Leaving No One Behind: South Asia’s Biggest Development Opportunity

Development in South Asian countries is largely unequal. Millions of people continue to be left behind, i.e., their identity and membership of one or more groups exposes them to specific types of discrimination, and they lack the voice and the power (Stuart et al. 2016) to advocate for and realise their rights and freedoms. Given two of South Asia’s largest countries – Pakistan and India – celebrate 70 years of their independence from colonial rule this year, it is a timely opportunity to revisit the gains these countries and the region overall has made economically and socially, and to see which segments of society are the furthest behind. Two questions must be asked:

1. What policies can be devised that will focus on the needs of the ‘left behind’ populations?
2. What global development agendas can countries in the region adopt to ensure their gains are not easily reversed and that further progress does not come at the cost of the most deprived people living there?

In this session, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) will present the ‘Leave No One Behind’ agenda as a powerful tool to frame and implement future development policies that will help accelerate progress explicitly for the people with the worst development outcomes (Stuart et. al. 2016). The panel will also lay out the agenda’s relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN 2015). More fundamentally, the panel will use the agenda to reflect on Pakistan’s responsibilities towards its most marginalised citizens and to the places where they live, and what it can and must do going forward to improve their life chances and living conditions. Speakers will highlight why a proactive policy stance in different provinces is now necessary, what needs to be done next, and by which actors. The session will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- to frame the ‘Leave No One Behind’ agenda within a broader SDGs context, and especially within Pakistan’s and South Asia’s development contexts;
- to present the body of knowledge and evidence on this agenda emerging in the global landscape, and highlighting issues relevant to South Asia;
- to see which actions Pakistan and its neighbours have already taken since adopting the SDGs, where has progress been made and where has it been slow;
- to gauge policy demand from, and the political and financial capabilities of, left behind provinces in Pakistan to progress on the agenda;
- to solicit advice directly from policymakers and civil society actors on priority actions to take on the ‘Leave No One Behind’ agenda before Pakistan and the region cross the first 1,000 days mark of their endorsement of the SDGs; and,
- to strengthen ODI’s and SDPI’s relationships with key stakeholders (including regional, national and subnational level policymakers, practitioners, and civil society actors) that signal their interest and investment in the ‘Leave No One Behind’ agenda.

References
Stuart, E. Bird, K. Bhatkal, T. Greenhill, R. Lally, S. Rabinowitz, G. Samman, E. and Sarwar, M.B. with

---

1 The SDG outcome document defines the term ‘leave no one behind’ within and among countries and population groups (UN 2015). Within countries, it is about accelerating progress explicitly for the people with the worst development outcomes. Paragraph 4 states ‘As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind… we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first’ (Ibid.).


**Panel Organisers**
Ms Amina Khan, Senior Research Officer, Overseas Development Institute, UK
Email address: a.khan@odi.org.uk

Mr Asif Javed, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan
Email address: asifjaved@sdpi.org