

INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

From research to practice: inclusive development for future prospects in Africa

Report of the conference hosted by INCLUDE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, Africa has experienced high rates of economic growth, but a large portion of the population has not benefited from this development. In fact, [research shows](#) that inequality has increased in many African nations and the absolute number of people living below the poverty line has grown. Since its inception in 2012, INCLUDE, the Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies, has focused on inclusive growth, reducing inequality and, more generally, realizing inclusive development. On 21 November 2018, these themes took centre stage, during the conference *‘From research to practice: inclusive development for future prospects in Africa’*, organized by INCLUDE in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

The conference took the [Dutch policy framework on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation](#) (BHOS) as a starting point and sought to identify the do’s and don’ts involved in tackling inequality as the root cause of poverty. Throughout the day, experts from policy, practice and research engaged in lively debates and discussed the implications of the findings of NWO-WOTRO’s Research for Inclusive Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (RIDSSA) projects, which cover eight inclusive development policy domains.

On 20 November, the day prior to the conference, researchers from NWO-WOTRO’s [RIDSSA](#) projects shared and discussed their final findings and policy recommendations with their colleagues and INCLUDE platform members. The key messages from this day were used as input for the conference *‘From research to practice: inclusive development for future prospects in Africa’* and, as such, are included in this report.

Misconceptions about development

After words of welcome by the chair of INCLUDE’s Steering Group Isa Baud (emeritus professor International Development Studies, University of Amsterdam) and an introduction by Wendy Asbeek Brusse (director of Policy and Operations Evaluation Department [IOB], MFA), keynote speakers Antonie de Kemp (IOB)¹ and Marleen Dekker² (professor of Inclusive Development in Africa, Leiden University/coordinator INCLUDE Secretariat), addressed a point of departure for this conference: that poverty and inequality will not be reduced by simply investing in economic growth, but targeted inclusive development policies are required in specific policy domains. To introduce the topic and provide some background for the discussions to follow, both speakers sought to dismantle some common misconceptions about Africa’s development.

- First, the ‘trickle down’ effect, which has for so long been the logic underpinning development policy, is unfounded. Without additional, targeted interventions Africa’s economic growth will not benefit the poor, but will continue to line the pockets of the political and economic elite.
- Second, inclusive development is not only important from a humanitarian perspective. Research teaches us that, in the long run, inequality is bad for economic growth, social cohesion and political stability. Furthermore, new evidence shows that redistribution, in contrast, helps economies grow faster and makes development more sustainable.

¹ Find Antonie de Kemp’s presentation [here](#).

² Find Marleen Dekker’s presentation [here](#).

- Third, there is no clear cut, causal relation between economic growth and the reduction of poverty and inequality. The most recent study of IOB testified to this fact, as countries like Burkina Faso and Senegal managed to reduce poverty without high growth rates, while countries like Ethiopia and Rwanda failed to reduce poverty rates proportionally despite their growing economies.
- Fourth, poverty is not only about income. By using the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which takes into account non-income dimensions of poverty, the IOB study '[Transition and inclusive development in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)' found that some countries are doing better if aspects other than income are considered. Countries like Ghana and Tanzania, for instance, score relatively better when MPI dimensions like health care, education and living standards are included in the analysis (compare figures 1 and 2). Conversely, in Ethiopia and Burkina Faso, higher levels of poverty are reported when using dimensions other than income (see Figure 3).
- Fifth, countries with high poverty levels do not necessarily have high inequality levels, and vice versa. While high poverty is concentrated in areas such as the Sahel and countries like Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see figures 1 and 2), inequality levels are higher in the southern part of Africa (see Figure 3).

Figure 1. Poverty levels in Sub-Saharan Africa



Figure 2. Multidimensional poverty levels in Sub-Saharan Africa

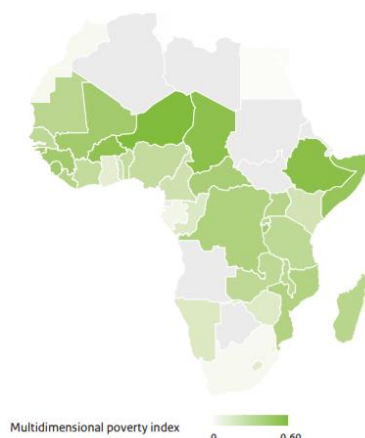
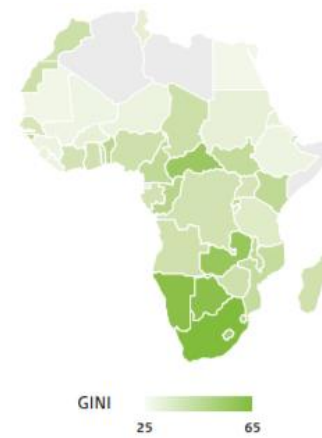


Figure 3. Inequality levels in Sub-Saharan Africa



Source: IOB, 2018

These debunked ideas about the relationship between economic growth, poverty and inequality paved the way for discussions on a new agenda for development in Sub-Saharan Africa. These discussions were kicked off by a plenary panel consisting of Sarah Ssewanyana (Economic Policy Research Centre/INCLUDE), Assefa Admassie (Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute/INCLUDE) and Nicky Pouw (University of Amsterdam), who reflected on the findings of the IOB study in Uganda, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso, respectively. The panel members also outlined issues such as the spatial development of poverty in Uganda, the role of large public expenditure in the economic growth of Ethiopia, and inequality in growth and productivity between urban and rural areas in Burkina Faso. In the same panel, Njuguna Ndung'u

(African Economic Research Consortium/INCLUDE) stressed that true inclusive development is endogenous and starts by empowering African smallholder farmers, while at the same time addressing institutional failures.

Setting a policy agenda

The IOB study concluded that for development to be inclusive, a focus on six policy domains is required (see Table 1). While many participants agreed with this policy agenda, some suggestions were also made to sharpen it. Paschal Mihyo (African Institute for Development Initiatives [AIDI]/INCLUDE) argued that the issue of international trade regulations was missing: in order to increase exports, producers need to be able to comply with international standards. Moreover, he argued that production should take place in Africa, rather than exporting raw materials. Rolph van der Hoeven (International Advisory Council [AIV]/INCLUDE) further noted that the IOB study concluded that while good governance is associated with low levels of poverty in the world, the opposite is true in Africa. Hence, quality governance that *also* promotes inclusive outcomes should be added to the policy agenda. Finally, Melle Leenstra (Department for Inclusive Green Growth [IGG]-MFA) suggested that the so-called ‘black box of donor decision making’ and its impact on decision making by African governments should receive more attention.

The policy domains identified by IOB are very similar to the six policy domains identified by INCLUDE in 2013 as the main domains for promoting inclusive development (Table 1). The overlapping and complementary nature of these two agendas testifies to the synergy between INCLUDE and IOB. It is not surprising, therefore, that the two bodies joined forces for this conference to discuss their findings and insights with policymakers and practitioners. Together, argued Wendy van Asbeek Brusse (director of IOB), INCLUDE and IOB can make an important contribution to policy making and policy learning, putting knowledge brokering front and centre of their shared efforts.

