

Strengthening Decentralised Governance for Human Security

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Abstract

The human security approach demands a shift from a territorial, militaristic approach to one that focuses on the protection of lives, livelihoods, and dignity of human beings. Today, the greater threats to security are conflict, environmental degradation, and the negative impacts of globalisation such as trafficking of women and children, illegal trade, increased vulnerability, and loss of traditions. Security is traditionally perceived as the preserve of central government agencies to ensure national integration, and efforts to achieve security have used force and control. This has aggravated ethnic conflicts within countries and served as a deterrent to cross-border trade and economic growth in poverty stricken regions. In conflict-prone areas, it is found that weakened decentralised structures and alienation among communities has aggravated insecurity.

Strengthening decentralised structures for human security may take a while to gain political acceptability but needs to be considered seriously as globalisation, and movement of people, information, and businesses across borders are changing traditional security concerns. A number of examples from Africa, Asia, and the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) regions provide valuable lessons in strengthening decentralised governance for human security through local economic development, local monitoring of impact of poverty alleviation and development programs, engagement of communities in dialogue to reduce alienation and conflict, local identification of early warnings of violence and management of resources for poverty reduction. Some lessons from these cases are highlighted to serve as inputs into capacity building initiatives to strengthen decentralised governance for human security and engage civil society in conflict resolution and empowerment of vulnerable groups.

Background

Human security is a powerful new concept complementary to the human development concept. It calls for a move from a territorial-centered perception of security to a human-centered one. The former approach to security depends on the national governments' defence policies and military control of external threats to a nation while the latter depends on

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government policies to address threats internal to a nation such as civil conflict, terrorism, crime, poverty, disease, and unequal access to opportunity and the involvement of all levels of government and civil society. Additional threats to human security include environmental degradation, and negative impacts of globalisation such as increased vulnerability and loss of traditions, trafficking of women and children, and illegal trade.

Human security addresses the protection of people from critical and pervasive threats to their lives, livelihoods, and dignity, including the downside risks of development. Human security covers both conflict and development aspects for peace and sustainable development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are aimed to assuage the threats to development related threats to human security. While some developing countries are making progress in achieving the MDGs, the least developed countries (LDCs) and those affected by conflict are found to be lagging on most goals. The human security approach can improve targeting of the vulnerable and directly address factors increasing vulnerability to poverty, disease, conflict and disempowerment.

Security related to conflict is traditionally perceived as the preserve of central government agencies to ensure national integration, and efforts to achieve security have used force and control. Human security is still an emerging concept — for governments to actively accept and promote a human security approach, a deeper understanding is required of the roles of different levels of government in reducing vulnerability of individuals and communities to the threats to human security. Decentralisation is recommended based on the principle of subsidiarity that recommends that tasks be allotted to different levels of government according to their capacities and potential.

Decentralisation has been widely promoted as a response to:

1. the call for greater regional political freedom, participation and conflict resolution to resolve latent or manifest ethnic conflicts, or marginalisation of minority groups
2. pressures of global competition, as countries or regions within countries make economic progress, resulting in pronounced development of certain regions over others
3. demands for stabilisation and 'opening up' of economies such as those exposed to exogenous shocks and transitional economies
4. demands for greater equity and efficiency in local service delivery (von Braun and Grote 2000).

Strengthening decentralised structures for conflict related aspects of human security may take a while to gain political acceptability but needs to be considered seriously as globalisation, and movement of people, information and businesses across borders are changing traditional security concerns. This paper aims to increase the understanding on the potentials of

decentralised structures in achieving human security. A number of cases from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are reviewed to better comprehend the need and the means to strengthen decentralised governance for human security through local economic development, local monitoring of impact of poverty alleviation and development programs, engagement of communities in dialogue to reduce alienation and conflict, local identification of early warnings of violence, and management of resources for poverty reduction.

The paper is divided into three parts covering the definitions of human security and decentralisation, a framework based on the recent report of the Commission on Human Security, and an analysis based on a review of experience from Africa, Asia, and LAC covering several aspects of human security. The paper concludes with a summary of the discussion, and identification of areas for capacity building to strengthen decentralised governance for human security and engage civil society in conflict resolution and empowerment of vulnerable groups.

Definitions

Human security

The Human Development Report of 1994 was the first to propel the concept of human security into mainstream development discourse with a clarion call for a shift from a 'territorial-centred' concept of security to a 'human-centred' one. This shift came in the wake of burgeoning civil conflict following the end of the cold war, the spread of epidemics like HIV/AIDS, and the negative impacts of globalisation being experienced as increasing income disparities and vulnerability to financial crisis. This report identified seven interrelated and complementary dimensions of human security as: economic security; food security; health security; environmental security; personal security; community security; and political security.

In response to a spate of terrorist attacks at the beginning of the new millennia, the human security concept has gained greater prominence being based on the premise that ensuring security of individuals and communities requires actions beyond military suppression of violence. With the promotion of the MDGs as a major step towards reducing development related insecurity, the case for human security has gained greater momentum. In the report of the UN Secretary General, *In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, prepared for the September 2005 summit to review the progress of the Millennium Declaration, it is stated that "humanity will not enjoy security without development, it will not enjoy development without security, and it will not enjoy either without respect for human rights" (United Nations 2005).

