



Introduction

It has been suggested that although poverty divides us, social inclusion unites us. A society is diminished when people are denied access to all that it has to offer. In a working paper on social inclusion published in 2007, the authors, Heather Boushey, Shawn Fremstad, Rachel Gragg and Margy Waller, observed that, "Inclusion demands goals and policies that avoid separating us. Inclusion calls on us to strive for a nation in which everyone lives with purpose, dignity and satisfaction."

Citizens who feel socially included contribute positively to the sustainability of communities. Their mental health, physical health and enjoyment of life are vastly improved, and they have the capacity to participate in community-strengthening activities such as recreational sports, volunteering, and artistic endeavours. A community that fosters social inclusion reaps the benefits of its engaged citizens.

The information and analysis within this report provide us with invaluable, concrete evidence that social inclusion issues and support needs are varied and require a collaborative, fresh approach on the part of Government and NGO service providers. The information will help pave the way for future planning and the development of an effective and responsive Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

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December, 2010

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