



Social Cohesion Consultation Report

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1. Background on Social Cohesion Study

The WANA Forum aims to highlight the contribution social policy can make to economic development, considering it as both an investment and as a way to ensure human security and the Legal Empowerment of the Poor.

Relations between and within communities suffer when people lack work and food security and endure debt, ill-health, poor skills and bad living conditions. These basic necessities of life are the foundations of a strong social fabric and important indicators of social progress. Another tenet of cohesion is social order, safety and freedom from fear.

Social cohesion should be understood beyond a safety net that protects and assists society's most vulnerable, and rather, as an integral part of socio-economic development that empowers everyone. It is about promoting a social cohesion mechanism in day-to-day life while also being reactive and strong enough to limit the damage of exposure to potential risks, whether it is the global financial crisis, conflict or natural disasters.

A regional Social Charter would further the aims of advancing social development by promoting the concept of citizenship, stimulating a process of dialogue with civil society and encouraging governments and non-state actors to demonstrate their commitment to the interests and welfare of their citizens.

The creation of a regional cohesion fund is an important step toward establishing a more productive and forward-thinking mechanism for investing funds that benefit the entire region and not only in times of conflict. Existing funds that are currently used on an ad hoc basis could be reallocated for new purposes with an understanding of public policy that promotes social peace and justice.

The aim of the WANA Forum's Social Cohesion Study is to initiate a multi-year collaborative effort that galvanises people in the region to think about social cohesion. The research project focuses on six stages:

1. Contextualising by combining global insights of current social development literature with regional cultural, political and structural realities and practices and assessing carrying and recovery capacity.
2. Compiling a WANA region social development index using advanced econometric techniques to identify and cluster those countries which are better/worse off in terms of social cohesion.

3. Exploring case studies on innovative mechanisms for delivering social cohesion (both formal and informal).
4. Investigating various ways to promote cooperation at the regional level drawing on practices in the context of WANA, reflecting cooperation between NGOs, states and networks of extended families across borders.
5. Evaluating international social cohesion experiences proposed by the institutions of global governance and international think tanks, with the aim of identifying good practices which may be useful to the WANA region.
6. Formulating policy recommendations which are technically and politically feasible and fiscally sound.

2. Overview of Social Cohesion Study

2.1 Definition: The Combat Poverty Agency of Ireland defines social cohesion as bringing together, in an integrated way, economic, social, health and education policies to facilitate the participation of citizens in societal life.

Social Cohesion is not a foreign concept to West Asia and North Africa:

- In Arabic: *takaful* (mutual interdependence), *tamasuk* (solidarity) and *tadamun* (complementarity) are Islamic principles that reflect social cohesion;
- In Farsi: *rafaa ejtimaa'i* and *amniyat ejtimaa'i* refer to both the concepts of social cohesion and social security;
- In Turkish: *sosyal uyum* refers to social cohesion and *sosyal güvenlik* refers to social security.

2.2 Dimensions of Social Cohesion:

According to the United Kingdom's State of the English Cities Report (2007), the dimensions of social cohesion are as follows:

- a) Material Conditions – employment, income, health, education and housing;
- b) Social Order – safety, freedom from fear, tolerance, peace and security;
- c) Positive Interactions – exchanges, networks, mutual support, information, trust and credit;
- d) Social inclusion or integration – sense of belonging, strength of shared experiences, identities and values;
- e) Equality – level of fairness or disparity in access to opportunities or material circumstances, such as income, health or quality of life.

3. Key Concepts of Social Cohesion:



3.1 Social Charter

A regional Social Charter would further the aims of advancing social development by promoting the concept of citizenship, stimulating a process of dialogue within civil society and encouraging governments and non-state actors to demonstrate their commitment to the interests and welfare of their citizens.

3.2 Regional Cohesion Fund

The creation of a regional cohesion fund is an important step toward establishing a more productive and forward-thinking mechanism for investing funds that benefit the entire region and not only in times of conflict.

Malaysia recently launched a Global Zakat Fund and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has begun to expand poverty reduction programmes, laying the groundwork for a system to provide social security for its citizens.

3.3 Human Security

Human Security is a concept of security that is people-centred and without borders. It is a concept that acknowledges the inherent linkages between economic and social development, environmental sustainability, respect for human rights and peace.

While national security is just as relevant as before, the strategies to achieve it must be much more global, and remedies must be centred on the welfare of the individual, not simply focused on the security of the state.

If our strategies are focused on achieving human security, then we will see the advantage of finding solutions through dialogue and negotiation rather than through confrontation and the use of force.

