the various manifestations of exclusion to help reduce the particular vulnerabilities faced by individuals in a lifetime.

15. Adopting this life-cycle perspective to exclusion, the first aspect of vulnerability that an individual can face in his or her lifetime is that of survival, which is also dependent on developments from conception through pregnancy. A child's survival during the first critical 28 days of life depends indeed on the provision of adequate health care and nutritional requirements, which can have critical impacts on the physical and cognitive development of the child during the first years of life. Indeed, child malnutrition largely depends on factors such as lack of food (in terms of both quantity and quality), limited access to health services, water and sanitation, and inadequate feeding practices. Indeed, there is substantial evidence that malnutrition during childhood will have irreversible consequences not only on educational achievements, but also on future opportunities and aspirations in life (ECA, 2013a).

16. By age 6, vulnerability to exclusion shifts from health to education. The formative years of children (between ages 6 and 14), become indeed a critical element of their future development. Children that are unable to obtain basic numeracy and literacy skills during those years will be disadvantaged in terms of access to productive employment and income-generating activities later in life.

17. The most likely result of this would be the inability to find a decent, well-paying job. This is indeed the most critical aspect of vulnerability that a young person can face after the formative years. Levels of unemployment and underemployment in Africa are soaring, largely due to the absence of the required skills to match labour market demands (International Labour Organization, 2012b). Yet the contribution that a young person can make to the economy goes beyond the individual, as youth employment outcomes have spillover across society, affecting social and political stability and future generations (Pieters, 2013). This is particularly important for Africa, where countries can reap the benefits of a large demographic dividend.

18. The income generated by productive employment will be critical in ensuring a sustainable livelihood to the individuals and their families, in order to satisfy the basic needs of food, shelter, access to social services, etc. The absence of these basic elements is likely to exclude individuals from development and from reaping the benefits of growth during their most productive period of life.

19. Lastly, when an individual reaches age 65, his or her capacity to participate in social and economic activities and live a decent life will depend on effective coverage for health and social services, which should increase as individuals get older. Although it is very difficult to assess quality of life based on years lived, it is commonly assumed that an increase in life expectancy after age 60 is associated with higher living standards.

Table 1  
**Exclusion throughout the life cycle**

|                    |                            |                                      |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Birth to 28 days   | Birth                      | Survival                             |
| 28 days to 5 years | Early childhood            | Nutrition/Health                     |
| 6-14 years         | Formative years            | Quality basic education              |
| 15+                | Entering the labour market | Access to productive employment      |
| 25+                | Productive life            | Maintaining household out of poverty |
| 60+                | Old age                    | Living a decent elderly life         |

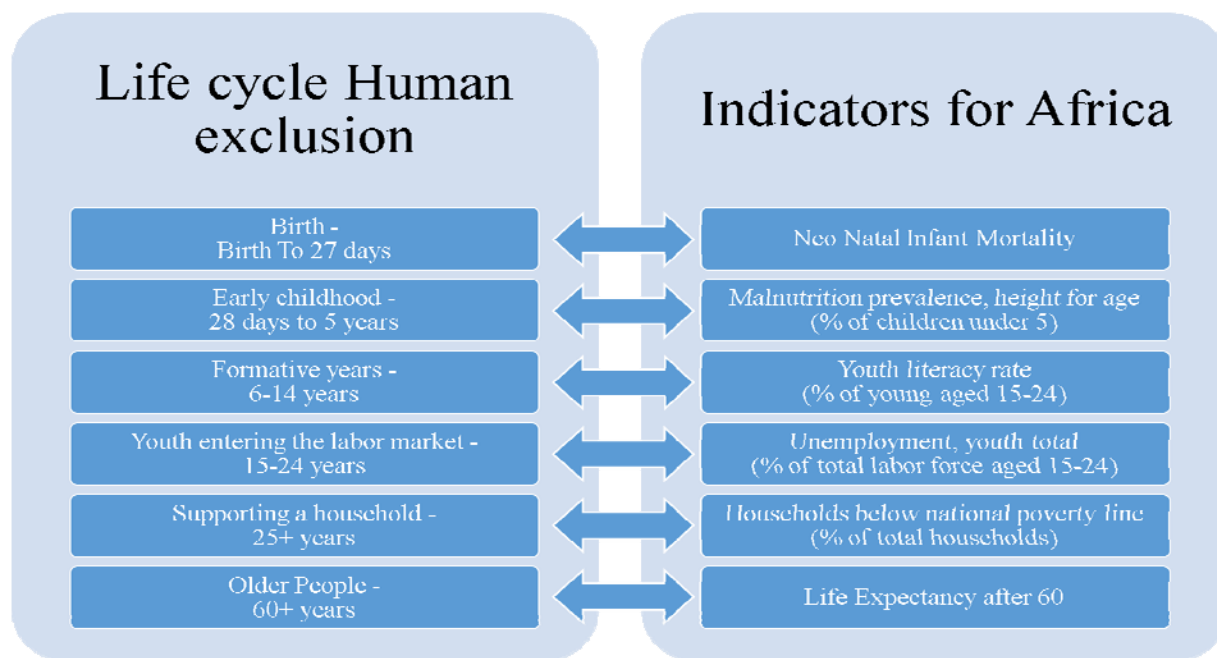
20. The six phases of life and the corresponding dimensions of exclusion illustrated in table 1 show clearly the minimum requirements that should be satisfied for individuals to be part of the development process of their country or society. To operationalize this life-cycle approach, each dimension has been associated with one indicator that best captures the aspects of exclusion described above (figure 3).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The indicators were selected following a strong participatory process and a number of consultations with experts from member States. The methodological foundations of the ASDI are detailed in annex 1.



