The Way Forward: Human Security Beyond Discourse to Action

Summary of Discussions and Recommendations from the Kisarazu Conference

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Much has been said and written about the concept of human security. Yet, the value of human security as an idea has now gone beyond its intrinsic nature. Indeed, if human security is to be realized, it is now a road that must be traveled—a process that has to take place, as well as a destination to be reached.

The deliberation and discussions at the Fourth Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia's Tomorrow point to the propitious timing of moving human security beyond discourse to concrete actions. The Fourth Intellectual Dialogue has called on the international community to act now without delay. And there is no better place to begin to push this agenda forward than in the Asia Pacific region.

As noted by Surin Pitsuwan, former minister of foreign affairs of Thailand, in his presentation, there are three factors that are working for the region to embark on this agenda. First is the emerging consensus that globalization has failed many people in many respects. Despite the many pronouncements on the benefits to be derived from being part of the global, interdependent economy, there have been in the last three decades incidences of failed states. There have also been societies, communities, and ethnic groups—pockets of people within nation states—who have been adversely affected by the process of globalization. The victims usually

belong to the vulnerable strata of society. This situation has led to the increasing polarization of the world. According to Dr. Pitsuwan, it has therefore become more urgent for the international community to help these people who have not benefited but have instead been marginalized by the globalization process.

Second, the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States had a searing impact on the consciousness of the international community. The attack was only part of a deeper malaise in the global order. Having been shown live on television, it was also an experience that people throughout the world shared. More importantly, the attacks highlighted the fact that if force and war are the only responses available to counter acts of terrorism, these are going to fail miserably because the root causes of terrorism, as well as of other kinds of tensions and strife in the international community, are psychological, sociological, and economic—leading to intense frustrations and conflicts. Thus, the tragic events of September 11 have spurred the international community to look for ways to address problems that are now beyond the state's capacity to resolve, that have raised questions about the limits of state sovereignty, and that have gone beyond the confines and formalities of international conventions.

Third, but certainly not least, is the fact that there is an evolving global awareness that the international community is one highly interdependent body. Events like the September 11 terrorist attacks have further reinforced this idea that we are no longer isolated, and that sufferings, destruction, and conflicts happening in any part of the world have an impact on the rest of mankind.

Against these three interrelated factors, the concept of human security provides a solid framework for crafting international responses and serves as a guiding principle in addressing these issues. As noted by Ogata Sadako, co-chair of the Commission on Human Security, the human security concept "presents a useful entry point to the central security issue of the day, i.e., the security of the people." From now on, human security could be the clarion theme in international cooperation. More importantly, it would provide the road map of that road that has to be traveled. The question now is, How, indeed, do we start?

From the time United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan drew the world's attention to human security as part of the "new security agenda" in 1999, projects in many parts of the world to address global issues falling under the rubric of human security have been undertaken concur-

rently or are being proposed. The Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia's Tomorrow series, organized by the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), is one of these projects. Started in 1998, this series began even before Secretary General Annan made mention of human security in his new security agenda.

It is interesting to note, however, that the responses to projects on human security have been mixed. Depending on the school of thought, these responses range from enthusiasm and hope to skepticism and suspicion. Considering that the components of human security are indeed comprehensive, covering basically all aspects of human survival and dignity, and consequently embracing political, economic, and socio-cultural rights, it has unfortunately become extremely difficult to obtain universal consensus, not to mention international cooperation, on these matters.

One of the major stumbling blocks in getting the international community to cooperate on efforts at addressing human security issues has been the concern about protecting a country's sovereignty and the strict adherence to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of states. The United Nations' human security agenda has been perceived by many states as a single-issue agenda, i.e., mostly that of humanitarian intervention. This perception is so strong that there appears to be a clear divide in the types of international responses to human security issues. The first one belongs to the so-called Western/interventionist response while the other is the Asian/developmentalist response. The latter type has been closely identified with the Japanese government-led initiatives on human security projects.

Against the controversies that the human security agenda has generated yet believing in the intrinsic value of the concept, the Fourth Intellectual Dialogue focused on health and human security as its main agenda for action. Building on the discussions of the case studies on health and human security in Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines and by drawing out the linkages between the two concepts, the concurrence at this fourth dialogue was that health and human security was one potential area where the human security agenda can best be served. More importantly, as far as concerted and cooperative actions are concerned, participants agreed that relevant and timely policy "interventions" on critical health and human security issues can be undertaken through coherent policy coordination among various actors in the region. And, by zeroing in on health, specifically the issue of access to primary health care, controversies that beset the human security agenda can be avoided.