In the past, war may have seemed a reasonable strategy for a country that views itself as a self-sufficient entity protecting its interests. But in today's interdependent world, one's enemy today could very well be a partner tomorrow – sharing resources, combating common environmental and health issues, and interacting with each other on many levels. In such a framework, the least developed countries are viewed not as weaker neighbours to be exploited, but as a wealth of human resources to be tapped for mutual benefit (qualitative human capital).

3.4 Legal Empowerment of the Poor

Empowering the poor entails exploring the relationship between justice and poverty alleviation and the creation of sound legal and political frameworks which address the needs of the poor and hold leaders accountable.

The Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor is the first global initiative to focus specifically on the link between exclusion, poverty and law, to give voice to the voiceless, so that legal protection and economic opportunity are not for a privileged, resourceful few who know how to be heard. It is a process which considers how to bridge the divide between the aspirations of world governments and existing legal texts and the realities of people's lives.

3.5 Responsibility to Protect

Responsibility to Protect (R2P) relates to a state's responsibilities towards its population and to the international community's responsibility in case a state fails to fulfil its responsibilities. It seeks to provide a legal and ethical basis for intervention by external actors (preferably the international community through the United Nations) in a state that is unwilling or unable to prevent or stop genocide, massive killings and other human rights violations.

3.6 Regional Commons

The idea is to integrate the social cohesion approach with the idea of a regional commons, such as establishing a Community of Water and Energy for the Human Environment, so that social policies could be seen as a part of public goods. WANA countries must share the responsibility to protect and sustainably manage the global commons for the benefit of future generations thereby creating a regional commons that enhances the region's carrying capacity.

The Coalition for the Global Commons engages partners across the world in the development of a common global action plan. But the custody and care of the global commons are ultimately the responsibility of everyone. They involve inter-linkages between environmental, cultural, social, political, ideological, economic, and technological dimensions that transcend geographical barriers to involve matters of shared concerns.

3.7 Carrying Capacity/Recovery Capacity

Carrying capacity is the maximum population that can be sustained by the available resources in a population's environment. Infinite growth is not possible. In conditions of extreme inequity, we cannot produce enough economic growth to help the poor without precipitating an ecological disaster. We must, therefore, give considerable weight to carrying capacity and boost capacity without degrading the natural social, cultural and economic environment for present and future generations.

3.8 Qualitative Human Capital

Qualitative Human Capital refers to the idea of investing in people. We have to conserve our physical resources and develop our human resources with respect to human dignity. This inevitably entails expanding our notion of education beyond text-book knowledge to encompass concepts of peace, citizenship and critical thinking.

Education, training, and health are the most important investments in human capital. People cannot be separated from their knowledge, skills, health, or values in the way they can be separated from their financial and physical assets.

4. Feedback on Social Cohesion Study Proposal:

4.1 Stages of the Study:

Stage One: Contextualisation

A concept paper will be developed to bring together various definitions and survey existing initiatives. A concept paper is needed to build on future work – on the contextualised understanding of social cohesion and social development, and draw on indicators to further enrich its bases in different ways.

Contextualisation should come out of engaging in the research, not from defining social cohesion – we do not have to wait until we have a clear definition of social cohesion. Regardless, contextualisation should go beyond the safety net approach to address socio-economic dimensions (culture, freedom from fear, right to be included in all spheres of life, legal empowerment of the marginalised). The aim should be to contextualise these ideas and how they are materialising or not in these countries. Often, the structures of power marginalise individuals.

Stage Two: Develop a Social Development Index

Since we do not have the capacity or the ability to gather raw data in any country, the index will be based on data that has already been gathered by other reliable sources. Existing development indices for the developing world will be used and expanded in relation to WANA. The index should capture the intangibles, such as happiness, peace, corruption, good governance and freedom of movement, at the local level that are missed by international actors. Therefore, the concept of development should be developed to encompass intangibles, even though it might be a challenge to measure them. Culture and tradition should also be taken into consideration – we have informal, sophisticated systems that are over 100 years old.

For the index, dimensions can be listed or accessed on a scale of 1 - 3, with a common understanding of social cohesion in the region taking local institutions as a starting point and generating our own understanding of development.

Stage Three: Explorative Case Studies

Explorative, instead of comparative, case studies will be pursued to build a full picture of what social cohesion in these countries looks like, focusing on broad themes, a minimum list of issues, such as quality of administration and youth,

while allowing the interest of the researchers to shape it. The investigation will be about how these countries are meeting or not meeting social cohesion (or what aspects of it). Social cohesion is not part of most social policy in the region.

Key question about the selection of countries: do we want them to be broad and representative of the region or to take a pragmatic approach, focusing on the best methodology to allow us to flush out significant practices?

The practical scope of the study should be focused upon. What are the policy areas or groups of areas (youth, immigrants) and how do we go about collecting the data and what kind of data do we want?