The most current and widely accepted definition of human security is promoted by the UN Commission on Human Security (CHS) in the report *Human Security Now*.

“... to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity” (CHS 2003).

The value of this definition is that it includes the need to strengthen individuals and communities for greater resilience in the face of threat.

Decentralisation

Decentralisation is understood as the:

“Restructuring of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional, and local levels according to the principles of subsidiarity thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance, while increasing the authority and capabilities of sub-national levels” (Work 2002).

Three types of decentralisation — political, administrative, and fiscal; and four forms — devolution, delegation, deconcentration, and divestment, are commonly identified.

Political decentralisation is concerned with transfer of political power and authority to sub-national levels of government often seen as election and empowerment of lower levels of government. Devolution, which involves full transfer of responsibility, decision-making, resources, and revenue generation to an independent and autonomous local level public agency, is considered a form of political decentralisation. This form of decentralisation necessitates the provision of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure accountability and transparency while also demanding links with civil society and community institutions.

Administrative decentralisation involves transfer of decision-making authority, resources, and responsibility for some public services from central to lower levels of government. This often takes place in conjunction with civil-service reform and is implemented as deconcentration, where authority and responsibility is transferred from one level of central government to another, or delegation where the authority and responsibility are transferred to a local unit of government that may not be a branch of the delegating authority (Work 2002).

Fiscal decentralisation is resource reallocation to sub-national levels of government and may include revenue raising and expenditure. Divestment can be seen as a form of decentralisation where planning and administrative authority are transferred from government to voluntary, private, or nongovernmental institutions. The World Bank refers to this as 'market decentralisation' that 'allows functions that had been primarily or exclusively the responsibility of government to be carried out by businesses, community groups, cooperatives, private voluntary associations, and other non-government organisations" (World Bank n.d.).

The sequence of the various types of decentralisation and the forms in which they may be implemented vary according to the need for decentralisation, existing institutional structures, and capacity at lower levels of government.

Framework

While decentralisation has been actively promoted for its virtues as mentioned earlier, it is also recognised that the positive impacts of decentralisation on poverty reduction or service delivery have not been clearly established.

The Department for International Development (DFID) in its key sheets on decentralisation states that decentralisation cannot be a panacea for development and that not all government functions should be decentralised. In weak states, decentralisation could aggravate existing problems when there is no strong central entity to regulate decentralisation and to ensure equitable distribution of resources between unequally endowed regions (DFID n.d.).

The sector guideline on decentralisation prepared by GTZ strongly endorses decentralisation and also highlights the complexity of the process. It is recognised that decentralisation will succeed depending on the nature of the relationship between the state, the market, and the community. As decentralisation demands cross sector coordination and high levels of capacity at all levels of government, it should be seen as a 'long-term, open and evolutionary' process. In addition to sufficient government capacity at all levels, there have to be well developed civil society institutions to ensure the legitimacy of local government action. As decentralisation involves the redistribution of power, it is an inherently conflictive process acerbating existing divisions. Additional issues are elite capture of the benefits of decentralisation and differences between decentralised governance and traditional local institutions (GTZ n.d.).

The impacts of decentralisation on poverty alleviation and social development remain insufficiently discussed and there are few studies on appropriate means to measure the impacts and related indicators. The study by Crook and Sverrisson discusses some conceptual and methodological issues with measuring the performance of decentralisation. They state that measurement of responsiveness and participation needs to be differentiated

from measurement of development impact on the poor as a result of decentralisation (Crook and Sverrisson 2001).

Degree of responsiveness can be understood by comparing popular preferences (obtained through representative surveys and social research) with government policies. These studies have to be specially commissioned. Participation is measured in terms of voting in elections, representation from local communities, formation of advocacy groups lobbying for changes in government policy, and associational membership. However, none of these can correctly indicate the extent of representation of marginalised groups in influencing policy, as often elite capture is observed at the local levels. In terms of community mobilisation too, the creation of 'grassroots institutions' can represent the extent to which the community is participating in democratic processes and indicate the influence of higher levels of government on local elites at the forefront of mobilising local communities (Crook and Sverrisson 2001).

In terms of economic and social impact on the poor, common measures used are increases in economic activity and income of the poor, extent of redistribution of income, improvements in education and health for the poor, and reduction in disparities between rich and poor areas in a country. To establish that the above are the result of decentralisation, the indicator generally used is the level of subnational expenditure on service delivery. This indicator is flawed though — for example the construction of a school does not necessarily benefit the poor if their children are still engaged in economic activity rather than attending school. Decentralised governments are found to spend on infrastructure projects such as roads and schools that are easily identified and appease the local population (Crook and Sverrisson 2001).

To study the implications of decentralisation on human security, this paper explores the tasks and responsibilities of sub-national governments for the seven categories of human security concerns identified by the CHS report *Human Security Now*:

1. Protecting communities in violent conflict
2. Addressing the needs and rights of people on the move
3. Post-conflict reconstruction
4. Ensuring economic security
5. Improving health conditions
6. Developing knowledge, skills, and values for human security
7. Creating a global alliance to give human security the highest priority in the development agenda.

