

SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

A future research strategy on the inclusion
of ethnic and religious communities in public
services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Draft April 2018

Authors and contributors

UNITED KINGDOM

Ghazala Mir, Tolib Mirzoev, Sahil Warsi, Bassey Ebenso, Naila Dracup, Gary Dymski,

University of Leeds

Saffron Karlsen, **University of Bristol**

Shahab Adris, Shenaz.Bunglawala, **Mend UK**

Tom Chigbo, **Citizens UK**

Councillor Mohammed Rafique, **Leeds City Council**

Waqas Tufail, **Leeds Beckett University**

VIETNAM

Bui Thi Thu Ha, Doan Thi Thuy Duong **Hanoi University of Public Health**

NIGERIA

Joyce Ogwezi, **Delta State University**

Benjamin Uzochukwu, **University of Nigeria**

Felicia Onibon, **Change Managers International**

KENYA

Winnie Mitullah; George Michuki, **University of Nairobi**

Steve Ouma, **Pamoja Trust**

INDIA

Upendra Bhojani, **Institute of Public Health, Bangalore**

INDONESIA

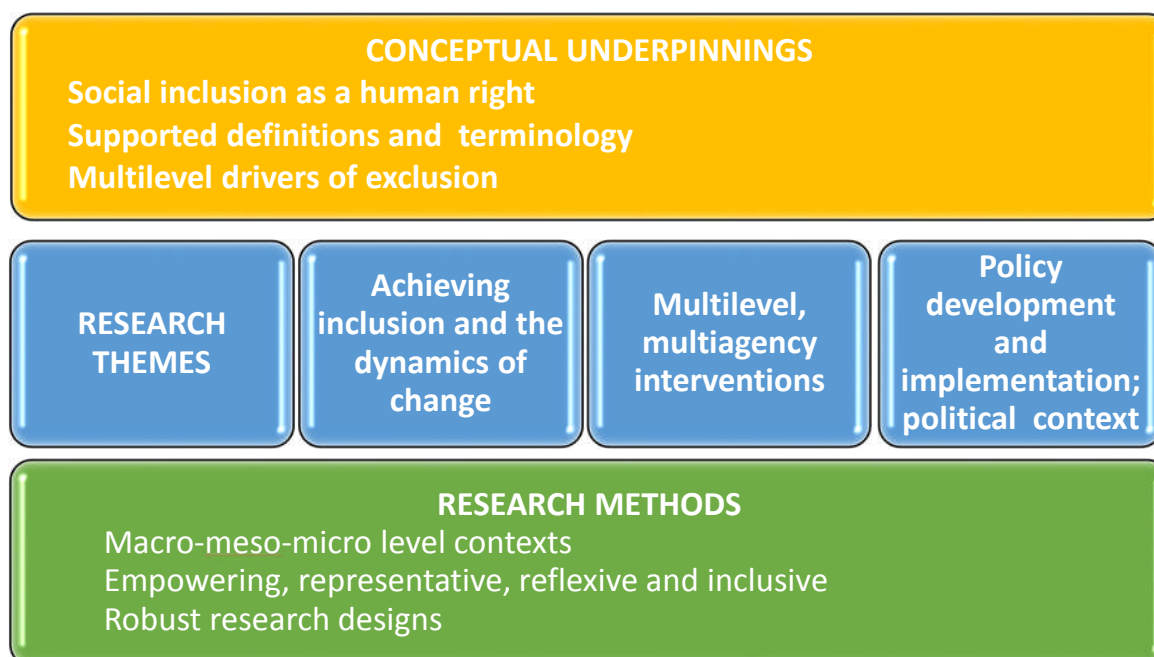
Mubasysyir Hasanbasri, **Universitas Gadjah Mada**

Background

This future research strategy was developed from a series of literature reviews and engagement with over 200 expert participants in 22 workshops and numerous interviews in India, Kenya, Nigeria, Vietnam and the UK. We explored these various sources of evidence in order to identify current knowledge and evidence gaps in relation to:

- key drivers of ethnic and religious exclusion globally and in 4 specific countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA-eligible countries)
- strategies for the inclusion of minority ethnic and religious groups in four public service areas: education, health, local government and police services.
- intersectional disadvantage: the additional impact of gender, age and migration¹