First, we start by investigating what types of systems are available which could be done through questionnaire, by contacting governmental and non-governmental institutions and from there build methodology.

A scoping questionnaire for governmental and non-governmental organisations should be developed. The questionnaire needs not be lengthy - 10 questions that deliver the information needed would suffice. It should help to: a) identify the formal and informal social mechanisms that promote social cohesion; b) identify the key obstacles to effective social cohesion; c) identify the developmental conditions necessary to promote social cohesion; d) identify leading practice (innovation).

Turkey was suggested due to its long history of social development through formal state institutions. Lebanon lacks established systems and relies on informal systems. Bahrain is a good model for the Gulf region because it has developed good welfare systems amongst which is the zakat funds. Yet, these countries represent less than one per cent of the WANA population. Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen are other countries that we could be looking at. Case studies will be proposed to the Forum in May 2010, after which it will be determined which countries will be researched.

Stage Four: Mapping of Existing Regional Initiatives

Regional mapping is important to find out what initiatives already exist (mainly cross-boundary initiatives). This exercise is also important to bridge the gap between non-governmental and governmental initiatives. A literature review should also be conducted.

Stage Five: Lessons Learned from International Experiences

This stage is about locating the project in the global context. It is already represented as we draw from the international experiences of Finnish partners.

Instead of taking a risk management approach, it is important to invent a new approach, a new understanding of social chances and possibilities. How can the welfare state empower people and promote healthy behaviour? The main pillar of this new understanding is that the welfare state is meant to provide resources to help people master their lives and not to just compensate for damages.

4.2 Other Proposals:

- Develop a matrix for social cohesion (different concepts of social cohesion in the different languages), and its dimensions in the different countries. Then select the case studies that support this understanding – should be something that can be used to upload regionally.
- Sponsor an Innovation Awards in Social Entrepreneurship ceremony, under the patronage of HRH Prince El Hassan, in Amman. This could provide for a more collaborative approach with organisations bringing examples of good practice directly to us. The project requires criteria to allow us to identify innovative practices.

4.3 Framework for Analysis*:

- a) The need for a concept paper that tackles social cohesion and represents our understanding of the term.
- b) More extensive work on the issue of contextualisation and mapping what exists in the region of concepts and initiatives.
- c) In parallel, start developing a social cohesion index.

* *The items listed under "Framework for Analysis" are the first steps. Other proposals will be considered for later stages.*

Annex 1: Consultation Agenda

Overview & Summary

The WANA Forum aims to highlight the contribution social policy can make to development, considering it as both an investment and as a way to ensure human security. The aim of the WANA Forum's Social Cohesion Study is to initiate a multi-year collaborative effort that galvanises people in the region to think about social cohesion. The research project focuses on six stages, which are outlined in the study proposal. The purpose of this consultation is to assess what can be accomplished by the Second Annual WANA Forum.

10:00 - 10:30	Welcoming Words and Introductions
10:30 - 11:00	Brief Overview of Social Cohesion Study
11:00 - 11:30	Roles and Responsibilities of Project Team
11:30 - 13:00	Feedback on Social Cohesion Study Proposal
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:30	Research Methodology
15:30 - 17:00	Timetable & Next Steps

Annex 2: List of Participants

Name	Background
Sultan Barakat	WANA Forum Moderator, Advisor to HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal and Director of the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit, University of York, United Kingdom
Sara Bazoobandi	Doctoral student at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Exeter University, United Kingdom
Rafia Ghubash	President of the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain and President of the Arab Network for Women in Science and Technology, Bahrain
Baker al-Hiyari	Team Leader, WANA Forum Secretariat, Jordan
Olli Kangas	Professor of Social Policy and Head of the Research Department at the Social Insurance Institution of Finland
Ahmad Mango	WANA Forum Moderator and Advisor to HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Jordan
Füsün Özerdem	Lecturer in the Department of International Relations, Traka University and Coordinator at Governorship of Edirne European Union Coordination Centre (EUCC) and Edirne EU Info Relay, Turkey
Ilari Rantakari	Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland
Juho Saari	Professor of Welfare Sociology, University of Kuopio, Finland
Maha Yahya	Regional Advisor on Social Policies at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Lebanon

