

## **SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SECURITY: A PARADIGM SHIFT**

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### **Abstract**

The concept of “sustainable human security” provides an integrated framework for adequately addressing development and cooperation in complex situations of conflict, violence and fragility. As human security shifts the attention from a state-centered to a people-centered approach to security, sustainable human security aims at underscores the persistence, interdependence and universality of a set of freedoms which are fundamental to human life. The concept of sustainable human security is a paradigm that suggests most of the contemporary understandings on human security, human development, human dignity and human sustainability. It emerges from at least thirty years of reflections in line with sustainable development; human rights based development, human security and human development. This paper explores the evolution of human security emerging from national perspectives into sustainable integrated frameworks and institutional capacity development implications. This is an effort to study the concept of human security in general and sustainable human security in particular, which provides the necessary integrated framework for addressing the root causes of conflict and human, economic, environmental and social insecurity. Sustainable human security aims at proposing adequate solutions through sustainable peace-building and human rights based sustainable development.

**Keywords: Sustainability, Development, Rights, Environment, Security, Cooperation.**

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### **From State Security to Human Security**

Human security embodies a notion of security that goes beyond conventional concerns with military capacity and the defence of borders. Human security approaches usually treat an expanded range of social and developmental variables as being able to constitute an international security threat. Poverty, population displacement, HIV/AIDS, environmental breakdown and social exclusion, for example, all bear directly on human and hence global security. The concept of human security has achieved striking prominence in the post-Cold War period. The term has gained widespread currency and, over the past few years in particular, has attracted a growing institutional interest. According to Lloyd, “the world is entering a new era in which the very concept of security will change – and change dramatically. Security will be interpreted as: security of people, not just territory, security of individuals, not just nations, security through development, not through arms, security of all the people everywhere-in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities and in their environment”

<sup>1</sup>In 1994, the Human Development Report (HDR), produced by the United Nations Development Programme, introduced a new concept of security -one that moved away from security as defined solely for the nation-state, to one defined by security for the people-“human security.” The Human Development Report’s definition of human security included threats in seven areas: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.<sup>2</sup>Since the introduction of the concept of human security in 1994, two distinctly different schools of thought and approaches have emerged. One, promoted chiefly by Canada, focused on the protection of individuals from violent conflicts, through measures such as conflict prevention and resolution, and peace-building. The other, promoted chiefly by Japan, focused on root causes of human insecurity, including hunger, disease and natural disasters. Environmental problems have also been addressed.<sup>3</sup> Human security is not necessarily a substitute to national security. The state remains the fundamental purveyor of security and human security complements state security by enhancing human rights, strengthening human development, and recognizing human dignity.

### **From Human Security to Sustainable Human Security**

The type of development that constitutes the present foundation of human security is more accurately defined as "sustainable development". A popular definition is that of the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development “sustainable development is a "development that

meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In bringing together the domains of development and the environment, the idea of sustainable development grew to become the developmental leitmotif of the 1980s. Despite being widely criticized for its lack of conceptual rigour, the phrase quickly entered the rhetoric of politicians, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Under the banner of sustainable development, formal development practice embraced a human, people-centered focus that not only prioritised the development of people ahead of states; it also decoupled human development from any direct or mechanical connection with economic growth.<sup>4</sup> Human security offers much to this vibrant field of sustainable development. Most notably, human security like human development highlights the social dimension of sustainable development's 'three pillars' (environment, economy, society).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the added notion of sustainability aims at identifying long term solutions for the institutional, economic, social and environmental aspects of human security. Hence 'sustainable human security' aims at finding systemic solutions to human trafficking, climate related disasters, recurring famines, chronic poverty, pandemic diseases and extreme inequalities among others. The notion is an essential integrated framework for designing, managing and evaluating programs and initiatives aimed at ensuring the survival, livelihood and dignity of people. Twenty years after the HDR report, the notion of "sustainable human security" appears to be a natural evolution and convergence of numerous achievements in the understanding and prioritization of human development, sustainable development and human rights. In addition, the recent inclusion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that emerged after the 2012 Rio+20 Conference with the continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Post-2015 development agenda is a promising sign. The integrated notion of sustainable human security represents the next stage in global responsibility to building a peaceful, secure, prosperous, and sustainable future for all. It integrates concerns for peace, poverty, pollution and participation with a human-centered perspective.<sup>6</sup> The "Future We Want" documents emerging from the Rio+20, as well as the merging of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the MDGs in the Post-2015 development agenda reaffirmed the need for a sustainable, human centered development approach.

