

Dear Colleague,

Welcome to the December 2014 issue of the “Indices of Social Development” (ISD) newsletter. This newsletter informs you about activities, events and data updates. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

- The ISD team is happy to congratulate Paulo Roberto Gitirana de Araujo Guerra, the ISS master student 2013-2014, who won the Prize for the Best Master Thesis 2014 Using the ISS ISD Database! In his paper *The Impact of Democracy on Inequality, Poverty and Development*, Paulo differentiates between formal democracy and participatory democracy, claiming that the former does not ensure a reduction in inequality. To analyze the performance of Participatory Democracy, the author uses Indices of Social Development indicators such as Civic Activism, Intergroup Cohesion, Interpersonal Safety and Trust and Inclusion of Minorities and relates them to the Gini Index (indicator of income inequality) through regression analysis. Interestingly, the findings of the research show that Interpersonal Safety and Trust is the most important variable fostering inequality reduction and that Intergroup Cohesion has a significant impact in reducing inequality. To the contrary, formal democracy has no statistically significant effect on income inequality. This research has great potential to contribute to the understanding of the impact of various types of democracy and of the related civil society factors which foster more (income) equality. This master thesis will soon be published on our website as an ISS ISD working paper. Paulo donated his prize of € 250 to the ISS Alumni Fund.
- The ISD has started its collaboration with the Task Team on Civil Society Organization Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment. The Task Team’s secretariat has been based at ISS since 2013. Established in 2009, the multi-stakeholder Task Team aims to advance norms and the implementation of international commitments in relation to civil society and development. The ISD is collaborating with the Task Team in the series of studies on multi-stakeholder initiatives and is contributing to the information-gathering to help investigate context-determining factors. The ISD data will help to analyse how differences in country conditions interact with parameters that co-determine multi-stakeholder initiatives’ effectiveness and legitimacy.

- On the 27 November 2014, Irene van Staveren presented the report “[Production and Use of Independent Media: Road to Government Accountability?](#)” at Hivos to project staff in various countries, who work on media and democracy.
- Currently, Irene van Staveren compares the widely used income inequality measure, the Gini coefficient, with the ISD index of Inclusion of Minorities as a measure of social inequality. The first measures vertical inequality, the second measures horizontal inequality. This allows for testing hypotheses about the role of different types of inequalities for development outcomes.
- ISD would like to know your opinion about the Indices. Please send your comments or (working) papers to isd@iss.nl.

Best wishes,

The Indices of Social Development Team.

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