



Social Cohesion in Africa: An interdisciplinary research project

Research and policy advice project of the
**German Institute of Development and
Sustainability (IDOS)**

*formerly German Development Institute /
Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)*



Background

The research project “Social Cohesion in Africa” aims to identify patterns of social cohesion in Africa and understand better what binds societies together. It focuses on the impact of national and international policies on strengthening social cohesion and preventing social disintegration. The project examines the interdependencies between social cohesion, specific policy areas and international cooperation, and aims to examine the contribution of social cohesion to sustainable development in Africa.

Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen networks between academics, practitioners and policy makers working on this increasingly relevant topic. To this end it supports and coordinates initiatives such as the Social Cohesion Hub (<https://www.socialcohesion.info/>) and the Social Cohesion Online Seminar implemented jointly with the World Bank.

Motivation

Social cohesion is associated with overcoming some of the key development challenges our societies are facing today, such as inequality, poverty, polarisation or violent conflicts. In Africa, urbanisation and increased demographic pressures may exacerbate development problems and create new challenges for social cohesion. Despite the importance of social cohesion, we lack the conceptual clarity and empirical evidence to define and support policy measures in support of strengthening social cohesion.

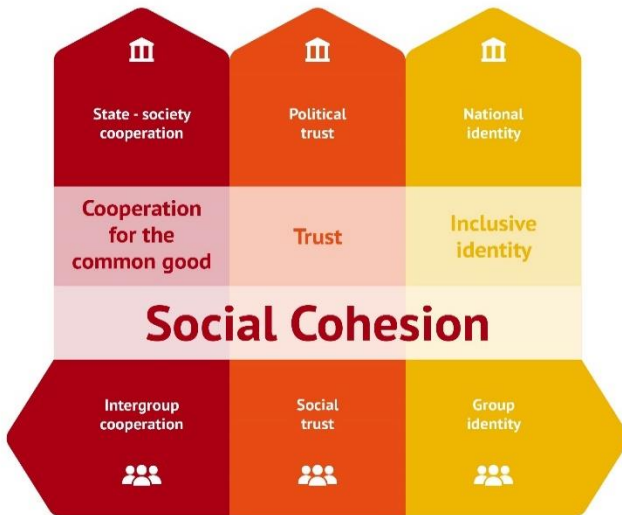
Against this background, the specific objectives of the project consist in:

- (1) bringing together different actors working in the field of social cohesion, by providing a shared understanding of social cohesion and advancing knowledge on how to measure it;
- (2) investigating how social cohesion influences, but also is influenced by, policy measures in specific sectors, and (3) understanding how to improve the effectiveness of measures in development cooperation aiming at strengthening social cohesion as well as how to more precisely assess desired or undesired effects that certain supported policies might have on social cohesion.

Our Understanding of Social Cohesion

Social cohesion is a key concept in academic and policy debates but it remains often vaguely defined. A shared concept is, however, essential to enable exchange and knowledge aggregation. We define the concept as follows:

“Social cohesion refers to the vertical and horizontal relations among members of society and the state that hold society together. Social cohesion is characterized by a set of attitudes and behavioural manifestations that includes trust, an inclusive identity and cooperation for the common good.”



We have operationalized this concept in close exchange with our partner Afrobarometer. Relying on Afrobarometer survey data we have been able to assess social cohesion in over 30 African societies. The results of this assessment, described and presented in a joint publication, constitute a major project milestone as the generated data allow for further empirical analysis on the relationship of social cohesion with different policy fields.

Thematic Areas

The project consists of one overarching and four theme-based working packages. In the overarching package (WPO) we bring our interdisciplinary expertise together on issues such as conceptualisation and measurement of social cohesion and the analysis of trends and clusters within the African region. In this WP we also work on overall drivers of social cohesion as well as the impact of policy measures on it with a specific emphasis on the role social cohesion plays in managing the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the long term effects the management of the pandemic might have on social cohesion itself.

