

# Minorities at risk and horizontal inequality

[History](#)



## Minorities At Risk And Horizontal Inequality

### Introduction

Horizontal inequalities occur when significant disparity exists between different culturally defined groups of people. The inequalities may be of political, social, economic or cultural status nature according to Stewart (2010). The existence of such horizontal inequalities elicits animosity between the groups involved and increases the risk of a violent conflict. There is evidence worldwide of peaceful co-existent of different ethnic and religious communities. However, where horizontal inequality exists between communities a conflict is inevitable. Such a conflict is not directly caused by the cultural differences but by the political, economic and social disparity existing along the cultural line. A recent violent confrontation among different communities in Kenya is a typical example of political inequalities' induced conflicts. Armed struggle in Côte d'Ivoire on other hand provides an example of a conflict triggered by economic, social and cultural inequalities. The Northerners who are predominantly Muslims were aggrieved by lack of recognition of their religion and the barring of one of their own from contesting for the presidency (Stewart, 2010).

Multi-party politics has been introduced in many countries as a way of reforming and improving governance. The increased political competitiveness has however provoked animosity between communities. Communities with a huge number of voters have an advantage of minority groups. The minority group ends up being politically marginalized and a possibility of conflict is real. The situation has given rise to power-sharing arrangements in some countries after a violent confrontation prompted by <https://assignbuster.com/minorities-at-risk-and-horizontal-inequality/>

multi-party elections. Addressing all the existing horizontal inequalities among the ethnic groups is important both in countries where violent conflicts have occurred and in potentially volatile regions.

Three categories of approaches have been identified to address the social inequalities namely the direct, indirect and integrationist approaches. Direct approaches advocate for affirmative action where previously marginalized groups are given preferences in access to education, political representation, and employment. The approach, however, may elicit disquiet among communities not benefiting from such policies. To avoid a potential conflict such initiatives should be given a definite time frame within which they can be used to correct the disparity. Indirect approaches involve policies that indirectly promote inclusion of all communities in the economic, social and political systems. They may include devolution of both economic and political decision-making mechanisms. Such policies are however slow in taking effects and may be inadequate in addressing all the horizontal inequalities existing. The integrationist approaches involve policies geared towards promoting cohesiveness among different communities by promoting nationhood. However, the perceived cohesiveness may be used to mask the existing horizontal inequalities.

By use of the minority risk group data, several categories of variables will be important while assessing the contribution of horizontal inequality to a conflict. Group characteristics, group conflict behaviors and group status categories of variables can clearly bring out the horizontal inequalities. If the focus is on economic inequalities variables such as, group representation in central government, level of economic grievances and foreign agencies and nongovernment support variable are important. Communities who are

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consistently receiving support from foreign donors are mostly the marginalized groups that economically discriminated.

The social aspect of the horizontal inequality will be well captured by considering, rebellion, government repression, and level of representation in the political systems. Political inequality can be captured by considering all the social inequality variables. In addition, external political support may indicate a high number of exiled members of the communities due to political persecution. Lastly, cultural inequalities can be well captured by the group characteristics and level of representation within the government (Stewart, 2010).

To properly capture the horizontal inequalities, the distribution of natural resources within a given locality inhabited by a given community is very important. Utilization of such resources determines a group's ability to empower themselves economically, politically and socially. Communities living in areas with a valuable resource may have advantages over those in regions without resources.

## References

Stewart, F. (2010). Horizontal inequalities as a cause of conflict, A review of  
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