



WORLD BANK GROUP
Social Sustainability & Inclusion



**MERCY
CORPS**

What is social cohesion? Why does it matter?

- Nik Myint, Practice Manager, Social Sustainability and Inclusion, World Bank
- Ryan Sheely, Director of Research, Conflict and Governance, Mercy Corps

December 5th, 2022

Why are we talking about social cohesion?

- **Social cohesion is critical to addressing today's development problems**, which require coordinated and collective actions across society and government.
- **It is particularly important in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence**, where government capacity is constrained and social cohesion allows states to tap into collective action capacity of communities.
- **But social cohesion is also under strain**, in ways which we are only starting to understand.
 - One-third of people globally would not recommend their community as a place to live to a friend or relative (Gallup, 2022).
 - Disaffection in government and distrust in neighbors are both on the rise.

Is social cohesion real?

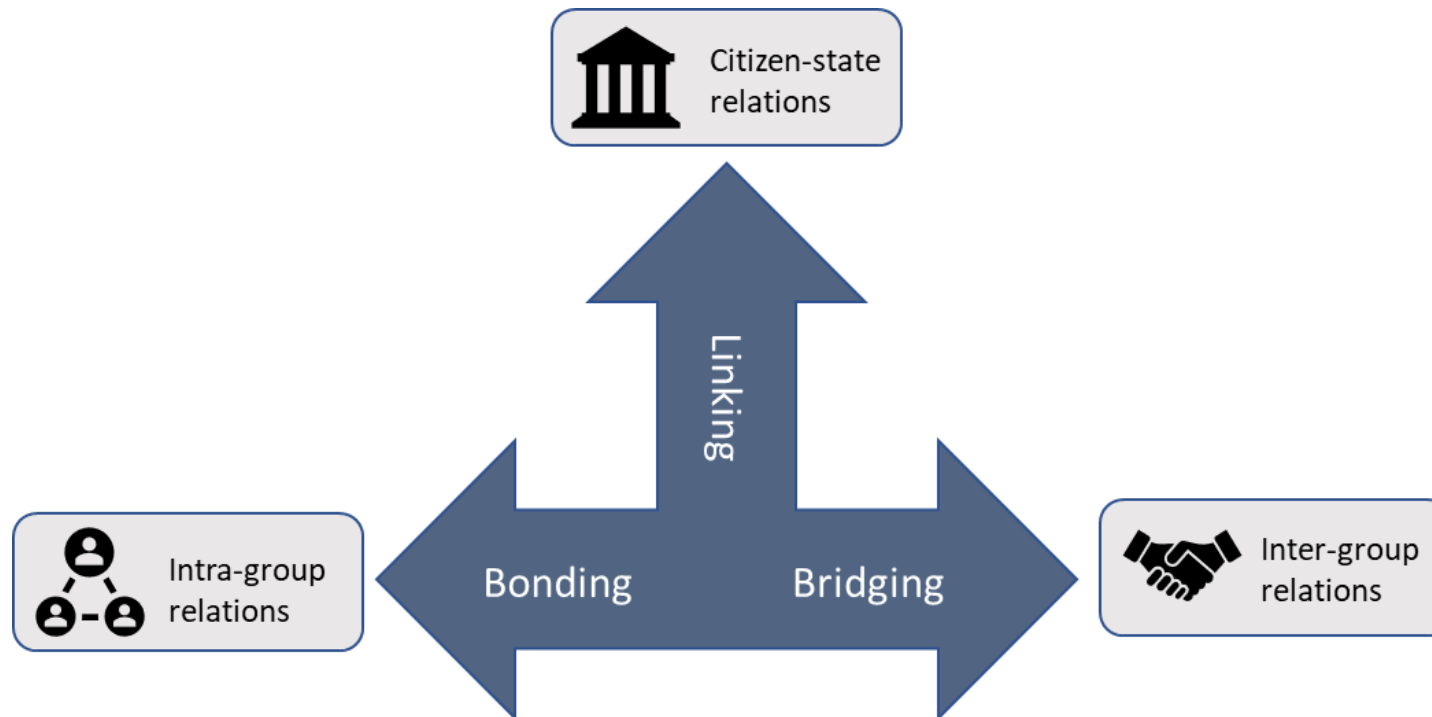
Can it be defined?