Figure 3  
**Indicators that measure human exclusion in Africa using a life-cycle approach**



21. The indicators for the consultations phase were selected based on two main criteria: (a) readily available data from African countries, possibly at various tiers of administration; and (b) impact rather than output indicators. It is therefore important to note that while some of the variables may not capture the full dimension of exclusion in each phase of life, they were chosen as the best proxy indicators based on available data and empirical evidence on exclusion in Africa.

### **B. Differential impacts of exclusion on women and men**

22. In each phase of life, women and girls experience vulnerabilities in different ways and to different extents than their male counterparts, because men and women have different roles in society, different levels of access to and control over resources, and different interests and concerns that can affect their likelihood of being included or excluded from the development process.

23. Some of these differences are intrinsic to gender, while others are the result of cultural biases and social factors. Gender-based discrimination affects women and girls throughout their life cycle; women and girls bear most of the responsibility of unpaid care work, suffer more than boys the consequences of a truncated education, are more likely to enter into the unskilled, informal labour market, and are more often victims of exploitation, violence or early marriage – all of which is likely to affect their future development and ability to participate in society. The effects can be different, however, across dimensions and stages in life. For instance, it is found that life expectancy of women who are able to survive the early life stages in developing countries tend to approach that of women in developed countries, and the gap will narrow in the future as child mortality rates decline. On the other hand, child malnutrition is found to be higher among boys than girls in most developing countries, although results are not uniform across all countries. In India, for

instance, girls are more at risk of malnutrition than boys because of their lower social status (Smith and Haddad, 2000).

24. Lastly, early marriage and other traditional practices have a significant effect on girls' educational achievements, lowering their social and economic opportunities and aspirations in life. These differential outcomes – whether based on contextual factors or intrinsic to gender, need to be tackled through more targeted interventions, as policies that do not adequately address such differences tend to perpetrate gender inequalities over time (Hedman, 1996, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2010).

### **C. Exclusion in urban and rural areas**

25. Patterns of exclusion are also influenced by the geographical location in which an individual is born and lives. People living in rural areas are often found to be deprived of the minimum social and economic infrastructure – including limited access to basic social services (education, health and sanitation) and decent job opportunities – that would allow individuals to develop adequately and to their full potential. Latest findings also point to higher rural poverty rates in Africa (ECA and others, 2014b). At the same time, African cities are increasingly faced with challenges, such as urban congestion, environmental and health hazards, poor infrastructure, social fragmentation, limited access to land, and increased competition that would deprive unskilled labour workers of economic and social opportunities.

26. The ASDI seeks to address these differential impacts of exclusion based on gender and location by helping to capture inequalities within countries and social groups that would not be accounted for otherwise. The results of such differences should guide and improve policy targeting and development planning processes at local level and on different population clusters.

### **Strategy for implementing the African Social Development Index**

27. National implementation teams have been set up in each implementing country, with members drawn from key government institutions – including the ministries of planning and social services and national statistical offices, under the leadership of the ministries of economic affairs and finance, to implement the Index. Five countries are currently piloting the tool (Cameroon, Kenya, Morocco, Senegal and Zambia), and a rollout phase was initiated in 2014. National and subregional reports are expected to be produced on a regular basis, depending on the availability of up-to-date statistics and relevant information in each country.