Health as a Core Human Security Value

It has been argued that health is a core human security value that has to be protected. Yet the reality is far from this in the Asian context. As revealed in the three case studies, the situation in the region is dismal. The picture becomes even more depressing when one notes that the situation need not be so. As argued by the authors of the case studies, many of the problems associated with the lack of access to and low quality of health care have more to do with poor management, lack of commitment, and absence of political will than with a lack of financial resources. There does not seem to be adequate explanation as to why primary health care should even become a scare resource in this region. But what emerged out of the case analyses and discussions in this Fourth Intellectual Dialogue was recognition that primary health care was not a priority in most countries in the region. It is hardly surprising, then, that health care and services usually become the first victims of economic downturn since developing countries see expenditures in these areas as expendable or nonessential. The Indonesian case, for example, had demonstrated that when a national budget is limited, health care and education become primary targets for reduction in budget allocations. This course goes against the very grain of human security. As Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel prize for economics, has argued, "The human security paradigm encourages institutions to respond by offering protection, which is constant—not episodic, not static; and anticipatory rather than reactive, so that people will manage downturn with security" (Sen 2000). Against these key challenges, a major policy recommendation that emerged out of the Fourth Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia's Tomorrow was on how to make good health equal good politics.

Policy Recommendations

Some of the reflections on the agenda for action on health and human security that emerged during the final deliberations at the Fourth Intellectual Dialogue are presented here as possible policy recommendations on the way forward.

Building a Constituency of Human Security Advocates

One of the major challenges in advancing the human security agenda is to build a critical mass to generate adequate support for the concept and its causes. In this regard, the task at hand is not only sensitizing domestic and international communities about the value of the human security concept but also convincing them of the merits of adopting a human security–centered approach to issues such as health. The human security enterprise calls for a multi-sectoral approach. It requires the active and coordinated participation of various state and non-state actors. There is therefore the need for continued dialogues, more sharing of information, as well as the sharing of experiences and best practices on human security to learn more about the utility of using a human security framework in crafting policy responses.

Specifically, on advancing the cause of health and human security, this would require working closely with the actors among the health community. They must be encouraged to pay more attention to the human security concept as an operational tool for delivery, promotion, and development of health services in their own constituencies.

Starting an Asian Human Security Audit

Starting an Asian audit on human security can provide a good overview of the status of human security in the region. The purpose of having an audit is to be able to track progress on human security issues, and advocate specific policy and operational improvements to move countries from where they are in terms of human security to where they want to be. For a start, this can be initiated by member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) themselves without having to impose on them an outside measuring stick. The auditing process helps in the overall exercise of information sharing and provides a valuable database in terms of tracking resources in addressing human security issues. These include the availability of financial support and human resources.

Sensitizing Regional Organizations

Regional organizations are important actors in spearheading regional initiatives and policy coordination on human security issues. They provide the right avenue for multilateral responses to human security issues that transcend national boundaries and have become sources of instability in the region. Moreover, regional organizations provide the launching pad for momentum on addressing human security issues. But before this can begin, regional organizations need to be convinced of the value of human security and of the need to adopt this as a suitable policy framework in crafting regional policies.

In Asia, ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the ASEAN + 3 are among the important actors in the human security agenda. In the ASEAN's Social Safety Net programs, for example, health has been identified as an important component that requires immediate and coordinated multilateral and multi-sectoral action. This is a significant step, and the momentum needs to be sustained. Other than ASEAN, ARF, and the ASEAN + 3, efforts should also be made to communicate directly with the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and to highlight to them the fact that health has been appropriated as an important dimension in the human security concerns of our communities. By working with these multilateral institutions, they could be enjoined to consider human security as a viable conceptual tool in their own projects so that the idea could gain currency. More importantly, the involvement of regional organizations could bring a lot of benefit to the realization and multilateralization of the human security agenda.

Building Partnership with the Private Sector and the Business Community

Aside from building a human security constituency among various communities and institutions at both the domestic and international level, partnership needs to be extended to include the private sector and the business community. After all, human security—particularly health—is everybody's business. Against the current moves toward privatization and globalization, the provision of health care has been profoundly affected. This had led to so much disparity and to polarization across and within

societies. While the private sector is not the enemy, it has been argued that there are social and public responsibilities in health that must cover market inefficiencies. Although the main responsibility belongs to the governments, the private sector's involvement must be sought. Building partnership with the private sector and the business community works to the mutual benefit of all parties concerned in securing the well-being of individuals and communities.