Under each human security concern, the probable implications of decentralisation are explored in terms of political, administrative, and fiscal decentralisation as seen from experience throughout the developing world. The factors influencing these cases are also

identified to offer some lessons for building capacity at lower levels of government to enhance human security. The first and third concerns related to violent conflict and post-conflict reconstruction are looked at jointly as they form a continuum. An outline of UNCRD's Human Security Programme highlights the sixth and seventh concerns of developing knowledge, skills, and values for human security, and creating a global alliance to promote human security in the development agenda. Conclusions are drawn in terms of the most significant issues that emerge in terms of building capacity in subnational levels of government for human security.

Protecting people from violent conflict and post-conflict reconstruction

Some of the key factors that cause violent internal conflict are:

- competition over land and resources between groups of different ethnicity or religious background
- sudden and deep political and economic transitions
- growing inequality among people and communities in terms of access to services and opportunities for economic advancement
- increasing crime, corruption and illegal activities such as trafficking of drugs and human beings
- weak and instable political regimes and institutions
- identity politics and historical legacies, such as colonialism (CHS 2003).

The victims of the conflict are generally the poor, those without resources or stripped of resources by stronger groups, women and children. Women and children are additionally vulnerable as they lose protection and livelihoods as well are subject to rape and prostitution creating serious insecurity.

When violent conflict erupts in a country, the central government generally suppresses it with military force. The role of lower levels of government however, is important at all stages of conflict — before, during, and after. Conflict occurs between different ethnic or religious groups of which one may be dominant and have greater representation in the local government. It is found that decentralised government without clauses for representation for minorities may reinforce the dominance of one group and ethnic politics can be used to manipulate and grab development outcomes. In the worst case, decentralisation polarises groups of different ethnicity or religion while in the best case, it creates political space for minorities.

Where communities of different religious or ethnic background are economically and socially integrated through business and participation in local institutions, the potential for violent conflict is found to be lower. Varshney in his study on Hindu–Muslim conflict in riot-prone and riot-averse cities in India found that in the former, the two communities shared little economic

and social space while in the latter economic and social activities were highly integrated and joint patrolling of areas was undertaken to avoid inter-communal violence (CHS 2003).

In a federal structure, de-concentration can be used to further the national agenda and dominate over the local population as in northeast India where secessionist forces are active. In Bosnia and Sri Lanka, decentralisation to ethnically exclusive areas (created through ethnic cleansing in Bosnia) has not reduced separatist pressures or created democracy (IDS n.d.).

In addition to security and resource gaps, the CHS report, *Human Security Now*, identifies governance gaps in the process for post-conflict reconstruction as follows:

- The perception of peace-building as a 'top-down' process, most often led and imposed by outside actors rather than as a process to be owned by national institutions and people
- Insufficient attention given to building national and local civil society and communities or to learning from their capacities and expertise
- A strong focus on national elections with few follow up actions to strengthen governance and democratisation
- Measures to ensure the coexistence of divided communities and the building of trust (CHS 2003).

The National Human Development Report 2004 for Afghanistan studies the issues in strengthening governance for human security in a post-conflict situation. The potentials and constraints are clearly recognised. In this situation, central government remains weak, and decentralisation is hoped to improve service delivery using local institutions including traditional organisations. It is also realised that decentralisation can "generate, re-ignite or intensify power struggles, thus leading to further chaos or conflict." Decentralisation can work to strengthen post-conflict reconstruction if mechanisms are in place for accountability and to counter abuse of power, corruption, and elite capture. Strong civil society and active participation of the people are essential for this but again, the lack of a "culture of participation" especially in post-conflict situations where social institutions have broken down is a major constraint (UNDP 2004).

The role of civil society in conflict mediation will depend upon the nature of the dominant political forces.

"Whether civil society becomes a guarantor of a democratic, constitutional order depends upon which elements within it predominate. In Bosnia, ethnic nationalist parties have continually sabotaged attempts to reach democratic accommodation amongst rival groups, whereas in Uganda they have been unable to do so. The factors that determine whether 'pro-democratic' elements in civil society become dominant include the character of the ruling political parties and the design of the state

(e.g. whether administrative areas are delimited on ethnic criteria, and the autonomy of decentralised authorities)” (IDS n.d.).

Early warning systems maintained by local governments and civil society can ensure early intervention to control escalation of conflict. In the conflict affected areas of Sri Lanka, the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) is monitoring data on missing persons, assault, extortion of money, civil unrest, protests, strikes, landmines, attacks and killings by unknown persons, kidnappings, grenade attacks, confrontation between security and the LTTE, harassment of civilians by security or the LTTE, recruitment of child soldiers, abductions and torture in custody. Timely dissemination of this information is contributing to reduction of violence in the conflict, <http://www.humanitarian-srilanka.org/Situation_Report/index.php>.

In Rwanda, FAST (German acronym for ‘Early Analysis of Tensions and Fact-finding’) has set up a political early warning system for early identification of impending armed conflict and political crisis situations. Their risk assessment identifies sources of disputes at the local level related to land, which are reported to the district administrators. Unfortunately, when local government itself is polarised between ethnic groups a volatile situation can arise. For example, in Ahmedabad, India a right wing Hindu fundamentalist local government is alleged to have disclosed records of Muslims residents helping the rioters to identify and attack them during the communal conflagration in February 2002.

