

National Human Development Reports and the Human Security Framework: A review of Analysis and Experience

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Recommendations for NHDR and other national-level studies¹

More specific conclusions and recommendations are now provided which aim to provide guidelines for future compilations of human security oriented NHDRs, and other national-level studies. The focus is first on methodological issues in the identification of concepts and the preparation and collection of data, followed by points of action and policy – both in regards to operationalising human security further on the ground, as well as for developing further the analytical and assessment capacities of the concept itself.

The Human security approach has proven useful for analysis and policy making in the three groups of countries for which NHDRs have been reviewed:

- countries emerging from conflict, notably the reports of Afghanistan and Mozambique, but also of Sierra Leone, East Timor and the Solomon Islands.
- countries in transition- notably the reports of Latvia and Macedonia, but also of Estonia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Bulgaria others like Lesotho.
- countries like Bangladesh, for which the report, though not strictly prepared as a Human Security or Human Development report, is of considerable interest and perhaps one which gains extra significance in a country which could move rapidly towards instability.

Though the Human security approach demonstrates real value, the 13 NHDRs examined are of very variable quality in their analysis and policy relevance. The best are those of Afghanistan, Latvia and Macedonia. However, all the reports may well have made an important impact on thinking and potentially on policy in the country concerned by presenting a new approach to security and raising issues of human security neglected or not even seen before to be issues of national security policy in the country concerned.

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be made about methodology for the preparation of future NHDRs and other national-level studies on human security. A number of lessons have already been noted in the body of the report. Among the most important are:

- The need for undertaking a special survey of public opinion to clarify the attitudes of people to different types of threat and the ranking they give to how these impact upon them. Special surveys have produced interesting and apparently reliable information at relatively modest cost. Such surveys should be made a recommended part of all NHDRs dealing with human security, and could be used to support other related national-level initiatives. The methodology of the Latvian NHDR is of particular relevance for analyzing human security in other countries and situations. This methodology included investigating for a random sample of the population the most important insecurities which they subjectively felt or objectively experienced – with a ranking and rating of the different insecurities according to how intensely they were felt to be a problem.
- Methodology needs to be developed at country level to analyze and assess comparatively the costs and benefits of different actions to deal with or diminish the various types of threats to human security and to explore trade-offs, especially the ones emerging from surveys or analysis as presenting the most serious threats to people. Some experiments with different approaches to cost-benefit analysis in this area would be useful. Trial and error in exploring trade-offs and in applying well considered methodology could be useful for some future human security studies or NHDRs.
- The value of a more pragmatic approach to analysis and action, especially one giving less attention to each of the seven areas of insecurity identified in the HDR 1994. Instead attention should be concentrated on whichever of the dimensions of insecurity are identified in the surveys of public opinion and other analyses

¹ Excerpts from National Human Development Reports and the Human Security Framework: A review of Analysis and Experience, pp. 50-52

of the experience of people in the country. Attention to gender insecurities almost certainly should be one area of concern but detailed focus on others should be varied depending on the situation and the extent to which earlier NHDRs and other national-level assessments have dealt with other causes of insecurity as part of a more general human development analysis.

- Combining a human security and human development analysis in many areas of concern and action would often seem useful. Some projections of future problems and trends likely to lead to human insecurity would also be useful, along with analysis of measures to pre-empt or to moderate them.

Assessments of the impact of the various NHDRs and complementary initiatives on the human security situation at a national level will be important, along with on-going monitoring. These could include:

- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks: Most NHDRs have used secondary sources for statistical information. While much of the information is useful in a human security context, it may be necessary to collect data on more specific indicators. Surveys (such as the ones conducted for the Latvia and Afghanistan reports,) are a useful tool to generate this type of qualitative data. Multiple surveys, conducted over a period of time, will likely be able to show trends and changes in people's perceptions of insecurity. This might also be a useful indicator to assess the success of human security policy.
- Impact Analysis: By building into the initial Terms of Reference for future NHDRs a required component on impact analysis, it may be possible to derive trends in the institutionalisation of human security in a national context. This process is a necessary 'final step' in the preparation of NHDRs on human security.
- The long run impact on security conditions cannot be properly understood until a considerable amount of time has passed. It will be desirable to encourage follow-up reports or indeed future NHDRs to reserve a section for comprehensive analysis of impacts of policy recommendations and suggestions from previous reports. Besides maintaining continuity, this exercise will allow critical reflection of policy choices, and could serve to inform future decision-making.
- It would be useful to explore the human security concept in other countries. Such reports might be reviewed, encouraged or commissioned, for instance, in South Africa, Egypt, Tunisia, Brazil, Guatemala, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. At the very least, it would seem to be useful to review the treatment of human security in a small number of other reports before reaching firm conclusions about the best way to prepare reports on human security at country level.
- There are also good grounds for including some element of human security in future NHDRs and other national-level studies dealing with more general issues of human development.

The recent UN agreement to establish a Peacebuilding Commission and a supportive secretariat provides a new challenge and opportunity to apply human security analyses. UNDP and other parts of the UN could support and make available human security analyses in all countries being considered for action in the Peacebuilding Commission. Such analyses, if prepared objectively by well informed professionals, could help provide a frame of reference to ensure a broad approach to Peacebuilding, related to the wider issues of human security.

Though the motivation of governments to implement policies directed to relieving different forms of human insecurity in their country will inevitably vary in different countries, human security analyses can still be of widespread importance and use. The information obtained and the analysis of human security needs can be used to critique the inadequacy or neglect of security issues in present policies, to build coalitions for change and for pressurizing policy makers to respond to specific needs. This could help to mark a real advance in international action for peace and security.