

Social Sustainability in Development

Page 29: Defining Social Sustainability

- **Core Definition:**
 - Social sustainability is framed as ensuring people's basic needs, capabilities, and quality of life are met while avoiding discriminatory practices.
 - It emphasizes meaningful participation in economic, social, and political life.
- **Key Ideas:**
 - **Durability and Resilience:** Focus on building communities that remain stable and secure over time.
 - **Safety Before Shocks:** Beyond just bouncing back, it involves reducing vulnerabilities before crises occur.
 - **Social Contract:** Encourages cohesive communities where every individual can engage and contribute.

Explanation: The idea here is to create systems where people not only recover from setbacks but are also less likely to be severely impacted by them due to strong social bonds and inclusive practices.

Page 30: Conceptual Framework Introduction

- **Broad Definition:**
 - Social sustainability increases when more people feel included in the development process and believe that both they and future generations will benefit.
- **Collective Action:**
 - Communities that are more socially sustainable can work together to overcome challenges and distribute resources fairly.
- **Aspirational Spectrum:**
 - It is not a binary state; rather, it exists on a continuum that inspires ongoing improvements.
- **Link to Measurable Objectives:**

- The framework connects subjective experiences (how people feel) with concrete indicators (like those found in the Social Sustainability Global Database).

Explanation: Here, the document stresses that social sustainability isn't an "all-or-nothing" achievement but an evolving goal where progress is continuously measured and improved.

Page 31: Components of Social Sustainability

- Four Key Components Introduced:
 - Social Cohesion: The shared purpose and trust among community members.
 - Inclusion: Ensuring everyone has access to services, opportunities, and participation.
 - Resilience: The capacity to withstand and recover from shocks.
 - Process Legitimacy: How policies and programs are designed and implemented in a fair, transparent, and credible manner.
- Intertemporal Focus:
 - Emphasizes the link between current actions and long-term benefits for both present and future generations.

Explanation: This framework lays out the idea that a thriving society depends not only on economic growth but also on how well communities work together, include all members, and maintain fairness in decision-making.

Page 34-35: Social Cohesion

- Definition and Types:
 - Bonding Cohesion: Strong ties within a group or community.
 - Bridging Cohesion: Cooperation between different groups or communities.
 - Linking Cohesion: The relationship between citizens and institutions or government.
- Historical Perspective:

- Roots in **Durkheim's work**, emphasizing interdependence and the absence of social conflict.
 - It explains that while Durkheim focused on the **fundamental role of strong social ties** in preventing conflict, contemporary research has expanded on this idea by identifying different types of cohesion-bonding (within groups), bridging (across groups), and linking (between citizens and institutions).
 - These expanded notions of cohesion help frame the argument that robust social bonds are essential not only for social stability but also for **effective collective action and sustainable development**.
- **Impact on Development:**
 - High cohesion leads to effective collective action, better conflict management, and improved overall development outcomes.
- **Empirical Evidence:**
 - Studies show that communities with higher cohesion often **experience lower poverty, reduced conflict, and stronger institutional trust**.

Explanation: In simple terms, social cohesion is about the “glue” that holds society together. Whether through close-knit communities (bonding), cooperation between diverse groups (bridging), or trust in institutions (linking), these forms of cohesion support a stable and peaceful society.

Page 37-40: Social Inclusion

- **Definition:**
 - Inclusive societies provide all individuals with access to basic services, markets, and opportunities to participate fully in society.
- **Historical Context:**
 - Emerged from recognizing that **some groups face systemic barriers to socioeconomic participation**.
 - Reflected in global development goals (e.g., “leave no one behind” in the Sustainable Development Goals).
- **Costs of Exclusion:**

- Exclusion leads to lower wages, poorer education and health outcomes, and broader economic losses at the national level (e.g., lost GDP, diminished human capital).
- Empirical Evidence:
 - Analyses show that greater inclusion correlates with lower poverty, higher GDP per capita, and improved human development outcomes.
 - Examples include impact evaluations in Indonesia where targeted programs improved health, education, and economic outcomes.

Explanation: Social inclusion means ensuring that no one is left out –by removing barriers (legal, social, or cultural) that prevent people from fully participating in society. This not only benefits the individuals involved but also boosts the overall economy and social well-being.

Page 41-43: Resilience

- Definition:
 - Resilience is the capacity of individuals, households, or communities to prepare for, cope with, and recover from various shocks and stresses.
- Types of Shocks:
 - Idiosyncratic Shocks: Affect individuals or households (e.g., job loss, health crisis).
 - Systemic Shocks: Affect large groups (e.g., natural disasters, economic downturns, pandemics).
- Resilience Strategies:
 - Risk Reduction/Mitigation: Preventing or lessening the impact of shocks before they occur (e.g., infrastructure improvements, vaccination programs).
 - Coping Measures: Actions taken after a shock to manage its immediate effects (e.g., using savings, borrowing).
 - Transformative Strategies: Long-term changes to strengthen institutions and societal structures to better handle future shocks (e.g., reforming public policies or building new safety nets).
- Empirical Insights:

- Data and impact evaluations show that higher resilience is associated with improved economic outcomes and faster recovery from shocks.

Explanation: Think of resilience as the strength and flexibility of a rubber band—it can stretch to absorb stress and then return to its original shape. In social terms, it means being able to withstand and recover from difficult events without long-lasting damage.

Page 44-45: Process Legitimacy and the Policy Arena

- **Definition of Process Legitimacy:**
 - It is concerned with the “how” of policy making and program implementation.
 - It assesses whether decisions and actions are seen as fair, transparent, and credible by the community.
- **Key Drivers of Process Legitimacy:**
 - **Credibility of Decision Makers:** Authority based on recognized legitimacy (e.g., elections, expertise).
 - **Consistency with Agreed-Upon Rules:** Following established legal, professional, or cultural norms.
 - **Consistency with Societal Values:** Aligning policies with shared beliefs and moral standards.
 - **Perceived Benefits:** Policies are more accepted if people believe they improve their well-being.
 - **Participation and Transparency:** Engaging citizens in decision-making processes builds trust and acceptance.
- **The Policy Arena Concept:**
 - Refers to the forum where decisions are made and where different groups negotiate, debate, and compromise.
 - Challenges arise when access is unequal or when processes lack transparency, which can undermine social sustainability.
- **Consequences of Low Process Legitimacy:**
 - Can lead to public outrage, social tensions, and ultimately, a breakdown in trust between citizens and institutions.

Explanation: Process legitimacy is like the fairness of the rules in a game. Even if the game (or policy) is challenging, people will accept the outcomes if they believe the rules were applied fairly

and everyone had a chance to participate. This fairness is crucial for building a resilient and cohesive society.
