How Can Human Security Contribute to More Effective Development?

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Washington, D.C., Development Forum
Washington, February 5, 2005

I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss with you today how human security can contribute to more effective development. I am sure that most of this audience is aware that Japan has emphasized human security in its foreign policy, including as a basic tenet in its recently revised ODA Charter. JICA, likewise, is giving increased prominence to a human security perspective. Our discussion today provides an opportunity for identifying ways to facilitate that process. I look forward to an active dialogue.

Development and human security are different, but related and overlapping concepts. The existence of a relationship between them can be readily inferred from the fact that the countries suffering from ongoing or recent conflict, where people are least secure, tend to be those with the highest indicators of underdevelopment, such as high levels of poverty, illiteracy and child mortality. However, acknowledging the fact of a relationship between development and human security is one thing; understanding the relationship and seeing how the two concepts can be made to be mutually reinforcing is another matter.

As a starting point, we can describe the two concepts separately. I do not presume to suggest a single definition of either development or human security. There are so many definitions that none can be singled out as authoritative. However, I think we can propose descriptions that most can accept.

Let's begin with development:

Development can be described as the holistic process by which societies become stable, prosperous, safe and just, with shared basic values and interests grounded in human freedom and opportunity. Such societies are foundations of human well being and fulfillment, and they form the base of a peaceful and productive global community.

Over the last half-century we have learned a lot about development. There is a broad international consensus about basic principles:

- Development comes from within a society. It must be based upon local responsibility for and commitment to integrated policies and strategies that are results-oriented over the

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long term. These policies and strategies have economic, social, political, environmental and security dimensions, all of which must be heeded.

- International support for locally led efforts can be effective in accelerating and increasing positive development outcomes. Such support should be provided in a spirit of partnership, based on shared goals, an agreed division of labor, adequate resources and effective coordination.

- Development cooperation is more than aid. It needs to be integrated into a broader framework of coherent policies to facilitate greater participation by poor countries in the global community and greater participation by poor and disadvantaged people in the economic, political and cultural life of their societies.

The United Nations Development Programme's annual Human Development reports, together with a series of UN conferences – on education, children, human rights, population, women, social development, food and habitat – had an important influence in the 1990s by emphasizing that development is ultimately about people. Growth, inflation, trade, investment, fiscal and monetary policies, and physical infrastructure are all important. But they are important because of their impact on the quality of life for people.

Beginning with this emphasis on people, the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD suggested in 1996 a limited number of specific inter-related goals to measure the progress of development. Those goals, drawn from the various UN conferences, have now been refined and expanded at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations as the Millennium Development Goals. When we speak today of shared goals, the MDGs are the agreed benchmark.

The locally led, people-centered, results-oriented partnership model has become the preferred approach to development cooperation. It is endorsed in policy statements by multilateral organizations and by developed and developing countries. It finds expression in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers prepared by more than 50 developing countries and also in ongoing international efforts to harmonize donor practices so as to better support local capacity and local ownership.

Let's turn now to human security:

"Human security" has a more brief history than "development." It has persisted over the past decade as a powerful idea. At the same time, it is an elusive concept that has attracted much debate but little consensus.

The renowned development economist Mahbub ul Haq provided intellectual leadership to the human development movement. He initiated the Human Development Report, in which he introduced many innovative ideas. In the 1994 report, he included an entire chapter on "new dimensions of human security." This was the first in-depth analysis of the notion that human security is an essential aspect of sustainable human development.

The 1994 report described human security as having two main aspects: "safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression" and "protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life." It suggested that those aspects of human security are related to economic, food, health, environmental, personal and political security.

The idea of a link between human security and human development was attractive. The end of the cold war, while hardly the end of history, had improved the climate for thinking about security as something broader than a military issue. At the same time, globalization was creating uncertainties that undermined confidence about the future. Human security evoked the historic aspirations of people everywhere for freedom from want and freedom from fear. I was among the early enthusiasts. I provided comments on the draft 1994 Human Development Report and endorsed the concept of human security in the 1994 Development Cooperation Report of the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

Some countries have shown a continuing interest in human security and have given it prominence in their policies. Japan, Canada and Norway are the foremost among them. Our study describes the policies, program and activities of Japan and Canada, in particular. For most, however, the appeal of the concept was not enough. From the beginning, the questions have persisted: What do you do differently in order to integrate human security considerations into development efforts, and how does this improve development outcomes? In the absence of answers to those questions we do not find references to human security in the programming guidance of the United Nations agencies, the World Bank, or donor agencies like USAID, Canada's CIDA and JICA.

