4

Leave no one behind: a cross-country synthesis

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Introduction

The concept to leave no one behind (LNOB) is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Paragraph 4 of the World Leaders' Declaration adopted in September 2015 states:

> As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognising that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and Targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first (United Nations, 2015).

The LNOB concept encompasses individuals, groups, and countries. It underscores that no one should be left behind and highlights the need to achieve sustainable development for all nations, peoples, and segments of society. More importantly, the resolution insists that priority must be given to the most deprived.

The commitment of the UN member states to leave no one behind implies that they should take explicit measures to (i) end extreme poverty in all its forms and allow the left behind to catch up with those who have made progress; (ii) reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that undermine a person's ability to escape poverty; and (iii) end group-based discrimination that leads to unequal outcomes for the marginalised (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018; Stuart & Samman, 2017).

Leaving no one behind, therefore means going beyond overall averages and ensuring that progress is made for all population groups on a disaggregated scale (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2018). Since people often do not have the same capabilities to take advantage of opportunities, equality in terms of access and opportunity does not necessarily lead to equality in the outcome achieved (Sen, 1999). The better off generally possess assets, are well educated, and have access to social capital (Van Kesteren, Altaf, & de Weerd, 2019). Reducing inequalities implies an irredeemable move towards equal opportunities and equal outcomes for all (Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018).

The LNOB concept is intrinsically linked to social exclusion. According to De Haan (1999), social exclusion has two main characteristics. On the one hand, it is a multidimensional concept in the sense that people can be excluded in many areas of life, such as education, housing, employment, and citizenship. On the other hand, social exclusion involves a focus on social relations, processes, and institutions that cause deprivation. For example, a group of people may be excluded due to their identity or by landowners who prohibit access to land or habitat; political elites may exclude other groups based on legal rights; and labour markets may prevent categories of individuals from obtaining access to employment.

In assessing exclusionary processes, several authors (Addison, Harper, Prowse, Shepherd, Barrientos, Braunholtz-Speight, & Moore, 2008; Khan, Combaz, & McAslan Fraser, 2015; United Nations Sustainable Development Group [UNSDG], 2019) have pointed to five dimensions

of exclusion: (i) social discrimination, (ii) spatial disadvantage; (iii) socio-economic status; (iv) limited citizenship; and (v) insecurity and shocks.

The concept of intersectionality helps us understand the multiple disadvantages that place several groups further behind and sometimes make them invisible. This is the case, for instance, when a group is located in a remote area, is of the lowest socio-economic status (income poor), and belongs to an ostracised minority (Khan et al., 2015; UNDP, 2018).

Poverty, inequality, and exclusion are closely linked to LNOB and are multidimensional. Indeed, most people who are socially excluded are poor (Hickey & Du Toit, 2007). Similarly, there are also many connections between group inequalities (or horizontal inequalities) and social exclusion (Khan et al., 2015; Stewart, 2004). Horizontal inequalities arise between culturally defined groups and are exacerbated when there is an overlap of cultural identities with inequalities in political, economic, and social dimensions (Stewart, 2004). In contrast, vertical inequality concerns inequality among individuals or households.

While there is extensive discussion on the implications of LNOB, we know little about what exclusion looks like at the country level. Therefore, the main aim of this analysis is to contribute to closing this gap. We will seek to answer two key research questions: (i) What does exclusion look like in a given country? (ii) What does it mean to be left behind?

This LNOB chapter will also look at the connections and interlinkages between three Goals: SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). For instance, the connections between education, employment, and clean energy can help identify left-behind groups that are often overlooked. Identifying those left behind at the country level and how they are excluded will further our understanding of the root causes of LNOB and will help design policies that address this issue. To illustrate the challenges, the chapter will refer to the six country case studies (Bolivia and Peru in Latin America; Ghana and Nigeria in Africa; and India and Sri Lanka in Asia) of the State of the SDGs initiative.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The next section presents the conceptual framework. It articulates how the concepts of extreme poverty, inequalities, and exclusion are interlinked to generate lasting unfavourable conditions within which certain groups of people are trapped. A taxonomy is proposed and serves as a tool to compare and contrast different LNOB approaches. Section 3 uses country studies to explore how LNOB is experienced in different settings and contexts. Section 4 analyses the set of policy responses proposed in each country case study and determines whether those responses are similar in different circumstances. The last section presents concluding remarks.

> **Poverty, inequality, and exclusion are closely linked to LNOB and are multidimensional.**

Conceptual framework

Conceptualisation

As noted in the introduction, horizontal inequality and social exclusion are two closely related concepts. Khan et al. (2015) point out that these two concepts are multidimensional and encompass social, economic, and political forms of exclusion. But it is when horizontal inequalities are severe that they lead to social exclusion.

Horizontal inequalities exist when groups with similar characteristics experience disadvantages or privileges related to their membership of categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, or disability. Horizontal inequalities are, therefore, understood as those that affect groups for which there is no economic justification for their different level of development (Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018).

Unlike these group-based inequalities, vertical inequality (extreme inequality) refers to inequality among individuals or households. Here, the focus is on people who are at the bottom of the distribution of a key well-being indicator such as income, education, or health. It highlights the concentration of power and wealth among the elite (Fukuda-Parr, 2019).

Ramos Pinto (2014) argues that horizontal and vertical inequalities are not separate dimensions, pointing to the interrelationships between social categories (horizontal) and resource inequality (vertical). In fact, social systems use categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, or religion to allocate individuals and households to roles and positions which allow them to access key resources and advantages. Access to these resources can play a central role in shaping institutions and policies that reinforce individuals' gains. As a result, Pinto suggests focusing both on horizontal and vertical inequalities for achieving a successful 2030 Agenda.