In Cambodia, it is found that traditional pagoda associations and women’s groups have played an important role in improving local governance, and ensuring peace and stability in the post-conflict phase of the country. The traditional pagoda associations are among the few institutions in Cambodian society that survived the political and social turmoil of the Khmer Rouge regime and continue to enjoy the trust of local people. This gives them legitimacy in local planning and rebuilding of shattered communities (Pellini 2004). The role of local traditional institutions and leaders based on clans or religion is important in achieving improved understanding between conflicting communities and strengthening decentralised governance. Traditional and religious leaders have been found to either foment hate or work towards reconciliation of differing groups (Jackson 2005).

The struggle for power between political parties has characterised the post-conflict phase of Cambodia during the past fifteen years and this struggle has used violence and intimidation. Although few women attain positions of power in Cambodia, some women’s groups, such as Women for Prosperity (WfP), are active in creating links between the parties for dialogue and peaceful resolution of issues. The Center for Social Development has tirelessly advocated for legislation on corruption and increased accountability in governance (McGrew et al. 2004).

The protection and empowerment of women in violent conflict and post-conflict reconstruction is of extreme importance as they are the worst victims of the violence. In Rwanda, in the reconstruction, a concerted effort has been made to enable women to participate in all levels of government resulting in women holding nearly half of the parliamentary seats following the elections in 2003. Both at national and grassroots levels, Rwandan women have contributed to the post-genocide recovery and reconciliation. As in Cambodia, women in government have generated mechanisms to work across party and ethnic lines, and strengthen partnerships with civil society (Powley 2003).

Killick et al. explore the role of local businesses in peace-building and finds that the private sector is often maligned and an underestimated and underused peace-building actor. As illicit resource exploitation is often the root of a conflict, there is a high level of awareness on the negative role of the private sector as a generator of conflict to gain control over resources such as diamond mining in Angola and Sierra Leone or cocaine in Colombia. Control of land and resources by big business and corruption in government monitoring agencies are seen as critical contributors to conflict. The first step is to understand the diversity of the private sector ranging from small traders to larger national and transnational companies, and the variety of interests that are generated to resolve conflicts (Killick 2005).

Business can have a major interest in peace when violence disrupts economic activities and influential business leaders can be champions for the peace building process. In addition to their capacity to influence political leadership is their role in employment generation where jobs engage conflicting groups to work together. This, combined with a more conscious social role in targeting the most vulnerable, can enhance the peace process as has been demonstrated in South Africa, which resulted in a dramatic shift in the way business was conducted following the breakdown of apartheid.

People on the move

People on the move include those who move between and within countries. In 2000, nearly three per cent of the world's population — 175 million people — was identified as international migrants. This figure doubled since 1975. The number of refugees constituted nine per cent of the international migrants amounting to 16 million people. The movement within borders is much higher than that between borders. Among these, the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are among the most vulnerable being victims of conflict, violence, disasters, or eviction as an outcome of development projects.

While migration generally improves economic opportunities, in the early stages, migrants lack assets and can become more vulnerable. Illegal migrants, who constitute 15 per cent of all migrants, are more vulnerable as they lack proper documentation and tend to be manipulated by criminals. Migration has positive outcomes on human security where improvements

income and remuneration to economically depressed populations in the country of origin are found to have reduced vulnerability. Migrant worker remittances represent the second largest international monetary trade flow, exceeded only by petroleum (\$100 billion in 2000, nearly twice the ODA of \$51 billion). Migrants also provide a valuable source of semi-skilled and unskilled labor to many industrialising countries and provide a source of highly skilled labour to advanced countries.

Among illegal migrants are persons trafficked to serve as cheap labour or in the sex trade. Women and children are the worst affected by trafficking. In recent years, there has been an explosive growth in irregular migration, trafficking, and crime. These illegal migrants need protections against exploitation and in their 'dirty, dangerous and demanding' jobs. Women are increasingly on the move as domestic workers, cheap labour, entertainers and in the sex trade. In addition to exploitation and lack of assets, migrants are vulnerable to xenophobia. Recently, terrorism has become a major concern worldwide and the links to transnational migration and criminal networks has constrained even legal venues for migration. With increased mobility of people, rapid spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, SARS and bird flu has become more likely.

Therefore, the CHS has called for steps towards the orderly and safe movement of people that includes more opportunities for migration and burden sharing among countries. Strategies to combat trafficking and smuggling of persons are necessary. Traditionally, pressure has been put on the country or origin of trafficked persons but increasingly the responsibility of the host country is being recognised. Better policing at the sub-national levels and local control of crime can decrease such illegal activities. In the Philippines and Thailand, NGOs are active in identifying victims of trafficking and creating awareness on their vulnerability. Remedial actions in the form of creation of sustainable livelihoods and local economic development are necessary to reduce risky movements of people.

Of all populations on the move, refugees are the most vulnerable suffering from loss to lives and livelihoods, living under the threat of violence and lacking stability in their country of origin as well as the host country. When dealing with the refugee problem, several human security concerns arise:

1. Guaranteeing security of refugees
2. Controlling spillover of conflicts into country of asylum
3. Integrating refugees into host countries
4. Reintegrating refugees into country of origin
5. Increasing the productive capacity of refugees in addition to humanitarian needs
6. Control of armed conflict within refugee camps.