Annex 3: WANA Forum Secretariat

Name	Background
Martti Antola	Advisor, WANA Forum Secretariat and Officer for External Relations and Governance Support, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Sweden
Fatima Azzeh	Communications Officer, WANA Forum Secretariat
Sultan Barakat	WANA Forum Moderator, Advisor to HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal and Director of the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit, University of York, United Kingdom
Michelle Bouchebel	Part-Time Researcher, WANA Forum Secretariat
Laura Haddad	Programme Coordinator, WANA Forum Secretariat
Baker al-Hiyari	Team Leader, WANA Forum Secretariat
Ahmad Mango	WANA Forum Moderator and Advisor to HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal
Manal Nayfeh	Logistics Coordinator, WANA Forum Secretariat
Nour Qabba'ah	Researcher, WANA Forum Secretariat
Mohammad Shahbaz	WANA Forum Environment Working Group Facilitator and President of the Jordan Badia Research and Development Centre

Annex 4: Social Cohesion Study Proposal

SOCIAL COHESION IN THE WANA REGION

a proposal for a comparative research project

The challenge before us all is to ensure that the effects of technological development, social change and globalisation do not continue to disenfranchise or alienate sections of our societies. I believe we must face this challenge with unity and cohesion, drawing strength from our faith and from our shared values. Our future wellbeing depends on an integrated approach to humanity and security, which necessarily includes the voiceless victims, or the "silenced majority".

- His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal, acceptance speech, Abraham Geiger Award, Berlin, Germany, 4th March, 2008

Sighting Shots

One of the greatest puzzles in world history has been why some regions have been successful in enhancing economic growth while other regions have lagged behind. Occasionally, their fortunes have been reversed: countries that had been successful for an extended period of time eventually lost their position of affluence to other countries. Indeed, while the economic progress of many developing countries in the post Second World War period has been slow, some have achieved spectacular levels of growth and other forms of developmental success. These countries include, amongst others, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Botswana, Malaysia, Thailand and Mauritius. At the heart of their relative success has been the character, capacity and role of their states – developmental states. As Adrian Leftwich (2000 : 155) notes:

The distinguishing characteristic of developmental states is that their political purpose and institutional structures (especially their bureaucracies) have been developmentally driven, while their developmental objectives have been politically driven. For at the heart of these states, fundamentally political factors have shaped the urgency, thrust and pace of their developmental strategies through the structures of the state... These political factors have normally included nationalism, ideology and a wish to 'catch up' with the West.

Identifying the ingredients of developmental success in the 'late industrialisers'

has, therefore, been a core objective for academicians and practitioners alike. The late industrialisers have used what Friederich List (1885 / 1966 : 175) refers to as ‘artificial means’ (e.g. the institutions and policy instruments of the state) to catch up with advanced nations. There are six core key features of this form of state:

1. The existence of a dedicated developmental elite;
2. The relative autonomy of the state apparatus from internal and external forces;
3. A competent and insulated economic bureaucracy;
4. A weak and subordinated civil society;
5. The capacity to manage local and foreign economic interests; and,
6. A varying balance of repression, legitimacy and performance (Evans, 2007).

However, the ‘late industrialisers’ have also been accused of failing to take social development seriously and for having poor human rights records (see Leftwich, 2000). Indeed, an important normative argument emerges in relation to the morality governing the Developmental State model – is it ethical to trade-off democratic or social development concerns to achieve development goals? Certainly, the evidence from the study of developmental states is that democracy is not a necessary condition for development. On the other hand, it is equally true, as China is currently finding to her cost, that unfettered economic growth can exacerbate regional inequalities and social tension. Indeed, on 15 March 2008, at the First Plenum of the 11th National People’s Congress, President Hu Jintao announced that the next stage of the New China’s development would focus on introducing the social cohesion policy reforms necessary to build a harmonious society (héxié shèhuì).

The WANA region, once one of the most prosperous regions in the world, has been a laggard in her industrial development. In an exhaustive field of study, scholars have sought to explain the path-dependent characteristics of economic and social development on the basis of the persistence of inflexible social structures and cultural legacies, institutional underdevelopment, political underdevelopment, the legacies of formal imperialism and the low levels of social trust due to an imbalanced world system and its corresponding power relations (see: Dercon et al., 2006; Leftwich, 2000; Sen, 1999; Stiglitz, 2002).

One structural feature that impedes social and economic progress in WANA is rentierism. The region suffers from the absence of a modern industrial base

because oil revenues and foreign aid have been the main engines of economic growth since the end of the Second World War. Rentierism has contributed to the widening of income gaps within countries and among them. It has also led to policies aimed at gaining short-term access to revenues and benefits, as opposed to policies that are in the long-term public interest.

In short, while it is important for WANA countries to learn from the positive economic experiences of the 'late industrialisers' it is equally, if not more important, given the instability of the region, to ensure that economic development is built on stable and creative social foundations that give rise to policy complementarities in the social, economic and environmental fields. In addition, having missed the first and second industrial revolutions, the WANA region can pave its own path independent of the 'late industrialisers' with the opportunity to leapfrog into the third industrial revolution. The silver lining of the absence of a modern industrial base is that WANA has no ailing industries to bail out. The example of setting up an electric car industry without having to protect any oil based automotive industry is a case in point. Greenfield industrial development (setting up industrial complexes from scratch) also produces environment friendly output and provides "green" jobs, in the sense of employment in post carbon sectors.

