

Social Cohesion and the Strategic Social Plan

Discussion Paper

What is social cohesion?

The concept of social cohesion is used to speak of how to respond to fears and lack of certainty in very economically and socially challenging times when relative and absolute positions in society are in flux. It refers to a state of harmony versus a state of struggle. It is often used to describe a process or how to proceed more than a condition. The accent is placed upon institutional processes and resolving conflicting interests and it stresses democracy and consensus building at a community level. As an end state, it involves a sense of commitment to live together in some harmony. Social cohesion has been generally defined as shared values and commitment to a community as a cornerstone of social order.

Within the Strategic Social Plan framework the definition of social cohesion would be common vision, goals and actions by a political entity within a common set of values. As an entity it enables collective public actions to be taken to achieve these objectives. Social cohesion creates a facilitating environment to plan for the future and enables organizations and groups of people to take collective actions to implement the plan. It could be considered a relative rather than absolute concept in that it enables greater results to be achieved than would otherwise be possible.

The lack of social cohesion, then, is social conflict and a disfunctioning society. It results in a failure to act for the common good and its outcome is a lower level of well-being. The conflicts may be represented by the “prisoners dilemma” in which personal interests supersede and are in conflict with the common good.

Although work on the subject of social cohesion has been on-going in Canada and internationallyⁱ, the

ⁱ The concept of social cohesion and other related concepts are being used in the country to describe community and social development concepts. There is, however, a lack of clarity about what it is these terms address. Several initiatives at an international, national and provincial level have been completed. The international policy community has adopted the concept of social cohesion as a way of discussing the interconnections among economic restructuring, social change and political action according to the Canadian Policy Research Networks, Inc. (CPRN). CPRN has undertaken a major project to clarify social cohesion generally and to define its key concepts by constructing an analytical and descriptive map of the Canadian discussion around social cohesion and its allied concepts.

Other major organizations have completed works on social cohesion including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in its *Societal Cohesion and the Globalizing Economy*, Canadian Heritage in its 1996 and 1997, *Canadian Identity, Culture and Values: Building a Cohesive Society*, the Government of Canada’s Policy Research Sub-Committee on Social Cohesion 1997 report and in France’s plan in 1997, *Cohesion sociale et territoires*.

On a provincial basis, the Social Policy Advisory Committee in its report *Investing in People and Communities - A Framework for Social Development* discussed many of the concepts around social cohesion including community capacity, public participation, collaboration, civic participation and community engagement. In the Strategic Social Plan, *People, Partners and Prosperity*, social cohesion is considered a major component of social and economic

focus has been at a definition and conceptual level rather than the tangible level. A more functional approach is required for the Community Accounts which are to be used as background for the Strategic Social Plan's Social Audit. Indeed the value of social cohesion continues to be intuitive while the concentration has tended to be on the process of developing it. In the social audit, however, results must be measurable and the analysis aimed at the role social cohesion plays in achieving Strategic Social Plan results. Implementation of processes to achieve social cohesion will require resources and efforts by communities and government and thus its value in achieving outcomes needs to be clarified. For the social audit, the value of developing social cohesion will need to be measured by whether or not it played a significant and direct role in achieving the Plan's vision, goals and objectives.

According to Jane Jenson in *Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research*, a report completed for the Canadian Policy Research Networks, Inc. (CPRN), the five dimensions of social cohesion include:

- < belonging (versus isolation)
- < inclusion (versus exclusion)
- < participation (versus non-involvement)
- < recognition (versus rejection)
- < legitimacy (versus illegitimacy)

If these are the common dimensions that form social cohesion, it is these dimensions that will need to be assessed to determine if social cohesion has occurred. The primary issue, however, is to determine what social cohesion has achieved once it has occurred.

To achieve this sense of commitment, social cohesion is allied with such concepts as social capital, civil society, community capacity, social inclusion, public participation, collaboration and citizen engagement. Most of these are components of the process of achieving an end state of social cohesion. Because they are essential to facilitate the end state, it is equally important to determine not only if social cohesion was achieved but also whether the components were actually the cause of attaining it.

Why do we need social cohesion now?

Social cohesion is mainly discussed in its negative state to describe the impacts of significant economic and social change that is causing fear and uncertainty in families and communities. These in turn cause social upheaval and disharmony in society. Social cohesion, in its positive state, provides a supportive environment for social and economic development. It enables people to act together and thus creates a sense of stability and well being for people in communities in its own right. The lack of social cohesion

development. The plan is underpinned by the involvement of people and communities in determining their long term future; setting goals, objectives and priorities at local levels; making decisions based on the community environment in which they live; and being given the capability of acting upon these decisions. The SSP states:

Government recognizes that when people work together in community-based groups and organizations, they create an effective vehicle for identifying and responding to local needs and priorities, and for developing effective strategies to deal with them. Community participation in decision-making with respect to the delivery of services and programs that affect the community increases the level of satisfaction with those decisions. A regular process of public participation can promote inclusiveness and thus a sense of social cohesion and civic responsibility.