Local governments are generally responsible for providing services to refugees and their integration into the local community. Sufficient preparation is needed in the host community as during periods of resource shortage, the host community resents the presence of refugees causing conflict. There is also host fatigue when the refugee population exceeds the capacity of the local government as is happening in northwestern Pakistan where the constant influx of refugees from Afghanistan has severely burdened the local population. Local governments are often not familiar with or are not allowed to undertake procedures related to refugee documentation and provision of services.

Refugee camps tend to be volatile places, and local police need to be aware and trained to control violence when it occurs. Often large external donations result in local manipulation of goods designated for the consumption of the refugees. In Sierra Leone, large-scale exploitation of women refugees occurred where provisions were allocated in exchange for sexual favors with the threat of violence.

IDPs in Colombia constitute the country's most serious humanitarian and social problem. Since the mid 1980s, nearly three million persons have been displaced as a result of the social and armed conflict with additional negative impacts on neighbouring countries. Colombia's IDPs are additionally vulnerable, as they belong to marginalised Afro-Colombian or Indigenous groups and have a high proportion of women headed households.

In 1997, the Colombian government promulgated Law 387 to prevent displacement and provide IDPs with assistance and protection. Enforcing the legislation however, was constrained by the lack of proper procedures to deal with the registration of the multiple kinds of land tenure systems co-existing in the country (such as owners with legal titles, possession without title, individual ownership, and collective ownership). The law required municipalities with a risk of displacement to register the properties of the potentially affected population — a task for which the capacity did not exist.

A joint project was recently undertaken by the Colombian government and the World Bank to increase capacity for implementation of the legislation at the subnational level of government. The approach was: participative, involving government, non-government organisations (NGOs) and the affected communities; partnership-oriented, as alliances were built with different sectors to prevent further displacement and to reduce the impacts on IDPs; and sensitive to the cultural diversity. Consensus was built between government, the Church, NGOs and the community during planning and implementation to gain their commitment and participation (World Bank 2004).

Where IDPs have to be protected at their new locations, several measures need to be taken to provide basic assets and integrate them into the host community. This is constrained by

inadequate resources, unwillingness or inability of the host community to accommodate new persons, and corruption. There is possibility of assimilation when there are pre-existing social networks in the host community.

Economic security

There are two dimensions to economic security — one related to reducing insecurities caused by chronic poverty and the other to using economic development and security as a means to bring peace to a region. The first MDG addresses the former.

The role of decentralisation in reducing chronic poverty through increased participation of pro-poor groups in local government to influence policy and decisions regarding pro-poor programs, and improved services for the poor has been emphasised for the last two decades. It is believed that participatory local governments are in a better position to assess needs at the local level, monitor and control development of local communities, and provide more responsive services. Elected local governments may also be more accountable to the community and inclusive of the poor in decision and policy-making. When given greater autonomy, local governments can stimulate economic development that makes best use of local resources.

Uganda has made a conscious effort to address the above. The *Local Government Act 1997* increased the responsibilities and resources assigned to local councils through grants for basic services and infrastructure. This increase has enabled the local governments to provide services and infrastructure for the poor. Participatory decision-making as well as upward accountability to the central government has improved. However, the extent of local choice in decisions on spending remains limited, participation is difficult for marginal groups, and there are widespread concerns about corruption (Devas and Grant 2005). In the Philippines, some local governments have been able to make progress in poverty reduction by better addressing the needs of the poor through partnership with civil society actors.

When it comes to increasing economic security in areas affected by conflict, the challenges are multiple as there is a destruction of economic activities, livelihoods, infrastructure, and social capital coupled with a larger presence of vulnerable groups. The StopGap Programme in Sierra Leone is cited as a successful example where 6000 ex-combatants were rehabilitated through provision of labour-intensive work opportunities along with community members for rebuilding of community infrastructure. In conflict-affected areas, rebuilding economic security through local initiatives is promoted by linking security with development, improved identification and targeting of the vulnerable, building of civil society capacity, ensuring community security and confidence building, and dealing with armed violence.

As mentioned earlier, the roots of violence often lie in inequitable or unfair access to resources. In the case of conflicts related to natural resources such as forests, land, and water, decentralisation has been recommended to increase equitable access to the resources and their preservation. In the case of land, agrarian reforms have been the key to poverty reduction. In Zimbabwe, currently fraught with land-related conflicts, the dominance of the central government to the extent of excluding the rural district committees (RDCs), non-state actors and civil society institutions has slowed down the progress of agrarian reform. Particularly, the RDCs need to be strengthened and empowered for democratic decision making, given capacity to set practical goals and link agrarian reform with securing rural livelihoods, and given financial sustainability through revenue collection. Also, measures for accountability and checks and balances need to be put in place (Ndlovu and Mufema 2003). In the Philippines, the establishment of the Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) has expedited the agrarian reform process and links with productivity enhancement has reduced poverty. Strong local government initiatives and participation of the civil society and private sector have contributed to the success (Reyes 2002).