### **The Intersecting Dimensions of Sustainable Human Security**

The following is a brief overview of the four expansions (or four pillars) of the current concept of "Sustainable Human Security":

**Freedom from Fear:**

This is one of the important aspects related to human security. It means freedom from all kinds of violent crimes; drug trafficking, violence and abuse of children and women. On a daily basis, personal safety is of utmost concern to all and constitutes one of the primary responsibilities of local governments. No other aspect of human security is as vital as security from physical violence. Because all people in different parts of the world want to live without fear of others. But majority of them live in a state of anxiety and fear over the pervasive dangers of crime and violence – in the streets, the workplaces and in the home. In the poor nations as well as in rich, peoples' lives are threatened by violence in several forms. These threats take diverse forms: individual criminal actions, intimidation and violence by street gangs, hate crimes, threats against women in the form of rape and domestic violence; children are threaten by child abuse; other groups of people are threatened by ethnic conflicts, crime, street violence. There are threats from other states like war, support for oppressive regimes and threats from one's own state are physical torture, arbitrary arrest and detention.<sup>7</sup> Thus personal security focuses on the principles of freedom from fear, the right to privacy, and tolerance of differences. These psychological needs are perhaps the most fundamental, get elusive conditions necessary for human beings to thrive.

**Freedom from Want:**

It refers to an individual's enjoyment of a basic income, either through gainful employment or from a social safety net. In other words, economic security refers to individual's freedom from want and poverty. Poverty is one of the most crucial problems that limits human freedom and deprives him of dignity. Some of the material and physical manifestation of poverty include hunger, disease, malnutrition, high infant mortality, limited life expectancy, high unemployment and under employment, inadequate housing and high illiteracy.<sup>8</sup> Besides poverty, proper remunerative sustained employment and lack of employment opportunities also include in economic security. Because, three quarters of the world's people do not have secure work. Hence, for economic security, efforts to ensure sustainable livelihood and work based security for all need to be strengthened. In the developing, as well as, in the

industrially more advanced countries, lack of remunerative, sustained employment and employment difficulties may be a matter of life and death. In the industrialised countries, it may lead to psychological anxieties and debilities which threaten individual's health and happiness.<sup>9</sup>

Human security demands better level of living for all the people in all parts of the world. The basic needs of each and everyone should be fulfilled. Because access to land, credit, education and housing especially for poor and women is critical. An equitable distribution of resources is key to economic security. Hence, emphasis is made on efficient and equitable trade arrangements, economic growth reaching the extreme poor and a fair distribution of benefits.

#### **Freedom from Environmental Insecurity:**

Human growth and well-being depend upon a healthy physical environment, which in turn is contingent on freedom from pollution and depletion or exhaustion of renewable and non-renewable resources. Environmental security means integrity of safe water, fresh air and arable land. It also includes freedom from deforestation, desertification and natural disasters. Relationship between the environmental and health and human security are obvious, yet multi-faceted. Today environmental degradation is one of the major problems that are threatening human security. Many people- especially the poor in some of the world's most crowded and marginally productive areas – are affected by: a lack of water for drinking and irrigation; a decline in agricultural production; increased resource scarcity; loss of supportive wildlife; widespread disease from mosquitoes and other pests; declining health; economic losses caused by hurricanes, tornadoes and cyclones; volatility in economic output and trade; and increasing poverty.<sup>10</sup> The threat of environment hazard, such as chemical contaminants crossing borders daily grown constantly, especially with the increasingly speed of transportation. Some kinds of environmental degradation are truly of global concerns, such as global warming and depletion of the Ozone layer. Others are international – acid rain, the state of the oceans, the conditions of rivers that run through several countries. Some are more localized, though they may occur worldwide air pollution,

water pollution, soil degradation etc. Rising temperatures and extreme climate patterns are also having an enormous impact on human security. The harmful impact of these climate extremes on human livelihood and living conditions, combined with heightened competition for scarce resources, has triggered disputes over territory, food and water supplies, social and cultural traditions and tribal and religious differences. Thus environmental security, including the protection of displaced persons that is an essential human right that flows from commitment to human dignity, connectedness with all living being and our responsibility to the earth. <sup>11</sup>

