The Human Security Approach in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

A Civil Society Position Paper

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Input to the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions
on Human Security, in particular 66/290 and 66/763

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In an interconnected world, security must be seen as a global public good. The state-centric notion of security, which emphasises the territorial integrity of the state and the role of military force, falls short in addressing the different dimensions of security in the life of individual human beings. State-centric security policies tend to take a top-down approach that fails to address issues that ultimately affect civilians' perceived sense of safety, peace and justice in the long term. There is a growing consensus about the need for a more holistic approach, based on a better understanding of what individuals and communities need in order to feel safe and secure. By recognising the structural causes of conflicts in terms of social, economic and political exclusion, grievances and inequalities, the human security approach requires analysing root causes, mapping existing local capacities for peace, and designing coordinated strategies for civil society and governmental preventive action as part of a long-term commitment to peace.

In response to the recent Human Security Survey[1], we welcome the initiative to gather input not only from Member States but also from NGOs and civil society on human security initiatives. UN GA resolution 64/701 contains limited reference to independent civil society / NGO initiatives in the section "Initiatives to promote human security". This paper offers civil society perspectives on the human security concept and how it applies in the UN and broader contexts, relating in particular to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. It identifies key peace and security challenges, and makes recommendations to the UN and member states on the development of the concept as both as an operational and policy framework. It provides input to the interpretation of the General Assembly resolutions 66/290 and 66/763, with a focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

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[1] As per paragraph 8 of the resolution (A/RES/66/290)

1. A people-centred, bottom-up approach

Human security refers to the security of the individual as opposed to the security of states. When individuals and communities are put at the centre of analysis, there are implications for the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of security and peacebuilding initiatives. All these require in-depth knowledge of the situation and context-specific solutions. The human security approach is not only centred on people as objects of interventions, but also as providers of security in their own right. This takes into consideration the needs of the populations, their capacities and, fundamentally, their judgement. Sustainable human security is therefore not only the responsibility of states, but also of citizens and local communities. Consequently, **international efforts should support local capacities and leadership to enable local response strategies to conflict as much as possible**.[2]

Ultimately, the legitimacy of both state institutions and security strategies relates to the extent to which populations perceive access to justice, basic human needs and space for participation.[3] The security policymaking process requires participatory mechanisms to determine what individuals and communities perceive as security threats as well as what is needed in order to feel secure. The human security approach recognises that civil society is not a homogeneous group. Consequently, the perspectives and needs of different segments of the population - including men, women, boys and girls, refugees, minorities, etc. – need to be considered. A gender-inclusive approach further recognises and addresses the different vulnerabilities of women and men to these threats, and their respective strengths and skills to build a more secure society (UNSC res 1325).[4] **Accountability towards local populations requires long-term relationship building and collaboration with a broad range of local actors, including diverse civil society and interest groups.**[5]

The importance of local ownership is increasingly emphasised in policy discourses. UN resolutions on human security and policies of some member states formally recognise and prescribe inclusive mechanisms and assessments (UN res 66/763). Yet, state-centric strategies that intentionally or unintentionally exclude civil society are still the norm, and there is limited knowledge and research conducted on local opinions, perceptions and experiences that shape or react to peacebuilding processes. **The UN and member states should take concrete steps to support inclusive participatory mechanisms and response frameworks, to ensure all interventions respond to locally defined priorities identified through multi-stakeholder dialogue.**

2. Peace and Security Challenges

Growing complexity of threats to peaceful co-existence and social justice
Human security requires multiple and diverse actors to develop solutions to interdependent threats. The interconnectedness of threats means they may spill over from the borders of one country or region to another, eventually affecting people across a wider region and even globally. Human security also recognizes the interlinkages between peace, development, human rights and other fields, which are all relevant to address the cross-cutting challenges in conflict-affected contexts. **Human security calls for complementary strategies ranging from the local to the regional and global levels, as well as inter-sectoral collaboration.**