I would describe human security as a special concern to protect and empower people so that they will be able to cope with situations that significantly threaten their survival, livelihoods or dignity. It is not a separate approach to development. Rather, it is an important factor in that people must have a minimal sense of security so that they can engage in development activities and development should contribute to their increased freedom and security.

The idea of an independent Commission on Human Security was discussed at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. The following year, with financing from Japan, the Commission became a reality. Under the leadership of co-chairs Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Amartya Sen, distinguished economist and Nobel Laureate, the Commission produced a comprehensive report and presented it to the Secretary General of the United Nations in 2003. That report has again brought to the fore the question of how to transform the concept of human security into a practical instrument for advancing sustainable economic and social development around the world.

A principal limitation on making human security an operational concept has been the breadth and vagueness of definitions that have been suggested for it. Various descriptions of human security have employed very broad terms. Often, these descriptions seem to be just another way of describing human development. One author went so far as to ask whether human security represented "paradigm shift or hot air."

Like others, the Commission adopted a very broad definition: "to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment." If human security is about human rights, good governance, and access to education and health care, as Kofi Annan has suggested, and if it also embraces fair trade and patent rights, as the Commission proposed, it his hard to see what distinguishes this concept from human development and how it might operate to modify the widely accepted partnership model for development cooperation.

The Commission's analysis offers two ideas that provide a basis for strategic thinking:

- First, the report speaks of "systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity" and suggests strategies of protection and empowerment to create such systems.

- Second, it makes the important distinction that, while human development "is concerned with progress and augmentation," human security "fruitfully supplements the expansionist perspective of human development by directly paying attention to what are sometimes called 'downside risks'."

The study team has identified these ideas in the Commission's report as offering a way forward, toward making human security an operational, not just a theoretical concept. Our recommended approach would be to defer the debate about broad definitions and universal application. Instead, we propose that the international community begin by trying to demonstrate the value of a focus on human security – coping with downside risks – in a few countries where the risks to survival, livelihoods and dignity are most evident and local capacity to respond adequately is most lacking – countries in conflict or emerging from conflict and other fragile states. These are the countries that the World Bank calls "low income countries under stress" and the DAC calls "difficult partnerships."

In such countries, the team is recommending concentration on core issues of survival, livelihoods and dignity. While specifics need to be determined on a country-by-country basis to reflect local circumstances, we have developed a chart to illustrate core issues. I have included that chart in the written text of my remarks.

Categories of Human Security

Aspects of human security	Challenges to human security	Nature of human security interests	Time frame of interventions	Activities to protect and empower
Physical	Violence, hunger, health, displacement, crime	Survival	Immediate and medium term	Access to food, shelter, basic health services; protection from conflict, violent crime, environmental hazards, natural disasters
Economic	Unemployment, inequality, poverty	Livelihood	Medium and long term	Access to education and training; employment opportunities, access to credit; access to markets
Political	Arbitrary government action, corruption, impunity	Dignity	Long term	Accountable governance, rule of law; access to information; opportunities for democratic participation

We believe there are good reasons for recommending a selective approach. Much of the international doubt about the operational value of a human security orientation relates to the broad nature of the concept, and the uncertainty as to where human security ends and other concepts begin. Also, while the partnership approach is widely accepted as the preferred approach to development cooperation, experience has shown that the partnership approach is not well suited to situations where political will and institutional capacity are in short supply. The international community is considering new approaches for dealing with the low income countries under stress, and especially with the implications of conflict for development. In particular, an ongoing learning and advisory process has been established that brings together the OECD Development Assistance Committee, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, European Union and a number of bilateral donors. An initiative to build up human security as a basis for sustained development in the low income countries under stress is likely to be welcomed as a timely contribution.

Certainly, human security is needed everywhere. We see an initial focus on low income countries under stress and core issues as a starting point. As experience is gained, lessons learned can be applied to consider a broader range of countries and a broader range of issues. However, if the initial effort were to make human security an operational concept immediately and simultaneously in all its potential aspects and in all developing countries, the result would likely be frustration and disappointment.

The essence of our recommendations to JICA is that it should develop a strategic plan to incorporate several elements:

- capacity building within the organization,
- engagement with interested members of the international community,
- dissemination of information, and
- selected pilot programs in collaboration with others.

In this way, we believe it will be possible to build a broad international consensus to embrace human security as a valued concept and make it an effective operational discipline in the practice of development cooperation.