



Comparative perspective on poverty and social exclusion: Qualitative content analysis of documents from countries representing different world regions

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Abstract

This article provides a qualitative content analysis of documents dealing with poverty and social exclusion from and/or about countries representing different world regions: Timor-Leste (East Asia and Pacific), Estonia (Europe and Central Asia), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Latin America and the Caribbean), Syria (Middle East and North Africa), the US (North America), Sri Lanka (South Asia), Burkina Faso (Sub-Saharan Africa). The findings reveal that the main topics referred to in the documents are government programs and national strategies as well as strategies of international organizations, the risk of poverty and social exclusion and percentage comparisons for specific groups (women, the disabled, the elderly, migrants), recommendations for governments, vulnerability (as a result of shocks) and sustainability in relation to poverty and social exclusion, and methodologies for evaluating poverty and social exclusion. When it comes to regional and country specifics, some of the examples are the aging of societies in Europe and North America; vulnerability due to conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region; high percentage of the population experiencing poverty in Timor-Leste which represents East Asia. Lastly, the study also emphasizes the need for more research offering comparisons on a global level, since poverty and social exclusion are pressing issues across different regions of the world, especially as a result of the global impacts of shocks like the Covid-19 pandemic and the wars in Ukraine and Iran.

Keywords: poverty, social exclusion, content analysis.

1. Introduction

When it comes to research on poverty and social exclusion, a sizable amount of it is done using data from EU countries, especially if the research offers a comparative perspective. That is because poverty and social exclusion are some of the key topics in the sociopolitical and economic scene of the EU, exemplified by the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Three targets to reach by 2030 have been set out in relation to this pillar - at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be employed; at least 60% of adults should be taking part in some kind of training every year; and the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion should be reduced by at least 20 million (European Commission, 2026). There are also 20

principles put forward by this Pillar, such as education, minimum income, childcare, gender equality, and housing. Furthermore, the EU collects data on income and living conditions for every member country, which can be a useful dataset for comparing the results that different countries are showing.

However, poverty and social exclusion are issues highlighted by the governments of countries from other regions as well as international organizations, such as the World Bank which has its Poverty and Inequality Platform storing data from countries all around the world (World Bank, 2026a). Moreover, there have been recent crises which have had an impact on different parts of the world, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the “The disruption to oil and gas flows through the Strait of Hormuz and attacks on energy infrastructure” as a result of the ongoing war in Iran (IEA, 2026). Therefore, comparative research of this topic on a more global scale is needed, which is the aim of this study. The research question is which similar aspects of poverty and social exclusion are referred to for countries in different regions of the world, and which regional particularities/differences can be pointed out?

2. Literature review

The United Nations (2016) defines social exclusion as “a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state”. Cuesta et al. (2024) points out how different conceptualizations emphasize different aspects of social exclusion – for example, some conceptualizations focus on the discriminatory practices associated with social exclusion, while others focus on the lack of participation in economic, social, and other affairs. This research also points out the different reasons why certain individuals or groups become socially excluded – their identity (caste, race, etc.), their circumstances (like becoming a refugee), or being in a disadvantaged socioeconomic position.

In some research on this topic, one specific kind (or a few specific kinds) of social exclusion are focused on. Luz & Portugal (2022) created a new framework for the analysis of transport-related social exclusion (TRSE) specifically through a “accessibility poverty” perspective and capability approach (treating mobility as a capability and accessibility as a human capability). One of the main points of the framework created is that exclusion happens as a result of the interaction between the spatial resources an individual has, the individual’s abilities and perceptions, and lastly, the sociopolitical and economic environment the individual lives in. Moreover, oftentimes the focus is on particular social groups and their risk of poverty and social exclusion. Fantahun & Taa (2022) examine the causes of the social exclusion faced by children living on the street in the Ethiopian city of Gondar and the consequences of this exclusion, showing that the main reason why children end up living on the street is parental neglect and emphasizing the need for facilities and community-based organizations that can help ensure access to basic needs like food and shelter for these kids. Nedeljković & Nedeljković (2024) put forward the idea of using social

pensions in Serbia to make sure that the elderly people in the country are not living in poverty and are not excluded from being full-fledged members of society.

