

RDD

Regional Development Dialogue

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ASSESSING HUMAN SECURITY

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ENNDA of Kenya

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Educating Somali Bantu Refugees in the US



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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

John F. Jones iii

ARTICLES

Nonny Schlotzhauer

Human Security: Assessing the Literature 1

Asfaw Kumssa

Human Security and Regional Development in the Ewaso Ng'iro
North Development Authority (ENNDA) of Kenya 18

Comment: Marian Bussey 34

Marian Bussey and James R. Moran

Assessing Human Security among American Indians: A Study of
the Impact of Alcohol Use 37

Comments: Nancy M. Lucero 54

Marie-Antoinette Sossou 57

Marie-Antoinette Sossou

Assessing Refugee Resettlement Programmes in the United States
and the Methodologies Used to Evaluate Outcome 59

Comments: Bayisa Wak-Woya 71

Ann Petrila 75

Ziblim Abukari	
Assessing Human Security in Ghana: A Developmental Agency Perspective	78
Comment: John Kayser	94
John F. Jones	
Indicators of Human Security: Search for True Criteria	96
Comment: Rodreck Mupedziswa	110
Qingwen Xu	
Migrant Workers in China: Rights and Security	114
Comment: Katsuaki Takai	130
Denise Pearson	
Educating Somali Bantu Refugees in the United States: A Human Security Assessment	133
Comment: Ziblim Abukari	143
Contributors	146

Editorial Introduction

John F. Jones

Welcome to this special issue of the *Regional Development Dialogue* (*RDD*) commemorating the thirtieth year of the journal's publication. To honor the occasion, the *RDD* comes with a new cover design and format. The topic selected for this issue is the assessment of human security. The articles and comments that follow offer a critical look at the methodology and practice of evaluating human security, a theme very relevant to the challenges of 2010, which in some respects are very different from those of thirty years ago when the *RDD* first appeared, but in other ways a continuation of concern for the dilemmas of development that UNCRD has always faced.

The Meaning of Human Security

Human security may be defined as **a process of intervention to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment through protection of civil rights and provision of basic human needs**. The definition is based on that of the Commission on Human Security (CHS), but with explicit reference to civil rights and basic human needs.¹ The phrase "human security" is intended to capture and refine development's changing character in today's environment, with new nuances and tone. Almost ten years earlier than CHS, in its 1994 *Human Development Report*² the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identified human security as the sum of seven distinct, though interrelated, dimensions of security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political.³ But as Guzzetta noted, the human security concept was not well formed and lacked agreement over what precisely each component consisted of.⁴ The explanation of human security took considerable time to reach any sort of consensus, and is in fact still debated. The emergence of the term in recent decades is especially linked to the plight of the world's absolute poorest as well as the tragedy of refugees and internally displaced persons, but the concept has implications for vulnerable populations of all kinds.⁵ Whether in the developed countries of the industrial North or in the global South where entire populations live in want, there is a common fear of the consequences of extreme poverty and associated violence.⁶ The UN Millennium Declaration sharp-

ened the focus on human security when calling on the international community to confront a global threat.

Acutely aware of the need to enhance freedom from fear and want in developing countries, the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) was among the first UN agencies to draw the attention of policymakers, practitioners, and scholars to human security in its journals *Regional Development Dialogue (RDD)* and *Regional Development Studies (RDS)*. These journals, along with the publications of the UNCRD Africa Office in Nairobi and the UNCRD Latin America and the Caribbean Office in Bogotá, initiated a series of studies on how human security was being implemented in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.⁷ Besides research studies, UNCRD can claim credit for the human security emphasis in its flagship International Training Course in Regional Development (ITC) in Nagoya, and its adaptation of the concept of security in its regional offices.⁸

Measurement and Programme Evaluation

The design of programmes and large-scale projects intended to promote human security in, say, Asian and African countries like Sri Lanka or Kenya calls for two early decisions: the choice of assessment criteria and, equally important, consensus around the research approach. Between the starting point of a research proposal and the end goal of policy recommendations and plan implementation there is the rough terrain of data collection and analysis. In a common sense way, the social consequences of development may be seen as improvements in health, education, housing, and welfare. The picture, however, is more complicated than that, since the categories or items used to assess people's well-being are limitless and the criteria for evaluation open to multiple interpretations.⁹

There are various ways of evaluating global, national, regional, and local programmes, calling for different aggregate or selective criteria.¹⁰ National aggregate measurements, for instance, have very often little meaning in villages and rural areas where access to the market as well as to health, education, and welfare services are either inadequate or entirely lacking. Furthermore, national planners have a tendency to plan for large-scale and centrally controlled projects, giving little attention to the local environment. The very success of a large-scale project can overshadow community concerns. The methodology of assessing local social development is intricate for a number of reasons. The first is that the complexity of local well-being is not modeled adequately by analytic techniques that assume simple, linear relationships.¹¹ Second, information on individuals or households can only be fully understood in the larger context of communities and nations within which they are "nested," adding an additional layer to the analysis.

