

## **Implementing Human Security:**

### **Japanese perspective through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security**

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#### Introduction

Recently, at the 9th Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network held in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 17-18 May 2007 (Takahasu, 2007), the Japanese representative acclaimed in his remarks that human security has been gaining increasingly wide support both inside and outside the United Nations. At the same time, however, he expressed his concerns on some tendency to let the discussions on human security be absorbed by definitional differences. Besides, emerging academic initiatives to support specific research on Human Security have placed special emphasis on looking at the

actual reaches of its approach once applied, as seen in the papers published in the Human Security Journal of the CERI Program for Peace and Human Security at Sciences Po in France, and in the conferences like the one this paper was prepared for. Lack of concrete actions/results applying the human security concept could be quickly evidenced through a bird-eye bibliographical revision on the theme: most of the debate has been concerned on the appropriateness of the principles supporting human security, with the possible interests lurking behind its promotion and international law concerns, while almost no academic articles scrutinize actual experiences in the field (Paris, 2001; Duffield & Waddell, 2006; Amayouel, 2006).

Currently, one of the major supporters of projects that apply human security is the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), whose objective is to advance the operational impact of the human security concept while promoting multi-sectoral and inter-agency integration. Projects are distributed globally, with priority given to countries and regions where the insecurities of people are most critical and pervasive, such as the least developed countries (LDC's) and countries in conflict (UNOCHA, n.d. b). Hereinafter, the paper presents an analysis of the principles behind the trust fund and its position inside the human security context, followed by the experience of the flagship project supported by the UNTFHS to stabilize refugee host

communities in Northwestern Tanzania, in order to look for practical implications of the concept. The description of the case study are based on a lecture by and an interview with Mr. Shigeki Komatsubara, Country Program Adviser of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Developed Program (UNDP), conducted in November 2006, during which he expressed his personal views and insights on the background situations in the country as well as some comments on the experience of the project. This work had not been possible without his help and support.

#### Japan and the UNTFHS

As well-recognized by the international community, Japan's view on human security is centered on *freedom from want* (MOFA, 2007; Bosold & Werthes, 2005; Garcia, 2007). Such stance entails a comprehensive view on those issues which support development or are sources of vulnerability and instability before conflict or in post-conflict situations. The range of these issues – including health, environment, education, food and income, among others – as well as the challenges ahead are depicted in the report entitled “Human Security Now” by the Commission on Human Security (CHS), which was established with the initiative of the Government of Japan and co-chaired by Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees and

Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

However, the developmental posture of Japan does not ignore the perils addressed in *freedom from fear*: it relies on the existent institutions in the territory in question to invigorate the top-down protection, while it is expected that orienting efforts to individuals and their communities would ensure the bottom-up empowerment necessary to balance the equation - in other words, to achieve human security. This view of the human security concept concentrates on conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, without being bogged down by the difficult issue of justifying international intervention in internal conflicts, which is the principal reason for the controversy around human security among the international community. Especially, the emphasis is placed on the vacuum created in the post-conflict recovering regions when humanitarian help ends and developmental cooperation is yet to arrive - the phenomenon called in the international cooperation jargon as “the gap” (CHS, 2003).

Launched by Japanese government and the UN Secretariat in 1999, the UNTFHS has been the primordial mechanism to promote the operationalization of the broad understanding of human security. As of February 2007, the UNTFHS has funded more than 170 projects all over the world with financial contributions of US\$ 297 millions, which, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, makes it “one of the

largest of its kind established in the UN” (MOFA, 2007, 5). In order to be eligible for funding, projects should fulfill various requirements spelled out in the Guidelines of the trust fund. These criteria were developed and revised by the Advisory Board for Human Security (ABHS), and are basically in line with the recommendations of the CHS report, adding emphasis on: prioritizing geographical areas; addressing vulnerable groups; and advancing in multi-sectoral and inter-agency approaches. It is important to note that the requirements of “dealing with multiple threats on the ground” and “inter-agency work” were incorporated only in the current version of the Guidelines issued in December 2005. Therefore, data on the new generation of projects are just recently becoming available. Analysis on such data should provide information about added value generated by the revision and its impacts in the field. Keizo Takemi, Vice Minister of Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan, also emphasized the importance of learning lessons from UNTFHS projects to gain deeper understanding of Human Security approach in his paper entitled “Japan’s Human Security Contribution through the United Nations and Other International Organizations” which was prepared for a symposium organized by the United Nations Foundation in October 2006 in Japan. Among those projects, the ongoing work in Northwestern Tanzania, which is presented as a case study below, is considered the flagship.