Doyle and Stiglitz (2014) call for eliminating extreme inequalities (vertical) as they tend to hamper economic growth and undermine social stability. Because the very rich tend to spend a smaller percentage of their income compared to the poor, high inequalities of incomes and assets (greater concentration), result in lower aggregate demand generating slower economic growth. Likewise, this concentration of power (monopoly) generates higher inefficiencies due to rent-seeking. Doyle and Stiglitz (2014) draw attention to the importance of inequality of opportunity, which is both the cause and consequence of unequal outcomes. This results in economic inefficiency because many individuals fail to realise their full potential due to the prevalence of inequalities of opportunity. One manifestation of this is the lack of socio-economic mobility that condemns individuals born in precarious situations to remain at the bottom of the social pyramid for their whole lives.

The link between discrimination and social exclusion is also worth noting. Discrimination results in unfavourable treatment of one or more individuals on the basis of social categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, social class, or age. It can take the form

of direct or indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination occurs, for instance, when an individual is denied access to an education or health service because of identity considerations. The indirect form is more pernicious and results from formal or informal rules affecting social categories without targeting them openly (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017). The United Nations Report on the World Social Situation 2016 rightly underlined that discriminatory norms and behaviours are widespread and constitute a key driver of social exclusion (United Nations, 2016). Discrimination has a huge impact on social inclusion as it affects people's opportunities, well-being, and sense of agency (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2018).

This quick overview of the main concepts around LNOB shows how interconnected they are, in particular how social discrimination influences social exclusion, as well as the strong similarities between horizontal inequalities and social exclusion. It also appears that vertical inequalities are little mobilised in the conceptualisation of LNOB and have, therefore, given rise to criticism (Fukuda-Parr, 2019).

As mentioned earlier, several authors propose five main dimensions of exclusion that can be used to identify those left behind (Addison et al., 2008; Khan et al., 2015; United Nations Economic and Social Comission for Asia and the Pacific [UNESCAP], 2017; UNSDG, 2019). There is a broad consensus on the social, spatial, economic, and political dimensions. There are, however, a few noticeable differences (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Dimensions of exclusion according to selected authors

	Variables/ Authors	Addison et al., 2008	Khan et al., 2015	UNESCAP, 2017	UNSDG, 2019	Altaf, 2019
Dimensions of exclusion	**Social**	Social discrimination	Social status or identity	Discrimination, marginalisation	Discrimination	Relational
	Spatial	Spatial disadvantages	Spatial factors	Geographical disadvantage	Geography	
	Economic	Limited employment opportunities	Economic status	Socio-economic	Socio-economic status	Material
	Political	Limited citizenship	Rights and citizenship		Governance	
	Insecurity and shocks	Insecurity traps			Vulnerability to shocks	
	Migration		Migration			
	Hidden population			Hidden population		
	Hard to reach			Hard to reach		
	Cognitive					Cognitive

Source: Addison et al. (2008); Khan et al. (2015); UNESCAP (2017); UNDP (2018); UNSDG (2019); Altaf (2019). Elaborated by the author.

The work of Addison et al. (2008) is particularly relevant in the framework of the SDGs since it is concerned with issues related to chronic poverty and identifies the following characteristics:

- Social discrimination: Chronically poor people often have social relationships that can trap them in exploitative links or prevent them from accessing public and private goods and services. Several factors, such as class and caste systems, gender, religious and ethnic identity, and age can be the source of these unbalanced relationships.
- Spatial disadvantage: Remoteness, political exclusion, and weak economic integration can all contribute to the creation of intra-country spatial poverty traps. Even within cities, some urban areas can face serious disadvantages that include poor or non-existent public services, precarious living conditions, and high levels of violence.
- Limited employment opportunities: When economic growth is limited or concentrated in enclaves, job opportunities are very limited and result in exploitation of the poorest people. Living in precarious conditions, the most vulnerable survive without the possibility of accumulating assets or investing in their children's education.
- Limited citizenship: In general, the chronically poor have neither a meaningful political voice nor effective political representation. They live in societies that deny them their most basic rights.
- Insecurity: People suffering from chronic poverty also live in precarious situations. They often have to resort to survival strategies to cope with risks, which undermines their ability to make long-term investments (such as asset purchases) that could potentially alleviate their poverty.

Similarly, Khan et al. (2015) state that social exclusion is multidimensional and contextual. They identify social, spatial, economic, political, and migration as dimensions of exclusion.

- Social discrimination refers to discrimination on the basis of social status or racial identity. These discriminatory processes are often deeply rooted in informal institutions; they might also result from policies embedded in formal institutions.
- The spatial dimension of exclusion portrays disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, including rural and urban areas. Often, physically deprived spaces are occupied by culturally and economically marginalised groups.
- Economic exclusion refers to power relations, targeted government policies, or group lobbying, which can result in an unequal distribution of resources and the accumulation of wealth. Economic exclusion also refers to the inability to access labour, credit, or insurance markets.
- Political exclusion refers to the denial of citizenship rights. In such circumstances, access to resources, institutions, or decision-making processes is denied to specific groups within society.
- Exclusion can also occur with migration, when rural-urban migrants are unable to benefit from the same political, social, and economic rights as their urban counterparts, condemning them to low-paid jobs and dwelling in slums (Khan et al., 2015).

> **The individuals or groups suffering from compounded or overlapping disadvantages are most likely to be the furthest behind.**

The recent guide produced by the UNSDG (2019) focuses on five LNOB factors that can demonstrate who is left behind, to what degree, and why. These factors are: (i) discrimination on the basis of assumed or ascribed identity or status; (ii) geography, that is groups isolated or excluded due to location with aggravating factors such as environmental degradation, lack of transport, or technology; (iii) socio-economic status, especially multidimensional poverty and inequalities; (iv) governance i.e. laws, policies, institutions preventing participation in decision making; and (v) vulnerability to shocks such as natural disasters, conflict, and economic shocks. The UNSDG framework shares the social, spatial, economic, and political dimensions with Addison et al. (2008) and Khan et al. (2015) to characterise those left behind.

