

Social Cohesion Concepts and Measurement

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UNDP Social Cohesion Initiatives

- United Nations Development Programme prioritized social cohesion into its programming since 2008
 - “The reduction of disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion...[and] the strengthening of social relations, interactions, and ties”
 - Proposed interventions engage excluded groups to ensure people from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities and strengthening social capital through the development of social networks, encouraging active political participation, and improving state responsiveness, among other strategies

UNDP Jordan

UNDP Jordan utilizes a horizontal and vertical approach to addressing social cohesion (i.e. government entities, municipalities leaders, community leaders, and Syrian and Jordanians in Host Communities)

- Community Cohesion Grant Mechanism

- Address the root causes of conflict by reducing horizontal inequalities and strengthening social capital for host community members and in strengthening state-citizen cooperation to strengthen horizontal and vertical linkages (i.e. thematic areas of education, justice and rule of law, political and civic participation, health, environment, media, arts, and recreation)

- 3x6

- Enhances social cohesion between Jordanians in host communities through encouraging community members to organize to realize economic activities (horizontal cohesion) and engage with other actors (vertical cohesion) in joint economic ventures based on collective savings, outside investment, and risk sharing. The 3x6 project aims to create short-term employment opportunities and economic recovery initiatives to improve the overall livelihoods and basic social services delivery.

- Skills Exchange

- Enhances social cohesion between Jordanians and Syrians in host communities through three-month skills exchange

Origins of Social Cohesion

- Social cohesion has reemerged as a key programmatic element in the international humanitarian aid and development world in the past ten years
- However, discourse surrounding social cohesion dated back to 1893 in Emile Durkheim's discussion of "social solidarity" in the Division of Labour in Society
- Social Solidarity was used to discuss individual's ties in a society that bind people together in relationship to:
 - Structures: social, economic, dependency, population size, etc.
 - Norms: the way law is instilled and restored (i.e. repressive sanction versus restitutive sanctions and cooperative law)
 - Collective consciousness: set of shared beliefs, ideas, moral attitudes which operate as a unifying force within society

Defining Social Cohesion

Mechanical Solidarity	Organic Solidarity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Groups of people with shared sentiments and beliefs- Reflected through penal law- Collective conscience regulates social life and the nature of social cohesion is marked by regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Societies of division of labor and specialization- Social coherence is based on socioeconomic interdependency- Solidarity is a product of individual necessity rather than collective will

Differences in Social Cohesion

Social solidarity is intrinsically linked to the division of labor in society:

Where labor division is low, solidarity relies on homogeneity of belief

Where labor division is high, solidarity is built on the strength of socioeconomic ties

Assumptions about Social Cohesion

- Social cohesion is not inherently “good” but can describe positive, negative, or neutral group dynamics (Entwisle et al.)
- Social cohesion is simply the mean of existence of interpersonal ties uniting a group of people as we whole (Blokland)
 - Ties can be antagonistic with parties constantly in dispute
 - Ties can be cooperative
- Social cohesion theory reveals a false correlation between economic growth and positive social cohesion (Zhao)

Assumptions: Programming Concepts and Monitoring & Evaluation of Social Cohesion

- Accessing resources and services can be used as proxies for social cohesion
- Utilizing a deficit approach in assessing lack of social cohesion versus measuring the presence and strength of social cohesion
- Assumption that strengthened social cohesion is positive
- Assumption that increased economic opportunity, access to basic services, increased political participation and representation, and strengthened rule of law will lead to increased social cohesion
- Assumption that positive social cohesion is equivalent to integration or assimilation as opposed to co-existence

Case Study: Uighurs in Xinjiang, China

1950's-1970s: Agricultural Production Cooperatives

People's Communes served as the foundation for economic and social collectiveness where every individual was relatively equal in terms of assets and economic benefits and dependent on the commune for employment, income, education, and sometimes housing

Close connection between individuals and the commune served as the foundation for social cohesion

1980s - Transition to free open market economy

Collapse of economic collectivism foundation and introduction of market economy and privatization of state owned companies and assets led to the collapse of the economy and social disintegration and breakdown of social cohesion

Economic inequality, cultural discrimination and oppression, political oppression, external factors of radical Islam

Lessons Learned

Policies that focus on growing the economy and increasing wealth in Muslim communities do not necessarily prevent radicalization because economic growth does not always contribute positively to social cohesion