With water and forests, joint resource management with the participation of the community is being widely promoted. While the rationale for decentralisation is undoubtedly sound, the practice has been challenged by decentralisation posing a threat to webs of vested interests, corruption, and domination by select groups. Larson in her study on democratic decentralisation in the forestry sector observes that democratic decentralisation is rarely implemented and that a large share of decision-making powers, resources and benefits from forests remain centralised. Moreover, the local actors tend to be local elites who are neither representative nor accountable. Decentralisation can even be harmful to poor local people without their empowerment in dialogue and the process of resource management. Decentralisation of natural resource management needs to start with building on the institutions that they have already existed, and through representative and accountable local governments (Larson 2004).

Health for human security

Health security can be achieved through reduced vulnerability to disease and increased access to health services. To reduce vulnerability to disease, the spread of infectious diseases needs to be controlled while also access to basic services such as water and sanitation needs to be improved. Access to health services is essential to cure disease as well as to reduce infant and maternal mortality which are high in many developing countries particularly in the remote areas. Health services include both curative and preventive strategies.

Decentralisation of the health sector has been rigorously promoted in most countries to ensure easier access to services by local communities through increases in the resources

being used for health, more efficient use of existing resources to provide the health services most needed at the local level, and changes in the mix of services at the local level for greater impacts on health.

A significant amount of research has been undertaken on the impacts of decentralisation on provision of health services. The results are mixed and studies find that decentralisation with insufficient planning or capacity building in the local agencies cannot provide the expected results. In Uganda, decentralisation of the health sector has been undertaken since a decade and it is found that the emphasis has shifted from provision of primary health care to curative care. This is attributed to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and shifts in donor priorities. This has negatively impacted the immunisation program with long-term implications on vulnerability to disease. Yet, local planners are responding to local preferences for services exactly as envisaged but these preferences may not correspond to the national policy. In the early stages of decentralisation, the process focussed on administrative decentralisation by creation of new posts at the district level with limited accountability to central ministries. At a later stage, fiscal decentralisation took place through devolution to the district governments (Hutchinson et al. 2003).

Uganda's health sector is seen as a success story and the key factors are identified as:

- sufficient time allowed to develop relationships between stakeholders for realistic planning
- well developed health sector strategic plan based on a sound national health policy
- administrative decentralisation followed by fiscal decentralisation
- earmarking of funds
- provision of additional technical assistance to the Ministry of health
- recognition that change takes time and continued support and commitment of donors (Hutton 2004).

In Thailand, the success of the HIV/AIDS control program is attributed to strong central government initiatives. HIV/AIDS prevention and alleviation efforts have been undertaken by mobilising the national, provincial, district, and local levels, government agencies, non-government organisations, business sector, community-based organisations and groups of people living with HIV/AIDS. The program has administered and implemented prevention and alleviation programs under the auspices of the National AIDS Prevention and Control Committee. Through wider participation of all sectors in the effort, Thailand has been able to contain the HIV/AIDS epidemic to a considerable extent.¹

In general, with decentralisation of the health sector, the following concerns remain:

¹ See the *National Plan for the Prevention and Alleviation of HIV/AIDS in Thailand 2002–2006*, viewed June 2005, <<http://www.aidsthai.org/download/PlanAIDS02061.doc>>.

1. Matching local action with national policy and local needs
2. Ensuring that privatisation does not result in less attention to primary health care and diseases of the poor
3. Building capacity at the local level — doctors and health workers
4. Ensuring appropriate generation and use of local resources — bulk of finances are used to pay salaries leaving little for implementation of health programs and improvement of health facilities
5. Involving the community for greater awareness on disease spread and control, basic sanitation and child and maternal care.

Knowledge, skills and values for human security

Education is emphasised in the MDGs, especially for women. The lack of education increases vulnerability, as it limits the opportunities for earning a livelihood, receiving entitlements, and protection. While increasing access to basic education is being stressed on the one hand, increased access to the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) is being stressed on the other to increase people's opportunities to emerge from poverty worldwide. Vocational skills and knowledge sharing are also important to further economic development. ICTs have a potential to hasten the achievement of the MDGs through wider dissemination of information reaching previously marginalised groups.

Human security deals with developmental and conflict-related threats. The lack of information is a major constraint to economic and social development, making the right to information one of the basic human rights. Moreover, while a lot of information is documented and even circulated on the internet converting into knowledge that is useful for a local community to develop economically, link it to the outer world and protect itself from threats is an additional task.

Recently, the Indian Ocean tsunami demonstrated how the lack of adequate and timely information resulted in the huge impact of the disaster on human lives and livelihoods for a number of countries in the South Asian region. Poor and biased information is known to feed conflict. The case of the Rwandan genocide that used the radio to transmit hate propaganda and incite killings is an example. Worldwide terror networks are making use of the Internet and modern technology to spread the culture of hate and violence.

Decentralisation of education services are purported to better respond to the local needs and demands. However, as in the case of health services, greater local spending on education can occur only when resources are allocated to this sector. Quality of education is an additional concern where what is imparted must be useful for the betterment of the people.

While there is not much documentation on how decentralisation can spread the knowledge, skills, and value for human security, a strong case has been built for the use of ICTs to strengthen decentralised governance through wide dissemination of information on government entitlements, improve service delivery, increase interaction between government and citizens, spread relevant knowledge for development, and document and preserve indigenous knowledge. Cases that have been doing this at a small scale abound. In Mexico, the e-local project is increasing public access to information related to local government activity in the federal, state and even municipal levels. This increases the responsiveness of government structures to respond to problems and improve public services. Widespread dissemination of information is being used to demand higher levels of accountability in government.