### **Freedom from Hunger:**

It means end of hunger, malnutrition, ensuring healthy diet and life-styles, especially for vulnerable groups, ensuring availability of food entitlement with work and end of famine. The persistence of hunger, despite enough food to go around globally and in the most of the regions and nations, brings up the need for redefining the food security concept. Conventionally, food security is defined as the balance of food supply (mainly cereal supply) and effective demand for food. In composition, food is specified as a basket of commodities consisting of not just calories but a nutritionally balanced diet, as well as a nutrition-effective environment with safe drinking water to minimize wastage arising from waterborne disease, and basic sanitation and an empowering environment with elementary education to inculcate the entitlement right to food security. It recognizes not only physical access or availability, but equally, emphasizes economic access to food or recognizes entitlement to food. The gender-based infra-household discrimination is warded off by ensuring food security to the individual. <sup>12</sup> Nearly about one billion people still live in extreme poverty, 70% of whom are in Africa. Three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas, where food accounts for more than half of a family's spending. Tightening food supplies and rising food demand are now resulting from: Poor harvest; Lack of fresh water and fertile soil; rising prices for seeds and fertilizer; The use of food crops for bio-fuels; rising oil and transportation prices; trade-distorting subsidies an agriculture; and food export restrictions. Food aid, health services and medicinal supplies also decline as the price of food goes up, pushing hundreds of millions into hunger and malnutrition,

economic depression and social unrest. It should be clear by now that water and food, which are essential to life, are human rights reflecting the personal dignity, common needs and well-being of humanity. Thus food security needs to be redefined as livelihood security for the household and all members within, which ensures both physical and economic access to balance diet, safe drinking water, environmental sanitation, primary education and basic health care.<sup>13</sup>

All these dimensions are interlinked and interconnected. For example, health insecurity can lead to poverty, which can further lead to education deficits. Poverty and inequality can both lead to insecurity and conflicts. Thus, the human security concept can be constituted as a space of research that cannot be narrowed, not at least in during the times of paradigm wars. Thresholds and measurements of human security are especially complicated, given the distinction between objective and subjective fear, because security, on any scale, is likely to remain a feeling and because thresholds of tolerance can be different and culture/space/time/circumstances specific. Another area of research is the study of region-specific threats and menaces. Human security, like human development, varies widely along regional lines, thus cannot be understood and applied, but alone politicized, in the same way across all regions. For example, in the Arab world, the major human insecurity issue is not only the lack of political freedom but also military interference by other states. In Africa, food security, conflict and gender inequalities may be the most relatable insecurities. In Latin America, insecurities may stem from the pace of reforms and the changing nature of democracies in the region. In South Asia, given the close connections and integration between the economics, insecurities at the local level are often the result of external shocks such as financial crises, globalization, etc. In Eastern Europe, insecurities resulted from the transition to market economy and democracy. Insecurities in India may be the result of overpopulation. Thus within each region and countries cases may differ from one indicator to another. Within each country, insecurities for communities may also differ. Within each community, people are affected differently according to their entitlements, aspirations, wealth, capacities etc. The notion and frameworks of sustainable human security are helpful to discern international policy priorities for intervention and cooperation because the principles alone are inadequate to obtain and sustain a global human community free from human insecurities due to violence, poverty, marginalization and vulnerability. The development of individual,

organizational and institutional capacities are key for the fulfillment of this global social responsibility of our and future generations. That is why “capacity development”-especially through the shaping and development of appropriate legal, political, economic and social infrastructures – has become the priority of intergovernmental organizations and United Nations specialized agencies like the UNDP, OHCHR, UNHRC, UNEP, UNHCR among others. Building capacity has become an essential strategy for achieving effective, sustainable and human international development. Numerous institutions and organizations engaged in development focus on capacity building in their missions, operations and objectives.<sup>14</sup> Sustainable human security underscores the persistence, interdependence and universality of a set of freedoms which are fundamental to human life. The concept of human security in general, and sustainable human security in particular, provides the necessary integrated framework for addressing the root causes of conflict and human, economic, environmental and social insecurity. Sustainable human security aims at proposing adequate solutions through sustainable peace-building and human rights based sustainable development.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, **Human Development Report (1994)**, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994, pp. 230-36.

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<sup>5</sup> Sanjeev Khagram et.al., “From the Environment and Human Security to Sustainable Security and Development”, **Journal of Human Development**, Vol.4, No.2, July 2003, P.2.

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