The other four WPs aim at generating scientific knowledge and deriving policy recommendations, focusing on the interaction between social cohesion and specific policy areas:

- 1) Inclusive economic development: WP1 focuses on issues connected to structural economic transformation, urbanisation, financial sector development, and foreign direct investment with an emphasis on how to maximise opportunities for sustainable economic development, which in turn can improve social cohesion;
- 2) Social policy, poverty and health: WP2 analyses poverty and health in African societies, and the specific role that different social policies can have in tackling poverty and improving health conditions. This, in turn, can promote both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of social cohesion.
- 3) Values, political institutions and resources mobilisation: WP3 focuses on how cultural factors, such as norms and value-orientation, affect the creation and functioning of political institutions in African societies as well as how political institutions (with a particular emphasis on political regime and processes of democratisation and autocratisation) affect the interaction among citizens and their perception of the state.
- 4) Conflict and societal peace: WP4 analyses how political institutions and regime transitions impact societal peace in postconflict societies and how international support can contribute to fostering social cohesion. A particular focus lies on analysing the effect of local elections on social cohesion.

Our core partners



Afrobarometer, is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, the economy, and society. It is considered the world's leading source of high-quality data on what Africans are thinking.



Together with the World Bank we organise the Social Cohesion Online Seminar Series conceived as meeting point for leading researchers of diverse disciplines, policy-makers and practitioners of national and international organisations to discuss new insights in the area of social cohesion as well as their implications for development cooperation.

Social Cohesion Hub

The Social Cohesion Hub is a knowledge-sharing platform originally conceived and launched by the “Social Cohesion in Africa” project that aims to bring together those interested in social cohesion. In particular, the Hub encourages dialogue between academics and practitioners working on the topic. In this vein, the Hub aims to promote exchange as well as foster cooperation and discussion between different stakeholder groups. Interest and demand is growing and with it the amount of information on the Hub which lives from the active involvement of its growing community and network.



**Social
Cohesion
Hub**





Events - Selected ones since 2020

Social Cohesion Online Seminar Series

Expert Discussion organised in cooperation with the World Bank, hybrid events on a regular meeting every 3 to 4 months

Social cohesion in context – perspectives from Africa

Expert Workshop, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), 15.-16.11.2022

Panel Discussion: Social protection and social cohesion

Virtual panel discussion, in co-operation with European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) 15.06.2022

The Role of Social Protection in Cushioning the Effects of Pandemics

PEGNet-DIE Workshop 29.01.2021

The impact of COVID-19 on the perceptions of informal employees in Sub-Saharan Africa. Results from national representative surveys in 6 African Countries

ILO-FES-DIE Workshop to discuss the results from national representative surveys in 6 African countries. Berlin, 10.02.2021,

Social Cohesion Week – #SoCoWeek,

Series of virtual panel discussion over 4 days. 9.-12. November 2020



Academic publications - Selected ones since 2020

Social cohesion and firms' access to finance in Africa

Walle, Yabibal (Forthcoming). Social Indicators Research.
doi:10.1007/s11205-023-03090-0

Social protection and revenue collection: how they can jointly contribute to strengthening social cohesion

Burchi, Francesco / Armin von Schiller / Christoph Strupat (2020).
International Social Security Review 73(3), 13-32

Social protection and social cohesion in times of the COVID-19 pandemic: evidence from Kenya

Strupat, Christoph (2022). European Journal of Development Research, 34
(3), 1285 – 1307

What role do local elections play for societal peace in Nepal? Evidence from post-conflict Nepal

Fiedler, Charlotte / Karina Mross / Anna Berg / Prakash Bhattarai / Dorothea
Drees / Tim Kornprobst / Alexandra Leibbrandt / Philipp Liegmann / Maleen
Riebsamen (2022). Discussion Paper 4/2022, Bonn: German Institute of
Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

Social cohesion and firms' access to finance in Africa

Walle, Yabibal M. (2022). Discussion Paper 9/2022, Bonn: German Institute
of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

Policy responses to COVID-19: why social cohesion and social protection matter in Africa

Leininger, Julia / Armin von Schiller / Christoph Strupat / Daniele Malerba
(2022). Discussion Paper 20/2022, Bonn: German Institute of Development
and Sustainability (IDOS)