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[2] See for instance the recommendations of the Local First initiative: www.localfirst.org.uk
[3] Futamura, Newman & Tadjbakhsh: Towards a Human Security Approach to Peacebuilding; United Nations University 2010
[4] Policy Paper on EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), 2013, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)
[5] Policy Paper on EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), 2013, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)

Violence as an 'unintended outcome' of bad practice and lack of conflict sensitivity
The implementation of short-term Security Sector Reform and Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration programmes can generate more harm than good when carried out with minimum consultation or involvement of diverse, local stakeholders or appropriate contextualization. Even well-intended interventions can undermine existing peacebuilding efforts or contribute to new outbreaks of violence if not properly tuned in with the context. Conflict sensitivity entails a thorough understanding of how an intervention interacts with the operating context, and acting to ensure that any potential negative impacts as a result of this interaction are minimised. The human security framework provides a basis to better inform security sector reform and other security initiatives to minimize 'preventable harms'. **UN institutions should mainstream a comprehensive approach to conflict sensitivity through all its agencies and its activities.**

A Comprehensive Approach that is Human Security-centred
The growing push for a comprehensive approach at the UN requires not only a multidisciplinary approach by states, but also regional intergovernmental bodies and civil society organisations (CSOs) from all fields to work together. Especially when it comes to foreign interventions, this has consequences for how actions in one sector affect those in another, requiring good communication and coordination mechanisms. Governments and CSOs tend to analyse and define problems differently, identifying different causes of conflicts. Before any action can take place, first there must be a common understanding of the conflict, and goals need to be aligned. However, as cooperation increases, the independence of each actor and their respective roles must also be respected. Governments and even the UN have been known to overlook the independent position of civil society organisations as they seek structural integration of security missions, with CSOs as as 'force-multipliers'. [6] This can be harmful to the role and independence and of CSOs, as it can result in a loss of trust that enables them to work with local communities. **Increased communication and cooperation, not integration, should be supported by professionally facilitated spaces and institutional mechanisms for multi-stakeholder dialogue.** [7]

3. Cases for Human Security

This section illustrates how a human security framework applies in different contexts, based on lessons learned from the work of civil society in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. A selection of recommendations is highlighted under each subtheme below.

Countering Violent Extremism
In the struggle against violent extremism, many governments have adopted far-reaching security measures that have adversely affected fundamental freedoms of people around the world and limited the space for dialogue and peacebuilding. The UN has urged the global community to move towards a more people-centred approach to security, extending beyond the traditional approach that focuses on states. Counter-terrorism measures would be more effective if based on notions of human security, with a focus on root causes and

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[6] E.g. the establishment of UN Integrated Missions – whereby humanitarian coordination and leadership are placed under the umbrella of political and peacekeeping missions – has raised serious concerns within the humanitarian community: "A Partnership at Risk? The UN-NGO relationship in light of UN Integration" February 2012, Norwegian Refugee Council.
[7] "Civil Society Perspectives on the Comprehensive Approach", Policy Brief February 2013, 3P Human Security.

context specificity. Based on several regional consultations on this issue, the Civil Society Network for Human Security published "10 Human Security Guiding Practices to Countering Violent Extremism"[8], including:

- *Military strategies to eradicate terrorism often harm innocent civilians. Such strategies must be amended to prioritize individual freedoms, safety, identity, and dignity.*
- *Restricting civil liberties and civil society space in the name of security creates the conditions of repression that fuel violent extremism.*
- *To effectively address terrorism, security policy must address root causes and focus on conflict prevention and transformation.*

Security Sector Reform

There is wide acknowledgement that civilian oversight, participation and ownership of the security sector and reform is important. While many state constitutions enshrine these principles, there are fewer processes for community participation and ownership of SSR processes. In some instances, security forces assume humanitarian, development and peacebuilding roles for which they are not properly trained and equipped. Misunderstanding and adversarial relationships between CSOs and security forces often result, prompting some civil society groups and international NGOs to withdraw from contact with security forces. This hinders the development of collaborative approaches to conflict transformation and prevention. It also impedes efforts to differentiate the appropriate role of nongovernmental actors, especially civil society voices, from that of government security forces. In a project that seeks to bridge this gap[9], 3P Human Security has concluded:

- *Protecting the appropriate functions of civil society and defining the relationship between nongovernmental and governmental forces in local conflict settings can help to forge more integrated policy solutions and align the policies of intervention forces with human security principles*
- *There is a need to recalibrate civil society-security sector roles, norms, and relationships by building capacity for greater civil society engagement with security sector forces for jointly addressing global threats and supporting human security.*
- *Military personnel and security forces would benefit from consulting CSOs on the ground. Referring to local civil society expertise in civil-military training, and designing institutional mechanisms for communication and coordination would be important steps forward.*

Organised Crime in the Americas

Levels of violence and the use of torture in Mexico are increasing. Counter-narcotics strategies, based on a military approach, that suspend due process, use torture to elicit testimony, and fail to bring military perpetrators to justice are creating widespread instability. These practices threaten the shared security goals of both Mexico and its neighbouring countries, notably the United States. The current US policy towards Mexico aims at short-term suppression of the problems while neglecting root causes, which require longer-term planning. A policy brief was developed by Serapaz and 3P Human Security on achieving human security on the ground in Mexico, with recommendations to address the root causes of violence and instability from organised crime and drug trafficking.[10] The policy brief includes the following:

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[8] "10 Human Security Principles for Countering Violent Extremism", the Civil Society Network for Human Security, a joint initiative of GPPAC and the Human Security Collective, September 2012.

[9] 'Increasing civil society participation in Security Sector Reform (SSR) to enhance human security' – a collaborative project between 3P Human Security, GPPAC, Alliance for Peacebuilding and the Kroc Institute

[10] "Defining Human Security", Policy Brief June 2011, 3P Human Security.

- *Refocus assistance from military support to investments in promotion of good governance, accountability mechanisms, and social services.*
- *Foster a citizen-oriented state along with an active civil society to hold it accountable.*
- *Support the legitimacy of Mexican civil society and their efforts to defend human rights and foster a culture of rule of law, tolerance and participatory governance.*
- *Foster sustainable development by encouraging fair trade, debt relief and sustainable economic development measures.*

<u>Human Security Framework for the Pacific</u>

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) developed a Human Security Framework (2012-2015)[11], based on six years of research, consultations and case studies done from 2006 to 2008, major regional documents, and experiences and lessons learnt from the implementation of the Framework's concepts (2008-12). The Framework is Pacific-specific, and a common representation of the unique understanding of human security in the Pacific region. It has been developed by the PIF Secretariat based on the guidance of Member States and partners, such as FemLINK PACIFIC, secretariat of the GPPAC Pacific regional network.[12] The Forum Regional Security Committee recommended the incorporation of *conflict sensitive approaches* into programmes and policies to address causes of conflict, the monitoring of conflict escalation, and strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms. The framework principles are: preventive, localised, collaborative, people-centred and inclusive. The Principle of 'Preventive' includes conflict sensitivity in programmes and policy as well as the addressing of root causes and mobilisation of grievances. Example actions in the area of political security were identified as:

- *Include women in peace and security decision making at all levels, and promote greater participation of women in parliaments and other decision making bodies, in line with UNSCR1325*
- *Promote leadership and civic participation by young people,* ensuring equal participation by young women
- *Ensure conflict sensitivity in the drafting and implementation of national development plans*

4. Recommendations to the United Nations

Although the Secretary General of the UN recognises the need for an integrated approach to human security, we still see insufficient implementing capacity and political will to dedicate resources to the implementation of these resolutions and their nexus with peacebuilding processes. The Barcelona Report of 2004 proposed a Human Security Response Force to make sure that high level strategic ideals connect with what is done on the ground, however this has yet to be enacted.[13] Furthermore, whilst the UN Peacebuilding Commission is mentioned as a key mechanism at the UN to ensure coherence of peacebuilding activities in post-conflict situations[14], much remains to be done with regards to civil society involvement and impact.[15] Finally, conflict prevention should not only be focused on post-conflict contexts and recovery; it should look further into the nexus between sectors such as development, human rights and justice, and not only in so-called fragile states.