Table 1. Policy domains identified by IOB study (2018) and INCLUDE (2013)

IOB	INCLUDE
1. Increasing agricultural productivity	1. Economic growth with a focus on structural transformation
2. Creating employment opportunities	2. Productive employment
3. Investment in infrastructure	3. Social protection
4. Investment in education	4. The provision of basic services
5. Investment in health care and sexual and reproductive health and rights	5. Territorial development and spatial equity
6. Support of cash transfer programmes	6. Quality governance

Organization of this report

The plenary presentations and discussions that took place at the conference formed the backdrop to all breakout sessions that would come after. These sessions, which were organized around the eight policy domains resulting from a combination of IOB and INCLUDE policy agendas, all addressed a central question: How can we create the conditions necessary to make development work for all? In other words, what additional policy interventions are required to effectively promote inclusive development in Africa?

The remainder of this document reports on the most important findings, discussions and policy recommendations of the sessions that took place on 21 November and, where applicable, includes complimentary findings of a workshop on 20 November where the RIDSSA projects shared their final findings. Rather than presenting a chronological report of the conference, this report is organized around eight key policy domains central to the issue of inclusive development for Africa (Table 2).

Table 2. Eight policy domains discussed during the conference

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agricultural productivity for inclusive development2. Skills training, education and entrepreneurship3. Access to (maternal) health4. Inclusive governance5. Jobs and income for youth and women6. Inclusive development in conflict-affected areas7. Redistribution through cash transfers8. Infrastructure and (in)equality

The following pages will not include in-depth descriptions of the 17 RIDSSA projects³, nor of all the debates in the conference. Instead, an effort has been made to distil the most interesting messages for policy in the hope that this report will provide policymakers with practical input with regards to inclusive development. Each of these chapters will describe the key elements of the discussions, as well as the highlights, key conclusions and recommendations for policy. Throughout the report, several case studies from the RIDSSA projects are included as illustrating examples. In the final chapter, the most important recommendations from the various break-out sessions and plenary discussions are summarized.⁴

³ Information on the RIDSSA projects is available [here](#).

⁴ Key findings and overarching conclusions relating to INCLUDE's three key themes (productive employment, strategic actors and social protection) have been brought together in three synthesis reports that can be downloaded [here](#).

2. Agricultural productivity for inclusive development

At a glance

- To achieve inclusive and sustainable agricultural development, broad sweeping transformation of the sector is required.
- This transformation includes technical and material innovations, as well as the transformation of organizational and collaborative structures.
- Interventions to promote innovation must be accompanied by some form of safety net if they are to be inclusive.
- As smallholder farmers face a multitude of different obstacles, multidimensional interventions are needed.
- Inclusive outcomes cannot be achieved by national governments alone, but also depend on the inclusion of other strategic stakeholders from across the agricultural value chain.

Discussion moderator: Marleen Dekker (coordinator INCLUDE Secretariat)

Discussants: Wilson Wasike (INCLUDE Secretariat) and Melle Leenstra (MFA-IGG)

Broad consensus exists about the centrality of the agricultural sector for Africa’s future development (see, for instance, [INCLUDE, 2018](#)). Investing in its development is essential, not only to promote economic growth and food security, but also to create employment opportunities for the many young un(der)employed people currently living in Africa. According to Wilson Wasike (AERC/INCLUDE Secretariat) and Assefa Admassie (director of Ethiopian Economic Policy Research [EEPRI]/INCLUDE), to achieve inclusive and sustainable agricultural development, **extensive transformation is required on multiple levels of the sector**. However, what should these transformations look like? What interventions are needed to realize them? And what obstacles must be tackled to ensure that results are inclusive and benefit smallholder farmers, especially youth and women?

To move agriculture from its current status to a truly productive sector requires **technical and material innovation**, and the **transformation of organizational and collaborative structures** at all levels.

- Addressing the first type of change, Melle Leenstra (knowledge policy coordinator at the MFA-IGG) pointed out that inherent to such technological innovation is the ‘inclusiveness challenge’. Innovation carries with it the risk of failure and the poorest farmers, whose crops are vital for their family’s survival, cannot afford to take such a risk. Hence, any **interventions to promote innovation must be accompanied by some form of safety net** if they are to be inclusive. Added to the ‘innovation risk’ are other obstacles such as a lack of access to land, inputs and markets; a lack of knowledge; and a lack of access to credit. These prevent the poorest farmers or youth from benefiting from agricultural development. As these **farmers face a multitude of different obstacles, multidimensional interventions are needed** such as for [weather index insurance to farmers in Ethiopia](#) (see Box 1).
- Annemarie van Paassen (associate professor Wageningen University and leader of the RIDSSA project [Agricultural partnerships](#)) refers to her experiences in Ghana as an example of how multifaceted interventions can indeed work. There, young farmers were given both agricultural machinery, as well as targeted training on using the new technology and on agricultural entrepreneurship. Such

complementary interventions, providing both tangible ‘hard’ assets and education, are attractive to youth and can transform farming in an inclusive, sustainable manner.

- Innovation and transformation of the agricultural sector requires the involvement and support of stakeholders at different levels and throughout the value chain. Although national governments should take a leading role in agricultural development, **inclusive outcomes depend on the inclusion of other strategic stakeholders from across the agricultural value chain and the food sector at large:** multi-stakeholder co-creation as a basis for inclusive and sustainable agricultural development.

Box 1. [Weather index insurance for farmers in Ethiopia](#)

The research project ‘Weather Index Insurance in Ethiopia’ investigated two interventions that could induce investment, leading to increased agricultural productivity. Assuming that climate shocks are a huge constraint for farmers, the project investigated the addition of an insurance against low rainfall (i.e. a weather index insurance) to the nationally implemented Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia. They compared its effectiveness to the addition of agricultural input subsidies for poor farmers in the Tigray region.

Although the farmers who received insurance did increase their agricultural productivity (measured through investment in agricultural inputs, farmland and labour), this increase was not significant. The input subsidies appear to be more effective, as they induced a significant increase in the use of improved seeds and resulted in higher agricultural productivity. This finding contrasts with other studies, which have found weather index insurance to be an effective instrument to reduce risk-averse behaviour. The researchers conclude that this finding can be explained by the level of poverty of farmers. In their view, the farmers in Tigray are more constrained by lack of cash or credit than by the presence of risk. Hence, reducing their cash constraints (e.g. through input subsidies) appears to be more effective. This research shows that a thorough understanding of the specific constraints of farmers at the local level is required to develop multidimensional programmes to alleviate them.

Key insight: While weather index insurance has the potential to alleviate the risk constraints of poor farmers, it may need to be complemented by interventions alleviating more persistent constraints to be effective.