The Premiers Council on Social Development has since begun to define some of the concepts for the involvement of people in social development specifically including social inclusion, community organization/community development, participation and collaboration as well as compile key methods and processes.

can make the period of change even more disruptive resulting in a downward spiral rather than an adjustment to change. To adjust to change, however, social cohesion must enable people to manage the change rather than resist the adjustments that are necessary.

There are two questions that need to be answered: “Are we cohesive now?” and if not, “Have we ever been cohesive?”. The following is a discussion of the things that appear to be related to social cohesion currently and in the past. It should be noted that any answers to these questions must be based on observation and opinion rather than evidence since the state of social cohesion in communities has not been an issue of concern until recently. Little analysis, therefore, has been done to determine its state in the past.

Are we cohesive now in Newfoundland and Labrador?

The answer to this question is probably “no”, there is little social cohesion now, particularly in rural communities. The massive changes that communities are experiencing has caused a state of instability and resentments among their residents. It appears feelings of belonging, participation, inclusion, legitimacy and recognition have all eroded.

During the consultation on the Strategic Social Plan the Social Policy Advisory Committee began to see evidence of the polarization among people in communities. It was particularly the case in rural areas where community economies had declined significantly since the collapse of the northern cod fishery. Many of these communities were solely dependent upon this fishery for their economic prosperity. Although the closure of the fishery and resulting lack of work has created stresses on communities, equally the policies and programs related to work in the province has created even more stress. The fishing industry was, and continues to be, dependent upon fish catches and processing work coupled with EI, UI in the past. This was partly due to the seasonal nature of the industry but job sharing had expanded the numbers working in the industry. Other sectors such as the service sector had followed the job share approach to work and in many rural regions most of the labour force received EI annually. This job sharing approach in communities could be considered cohesion and it undoubtedly let people live together in harmony.

The importance of EI and the work needed to access it, in many ways is the source of polarization between people in rural communities. It is also a source of friction between the labour force and government and has been for many years. This could be seen in the past as people competed for work program placements to obtain UI/EI. When the fishery collapsed, NCARP and then TAGS were established. This further divided communities along income support lines. Resentments began to grow among those who were unable to obtain work and thus access UI/EI, those who were forced to rely on low incomes from Social Assistance, those who received NCARP/TAGS at higher levels equal to UI/EI but who were also unable to access work, those who were able to access seasonal work and UI/EI in an unfavourable job climate and those who had full time jobs.

The changes in the fishery have also resulted in social changes in communities. The fishery restructuring and groundfish moratorium have caused a breakdown of the traditional family fishing enterprises and local merchant system. The response of young people has been to migrate out of communities adding stress to families in communities who are losing their extended family relationships and family support systems. Coupled with a low fertility rate in the province, kinship relationships are becoming a less important part of community social and economic stability. The decreasing role of traditional organized religions over the past several years and the more recent changes in the denominational school system have also changed the historic social relationships in communities.

The Social Policy Advisory Committee found evidence of this lack of social cohesion during its public consultation process. It stated:

During the consultation, people pointed to a new divisiveness which is shaking our social foundations. This is evidenced by personal conflicts, mean-spiritedness and bitter competition among people and communities.

SPAC suggested that special efforts were required such as mediation skills to enable communities to deal with conflict. It was also of interest to some members of SPAC that the consultation process itself was one of the few opportunities that people in communities had to explore social issues of their communities and to explore common values. The need for such processes at community levels became obvious during the consultation thus many of the allied concepts related to social cohesion became prominent in the SPAC reports.

Changes as significant as the economic restructuring that is happening in rural areas requires a much greater social cohesion than the current divisiveness of people and communities if people are to work together to resolve economic and social problems. The SSP proposes development occur in localities where communities within driving distance to work and services begin to work together to develop new economic opportunities and employment. This is only possible if people and communities are able to work together and if the benefits of locality development are equally available to all people in all communities. Unless a locality approach is taken, the survival of many communities is in jeopardy since the fishery restructuring around designated core plants has removed the potential for fishery development even if the cod fishery recovers in the future.

Have we ever been cohesive in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Social cohesion is as much a process as it is an end state. For example the act of developing cohesion is, in part, cohesion itself. It must be determined if once social cohesion did exist as an end state rather than a process, and if so, what caused it to erode. The following argues that social cohesion did exist to some degree within communities but it did not exist at the level required in communities to cope with the more recent social and economic changes that have occurred. It also did not exist to the extent that enabled communities to adapt to the current regional development approaches. On a provincial basis, however, our identity as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to the extent that this represents social cohesion, has remained strong.

People in communities were likely more cohesive in the past. If not in long term economic development approaches in their communities, they appeared to support their neighbours and they displayed a sense of community identity and seemed to hold common community values. Some might argue they were not always the values that should have been held. For example, they excluded strangers and often protected deviant behaviours in some residents, particularly when related to what was perceived as family business. Nevertheless, they were cohesive around their values associated with looking after the community as a whole. Inclusiveness through job sharing; belonging to church and community groups; recognition of the needs of the disadvantaged and the provision of community support to help them; legitimacy of the views of most individuals; and participation of people as volunteers in bettering their community society were all evident. In fact the values held by people in communities were generally consistent although it could be argued exclusionary by religion and for those who were considered intruders in communities.