In 2001, the municipality of Ipatinga began using the Internet to extend, enhance and diversify the process whereby citizens voted on priorities and budgetary allotments for local projects. Through the municipality's website, citizens register their priorities and track public project delivery. This resulted in a three-fold increase in the numbers of citizens giving inputs into the budgeting priorities, and also helped draw younger participants into the process. Interestingly, even citizens without much education are using this website for inclusion of their demands. This has increased participation and social control in the process.

Promoting human security in the development agenda

The concept of human security complements that of human development by ensuring that the benefits of development reach the most vulnerable groups and that the downside risks of development and the impacts of conflict are addressed to ensure security to the lives and livelihoods of individuals and communities.

In this section, UNCRD's efforts towards integrating human security into the development agenda are discussed. UNCRD is currently endeavoring to integrate the human security concept into local and regional (sub-national) development through practical applications. Defining human security as the removal or reduction of vulnerability to economic, environmental, social and cultural threats that undermine sustainable development of communities, the goal of UNCRD's Human Security Group (HS Group) is to increase human security for the sustainable development of vulnerable communities by:

1. mainstreaming human security concerns into development policy and local/regional development planning
2. building capacity to incorporate human security into local development planning
3. increasing opportunities for the inclusion of the most vulnerable communities (poorest women, Indigenous groups, resettled communities, etc.) into mainstream economic and social development.

The activities of the HS Group arise from UNCRD's mandate to provide research, training, and advisory services for regional (sub-national) development and the imperative to contribute to the commitments of the Social Summit and the Social Summit +5 as well as to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI).

Seven interrelated project areas are identified to achieve the goal of the HS Group:

1. Human security assessments as inputs into development policies and regional/local planning. The human security concept is seen as integral to achieving and sustaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It ensures that ongoing development efforts include the most vulnerable groups, and that mechanisms are established at different levels, national, provincial, and local — within government and civil society — to protect communities from threats to their sustainable development. Human security also responds to the negative impacts of globalisation such as the increased vulnerability of individuals and communities to financial crises, widening gaps between the rich and the poor, and the social breakdown and cultural erosion caused by resettlement, conflict, migration and rapidly changing lifestyles.

Over the past five years, UNCRD has undertaken joint research and capacity building activities to integrate a human security orientation in local and regional (sub-national) development with governmental and nongovernmental agencies at the central, provincial, and local levels in five countries in the Asia-Pacific Region. The current focus is on Cambodia and Sri Lanka, where human security is challenged by the aftermath of civil war, environmental degradation, and chronic poverty. While Cambodia is additionally challenged by weak governance and institutions as the country painstakingly rebuilds itself, Sri Lanka has been among the hardest hit by the devastating tsunami of December 2004.

2. Training on the human security concept, assessment methods, and tools to reduce vulnerability. While creating awareness for addressing human security at the national level, it is also essential to develop a human security orientation in implementing plans and development programs at the regional (sub-national) and local levels. UNCRD has developed training modules on human security for this purpose. This contributes to the JPOI by increasing capacity for the preparation and implementation of poverty reduction strategies.

Thematic training on human security focuses on teams combining policymakers and practitioners from developing countries to create awareness on the significance of human security and ensure support for introducing a human security orientation in ongoing development initiatives. The Human Security Module in the international training courses creates awareness on the significance of the human security concept and introduces

participants to methods and tools to integrate human security into local development and the action plans prepared during the course. Country-specific training is designed according to identification of local human security concerns through technical assistance in assessing human security in a region through vulnerability and capacity assessments and integrating the results of the assessments in training initiatives for regional and local development planning.

3. Decentralised governance and participatory planning for human security. Capacity building is undertaken at the provincial and district levels for translation of national policy guidelines into relevant programs for local development. Joint participatory action research is undertaken to understand the constraints in decentralisation at different levels of government and to design training strategies to address them. Engaging policymakers provides support for dissemination of ideas to all levels of government. Enhancing collaboration between governmental and nongovernmental agencies enables a mutually supportive learning approach and the opportunity to move from confrontation to consolidation of joint development efforts through proper identification of roles and responsibilities. This increases accountability, particularly downward accountability, to target communities. Means to engage the community using participatory planning techniques is encouraged.

Strengthening vertical and horizontal linkages, and team building between the various government agencies allows for sharing of information and minimising overlaps and duplication of efforts. Decentralisation requires that linkages between higher and lower levels of government be strengthened and function according to the principle of subsidiarity. However, institutional memories take time and effort to overcome. UNCRD makes effort to strengthen linkages between different levels of government. Training with lower levels of government is linked directly to the outputs — the plans for the region. South–South collaboration encourages sharing of experience in decentralisation through exposure visits and special training sessions by local experts. This approach is in accordance with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) 2002.

4. Sustainable livelihoods. Communities with sustainable livelihoods are able to emerge from poverty and maintain an informal safety-net mechanism when subject to shocks triggered by a financial crisis, environmental destruction, or conflict as well as to chronic problems such as illness, death of the breadwinner, indebtedness, social oppression, and seasonal variations in vulnerability.