3. Skills training, education and entrepreneurship

At a glance

- If interventions are to have inclusive and sustainable results, the type of training provided must be tailored to the local context and include soft and/or hard skills where necessary.
- Training that focuses on soft skills can make significant contributions to promoting job creation.
- To address the mismatch between the current education system and labour market demand, interventions are needed that seek to transform the education system and supply additional programmes, such as on-the-job training and mentorship.
- To ensure education interventions yield inclusive results, un(der)employed youth and women should be consulted and included in decision-making processes.
- (Local) companies can play an active role in creating employment opportunities for youth and women. To do so, they require financial, technical and organizational support.
- If educational programmes are to contribute to job creation for rural women and other un(der)employed adults, a lifecycle approach to education is needed.

Discussion moderator: Sara Ruto (People’s Action for Learning [PAL] network/INCLUDE)

Discussant: Désiré Assogbavi (United Nations Population Fund/former INCLUDE platform member)

Small-scale (informal) enterprises make an important contribution to Africa’s overall economic growth and employment. To improve employment opportunities for the most marginalized and ensure that the benefits of growth are shared by everyone, including youth and women, education is often singled out as a key area for interventions. While this idea enjoys general consensus, a question remains about what kind of education is important and what type of skills training should be given priority to contribute to inclusive development.

[Previous INCLUDE conferences](#) have shown that while increasing access to basic education is crucial, development also demands investment in on-the-job skills training. This conference confirmed this idea and focused specifically on what kind of training is necessary to act as a catalyst for employment and entrepreneurship. Several key topics were discussed in relation to education and training:

- If interventions are to have inclusive and sustainable results, the type of training provided – e.g. soft skills or ‘hard’, technical skills – must be **tailored to the status of knowledge, needs and goals of the entrepreneurs that are targeted**. The RIDDSA project [Empowering female Ugandan entrepreneurs](#) (see Box 2) supports this recommendation.
- While investing in technical skills is of great value, **more investment should be made in training that focuses on soft skills to promote endogenous job creation**. As Karin Nijenhuis (INCLUDE Secretariat) suggested, for entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and be able to contribute to employment creation, building a network is vital. To that end, soft skills are indispensable, as was found in the RIDDSA project [Multiplier for employment creation: the IT sector in Kenya](#).
- One major problem when it comes to employment is the mismatch between supply and demand. **The education system is not tailored to the needs of the labour market**, which means that young people,

despite their education, often cannot find a job. To close this gap, **efforts should be made to transform the education system and invest in additional programmes** such as on-the-job training and mentorship.

- Additionally, **private sector actors as well as un(der)employed youth and women should be consulted and included in decision-making processes**, so that interventions are tailored to both their needs and bridge the divide between them. Marina Diboma (deputy managing director Netherlands-African Business Council [NABC]/INCLUDE) noted that companies can play an active role in bridging the gap between labour supply and demand, but they **require financial, technical and organizational support to do so effectively and absorb the vast amount of young un(der)trained people**, e.g. by providing them with on-the-job training.
- Finally, **if educational programmes are to contribute to job creation for rural women as well, a lifecycle approach to education is needed**. Sara Ruto (coordinator of the PAL network/INCLUDE) noted that many rural women missed out on formal schooling in their youth. Yet, if they are provided with appropriate training in a framework of lifelong learning, they can still become productive employees or entrepreneurs, benefiting their own families and their communities.

Box 2. Empowering female Ugandan entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship promotion requires a thorough understanding of factors that determine the context-specificity of successful interventions. One of such factors is the needs and aspirations of entrepreneurs. The project 'Empowering female Ugandan entrepreneurs' distinguished between survivalist entrepreneurs and growth-oriented entrepreneurs. Understanding these different aspirations helps to tailor interventions to specific needs.

Another factor is the skills required by entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs can all benefit from various types of skills training, but the female entrepreneurs in rural Uganda need a wide range of skills, varying from financial, technical and market-specific skills to strategic and soft skills. These can be advanced skills, requiring long-term training, or simple skills such as operating a mobile phone.

The research project concluded that resource centres providing various services such as radio programming on entrepreneurship content, SMS-messages containing market prices and training in mobile money-using skills reduced the lack of access to information that entrepreneurs face. Promoting these initiatives and increasing their financial sustainability is one of the main recommendations coming out of this research. In general, forming small learning groups led by local leaders is seen as a promising initiative.

Key insight: Support resource centres and organize small learning groups to tailor knowledge transfers and skills trainings to the different needs of rural female entrepreneurs.

4. Access to (maternal) health

At a glance

- Although free health care leads to an overall increase in health care deliveries, it does not automatically benefit poor women and, therefore, can also lead to more inequality.
- There is no such thing as ‘free’ (maternal) health care: there are many financial, physical and social costs that marginalized people still have to overcome.
- More thorough analysis is needed in the early phases of interventions to identify those people and areas most in need of health care, to allow for better targeting and limit expenditure.
- To increase the inclusion of marginalized people and provide them with care tailored to their needs, improving communication and information (e.g. between local authorities and target communities) is a viable option for additional policy interventions.
- Another option includes strengthening institutions at the local level and facilitating their collaboration with local strategic actors and (representatives of) marginalized groups.

Discussion moderator: Frank van Kesteren (INCLUDE Secretariat)

Discussant: Paschal Mihyo (AIDI/INCLUDE)

Improving access to (maternal) health care is one of the priority areas of the Sustainable Development Goals. As Paschal Mihyo (AIDI/INCLUDE) pointed out, many efforts are indeed on their way to achieving this goal, also for the most marginalized groups. A number of RIDSSA projects focus specifically on this issue and although they are finding positive effects of current interventions, the success of most efforts do have significant limitations. Two studies in Kenya – one comparing the introduction of [free maternal and primary health care with a community health insurance in Kenya’s Nandi County](#) and another comparing [the efficiency of a maternity voucher system](#) with free maternal care – found that the population, including the poor, had better access to care and their health expenditure was significantly reduced. Yet, the research also revealed that inequalities continued to exist between rural and urban areas, between the poor and the poorest, between the educated and non-educated.

The study in Nandi county and other examples show that, while programmes to improve access to (maternal) health can be considered successful to some extent, they often fail to deliver on being truly inclusive. In fact, argued Obadia Miroro (INCLUDE Secretariat), one could go as far as to conclude that although free maternity care has led to an increase in health care deliveries, it has also led to more inequality. Women who are more educated, less poor, and live in urban areas, have benefited disproportionately. Such inequality can be explained by the fact that there is no such thing as ‘free’ (maternal) health care. As Nicky Pouw (Associate Professor in Economics of Wellbeing, University of Amsterdam/leader of RIDSSA project [Social and health policies for inclusive growth](#)) pointed out, there are many financial, physical and social costs that marginalized people still have to overcome when trying to access care. Consider, for instance, transportation costs (especially when health care is not nearby), security issues for women traveling to health care centres, and time constraints for one-parent poor households, among other things. To make sure even the most marginalized have equal access to health care, additional interventions are needed that take away these obstacles.