Willingness to take COVID-19 vaccination in low-income countries: evidence from Ethiopia

Strupat, Christoph / Zemzem Shigute / Arjun S. Bedi / Matthias Rieger
(2022) in: PLoS ONE 17(3)

Can integrated social protection programmes affect social cohesion? Mixed-methods evidence from Malawi

Burchi, Francesco / Federico Roscioli (2022). European Journal of
Development Research, 34(3), 1240 - 1263

Disentangling the relationship between social protection and social cohesion: introduction to the special issue

Burchi, Francesco / Markus Loewe / Daniele Malerba / Julia Leininger (2022). *European Journal of Development Research*, 34(3), 1195 - 1215

"Urbanisation and rural development in developing countries: A review of pathways and impacts.

Sakketa, Tekalign (2022): Discussion Paper, Bonn 5-2022: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

Protection against autocratisation: how international democracy promotion helped preserve presidential term limits in Malawi and Senegal.

Leininger, Julia / Daniel Nowack (2022). *Third World Quarterly*, 43 (2): 309-331.

Identifying pathways to peace: how international support can help prevent conflict recurrence

Mross, Karina / Charlotte Fiedler / Jörn Grävingholt (2022). *International Studies Quarterly*, 66 (1)

Inequality and social cohesion in Africa: theoretical insights and an exploratory empirical investigation

Burchi, Francesco / Gabriela Zapata-Román (2022). Discussion Paper 16/2022, Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

Determinants of social cohesion: cross-country evidence

Walle, Yabibal M. (2022). IDOS Discussion Paper 18/2022, Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

Trust in institutions and perceptions of the tax system among informally employed people

von Schiller, Armin (2022) in: Traub-Merz, Rudolf / Manfred Öhm / Julia Leininger / Florence Bonnet / Henrik Maihack (Hrsg.), *A majority working in the shadows: A six country opinion survey on informal labour in sub-Saharan Africa*, Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung , 49-57

Social cohesion after armed conflict: a literature review

Fiedler Charlotte / Christopher Rohles (2021). Discussion Paper 7/2021, Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

E-government and democracy in Botswana: observational and experimental evidence on the effect of e-government usage on political attitudes

Bante, Jana / Felix Helmig / Lara Prasad / Lea Deborah Scheu / Jean Christoph Seipel / Helge Senkpiel / Markus Geray / Armin von Schiller /

David Sebudubudu / Sebastian Ziaja (2021). Discussion Paper 16/2021, Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

Protecting democracy from abroad: democracy aid against attempts to circumvent presidential term limits.

Nowack, Daniel / Julia Leininger (2021). Democratization, 29(1): 154-173.

Disaggregating democracy aid to explain peaceful democratisation after civil wars

Mross, Karina (2021). European Journal of International, Volume 7(2): pp. 164 - 188

Social cohesion: a new definition and a proposal for its measurement in Africa

Leininger, Julia / Francesco Burchi / Charlotte Fiedler / Karina Mross / Daniel Nowack / Armin von Schiller / Christoph Sommer / Christoph Strupat / Sebastian Ziaja (2021). Discussion Paper 31/2021, Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)

Investigating the Relationships between Inclusive Institutions, Social Cohesion, and Human Development.

Burchi, F. / Charlotte Fiedler / Palina Kolvani / Jean Lachapelle / Armin von Schiller / Svend-Erik Skanning, / Julia Leininger / Staffan I. Lindberg, (2021). Background Paper for the Human Development Report 2022

The role of values for social cohesion: theoretical explication and empirical exploration

Nowack, Daniel / Sophia Schoderer (2020). Discussion Paper 6/2020, Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)



Policy briefs and opinion papers - Selected ones since 2020

Achieving globally equitable vaccine supply

Strupat, Christoph (2022). Bonn: German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Die aktuelle Kolumne vom 21.02.2022

Protecting democracy: the relevance of international democracy promotion for term limits

Leininger Julia / Daniel Nowack (2021). Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Briefing Paper 21/2020