Moreover, researchers oftentimes focus on policy and policy frameworks while analysing poverty and social exclusion. Plagerson (2023) analyses South African national strategy, legislative and policy documents to check how often poverty, inequality, social exclusion and some other related concepts (like race and gender) are referred to in these documents. This quantitative analysis was then paired with qualitative analysis of the references to see, for example, whether poverty and social exclusion are just generally mentioned or there are specific policy responses proposed in order to tackle these issues. Kwilinski et al. (2020) study whether the trend of digitalization in the EU encouraged by such initiatives as “A Digital Agenda for Europe” helps reduce the level of poverty. The results of the study are ambiguous – it is found that “for relatively poor segments of the population (1st, 2nd quintile by income) in the EU member states, the level of digitalization does not play a significant role”, meanwhile for the wealthier segments “the higher the level of digitalization is, the lower the risk of poverty and social exclusion”.

Other research on this topic offers a comparative perspective, mostly comparing EU countries. Kerr et al. (2019) compare energy poverty in England, France and Ireland, finding differences in the reactions to the EU’s encouragement of deregulation (including in the energy sector), the official interpretation of energy poverty, and efficiency policy. However, some similarities are also found, such more funding for affordability policies than efficiency policy. Calegari et al. (2024) analyze data from twenty-three European countries to analyze the material deprivation and social exclusion experienced by single parents (typically women earning a low income) in the region. There is also some research with a more global perspective – for example, Marlier & Atkinson (2010) focus on policy making on a multinational scale and propose a framework with three tiers for how to use social indicators in this process (first tier with key indicators, second tier with context and supporting indicators, third tier decided by countries individually).

Lastly, regarding the methodology used, some research offers a more quantitative perspective. For example, in the aforementioned Calegari et al. (2024) study, data is taken from the EU-SILC (EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) survey, and the calculations are made with the use of a dynamic panel. This method is used due to the fact that specifically dynamic panels can account for “correlation between successive observations pertaining to the same individual”. Meanwhile, other studies on this topic use qualitative methods. An example of this is the O’Donnell et al. (2021) study in which semi-structured interviews were carried out with “relevant stakeholders in Ireland in order to learn how they defined and conceptualised social exclusion”. Finally, there is research which combines both types of methods, such as the aforementioned Plagerson (2023) study regarding South African national policy, strategy and legislative documents.

3. Methods

In this study, content analysis is performed, specifically qualitative content analysis. This approach was chosen because it helps identify recurring themes and to see the similarities as well as differences (of the topics or the way the topics are discussed) in countries from different regions.

Firstly, the countries used for the research were picked out randomly - one random pick (with a random number generator) for every region classified by the World Bank (World Bank, 2026b). The countries chosen were Timor-Leste for East Asia and Pacific, Estonia for Europe and Central Asia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines for Latin America and the Caribbean, Syria for the Middle East and North Africa, the US for North America, Sri Lanka for South Asia, Burkina Faso for Sub-Saharan Africa. After that, the documents for the content analysis were chosen – two documents for each country, fourteen documents total. They were chosen based on how recent they were and based on whether the name and/or contents indicate a focus on poverty and social exclusion.

Table 1
Documents for each country chosen for the study

Country	Document
Timor-Leste	National Strategy for Social Protection 2021-2030 (Democratic ..., 2021)
	UNICEF (2021). Understanding and Measuring Multidimensional Poverty in Timor-Leste
Estonia	Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030
	EAPN Estonia (2022). Poverty Watch – Estonia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Caribbean Development Bank (2022). Country Engagement Strategy 2022-26
	IOM (2023). Environmental Migration, Disaster Displacement and Human Security Policy Assessment Tool
Syria	World Bank (2025). Welfare of Syrian Households after a Decade of Conflict
	UN (2025). Common Country Analysis: Syria
The US	US Congress (2025). Poverty in the United States in 2024
	US Congress (2024). Poverty in the United States in 2023
Sri Lanka	UNDP (2023). Understanding Multidimensional Vulnerabilities: Impact on People of Sri Lanka
	World Bank (2021b). Sri Lanka Poverty Update
Burkina Faso	World Bank (2019). The Way Forward for Social Safety Nets in Burkina Faso: Overview
	World Bank (2021a). Burkina Faso: Protecting the Poor during the Recovery and Beyond

The coding was done inductively, meaning codes were decided by the content of the documents themselves.

