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Human Security: An approach and methodology for business contributions to peace and sustainable development

WHAT IS HUMAN SECURITY?

> *"Human security, in its broadest sense, embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment -- these are the interrelated building blocks of human and therefore national security."* **Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General**[1]

The concept of human security is about understanding security in terms of the risks and insecurities faced by individuals and groups at grass roots level. It is an approach to the problematic of security which emphasises the importance of the lived experiences of those caught up in crisis, conflict and severe need.

It is about engaging individuals, families, villages and cities, companies and community groups as the vital organs of a society, alongside government in an ongoing conversation, and strategies about what is needed for people to lead tolerable lives. It is an approach which not only seeks to protect people from existential threats, the so-called 'vital core' of life,[2] but which recognises that effective solutions to insecurity have to be rooted in people's support, expectations and own resources. This idea of security is summed up in the UN's phrase: ***'Freedom from fear, freedom from want and dignity'***. Human security in action is about attaining the social, political, environmental and economic conditions conducive to alife in freedom and dignity.[3]

In the UN definition,[4] human security is a comprehensive, prevention orientated, people-centred vision of security which seeks to address a broad range of threats faced by individuals and communities. Human security is context-specific: what makes people afraid and what threatens them will vary from one place and time to another, so it requires an integrated and bottom-up approach which engages with grass-roots perceptions, and real-life dynamics.[5] This means that responses and strategies also need to be able to adapt as circumstances shift, in order to be relevant and useful. It is not just about giving traditional security policies and strategies a 'human face' but of promoting a new approach to what/who needs to be protected and the means by which security is achieved, and risks mitigated.

Human security could be described as ' the security of small things' because it is not about armies and weapons, the control of territory and defence of state borders which are the classic concerns of traditional security thinking. But small things are important from a practical point of view: having a roof over your head, a job, clean water, your children being able to go to school. Small things are fundamental for establishing durable peace, and building a firm base from the ground up for lasting stability, preventing a return of conflict and achieving development. Research on community policing in Medellin suggests that human security, or 'security from below' means increasing the capacity of people on the ground and not just national policymakers, empowering them to define the values, norms and goals of security with development and democracy.[6]

Kofi Annan added a third element of social inclusion -or having equal access to the political, social and economic policy making processes, as well as being able to draw equal benefits from them. This is linked to the establishment of rule of law an effective justice system.[7]

HUMAN SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Respect for human rights is an integral and indispensable component of human security. However, there are important distinctions in the ideas represented by each concept and in how they are put into practice. Human rights are universal and indivisible. Human security focuses on the most fundamental rights – to life, basic needs and dignity, and attaches particular importance to the local context in which threats to these fundamental rights exist. Depending on context, different kinds of rights may be in jeopardy. What is important in human security is responding to a localised range of threats and providing individuals with the ability to articulate and achieve what is necessary to address these threats to make their lives safe and tolerable. Human Security emphasises interconnections, both between individual types of rights and needs on the one hand – for example how physical safety is linked to the prospects for material welfare, how land rights are linked to dignity, and on the other the connection between human rights and development .It pays attention to the intersections of diverse forces in peoples lives and the nexus between issues in different domains – for example between economy, conflict, environment, health (physical and mental) and justice.[8] As a comprehensive response to improving security human security means having 'an eye' for these intersections in any given context.

HS offers the chance to 'ground' human rights and human development work in the actual nature of being and wellbeing , directing attention both to potential dangers and imminent threats through a focus on vulnerability, but also how to achieve potential upsides and improvements to people's welfare and safety.

HS emphasises capability through its stress on empowerment as well as protection.

According to Gasper: 'To only be protected can be disempowering. It reduces both felt security and objective security because capabilities wither or are never developed and confidence stays low'.[9]

The Global Environmental Change and Human Security programme defines the bridging between rights and development as 'where individuals and communities have the options necessary to end, mitigate or sufficiently adapt to threats to their human social and environmental rights; the capacity and freedom to exercise these options and actively participate in pursuing these options.[10]

In this respect, human security provides a more expansive vision, and offers more scope for strategy than a rights based approach. In this it chimes with the aims of the 2030 SDG Agenda which envisages action on multiple fronts to build the resilience of societies against crisis, underdevelopment, conflict, lack of governance and climate change. In practice because human security is not codified in a set of principles such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and because it has to be defined contextually, it does not function as a compliance concept. There are no universally agreed benchmarks against which to measure or verify it. Therefore it should be seen as a complement to initiatives on business and human rights and as underpinning the fulfilment of the SDGs while allowing for new interactions between those who are insecure and those able to address their insecurity.