In recent times, this sense of community and support for people within communities has eroded. Much of this erosion has been caused by policy changes in social programs and economic restructuring that has pitted individuals against each other in competition for fewer jobs and income support benefits than are able to support all those who live in communities.

In trying to resolve these significant economic difficulties in communities and social program dependency through policy changes, a new regional and locality approach has been taken. This requires a broadening of commitment to development of communities as groups. In the past, however, there was little cohesion between communities. Competition between communities in Newfoundland and Labrador was a common phenomena. Some of the resentments were based on religious grounds and some had an economic basis.

The issue of social cohesion will need to be dealt with within communities and among communities for it to have a sufficient impact to enable people and communities to move forward on social and economic fronts. Communities will need to cooperate and rid themselves traditional conflicts. They will need to view themselves differently than in the past and focus on the benefits of economic opportunities that are occurring outside their own community. Those in communities with opportunities will also need to be less parochial and see economic opportunities as a means to benefit the people of the locality. This is a massive shift from the competitive approach between communities requires the development of a new understanding of their futures as well as a revised set of values and principles associated with community that have been absent in the past. It also requires that conflicts and resentments in communities be resolved and social cohesion developed to enable a new vision of the community to be adopted by residents that enables them to work together to achieve a new outcome.

Provincially, there has been disharmony and resentments between the island of Newfoundland and Labrador, and between rural and urban areas, particularly resentments to St. John's. Our ability to move forward as a province on plans and development initiatives such as oil industry development, hydro power development, mining development, and other megaprojects that affect the economy of the province as a whole may show social cohesion at the provincial level has existed. It appears that polarization exists within the province and manifests itself primarily in local areas among people and communities but as a province facing other threats or developments that affect us all, we are relatively cohesive. Out migration of youth from the province could be perceived as a lack of social cohesion on such dimensions as inclusion, legitimacy and recognition, however, belonging and a sense of identity with the province remains strong in out migrants. On issues of a national nature, the province has tended to remain cohesive although the trust in both levels of government appears to have eroded. The perception of government's ability to make decisions in the best interests of the province and a sense of abandonment by government, particularly in rural regions, was a prominent position of people during the SPAC consultations.

Why is it important to achieve social cohesion?

Jane Jenson in *Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research* stated:

The forces of what we call globalization have brought new possibilities of economic well-being for many individuals, corporations and countries. For legions of others, however, these have been icy times producing hypothermia rather than rejuvenating cold showers, to use Judith Maxwell's distinction (1996:5). One legacy of this hypothermia is fear and uncertainty. People feel hostage to corporate downsizing, chronic unemployment, and a fraying social fabric. They fear for their children's future as well as their own. Nor do they lay the blame for mounting uncertainty and the sense of menace exclusively on themselves. They accept their own responsibility, to be sure, but also realize that no one, nor any family, is an island. Canadians understand that communities and countries are more than single groupings of individuals. These collectives have their own lives and citizens worry about their futures too.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, people and communities are experiencing the same fear and uncertainty that people and communities are experiencing all over the country. Globalization has had a significant impact on this province. Restructuring and diversification to a more knowledge-based economy has been

occurring but primarily in more urban areas of the province. Rural communities are, in most cases, being excluded from the benefits of this development. But globalization is not the only economic influence that has impacted this province. The economic mainstay of the province, the fishery which was based primarily on northern cod in the past, has radically restructured leaving many communities as isolated as the individual workers who have become excluded from the fishery. Never before has the issue of rural economic development been more important and never before has the need for social cohesion around future social and economic development goals of many rural communities been as necessary. The change in economic prosperity, social well-being, and political power has cause tremendous upheaval and threatened some of the values held by communities. One of these values that has been particularly impacted by the recent changes in the economy and in public policy was the equal distribution of income from work and income support across residents of communities. It is little wonder that the Social Policy Advisory Committee and the subsequent Strategic Social Plan focused on issues of social cohesion and place-based development.

The Strategic Social Plan's focus is place-based social and economic development and a common vision, goals and objectives are essential by people in communities to achieve this. The massive erosion of their community economies and related social programs have left communities in positions where they must build completely new economies rather than enhancing existing ones. Their success is not only built on their own community opportunities but also those within their localities. Collectives of people and communities will need to form a vision of community development that is consistent and interlinked with locality and regional development objectives for their long term survival. Social cohesion in many areas of the province then is not only common values and commitment within a community but also among communities. As well, social cohesion must lead to development that directly relates to the development and survival of rural communities. To develop meaningful social cohesion, therefore, clarity on vision, goals and objectives needs to be found among people within communities, among communities within localities and among localities within regions.

Is social cohesion the possible?

As a means for implementing the Strategic Social Plan, the vision, goals and objectives of people will need to be consistent with the SSP. Is this likely to occur or is it even possible? The SSP vision is based on different values, goals and objectives than rural communities have had in the past. Relationships with other communities are strained as some progress and other regress.