The private sector must be brought into the multi-sectoral process of working toward health and human security since it too has a vital stake to protect. For instance, certain aspects of health have been and are already being privatized. These include drug production, research, and care of the elderly. These are some of the many areas where partnership and constituency building can be undertaken toward the common goal of realizing human security.

Engaging Track Two Bodies

Much has been written about the pivotal role that track two bodies can play in advancing ideas at the research and policy levels. Track two is not only a reservoir of knowledge and expertise that must be tapped. More importantly, track two bodies are vital conduits between governments and nongovernmental organizations and civil society in many issues. They also have the added advantage of having direct contacts with the stakeholders in government.

Advancing the human security agenda has been one of the major works of the track two bodies in the region. The ASEAN-ISIS (ASEAN Institutes for Strategic and International Studies), for instance, has undertaken major projects related to the many dimensions of human security. Among these are the ASEAN-ISIS Human Rights Colloquium and the ASEAN People's Assembly, which especially emphasized HIV/AIDS as a human security problem. Track two institutions therefore can be used as a platform to develop and disseminate the ideas on health and human security. This in turn builds more constituencies in every country based on intellectual skills and adds to the creation of a critical mass in advancing the human security agenda.

Convincing Government of the Merits of a Human Security Framework

Politics is defined as the authoritative allocation of values. Within the context of the human security framework, these values are the core values that are identified in the different dimensions of human security, as discussed in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report*. These core values are economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. In the authoritative process of allocation of values, the government is the main actor. In fact, within the human security framework the government holds the key in the allocation of resources to other core values. Thus the main challenge in this regard is how to convince the stakeholders in government that health is a core value and deserves to be given careful attention. This is a major task since it involves the political process of prioritization and perhaps reallocation of resources from one core value to another. We know that the situation of primary health care in Asia needs a lot of improvement. As a percentage of gross domestic product, budget allocations on health in countries in Asia have been so limited that unexpected events such as the Asian financial crisis result in not only sudden impoverishment but also almost no protection for health.

To generate political will and political commitment, the stakeholders in government must be convinced of the merits of human security. More importantly, they need to be convinced that health is a priority for governance and politics. The most obvious strategy, then, is to establish the clear linkage between human security and the values that appeal to power holders. Since they are interested in issues of political stability and legitimacy, power holders must be sensitized to the idea that human security does in fact address the interrelated issues of stability and legitimacy. To be sure, this is not going to be an easy task and may even require a paradigm shift. Thus, along with the task of building constituencies for political purposes, bridging the differences in mindsets needs to be done if the aim is to reach consensus on effective policy responses to issues on health and human security.

Role of Japan

Japan has been at the forefront in the conception and promotion of the human security concept. Japan has contributed significantly to the human security agenda with its sustained contribution to the Human Security Trust Fund. Moreover, Japan has been instrumental in the establishment of the Commission on Human Security, which was formally launched in January 2001.

Apart from Japan's contribution in the international arena, Tokyo has made a substantive contribution to health care in crisis-stricken countries in Southeast Asia. Indonesia, for example, has benefited from Japan's emergency grant aid for the purchase of essential drugs and medical supplies at the height of the Asian financial crisis. Japan has therefore provided the lead in operationalizing the human security concept into concrete policies on such critical issues as health care. It has adopted the human security concept to inform policies, both at home and abroad. Japan has also used the human security concept to convince people to regard health as a core human security value and a common agenda not only within Japan but also for the rest of the world.

It is hoped that Japan's commitment to the human security agenda is sustained in the years to come. As with any new enterprise, this agenda too must have leaders to lead the course and keep the momentum going. Japan has played and should continue to play this role.

Conclusion

Human security has now reached the point where it has to be operationalized into concrete policies and actions. Unless this can be done, human security risks losing its relevance. During these times of crises and uncertainties, when the world is faced with mounting pressures from globalization and inequality, poverty, infectious epidemics, and the many intra-state conflicts and other human insecurities, human security offers a new hope in addressing these issues. Human security can indeed offer new windows for meeting the security challenges of today. But delay we cannot. The recent experiences of complex humanitarian emergencies such as in Afghanistan, the looming threats brought on by the HIV/AIDS global pandemic, and, closer to home, the catastrophic impact on health care as a result of the Asian financial crisis are no doubt sufficient reasons for

the global community to act immediately and decisively.

Finally, there is no time for getting bogged down by the controversies that beset the conceptual development of human security. Constituency-building on health and human security is vital to prevent efforts to move the human security agenda forward from being stymied.

Bibliography

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