BUSINESS AND THE VALUE ADDED OF HUMAN SECURITY

There are many ways in which business intersects with the idea of security from below and in the everyday, and with the aim of building community and individual resilience . As employers, companies are a source of material security but also personal dignity. They operate amid and rely on networks of social relationships – between individuals, communities, governments and other stakeholders from civil society , international organisations and media.

While security provision is acknowledged as a public good and the responsibility of the state, companies are frequently the 'force on the ground' and how they engage at the local level is an integral part of transforming the post-conflict environment, delivering not only economic development, but influencing social cohesion and applying core norms such as human rights and good governance . Companies often create heightened expectations and fears among local populations since their influence is proportionately greater than in settled societies with robust governance and universal rule of law. They also deploy leverage over other actors, and are therefore able to act as convenors, bringing together diverse capacities and perspectives among local, national and global stakeholders.

Ideas of business and peace, corporate social responsibility and licence (or privilege) to operate express an increasing understanding that business and investment have a role to play in achieving security and sustainable development. However, innovative approaches are required to assist business to deploy this role and build human security. Such approaches emphasise the need to generate positive connections between investment and security, a recognition that the quality and methods of development matter, and that while companies are not primarily development actors, they can make important contributions to sustainable development with security.[11] They are based on achieving new forms of association and co-operation between companies, communities and other stakeholders.

A HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH AS MOBILISATION AND METHODOLOGY

While the private sector is integral to addressing human security and achieving the SDGs, it cannot do so alone. There is a need for constructive engagement with other development and peacebuilding actors, and co-ordinated efforts to deal with threats and build comprehensive forms of security. A human security approach for business is firstly about mobilising effective **partnerships** involving the private sector with national government, international agencies, local administrations and civil society. The most important partnership is between companies and citizens, in which the resources and interests of each are recognised and maximised.

Secondly, human security is a **methodology** for doing things differently and for how companies can engage productively with the needs of ordinary people to build peace, limit risks and generate sustainable development. This methodology is grounded in a focus on people, a bottom-up and participatory approach and integrating multiple contributions and types of threat into security provision.

HUMAN SECURITY BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

The proposal of Human Security Business Partnership (HSBP) is based on identifying and leveraging what are the shared interests of business, policy and communities in specific situations of insecurity. Using human security as a language to frame common goals and to provide the methodology for addressing security needs, and limiting risk, HSBP's aim to build new forms of co-operation and alliances involving the private sector;

HSBPs seek to replace sometimes confrontational relationships between communities, outside stakeholders and business with a new form of dialogue, a set of agreed objectives and a participatory process for generating development with security.

HSBPs will draw on key principles including the respect of human rights, justice, equity and transparency . They will aim to deliver protection and empowerment by exploiting areas of overlapping concern and interest between investors and communities within a context of national and local policy goals, while recognising and respecting the relative capacities and resources of different stakeholders . Where HR uses rules to benchmark companies and hold them to account, operationalising HS in terms of the private sector is about understanding the impacts of business operations, identifying both positive and negative potential and establishing common goals and mutual processes.

HSBPs represent an agenda to discuss needs, objectives and an equitable distribution of power, realised through partnership, dialogue and constructive co-operation.

The HSBP Framework is currently being elaborated as a research and policy programme by the London School of Economics, UN agencies, SwissPeace, International Alert, Peace StartUp, Business and Human Rights Network and ESSEC-Irene. The Framework will emphasise participatory processes for creating positive interactions between diverse stakeholders, to improve the kinds of freedoms envisaged in the human security concept and SDGs. The HSBP Framework will not be a compliance or regulatory mechanism for business. Nor is it intended as a way of delivering CSR. It is intended to encourage a flexible, dynamic and mutually beneficial agenda for action, between business and other stakeholders, which is tailored to local circumstances.