## Filling the Gap

Tanzania is regarded as one of the most generous countries toward refugees. Despite its economical situation, the country unconditionally received displaced people from neighboring countries, permitted the installation of refugee camps and even offered in 1983 citizenship to those who wished for it (UNHCR, 1997). However, a turning point came in 1995, when 50,000 fleeing Rwandans were stopped at the Tanzanian border by the army and were asked to stay away. In that moment, the country was already hosting 500,000 refugees, with local population being outnumbered 3 to 1, and the impacts of the refugee settlements on the environment and on host communities' livelihood were notorious (UNHCR, 1997). That phenomenon is called 'host country fatigue' and has been receiving important attention from the international community because it is regarded as a hidden burden of the refugee issues.

Support in host communities has traditionally been of a humanitarian profile, yet expectations of local people are quite dissimilar to emergency and relief aid. Host communities are far from wealthy and have their own sources of vulnerability: illicit arms proliferation, crime and gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS epidemics and their impact on economic performance, education, health, and social integration in general.

However, because of the emergency attention needed to confront refugee situation, these communities have been left out of the developmental cooperation. Burdened also by the pressure on resources put by refugee camps, the risk of host population falling into a conflict situation is increasing, menacing to intensify vulnerability.

That is the context in which the project is being implemented by UNDP together with FAO, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR and UNIDO. The project started in April 2005, aiming to bridge the gap between humanitarian actions and development for these vulnerable populations of Northwestern Tanzania. A closer look at its strategies, that made the application of the human security approach in the UNTFHS Guidelines possible to this particular situation, offers a good opportunity to link theory and practice in order to analyze implications of the concept once applied.

### Focusing on People

In addressing the situation described above, the first challenge was to properly design actions in order to cope with the core menaces - in other words, to identify the most pressing issues expressed by the community, to analyze how those issues were interlinked, and to jointly propose strategies that alleviate the existent tensions and lead to sustainability. To achieve this, UNDP and other agencies built up their strategies

based on their previous work in the area as well as on a workshop entitled “Transition and Recovery Scenarios Development and Analysis” held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in October 2004, involving UN agencies and UN Country Team, national and local governments, mass media, and international and indigenous NGOs. As a result, the following five specific areas for action were identified: 1) Small arms and light weapons and concomitant armed violence; 2) Post harvest losses and food insecurity; 3) Complementary basic education and HIV and AIDS; 4) Water supply, sanitation and environmental assets protection; and 5) Strengthening local government to face present and future human security threats.

The identification process entailed the pursued holistic understanding of security, which is embedded in the notions of transition and recovery, mainly related to the vulnerability factors affecting the addressed population. At the beginning, the areas of action were mostly concerned on *freedom from fear*, closer to the traditional understanding on security, yet centered on determinants behind outbreaks of violence. However, they then moved to a broader conception including food for consumption and as source of income, health and diseases, reinforcement of the education system that fitted into the context, and incorporation of environmental emergencies particularly

water management and supply. All the efforts were subsequently linked to the local government mainly through its capacity development, informational infrastructure, and its permanent participation in every action, so that local institutions were prepared from the beginning to take over when the external agencies withdraw in the future.

Thus, from the beginning, the broadness of reach of the project was evident, as it was able to encompass in one project such a variety of menaces related to health, environment, food security, economic sustenance, education, security in the traditional sense, and governance. Furthermore, the project represented an integral work on the whole set of sources of vulnerability identified by communities through the participatory planning involving all the stakeholders, replacing separate actions by each international organization focusing on its own areas of expertise. Mr. Komatsubara presented this as an accomplishment of human security's "empowerment from below to complement protection from above", a balanced combination of comprehensiveness and adaptability. Hence, it cannot be overstressed here that a key to practical approaches to human security is flexibility that permits the incorporation of various dimensions of human security issues in one project.

At the same time, to carry out such an ambitious project, coordinated work on the ground has been indispensable. Personnel of all the stakeholders concerned including

different UN agencies got together to work in teams, bringing different views on the same problems and optimizing efforts and resources – human, physical and financial. As leaders and supervisors of the endeavor, UNDP and community leaders were deeply involved in every activity, while other members applied their expertise to achieve the specific objectives. Altogether, this synergic work realized throughout the project planning and implementation reveals another key issue, that is, effective coordination.

Successful coordination, as Mr. Komatsubara expressed, have been evident during all the phases of the project and reflected on the ongoing achievements in the proposed tasks. Placing one agency in charge of the project made it possible to avoid functional duplication as well as incoherence arising from isolated work of each UN agency. Thus, a way to minimize the risk of failure intrinsic to involvement of divergent agencies and actors is tested and the project has demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach. In fact, the importance of effective coordination is evident as featured in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment entitled "Delivering as One" issued in November 2006 – seven years after the creation of the UNTFHS. At a glance, it could be envisaged how ongoing UN reforms, according to the recommendations of the report, are in line with the UNTFHS experience. Conversely,

although the report makes a thorough review of the UN system, it makes no reference to UNTFHS and its work (UN, 2006).