Measured?

Changed?

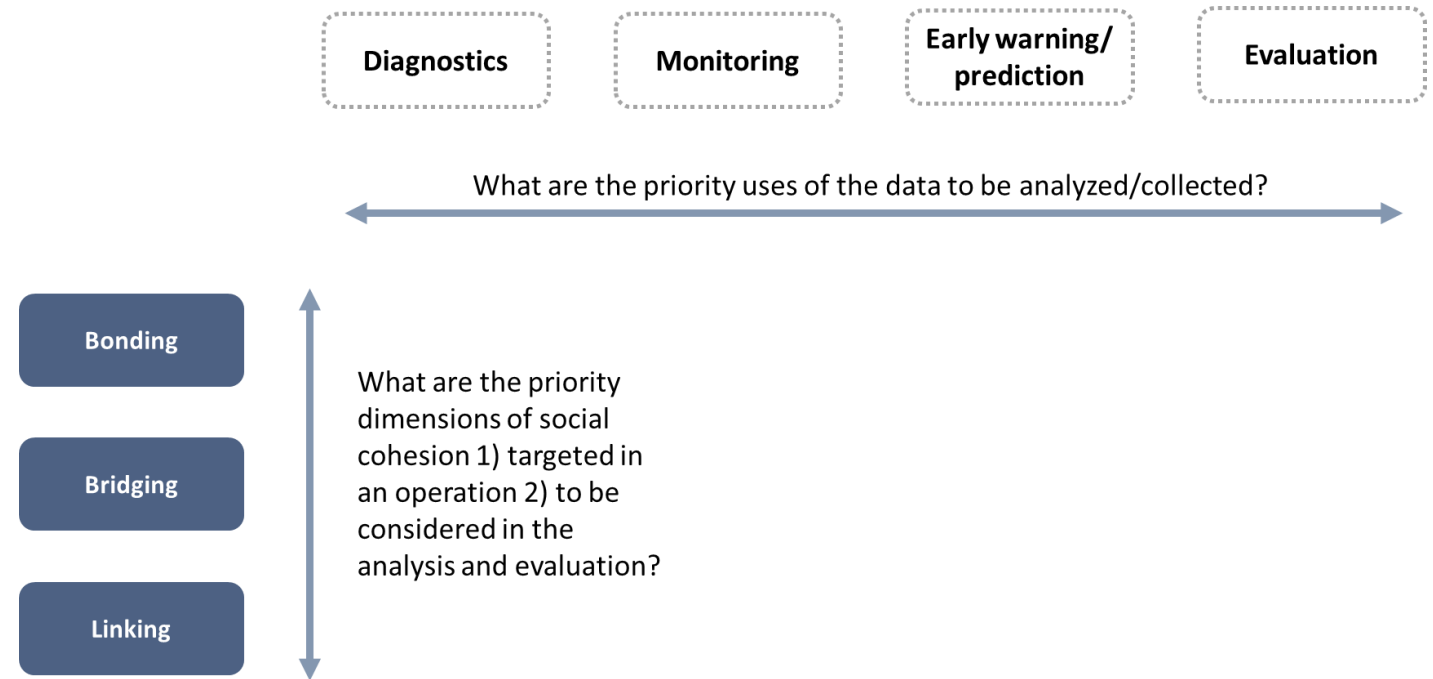
Defined? Yes. Social cohesion is...

*“a sense of shared purpose, trust and willingness to cooperate **among members** of a given group, **between members of different groups**, and **between people and the state.**”*



Measured? Yes.