UNESCAP (2017) proposes five criteria to identify target subgroups of the population likely to be left behind. The first criterion consists of subgroups that are 'hard to reach' for several reasons, including minority, occupation, or illness. The 'hidden population' represent the second criterion and includes subgroups whose public acknowledgement may pose critical threats to their members (e.g. LGBT, HIV, and AIDS). The third criterion regroups those who are "excluded, marginalised or discriminated against" (UNESCAP, 2017). These subgroups are often known but mostly ignored (age, sex, religious minority, or ethnicity). Finally, the fourth and fifth criteria consist respectively of subgroups vulnerable to socio-economic conditions and geographically disadvantaged sub-populations (by climate, remoteness, or poor infrastructure).

The analytical framework of UNESCAP has several similarities with the preceding authors, in particular in the use of three dimensions of exclusion: social discrimination, geography, and socio-economic status. However, this framework introduces two dimensions that are absent in the above propositions: the 'hard to reach' and the 'hidden population' categories.

Altaf (2019) differentiates between the poor and the extremely poor. She insists on the need to better conceptualise the latter group and to identify the causes pushing people into extreme poverty. Although she acknowledges Addison et al.'s dimensions of exclusion (2008), she introduces a new categorisation of well-being: material, relational, and cognitive. The material dimension cuts across the economic aspects of exclusion. These are occupation, employment, and income; access to housing, land, and livestock; and access to basic social services (education, health, water, and sanitation). The relational dimension indicates how extremely poor people have limited access to essential social networks (lack of social capital), including family, community, and other formal and informal institutions. The cognitive dimension focuses on self-exclusion. Altaf (2019) shows that extremely poor people tend to self-exclude from several processes. Self-image, autonomy and agency, or feelings about one's power to change or influence an existing situation might be decisive factors inhibiting the capabilities of the most vulnerable. This dimension is the main contribution of Altaf (2019) to the well-documented aspects of exclusion.

Most authors analysing the concept of LNOB reach a consensus on its five main dimensions (Addison et al., 2008; Khan et al., 2015; UNSDG, 2019). It is certainly worthwhile to add the cognitive dimension.

However, instead of creating a sixth category, we can integrate the concept of self-exclusion in the broader context of the 'discrimination' dimension, extending it to factors that lead people to self-exclude. This implies using methods of investigation that allow a better understanding of this cognitive dimension. Likewise, the migration dimension proposed by Khan et al. (2015) is an integral part of the social discrimination dimension. In our analysis, we will thus rely on the following five dimensions: (i) social discrimination; (ii) spatial disadvantages; (iii) socio-economic status; (iv) governance; and (v) shocks and fragility (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Dimension of exclusion retained for the analytical framework

Dimensions of exclusion	Definition
1. Social discrimination	Exclusion based on identity: gender, ethnicity, age, class, disability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, indigenous, migratory status.
2. Spatial disadvantage	Exclusion due to location; remoteness; intra-country poverty traps; disparities between rural and urban areas; geographically disadvantaged areas; physically deprived spaces.
3. Socio-economic status	Disadvantages in terms of income, life expectancy and educational attainment; limited employment opportunities; workers excluded, totally or partially, from three basic markets: labour, credit, and insurance.
4. Governance	Exclusion due to ineffective, unjust, unaccountable or unresponsive laws, policies, and institutions; lack of voice and participation (includes informal and traditional governing systems); limited citizenship.
5. Shocks and fragility	Vulnerable to setbacks due to the impacts of climate change, natural hazards, violence, conflict, displacement, health emergencies, economic downturns, price or other shocks.

Source: Addison et al. (2008); Khan et al. (2015); UNESCAP, (2017); UNDP (2018); UNSDG (2019); Altaf (2019). Elaborated by the author.

Overall, the severity of the conditions in which deprived groups evolved is mostly dependent on intersectionality. The underlying hypothesis is that individuals or groups suffering from compounded or overlapping disadvantages are most likely to be the furthest behind. Furthermore, we shall also consider those who suffer the most extreme of difficulties or discrimination in one or several areas. A contextualised assessment is key to identify who is left behind and propose effective policy responses. The methodology subsection provides an overview of how we apply this using country case studies.

Methodological approach

In the first part of this section, we carried out an overview of the recent literature on LNOB, and documented the key factors that can help identify who is left behind and why. The five dimensions of exclusion will serve as a framework to analyse the LNOB concept and to operationalise the concept of intersectionality in different contexts. Table 4.3 provides a summary of the approach.

The identification strategy for LNOB will seek to answer two key questions: (i) What does exclusion look like in a given country? (ii) What does it mean to be left behind? This strategy will comprise three main parts:

- Conduct an analysis by dimensions of exclusion to characterise commonalities among the countries' LNOB conditions;
- Analyse the specificity of the LNOB from a country perspective and through SDGs;
- Drawing on intersectionality, explore the connections between access to education, employment, and clean energy to identify left-behind groups that are often overlooked.