Finally, among the five specific areas of action mentioned above, Mr. Komatsubara stressed that the experience in facing the problem of small arms and light weapons brought him new understandings on the advantages of the human security approach. At the beginning of the project, the known presence of these weapons was a latent source of loss of community's trust, distorting the feeling of welfare and menacing to feed any disruptions with violence. The arms spread as fast as the rumors and suspicions by members of the community spread, saying that someone else had acquired his own weapon. Such proliferation was not necessarily related to the presence of refugees, as some arms were commercialized or were even hand-made inside the host population, though there were also cases in which weapons were used as an alternative income source of those escaping from conflict. Here, it should not be overlooked that the presence of the refugee camps could easily become a scapegoat for the local proliferation of weapons: any upsurge of conflict was regarded as a problem associated with the existence of the camps, regardless of its actual cause. Hence, given the situation, the problem of small arms and light weapons could not only destabilize the community from the inside, but also raise discomfort and stigmatization over the

presence of external populations.

To confront such situation, local government could only rely on police efforts, but this entailed a negative incentive to people. Police actions brought them feelings of persecution and the fear of imprisonment, and thus developed uneasiness towards the governmental institution. At this point, making use of its impartiality, project personnel decided to talk openly about the issue with community members in the places where the movement of weapons was suspected, and tried to persuade them to give up their weapons. At the same time, staff of the project negotiated with the local government to provide amnesty to those handing in arms under the campaign, and made use of radio broadcasting to widely publicize this opportunity. This resulted in more weapons collected through the project than those confiscated by police in five years.

This example of tangible success could be, as mentioned above, seen as an outcome of flexibility and coordination brought by the implementation of human security perspective, but there is also an additional new key to underscore: empowerment of grassroots workers. Since different kinds of expertise, both local and external, were drawn together in the coordinated work, it was made possible to intervene in all the determinants of the vulnerability situation on the ground, and thus restrictions to grassroots work were removed. At the same time, in the crossroads of ideas and facts,

and of theories and realities, personnel in the field were freed from constraints by organizational paradigms and enabled to act beyond their individual tasks bound by mandates and rules, and thus empowered to take pertinent decisions to re-orient the ongoing activities in order to ensure the fulfillment of the project's objectives. Therefore, empowerment can be regarded as an additional strength of the new paradigm of action based on the human security concept.

#### Ongoing Reflections

As described in the previous section, by examining a flagship project of UNTFHS, three issues are identified as keys in application of human security concept and putting it into practice in the field: 1) Flexibility to encompass variety of threats and divergent institutional approaches in one project; 2) Effective means to promote and achieve stakeholder coordination and teamwork; and 3) Empowerment of grassroots workers to overcome obstacles placed by institutional turfs and thus to generate comprehensive strategies as well as new possibilities of actions for alleviating communities' hardships.

These are preliminary analysis of the ongoing initiatives and, certainly, many other lessons will be visible in near future, with more experiences gained to feedback to the

whole system of international cooperation, peace building and development - hence, to influence the evolution of the human security concept. Just to outline some, looking at the new experiences at the grassroots under the joint work in multiple paradigms, coordination of agencies may be expected to go beyond operative rearrangement, and utterly disrupt the principles of their mandates (Tadjbakhsh, 2007). This would enhance the evolution of agencies' own paradigms of action like, for instance, the very concept of "Human Development" – cornerstone of UNDP's work and proximate origin of the concept of human security. And through such evolution, a broader understanding of security in modern states should be gained, which is prerequisite to move fragile societies out of the vicious circles of conflict and poverty. Furthermore, it is possible that human security concept will serve as an inclusive meeting place to all the stakeholders because of the simplicity of its conception, with less possibility of discrimination based on expertise areas or degrees of literacy than more elaborated concepts such as those promoting sustainability.

The task of realizing human security beyond definition is a complex but extremely urgent one. Literature about the concept is full of skepticism. The near-exclusive use of human security on foreign policy raises mistrust and further skepticism if success in this

field gets tainted by a race of “brands” (Tadjbakhsh, 2007). Also, overstress on the problem of failed states can impose an interventionist dynamic, jeopardizing the use of human security and deepening uneasiness (Acharya, 2005). Moreover, even worse, the lack of knowledge flowing not only through academics but also through all societal torrents of information could open a door to perverse instrumentalizations of the promising paradigm, as it seems to be the case with the “Human Security Act” approved in the Philippines. Knowledge construction and its dissemination, and documentation of successes and failures derived from experience, yet incorporating real-life power tensions distorting the ideal goals, should be priority in order to ensure soundness on the spirit behind the paradigm, and to extend the lifespan of the concept of Human Security that precisely attempts at long-term solutions. And, hopefully, further study on the evolution of the concept would not only help in consolidating new approaches to research on the complex reality of vulnerable people around the world, but also in making human security real for and by those populations.

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