Defining Social Cohesion

The Combat Poverty Agency of Ireland defines social cohesion as "Bringing together, in an integrated way, economic, social, health and educational policies to facilitate the participation of citizens in societal life."

According to UK's State of the English Cities Report (2007), the five dimensions of social cohesion are: material conditions, passive relationships, active relationships, inclusion and equality:

Material conditions refers to employment, income, health, education and housing. Relations between and within communities suffer when people lack work and endure hardship, debt, anxiety, low self-esteem, ill-health, poor skills and bad living conditions. These basic necessities of life are the foundations of a strong social fabric and important indicators of social progress.

Passive relationships refers to social order, safety and freedom from fear. Tolerance and respect for other people, along with peace and security, are hallmarks of a stable and harmonious society.

Active relationships refers to the positive interactions, exchanges and networks between individuals and communities. Such contacts and connections offer people and organisations mutual support, information, trust and credit of various kinds.

Social inclusion refers to the integration of people into mainstream institutions of civil society. It also includes people's sense of belonging and the strength of shared experiences, identities and values between those from different backgrounds.

Social equality refers to the level of fairness or disparity in access to opportunities or material circumstances, such as income, health or quality of life.

Social cohesion is not a concept foreign to West Asia and North Africa. Islamic principles that reflect social cohesion include mutual interdependence (*takaful*), solidarity (*tamasuk*) and complementarity (*tadamun*). Other defining elements are togetherness, inclusion and income distribution.

Social cohesion should be understood beyond a safety net that protects and assists society's most vulnerable, and as an integral part of socio-economic development that empowers people at all levels. It is a large spectrum to cover, promoting a social cohesion mechanism in day-to-day life while also being reactive and strong enough to limit the damage that could be done when exposed to risk in the region, whether it be the global financial crisis, conflict or natural disasters.

A regional Social Charter would further the aims of advancing social development by promoting the concept of citizenship, stimulating a process of dialogue within civil society and encouraging governments and non-state actors to demonstrate their commitment to the interests and welfare of their citizens.

The creation of a regional cohesion fund is an important step toward establishing a more productive and forward-thinking mechanism for investing funds that benefit the entire region and not only in times of conflict. Existing funds that are currently used on an ad hoc basis could be reallocated for new purposes with an understanding of public policy that promotes social peace and justice.

Research Aims

The WANA Forum seeks to highlight the contribution social policy can make to economic development, considering it as both an investment and as a way to ensure human security and the Legal Empowerment of the Poor.

The aim of the Social Cohesion Study is to initiate a multi-year collaborative

effort that galvanises people in the region to think about social cohesion. Together with stakeholders from WANA, the study would map out social development in different countries, identifying how citizenship is understood in different countries and learning from each other's best practices. The ability to implement policies is at least as important as the ability to develop them, and through understanding political decision-making processes, it would be possible to assess the possibilities for developing regional cooperation in social cohesion management.

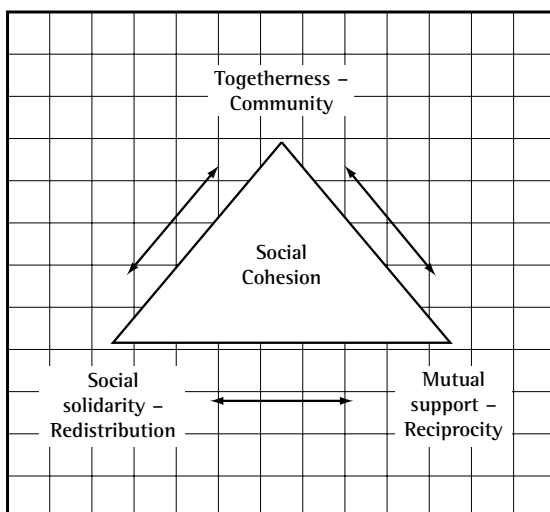
This research project will resist the temptation to rehearse the familiar story of endless crises and failures in the WANA region and instead focus on investigating examples of successful innovations in social development which provide lessons of good practice in the design of local, national and regional institutions. Only exemplar institutions will be selected – those which contribute positively to both social cohesion and economic growth and deliver genuine public value for the citizenry (Moore, 1995).