Table 4.3. Overview matrix of country case studies

Approach	Country case studies					
	Bolivia	**Peru**	**Ghana**	**Nigeria**	**India**	**Sri Lanka**
Scope	Left behind in current education system	Left behind in quality education and decent work	Assess household energy use and identify furthest behind	Drivers of exclusion in quality education outcomes	Female labour force participation	Socio-economic conditions and risks of being left behind in decent work
Type	Quantitative	Mixed methods	Mixed methods	Quantitative	Mixed methods	Qualitative
Methodology	Regression analysis; simulations of joint density functions	Non-linear logistic model; community-based participatory	Decision tree analysis; logistic regression	Logistic regression; mediation analysis	Citizen report card; textual analysis; statistical analysis; factor analysis	Life stories
Data sources	Ministry of Education; Standard Bolivian household surveys	Student evaluation census; Young Lives survey; Peruvian household survey	Ghana living standard survey; 2010 housing and population census; energy policies; key informant interviews	Demographic and health surveys	Census of India; household questionnaire	In-depth interviews of workers and industry professionals
Level of analysis	Individual	Country, individual	Country, region, individual	Country Demographic and health surveys	Country, region, individual	Individual

Source: Adeniran, Onyekwena, Onubedo, Ishaku & Ekeruche (2020); Nair, Shah & Sivaraman (2020); Crentsil, Fenny, Ackah, Asuman & Otieku (2020); Andersen, Medinaceli, Maldonado & Hernani-Limarino (2020); Alcázar, Bullard & Balarin (2020); Fernando, Arambepola, Niles & Ranawana (2020). Elaborated by author.

This identification strategy is reflected in Table 4.4, where the dimensions of exclusion (rows) display interesting commonalities and show those most prominent dimensions. Likewise, SDGs/country (columns) portray the country's specificity based on targeted SDGs.

Analysis of the country case studies might lead to a better understanding of the drivers of LNOB and thus allow for better formulation of policy interventions. We will look into the set of policies presented and the underlying circumstances of their formulation. We will also compare and contrast the different policy responses and indicate similarities and uniqueness where relevant. The analysis of the country studies through the lens of LNOB will shed light on how proposed policies can address the needs of those left behind. It will also discuss the policy implications of the results.

Table 4.4. Key factors of being left behind in selected countries

Countries		Bolivia	Peru	Ghana	Nigeria	India	Sri Lanka
SDGs		4	4, 8	7	4	8	8
Dimensions of exclusion	Social discrimination	Gender, ethnicity, disability, children with parents in prison	Gender, indigeneity, disability	Gender	Gender, disability, nomadic, Almajiri	Gender, norms	Gender
	Spatial disadvantage	Remote areas	Rural/urban; regional disparity	Regional disparity	Rural/urban; regional disparity		Residents / migrants
	Socio-economic status	Income	Socio-economic level, education	Education, poverty status			
	Governance					Structure and agency	Rules, regulation, collective organisation
	Shocks and fragility				Displaced (conflicts)	Safety (travel for work)	

Source: Adeniran et al. (2020); Nair et al. (2020); Crentsil et al. (2020); Andersen et al. (2020); Alcázar et al. (2020); Fernando et al. (2020).
Elaborated by author.

Who is left behind and why?

In this section, we will discuss the three dimensions of exclusion found on the country case studies: social discrimination, spatial disadvantage and socio-economic status.

Social discrimination

The analysis of the social discrimination dimension highlights four main variables: gender, ethnicity/indigeneity, disability, and mobility. Gender issues are key determinants of access to quality education and decent employment, and cut across different configurations depending on regions, countries, and levels of education and training.

Statistics show that gender disparities tend to shrink globally. In 2000, 54% of children, adolescents, and out-of-school young people were female, whereas from 2016, the gap disappeared, and girls out-of-school now represent only 50% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018). These results, however, conceal large differences by region and school age. Primary-age girls are at a disadvantage everywhere, except in Latin America and the Caribbean, where young boys are more likely to be out-of-school. This region displays the same characteristic for lower secondary adolescents and upper secondary youth. Results of the latter school-age group are closer to gender parity (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, girls of all ages are more likely to be excluded than boys. At primary school, 23% more girls than boys are out of school

(UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018). In Asia, efforts are still needed at the primary level, where girls are also more likely to be out-of-school than boys. On the other hand, at the adolescent level, the situation is favourable for girls in Southern Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. Only Central Asia has favourable statistics for boys. With regard to the upper secondary level, there are also wide disparities in favour of girls in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia.

Despite progress made in boys and girls' enrolment, children and adolescents are in school but are not learning. According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2017), six out of 10 children and adolescents in the world are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. The situation is more dramatic in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Central and Southern Asia. In Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, it is estimated that 202 million children and adolescents (88%) will not be able to read proficiently when they complete primary and lower secondary. Likewise, 81% of children and adolescents in Central and Southern Asia are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading. The Eastern and South-Eastern Asia region presents relatively better learning outcomes with 31% of children and adolescents not reading proficiently. Similarly, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the rate of children and adolescents not reading proficiently is 36%. However, in this region, more than half (53%) of adolescents in lower secondary do not achieve minimum proficiency in reading, while only 26% children in primary fail to do so. In contrast, in North America and Europe, only 14% of children and adolescents are not achieving minimum proficiency in learning (reading and mathematics). The recent World Development Report 2018 corroborates these findings (World Bank, 2018).

When analysed through a gender lens, access to quality education shows contrasting characteristics depending on regions of the world and specific countries. For instance, women are excluded from quality education in Nigeria. Overall, only 19% of women can read in comparison to 32% of men (Adeniran et al., 2020). Further disaggregation shows that gender disparity in quality education is more pronounced in the northern regions. Also, for men, all regions record above the national average (24%), with the exception of the north-east of Nigeria. In contrast, women display results below the national mean in all regions except the south, mainly due to the fact that girls tend to be more distracted from learning than boys given their household chores such as fetching water and firewood for cooking (Adeniran et al., 2020).

In contrast, in Peru, there is no negative gender gap between the performance of primary-aged boys and girls (girls have a small lead of 1% in reading). The same is true for secondary students in reading but in mathematics, girls lag as they are 3.8% more likely to be left behind than boys (Alcázar et al., 2020).