These research hypotheses were proposed:

1. One of the main similarities across the countries will be a focus on different societal groups (Fantahun & Taa, 2022; Nedeljković & Nedeljković, 2024).
2. Government policies and strategies will be another prominent topic (Plagerson, 2023; Kwilinski et al., 2020).

Finally, the potential drawbacks of the methodology chosen for this study should be discussed. To start with, since the coding was done inductively, it is possible that some aspects from theoretical frameworks might be missing. Another thing is that some of the randomly chosen countries have particularities that might make them stand out and might prevent them from being a typical example for the region (most prominently, it is important to keep in mind that Syria had undergone a civil war for over a decade from 2011 and is now undergoing a transitional period).

4. Results

To start with, some of the documents are focused on specific national strategies and plans. This is true for the document about Timor-Leste's National Strategy for Social Protection 2021-2030 and the document about Estonia's Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030. In Estonia's case, the document focused on the five sub-goals that were put forward – children and families, labour market and working life, older people, social care, and gender equality. For every sub-goal, the main indicators were named (such as the percentage of children separated from their families for the children and families sub-goal, and the Active Ageing Index for the older people sub-goal). Also, challenges and opportunities pertaining to the sub-goal are highlighted. For example, when it comes to the social care sub-goal, it is noted that “the care home infrastructure is outdated and there are not enough places for people with more complex care needs”. Then, for every sub-goal, courses of action are proposed – in the case of gender equality, some of the proposed actions are encouraging for societal attitudes to change in such a way that gender equality is valued and supported, and increasing economic equality between women and men (focusing on the pay gap and helping women to balance their work, family, and private lives). Finally, the cost of the development plan is discussed as well as how it's going to be governed (mainly a steering committee and expert panel).

Timor-Leste's national strategy document is similar in how there is also a focus on a few main objectives – reducing poverty, improving social security for workers, and institutional development. Every objective has its own sub-goals – for example, with the social security objective, the sub-goals are the development of a contributory system and the development of the National Institute for Social Security. Besides some proposed actions for every sub-goal, the importance of the issue is described as well as some issues with how the government deals with the issue currently. For poverty reduction, one of the sub-goals is increasing nutrition support, and it is explained that with the Merenda Escolar program which is the one used for providing

meals in schools, “the selection process of food and service providers does not follow strict evaluation criteria as regards the quality of the goods and services provided, their delivery capacity, transparency and accountability /.../”. The governance structure and indicators for all three main objectives as well as the implementation cost are also discussed, just as in Estonia’s case. The main difference is that the number of beneficiaries for specific programs are calculated for Timor-Leste’s strategy. So, for example, after reforming the SAIL program which supports the elderly and disabled, it is calculated that the reform “would lead to savings of 1.78 million USD in 2021, and of 2.30 million USD due to the reduction of the number of beneficiaries, which would represent 5499 less beneficiaries in 2030”.

There are also some important initiatives by international organizations, such as the Country Engagement Strategy 2022-26 for St. Vincent and the Grenadines by the Caribbean Development Bank. Some of the key goals highlighted for this strategy are economic growth, increased human and social development, and resilience to climate change. There are also key sectors pointed out for the country – agriculture due to it being “critical for food security, rural incomes, and employment”, the private sector due to some issues like limited financing and “inadequate supporting infrastructure such as transportation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)”. Moreover, since St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a country particularly susceptible to natural disasters (which will be discussed more later on), the need to invest in social protection is emphasized as well as better disaster risk management and more resilient infrastructure.

