



Partnership between State and Non-governmental Sector - Social Inclusion Strategy

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Introduction

Although there have been many advancements in the development and recovery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in the last decade, numerous issues remain to be solved. The challenges ahead primarily include the establishment of democracy, rule of law and a properly functioning state apparatus, as well as laying down the foundations for an economic boost and prosperity. Poverty and social exclusion are among the most pressing issues that affect a vast majority of BiH citizens. Numerous measures have been taken in order to tackle these problems, but they have not produced substantial and long-term results. According to the latest data in Bosnia and Herzegovina, about half of the population is socially excluded on various grounds, while one fifth of the population is in the state of extreme social exclusion,¹ even though many of them are not even aware of the existence of this phenomenon, its meaning and consequences.

Definition of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a relatively new notion, even in the context of the European Union, and there are not many definitions of social exclusion. Generally speaking, being excluded means being left out of the main stream, and being deprived of the social, economic and political rights that others have.² A broader definition of social exclusion explains this phenomenon in the following words: "Social exclusion is a process which pushes certain individuals and groups at the margin of society, preventing them from partici-

pating in society on the grounds of their ethnic origin, age or gender difference, disability, financial issues, lack of education or employment. That further prevents them from accessing health care and social services as well as social networks. The "excluded" almost have no access to power and decision making processes and are therefore unable to influence decisions of importance to their everyday lives."³

Issue of Social Exclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The issue of social exclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina was addressed in a comprehensive and in-depth manner only in 2007, when the analysis conducted within National Human Development Report⁴ revealed the alarming extent of the social exclusion of BiH citizens. The analysis presented the percentage of social exclusion in BiH, measured by the following three indexes:

The General Social Exclusion Index (HSEI)

is based on seven main indicators, which include living standards, health, participation in society, education and access to services. This index shows that 50, 32% of the population in BiH is excluded in at least one of these categories.

The Extreme Social Exclusion Index (HSEI-1)

shows that approximately 22% of the BiH population is extremely socially excluded from the basic human needs and processes.

The Long-Term Social Exclusion Index (HSEI-2)

differs from the two other indexes as

Summary

Bosnia and Herzegovina is faced with an increasing problem of social exclusion and poverty that affects almost a half of the BiH population. With the aim of tackling this problem the Social Inclusion Strategy has been created. Due to its inclusive character, the creation and implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy requires a participatory approach and engagement of the wide range of relevant actors. One of the main actors in this process, along with the state, is the NGO sector, which possesses vast experience in working with socially-excluded and marginalized categories. The representatives of the NGO sector were involved in the preparatory phase of the Social Inclusion Strategy, and their active participation needs to be continued, even enhanced, in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases of the Strategy. Continuation of the cooperation between these two sectors is one of the main factors determining the further qualitative development of the Strategy and its overall results.

¹ United Nations Development Program. (2007). National Human Development Report (pp. 11). Sarajevo: Fetahagić, M., Hrbač, B., Memić, B., Ninković, R., Pašalić-Kreso, A., Somun-Krupalija, L., and Živanović, M.

² Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. (2007). Civil Society in Strengthening Social Inclusion (pp.8). Sarajevo: Papić, Ž.

³ Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues. (2009). Analysis of NGO Sector from the Perspective of Social Inclusion (pp.11). Sarajevo: Ibrahimagić, M.

⁴ United Nations Development Program. (2007). National Human Development Report (pp. 11). Sarajevo: Fetahagić, M., Hrbač, B., Memić, B., Ninković, R., Pašalić-Kreso, A., Somun-Krupalija, L., and Živanović, M.

it measures the population with limited possibilities for improving their situation which leads to long-term exclusion. This index shows that 47% population is at risk of long-term exclusion.⁵

The data presented above certainly produced a shocking effect. After its publication, the problem of social exclusion has started to be discussed by the public and official authorities. As a response to this problem, the Council of Ministers decided to develop the Social Inclusion Strategy of BiH 2008-2013,⁶ whose preparation and coordination of the related activities was delegated to the Directorate for the Economic Planning.