In Bolivia, the gender gap between boys and girls is being closed. With data from 2007 and 2017, Andersen et al. (2020) portray a dramatic change in the participation rate, with the gender gap between boys and girls closing. The implementation of the education revolution has also generated a sharp drop in repetition rates from 7.3% in 2011 to 4% in 2017 for boys, and from 4.8% to 2.1% for girls in the same period. Girls also have lower drop-out rates through primary and secondary education every year since 2000, corroborating overall results in

Latin America (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018). It is only in tertiary education where we note a small gender gap in favour of men with 50.6% of women versus 57.0% of men studying (Andersen et al., 2020).

While gender gaps are closing in education and as a result, in many instances, girls are less likely to be left behind in education, the gaps are pervasive in the labour market. In several regions of the world, women still earn less than men, are more likely to be unemployed, and work in precarious conditions.

According to Alcázar et al. (2020), in Peru, being a woman is strongly associated with being left behind in decent work. It increases the likelihood of being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) by 10.7% and of working precariously by 12.4%. Being female and having a young child in the household raised the probability of being NEET by 27.7% and of being precarious by 40.3% compared to men with no children present in the household. Another gendered difference relates to having a spouse or cohabiting with a partner. Women were 18.4% more likely to be NEET if they cohabited while men in a similar situation had 6% less chance of being NEET. The same trend is observed with precarious employment. Cohabiting females were 10% more likely to be working precariously than single women, while cohabiting males were 3.1% less likely to be precariously employed than single males. These figures indicate the strong presence of gender roles in Peruvian households. Women choice is limited to stay at home and fulfil domestic chores or access inadequate jobs in the labour market (Alcázar et al., 2020).

In India, gender discrimination is observable at the household level and at the workplace. Informal practices and norms play a crucial role in perpetuating this gender discrimination both at the household level and in the workplace. For instance, barriers to education related to married life and motherhood may largely explain the labour participation decision of Indian women (Nair et al., 2020).

The case of the garment sector in Sri Lanka illustrates how gender in a specific context might lead to exclusion (Fernando et al., 2020). Rural women residing near the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) can organise collectively even for night shifts. With the ability to accommodate the shift basis of work at large firms and to take care of domestic chores at the same time, these rural women workers are in a much better position than migrant women.

In the work ecosystem, there is a clear difference between large firms and small and medium-sized firms. The former is known to offer more decent working conditions, more non-monetary benefits and better job security. Small and medium-sized firms, however, expose workers to more frequent dismissals at short notice for various reasons including automatism. This also explains why women tend to leave these small and medium-sized enterprises to migrate to EPZs, where large firms operate.

These large firms often implement women empowerment programmes with specific skill-building activities (e.g. sewing, language, or computer skills). However, these companies are missing essential elements for the advancement of women, namely maternity leave

> **Although gender gaps are closing in education, they are still pervasive in the labour market.**

and childcare. The lack of facilities for babies and early childhood, in general, is a barrier to women's progress. Beyond these companies, the lack of formal social security institutions that can take care of these needs means that married women are often at risk of being left behind (Fernando et al., 2020).

Although the gender issue is strongly present in the dimension of social discrimination, other factors such as ethnicity and indigeneity are also important. In Latin America, indigeneity is still a discriminating factor in education, especially beyond primary school. In Peru, at the primary-age, indigenous students are not being left behind. In contrast, at the secondary age, indigenous students were 15.1% and 18.1% more likely to be left behind in reading and mathematics, respectively, compared to non-indigenous students (Alcázar et al., 2020). In Bolivia, in general, non-indigenous people are more likely to go to school than indigenous people. Based on the 2007 and 2017 household surveys, it appeared that, by 2017, the gap has vanished: all children, irrespective of their ethnic group attend primary school, and the gap at secondary school has almost been closed. Differences persist however, at the tertiary level, where 58% of non-indigenous and 26% of indigenous tertiary-aged youth go to school (Andersen et al., 2020).

Disability is another key factor in social discrimination. In Nigeria, children with disabilities, who often need specialised training or teaching procedures, have to cope with poor funding and an insufficient number of qualified staff. As a result, the majority of children with disabilities do not benefit from adapted services to support their needs (Adeniran et al., 2020). In Peru, disability is also a determinant of being left behind. Alcázar et al.'s (2020) analysis show that disability increased the probability of being NEET by 25.8% and of working precariously by 12.9%. In Bolivia, government efforts have allowed the enrolment of about 11000 students in schools designed for students with special needs. About 8000 students with disabilities are also studying in regular schools. However, Andersen et al. (2020) have shown that about half of the children with disabilities aged five to 19 are not enrolled in the formal education system.

Mobility (or lack of) is another social discrimination factor when we look at the quality of education and decent employment. In Nigeria for instance, mobility prevents a significant number of children from gaining access to quality education. It is estimated that more than 10 million nomadic pastoralists and migrant fishing groups live in Nigeria, of which half is composed of school-age children. Despite efforts by authorities, most of these nomadic children remain out of school. Designing a system that adapts to mobility is the key to success. However, because basic education is an institutional responsibility of the State, children moving across states are difficult to account for (Adeniran et al., 2020).

Children displaced by conflict also suffer discrimination in access to quality education. Because Nigeria has been prone to violent conflict, especially in the north, it is estimated that 1.7 million people have been internally displaced. About 56% of these are children (Adeniran et al., 2020). In spite of combined efforts by the government, donors, and the private sector to address the problem, quality remains a challenge in an environment not conducive to adequate learning. As a result, one

can assume that displaced children are systematically excluded from quality education.

