

NHDR Write-Up: VDA Practitioner Course on Human Development

The Kenyan HDR 2006 Human Security and Human Development – A Deliberate Choice

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The Kenyan NHDR of 2006 deals with human security as its main theme, and attempts to show the link between human development and human security and argues that ensuring human security is not an option but a pressing priority if the country is to continue the improvements observed in terms of human development in the preceding years of the report. The report adapted the expanded concept of human security introduced in the UNDP 1994 HDR and addresses a wide range of issues that are directly related to the human development situation in the country. These issues include, *inter alia*, economic and food security as expressed in the overwhelming challenges of poverty and hunger, political security as evidenced in the continuous armed conflict and civil strife in boarder areas, environmental security as evidenced by recurrent drought and floods, and health security as seen in the spread of infectious diseases in particular AIDS. Though the report seldom establishes a direct link between these human security issues and the progress (or lack thereof) in human development, it provides a good insight on how human development impacts on human security and vice versa. For instance the report shows that the North Eastern District where ethnic conflict and cattle rustling are common is consistently found to have lower HD indexes both in GDI and HPI. On the basis of such analysis, the report demonstrates how lack of progress in human development results in reduced human security, which in turn perpetuates poverty, low health status and education thus essentially creating a vicious circle of insecurity and low human development.

The most important policy implication of the 2006 NHDR is its articulation of the importance of integrating human security in national development strategies such as the PRSP. Elaborating this point, the report puts forward concrete suggestions broadly divided into seven categories as broad strategies to address the impediments to human development. These strategies, among other things, include guaranteeing the right to food and income, ensuring personal safety, promoting environmental sustainability, and pursuing international trade instead of international aid. The report also identifies some broad principles (such as continuous learning, integrity of the country's leadership, solemnizing the social contract and pursuing fairness) that are deemed essential in realizing successful integration of human security in the country development strategies.

In conclusion it is possible to argue that, the relevance of the ideas raised and the conclusions reached in the report have been demonstrated in recent developments following the December 2007 elections. The violence that claimed the lives of several hundred people, displaced hundreds of thousands, and caused human suffering and indignities (such as rape which is said to have reached epidemic proportions), is rooted in the human development disparities most noticeably in terms of chronic poverty in specific parts of the country. Kenyans should learn from this unfortunate incident that the most effective way of ensuring human security is ensuring balanced human development in all parts of the country and for all sections of the community. This obviously is a huge task that requires the courage to admit existing imbalances and the commitment to change the situation.