Preparatory Phase of the Social Inclusion Strategy

The goals and objectives of the Social Inclusion Strategy include promoting employment, enabling access to all goods, resources, services and rights, combating poverty and social exclusion, support and assistance to vulnerable groups and engagement of all the relevant bodies.⁷

Taking into consideration the inclusive character of the social inclusion process, the preparation of the Social Inclusion Strategy required a participative approach and active engagement of all the relevant social actors and groups. Due to their long-standing work and vast experience with vulnerable and socially-excluded groups, civil society organizations i.e. non-governmental organizations were to have one of the key roles in the preparatory activities. They indeed participated in this process, and attention was paid to engagement of the relevant representatives of the public and civil sector. Nevertheless, it is not certain whether the NGOs will equally participate and be engaged in the next phases of the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy. Namely, in the draft text of the Social Inclusion Strategy the role of the NGO sector in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases is mentioned within only one page. In a very general framework, it is stated that due to their experience and capacity, it is presumed that NGOs will take part in the implementation and monitoring of the Social Inclusion Strategy.⁸ Such a brief and insufficient articulation of the role that the NGO sector will play in the

implementation and monitoring phase creates a grounded concern that this sector might be left out from these phases, or have a reduced role and influence.

The Social Inclusion Strategy should, therefore, define the role of the NGO sector in the next phases in a more precise and detailed manner. It should contain precisely stated and determined functions of NGOs, channels of communication, models of action and mechanisms through which they will exercise their function, and through which their advice and complaints will be responded to and considered. The continuation of this participative planning and cooperation is among the key factors determining further quality development of the Social Inclusion Strategy. This approach and good practice should be continued in order to ensure valid implementation of the proposed measures and activities.

NGO Sector as the Key Government Partner in Social Services Provision

Non-governmental organizations have played a very important role in a vast spectrum of activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina both during the war and in the post-war recovery phases. The field of social inclusion is one where the NGO sector has given the greatest contribution in, primarily, a practical manner.

The importance, capacities and impacts of the NGO sector are very clearly numerically illustrated by the data on NGOs and persons who are involved in their activities. The total number of registered NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005 was 9095, out of which less than a half is actually active, i.e. about 4629 NGOs.⁹ Furthermore, NGOs in BiH provide services for 29% of the citizens. 60% of the NGOs work in the local communities, which gives additional value to their work since they have direct contact with the final beneficiaries of their services and insight to their real needs and problems.

Generally speaking, non-governmental organizations are quite flexible and can adapt to new circumstances and localities, which is not a characteristic of large state structures. They establish direct contacts with their beneficiaries, they openly accept cooperation with other

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Council of Ministers and Directorate for Economic Planning (2009). Social Inclusion Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina (draft document). Sarajevo: BiH. Retrieved on October, 05, 2010 from http://www.dep.gov.ba/razvojni_dokumenti/socijalne_ukljucenosti/Archive.aspx?template_id=71&pageIndex=1

⁷ HTSPE Ltd. UK and Kronauer Consulting. (2009.) Civil Society, Contributions to the Development of the Strategy on Establishment of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina (pp. 58-60). Sarajevo: Jones, G. Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues. (2009). What is to be Done? Social Inclusion and Civil Society- Practical Steps (pp. 12). Sarajevo: Vuković, A.

⁸ Council of Ministers and Directorate for Economic Planning (2009). Social Inclusion Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina (draft document). Sarajevo: BiH. Retrieved on October, 05, 2010 from http://www.dep.gov.ba/razvojni_dokumenti/socijalne_ukljucenosti/Archive.aspx?template_id=71&pageIndex=1

⁹ Department for International Development, Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues and Bricks Sinclair & Associates. (2005). Qualitative Study 3-Employment, Social Service Provision and the Non-governmental Sector: Status and Prospects for BiH, Analysis and Policy Implications. Sarajevo: BiH.



organizations and institutions and they embrace changes and innovations more readily.¹⁰ All of this demonstrates the importance, potentials and to date achievements of the NGO sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Contributions and role of the NGOs in the overall social service provision and implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Promoting the procedure of social inclusion processes and raising public awareness on the importance of the process for vulnerable and excluded groups;
- Informing the public, primarily targeted groups, on the possibilities for social inclusion;
- Contributing to faster, more economical and accessible social service provision;
- Providing inputs for creating new services based on the feedback received from the beneficiaries;
- Providing a better choice of services to the beneficiaries;
- Engaging all disposable means, especially in the local communities;
- Enhancing the role civil society and non-governmental organizations.¹¹

For all the above stated reasons the cooperation with the NGO sector should be continued in the phases of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Social Inclusion Strategy. NGO sector should assume the role of the state's key and equal partner in this process and perform it in the most efficient and comprehensive manner.