In India, the lack of mobility is one of the constraints women face. Menstruation norms which restrict women's mobility are likely to hurt women's participation in the labour force. Although safety in the workplace may be an issue, as 2% of currently working and previously working women reported they dealt with harassment in the workplace, the most worrying issue relates to safe travel to and from work. Women's access to safe transportation is a huge challenge and could contribute to exacerbating the precarious situation of women being left behind. According to the available data, 37.8% of respondents considered that the journey to the office was the least secure. Since the majority of women use buses (40.8%) or walk (40.9%), making these means of transport and the journeys of walkers safe is imperative. Working women living in deprived areas where public transport is not very secure are likely to be left behind (Nair et al., 2020).

The lack of mobility in Bolivia is linked to children whose parents are in prison. It is estimated that 2150 Bolivian children live in prison with their parents without proper care, especially as it relates to access to quality education (Ministry of Education of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2015).

In Sri Lanka, mobility is experienced differently. Migrant workers often experience severe conditions linked to their disconnection with their area of origin. Since they cannot have two successive days of rest, they cannot return to their land regularly. Living around the EPZs, they are perceived as outsiders and are recognised neither by the local authorities nor by the local communities. Consequently, they live in ghettos, suffering social prejudices and stigmatisations. They are most likely to be left behind (Fernando et al., 2020).

Spatial disadvantage

Spatial disadvantage is another important dimension of exclusion. Two variables are often taken into consideration: rural/urban relations and regional disparities.

Rural areas often suffer from problems of access to quality education, access to clean energy, and decent employment compared to urban areas. In Nigeria, for instance, only 21% of primary school children in rural areas were able to meet the minimum quality requirements, while 31% of children in urban areas were able to perform well. In urban areas, all regions in Nigeria exceeded the national average. In contrast, in rural areas, only the south-east recorded above average. The weak performance of rural residents can be attributed to the poor learning environment manifested through the lack of economic opportunities and insufficient access to good social and economic amenities. In sum, the environment for learners and teachers largely explains why children in urban settings perform better than their rural counterparts (Adeniran et al., 2020).

The same trend is observed in Peru. For primary students, being in rural schools and in single-teacher, single-classroom schools meant they were more likely to be left behind. Alcázar et al.'s analysis showed

that the effect of rurality was stronger for secondary-age children. They were 14% more likely to be left behind in both reading and mathematics than their urban counterparts (Alcázar et al., 2020).

In Ghana, electricity is widely used for lighting by urban households (90%) while only 58% of rural households rely primarily on electricity for lighting. Overall, rural households are 14.3% less likely to have access to electricity for lighting than households in urban areas. In terms of clean cooking, rural households are 13.6% less likely to use clean and improved fuels for cooking than their urban counterparts (Crentsil et al., 2020).

A similar story can be seen with respect to employment in Peru. The probability of being in precarious employment was 14.8% more likely to happen for rural individuals than urban ones. For instance, job precarity was much more probable in the Andean highlands (20.4%) and the Amazon rainforest (19.8%) contexts than in Lima. In contrast, the condition of NEET is largely urban. Thus, youths were most likely to be NEET if they came from Lima than if they came from Andean or Amazon regions (Alcázar et al., 2020).

Beyond the rural/urban issue, we can analyse the variables 'access to quality of education', 'access to clean energy' and 'decent employment', in terms of regional disparities. The Andean highlands and the Amazon rainforest are good examples both in terms of exposure to job precarity and more difficult access to quality education. Children in the Amazon region, for instance, had the most significant probability of being left behind compared to those in Lima (Alcázar et al., 2020).

The analysis of Nigeria's six geopolitical regions suggests significant disparities in education. Looking at the north (north-east, north-west and north-central) and south (south-east, south-west and south-south), the study shows that, on average, education performance is better in the south than in the north. The gap in performance in terms of quantity is, however, more extensive than the estimated shortfall in quality. For instance, on aggregate, the regional gap in enrolment in 2017 between north and south was about 20 percentage points, while the quality gap was 5 percentage points. The south faces issues of quality when the north has to cope with both quality and quantity (Adeniran et al., 2020).

In Ghana, regional disparities are also prevalent in the energy sector. When compared to the Greater Accra region, the probability of household access to clean cooking fuels is 10.2% and 25.2% lower in the Western and Northern regions respectively. In contrast, in the Brong-Ahafo, Northern and Upper West regions, the likelihood exceeds 20%. Likewise, households in regions other than the Greater Accra region are less likely to have access to electricity from the national grid for lighting the household.

When comparing rural households through regions, it appears that those in the Western, Greater Accra, Central, Volta, and Ashanti have greater access to electricity than rural households in the Eastern, Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions (Crentsil et al., 2020).

Socio-economic status

Although less prevalent, the socio-economic status dimension of exclusion is also important and can be seen in quality education, access to clean energy, and decent employment.

In Peru, at the primary-age in mathematics, "a child from a family with a very low socio-economic level has 16% more chance of being left behind in the Student Evaluation Census (ECE) than one from the highest wealth level" (Alcázar et al., 2020). The data on Young Lives (YL) longitudinal study on Peruvian child poverty confirm and extend these findings; children belonging to low-income families are 21.5% more likely to be left behind than those at a better-off socio-economic level. The analysis provided additional insights: Underweight children are more likely to be left behind at eight years old by 5.6% in mathematics and 10.4% in reading; likewise, children who did not read for fun were 10.9% more likely to be left behind in primary-age mathematics than those who did.

In Bolivia, using the same data for 2007 and 2017, Andersen et al. (2020) show that the income gap by the end of secondary school has closed. Indeed, in 2007, 76% and 90% of 17-year-olds from poor households and non-poor households, respectively, were in school. By 2017, the gap between the two groups was closed with 90% of 17-year-olds from poor families in school compared to 92% for non-poor households.

