



Inclusion through Empowerment

A key tool of human security

GCSP Inclusive Security Policy Brief Series

As global attention shifts to geopolitical challenges, human insecurity is on the rise. The food crisis, the health crisis, increasing poverty and inequality make the achievement of the SDGs a distant prospect. Ten years before the finishing line, COVID-19 has emerged as a massive hurdle to global efforts to achieve Agenda 2030. Now more than ever, there is a need to focus policies and action on the seven dimensions of human security: food, health, environmental, economic, political, personal and community to improve the global outlook and put humanity on the right track.

Two elements are crucial within the human security paradigm. The first, protecting vulnerable communities is a top-down approach that works in concert with the second, the bottom-up **empowerment** of individuals to achieve human security – that is freedom from fear, want and indignity, and ultimately inclusive security.

From “leaving no one behind” to empowering each individual.

Human security is sometimes criticised as a UN driven approach, which uses the language of bureaucracies. But it can be embraced by citizens around the world with a focus on **peoples’ empowerment**. In the context of human security empowerment means **increased resilience and well-being** and shifts the focus from **threats** towards **solutions**.

How does it work? It requires initial assistance from governments or international organisations, such as financial support to grassroots projects, or providing education and training opportunities, together with broad ownership across societies.

Why is it effective? The bottom-up empowerment of citizens and local communities in concert with national and local governments can generate inclusion, bridge gaps in participation and resources, and this inclusiveness can in turn provide increased peace and security. Connecting the dots between challenges and diverse actors can improve the management of many of the complex, multi-layered challenges humanity is facing today.

What policies do we need? In practical terms, there are several policy scenarios enabling empowerment. These are the three major strands:

- 1) Education:** from pre-school to lifelong vocational training and higher education, empowerment starts with education. It needs to be accessible to all and the curricula should highlight various types of discrimination whilst shifting mindsets from blaming “others” or failures and setbacks towards shared ownership and individual responsibility. Newly acquired knowledge and skills can provide opportunities to fulfil potential, strengthen societies and improve human security, and in turn state security.
- 2) Recognise the existing knowledge and wisdom of populations,** including indigenous people. Practices can range from: the art of co-existence with the environment and strengthened sustainability, to traditional justice systems permitting more just societies or, spiritual practices that introduce alternative approaches to conflict resolution.
- 3) Create conditions for increased innovation and creativity.** Unleashing the potential in communities can bring more development and security in societies across the planet including innovative green technologies and social innovation projects. While some might see the idea of individual empowerment as a threat, many argue that this approach is ultimately the optimal

“Human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.” It calls for “people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people.”

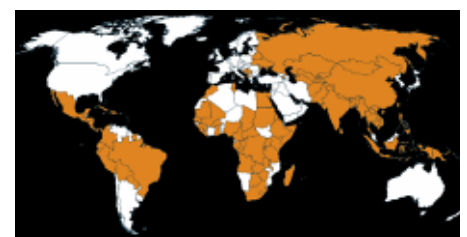
United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/290

strategy for building resilience. Human and state security are complimentary, and all security policies need to be designed on the human and state security spectrum depending on local, national or regional contexts. Ultimately, the SDGs cannot and will not be achieved until we “leave no one behind” - and achieving empowerment at every level of society is how we get there.

‘United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security’

The UNTFHS finances programmes that translate the human security approach into practical actions and provide concrete and sustainable benefits to vulnerable people and communities threatened in their survival, livelihood and dignity. Its priorities include: Agenda 2030, climate change, migration and prevention and resilience.

<https://www.un.org/humansecurity/trustfund/>



CASE STUDY

Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration¹ is a new method of reforestation that allowed for 3 million hectares of trees to be planted in the Republic of Niger. This initiative is a bottom-up approach where farmers are trained to re-grow trees on previously desert lands. “It is simple and can be adapted to each individual farmer’s unique requirements, providing multiple benefits to people, livestock, crops and the environment, including physical, economic and social benefits to humans.” says Rinaudo, World Vision Australia’s “the forest-maker” and laureate of the Alternative Nobel Prize for Reforestation Technique

¹T. Rinaudo, ‘The Development of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration’, <http://fmrhub.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Rinaudo-2007-Development-of-FMNR.pdf>



EMPOWERMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Human insecurity is linked to environmental challenges such as climate change, loss of biodiversity or pollution. The solution to these challenges lays partially in empowerment of local communities to become stewards of nature. By creating conditions such as reform of land ownership laws allowing women to own land or protecting natural resources and equitable distribution of their revenues leads to better relationship between humans and the environment and potential conflict prevention.

FACTS AND STATS: Human Security Empowerment Gaps

Lack of empowerment of vulnerable groups which may be aggravated by the current COVID-19 crisis:

More than **72 million children** of primary education age are not in school and **759 million adults are illiterate** and do not have the awareness necessary to improve both their living conditions and those of their children.²

Of the world’s 774 million illiterate adults, **2/3 are women**. The share of illiterate women has not changed for the past 20 years. Among the world’s **123 million illiterate youth, 76 million are female**. These gender disparities remain persistent, with little change over time.³

Youth unemployment rates in North Africa are **above 25 percent** in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria. Meanwhile, sub-Saharan Africa displays the highest youth working poverty rates in the world, at about 70 per cent.⁴

Among people living in the EU, **21%** of nationals, 29% of foreign EU citizens and **45%** of non-EU citizens living in the EU faced the risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2018.⁵

In 2016 **40 million people** were victims of modern slavery. This includes: **25 million people** in forced labour and **15 million people** in forced marriage. Of which **71% are women** and **girls and 25% are children**.⁶

Human Security Empowerment Successes

Yet, failures cannot overshadow success and innovative approaches to empowerment strategies that could be scaled up in the future:

Increase of e-commerce during the COVID-19 in Africa due to reforms caused by the pandemics and 5-7 fold growth of business.⁷

Tapping into innovation potential of populations – in particular in food security projects such as urban gardens.⁸

Fighting the violent extremism at grass root level – creating conditions for local communities to prevent violent extremism through projects and programmes as exemplified by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.

² Humanium, ‘Right to Education : Situation Around the World’, <https://www.humanium.org/en/right-to-education/>

³ UNESCO, ‘Women and Girls’ Education: Facts and Figures’, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/international-womens-day-2014/women-ed-facts-and-figure/>

⁴ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ‘World Economic Situation And Prospects: April 2019 Briefing’, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-april-2019-briefing-no-125/>

⁵ Eurostat, ‘Migrant Integration Statistics - At Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion’, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migrant_integration_statistics_-_at_risk_of_poverty_and_social_exclusion

⁶ 8.7 Alliance, ‘Global Estimates of Modern Slavery’, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf

⁷ Y. Kazeem, ‘African E-Commerce is Getting a Much Needed Boost from Coronavirus Lockdowns’, <https://qz.com/africa/1855227/africas-e-commerce-boosted-by-coronavirus-lockdowns/>

⁸ Interreg, ‘Approaching urban agriculture as a social innovation’, http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/11/1927b3f0dc02baada02e1305eda5112166ea0c1a.pdf

SECOND IN A SERIES...

This is the second part of a series of inclusive security policy briefs, produced by GCSP staff and fellows, written by Anna Brach, Head of the Human Security Cluster. We unpack some of the key concepts and provide some concrete actions of steps we can all take to integrate inclusive behaviours and practices into our lives and work, overcome biases and narrow perspectives, and harness the collective intelligence of diverse voices. We aim to highlight the positive potential of behavioural change and technology to gather disaggregated data and identify patterns and opportunities to generate more responsive policies and programmes, systems and structures