The documents also discuss the poverty and social exclusion risks for different societal groups. The risks for children are emphasized in most cases. In the Timor-Leste strategy document, it is pointed out that “children born in Timor-Leste could expect to reach only 45% of their potential human capital relative to a benchmark corresponding to complete education and full health”. In the Estonian EAPN document, it is mentioned that since there are quite a few families who stay in social housing units for years, the children in these families basically “grow up in a social care institution” instead of a stable home due to lack of accommodation and high prices of rent. Some other aspects mentioned in relation to children are access to high quality education, the fact that malnutrition in the first years of life can impede a child’s ability to grow and learn properly, as well as, especially in Estonia, an impending shortage of teachers due to the fact that most of them will be retiring in a short while. Going back to the dangers of malnutrition, in the Poverty Update for Sri Lanka, the dangers for a particular group of children (ones in the estate sector) are emphasized - “undernutrition among women and children under five remains a concern in Sri Lanka, but the problem is most severe in the estate sector. Despite improvements in the last 10 years, as of 2016 32 percent of children under the age of five in the estate sector were stunted”. Moreover, the changes in educational outcomes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic affected children as well. The 2021 World Bank document for Burkina Faso cites findings stating that “school closures under COVID-19 could result in a loss of between 0.3 and 0.6 years of schooling adjusted for quality, as measured by the Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS)

indicator. Besides, students from the four Sahel countries, on average, could face a reduction in their lifetime income by US\$123.1 and US\$212.1, depending on the scenario”.

Another societal group that's at huge risk of poverty and social exclusion is the elderly. This is especially important in Europe and North America, since these are the rapidly aging societies, but it is discussed in the documents about other countries as well. For example, in the paper on multidimensional poverty in Timor-Leste, adults over 60 are the first group mentioned as being „most likely to be multidimensionally poor“. As mentioned before, one of the sub-goals of the Estonian Welfare Development Plan is the improvement of the situation for elderly people, and it is said that „compared to other European countries, older people in Estonia are relatively less involved socially, less involved in volunteering and politics, and less involved in hobbies“, and there are issues with digital literacy as well, which is a huge barrier because of how prevalent technology is in modern society. The Estonian EAPN also points out that there are some rural areas „where young people leave and only the elderly and needy remain“, which also contributes to the isolation and exclusion faced by the elderly. The elderly are also extremely vulnerable as a result of conflicts – according to the Syria Common Country Analysis, „older persons in Syria often lack access to adequate social services and health care, with many living in poverty after losing savings, property, or family support during the years of conflict. All these factors led to financial insecurity, neglect, and psychosocial distress“. In the US, according to the Congressional Research Service 2026 report, poverty rates are the highest for the elderly using the Supplemental Poverty Measure - “13.4% for children (no statistical change), 12.2% for working-age adults (no statistical change), and 15.0% for the aged, up from 14.2% in 2023”, due to things like the subtraction of “out-of-pocket, medical expenses” from the SPM income.

The next aspect discussed in the documents is the risk of poverty and social exclusion with regard to gender. In the Timor-Leste national strategy document, it is mentioned that „unemployment rates are higher for women (14.3%) than for men (7.5%)“. In the document pertaining to multidimensional poverty, the headcount is also a little higher for adult women than adult men (56.5% and 54.2%, respectively). In the Estonian welfare plan document, the pay gap is emphasized (“Although the gender pay gap (14.9%) has been on a downward trend over the last decade, it shows significant gender inequalities in the labour market and in the economic independence of women and men“), as well as the „unbalanced distribution of care work“. Another important aspect is access to maternal health – in Timor-Leste, „in 2016, around 77% of women (15-49 years old) attended at least four prenatal visits during their pregnancy but only 35% received postnatal care in the two days after giving birth“, according to their national strategy document. Other issues are discussed as well, such as the need for better protection of victims of gender-based violence. Conflict and other shocks can also contribute to the gender aspect of poverty – according to the 2025 World Bank document on Syria, despite the fact that some women became the sole caretakers of the household and thus had to join the labor force, „in 2022, the female unemployment rate stood as high as 24 percent, 15

percentage points higher than the male unemployment rate”. Moreover, for young girls, education is the sphere where social exclusion can be found. The UNDP report on Sri Lanka points out that “gendered expectations might place greater emphasis on girls’ domestic roles, leading to reduced investments in their education in female-headed households”. For Sri Lankan adult women, a specific issue is that they spend a lot of time on domestic tasks because not a lot of women in the country own things like washing machines which could save them a significant amount of time, and this, in turn, means that they cannot properly participate in the labor force.