- With indicators at national and subnational level
- Existing sources—such as Afrobarometer— can offer a first layer of information.
- Dedicated data collection processes are often required



Changed? Yes. But not always.

- Literature is rich with examples of project interventions that measurably improve social cohesion.
 - But also with lots of cases where interventions had no impact.
- What does it take?
 - **Sound diagnostics** – what particular aspect of cohesion are we trying to address?
 - **Quality implementation** – good design will take you only so far
 - **Careful M&E** – scale up what's working, fix what's not
- This is a new and emerging field – **getting things right at the pace we need will require collaboration beyond institutional boundaries**

There have already been exciting collaborations around measurement



Mercy Corps and World Bank –
*Social Capital and Social Cohesion
Measurement Toolkit for CDD
Operations*



The evidence base is growing, and promising approaches have been identified



Photo: Yagideh Emsal | Getty Images | Images of Empowerment

GOVERNANCE, CRIME, AND CONFLICT INITIATIVE EVIDENCE WRAP-UP

Lessons from randomized evaluations on managing and preventing crime, violence, and conflict

June 2021

IPA and J-PAL GCCI Evidence Wrap Up and numerous papers on social cohesion



3ie – Strengthening Intergroup Social Cohesion in Fragile Situations



Photo: Bobbie Meyer | Open Source/Imagery Corp.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Ten Lessons for Policymakers and Practitioners

MARCH 2022 - DRAFT - DO NOT CIRCULATE

Strengthening social cohesion is a cornerstone of many peacebuilding programs and other donor interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states. This has taken on new urgency in light of **emerging evidence** that the COVID-19 pandemic has eroded relations within and between groups in multiple countries. The U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability – also known as the Global Fragility Strategy – **pledges to address weak social cohesion**, along with other key drivers of violence and instability.

Mercy Corps – Strengthening Social Cohesion for Violence Prevention and numerous reports on social cohesion

LEVERAGING SOCIAL COHESION FOR DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

