

Human Security:



United Nations Trust Fund
for Human Security

Bridging the Gap between Humanitarian Assistance and Sustainable Development

Armed conflicts and natural disasters have taken a staggering toll in human suffering. Almost 40 countries face crisis today, while globally, over 125 million people need immediate, life-saving assistance. Addressing the scale and complexity of these needs, and making good on the global promise of the Sustainable Development Goals to leave no one behind, depends on closing the ongoing divide between humanitarian and development assistance. An emphasis on addressing the root causes of crises, building resilience, and preventing risks would help move the world from delivering aid to ending need.

These are all core elements of the human security approach, which offers a proven, well-tested framework for bridging the humanitarian-development divide. Grounded in the notion that threats to people's survival, livelihood and dignity are seldom singular in nature, human security recognizes the full array of insecurities that can both propel the devastating force of a crisis and undercut prospects for sustainable development. This essential understanding informs comprehensive, integrated strategies that proactively identify root causes and reduce risks.





Connecting Immediate Responses to Long-Term Solutions

Human security complements immediate humanitarian efforts, while helping to shape long-term solutions that put people on the path to sustainable development. It highlights structural, institutional and behavioural changes that can reduce insecurities, while encouraging a process that builds trust, restores vital services and infrastructure, and fosters psychosocial healing as fundamentals for stability and development.

Centered on people and the most pressing concerns they face in everyday life, the human security approach encourages better alignment of international responses to local needs and vulnerabilities. It aims to ensure that actions taken by the international community as well as other actors empower and protect people, and result in tangible improvements that make them more resilient to risks. Close engagement of all key stakeholders begins with those most affected by a crisis, while systematically involving those responsible for relief, rehabilitation and development.

As a guiding framework linking humanitarian and development assistance, human security promotes collaborative and cross-sectoral planning, implementation and monitoring. This is critical to avoiding loosely coordinated but essentially individually focused solutions that are compartmentalized around different categories of people. By taking a comprehensive, prevention-oriented focus and by examining the overall needs of affected communities, the human security approach helps clarify and strengthen the continuum

between humanitarian and development interventions. It also bolsters close connections between international support and national and local priorities, both short and long term.

The first ever World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 signals a forward-looking agenda to reform a humanitarian system under great stress. Today, there is broad agreement on the need to go beyond delivering aid, including taking steps to diminish humanitarian needs. Human security makes essential contributions to transforming the system's effectiveness by reducing the risks to those who are most vulnerable, enhancing local capacities, building inclusive partnerships and connecting immediate responses to longer-term solutions.



Showing the Way Forward: The UN Trust Fund for Human Security

Established in 1999, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) has funded a number of programmes linking humanitarian and development assistance. In each case, the human security approach informed strategies that were comprehensive and context-specific, empowering and protecting people in the face of natural disasters, conflicts, displacement and extreme poverty.

Human security programmes have encouraged effective and highly coordinated actions by UN country teams, who have brought together their combined expertise on different elements of humanitarian and development responses. Programmes have consistently shown that long-term sustainable results are more likely to be generated by activities that go beyond responding to an immediate crisis.



REPUBLIC OF CONGO:

Restoring Livelihoods and Trust

The Republic of Congo's civil war ended with a peace agreement in 2003, but unresolved challenges continued to undermine stability and development. The Pool region was particularly affected, so the UN country team applied the human security approach to define and address impediments to lasting peace and well-being. In an initial analysis, it found that thousands of ex-combatants had no access to sustainable livelihoods, leaving them socially isolated and prone to criminal activities. Entire communities struggled with multiple challenges such as food insecurity, poor sanitation, lack of livelihoods, and persistent intercommunal and gender-based violence.

The UN country team drew together expertise from different entities to collectively tackle these root causes of instability. Assistance helped marginalized ex-combatants and female-headed households employ skills in agro-forestry, livestock and fisheries. The process bolstered agricultural activity in the region, providing opportunities for community members to work together on restoring social connections and trust. Psychosocial support for both men and women helped ease lingering psychological effects of the conflict, and stem sexual and gender-based violence. Over time, the United Nations measures not only contributed to a fall in violent outbreaks, but also improved basic social services, promoted a culture of peaceful coexistence, and helped communities move towards a stable, sustainable recovery from years of devastating conflict.



UGANDA:

Engaging and Empowering Communities

People in Northern Uganda suffered from decades of conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda. Over 1.5 million people were displaced. In the late 2000s, a peace agreement led to the cessation in hostilities, and the United Nations system began to shift from humanitarian relief to rehabilitation and development assistance.

Applying the human security approach helped the UN country team ease the transition. The process involved considering the broad range of insecurities resulting from over 20 years of conflict and dislocation through close consultation with humanitarian, development and community actors, and in full partnership with national and local authorities. Based on an integrated human security framework, the team set up community-based "peace rings" that engaged and empowered people in resolving local conflicts. These were complemented with development-related activities that improved access to health care and strengthened livelihoods in agriculture and through small-scale enterprises. Throughout, people were actively encouraged to participate in improving the well-being of their communities.



KOSOVO:

Development Solutions Shape a Common Future

In the late 1990s, conflict in Kosovo imposed many hardships, including a breakdown in social services and the interruption of economic activities. In some municipalities, tensions between communities led to the creation of separate social services and economic structures. Displaced minority groups were excluded from health care and education, as well as opportunities for livelihoods.

The UN country team developed a human security programme to protect and empower local stakeholders, build appropriate institutions and ensure that all communities can access public services. Municipal development plans designed in close consultation with different groups helped communities devise common solutions to their problems, and led to a number of inter-community development projects. Implementation of the plans was complemented by training for civil servants on issues such as participatory planning and human rights, which resulted in more people feeling that municipal authorities were responding to their needs. To strengthen the economic base as well as the sense of individual and community well-being, the programme helped people establish small enterprises. These not only produced new income, but also began forging economic links between people from different groups, cultivating trust and instilling joint commitment to a better future.



TIMOR LESTE:

Building Peace by Reaching the Most Vulnerable

Decades of conflict and unrest left Timor-Leste one of the newest and poorest countries in Asia. In rural areas in particular, the lack of essential services and limited livelihood options hampered peacebuilding and development. Many people were vulnerable to a mix of threats from severe food insecurity, limited opportunities for education, and high rates of maternal and child mortality.

A people-centered, comprehensive approach was needed to ensure that the dividends of the country's hard-won peace and independence could be shared by all social groups. In two districts with acute deprivation, the UN country team mobilized behind a human security programme to protect and empower vulnerable people by reducing extreme poverty and promoting social inclusion in the delivery of basic services. It developed more than 150 community-based self-help groups that provided training on agricultural and businesses skills, and shared information on reproductive health and rights. New roads and irrigation systems improved crop yields and access to markets. Together, these measures resulted in concrete and sustainable benefits in terms of health, economic opportunities and food security.

Learn more: www.un.org/humansecurity/
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