Furthermore, some issues faced by young adults are discussed in the documents. These issues have to do with employment, such as not working full-time or working in the informal sector. According to the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Country Engagement Strategy, „limited access to higher level demand-driven Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes has resulted in an inadequately skilled workforce relative to labour market needs, constraining employment opportunities especially for young graduates”. Unemployment is a huge risk in these countries as well – “looking at the working-age population in 2024, 4.4% of workers were in poverty, compared with 28.2% of nonworkers”, as calculated in the 2026 Congressional Research Service report for the US. Lastly, in some countries, work in the agricultural sector is prevalent, but this does not guarantee income. In the case of Burkina Faso, “most of those active in this sector (92.5 percent) work in agriculture only for their own consumption, with just 7.5 percent actually selling their products”, according to the 2019 World Bank document.

Disability can also contribute to poverty and social exclusion, as evidenced by some of the documents analyzed. Most notably, the Sri Lanka UNDP report states that „households with PwDs also have higher deprivations in terms of food stock (23.8 percent). Additionally, the elevated levels of debt (35 percent) and informal work deprivations (20.6 percent) in households with PwDs suggest potential economic vulnerabilities”. Moreover, in the Estonian Welfare Development Plan, disabled children are singled out as a vulnerable group in need of regular support in their daily lives. Finally, in Syria, “the number of Syrians living with disabilities has increased significantly as a result of the conflict”, which exacerbates accessibility issues, causing the exclusion of “many persons with disabilities from full participation in education, social and economic activities”, as per the Common Country Analysis.

Refugees and displaced people are another group susceptible to poverty and social exclusion mentioned in the documents. Syria is the most prominent example, where the civil war has caused „one of the largest episodes of international displacement since World War II”, as per the World Bank report. Specifically in Estonia, „the labour market started to be affected by war refugees from Ukraine, who accounted for 11.1% of the registered unemployed on 21.08.2022“, according to the Estonian EAPN report. Another important problem highlighted by this report is the difficulty of finding housing for refugees because of not enough supply, especially in the bigger cities with the most job opportunities. Lastly, due to the climate change risks faced by the country, according to the St. Vincent and the Grenadines IOM

assessment, the country's government should take „environmental migration and disaster displacement“ into special consideration

Another aspect of poverty and social exclusion often mentioned in the documents is the divide between urban and rural communities or between different regions/provinces/states. For the US, the disparities between states are shown in the Congress reports – the highest percentage of the population experiencing poverty and social exclusion is in the southern states, particularly Louisiana and Mississippi. In Timor-Leste, according to the paper on multidimensional poverty, „29% of people are multidimensionally poor in urban areas, versus 70% in rural areas. There are significant variations among municipalities, with Ermera (75%) and Ainaro (68%) having the highest headcount, and Dili the lowest (23%)“. In Sri Lanka, the provincial disparities are noticeable – according to the Poverty Update, „the share of households living in dwellings where two adults have the equivalent of less than one room is 51 percent in the Northern Province and 43 percent in the Eastern Province, compared to the national average of 32 percent“. In the UNDP report, it is said that „among the three provinces, the Eastern Province exhibits a particularly acute issue with debt status, constituting a substantial 22.7 percent of its weighted contribution“. Going back to the Poverty Update, a third sector outside of the rural and urban - the estate sector - is also highlighted for Sri Lanka, with it being pointed out in the document that the population of this particular sector „continues to be one of the most marginalized groups as measured by poverty, human development outcomes, and access to services and economic opportunities“. Lastly, the rural/urban aspect can be relevant for educational outcomes. For instance, in Burkina Faso, the school attendance numbers varied after schools were re-opened after the Covid-19 pandemic, with 65 of students in rural areas returning to school compared to 87 percent in the capital city and 84 percent in other cities, as per the 2021 World Bank document.