Socio-economic status has proved to be determinant in terms of decent employment. In Peru, extreme poverty increased the probability of NEET by 7.2% and the probability of labour precarity by 27.5% in comparison to the reference group. The effects of socio-economic income were three to four times stronger on precarious employment than on the NEET across all poverty levels.

When considering access to clean energy, we notice in Ghana that non-poor households (above the national poverty line) are 16.1% more likely to use clean and improved fuels for cooking than the very poor households. Likewise, wealthy households are more likely to use clean energy sources for lighting compared to poor households. Non-poor and poor households are respectively 21.5% and 10.9% more likely to have access to electricity than extremely poor households.

This rapid overview highlighted the importance of the dimensions of social discrimination, spatial disadvantage, and socio-economic status when addressing issues of exclusion in access to quality education, access to clean energy, and decent employment. It also pointed to the importance of context which we illustrate through gender and mobility. Gender-based discrimination does not always affect women. In Bolivia, for instance, young non-indigenous men living in urban areas are the group mostly left behind. Similarly, in Peru, depending on the subject (reading or mathematics), either boys or girls are marginalised. This demonstrates the importance of having disaggregated data to refine the analyses taking into account multiple dimensions.

Although gender-based exclusion is pervasive, it does not always produce the same outcomes. In Peru, enormous progress has been achieved in closing the gender gap. However, those who completed

Mobility as a factor of exclusion has several meanings depending on the country and local conditions.

education are not always able to access employment, highlighting the fact that access to education can still result in a different type of exclusion to opportunities. In India, even though gender-responsive policies are in place, these are not effective due to social norms and cultural practices that place women in disadvantaged positions.

Mobility as a factor of exclusion has several meanings depending on the country and local conditions. In Nigeria, it takes the form of economic and social activity (pastoralism) or is the result of the conflict. Each of these cases requires special care. In India, it is rather social norms and practices (menstruation) or insecurity during mobility (to and from work,) that must be addressed. In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, mobility is labour-related (rural migrants vs rural residents). At the same time, in Bolivia, it is the lack of parental mobility that causes problems for children's education.

The issue of intersectionality

Intersectionality explains to a large extent the severity of the conditions faced by disadvantaged groups. The underlying hypothesis is that individuals or groups suffering from compounded or overlapping disadvantages are most likely to be the furthest behind.

From the analysis of exclusion in access to quality education, access to clean energy, and decent employment, three main dimensions emerged: social discrimination, spatial disadvantage (rural/urban, regional disparities), and socio-economic status. These dimensions are often interrelated: social discrimination is sometimes superimposed on socio-economic status, spatial disadvantage strengthens socio-economic status, while spatial disadvantage, social discrimination, and socio-economic status mutually reinforce each other. Individuals or groups at the intersections of these different dimensions are particularly affected. These overlapping disadvantages thus create groups whose fate is to hold the attention of policymakers.

In Nigeria, three variables (gender, regional disparity, and rural/urban) are essential determinants of exclusion from quality education. Their impact is heightened when they interact, thus creating subgroups suffering from overlapping disadvantages and susceptible to being the furthest behind, such as rural girls from the north.

In Peru, several examples show how overlapping disadvantages may lead to specific groups of children being susceptible to exclusion in education. For instance, with primary-aged reading and primary-aged mathematics, gender, socio-economic status, and spatial disadvantages overlap. Thus, in primary-aged reading, the most left behind are boys from families at the lowest socio-economic level whose parents did not complete primary education. Those boys attending rural public schools in the Amazon region, are 32% more likely to be left behind than girls from high socio-economic levels in multi-teacher urban schools in Lima. Likewise, with regards to primary-aged mathematics, the furthest behind are girls, who share the same characteristics as the boys above. They are 64% more likely to be left behind than boys from high socio-economic levels in multi-teacher urban private schools in Lima (Alcázar et al., 2020).

These two profiles show how compounded disadvantages (gender, low socio-economic level, rural public school, and a remote region) can plague groups of children and leave them behind. We also notice that boys or girls are more affected depending on the subject (reading or mathematics).

Further up the education ladder (secondary-aged), we observe similar patterns. Indigeneity, socio-economic level, rurality, and remoteness weigh more on the probability of being left behind in quality of education. Thus, the most left behind in secondary-aged reading were indigenous boys who did not attend pre-school, come from families at the lowest socio-economic level, and with parents who did not complete primary education. They attend rural public schools in the Andean highlands and are 86% more likely to be left behind than non-indigenous girls who attended pre-school, from high socio-economic levels, and parents with higher studies, attending urban private schools in Lima (Alcázar et al., 2020). Likewise, the most left behind in secondary-aged mathematics are girls who display an identical profile to the one above. These girls are 90.6% more likely to be left behind than non-indigenous boys who attended pre-school, from high socio-economic levels, and parents with higher studies, attending urban private schools in Lima (Alcázar et al., 2020).

In Bolivia, intersectionality in access to quality education displays interaction between gender, ethnicity, and spatial disadvantage. Although the gender gap has almost closed, we still note, in tertiary education, a small gender gap in favour of men, with 50.6% of women versus 57.0% of men studying (Andersen et al., 2020). Besides gender, these differences at the tertiary level include indigeneity. Indeed, at the tertiary level, 58% of non-indigenous and 26% of indigenous tertiary-aged youths attend school. Remoteness is also a trigger for exclusion. Rural riverine communities, Guaraní communities, and populations in remote border areas have often suffered from exclusion from public services. Indigenous women from rural communities located in remote areas are likely to be the furthest behind in terms of access to quality education.

In the context of decent work in Peru, we see two different situations. On the one hand, NEET is where gender and urban factors intertwine; on the other hand, precarious employment overlaps for gender, rurality, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. In the first case, we note that women are overrepresented among NEET (66.8% of women), and 71% of those NEET live in an urban environment and are non-indigenous (Alcázar et al., 2020). In contrast, indigenous and rural people are overrepresented in precarious employment as well as women (62.2%).