Based on the RIDSSA research findings and the knowledge and experiences of researchers shared during the conference, some additional interventions were identified that will help promote inclusive (maternal) health care.

- To better target interventions and make sure they reach the most vulnerable, **more thorough analysis is necessary** in the early stages of interventions. For maternal health care, for instance, in addition to free access, prenatal testing could be increased. This would put women with health risks on the radar in the early stages. Instead of money and proximity, need can then determine care.
- **Information and communication are key to reach the most marginalized people and provide them with care that is tailored to their needs.** This begins with openness about the ‘hidden costs’ of free health care – call it ‘affordable health care’. Additionally, the people in need of health care and those working in health care facilities in rural areas are most knowledgeable about what problems they face and what support they need in addition to finances. They should be consulted more often and included in the decision-making process. Finally, if people are actively made aware of the health care services available to them, they are more likely to demand and seek out the services they need.
- Good governance and institutional capacity are essential ingredients to achieve inclusive health care. Efforts should be made to **strengthen institutions at the local level and facilitate their collaboration with local strategic actors and (representatives of) marginalized groups.** An interesting method here would be to support informal committees and institutions that can play an active role in ensuring the inclusion of the most marginalized in deciding on their health care services.

Box 3. [Social protection through maternal health programmes](#)

The project ‘Social protection through maternal health programmes’ attempted to compare the effectiveness of two national social health programmes in Kenya and relate this to the costs of each programme. The programmes assessed were the Free Maternal Care programme (2013-ongoing) and maternal health vouchers under the Reproductive Health Output-Based Aid (OBA) programme (2006–2015).

The project found that the effectiveness of both interventions largely depends on the quality of public services. As the availability of free maternal care led to a large increase in demand at public health facilities, there were challenges with inadequate facilities, bed space and medical supplies. Maternal health vouchers could be used in private facilities and faith-based organizations as well and were, thus, preferred by many women because of concerns with the quality of public services.

Yet, many women still prefer public health care services. The main reason is that ‘free services’ are seldom without additional costs. Poor women often had to make catastrophic expenditure (such as the sale of land or livestock) to afford maternal health care. A key issue with expanding the coverage of maternal health is, therefore, to reduce the additional costs and/or provide better information to women before they access health facilities.

Key insight: The success of free maternal care largely depends on additional interventions, such as those aimed at alleviating poverty and improving the quality of health facilities.

5. Inclusive governance

At a glance

- To promote inclusive governance Dutch policy interventions can play a role in creating spaces for marginalized people at the decision-making table.
- To do so, a first step is to adequately identify who the most marginalized are, and whether and how they want to be included..
- An important precondition for effectively promoting inclusive development is addressing the issue of shrinking civic space, e.g. by protecting and strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs).⁵
- Interventions are more likely to be truly inclusive if they are based on a thorough analysis and understanding of the power structures and political and institutional landscape, which includes the identification of strategic actors who can act as ‘champions’ of inclusion.
- True inclusive processes run throughout the full programme cycle. To avoid impractical ‘direct democracy’, strategic moments in the decision-making process most crucial for inclusion and representation should be identified.
- To ensure interventions contribute to the ‘right kind’ of inclusion – i.e. the kind of inclusion envisioned by the people targeted – communities should be actively consulted about their views.

Discussion moderator: Marc de Tollenaere (GovNet/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

Discussant: Ton Dietz (African Studies Centre Leiden [ASCL]/INCLUDE)

Inclusive development is not only about outcomes, but also about processes. To realize inclusive processes the domain of governance comes into play, and with that the complexities of power structures and politics. When trying to achieve inclusive governance, a number of challenges can be identified:

- **Inclusive governance implies creating space for marginalized people at the decision-making table.** A first challenge then, is to adequately **identify who the most marginalized are**. Logically following on from this is the challenge of organizing their voices. Should it be a policy priority to organize them? Or should we first work through ‘champions’ or ‘brokers’? Lorraine Nencel (Vrije Universiteit/leader of RIDSSA project [Economic empowerment and sex work](#)) noted it is not up to donor communities to ‘give a voice’ to marginalized people; most have a voice, but do not have the means to make themselves heard. Harrie Oostingh (Oxfam Novib/INCLUDE) supported this comment by noting that Dutch policy could play a role in creating spaces to speak up and participate by facilitating the organization of marginalized groups. This also includes **addressing the issue of shrinking civic space**. We cannot claim to achieve inclusive development if entire spaces and groups are cut off, pressured, prosecuted and effectively silenced.
- To deal with the context-specificity of governance structures, a challenge is to **acquire a thorough understanding of the power structures in place and the political and institutional landscape**. This landscape includes much more than the obvious institutions and power holders. It is vital to **identify**

⁵ For more on the issue of civic space and the role of CSOs for inclusive development, see the research programme [‘New roles of CSOs for inclusive development’](#).

the strategic actors that can play a key role in determining the extent of the inclusiveness (or exclusiveness) of decision-making processes and interventions. One group that must be well understood is the (local) elites, who have a crucial influence on social norms, taboos, societal hierarchies etc. Identifying (and perhaps trying to change) their views about those who are ‘deserving’ and ‘non-deserving’ is key to ensuring that (policy) interventions reach the marginalized.

Isa Baud added that local authorities should be of prime interest in these political context analyses. They may be highly divided among themselves about who to include and exclude and, in addition, their initiatives to hear the most marginalized (e.g. by organizing community councils) might in fact be mechanisms to control these communities. This is confirmed by the RIDSSA research project [Social and health policies for inclusive growth](#), which found that the involvement of local bureaucrats and traditional authorities are fundamental in the access to social protection in Kenya.

- Governance processes cannot be inclusive all the time. Trying to mimic a ‘direct democracy’ model is impractical and counterproductive. A key challenge is to **determine what moments in decision making are most crucial for inclusion and representation**. In practice, local actors are mostly involved at the moment when projects/programmes are being delivered. They are not involved in the early (design) phases, which is, arguably, most important for **truly inclusive processes**.
- A point of contention is the assumption underpinning Dutch policies and interventions that marginalized people *want* to be included and *want* to be seen. But do they? Case in point is those working in the informal economy (see the RIDSSA project [Informal workers' political leverage](#)). Interventions are often aimed at including them in the formal sector, but this is not necessarily what they want. This is also true for the Twa in Rwanda (see Box 4). They want to be included, but not on the basis of their identity (which is what we would automatically assume). According to Morag Goodwin (professor of Global Law and Development at Tilburg Law School/leader of RIDSSA project [Barriers to Batwa inclusion in Rwanda](#)) **the kind of inclusion envisioned by the people we seek to reach may not be in line with our Western ideas**.

Box 4. Barriers to Batwa inclusion in Rwanda

The research project ‘Barriers to Batwa inclusion in Rwanda’ investigated why, despite being acknowledged as a vulnerable group, the Batwa in Rwanda remain marginalized. This marginalization not only involves high levels of poverty, but also their absence in participation in community activities. They are also vulnerable in terms of their relationship to the law, violence and ability to raise their voice, among other things.