The SSP's economic development focus is locality and regionally based. Through this approach the economic sustainability of communities in the locality will be addressed. Its social development focus, however, is community-based with services flowing from service centres within localities. Is it indeed possible that people will believe there is potential in the concept that economic development in sustainable communities can benefit surrounding communities? Traditional relationships between communities have excluded other communities from benefits of such developments. It may be difficult, if not impossible, to create such a vision for development. Although the SSP espouses this vision, government and regional boards implementing the Plan cannot determine the vision and values of people in communities and at best, can only advise on choices that are consistent with the SSP.

What is at stake for communities which are becoming cohesive? For many, the locality and regional approaches to development may signify a loss of community identity. It would need to be replaced by a regional and locality identity but to achieve this shift people and communities must believe that those communities with economic opportunities will share the benefits of them with people in other communities and with other communities as well. It is likely that, rather than a new risky approach to locality development, communities want their past prosperity back which had been focused inward on

employment in their communities which directly benefits them and their neighbours. The question remains, however, *Is this possible to attain?* It is not likely with the broader economic diversification in the province, the regional approach to economic development and the restructuring of the fishery, that employment at previous levels in the fishery will become available in all rural communities.

Can a community be cohesive on a social basis only in the absence of economic development? It is probably not possible for well being to be disassociated from economic prosperity. Even if it were possible, economic issues will undoubtedly continue to lead the concerns of communities since it is the changes happening in communities that are causing uncertainty and fear. The social cohesiveness thus will likely need to be based on localities rather than communities and belonging, inclusion, legitimacy, recognition and participation must be developed at this level.

Can the SSP be implemented without social cohesion? It can be argued that it is probably not possible. In the context of the significant changes the province, and particularly rural communities are experiencing, the development challenges are extensive. If people in communities are not working towards the SSP implementation, and worse still if they are working against it, the necessary economic restructuring will likely not be achieved and social development will be undermined as a result.

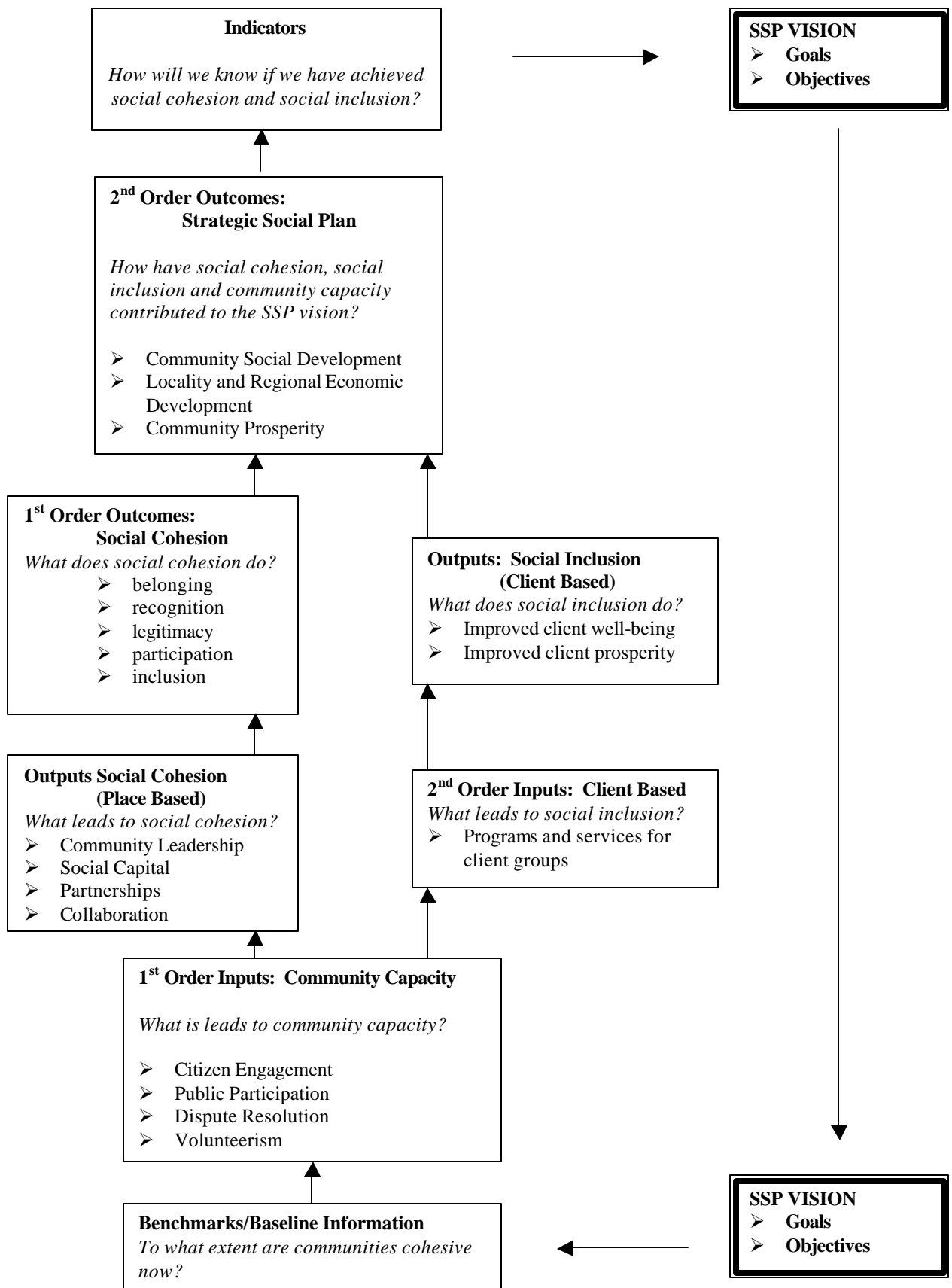
How does social cohesion relate to the social audit?