Policy implications

The above analysis has shown that social discrimination and spatial disadvantage are two important dimensions of exclusion and must be taken seriously if we are to leave no one behind. Variables such as gender, ethnicity/indigeneity, disability, and mobility are key drivers of the social discrimination dimension, and their management must integrate any LNOB strategy. The same is true of regional disparity and rural/urban relations. These exclusion factors are even heavier

Social institutions are often the source of discrimination and exclusion.

when they overlap, highlighting groups with multiple disadvantages and likely to be the furthest behind. We present below the policy implications of the above analysis.

Address overlapping disadvantages through a comprehensive development strategy

The literature review and the case studies have shown the extent to which left behind people suffer from overlapping disadvantages. Therefore, it is essential that interventions are comprehensive. There is sufficient evidence that development programmes can succeed in reducing poverty but fail to take care of the most vulnerable (van Kesteren et al., 2019; Altaf, 2019). A holistic intervention should not only promote asset transfer but also include skills training and coaching. Taking a local community approach would ensure inclusion of extremely poor people. Besides the comprehensive development strategy, it is often necessary to provide targeted interventions to improve people's resilience from various climate and economic shocks. Social protection interventions are proving increasingly effective in reaching the extreme poor, including through productive safety net programmes and cash transfers. In certain circumstances, these policies are essential in addressing the cases of extremely poor people (elderly or severely disabled) who require permanent or long-term assistance (Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018; Altaf, 2019).

To address these overlapping disadvantages, it is necessary to pay attention to the social dimension of exclusion. Variables are dependent on local situations, such as ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, and mobility, and are, most of the time, context specific. It is therefore crucial that data be made available for relevant policy design. However, given the pervasive nature of gender discrimination, policies should be designed through a gender mainstreaming lens.

Conceptualise contextually and mainstream the principle of leaving no one behind

Reaching extremely poor people is often challenging and requires well-thought targeted interventions based on a context-specific conceptualisation of the group. Altaf (2019) has shown that the extreme poor are distinct from the poor and are often invisible and voiceless. Understanding the contours of this category demands a better understanding of the concept of multidimensional human well-being, lifetime dynamics, and the issues of agency and structure. In addition, policymakers should be sensitised to adopt a 'special LNOB lens', providing more weight to the well-being of the most vulnerable groups (Reinders et al., 2019; Van Kesteren et al., 2019).

Conceive a policy of territorial development that mainstreams spatial equity

The case studies confirmed the importance of regional disparities and the inequalities between rural and urban households. These geographic dimensions play a key role in excluding large sections of the population. Therefore, it is imperative that development strategies are not blind to these spatial realities and take a decisive option to rebalance the territories (Reinders et al., 2019).

Improve the quality of governance and drive for transformative social change

Governance issues were raised in the India and Sri Lanka case studies, particularly on the impact of governance systems on women, minorities, marginalised groups, and those living in extreme poverty. When formal institutions do not work properly, the lack of transparency and respect for the law will initially affect the weakest, such as the extremely poor. Social institutions are often the source of discrimination and exclusion. Gender equality, social inclusion, and increased agency should be at the core of the agenda if we are to succeed in leaving no one behind. This transformative social change includes giving voice to the most deprived and empowering civil society organisations that represent these marginalised groups.

Promote structural transformation of the economy and boost productive employment

A comprehensive development strategy should be based on inclusive development conditioned upon structural transformation and granting growth with productive employment (promote decent jobs in good working conditions with good remuneration and stability). One way of achieving this objective is by investing in small businesses with a clear goal of creating spill-over effects within the broader economy (Reinders et al., 2019; Van Kesteren et al., 2019). These efforts should also include provision of basic services (infrastructure, finance, education, health) that would enable the potentially left behind to build their capacities and engage in gainful employment.

Conclusion

The international community has pledged to leave no one behind in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This means ending extreme poverty in all its forms, reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities, and ending group discrimination. The analysis of the case studies revealed, among other things, three interesting elements:

- Country context matters for tackling exclusion and mainstreaming the LNOB principle. The case studies showed the importance of contextual analysis. For instance, gender-based discrimination does not always affect women. In Bolivia, young non-indigenous men living in urban areas are the group mostly left behind. Likewise, in Peru, depending on the subject (reading or mathematics), either boys or girls are marginalised. Despite huge progress made in closing the gender gap in education in Latin America, it appears that access to education may result in a different type of exclusion to opportunities as evidenced by the case in Peru. Mobility as a factor of exclusion is another example of the necessity for contextual analysis. This variable encompasses economic and social activity in Nigeria (pastoralists), social norms and practices (menstruation) or safety (travel) in India, and migration in Sri Lanka.

- Intersectionality, i.e. overlapping disadvantages superimposed on individuals or groups, is widespread and requires a holistic intervention. In education, we have seen that spatial disadvantages (rural/urban, regional disparities) and social discrimination (gender, disability, nomadic) are key factors in exclusion or deprivation. For example, girls from northern regions of Nigeria, living in rural areas, are an example of groups suffering from these multiple disadvantages. The same is true for Peru, where girls (or boys depending on the subject) of indigenous origin living in the Amazon region are most likely to be left behind.

- Social discrimination and spatial disadvantage are two prevalent dimensions of exclusion that most characterise the furthest behind. In all the case studies, regional disparities and the rural/urban relationships have been key to explaining why certain groups struggle to meet the minimum level of well-being. Therefore, territorial development and spatial equity must be placed at the heart of public policies. On the other hand, it appeared from the case studies that social discrimination (gender, indigeneity, ethnicity, mobility) was widespread and represents a serious factor in group exclusion.

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