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, among others, which aim to halve the share of people living in poverty by 2015, pose a great challenge to nations and international organisations. To meet these formidable challenges in constructive ways, the international developmental discourse repeatedly emphasises the role and importance of various social policies either implemented through statutory measures, social partners in labour markets, various non-governmental organisations or civil society (e.g. religious groups, professional associations and women's organisations). The crucial issue which arises for this research project is how the institutional design of social policies can be used to build human capacities, to empower social groups and to facilitate modernisation. The failure of the late industrialisers to balance economic with social development provides a strong case for why social policy is a strong instrument for development in promoting social cohesion and even in accumulating social capital for investments in economic projects (Putnam, 2001).

The aims of this research project are, therefore, twofold: to map and analyse the existing mechanisms for promoting social cohesion and social development in the WANA region and to identify exemplars of good practice. These social mechanisms are often understood through the lenses of concepts such as capabilities (Sen, 1999), social exclusion (Hills, Le Grand & Piachaud 2002; Silver, 2007), social development (UNDP, 1990) or poverty reduction (World Bank, 2001 & 2006).

Although there are important points of difference in the understanding of these concepts, core overlapping features exist.

All of these concepts stress the importance of issues of togetherness or community, social solidarity and redistribution as well as inter-dependency or mutual support. Indeed, as Figure 1 illustrates, social cohesion itself can be used as a concept for understanding the virtuous inter-relationship between these variables in which social development is partly understood as the outcome of the interaction between community, redistributive social solidarity and mutual support.



Hence, the notion of social cohesion provides a good starting point for an investigation of social development in the WANA region. Social development, in turn, refers to a particular form of social change that emphasises the mutually reinforcing relationship between economic improvement and social habitation in the sense that it helps to enhance the adaptive efficiency of public and social policies. Empirical evidence from East and West, South and North indicates that economic growth is a necessary, but not a sufficient, pre-condition for positive change in human well-being. Economic growth does not have trickle-down benefits: without social solidarity and related mechanisms of redistribution some sections of population may actually be worse off due to social changes (Stiglitz, 2002). Furthermore, under certain circumstances, economic growth can undermine

togetherness. Indeed, as the recent financial crisis has demonstrated, unregulated markets may harm not only the principle of reciprocity but jeopardise the very market mechanism itself (Krugman, 2004).

Finally, the evolving concept of an interdependent WANA suggests three overlapping dimensions of territoriality. Firstly, the WANA region restructures geographical space from Western Asia to Northern Africa. These countries that comprise WANA share several important communalities (as well as sources of conflict), including history, religion and culture. Secondly, regional cooperation could represent the starting point to a process of integration which may ultimately lead to the emergence of a new supra-national level of governance aimed at combining existing or creating some new economic, social and political spaces. The time is right for developing regional initiatives as a methodology for promoting peace and stability in the WANA region, of which enhanced co-operation between nation states and civil societies is essential.

As a part of this regional methodology of peace-building and stabilisation, social development and cohesion policies could play a crucial role. In particular, social policies – the redistributive element of social cohesion – should be considered as a productive factor in the context of a more extensive package of governmental and regional policies (or policy complementarities) where social, economic and environmental policies are mutually re-enforcing and aim at increasing adaptive efficiency. Needless to say, constructing such a package is easier in rhetoric than in reality but, nevertheless, it is an alternative worthy of systematic inquiry in the context of WANA. The same applies to the co-operation between various NGOs – the togetherness component of social cohesion – which are mainly national in character, but nonetheless create ad hoc or permanent networks of various kinds that bridge countries and bind their civil societies together. Finally, individuals within their extended families also work and move across borders – the mutual support component of social cohesion – and establish a strong regional component (e.g. remittances). In short, there are good reasons to investigate the relevance of this component for social cohesion.

From charity to social cohesion: proactive development policies

Contextualisation

The politics of social development and social cohesion require some serious

contextualisation (see Ghai, ed., 2000). We can probably agree that human beings are social creatures who universally value certain capabilities, like good health, freedom from poverty, adequate social relations, freedom of expression, and so forth. These objectives are often summarised in constitutions and charters. On the other hand, however, there is overwhelming evidence that one size does not fit all. The same set of policy recommendations – for example, the deregulation of commerce and external trade or the reform of family law – may have very diverse consequences for capabilities in various contexts (see Evans ed., 2004). As a consequence, it is crucial to be sensitive to context and to varieties of institutional frameworks and cultural configurations. This is very often neglected in studies analysing welfare states and development. Till now, these studies have been strongly OECD-biased (for the exception see Ghai, ed., 2000).