The project found that identity politics, i.e. acknowledging Batwa by a shared, universal identity, can lead to exclusion rather than inclusion. While international actors often relate to the indigenous identity of the Batwa, their (lack of opportunities for) socio-economic development is considered more important by the Batwa. Particularly youth employment is considered an important issue, as many young Batwa lack access to start-up funds for business.

Key insight: It is important to ask excluded groups how they view their inclusion, in order to get a better understanding of their specific needs (such as for socio-economic opportunities, rather than the acknowledgement of identity or vice versa).

6. Jobs and income for youth and women

At a glance

- No clear consensus was reached about whether policy should prioritize numbers or quality and sustainability when it comes to job creation.
- Social protection measures are a necessary addition to employment creation interventions, either to allow vulnerable communities to link up with the transition to productive employment or to ameliorate the possible negative consequences of certain choices.
- Employment creation does not work without investment in education (and vice versa)
- Both social protection and investment in education are indispensable complementary measures when working on employment creation and should be treated as a ‘package deal’.

Discussion moderator: Fia van der Klugt (Sustainable Economic Development Department [DDE]-MFA)

Discussant: Rolph van der Hoeven (AIV/INCLUDE)

Job creation and productive employment are essential for inclusive development. However, more employment opportunities does not automatically lead to more equality. To illustrate the issue, Monique Calon (Senior policy advisor at the MFA) shared an example that shed light on the policy dilemmas the MFA faces with regards to employment creation. Presently, employment programmes are on the way in the transport sector in West Africa. Because work on the ground is generally inefficient – e.g. due to the high level of manual work, lack of material and transport breaking down – much manpower is needed and, consequently, many jobs are created. However, this type of employment is not long term and is vulnerable. The key question here is, should policy aim at improving efficiency and job quality? Or, should the first priority be the number of jobs created?

The discussion that ensued testified to the difficulty of this dilemma and the many aspects that need considering. Strong arguments were presented for both sides, but in the end **no consensus was reached about whether policy should prioritize the number of jobs or the quality and sustainability of employment**. Advocating for creating as many jobs as possible, Assefa Admassie (EEPRI/INCLUDE) pointed out that, given the enormous amount of un(der)employed youth are suffering *now*, Africa does not have the luxury to be weighing jobs and waiting for increased efficiency. **The first priority should be to create jobs that are accessible to the most marginalized**. A key discussion in relation to this is the role of Dutch Multinational businesses in Africa (see Box 5). While these efforts are ongoing, Rebecca Kiconco (Eindhoven University of Technology/Makerere University Business School) argued that a more thorough cost-benefit analysis should be done to assess what approach (numbers or efficiency) would best benefit youth and women in the long run.

In reflecting on the discussion, Rolph van der Hoeven noted that focusing on efficiency is a viable option too, as long as interventions are complemented by additional social protection measures. **Social protection will prevent communities from falling further behind and link them up with the transition from vulnerable, uneducated jobs to productive employment**. In other words, **integrated approaches should aim at both economic and social transformation**, contributing to productivity and efficiency while at the same time ensuring that the most marginalized are included.

The dilemmas related to job creation, do not stop with the numbers versus efficiency question. Other important choices include: What sector to invest in? And whether to focus on employment or entrepreneurship? Context-specific cost-benefit analyses are needed to make the right decisions, but no matter what choice is made, there is always a trade-off. That is, if funding is allocated to one sector or type of job, the other sector or job type will receive less, hence, creating ‘losers’ and differentiation. **To ameliorate negative consequences and ensure that interventions do not exacerbate inequalities, social protection measures should always be used to complement them.**

Other than social protection, investing in **education is seen as an indispensable complementary measure when working on employment creation.** Often un(der)employed youth do not possess the skills required on the labour market, which means that training is necessary. Contrary to the Dutch Intermediary Vocational Education (MBO) institutions, which have direct connections with businesses to provide students with intern places, such linkages between public education and the private sector are not widespread in Africa. Establishing such connections is a viable direction for Dutch policy, as it will contribute to closing the skills gap that currently prevents young people from securing sustainable jobs. Harrie Oostingh noted, however, that while such measures would indeed be valuable, they are not efficient if they are not combined with programmes that create long-term employment opportunities.⁶ Connections between public and private institutions may lead to more skilled youth, but if there are no jobs to access after training, then efforts eventually amount to nothing. In other words, the two interventions must go hand-in-hand: **employment creation does not work without investment in education, and investment in education leads to nothing without employment creation.**

Box 5: Dutch multinational businesses in Africa

Under the theme ‘productive employment’ in INCLUDE’s research agenda, the research project ‘Dutch multinational businesses in Africa’ investigated the policies of Dutch multinational companies (MNCs) in Kenya and Nigeria, as well as the policies of national governments to stimulate the business environment. The project was launched in light of the shift of the Dutch government from aid to trade as the engine of inclusive growth. The researchers conclude that Dutch MNCs do create productive employment to some extent. Yet, the number of productive jobs created is limited. In Kenya, a large share of jobs are in the informal sector with a high level of vulnerability for workers. In their view, a more coherent, national policy is required to stimulate the transition from informal jobs to productive employment, promoted by Dutch MNCs, among others. This enabling policy environment also encompasses the participation of ‘real stakeholders’ along the value chains of MNCs. Often, policies affecting these stakeholders are implemented without them being consulted. A key question is not if economies can benefit from employment creation by Dutch MNCs, but who benefits. An example is the Lake Turkana Wind Power project, implemented in Marsabit County, one of the most remote, underdeveloped and poor regions of Kenya. The researchers concluded that the project may have many direct benefits (employment creation) and indirect benefits (road upgrades, increased security, corporate social responsibility, etc.). Yet, there are several downsides for the local communities, such as issues of land ownership and the influx of labour migrants from other areas at the expense of employment opportunities for locals. These are a major cause of local conflict.

Key insight: Dutch MNCs have the potential to create employment opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa, if a sustainable business environment is promoted.

⁶ This was also emphasized in the INCLUDE synthesis report ‘[Boosting youth employment in Africa: what works and why?](#)’

7. Inclusive development in conflict-affected areas

At a glance

- Promoting inclusive development is even more important in conflict-affected areas, because not doing so can exacerbate tensions.
- A knowledge gap still exists when it comes to promoting inclusive development in conflict-affected areas.
- By seeking more synergy and knowledge exchange, INCLUDE and the Knowledge Platform on Security and Rule of Law (KPSRL) can play a key role in filling this knowledge gap.
- A thorough analysis and understanding of the (volatile and changing) political landscape is necessary to promote inclusive development in a conflict-sensitive manner.
- Setting up and/or working with indigenous research-groups/projects would greatly benefit knowledge acquisition in conflict settings.