Public services are conceptualised as potential mechanisms for the wider social inclusion of disadvantaged ethnic and religious groups. We suggest that if inclusion can be achieved simultaneously in key public service contexts, this will have a positive effect on social inclusion within society as a whole. Our future research strategy focuses on how research could play a role in supporting comparable access *to*, representation *in* and quality *of* public services for ethnic and religious groups that currently experience disadvantage in society. A graphic representation of the strategy is provided below and further details of each element follow:



Concepts and challenges

We conceptualise social inclusion as a human right and exclusion as a denial of this right. There is a lack of research in ODA-eligible countries identifying which ethnic or religious groups experience social exclusion and the kinds of marginalisation that exist. In the context of multi-ethnic states and 'superdiversity', ethnicity is a dynamic and fluid concept with evolving and diverse definitions in different settings. Religious groups may also be made up of multiple sects that are or are not afforded state recognition as needing particular attention to overcome social exclusion. In some contexts, geography can make a huge difference to whether someone from a particular ethnic or religious background is part of a minority or

¹ A global evidence review and four country specific reviews will be made available online by the end of June 2018 at https://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/info/615/research/2381/socially_inclusive_cities

experiences disadvantage. Our strategy highlights the needs for specific terminology to define ethnic and religious groups that experience exclusion, so that interventions are focused on those that most need support.

We also promote attention to the multilayered and interconnected factors affecting exclusion from public services. This reflects our finding that key drivers of exclusion for people from disadvantaged ethnic and religious communities exist at different levels (see Figure 1 on p9): the social and political context (macro level), institutional practice (meso level) and at the level of the individual (micro level).

Research themes

Achieving inclusion; understanding the dynamics of change

There is a need to better understand how different stakeholders, particularly key influencers of public services, identify and explain inequalities. How are these understandings influenced by historical and social processes? Where negative understandings exist, how can these be countered in public services? What are the key indicators of exclusion and of inclusion? Mapping inclusion initiatives to the key drivers of exclusion requires robust theoretical framing and development of theory that can be applied within and across specific country contexts.

There is also a need to ensure that under-represented or 'hardly reached' groups, typically excluded from both research and policy are addressed in future research studies. Some service areas are also very under researched; we found a particular lack of evidence in relation to inclusive policing initiatives, linked to poor policy development and primary data in this area. For many disadvantaged communities contact with the police may be seen as a last resort and avoided. Evidence from NGOs or ex-police officers about the experience of disadvantaged communities within police and criminal justice systems and their ideas for the kinds of interventions needed to improve this experience may be a helpful first step in this area.

Multilevel, multiagency interventions

Multifaceted interventions at macro, meso and micro levels are needed to address the complexity of disadvantage experienced by some ethnic and religious groups. The cumulative impact of disadvantage experienced simultaneously across different public services adds to this complexity. Multidisciplinary, multisector studies would reflect the way in which disadvantage is experienced more closely than approaches dealing with a fragmented aspect of this experience.

'All stakeholder' collaboration across sectors and disciplines is helpful to such research and this in turn demands a specific set of skills including leadership, understanding of community and service cultures and social and political awareness. Examples of research questions relating to this theme are: what kinds of inclusion issues or challenges would facilitate collaboration and be prioritised by stakeholders from diverse sectors? What are the most effective gateways for engaging public service providers on such issues? What do effective multi-sector initiatives look like, and how do these vary by context? How can NGOs work successfully with government agencies and other public services on a long-term basis and what contributes to, or detracts from, the effectiveness of such collaborations?

Policy development and the political context

The role of policymakers, public service providers, excluded communities and other social groups in policy development needs to be better understood: how accessible are legal and political processes to those from disadvantaged ethnic and religious groups and what political opportunities or barriers exist that can support or prevent effective social inclusion?

Political tensions affect research in all four public service areas to which this strategy relates but are particularly noticeable in relation to local government and police services, where there are huge gaps in research evidence globally. The political sensitivity of such research may explain why ethnic and religious exclusion is so under-researched in ODA-eligible contexts. Ways of reducing the fear and sensitivity surrounding such research and legitimising work in this field are needed. An incremental approach, building on what is considered feasible in specific contexts can potentially be helpful.