Balancing Competing Interests

Assessing local social development has the added challenge of involving communities in gauging the impact of intervention on villages, neighbourhoods, households, and individuals. If intervention is from the outside, the measurement criteria may also come from the outside: from a nongovernmental organization (NGO)'s researchers, from professional literature or the experience of consultants. In that case, it is important to have the community participate in discussions on the benefits of the study along with the usefulness of the research indicators. Ideally, the community should have an opportunity to develop its own criteria of sustainable development, listing factors that raise or

lower their standard of living.¹² But a collaborative process of choosing criteria is also possible. That happens when community members as principal stakeholders, along with outside evaluators, make a joint selection of community development indicators. Community-selected indicators can be combined with standard instruments, perhaps adapted or refined by professional researchers. Whatever the method, there should be a mechanism for feedback, so that the results of the evaluation are shared with the community concerned.

Criteria for judging social progress can be grouped in different ways. Very broadly, investigation of global, regional or national data tends to rely on aggregate measurements such as the gross national product (GNP), or on large data sets like those of the general social survey conducted annually by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in Chicago. But a caveat is called for. While the indicators used on the global stage have their implications for towns and villages as well as for urban and rural communities, there is risk in adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to assessing community development. Standard measures for evaluating local social development do not always work, especially when the focus is on social or cultural issues. Financial indicators are used routinely in economic assessment, but they too can be misleading. To counterbalance and complement economic measurement, there is need for social indicators.

Accountability in Assessment

The focus of this *RDD* issue is the assessment of human security-related national and regional programmes and projects, including multilateral or government efforts as well as case studies of agency and nongovernmental projects. The intended emphasis is not so much the detailed findings of these separate studies as the methodology of their assessment. The underlying aim of this approach is to explore how well or not human security is evaluated. Policymakers, practitioners, and the public, when reviewing social or economic intervention, want to know if they can trust the programme evaluations that NGOs, governmental bodies, and multilateral agencies conduct. After all, the question in many people's minds is: Does human security intervention work and how thoroughly is it measured? There has been criticism of planning bodies and the effectiveness of their outcome studies.¹³ Doubts too have been raised regarding some of the laudatory reports coming from organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations agencies, and international NGOs describing their own work. Too often articles on programme evaluation of human security programmes and projects tend to be self-serving in exaggerating goal achievement.

Looking at the Assessment Landscape Through Different Lenses

Acknowledging that research designs have both strengths and weaknesses in their ability to determine effectiveness, in the articles that follow their authors examine programme evaluation in the field of human security. They offer critical appraisal of the methods used to gauge the success of different development programmes. With the exception of Nonny Schlotzhauer's opening bibliographic essay on the literature of human security assessment, each article is followed by one or two commentaries. The articles and comments presenting different points of view thus allow readers to weigh for themselves the validity and reliability of the various research methodologies employed to evaluate human security.

In his article on the Ewaso Ng'iro North Development Authority (ENNDA), Asfaw Kumssa examines a programme of the UNCRD Africa Office. ENNDA falls within the arid- and semi-arid lands of Kenya. Pastoralism is the dominant economic activity and the economy is dependent on a fragile ecosystem. Oftentimes, there are drought and floods that adversely affect the economy of the region. Also common are fierce competition and conflict over access and control of scarce resources such as water and pasture. Conflicts have led to loss of life and property. The region is among the most underdeveloped and poverty-ridden areas of the country. The region suffers from high levels of human insecurity and a poor infrastructure. The accessibility to safe drinking water in the region is quite low compared to the national average while sanitation facilities are clearly inadequate in most areas. Since 2004, the UNCRD Africa Office has been supporting ENNDA in efforts to address these problems through human resource development and plan preparation programmes. Kumssa examines and assesses the approach of the UNCRD Africa Office, and draws important lessons that might be of use in other parts of Africa with similar socioeconomic structures.

The article by Marian Bussey and James R. Moran examines the prevalence of alcohol abuse in the American Indian community in the United States as both a public health and a human security issue, and describes the process of design, implementation, and evaluation of a youth alcohol prevention programme. The design phase included community-level input from a variety of tribal members in an urban area to reach a consensus on the goals and values best related to creating positive futures for American Indian youth. The implementation operationalized those values into narratives and experiences for the youth, and the evaluation analysed data at multiple time points to assess for significant change. Suggestions are given for several evaluation designs, depending on agency resources. Having follow-up data, particularly for a programme involving youth, is seen as essential, as in many cases, including the intervention in this study, the most positive gains are achieved after the programme's end.

