

Defining marginalised – the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office’s ‘Leaving no one behind’ agenda

Introduction

In signing up to the Global Goals, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is committed to ‘leaving no one behind’. The interests of the poorest and most vulnerable populations must be prioritised. This includes the world’s most disadvantaged people, the poorest of the poor, and those people who are most excluded and at risk of violence and discrimination.

The FCDO pledge to ensure that:

- every person has a fair opportunity in life no matter who or where they are
- people who are furthest behind, who have least opportunity and who are the most excluded will be prioritised
- every person counts and will be counted

[Read the FCDO’s policy paper on leaving no one behind.](#)

Evidence from project annual reviews and project completion reports often point to difficulties faced by implementing partners in defining marginalised.

What is meant by marginalised and how do we identify those communities, households or individuals who are marginalised?

Marginalisation describes both a process, and a condition, that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life. As a condition, it can prevent individuals from actively participating. There is a multidimensional aspect, with social, economic and political barriers all contributing to the marginalisation of an individual or group of individuals.

People can be marginalised due to multiple factors: sexual orientation, gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, displacement, conflict or disability. Poverty is both a consequence and a cause of being marginalised. However, policy makers do not consider that all forms of marginalised or poorest populations have equal weighting, that there are different levels of poverty and marginalisation within each context.

There are core factors that determine who or what groups are marginalised and what the barriers are that prevent them from being reached. Political discrimination may marginalise some ethnic groups, migrants or regions of a country. Social discrimination and

marginalisation can impact on a wide range of groups based on age, gender, sexuality, language or disability. Economic marginalisation can prevent equal access to basic services, income opportunities and access to jobs.

When defining target groups for interventions:

- consider the core factors determining marginalisation in your specific context
- consider the political, social and economic factors
- define the barriers preventing the marginalised group from being reached
- consider how different types of marginalisation intersect to multiply disadvantage. For example, in some countries, girls may not be particularly marginalised overall but certain groups, like the rural poor, are marginalised

Gather the evidence needed to weight your marginalised groups to determine which groups are the most vulnerable.

Evidence should be drawn from existing data that can point to a specific need, rather than anecdotal evidence. Within those populations, it is possible to further define the levels of marginalisation. For example, firstly use national or district data to identify the first layer of vulnerable populations, then draw on baseline data or existing surveys that have taken place within your proposed intervention populations to demonstrate further marginalisation within the vulnerable population(s).

It is important to collect and use data disaggregated by sex, then depending on the project, by age, wealth, location, ethnicity, disability, sexuality. The most marginalised can be 'invisible' to conventional forms of data collection; for example, they are not in traditional households, or may be overlooked or deliberately hidden by households responding to surveys and may then get missed from household surveys. You may need to use innovative data collection methods.

Often community mapping is used, working closely with the community, using community health workers for example, to identify those falling under the radar. It will be easier to reach some, and more difficult to reach others. This will depend on the barriers and the context; therefore, interventions will need to be tailored specifically to match each context.