28. The project also comprises a strong capacity-building component, as members of the national implementation teams are trained on the methodological foundations and utilization of the tool, before they can process the data and country results. As such, the ASDI is not only providing a policy tool to measure human exclusion over time, but also strengthening national capacities for ensuring that it is sustainable.

## **A comparative analysis of three international indices: the African Social Development Index, the Human Development Index and the Multidimensional Poverty Index**

A question that seems to be recurrent in development circles in Africa and beyond is: Why another index? We have sought to respond to this question – by trying to highlight the value addition that the ASDI can bring, as compared to two other composite measures: the Human Development Index and the Multidimensional Poverty Index. Below are some elements that distil the most prominent features and comparative advantages of each of these indices.

### **The Human Development Index (1990)**

The Human Development Index (HDI) ranks countries globally according to health, education and material resources. It was first developed in 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme, but today it is considered by some outdated and insufficient to reflect the country specificities and multi-faceted nature of human development. The HDI has achieved strong popularity over the last two decades or so, largely due to its simple, intuitive approach to development and the possibility of ranking countries, as data is standardized and easily comparable. However, one of the main drawbacks of the Index has been its failure to capture inequalities within countries, and its excessive emphasis on rankings.

### **The Multidimensional Poverty Index (2011)**

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme as a “successor” to the HDI. It is a composite index with a combination of income- and non-income-based measures, following an approach pioneered by Townsend (1979) and later by Sen (1985). It has been so far applied to 91 countries globally, and is being considered as the main metrics for the implementation of the emerging sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. The MPI is intended to provide an overarching framework, whose dimensions, indicators and aggregate methods can be adjusted to reflect national priorities. Like the HDI, it can be applied to study changes over time. Its main drawback, however, might be the large number of indicators included in it and its inherent data gaps, particularly in the case of developing countries.

### **The African Social Development Index (2013)**

The African Development Index (ASDI) has a strong focus on human inclusion over the life cycle, as a critical condition for ensuring sustainable and equitable development. Its calibration to Africa’s development challenges makes it possible to capture the specific manifestations of exclusion experienced in African countries today as a result of their transformational processes. Its indicators were selected based on a highly consultative process with States and its weightings were defined using robust statistical methods (principal component analysis and factor analysis). Also, it avoids setting an arbitrary cut-off point for defining “the excluded groups”, but it is based on an ordinal score normalized from 0 to 1. The main purpose of the ASDI is to measure existing inequalities and exclusion patterns within countries and different groups of the population, to assess national social policies and their effectiveness in reducing human exclusion over time.

## **Conclusion and way forward**

29. Preliminary results of the ASDI have pointed to the need for African countries to refocus their development agenda in order to address human exclusion more effectively and deal with both its underlying and its structural causes. Exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon, and therefore, its extent and determinants can be better understood by examining the wide range of dimensions and manifestations of exclusion throughout the life cycle (Sen, 2000).

30. Exclusion is clearly a major hindrance to progress toward social and human development in Africa. There is a clear recognition that without a more inclusive approach to growth and development, people's living conditions will be improved only slightly. Indeed, exclusion needs to be tackled, as it can be a recipe for social unrest and threaten peace and political stability in the region.

31. In this context, and through its various applications, the ASDI provides an important policy tool for member States to identify policy gaps and formulate appropriate measures for ensuring that every individual is part of the development process. At the same time, the ASDI has the potential to deepen the analysis and understanding of human exclusion, through its disaggregation by social groups and across dimensions, which can help to identify the key drivers of exclusion in each country. In addition, the application of the index at subnational level will be critical in capturing within-country inequalities, reorienting key policy options and placing social protection strategies at the centre of national and subnational planning.

32. Indeed, inclusive development cannot be achieved simply by increasing the size of national economies, but by learning and shaping enduring opportunities that take the rights of individuals into consideration. Global and regional frameworks such as the post-2015 development agenda and the Africa Agenda 2063 offer an opportunity to shift the focus from growth to the integration of social dimensions and the inclusion of each and every individual in the development process.

33. The piloting of the ASDI in five African countries has provided opportunities to test and further refine the tool, making it more responsive to the needs of member States. As part of the follow-up strategy, a policy mapping framework is being developed to help identify and assess the effectiveness of social policies in reducing human exclusion, following the conceptual and methodological frameworks underpinning the Index. This exercise will be a major step forward in the use of the ASDI for development planning and effective policy targeting. It will also ensure the critical buy-in of States and the involvement of other relevant stakeholders, including development partners, non-State actors and regional strategic institutions working in the area of social protection and inclusive social policies.

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