Discussion moderator: Rob Sijstermans (Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid [DSH]-MFA)

Discussant: Jean Bossuyt (European Centre for Development Policy Management [ECDPM]/INCLUDE)

Promoting inclusive development – or at the very least preventing exclusion or growing inequalities – is always important, but even more so in conflict-affected areas, because **not doing so could result in exacerbated tensions**. How to effectively promote inclusive development in conflict settings is, therefore, an important issue. The questions that need answering include: What kind of additional interventions are required to promote the wellbeing and prospects of the most marginalized groups? How can we ensure interventions are both conflict-sensitive *and* conducive to inclusion? As both Rob Sijstermans (Cluster Coördinator Human Security/MFA-DSH) and Jean Bossuyt (ECDPM/INCLUDE) point out, the Dutch MFA, as well as the European Union, are still **facing a knowledge gap** when it comes to answering these questions. Therefore, research about promoting inclusiveness in these areas is of particular value.

The first important point to address are the conditions necessary in the Netherlands to be better equipped to work on inclusive development in conflict-affected areas. Here, an important role can be played by the knowledge platforms and research projects on relevant topics. So far, INCLUDE and the RIDSSA projects have not focused specifically on conflict regions, although one project investigated the impact of trauma support in post-conflict Uganda (see Box 6). The Knowledge Platform on Security and Rule of Law, in contrast, does focus on conflict and security, but does not pay specific attention to questions of inclusive development. To make headway in the domain of inclusive development in conflict-affected areas, more **knowledge exchange and collation of findings between the two platforms** is recommended⁷. This does not entail broad institutional cooperation, but rather collaboration around certain topics and geographical areas. Additionally, as Sijstermans emphasizes, stronger linkages between different directorates within the Ministry are also needed to ensure experience and knowledge are exchanged between policymakers more efficiently.

Another key ingredient needed to effectively promote inclusive development in conflict-affected areas is a **thorough understanding of the political settlement in place**. This is a significant challenge,

⁷ Such inter-platform collaboration also extends to the Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP). See, for instance: <http://knowledge4food.net/discussion-paper-indicators-for-the-nexus-between-food-systems-and-stability/>

because conflict situations are often characterized by volatile, complex and changing power relations, and are sometimes too dangerous to conduct research in. To deal with this challenge, gain a better understanding of power structures and more effectively identify strategic actors to work with in a constructive manner, **setting up and supporting indigenous research-groups/projects could be an interesting pathway for the MFA**. Especially in conflict settings, where detailed knowledge of the context is vital, such local in-country researchers could be a great source of knowledge.

Box 6: Post trauma services for women's empowerment

The research project 'Post trauma services for women's empowerment' focuses on interventions that contribute to the empowerment of women survivors of conflict in Northern Uganda. Apart from socio-economic constraints, these women are often traumatized as a consequence of conflict. By acknowledging this multitude of constraints on economic empowerment, the research compared cash transfers and trauma support through counselling and radio broadcasts. It also assessed to what extent these interventions complement each other and, therefore, are worth investing in a joint programme rather than separate interventions.

The research found that cash transfers and trauma support can positively impact on various indicators of economic empowerment such as income resilience, psychological wellbeing and capabilities. In particular, trauma support was found to have a strong impact on socio-economic resilience (SER). The Self-Help Low-Cost Post-Traumatic Stress (SHLCPTS) programme was perceived as positive by participating women, and contributed to their SER.

Key insight Adding trauma support to social protection programmes in conflict-affected regions can strengthen the impact of social protection programmes on empowerment.

8. Redistribution through cash transfers

At a glance

- African governments have come to accept and even embrace cash transfers as an effective intervention to promote economic development.
- Cash transfers and social protection in general find little political traction within the Dutch government, mostly because they are thought to create a ‘dependency pact’ between citizens and their government.
- Social protection should be seen as a comprehensive framework, of which cash transfers are an important element.
- Social protection measures are most effective when based on a lifecycle approach.
- Embedding cash transfers/social protection within the framework of the Dutch Diamond approach is a viable policy option to contribute to inclusive governance processes and promote inclusive impacts.
- Cash transfers/social protection measures can contribute to achieving the goals of the four priority areas of the MFA and should be embedded more strongly within this framework.

Discussion moderator: Frank van Kesteren (INCLUDE Secretariat)

Discussant: Nicholas Awortwi (Africa Governance Institute/INCLUDE Steering Group)

Cash transfers as a means to promote economic development has come to stay. Whether initiated by donors or home-grown, **African governments have come to accept and even embrace it as an effective intervention.** Initially, argued Nicholas Awortwi (director of Africa Governance Institute/INCLUDE Steering Group), cash transfers were a tool for donors to prevent millions of dollars from going down the drain, due to inadequate governance, irresponsible spending, bureaucracy, corruption, and so on. Through cash transfers, money is given directly to the people, instantly reducing poverty and vulnerability. Especially governments in competitive democracies – such as Senegal and Ghana – have recognized the value of cash transfers, not only for their population, but also for the government itself. The cash is then seen as a win-win situation: poor people benefit and governments are viewed well by their voters for providing financial assistance.

While cash transfers, thus, seem to have gained ground and multiple sources call for their use in development efforts⁸, their popularity does not extend to the MFA. As Melle Leenstra (knowledge policy coordinator at MFA-IGG) pointed out, **cash transfers and social protection in general find little political traction within the Dutch government.** This is due to the fact that social protection is not in line with the Dutch view of international development. Cash transfers in particular **are thought to create a ‘dependency pact’ between citizens and their government.** This view can hamper the upscaling of successful social protection intervention, added Nicky Pouw (associate professor of Economics of Wellbeing, University of Amsterdam/leader of RIDSSA project [Social and health policies for inclusive growth](#)). Studies show, however, that social protection creates economically independent citizens. When it comes to cash transfers then, two key questions are up for debate: First, how can we ensure that cash transfers work for marginalized and vulnerable groups (i.e. are more inclusive)? And, second, what is

⁸ See for instance: <http://knowledge4food.net/job-review-of-dutch-food-security-policy-2012-2016/>

needed to convince the MFA of the value and effectiveness of social protection as a means to achieve its policy goals?

Before delving into how to implement cash transfers to ensure inclusive development, a more fundamental issue was addressed. Although research has shown that cash transfers can be instrumental in redistribution efforts, they are but one form of social protection interventions. Their application should not, therefore, be discussed in isolation, argued Barbara Rohregger (Institute for Sustainable Development/researcher RIDSSA project [Social and health policies for inclusive growth](#)) and Nicky Pouw (associate professor of Economics of Wellbeing, University of Amsterdam/leader of RIDSSA project [Social and health policies for inclusive growth](#)). **Social protection should be seen as a comprehensive framework, of which cash transfer are one important element.** By treating social protection as a ‘package’, different social protection interventions – including cash transfers – can be better aligned and are mutually reinforcing. What is more, some hesitation by the MFA with regards to cash transfers may be obviated if cash transfers are combined – in discourse and practice – with other social protection measures.