Sustainable livelihoods are a valuable means to ensure human security with the potential to address several dimensions of vulnerability. Emphasis is laid on mobilisation of the

community, in particular women, and expanding women's livelihoods. Best practices in the region are used for exchange of experience through South–South cooperation.

5. Asset base protection and improvement (focus on natural resources, social assets, and access to finance). The lives and livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in rural and remote areas are directly dependent on the natural resource base. Destruction of the natural resource base, including land, water and forest, is seriously threatening human security. Several chronic conflicts are rooted in the degradation and skewed use of natural resources that are the principal source of life, livelihood and cultural identity of communities. During crisis, the maintenance of diversity of species and products serves as buffers to shocks caused by the vagaries of the market and the environment. Adequate natural resource management is a vital concern for sustainable development and human security.

The move towards decentralised, participatory, local management of natural resources in the past two decades has highlighted the important role of the community as a unit for natural resource management. In many countries, the failures of centralised control of natural resources and forfeiture of communities' critical assets to their livelihoods have resulted in marginalisation and impoverishment of local communities.

6. Use of Information and communication technologies (ICTs) for social inclusion and empowerment. Access to ICTs is more than provision of technology and hardware to a community. It entails undertaking an assessment of information needs of the community, an understanding of existing communication systems and their inherent strengths and flaws in providing information to the weakest, training of the community to use the ICTs effectively and participate in content creation for their benefit, and preparation of the local governments for the changes wrought by a move to e-government and greater dissemination of information.

The introduction of ICTs induces social change and demands institutional reform with communities being empowered with greater information and increased accountability being demanded from local governments. Therefore, a two-pronged approach is adopted for this project area:

- i. Empowering poor communities with the use of ICTs for their social and economic development
- ii. Increasing capacity in local governments to adapt to e-government and greater inclusion of weakest groups in the planning processes.

This is done through documentation of projects successfully using ICTs for development of poor groups, South–South cooperation on exchange of experience, and provision of

training on uses of ICTs for development targeting intermediaries in the local government and the community.

7. Access to basic services — water supply and sanitation. Human security for millions of people is compromised by poor access to basic services, in particular water supply and sanitation. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) stressed the need to ensure drastic improvements in provision of water supply and sanitation. It is realised that even where there is expansion of services, it is the poorest and the most marginalised groups located in illegal settlements or in remote rural areas that are often neglected.

UNCRD has been providing training on improving access to basic services, and efforts are now being made to combine training activities with ongoing projects that provide water supply and sanitation to the most vulnerable and marginalised communities. These activities are especially important in transitional economies where few mechanisms exist to empower the poor and mainstream their concerns. Joint efforts involving local governments, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and community-based organisations (CBOs) are found to be most successful worldwide. In the least-developed countries (LDCs) with insignificant history of community mobilisation and low intervention of NGOs, much needs to be done in mobilising the communities, and building capacity in local governments to address the needs of the poorest groups.

Conclusions

Human security deals with conflict and development-related threats to lives and livelihoods of individuals and communities. This approach calls for a major shift in the perception of security from a territorial focus to a human focus. Several countries face increased vulnerability caused by conflict, disasters, environmental degradation, poverty, epidemics and negative outcomes of globalisation. The human security approach can help the threats to development.

This paper looks at the role of decentralised governance in enhancing human security along the priority areas identified by the CHS report *Human Security Now*. The role of local government is found to be significant in conflict-affected areas and post-conflict reconstruction. The strengthening of local institutions can provide a forum for peace where conflicting parties are given sufficient political space without domination by one group. The experience shows manipulation of local conflict and development outcomes by local elites. This can be countered by strong civil society and measures for accountability. After conflict, the culture of participation is destroyed and rebuilding it is a challenge. Innovative measures in rebuilding infrastructure involving conflicting parties and engagement of the private sector offer solutions.

People on the move — migrants (legal and illegal), refugees, victims of trafficking, and IDPs are among the most vulnerable populations due to their lack of assets and exposure to

exploitation and crime. Women and children are worst affected. Local governments receiving these groups of people need additional capacity to provide appropriate services and integrate them into host communities as well as better policing to monitor negative aspects such as violence and conflict. The countries of origin of populations on the move need to enhance local economic development to discourage risky movements and rehabilitate returning populations. The participation of the civil society is essential.

Decentralisation for improved health and education services is discussed. A review of the experience indicates the need for a match between national policy and local choices made in respond to the local demand to ensure that the wider public good is addressed. Commitment in terms of resources to increase spending on services by local governments is important. Sufficient capacity is essential in the local governments to undertake additional responsibilities for planning and implementing development programs previously undertaken by the state. Measures for accountability and increased empowerment of the marginalised are important to avoid elite capture and improve targeting of the poor. The use of ICTs to further the MDGs and also to strengthen decentralised government is important as these can become valuable tools in increasing accountability in the government, and interactions between the community and the government.

Human security needs to be mainstreamed in the development agenda to address the vulnerable and the downside risks of development. UNCRD is active in promoting human security in the development agenda through dissemination of knowledge on practical application of the concept and strengthening of capacity at the sub-national levels of government in addressing this concept and applying it to ongoing development programs.

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