About the need for a public debate about social cohesion and democracy

Leininger, Julia / Armin von Schiller (2021). German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), The Current Column of 28 April 2021

Diskussionsbedarf in puncto Demokratie und gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt

Leininger, Julia / Armin von Schiller (2021). German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Die aktuelle Kolumne vom 28.04.2021

Implications of COVID-19 for conflict in Africa

Fiedler, Charlotte / Karina Mross / Yonas Adaye Adeto (2021) Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Briefing Paper 12/2021

Revenue collection and social policies: their underestimated contribution to social cohesion

Burchi, Francesco / Christoph Strupat / Armin von Schiller (2020) Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Briefing Paper 1/2020

Wir brauchen Demokratieschutz, um Autokratisierung zu stoppen

Mross, Karina / Daniel Nowack / Julia Leininger (2020). German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Die aktuelle Kolumne vom 14.09.2020

Warum Soziale Sicherung in der Corona-Krise entscheidend ist

Strupat, Christoph / Daniele Malerba / Francesco Burchi (2020) Bonn: German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Die aktuelle Kolumne vom 26.03.2020

A fundamental transformation of tax systems is needed in the wake of Covid-19

von Haldenwang, Christian / Sabine Laudage / Armin von Schiller (2020)
German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik
(DIE), The Current Column of 29.06 2020



The Team - not including associate and guest researchers



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WP1 “Inclusive economic development”:

Fields of expertise:

Agricultural/development economics, rural-urban linkages, conflict and social protection, food and nutrition security



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WP1 “Inclusive economic development”:

Fields of expertise:

International economics, development economics.



Yabibal M. Walle

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WP1 “Inclusive economic development”:

Fields of expertise:

Financial sector development, institutions, economic growth, corruption control, social cohesion, financial literacy, migration, panel unit root tests.



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WP2 “Social policy, poverty and health”:

Fields of expertise:

Poverty measurement, inequality, social protection, social cohesion, food and nutrition security.



Julia Leininger (Project Co-Lead)

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WP3 “Values, political institutions and resources mobilisation”:

Fields of expertise:

Political regime change, international democracy promotion and protection, future scenarios and governing sustainability policies.



Armin von Schiller (Project Co-Lead)

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WP3 “Values, political institutions and resources mobilisation”:

Fields of expertise:

Tax morale, attitudes towards political institutions and public administrations, public administration reform, regime performance, evaluation of governance interventions.



Daniel Nowack

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WP3 “Values, political institutions and resources mobilisation”:

Fields of expertise:

Cultural change and regime change, democracy promotion, democratisation and autocratisation, civil society and social movements.



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WP3 “Values, political institutions and resources mobilisation”:

Fields of expertise:

Social media mis(dis)information and electoral mobilisation, democratisation, autocratisation and social cohesion, electoral violence & civil war.



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WP3 “Values, political institutions and resources mobilisation”:

Fields of expertise:

Political transformation, democracy promotion, scenario research, mixed methods, democratisation and autocratisation.



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WP3 “Values, political institutions and resources mobilisation”:

Fields of expertise:

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Participation and Accountability, Digitalisation in Politics and Development, political behaviour and attitudes.



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WP4 “Conflict and societal peace”:

Fields of expertise:

International peacebuilding, post-conflict societies, local elections, democracy support, transitional justice.



Karina Mross

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WP4 “Conflict and societal peace”:

Fields of expertise:

Social cohesion in conflict affected societies, peacebuilding, democracy promotion, local elections, transitional justice.

*Please check more information at individual profiles
at www.idos-research.de*



Notes

IDOS

The German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) (formerly German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, DIE) is located in the UN City of Bonn and is one of the world's leading research institutions and think tanks for global sustainable development. Our work is based on the interplay between research, policy advice and training. The IDOS is building bridges between theory and practice.

The research is theory-based, empirically driven and application-oriented. It provides the basis for the activities in policy advice of the Institute. We develop policy-relevant concepts, advises ministries, governments and international organisations, and refers to current policy issues. The training programmes of the Institute for university graduates and young professionals are integrated into the research and advisory process.

Contact



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