The social audit requires firstly that we know the current state of well-being and prosperity of people and places. Its goal is then to determine if the state of this environment has changed because of the programs, services, interventions and investments being made by government and the community (inputs) and/or because of the changing economic and social environment due to market forces. It determines if interventions have increased well-being and prosperity of the clients, community, locality, region and province (outcomes). It asks and answers if progress has been made and if not, why not.

The following chart attempts to sort social cohesion into the various elements of the social development process. It seems that social cohesion is likely an output as well as an outcome. It may naturally occur but it may be the result of some action or intervention taken for example mediation approaches to resolving conflicts. The social audit, however, is measuring the extent to which the Strategic Social Plan's vision, goals and objectives have been achieved and outcomes are related to enhanced well-being and prosperity for people in communities. As a result, stability without achieving these outcomes has not assisted the province to move forward in achieving its vision. Social cohesion has, therefore, been called an output in this context.

Since social cohesion is as much a process as an end state, the inputs are extremely important to the audit. Social cohesion is also a social "environmental" variable, and, as such the process of creating it is an "input" into socio-economic policy development and planning. It could even be said that the process of achieving social cohesion is in fact itself social cohesion. This means the audit approach for social cohesion and its allied concepts is slightly different from the approach taken in other sectors. There are two roles that communities play in achieving social cohesion or components of it. The two roles are shown in the chart. The first is a more traditional way that the voluntary sector has provided services to the disadvantaged in a community or area. It in itself does not create social cohesion but social cohesion cannot exist without this approach being in place. The second is a broader concept that makes the act of volunteering a community development tool and through this involvement the broader issues of community are addressed.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



What are the specific elements of the social audit?

First Order Inputs

Community Capacity : *What leads to community capacity?*

The capacity of the locality and region to act as a cohesive group of individuals and communities is essential to social cohesion. Community capacity is also essential if community based programs, services and interventions are to be provided that respond within the context of the community. The community's capacity to act as a group most often manifests itself as the voluntary sector or community-based sector. But there are other ways to view the community capacity including through the concept of social capital which has been defined by the Trillium Foundation as the *space between the individual and the state. In that space is the community, social agencies, formal and informal activities such as sports clubs, volunteering, caring for neighbours and so on.* This concept is closely allied with the concept of a civil society which according to the Caledon Institute should strive to *build and strengthen caring communities; ensure economic security, and promote social investment by directing resources towards the well-being and positive development of people.* Social capital and civil society then can be viewed as broader concepts that include community capacity which is mainly dependent upon a strong voluntary sector.

There are a range of investments and activities required to develop community capacity including investments from government, business and the community; community leadership and volunteers. This enables a voluntary organization to provide community-based programs and services to its clients, most often those who are disadvantaged in some way. The voluntary sector also enables collections of volunteers, which have generally formed around concerns for a particular target group or issue, to grapple with their role in developing a cohesive approach to development of the community as a whole. Currently, this can only be achieved from a particular focus of each agency and its mandate but to develop a broader sense of cohesion, community groups will need to see the well-being and prosperity of the community as a whole as their mandate and will need to draw in other parts of the community.

A few community-based agencies have capacity to develop social cohesion such as the Regional Economic Development Boards, but others have the mandate but less community capacity at local levels such as the Community Services Council. Actively promoting public participation; engaging citizens in meaningful community endeavours; and providing broad based community leadership as an agency are often new initiatives for volunteers to undertake in many social agencies. Currently there is a limited ability in communities to develop social capital. Undertaking the development of social capital will require not only greater finances but also support for volunteers who are reported by SPAC to be experiencing burn-out from added responsibilities as public services are reduced and investments reduced to carry out their mandates.

Implications for the social audit: In completing a social audit, the level and nature of investments, the creation of capacity to develop social cohesion and the appropriateness of the capacity in achieving cohesion will all need to be assessed. If the Strategic Social Plan is to achieve the results it espouses, it will need to invest in, provide supports to and respond appropriately to the community-based sector. This is an area of support by government that in the past has not been popular as conflicts between communities and government have often resulted. There are often fears that social unrest and resistance to change will be the outcome rather than actions to achieve developmental results.

Social cohesion, however, will not likely be accomplished without new efforts and further investments or redirected investments. The assessment should answer questions such as: *Were investments and/or efforts made to enhance the capacity of the community-based sector to develop social cohesion? What efforts were made and did they include developing community leadership and enhanced social capital? and Did*

the process engage more people in the community and to what extent did the public participate?