To illustrate the importance of cultural context, the role of dominant or hegemonic religion in social development policies and practices is evidently quite different in Arab and Islamic cultures than in, for example, Protestant or Catholic countries that display different socio-political configurations – not to mention major Asian countries influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Any development policy model that does not pay sufficient attention to these cultural factors in explaining the position of the individual versus the collective, or more broadly, individualism versus collectivism, or the state versus civil society, may result in conflict, low rates of legitimacy, and consequently, the emergence of implementation gaps.

Institutions, or the rules of the game, also have different incentive structures depending on context. Again, consider the role of the state or social partners in organising social policies in Scandinavia and Jordan or Egypt. In the latter countries, there are functional substitutes for the Scandinavian type statutory welfare arrangements (for example, the extended families, remittances through various networks, donations and charities that are motivated by religious ideas and visions, some parts of organised civil society, companies) that for a variety of reasons play roughly similar roles as statutory social policy in the Northern hemisphere. In order to understand the requisite design of institutional framework and the basis for social development, sufficient attention should be paid to these functional equivalents.

Filling the gap in social cohesion research

The field of social cohesion research lacks well-established disciplinary traditions in the field of social policies, and possesses relatively few established research institutions specialising in comparative or regional research. The WANA Forum can help bridge the gap by confronting two central problems within much of the present academic literature on public policy in general and policy innovation in particular. Firstly, there is a relative absence of enterprising prescription to help public organisations solve public policy problems and, secondly, there is reluctance to make social scientific enquiry relevant to practice. The virtuous relationship between 'rigorous' evidence-based practice, international lesson-drawing and sound policy-making has created a political space for comparative public policy specialists to provide a unique contribution to policy discourse. This project aims to produce the type of comparative research necessary to bridge the world of theory and practice in a way that reinforces the strengths of both.

It will be important not only for this project to provide explanations and understandings of social cohesion subjects but (where appropriate) to seek progress through 'enlightened' prescription. Moreover, as well as addressing domestic concerns, the WANA Forum's approach will be comparative in method and global in scope, guided by the following quotation from the work of Richard Rose (1991: 3):

Every country has problems, and each thinks that its problems are unique. However, confronted with a common problem, policy makers in cities, regional governments and nations can learn from their counterparts elsewhere.

Current problems in the WANA region can, in part, be confronted through 'rational' lesson-drawing which avoids the 'learning paradox'. In other words, lesson-drawing through comparative public policy-making can be a rational and progressive learning activity but only if the outputs of the process of learning are compatible with the value system of the recipient organisation, culturally assimilated through comprehensive evaluation and built on existing organisational strengths. This research project will, therefore, provide practitioners with the guiding principles for avoiding the learning paradox, thus helping them deal with

problems of public policy by drawing lessons from international experience.

Methodologically, the project will be innovative, utilising both quantitative and qualitative approaches and data sets that can identify various mechanisms of social cohesion. The project will also promote participatory action research – where the research group co-operates closely with governmental and civil society actors and engages in knowledge sharing over an extensive period of time.

Project Implementation

In practical terms, the research project will focus on six stages of research, analysis and evidence based prescription as follows:

I – Contextualisation

- Defining and operationalising the concepts of social cohesion and social policy innovation
- Scoping the policy arena
- Identifying WANA cohesion needs
- Assessing recovery capacity/carrying capacity

II – Compilation of a WANA region social development index

III – Explorative case studies on innovative mechanisms for delivering social cohesion (both formal and informal)

IV – Identification of Regional/cross-boundary mechanisms for delivering social cohesion (both formal and informal)

V – Identification of international experiences and recommendations

VI – Policy recommendations – Establishment of evidence-based proposals for regional social cohesion mechanisms

Stage 1: Contextualisation

This stage of investigation refers to the observation that any attempt to promote social development should be based on a solid theoretical framework that combines global insights of current social development literature (in order to avoid the ‘reinvention of the wheel-syndrome’) with regional cultural, political and structural realities and practices in ways that make it possible to embed key concepts like social cohesion, social risk and development and international lesson-drawing into regional and local institutional matrices. In addition, several concepts with significant exploratory powers will be introduced, including dichotomies like

recovery capacity/carrying capacity.

Stage 2: A WANA-regional social development index

A WANA regional social development index will be compiled using advanced econometric techniques to identify and cluster those countries which are better/worse off in terms of social cohesion and beyond what the institutional and structural characteristics seem to imply. Typical output-indicators include life-expectancy, child mortality, and other well-established measures. The index could benefit from the experience of both the United Nations Human Development Index and the Global Peace Index.

Stage 3: Explorative case studies

The 'Explorative case studies' stage of investigation refers to the identification of concrete cases either at a local or national level that could be considered good practices in the context of the WANA region.