One of the other aspects discussed in the documents is vulnerability, especially as a result of shocks and disasters. One of the most prominent examples in this case is St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This country is particularly vulnerable to environmental disasters, which is exemplified by the eruption of the La Soufrière volcano in 2021. According to the Country Engagement Strategy document, „the ashfall and lahars (mudflows) related to the volcanic eruption had a significant adverse impact on the [agricultural] sector, with total damage and loss of around two hundred and thirty million, one hundred thousand Eastern Caribbean dollars“. It is also pointed out in the document that such a disaster, on top of the risk of floods and landslides, illustrates how necessary investment in resilience and protection is (both for the infrastructure and the populations that are most at risk). Also, as mentioned previously, the IOM document highlights the necessity for the government to consider the specific group of environmental migrants while creating or refining policies and strategies. There is another reason for vulnerability mentioned for some other countries, which is war. The civil war in Ukraine and the civil war in Syria are the main examples. In Syria's case, some of the things pointed out in the Common Country Analysis are food insecurity („In 2026, approximately 13.3 million people

need food and agricultural assistance, including those facing or at risk of acute food insecurity”) and poor healthcare infrastructure (“Only 57 per cent of hospitals and 37 per cent of primary healthcare centers are fully functional, with widespread health workforce shortages, and persistent gaps in essential medicines”). As discussed previously, the war in Ukraine is talked about through the lens of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia, with emphasis on issues with finding housing and unemployment. The Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on energy prices are mentioned as well, especially for Estonia, where “the electricity exchange price had already risen by 122% by September 2021, and the price of natural gas, which is widely used for heating in many areas, had risen by as much as 3.7 times”.

Furthermore, for the evaluation of the situation regarding poverty and social exclusion, sustainability is often referred to. To be more exact, the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) are often mentioned as a reference point. The IOM document on St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in the context of the agricultural sector, mentions „the targets established under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 on ending hunger“. While discussing the revival of agriculture in the Syria Common Country Analysis, „renewable energy, and sustainable and climate-resilient practices” are encouraged. In the Estonian Welfare Development Plan, besides targets set on a national level, „the global sustainable development goals of the UN” are taken into consideration.

In addition, what stands out is the telling of the stories of specific people dealing with poverty and social exclusion. This is the case for the UNDP report on Sri Lanka. In the report, some personal stories are highlighted, such as the one of Nanda Kumara, a father who, along with his wife, cares for their two severely disabled children while only relying on their incomes (which, for Nanda, decreased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic). Another example is the story of H. A. P Kusulamatha, a single mother of two children (one of whom has liver complications and a blood disorder), who does receive a little support through the Samurdhi program, but still struggles to make ends meet, sometimes leading to her having to go hungry herself in order to feed her children. This helps provide a meaningful insight into what poverty and social exclusion mean for the daily lives of those who are struggling and marginalized.

Another topic discussed in the documents is the methodology for measuring poverty and social exclusion. The main metric discussed is the Multidimensional Poverty Index. The main strength of this index, according to the document about multidimensional poverty in Timor-Leste, is that it is „a useful tool to look at the needs of the population in a more holistic way“, meaning that not only monetary poverty is taken into consideration. In Timor-Leste’s case, the indicators chosen were „WASH (Water and Sanitation), Living Standards, Information (for adolescents and youth), Nutrition (for children under 6 only), Health, Education (for individuals 6 years and older), Employment (adolescents and youth), and Child Protection (for children under 6)“. After the calculations, it was found that „at the cut-off of 0.33, which is the most used internationally, 41% of the population is multidimensionally poor, and, on average, experiences an intensity of 50% of all total possible deprivations”, which

shows that almost half of the population experiences half of all the deprivations included in the calculations. Another metric, which was used for the US, is the Supplemental Poverty Measure. It is an additional measure used besides the official one. As explained in the 2025 Congress report, “the measure of need is based on recent spending data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey; namely, 83% of median family spending on food, clothing, shelter, utilities, internet, and telephone service (plus an extra 20% for miscellaneous expenses such as personal care products)”. To calculate how much is required to meet the measure of need, after-tax income and some noncash benefits are used. This measure also subtracts some expenses, like the ones related to child care or out-of-pocket medical expenses since these do not fall under the category of basic needs under the Supplemental Poverty Measure. As mentioned before, these subtractions make a difference for the calculations regarding which groups are the most likely to experience poverty, since the elderly end up the most vulnerable according to the SPM.