Second Order Inputs

Client Based: What leads to social inclusion?

The voluntary sector generally organizes itself by meeting the needs of the various disadvantaged groups within a community or to deal with a particular problem, issue or development requirement. Their role is one of inclusion by either assisting them with resolving a social problem or enabling them to participate in a more meaningful way such as through employment and/or voluntarism. They most often provide services but in some cases deliver programs in areas such as education, health and family programs for the disadvantaged. This is clearly a necessary and important role for the community-based sector but the context of the community in which the individual is assisted must be able to then include them if interventions are to be successful.

Within these organizations themselves there is a consensus on the actions to be taken. The values and commitment to the issue for which the organization is established is generally strong. Services are provided by staff and/or volunteers and the goal is to improve the well-being or prosperity of the group of clients that have been targeted for assistance. The voluntary sector has not traditionally, with some exceptions, attempted to develop a common approach across the sector nor has it consensus on the broader issues that affect the community as a whole.

Implications for the social audit: The social audit in the context will need not just to determine if the capacity of the community exists to assist clients but to determine if the types interventions provided were ones that were expected to result in social inclusiveness and broader well-being of clients. The assessment should answer questions such as *What were the programs and services provided? Were they offered for all who needed them? and Did they meet the needs of clients?*

Outputs

Social Inclusion/Client Based: What does social inclusion do?

For the client groups that are in need of services, the community-based sector provides services that add to the well-being and prosperity of clients. They are organized differently than government which organizes itself by sectors such as health, education, justice, fisheries and agrifoods, tourism, etc. Although the economic community-based sector is often organized by sector such as tourism, technical industries, environmental industries, fisheries), some are client centred such as business groups and economic development agencies. The socially based voluntary sector is organized mainly by client group such as children, families, persons with disabilities, seniors. As such they are able to respond more fully to the complete needs of a specific client group and, in many cases, clients are represented on the board of directors and are included in decision making. They often create community leadership and empower clients themselves to become more self-reliant. In involving themselves with the issues of a particular group they participate in social inclusion of the disadvantaged. They are a very important component of communities and communities which do not have many of them are themselves disadvantaged. They generally provide services and supports to improve the well-being and prosperity of the disadvantaged residents in communities. To determine outputs as a result of community-based efforts, evaluation of the impacts of the programs and services provided would need to be completed. Increasingly, however, the erosion of well-being and prosperity of the community as a whole is limiting their ability to achieve results for disadvantaged clients and add value generally to community prosperity through them. For example, rather than being able to assist people to resolve their poverty problem through employment, their focus is often on coping with unemployment and poverty and providing services to mitigate the impacts of them on families.

Implications for the social audit: In completing the social audit, an evaluation of the programs and services will be required to determine if they had value for the clients who received them. The impacts on individual clients and their families in relation to their enhanced well-being and prosperity will also be

required. The assessment should answer questions such as: *Did clients benefit from the programs and services provided to them through the community-based sector? Did they result in greater inclusiveness for clients? and Was the well-being and prosperity of clients enhanced by the interventions?*

Social Cohesion/Place Based: What leads to social cohesion?

The voluntary sector has not generally be able to focus its efforts on inclusion of the entire community around those issues that affect the community as a whole. The set of organizational values from the range of community-based organizations, often limited to the disadvantaged, is its basis for inclusion. Social objectives such as prevention and early intervention and economic objectives that include both the advantaged and disadvantaged require a broader inclusiveness. This flows from the need for people in communities (some of which are disadvantaged) and from the need for communities (some of which are also disadvantaged) to commit to a future community development goal in a less targeted fashion within the context of a locality and region. This approach stems from the understanding that solutions to the root problems associated with people's well being are not always found in the individual or inside the family but at the community level. It also stems from the understanding that the prosperity of communities are often found in economic opportunities that are not confined to a single community as in the past but in a broader industry development approach at locality levels.

To develop social cohesion, however, additional processes are required including the participation of the public and the engagement of all citizens to build consensus on values and commitment to community not solely specific disadvantaged groups. To develop social cohesion, the organized components in the community need to collaborate with one another and form partnerships around those issues that concern them all. Partnerships need to be formed between them and between the community and other communities within the locality. Common values, a vision for the future, goals, objectives and strategies for implementation within the SSP framework need to be developed. Partnerships need to be established with regional boards on investments and service delivery and with government on policy and program design issues.

Implications for the social audit: The capacity of communities will need to have expanded to achieve social cohesion a community level. The capacity to take a broader approach and form partnerships between organizations and community groups to collaborate on those broader community issues that are not resolved solely by services to the disadvantaged or by a single organization. The assessment should answer questions such as: *Were partnerships developed? Did the partnerships develop common values and a common understanding of commitment to the long-term future of the community? and Did they begin to collaborate in actions to achieve this vision?*

First Order Outcomes

Social Cohesion: What does social cohesion do?

