

# INCLUSION MATTERS IN AFRICA

## Main Messages

1. Africa has seen significant progress towards social inclusion in the past few decades, in many areas moving at a pace faster than seen globally.
2. Some groups and areas have been left out of the progress in Africa and continue to remain at risk. Social inclusion helps us understand who is left out, from what, in what ways, and why.
3. Social inclusion draws attention to the drivers of poverty in Africa and explains that while we need to focus on poverty, this is only a starting point to end the exclusion.
4. Structures and processes that aid and abet social exclusion often have historical and cultural roots.
5. Areas that are affected by conflict and fragility stand out as having the poorest outcomes related to social inclusion. Conversely, peace and security matter for social inclusion.
6. Societies incur significant costs from social exclusion. Yet, achieving social inclusion also has costs. Therefore, investing in social inclusion has to be a conscious choice for states and societies.
7. With a strong social contract, social inclusion in Africa is eminently within reach, as hundreds of initiatives across the continent demonstrate.



Artwork by Geoffrey Ernest Katantazi Mukasa

Africa has garnered global attention for its many achievements and its dynamism, and at the same time, it has taken the spotlight for its substantial challenges. Poverty has declined, human development outcomes have improved, and dynamic social movements are helping to transform communities and bringing attention to previously stigmatized issues and people.

Technological innovation has spread to many remote areas. New policies and programs across the continent have highlighted the importance of social inclusion. African countries have led the charge towards progress in some domains; for instance, in the past decade, Africa has implemented the most reforms promoting gender equality of any region globally. Yet, as in other parts of the world, positive developments have been uneven in Africa. They have left many areas and groups behind. Digital technology, for instance, can leave those who do not have mobile phones or Internet connections further behind. Similarly, improved infrastructure has provided better lives, but also carries risks, for instance, of lands being unfairly taken from those most powerless or of damage to the environment and livelihoods.

Improvements in education and health can be concentrated in certain locations and benefit some groups more than others. Areas that experience state and societal fragility also fall behind in various development outcomes.

The term social inclusion (or just inclusion) has gained unprecedented traction in development and broader policy debates, so it is important to define what we mean. This report defines social inclusion as the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society, following World Bank 2013<sup>[i]</sup>.

It emphasizes disadvantage based on social identity and draws on distinct markers such as gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, location, occupation, race, ethnicity, religion, or citizenship status, among others. Yet, the intersection of identities bestows the real advantage or disadvantage. In answer to the question “inclusion in what?”, World Bank (2013) answers: in markets, services, and spaces. Social inclusion is about enhancing the ability, opportunity, and dignity of individuals and groups to take part in society.



[i] World Bank. 2013. *Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

## What does *Inclusion Matters in Africa* achieve?

For the first time, this report places the notion of social inclusion front and center in an analysis of Africa's achievements and challenges. Its interdisciplinary approach uses evidence from varied sources to bring empirical weight to issues that are often debated through advocacy and contestation. One of the main contributions of *Inclusion Matters in Africa* is that while it is grounded in the experience of African countries, it also shows that Africa's challenges in social inclusion are not unique or exceptional. It highlights examples of the remarkable innovations that abound in Africa and of the policy and programmatic movement toward social inclusion. It surmises that social inclusion must be based on a clear social contract that recognizes both the costs and benefits of policies and interventions towards social inclusion.

## Roadmap of the Report

This report sets out Africa's development imperatives within a framework of social inclusion. It contributes to the priority areas of a new regional strategy for the Africa region of the World Bank by focusing on women's empowerment, digital technology, fragility, and climate change, among others.

The report frames its key questions using the approach of the Social Inclusion Assessment Tool<sup>[ii]</sup>. It asks, in the wake of the advances Africa has made over the years, who is excluded, from what, how, and why. The report then highlights what has been attempted in the quest of African countries for social inclusion.

The **first chapter** lays out the motivation for this work and clarifies concepts. It highlights the fact that social inclusion is intrinsic to poverty reduction and human capital accumulation and outlines the channels through which the costs of social exclusion accrue to society.

The **second chapter** highlights the major trends and transitions that shape the context for social inclusion in Africa and describes who may be left behind. It discusses broad categories of transitions: *demographic* changes and their relationship to the accumulation of human capital; *economic* changes, of which poverty reduction is a big part; *spatial* transitions and their social ramifications, including urbanization, spatial inequality, and *climate change*; the growth of *technology* and its implications for social inclusion; and the pervasive nature of *conflict and fragility*, with its implications for a range of outcomes. Finally, it draws attention to the nature of *political and civic participation* and dynamic social movements.

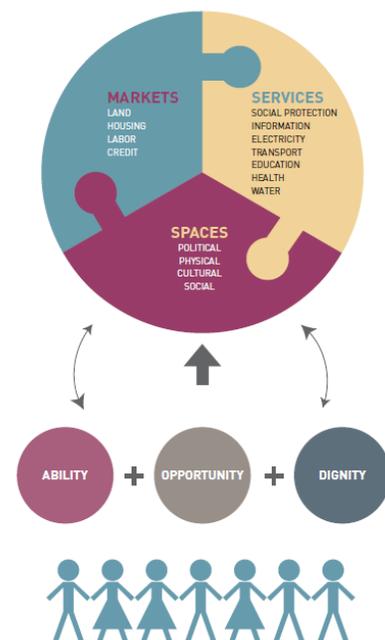
The **third chapter** provides pointers on the processes that underlie exclusion and those that foster social inclusion. It reminds us that social exclusion is fundamentally about relations of power. The world over, societies devise intricate ways to solidify social structures and uphold the status quo. Attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and practices, including superstitions, stigmas, and rituals, are among the processes through which societies render some groups to subordinate and others to dominant status. Structures and systems comprise, among others, families, communities, legal systems, labor, land markets, and knowledge systems. The chapter tells us that an understanding of social structures and processes helps us get to the core of how exclusion plays out. Without this understanding, many of the solutions we employ to address social inclusion are likely to fail or to meet with resistance.

**Chapter four** highlights Africa's movement toward social inclusion. Who are the key actors? What are some of the innovations promoting social inclusion in Africa? What evidence do we have about what has made a positive difference?

Finally, **chapter five** concludes the discussion and provides guidance on framing the right questions for inclusive solutions.

[ii] World Bank, "The Social Inclusion Assessment Tool (SiAT)," <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/478071540591164260/SiAT-Logo-web.pdf>

## Inclusion in What? And How?



Learn more about the World Bank's work on social inclusion: [worldbank.org/socialinclusion](http://worldbank.org/socialinclusion)