Migrants, Muslim communities, and NGOs that represent their interests, may be particularly affected by the focus on extremism adopted by government and police institutions, influencing the extent to which these institutions are prepared to engage as well as their terms for engagement. Poor representation of disadvantaged community members in positions of power is compounded within institutions by a 'risk averse' culture towards communities stigmatised by government policies on counter terrorism or immigration, which undermines effective engagement. These populations are particularly affected by the misrepresentation of religious and ethnic minorities in the media, particularly social media, and in decision-making spaces, which helps to maintain and reinforce social inequalities. Questions on this issue include: how can local government and other public services become more receptive to unpopular or underrepresented voices? What is the relationship between political leaders' ethnic and/or religious affiliation and actions or attitudes towards those from different ethnic or religious backgrounds? How does greater accountability impact on the activities of government functionaries and on corrupt or discriminatory practices?

The policy context is also pertinent to exploring the effective use of research evidence by policy makers and by excluded communities, in which research can potentially be used as a lever to influence policy. Are some marginalised groups more able or willing to access and use research and other evidence than others? A further key issue is the inadequate implementation of inclusion policies and antidiscrimination laws that already exist in many contexts. Research is needed that improves our understanding of the mechanisms by which effective implementation can be achieved and how to reduce implementation barriers.

Research methods

Robust design

Research designs and methods are needed that support the evaluation of initiatives tackling macro, meso and micro level drivers of exclusion; case study methods are considered a particularly helpful approach for paying simultaneous attention to all these levels. In addition, impact that is built into research design, as in action research studies, is considered vital by NGOs in ODA-eligible country contexts.

There is also a need to evaluate existing initiatives more effectively to enable better understanding of the specific reasons why interventions work or not and who they benefit. Measures to establish the dynamics of change would contribute to enhancing the quality of studies in this area. For example, can we establish a 'standard' approach that will enable us to recognise 'success' in different national contexts? How would such standardisation accommodate different forms of knowledge, especially knowledge within excluded communities, and the need for contextual approaches?

Inclusive, reflexive research

Research itself needs to model the kind of collaboration with members of excluded communities that we have recommended for public services. Key considerations or principles for such engagement include: representation of community advocates from groups involved in the research at all stages of the process; mutual benefits from such engagement and constructive, long-term, rather than tokenistic, relationships. Inclusive approaches are facilitated by co-production and participatory research as well as 'participatory visioning'. Privileging the voice of community participants, who may be involved as co-researchers,

challenges assumptions and power-imbalances associated with methods that can replicate social exclusion within the research design. Mutual learning and intercultural dialogue is a significant aspect of such research, involving recognition that everyone involved in the collaboration has valued knowledge to share.

Interventions that increase accountability and civic participation can have significant impact on the representation of disadvantaged ethnic and religious groups in decision-making processes. Research that addresses current barriers to effective involvement of these ethnic and religious groups in research would be helpful, for example, how accessible is research funding from diverse sources for studies supporting the inclusion of such disadvantaged groups, particularly those that adopt participatory approaches? How willing are public institutions to engage in such research? What impact do counter terrorism policies have on engagement between public services (particularly local government and the police), and advocacy groups that actively dissent from such policies?

Conclusions

Unequal societies contribute to local, national and international injustice, tensions and instability that ultimately affects the lives of everyone. There are moral, legal and economic reasons for addressing ethnic and religious group inequalities and constructive approaches to exploring how to do so. This future research strategy provides a way forward for promoting greater social ownership of 'inclusive societies'. It is an initial attempt to map out the kinds of research that would help transform the current landscape in which disadvantaged ethnic and religious groups face routine discrimination and exclusion globally. We recommend that the strategy should be reviewed and updated annually in the light of what we hope will be a greater body of research evidence situated in ODA-eligible contexts. With support from funding agencies, we anticipate that work linked to this research strategy can play a key role in reducing social inequalities that are both avoidable and unjust.

Project website:

https://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/info/615/research/2381/socially_inclusive_cities

Further information: Dr Ghazala Mir, Associate Professor, Leeds Institute of Health Sciences, University of Leeds: g.mir@leeds.ac.uk +44 113 343 4832

This strategy is based on independent research commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council