Social cohesion as an end state is an environment where people feel a sense of belonging rather than isolation, where they are included rather than excluded, where they participate instead of being uninvolved, where they are recognized compared to rejected, and where people feel they have a legitimate place in the community rather than illegitimacy or a sense of worthlessness. In addition to developing these elements of social cohesion, common values and a collective commitment to the future development of the community, locality and region are necessary. When all of these elements of social inclusion are in place, the questions remain, *What are people and communities poised and committed to achieve as a result of being more socially cohesive?* It is the answer to this question that will allow outcomes to be produced through a socially cohesive approach to social and economic development. Thus social cohesion is considered a first order outcome.

Implications for the social audit: To develop social cohesion at locality and regional levels, community-based mechanisms for participating must be available at this level. These community based approaches must become committed to development and cohesion at this level and the dimensions of social cohesion must include communities in addition to people. Rather than first developing cohesion in each community where people live and are currently committed, and then developing a social cohesion approach within a locality, new approaches must be taken. A more horizontal approach may need to be taken where the community-based sector and volunteers see their involvement at locality and regional levels. The assessment should answer questions such as: *Is there a will to accept trade-offs and act to develop a state of greater well-being? Were people participating at a locality and regional level? Did people feel they belonged to a locality? Was there evidence of inclusion of people and communities within a locality? Were there mechanisms for people and communities to be recognized and were their legitimate roles for them? and Were people from all communities in the locality able to take action together toward social and economic development in their region?*

Second Order Outcomes

Strategic Social Plan: *How have social cohesion, social inclusion and community capacity contributed to the SSP vision?*

Once it has been determined that social cohesion has occurred on the locality basis necessary to achieve social and economic development results, the outcomes need to be measured. Social cohesion is a development process and as such is not an outcome but a means to an end. It has a facilitating role to enhance the effectiveness of community-based and public sector programs, services and interventions. Like government programs and services, outcomes are dependent upon the specific actions taken. Outcomes from social cohesion, then, are related to the role it plays in directly influencing results expected in the Strategic Social Plan. Outcomes are the same or similar to overall outcomes being sought by the SSP and thus a separate set of outcomes are not expected. It does need to be determined, however, to what extent social cohesion affected these outcomes.

Implications for the social audit: The outcomes are thus related to improvements to community, locality and regional social development, locality and regional economic development and community prosperity. The outcomes will need to relate to the increase in well-being and prosperity of people as a direct result of belonging, inclusion, participation, legitimacy and recognition of people in the development of the region, locality and communities. The assessment should answer questions such as: *Was the well-being of people improved as a result of actions taken by the community-based sector? Were social problems and issues addressed and improved or resolved as a result of efforts of the community-based sector? Were people in all communities in the locality and/or region affected by these efforts? Were some people excluded, isolated, uninvolved, rejected or illegitimate? and Were some communities excluded, isolated, uninvolved, rejected or illegitimate?*

Indicators: *How will we know if we have achieved social cohesion and social inclusion?*

The indicators for determining the outcomes of social cohesion are found in the overall indicators for achieving results in all community accounts. Social cohesion should not be expected to achieve different results but needs to enhance the ability to achieve results. In this capacity, the indicators for outcomes of the plan will also need to determine the causal relationships. The difference in the community, locality and region or the changes that occurred as a result of the development of social cohesion will need to be determined.

Implications for the social audit: The indicators will need to determine if communities, localities and/or regions are more cohesive. To do this some of the indicators will need to assess: *Are there more people involved in the community-based sector as volunteers and as employees? Have more organizations been formed? Are their mandates focused on social and economic development? Is there a common vision among the organizations, communities, localities, regions and the Strategic Social Plan? Are all communities represented on regional and locality organizations? and Are community organizations*

*focused on broader social and economic development in localities and regions? If these questions are answered, the existence of social cohesion will be able to be determined but its role in social and economic development will not be established. Further indicators will be necessary to determine what this cohesion has achieved. The assessment should thus also answer questions such as: *Did social cohesion enhance or improve the results of the implementation of the Strategic Social Plan? What were the interventions that influenced improvement in SSP social and economic indicators? and To what extent did a common vision of people and among communities result in different actions by the community-based sector to achieve better results?**

Benchmarks/Baseline Information: To what extent are communities cohesive now?

The benchmarks for change in this area is complex. Not only do we need to know what exists as a voluntary sector in communities, localities and regions, we need to understand what they do. The benchmark information needs to inform us about not only the existing organizations but also about their nature. For example, the organizations that exist will need to be focused on some or all of the determinants of social cohesion. Because there is a plethora of organizations does not mean social cohesion will occur as many may be exclusionary or their activities do not focus on social and economic development in the community or locality nor the implementation of the vision, goals and objectives in the SSP. The inputs and outputs must be consistent with the SSP for indicators to measure success in achieving it.