FRAMING PAPER

June 2022

Shreya Chatterjee, Marine Gassier, Nikolas Myint

World Bank – Leveraging Social Cohesion for Development Outcomes

Charting next steps across a broad set of possible categories of interventions

Intergroup
contact &
dialogue

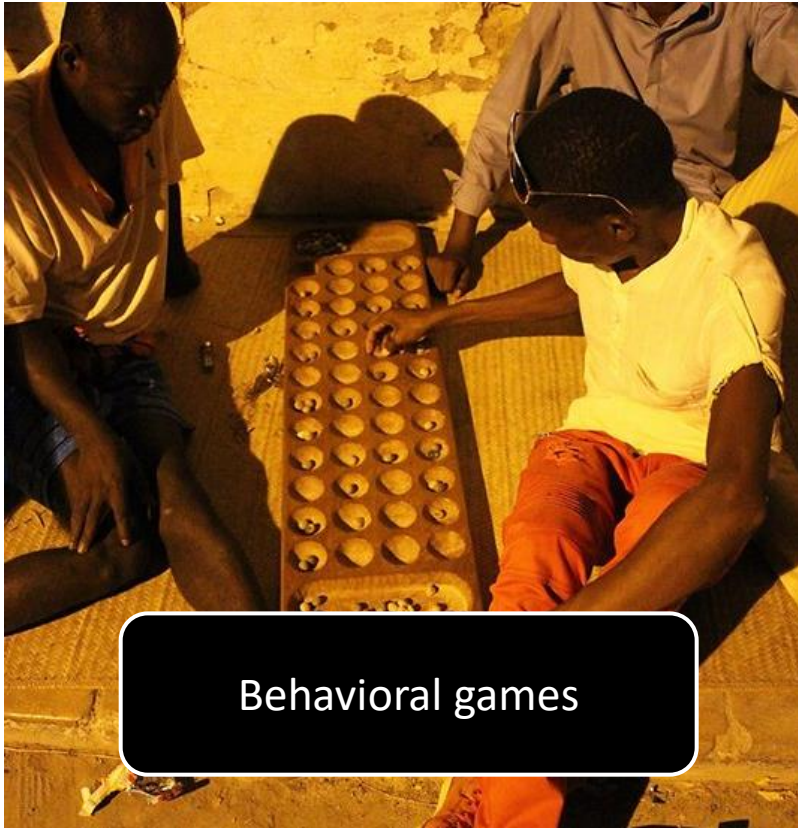
Mediation
Dispute
resolution

Pedagogical/
Perspective
taking

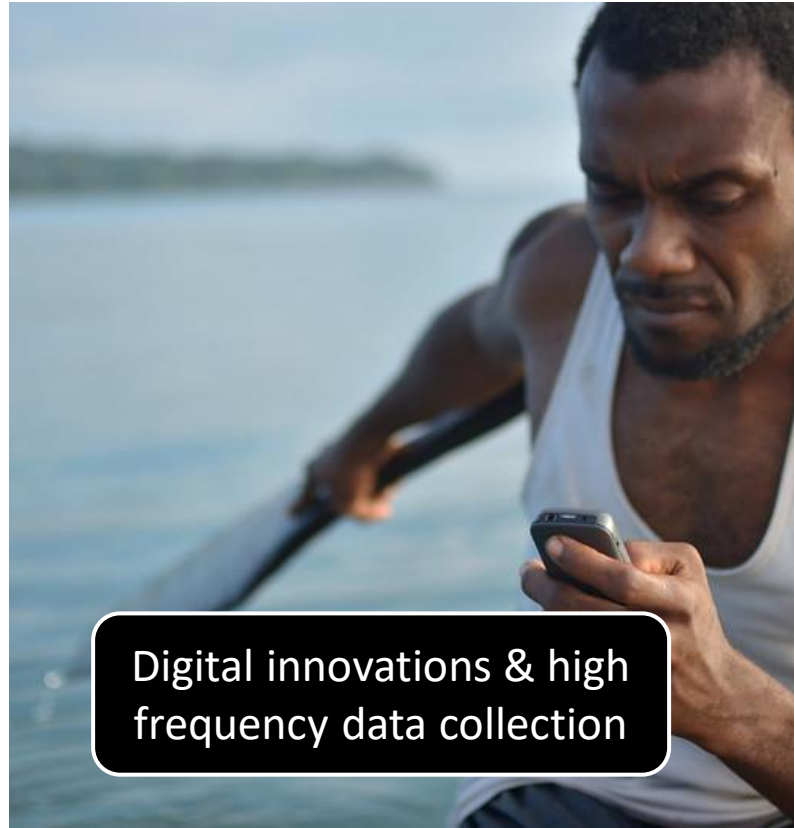
Inter-Group
Joint Projects

Media-based
interventions

Reconciliation



Behavioral games



Digital innovations & high frequency data collection



Indicators defined through participatory approaches

New measurement tools are being tested and deployed

Social cohesion is not an unambiguous good, and interventions should be guided by "do no harm" principles

- Communities can be cohesive yet organized around hierarchical or exclusionary norms
- In some contexts, social cohesion can contribute to conflict escalation
- Following “do no harm” principles require that we deploy effective tools for detecting the potential adverse effects of interventions that affect social dynamics



Cross-cutting questions underpinning today's discussions

1. How do we ensure that the "social cohesion agenda" reflects communities' priorities?
2. How can we continue to identify and test innovative interventions that may mitigate some of the most pressing or difficult social cohesion challenges societies face? How can we scale up promising interventions?
3. How do we design assessment and measurement strategies that offer evidence that is credible, but also timely and actionable?
4. How do we identify opportunities for collaboration that build on our organizations' respective strengths and experience?



Thank you!