The selection of exemplars of policy innovation from these country studies will be the subject of careful reflection, which takes into an account data requirement, comparability, the variety of cases, etc. It is preferable that the exemplar case studies are comparable in objective (for example, 'the empowerment of children by NGOs', 'social safety nets', or 'strategic thinking in public administration in the field of social and health policies') and magnitude so that the project can identify why some models of action are more effective than others in terms of promoting social development. It may also be an appropriate time to investigate various questions attached to (im)migration, youth and gender issues.

Stage 4: Identification of Regional/Cross-boundary mechanisms

Stage 4 of the research will investigate various ways to promote co-operation at the regional level drawing on WANA and international experiences. Again, the project will identify successful projects to be used as exemplars of good practice. As with the explorative case studies discussed above, the cases to be selected will include those reflecting co-operation between NGOs, states and, perhaps more importantly, networks of extended families across borders (for example, through the study of remittances, etc). As an example of co-operation between states, possible cases could include agreements on the free movement of persons, etc.

Stage 5: Identification of international experiences

This stage of investigation refers to the evaluation of international social cohesion experiences proposed by the institutions of global governance and international think tanks. The aim of this research is to identify good international practices which may be useful to the WANA region. However, in order to draw conclusions as to whether certain ideas are exportable or not, it is important to engage in a self-conscious process of integration of theory and practice. This works at two levels – practical application and communication for practice. The former involves identifying the elements of the research that are both relevant and irrelevant to practice and the elements that are missing from the research that would be relevant to practice. The latter focuses on developing a sense of audience. Getting research into practice is often a difficult process because policy-makers often describe research articles as being inaccessible (Burton, 2006; Shaxson, 2005).

These principles can be included within a logical framework matrix in order to aid the application of the principles to practical examples. As Table 1 illustrates, the logical matrix summarises the constituent elements of the research and links them to each other allowing for conclusions to be reached as to the utility of research for public action. Moreover, the logical framework also demonstrates the academic benefits of prescriptive analysis as it draws attention to putative problems in theorisation, method, data analysis and synthesis. The matrix of the logical framework is organised around four columns: a narrative summary of the potential of the research for public action; verifiable indicators; means of verification and critical reflexivity.

Table 1: A Logical Framework for assessing the utility of policy sharing research for public action

1. Narrative Summary	2. Verifiable Indicators of Rigour	3. Means of Verification	4. Critical Reflexivity
<i>Goal – the overall practical aim to which the research is expected to contribute</i>	<i>Identifying the measures that show the potential of the research for public action – theory, method, data, analysis</i>	<i>Identifying the sources of information and methods used to show achievement of the goal</i>	<i>Reflecting on the utility of the research for public action</i>
<i>Theoretical Approach</i>	<i>Is the theory or approach verifiable? Can it be tested against the world of observation?</i>	<i>Is the theoretical approach tenable? If they exist, are the core propositions of the theory tenable?</i>	<i>Is there inherent bias in the theory? Does the theory need to be reconceptualised? What amendments to the theory need to be made to make for sounder knowledge claims?</i>
<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Does the methodology allow for the verification of the theory? Are these tried and trusted methods?</i>	<i>Have appropriate documentary, qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods been used?</i>	<i>Is there inherent bias in the method? Has the evidence been obtained properly?</i>
<i>Data analysis and synthesis</i>	<i>Is the evidence credible? Has enough evidence been generated?</i>	<i>Has the data been verified through triangulation and the use of counterfactuals</i>	<i>Is the evidence reliable, and generalisable?</i>
<i>Self-conscious integration of theory and practice</i>	<i>What elements of the research are relevant to practice? What elements of the research are irrelevant to practice? What elements of the research could have been relevant to practice but are missing from the research agenda? Is the communication of the research accessible to practice?</i>		

Stage 6: Policy Recommendations

Finally, a set of policy recommendations will be established identifying technically and politically feasible, fiscally sound and legitimate regional cohesion mechanisms to promote social development. In practice, the project will engage in various cost-benefit analyses in terms of re-allocation of public expenditure to various objectives. The project is also quite ambitious in its investigation of the feasibility of several new forms of sustainable funding for supporting innovative social policies (e.g. a cohesion fund to reduce regional disparities).

Project Outcomes

The projected outcomes of the project are threefold. Firstly, the results of systematic inquiries will be published in a book by a prestigious international publisher in order to generate international interest and add value in this field amongst the community of social cohesion and development researchers both within the WANA region and globally. Secondly, the established index will be a focal point for knowledge sharing and policy sharing in this field. Finally, the findings will strongly contribute to the debate on the future of social cohesion management in the context of the WANA region, thereby providing solid foundations for a reform process that is definitely needed in this context. The ultimate goal of the project is to disseminate the results as widely as possible to various social actors and decision makers in WANA.

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