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[11] "Human Security Framework for the Pacific 2012-2015", Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2012.

[12] FemLINKPACIFIC, GPPAC Regional Lead Organisation of the Pacific.

[13] "A Human Security Doctrine" - Barcelona Report, 15 September 2004

[14] UN GA Resolution 64/701, paragraph 52

[15] The Peacebuilding Commission 5-Year Review: The Civil Society Perspective. GPPAC/WFM-IGP Policy Paper, June 2010

Summary of recommendations:

1. **Support local capacities and leadership for local solutions to conflict.** *For example: balancing the convening power of the UN with local ownership, building national capacities to own the processes surrounding conflict prevention, including making UN/member states funding and policy processes accessible.*

2. **Ensure the UN, its partners and member states are accountable towards local populations. This requires crating multi-stakeholder forums for dialogue to build long-term relationships and collaboration with a broad range of local actors, including diverse civil society and interest groups.** *For example: The UN could convene and facilitate a dialogue between civil society and security actors and institutions to develop National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325, to advance women's roles in a preventive and human security approach to security sector governance.*

3. **The UN and member states should take concrete steps to support inclusive participatory mechanisms and response frameworks, to ensure that all interventions respond to locally defined priorities identified through multi-stakeholder dialogue.** *For example: the UN could convene and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues that allow for regular processes for joint conflict analysis between civil society, business, government and international stakeholders.*

4. **Enhance the UN's capacity to coordinate complementary strategies ranging from the local to the regional and global levels, as well as inter-sectoral collaboration.** *For example: shape the UN mandate to coordinate the relationship and coordination of governments, civil society, Regional Inter-Governmental Organisations, and other stakeholders as part of a global peace architecture, which can foster communication and coordination amongst these actors.*

5. **Ensure conflict sensitivity in all UN operations and programmes.** *For example: the UN should mandate a 1 day training course in the principles and skills of conflict sensitivity for all staff in all agencies to ensure UN actions – from needs assessments to program implementation and evaluation – do not inadvertently negatively impact conflict dynamics.*

6. **Work towards increased communication and cooperation, not integration.** *The UN should recognise the need to protect humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality to ensure that non-governmental organisations have the ability to safely and professionally conduct their work independent from short term political and security missions that would prevent humanitarian and some other CSOs from becoming targets of armed groups or to lose their trust with communities where they work.[16]*

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[16] "Civil Society Perspectives on the Comprehensive Approach", Policy Brief February 2013, 3P Human Security.

5. References & Find Out More:

- *The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC):* a global network of civil society organisations working for conflict prevention & peacebuilding - www.gppac.net

- *Human Security Collective and the Civil Society Network for Human Security:* a platform bringing together CSOs from fields such as peacebuilding, development and human rights, concerned with measures to address violent extremism - www.humansecuritynetwork.net

- IKV Pax Christi: working with partners for peace, reconciliation and justice worldwide: www.ikvpaxchristi.nl

- Local First initiative: A community of practice and knowledge about an approach to international development that prioritises the views and leadership of people and organisations in the countries affected, over those of outsiders from the international community: www.localfirst.org.uk

- 3P Human Security: Partners for Peacebuilding Policy – a civil society voice on US foreign policy: 3phumansecurity.org

- Serapaz: Servicios y Asesoría para la Paz: Mexican civil society for the peaceful transformation of social conflicts: www.serapaz.org.mx

- FEMLINK PACIFIC: Women, Peace and Security in Fiji and the Pacific region, and GPPAC Regional Secretariat for the Pacific: www.femlinkpacific.org.fj

- Policy Paper on EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), 2013, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)

- "A Partnership at Risk? The UN-NGO relationship in light of UN Integration", February 2012, Norwegian Refugee Council.

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