Case Study: Central African Republic

Social cohesion and peacebuilding efforts focused on de-escalating violence rather than building bonds of trust and privileged horizontal at the expense of vertical linkages

Most recent conflicts unfolded in centralised settings where the capital city has a privileged position of the seat of power, the hub of economic life, and the main recipient of development funds (i.e. Southern Sudanese and Darfuris against Khartoum and Northern Malians against Bamako)

Lessons Learned

Governments SC initiatives must approach building bonds of trust and equally address horizontal and vertical linkages

Policy formulation, implementation, evaluation must connect to objectives, policies, programs, and outcomes of the realities of conflict post/conflict societies

Governments and policies need to ensure that populations receive equal political power, economic support, and development funds to prevent further breakdown in social cohesion between communities in post-conflict and conflict settings (i.e. not favoring certain municipalities or demographics, ensuring that Jordanians do not feel disproportionate access to services and funds)

Alternatives Ways of Measuring Social Cohesion

Core Variables:

- Horizontal attitudes and collective action tendencies

 - Respective levels of sustained interpersonal interaction (Entwisle et al)

 - Using “Community” as an analytical device to assess the relational dynamics between group members rather than the inclusion or exclusion of specific individuals (Blokland)

 - Measuring identities (belonging), emotions (motivation), and trust

 - Citizens tendencies for collective action against specific outgroups

Vertical attitudes:

- Citizen perceptions of state and local authorities

- Citizens tendencies for collective actions against state authorities

Peripheral Variables:

- Threat (human security), justice, contact, and levels of participation and representation

Guidelines for Measuring Social Cohesion

Develop indexes

Access to Services Index:

- Proxy variables for preventing Social Cohesion: access to basic services, employment,

Social Cohesion Index:

- Indicators for social cohesion including intergroup and individual identities, emotions, trust, threat perceptions and human security, justice perceptions, political participation and representation

Analysis:

- Comparative analysis of the Access to Services Index and Social Cohesion Index to understand the relationship and if SC programs are effective

Guidelines for SC Concepts and Measurements in Jordan

Take into Consideration Historical Context

Transition from traditional economically and socially collectivist society to imposed liberal market-oriented economies and individualistic society
Absence of social cohesion in Jordanian communities prior to the Syrian crisis
Social cohesion weakened when traditional social connections under collective and local economic systems were broken and no alternatives to establish new economic and social ties under a liberal market system

Responsibility of Institutions and Government for Social Cohesion

Governments need to determine what type of social cohesion they want to develop (horizontal - vertical)
Governments need to positively strengthen social cohesion within communities (Among Jordanians - Among Syrians)
Long term versus Short term Social Cohesion (coexistence, integration, or assimilation)
Develop social cohesion indexes (vertically and horizontally) and access to services index
Develop policies that address social cohesion based on a ground-up approach

Identifying Community and Institutional Approaches

Identify key stakeholders at the local, municipality, governorate, and national level to collectively design and implement SC policies and action plans
Ensure equal access and opportunity to services and outputs based on targeting areas in greatest need while ensuring new tensions are not created and existing tensions are not exacerbated
Ensure sustainability of interventions and joint horizontal and vertical intervention approaches

Measuring Social Cohesion

Measure the relationship between social cohesion indexes against access to basic services index
Qualitative and quantitative approaches to measuring social cohesion
Ensure that the presence of social cohesion is measured and not just the absence of social cohesion

Moving Forward

- Theoretically driven and culturally relevant model of social cohesion in the MENA region
- National and regional interagency social cohesion index including government entities, INGOs, UN Agencies, and CBOs
- Government needs to address social cohesion among citizens
 - Support economic transition into free market economy and competitive labor market
 - Support social transition into free market economy and competitive labor market
- Governments needs to be addressed on a policy level to determine their long and short term SC goals with Syrian refugees and host communities
 - How do you strengthen social cohesion among citizens of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds? Do you want to support coexistence or integration?
 - How do you strengthen social cohesion in host communities? What were the pre-existing challenges to social cohesion prior to the Syrian crisis?
 - Are the short term plans to support coexistence between Jordanians and refugees, without integration or assimilation? If so, should the focus be on strengthening social cohesion within groups rather than between groups?
 - Are there long term plans to support integration of refugees in host communities? If so, should you strengthen SC within grounds and then between groups?
 - What policies should be developed to address SC? What stakeholders should be involved in the development and implementation process?
 - How can you strengthen vertical and horizontal interventions to social cohesion?