Practical Recommendations

In order to have provision of social services improved and the Social Inclusion Strategy properly implemented and resulting in sustainable changes and long-term improvements the following set of recommendations should be considered and integrated to the Social Inclusion Strategy or accompanying documents. These recommendations aim to ensure the continuation of partnership with NGOs in the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy, achievement of the stated goals and objectives and response to the needs of the targeted groups

and final beneficiaries. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Clearly define the NGO sector as a key partner in the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy.

The role of the NGO sector as the key partner in the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy should be stated more precisely. It needs to be added to the text of the Strategy or the accompanying documents that NGO representatives will have the status of an equal partner with the rights and competences to actively take part in decision making, setting priorities, monitoring, evaluation, supervision of the budgetary allocations and all other processes related to the implementation of the Strategy.

2. Clearly assign the NGO sector the role of monitor

The NGO sector needs to assume the role of a monitor that will analyze and process information about the effects of the Strategy and its measures on the targeted groups of population. The members of the NGO sector appointed to the monitoring commissions and bodies, together with the state representatives, would thus supervise transparency, efficiency and accountability of the state institutions in implementing the Social Inclusion Strategy and they would function as a mechanism of checks and balances vital for establishing democratic ambience. This role should also be clearly defined in the text of the Social Inclusion Strategy.

3. Establishment of the monitoring commissions and bodies for the budgetary spending and allocations

The monitoring process requires establishment of monitoring commissions and bodies whose task would be to control if the budgetary allocated resources are being spent in accordance with the stated purpose and if the resources invested in different programs and projects have achieved the expected results. The commissions need to be composed of state and non-governmental representatives that will have equal status and rights which also need to be clearly stated in the Strategy.

¹⁰ Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues. (2009). Strengthening of Professional Capacities of Nongovernmental Organizations (pp.24). Sarajevo: Lepir, Lj.

¹¹ Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues. (2009). Analysis of NGO Sector from the Perspective of Social Inclusion (pp.23). Sarajevo: Ibrahimagić, M.



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4. Establishment of the commissions and bodies for qualitative monitoring

Besides the financial aspect, monitoring needs to include the qualitative measurements in order to determine real and long-term impact of the programs on the final beneficiaries. In brief, the role of the monitoring bodies would be to test if the overall strategic goals are being fulfilled as initially planned. These commissions would also be composed of the state and non-governmental representatives that will have equal status and rights.

5. Define criteria for the selection of the NGO representatives that will take part in the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy

It is very important to define the selection criteria of the NGO representatives that will take part in the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy since NGOs have different orientations and are at different levels of experience in the field of social exclusion. The criteria should define the orientation and mission of an NGO, number of years of work and experience in the relevant field, professional, human and technical capacities, the number of projects implemented and results achieved through these projects and other related activities. This will ensure that the most competent NGOs take part in the implementation and will consequently ensure the best possible outcomes of the Strategy.

6. Define the role of the NGO sector as a resource of information

The function of the NGOs should not be just of a supervisory nature. In line with the functions of a partner, the NGO needs to constantly provide new inputs and information on potential new partners, recruiting volunteers and attracting additional financial resources.

Conclusion

The number and state of the vulnerable and excluded population in BiH has reached an alarming extent. The change is necessary, inevitable and urgent. The Social Inclusion Strategy of BiH is the tool to introduce these changes and it needs to be properly implemented. The proper

and comprehensive implementation will be possible if the NGO sector keeps an active role in the whole process of Strategy implementation. The NGO sector is the best guarantee for representing the interests and needs of the socially marginalized and excluded groups and therefore its participation in the public system is of crucial importance. Therefore, the Social Inclusion Strategy needs to be implemented on the basis of partnership and equal participation of both sectors. Only in this way the image of social exclusion and poverty can be changed in a substantial and long-term way and the present state of the population improved in an in-depth and irreversible manner, thus ensuring progress and stability of the whole society.



A "Policy Development Fellowship Program" has been launched by the Open Society Fund BiH in early 2004 with the aim to improve BiH policy research and dialogue and to contribute to the development of a sound policy-making culture based on informative and empirically grounded policy options.

The program provides an opportunity for selected fellows to collaborate with the Open Society Fund in conducting policy research and writing a policy study with the support of mentors and trainers during the whole process. Seventy three fellowships have been granted in three cycles since the starting of the Program.

All policy studies are available at www.soros.org.ba