Finally, in each document, recommendations are given for governments on what they should prioritize. For example, in the UNDP report on Sri Lanka, some of the things recommended are collecting data to provide better support for people with disabilities, investing in equal access to education, ensuring resilience in the case of climate disasters, assessing the credit markets to help those who are struggling with debt. For Burkina Faso, “only 2,9 percent of the entire population benefits from safety nets”, according to the 2019 World Bank document, therefore ensuring that more people in need are covered by social security programs should be a priority. In Estonia’s case, outside of the priorities set out in the Welfare Development Plan, the energy sector is highlighted by the EAPN - “as high energy prices are the main cause of Estonia’s EU-highest inflation, EAPN members call on the Commission and the Council to critically review EU energy policy”. For St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which faces a huge risk of environmental disasters, the CDB recommends “revitalising and intensifying targeted crop and livestock industries” and “enhancing the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) (including fisheries and forestry) in data collection and analysis, management of data systems, and the development and dissemination of information products”, for instance. This could make the agricultural sector less susceptible to climate-related shocks and, as a result, ensure that food keeps being provided for the population in case of disasters. To conclude, it is noticeable that most of the recommendations are aimed towards resilience and adaptability in case of sudden shocks or disasters, especially due to climate change.

5. Conclusion

This study contributes to existing poverty and social exclusion research, particularly the research where documents and policies are analyzed using content analysis (such as Plagerson, 2023) and the research offering comparisons between countries (such as the Calegari et al., 2024) by utilizing a global perspective, i.e. performing content analysis on documents about poverty and social exclusion in randomly selected countries from all world regions, as classified by the World Bank. This perspective

and method are useful in the sense that they help identify similarities as well as problems and risks that are more specific to one or a few countries/regions. This, in turn, can improve the policy making process by systemizing findings, determining priority activities, and pinpointing policy strengths and weaknesses from every region.

Furthermore, this study finds that the main recurring themes in the documents are government programs and strategies (national and those of international organizations), risks and percentage comparisons for specific groups (women, the disabled, the elderly, migrants, young adults), vulnerability (as a result of shocks) and sustainability in relation to poverty and social exclusion, methodologies for calculating poverty and social exclusion, and recommendations for governments. As hypothesized, the main similarities for all the different countries were: 1) the discussion of specific risks or percentage comparisons for specific societal groups; 2) descriptions of government programs and strategies as well as recommendations for what should be prioritized moving forward. When it comes to recommendations, as mentioned before, it is observed that most of them have to do with increasing adaptability and resilience, especially in the case of environmental disasters. This is most urgent for St. Vincent and the Grenadines (representing Latin America and the Caribbean) and Sri Lanka (representing South Asia), since those are small islands, therefore their geographical position makes them prone to be affected to natural disasters more often and on a bigger scale.

In terms of regional specificities, besides the islands more susceptible to climate change, the aging of societies in Europe and North America is increasingly important for these regions. For Europe, the effect of the war in Ukraine was felt most intensely from the beginning, especially when it comes to war refugees and the energy sector. Then, part of the population in the Middle East and North Africa region is vulnerable due to conflicts, as exemplified by the Syrian civil war, which has caused mass migration, unemployment, an increased number of disabled people in the country, as well as destruction of infrastructure. Moreover, Timor-Leste (which represents East Asia) has a high percentage of the population experiencing poverty, as shown by the calculated multidimensional poverty numbers. There were also particular issues for one country, such as the low percentage Sri Lankan women having household appliances which could save them time spent on domestic work.

Finally, more research on poverty and social exclusion with a global perspective is needed. In recent years, there have been multiple events with their effects being felt on an international scale, for instance, the wars in Ukraine and Iran, the Covid-19 pandemic. When such shocks with far-reaching consequences happen, for the risks to be addressed properly, it is important to look into the nature and strength of the effects for every country and/or region.

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