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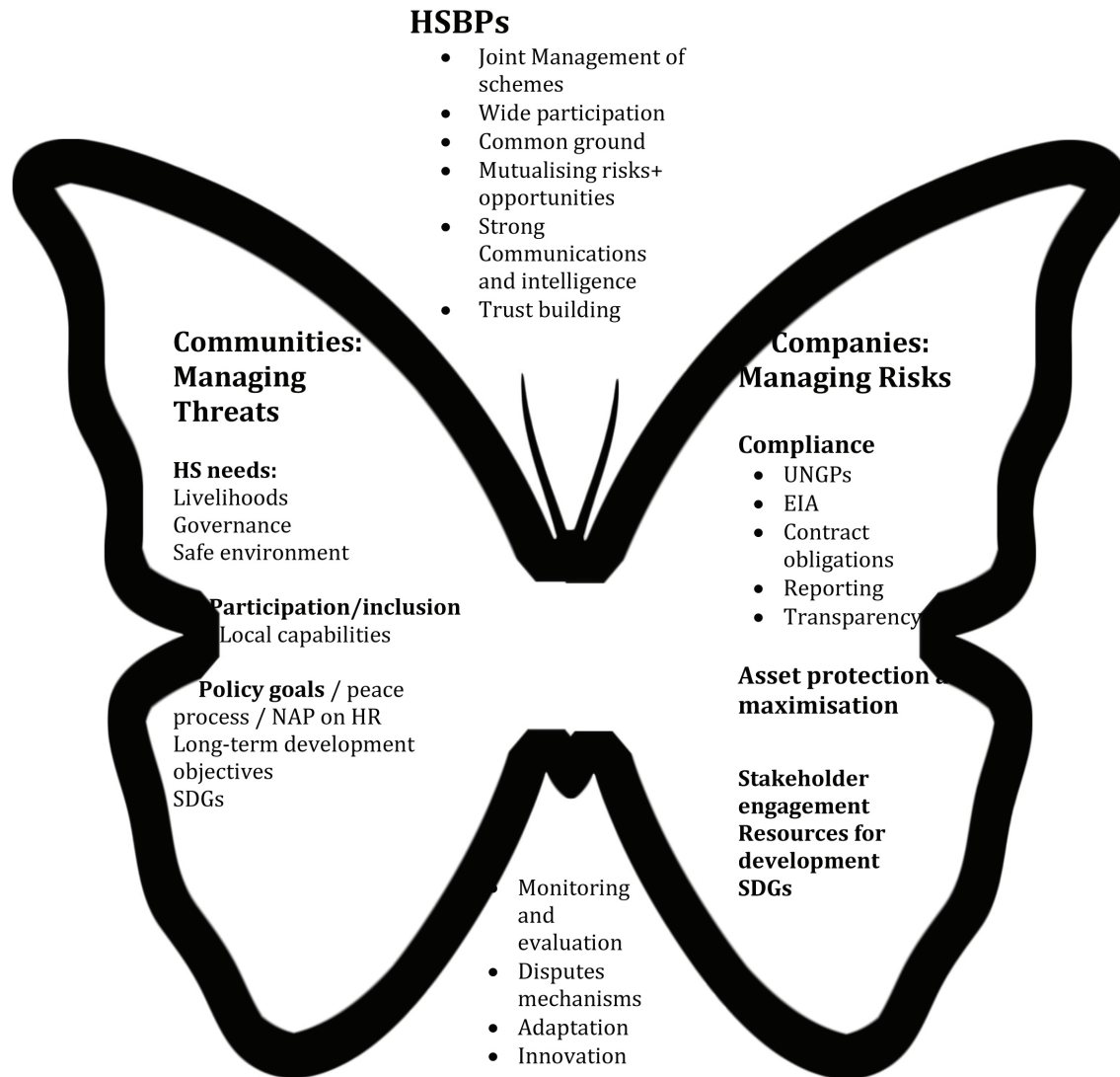
HSBPs
- Joint Management of schemes
- Wide participation
- Common ground
- Mutualising risks+ opportunities
- Strong Communications and intelligence
- Trust building

Communities: Managing Threats

HS needs:
Livelihoods
Governance
Safe environment

Participation/inclusion
Local capabilities

Policy goals / peace process / NAP on HR
Long-term development objectives
SDGs

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Disputes mechanisms
- Adaptation
- Innovation

Companies: Managing Risks

Compliance
- UNGPs
- EIA
- Contract obligations
- Reporting
- Transparency

Asset protection **maximisation**

Stakeholder engagement
Resources for development
SDGs

Figure 1. Human Security – Connecting Companies to Communities and Government; Connecting compliance to co-construction of peace.