Marie-Antoinette Sossou next assesses research methodologies in refugee programmes in the United States, and reviews the recent history of refugee resettlement. As she points out, the principal research methodologies used to assess the overall well-being of resettled people focused primarily on physical health, mental health, and psychosocial issues. In her article, she pays close attention to the methodologies utilized to identify the health and acculturation-related traumas of different refugee groups, namely, the Bosnians, the Ethiopians, the Khmers, and the Somalis who were resettled in the US through voluntary agencies and sponsors. The article mentions both standard psychological tests and more open-ended instruments to measure the social situation of refugees, their well-being, and their resettlement problems. In reviewing the literature, the author maintains that the prevalence of serious mental health issues among displaced populations in the US demonstrates a need for more effective research methodologies to determine successful refugee resettlement. Sossou questions the traditional medical model so often used to evaluate the problems experienced by displaced people, and advocates more appropriate methods for assessing coping strategies, mental health, and the general well-being of resettled refugees.

In his study of Ghana, Ziblim Abukari maintains that recent statistics suggests a very poor quality of life for most people in sub-Saharan Africa. In the decades following UNDP's *Human Development Report 1994*,¹⁴ national governments and bilateral and multilateral organizations have devised different methods of assessing human security.

Using gross domestic product (GDP) and other human development indices such as access to safe drinking water, healthcare, education, and sanitation, along with the protection of civil liberties, many nations and organizations measure human security. This article examines critically how human security has been measured from a development agency perspective. Using the final evaluation reports of Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI), Ghana Program, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA-Ghana), Abukari explores how the assessment method of these two NGOs stands up to criticisms leveled in the literature against broader concepts of human security. The article concludes that the definition and assessment of human security should transcend aggregate data to include considerations of how individuals at the local level of society are impacted by the intervention of agencies such as OICI and ADRA. The author investigates the limitations on assessing human security based on aggregate data, and makes recommendations on how to improve human security's programme evaluation.

In his article on measurement criteria, John F. Jones examines from an empirical viewpoint human security's indicators to see how valid and reliable they are. After considering the indices and relevant criteria used by such bodies as UNDP and the World Bank, the article specifically narrows its focus on global monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — monitoring undertaken by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)'s Statistics Division with data contained in the annual reports of the MDG Gap Task Force. By and large, the reports indicate that the measurement of goals appears to be valid, certainly as far as conceptual validity is concerned. But reliability is open to question in that the trustworthiness of research depends upon the willingness of its sponsors to commit themselves to its continued funding, its methodology, and its implementation. In this instance, carrying out the research depends upon UN member states, their governments, and collaborators. This support has never been assured and has fallen short, affecting the indicators' predictive value. However, leaving aside the accuracy of forecasting target timetables, the MDG collective indicators are themselves sound measurements of poverty alleviation and social progress and by that standard are among the best means of assessing human security.

In her study of migrant workers in China's cities, Qingwen Xu shows how in 2008, approximately 132 million migrant workers had moved from China's rural regions to urban centres in search of work.¹⁵ Unfortunately, China's longstanding urban-rural distinction, as a result of the country's household registration system, has made life difficult for these rural-to-urban migrant workers in several respects. China's rapid economic development in the past decades has been fueled in part by these under-educated, low-wage migrant workers who have flocked to the cities for manufacturing jobs. But, because these migrant workers are registered with city governments as "temporary residents," they do not have equal access to state-subsidized public benefits and must rely on their meager paychecks for housing, healthcare, and education, benefits that urban residents enjoy based on their residential (urban) status. The urban-rural classification also upholds a societal bias that marginalizes rural-to-urban migrant workers and makes it difficult for them and their families to fully integrate into urban communities. Thus, China's urban-rural distinction leaves migrant workers insecure economically, politically, and socially. This article assesses several essential human security indicators of China's rural-to-urban migrant workers, and explores the economic, political, and social thresholds that are essential to China's migrant worker rights and well-being.

Within the theoretical context of culture and education, Denise Pearson examines efforts to educate and integrate children of Somali Bantu refugees into American public schools. Her article offers a framework for discussing human security evaluation using the case of refugees living in the United States. It highlights the various dimensions of human security and the challenge of assessment and evaluation. The critical connection between human security measurement, relevant interventions, and sustainability of progress is evident, and Pearson advocates the implementation of evaluation processes so that they can be utilized to improve the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at improving the human security of at-risk populations. There are many generic evaluation models to consider, although some appear more promising than others. The author presents several of these models and their potential to effectively measure the human security of refugee populations in the United States.

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