Whether talking about cash transfers or social protection as a whole, some recommendations can be made to ensure their implementation contributes to inclusive development:

- **Social protection measures are most effective when based on a lifecycle approach.** They are not a short-term remedy, but require medium to long-term attention if they are to have a lasting impact on people’s lives. This is especially important because social protection is not merely an instrument to help people get out of poverty; it also serves to prevent people from falling back into poverty. It is, in other words, a productive investment that can act as both cure and prevention.
- To find traction within the MFA for cash transfers, attention should be drawn to its effect on multi-stakeholder cooperation. RIDSSA research on the [complementarity of cash transfers and social health protection policies in Ghana and Kenya](#) shows that in areas where social protection is implemented and cash transfers allocated, interaction between a variety of stakeholder intensifies. Local authorities and private sector parties are increasingly coming together. **Funding by the Dutch MFA can contribute to this collaboration (as part of the Dutch Diamond approach) and facilitate a framework in which local parties work together on social protection allocation.** In this way, efforts will also contribute to the inclusiveness of governance processes underpinning social protection interventions.
- Another option is to embed social protection interventions more strongly within the framework of the four priority areas of the MFA. Social protection measures, **if combined with other (existing) interventions, can contribute to achieving the policy goals in each of the priority areas.**

Box 7. [Social protection in Uganda.](#)

The research project ‘Social protection in Uganda’ investigated the long-term return of two cash transfers programmes under the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) programme in Uganda. These programmes were the Senior Citizen Grant, consisting of a cash transfer to citizens over 65 years old (over 60 years in some districts) and the Vulnerable Family Grant, a cash transfer for poor families with high labour capacity deficiency and high dependency. The latter was ended by the Ugandan government in 2015, while the former is still running. By using a microsimulation of the returns on investment of both programmes for school enrolment and school attendance, the research compared the costs and benefits of both programmes.

The simulation showed no positive cost-benefit ratio in either the short or long term for either of the programmes, although this ratio improves over time. The researchers also compared this model to a model where ‘welfare weights’ were used; i.e. one where the poverty alleviation of the poorest groups was given additional value. Using this model, the Senior Citizen Grant showed a positive return on investment after 10 years. This indicates that the benefits of education, measured through school attendance and enrolment, outweigh the costs in the long term.

The researchers also concluded that the impacts of the Senior Citizen Grant are highly mediated by area. As cash transfers do not only have direct, but also indirect benefits on the economy, the indirect impacts matter in terms of the benefits of a transfer on the local economy. For instance, when additional income is gained, local economies can grow because of additional expenditure. However, in remote areas, the lack of quality infrastructure (such as roads, mobile phone networks and markets) prevents these indirect impacts from taking place.

Key insight: When assessing the benefits of cash transfers, the indirect benefits need to be taken into account. These indirect benefits can increase when there is simultaneous investment in infrastructure.



9. Infrastructure and (in)equality

At a glance

- Infrastructural development does not necessarily reduce inequality and additional measures are required to ensure that its positive effects are felt by more vulnerable groups.
- In addition to ‘hard infrastructure’ inclusive development requires ‘soft infrastructure’ and services aimed specifically at including and connecting the most marginalized.
- A combination of social protection and road development can have great positive and inclusive impact.
- Targeted training and education are valuable complementary interventions to promote the inclusive results of infrastructure development.
- Training should not merely focus on beneficiaries/marginalized communities, but also target (leaders of) implementing and construction agencies to raise awareness and change mind sets about inclusion.

Discussion moderator: Tahmina Ashraf (Department of Multilateral Organisations and Human Rights [DMM]-MFA)

Discussants: Witness Simbanegavi (INCLUDE Secretariat) and Antonie de Kemp (IOB)

It is widely acknowledged that infrastructure development is key for economic growth and has the potential to contribute to inclusive development as well. By reducing spatial inequalities and enhancing access to markets, employment and services, marginalized regions and communities have better opportunities to share in the fruits of development. However, research shows that **infrastructure by itself does not necessarily reduce inequality** and can in fact widen gaps between the better-off and the most marginalized. Thus, although the overall effects of infrastructure development might appear positive, **additional policy measures are required to ensure that these positive effects are felt by more vulnerable groups.**

Researchers of RIDSSA projects focusing on infrastructure development could all come up with examples of where new infrastructure led to better access and created employment opportunities, but at the same time resulted in *de facto* exclusion. Antonie de Kemp (IOB) noted that the IOB study found similar effects. In a development project in Rwanda, for instance, IOB found that although newly established roads made access to the urban areas easier, the poorest communities did not stand to benefit as they did not have the same means to ‘connect’ as better-off people. That is, they did not have the time to leave home, lacked transportation, did not have surplus goods to sell, and had limited information about markets, among other things. In summary, what these findings show is that **‘hard infrastructure’ is not sufficient for inclusion. What is needed is additional ‘soft infrastructure’ and services** aimed specifically at including and connecting the most marginalized.

One could assume that large infrastructure projects, like the construction of a suspension bridge in Maputo, Mozambique, have the potential to benefit more people, both by creating jobs and establishing new spatial connections. However, as Adriano Nuvunga (executive director of Centro de Integridade Pública [CIP]/INCLUDE) argued, the problem with such **projects is that they are often carried out by multinational companies whose first priority is not to generate inclusive development.** In the

case of the suspension bridge in Maputo, a large Chinese company was commissioned to take on the construction. To pay the debt upon completion, budget funds were used that were supposed to be allocated to social protection initiatives. As a consequence, the poorest were worse off because of the bridge.

RIDSSA research shows that for almost all interventions to have inclusive results, additional initiatives and multifaceted approaches are required – and infrastructure projects are no exception. Research shows that, indeed, **a combination of social protection and road development can have great positive and inclusive impact**. Marleen Dekker (coordinator INCLUDE Secretariat) referred to an example from Uganda. The [RIDSSA project on social protection in Uganda](#) found that the impact of cash transfers is significantly greater in integrated areas (i.e. connected by infrastructure) than in more remote areas. In other words, the success of the two types of interventions depends on their coexistence.

In addition to social protection interventions, **targeted training and education should also be considered as a complementary intervention to infrastructure development**. Making sure that rural companies and smallholder farmers have the essential knowledge about markets and credit, for example, can go a long way to reducing inequality between them and the urban population. Additionally, Antonie de Kemp (IOB) noted that education and **training should target (leaders of) implementing agencies and construction agencies in order to raise awareness and change mind sets**. They have a big role to play in ensuring that infrastructure projects are aiming for inclusiveness from the very start.

BOX 8. Feeder road development in Ethiopia

The research project ‘Feeder road development in Ethiopia’ assessed to what extent the construction of feeder roads in Tigray, Ethiopia, led to employment, changes in local economies and impact on the natural environment. Apart from asking what these impacts are, the project also assessed for whom these impacts occur. It particularly assessed if feeder roads decrease or exacerbate inequalities.