Implications for the social audit: The benchmarks need to be collected to determine where we are now in terms of social cohesion. They need to answer such questions as: *Do people feel a sense of belonging now and to what? Do people participate now and how? Are people included and in what ways? Do people feel they play a legitimate and worthwhile role now and how? and Are the values and principles, and opinions recognized within the community, locality and/or region and how?* The actions now being taken need also to be determined so that changes in actions as a result of greater social cohesion can be determined. The benchmarks should thus also answer such questions as: *What is the current state of activity at the community level? What actions are being taken to develop society and the economy? What has it achieved as a result of these actions to date? and What geographic region are the actions focused on?*

What are the specific indicators of social cohesion?

The following lists a number of potential indicators that determine the level of social cohesiveness that exists in communities. As an output, they determine only to what level it exists. The second type of indicator must determine if the level of cohesion has enabled people and communities to act towards greater well-being. The third type of indicators which are not included are those well-being indicators associated with achieving the vision of the Strategic Social Plan.

People and Families

Attitudinal Variables

- < belonging - increased sense of belonging to locality/region/decreased isolation
- < legitimacy - increased level of legitimacy
- < recognition - increased feeling of being recognized
- < government - level of mistrust
- < community leadership - level of mistrust
- < private sector employers - level of mistrust
- < neighbours - level of mistrust

Family Cohesion Variables

- < out-migration of youth - level per capita
- < extended family members - number of family members in community with close contact
- < older people remaining in communities - greater sense of belonging than youth

- < equality by gender -level of income, employment status, community involvement by gender
- < divorce/separation -rates
- < lone parent families - ratio to 2 parent families

Social Inclusion Variables

- < disadvantaged assisted - percent receiving service
- < attempts/mechanisms for citizen engagement - number of events held and attempts made to engage citizens

Communities, Localities and Regions

Social Capital/Participation Variables

- < voluntary organizations assisting people and community vs. social organizations - voluntary organizations per capita
- < volunteerism- volunteers per capita

Values and Commitment Variables

- < increased identification with locality and region
- < increased inclusion of people and different views
- < increased sense of direction to achieve SSP vision and goals

Cooperation Variables

- < increased cooperation among communities, less competitiveness among communities
- < increased actions taken in partnerships across communities
- < increased planning and collaboration among community based agencies
- < increased joint action on implementing SSP vision

How will we assess social cohesion?

The process of achieving social cohesion is equally important to the end state itself. The process is currently unclear and may be a part of a development process that needs to happen during the implementation of the SSP. It could include a variety of interventions some of which could include:

- < greater efforts at engaging citizens
- < mechanisms for long-term locality and regional planning
- < better communication and involvement of people in public meetings, groups and actions designed to meet the needs of all members of society to promote greater inclusion
- < mediation to resolve conflicts among people within communities
- < mediation to resolve conflicts among communities
- < community development approaches to creating shared values and commitment to locality and region

The approach requires a new way of doing business in government and community-based agencies to create social cohesion which enables greater well-being and prosperity to be achieved.

Since social cohesion is also important as a process, assessments will need to include components that determine if interventions to achieve it have been made and how successful they have been. In addition to quantitative research, qualitative research approaches will need to be taken to assess the effectiveness of processes aimed at developing social cohesion.

The assessment of having achieved social cohesion through indicators will also need to use a qualitative as well as quantitative approach. Some of the indicators that determine if social cohesion has been increased are assessed by the personal opinions of people and their value in terms of increased well being assessed by the personal expression from those who live in communities. Such approaches as case studies, ethnographic studies, participant observation, action research to name a few can provide the understanding of the underlying issues, subtle nuances and ambiguous and obscure innuendoes. Changes in the state of social cohesion will continue to require quantitative analysis but the more qualitative analysis can not only inform the understanding of the baseline information but greater clarity and

specificity of the indicators themselves. In this area of the social audit the assessment of changes in indicators will require an interactive process between qualitative and quantitative analysis with constant attention to attaining a greater clarity of the role, benefits and outcomes of creating social cohesion.

Conclusion

Both people and communities need a sense of stability. Social cohesion, therefore, is needed in families as well as in communities. To implement the Strategic Social Plan, it is also necessary for social cohesion to exist in localities and regions. Social cohesion is not only an end product but a means to an end. As a process it will need to focus on people and places. As an end product it will need to exist at all levels relative to the current state as well.

The value and benefits of social cohesion are mainly intuitive and in functional terms it is likely crucial to the successful implementation of the SSP. Conversely, however, social cohesion may be detrimental to implementing the SSP if, in its development, its focus becomes too parochial and aimed at resisting change. Since it is the implementation of the SSP that will enable outcomes to be achieved, resistance to the changes necessary in the SSP will seriously undermine efforts to achieve results.

There is commitment to social cohesion and its various elements such as public participation, leadership development, partnerships and strengthening the community-based sector in the SSP. To develop social cohesion a significant effort will need to be made by government and by communities. A rethinking of activities and approaches will be needed at the community level and new or redirected investments will be needed by government in the community-based sector.

Its development will need to match the SSP vision and approach and be connected by partnerships and collaborative approaches to the integrated approaches at regional levels. Engaging people and communities is at the centre of its success and a framework for this engagement will be necessary if it this approach is used to accomplish the outcomes in the SSP. Indicators for determining success will need to measure these approaches as well as the role social cohesion plays in social and economic development.

Notes