The project found that, apart from the direct benefits of road construction, there are many indirect benefits of the construction of feeder roads. These include the ability of crop farmers to transport crops to markets in other areas and the emergence of new roadside businesses. These play an important role in promoting local economies and non-farm enterprises. However, these benefits are not equally distributed among roadside communities. While the majority of the population experienced new or better employment opportunities, several population groups did not experience improved employment conditions. Moreover, while new business opportunities emerged, the absence of business development services prevented many potential business owners from setting up a business. Finally, poor female-headed households are worse off after feeder road development because producers will sell elsewhere and, therefore, move food out of the community. These women often have to walk longer distances to purchase food themselves. Hence, while feeder roads contribute to economic development, they can also increase pre-existing inequalities.

Key insight: Feeder roads can stimulate economic development, but may need to be accompanied by additional interventions to prevent gender, spatial and economic inequalities from increasing.

10. Conclusion

This final section serves to bring together the most important messages of the conference as well as report on the plenary reflections that formed the end of the day. Given the multiple break-out sessions and variety and depth of discussions, the conclusions have been divided into three sections. In the first section, the key recommendations that derive from INCLUDE and the RIDSSA projects are summarized. These recommendations provided input and a starting point for the discussions conducted during the conference. The second section synthesises the key messages from these discussions and shows clearly the overlap between the eight policy domains. Finally, the third section provides a brief report of the concluding plenary session of the conference, including three take-home messages.

Recommendations from INCLUDE

In order to promote more inclusive development, it is important that policy stakeholders take into account the distributional consequences of their policies and programme design. Recognizing that full equality in opportunities, capabilities and outcomes cannot be attained, certain approaches and decisions do contribute to more inclusive development outcomes and processes. Some recommendations to that end are as follows:

- Carefully considering of what **economic (sub)sector or geographical area** to focus on is necessary to formulate policies and programmes tailored to the needs and challenges specific to each sector and area. There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution for inclusive development.
- The monitoring of programmes and interventions should include a **critical assessment of who is included and excluded** and to what extent marginal groups are adequately represented by CSOs and partnerships.
- From the previous recommendation it follows that a level of flexibility should be built into programme design, so that **programmes can be adjusted to ensure improved inclusiveness** and adequate representation.
- A vital precondition for achieving inclusive processes and outcomes is acquiring a thorough **understanding of the needs and constraints of ‘excluded’ people**, as well as identifying the (information) channels that can be used to pull them in.
- Looking for opportunities to **increase the impact of interventions within the scope of the project** is a cost-effective and fruitful course of action. Especially **integrating and combining complementary approaches has proven to yield more inclusive impacts**.
- **Identifying and working with strategic actors who can make a difference** in the region is an important step towards more inclusive policy making and programming. This includes actors at all levels, such as (local) government, traditional power holders, business representatives, CSOs and NGOs and (representatives of) local communities.

Key messages from discussions

An afternoon of discussion and exchange about the eight policy domains resulted in a wide range of valuable insights and recommendations for future policy (see ‘at a glance’ sections in this report). While some recommendations are specific to certain policy domains, many were applicable to multiple fields and can be roughly summarized as follows:

- **Integrated approaches** are more effective and better equipped to reach the most marginalized and generate sustainable impact. Research and experience from the field showed that a combination of interventions – such as combining education and job creation; infrastructure development and skills training; promoting innovation uptake and agricultural subsidies – yields better results.
- Interventions that seek to achieve economic development are more effective and inclusive when they are supplemented with **social protection** measures. Combining development efforts with social protection programming, including, but not limited to, cash transfers, is a cost-effective policy direction.
- Inclusive outcomes are best achieved through **inclusive processes** and based on inclusive governance structures. This means facilitating multi-level cooperation and the inclusion of both strategic stakeholders and the most marginalized themselves in decision-making processes.
- If interventions are to have inclusive and sustainable results, they should always be **context specific** and tailored to the needs of the local population. Hence, context analyses and the ongoing consultation of stakeholders and target communities are essential throughout the intervention cycle.

Although this brief summary does not do justice to the wealth of insights and recommendations shared by experts, policymakers and researchers during the conference, it does, however, show clearly that inclusive development, no matter what the policy domain, requires a change in policy and a rethinking of current interventions. The above recommendations and key messages from the conference are reflected in the take-home messages that were presented during the final plenary session of the conference.

Take-home messages from plenary sessions

In the final plenary session, three panellists – Reina Buijs (Director-General of International Cooperation, MFA), Désiré Assogbavi (United Nations Population Fund/former platform member) and Marc de Tollenaere (GovNet/OECD) – were invited to reflect on the discussions of the day and share their main take-away messages on inclusive development. These can be summarized in the following four distinct, but highly-interrelated, conclusions:

- Traditional means to bring research to and interact with policymakers are not always effective. Yet, as the MFA strongly prioritizes evidence-based policy making, **knowledge exchange between researchers and policymakers – i.e. knowledge brokering – is more important than ever**. To ensure research indeed becomes the backbone of development policy, what is needed is the breaking down of silos and improving of connections between research and policy, between different departments and sectors, and between the different knowledge platforms.

- Fully eliminating differential outcomes and inequality is not possible. They are embedded in and result from social structures that are already there. What should be **our goal is to ensure that our interventions do not exacerbate inequalities, put a stop to growing inequalities, and ideally aim to diminish inequalities.**
- All research and discussions showed clearly that context matters. To ensure policy interventions have inclusive and sustainable impact, they should be tailored to the specifics of the given context and especially **take into account the influence of the political landscape and power dynamics.** More research is needed to better understand this political landscape, which goes beyond the obvious power holders or economic elites, and also includes local leaders and social/traditional elites.
- Inclusive development is not just about inclusive outcomes by any means. **Inclusive processes that lead to inclusive outcomes should be seen as a policy goal in and of itself.** To that end policy should aim to create spaces for ordinary citizens – and especially for the most marginalized – to voice their needs and demands. Particularly troubling in this regard is the **global shrinking of civic space.** The issue of an open civic space, as a vital precondition for achieving inclusive development, should receive more attention, both as a topic for more research and as a policy goal. This also implies supporting and protecting CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) as key actors for promoting inclusive development.⁹

What the RIDSSA projects, the discussions of the day and the final plenary discussion convincingly demonstrate is how complex and multi-layered inclusive development is. It is a so-called ‘wicked problem’, which means that progress is always partial and non-linear and solutions must be multi-faceted and tailor-made. This, however, is often difficult to match with the realities of policymaking. Yet, although the complexities of inclusive development are not easily translated into clear-cut policies, the above described conclusions of the conference provide hope for the future. The conference results show that not only is it possible for policymakers, researchers and practitioners to reach consensus, their cross-sectoral debates and knowledge sharing can yield invaluable insights and practical recommendations to promote inclusive development. Above all, the conference has underlined the importance of **continued interaction, the breaking down of silos and the establishment of strategic alliances** – including between researchers, politicians, private sector actors and others across Africa and the Netherlands – to effectively tackle the challenge of promoting inclusive development in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

⁹ See also INCLUDE’s synthesis report: [‘New roles of CSOs for inclusive development’](#).