United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security Projects implemented by UN-Habitat in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Sri Lanka

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Introduction

In March 1999, the Government of Japan and the United Nations Secretariat launched the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) from which the Commission on Human Security prepared the 2003 *Human Security Now* report as a contribution to the UN Secretary-General plead to progress on the goals of 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'. UNTFHS main objective is to advance the operational impact of the human security concept particularly in countries and regions where the insecurities of people are most manifest and critical, such as in natural and human made disasters areas.[1]

With the growing urbanization of the population, human security as protecting 'the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment' increasingly means providing the conditions of livelihood and dignity in urban areas. Living conditions are crucial for human security, since an inadequate dwelling, insecurity of tenure and insufficient access to basic services have a strong negative impact on the life of the urban population, particularly the urban poor. With spatial discrimination and social exclusion the rights to the city and to citizenship are limited or precluded.

In this framework, the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Fukuoka has coordinated three United Nations Human Security Trust Fund programmes in Afghanistan, North East Sri Lanka and Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia, on informal settlements upgrading. On the assumption that community empowerment is crucial for the reconstruction of war affected societies, all programmes adopted the Community Action Planning (CAP) method, a community based consultative planning process, and established Community Development Councils (CDCs) as the most effective approach to improving living conditions in informal settlements.

The growing inequalities between the well offs and the poor, as well as the social, economic and political exclusion of large sectors of the society make the security paradigm increasingly complex. By now, human security has broadened to include such conditions as freedom from poverty, access to work, education and health. This, in turn, requires changing perspective from state security to people centred security.

As stressed by the Commission on Human Security, protecting people, institutions and national values remains in the hands of the state. Yet, as the notion of human security has broadened to include new menaces, so has the range of actors. Therefore, empowering individuals and the community to take security issues in their hands is increasingly important. This is particularly true in countries still affected by war like Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, or in post conflict countries like Cambodia, where reintegrating refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and enhancing their human security is an arduous task. Experience shows that when empowered to identify their needs and priorities, communities contribute themselves to

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[1] The term "human security" entered mainstream development discourse with the Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security. At the 2000 UN Millenium Summit, the idea of an independent Commission on Human Security was launched, at the time when a number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region were reeling from the impacts of the Asian financial crisis of 1997 that reversed the major achievements in poverty reduction of two decades.

implementing the solutions that best fit their capacity and know-how. To ensure human security as well as state security, particularly in conflict and post-conflict areas where institutions are often fragile and unstable, rebuilding communities becomes an absolute priority to promote peace and reconciliation by a seamless transition from protection to empowerment.

Afghanistan: *Upgrading of informal settlements in three cities*

Institutional recognition of informal settlements and empowering communities in human security are at the core of the *Upgrading of informal settlements in three cities* programme strategy to improve human security in Afghanistan urban areas. The programme main objective is to improve the urban environment in informal settlements. This is to be achieved by i) providing security of tenure and adequate access to basic infrastructure and, ii) empowering the communities to directly implement specific projects and to negotiate with central and municipal agencies. Thus, the approach is substantially different from the prescriptive planning approach adopted in Afghanistan in the past.

The programme rests upon the recognition of the financial and technical constraints the country has to face as a consequence of the fifty years long conflict and the complex post-war conditions under which reconstruction is taking place. In addition, to confront Taliban unrest, public institutions need to be strengthened and a new relation of trust and mutual engagement established between citizens and the state.

Since its inception in 2005, the programme has been implemented in 48 settlements in Mazar-e-Sharif (Balkh province) to the north, Jalalabad (Nangarhar province) to the east and Kandahar to the south, with an average of three projects per settlement. Local projects are carried out with the direct involvement of CDCs and through the Community Action Planning approach[2]. The project settlements were selected in agreement with the Municipalities and the Ministry of Urban Development (MUD), while other partners such as the Central Authority for Water and Sanitation Supply or the Afghanistan Electricity Authority have been implicated directly by the CDCs. In addition, some CDCs have contacted international donors, thus proving their capacity and level of empowerment.

Programme background

In the past twenty-five years the urban population of Afghanistan has doubled after speeding up in the last five years to reach the highest rate of urbanization in Asia. The absence of a clear land policy, the unclear distinction of roles and responsibilities between MUD and local governments as well as the inability of the judiciary system to resolve land disputes, deeply undermines urban governance and management. The civil war among Mujaheddin factions that beleaguered the country from 1989 to 1996, has hampered the process of state building and reduced human security.

Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have moved to the cities since the end of the seventies, putting additional pressure on already problematic urban contexts. With the expansion of informal settlements resulting from the rapid population growth, human security is in a critical state. Most new settlements are characterized by a high density of self built housing, often with no security of tenure, poor environmental conditions, lack of basic

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[2]   This methodology had already been applied by the National Solidarity Programme funded by the European Union.

infrastructure and services, very low incomes and limited job opportunities and rare or no opportunity to participate in the decision making process.

In recent years the government has acknowledged the existence of informal settlements and the necessity to provide better living conditions to their inhabitants, including security of tenure, until other options become viable. However, lack of financial resources has thwarted any large scale upgrading policy so far. In addition, urgent infrastructure projects on land illegally distributed by war-lords have to be deferred until politically viable solutions become feasible.

Though outdated Master Plans approved before the conflict outbreak are being replaced by a more appropriate strategic planning approach, the future of informal settlements remains uncertain making human security for large numbers of urban Afghans a critical issue. Because of the urban land market poor functioning the supply of affordable land for low-income families is dramatically inadequate. When the informal settlements are built under the warlord's patronage, the government has little or no power to contrast their growth. All the same, the dwellers live in fear of eviction and relocation and find themselves increasingly marginalised and disadvantaged.

Programme objectives and results

The programme addresses the issue of human security by improving the conditions of the urban environment, empowering local communities and fostering local economic development.

Improving the living conditions in the informal settlements is the main objective. In particular the focus is on providing a 'secure place to live' (right to occupy) to the population by upgrading the physical conditions and by creating the institutional framework necessary to achieve sustainable results. The acknowledgment of security of tenure by the national and local governments as a main housing policy component was achieved by institutionalizing community involvement, thus helping bridging government and communities.

The institution of elected CDCs is a major outcome. Empowering the communities themselves to identify and address common threats, inevitably affects the process of institution building. It also makes the social, spatial and political inclusion of informal settlements an inescapable condition to foster human security in urban areas. Community Action Planning is the tool employed by CDCs for such sustainable integration: through the CDC each community has prioritized a number of proposals of improvements. The programme allocated funds to the communities on the basis of US$ 225 per household. Under the Municipalities and MUD supervision, CDCs evaluated and implemented projects submitted to UN-Habitat by the 48 selected communities, paving the way for a direct and fruitful dialogue between the various stakeholders.

By addressing the demand for better living conditions, the programme also contributed to mobilizing the communities on a much wider range of issues. In particular, it paid great attention to the social dimension of human security and provided the communities with the capacity and skills necessary to ensure CDCs proper functioning. Women were organized in specific committees where they received literacy and training courses providing them with new skills and income generating opportunities.

A participatory Neighbourhood Profile was prepared for each settlement producing a detailed physical and social mapping. The Profile represents an essential information base and a crucial operational tool not only to select the more urgent interventions, but also the labour

locally available to implement them. Given the very high levels of unemployment, particularly in urban areas, providing jobs through upgrading activities is a major opportunity to fight urban poverty and to address the root cause of insecurity in informal settlements[3]. Community projects have employed about one thousand people, mainly unskilled day labourers.

Employment generation through community projects

In addition to daily construction workers, 88 persons and 220 trainees were employed full time for about three months in Jalalabad, for a target population of 44,167 of which 37,310 were direct beneficiaries.

In Kandahar, the 14 CDCs hired more than fifty persons on the average, for a target population of 3,490 households, or approximately 20,000 people.

CDCs representatives were trained in project management activities, including monitoring and evaluation, strengthening the co-operation between local authorities and communities. As a result they now have the skills to assist the municipal engineers in small scale planning and contribute to raising the awareness among community members on sanitation and waste management issues.

In order to ensure their active involvement in the planning process, communities have been organized into different clusters, each cluster electing one representative to the newly established CDC. CDCs are now all officially registered by the Municipalities and it is expected that they will become effective representative bodies of local communities on a long-term basis. Women committees, established through the same elective system, have pioneered literacy, embroidery, tailoring and carpet weaving courses that have benefited 220 trainees in Jalalabad, 420 in Kandahar and a similar number in Mazar.

As stated by one CDC member in Mazar, the practice of public discussions brought up important changes in the attitude of the local population supporting reconciliation, setting up inter-ethnic dialogue, helping to look beyond their individual livelihoods and to consider community development issues. Coordination among CDCs has also proved effective in terms of more efficient planning decisions: in Mazar and Kandahar, neighbouring CDCs have agreed to realize a school in common, as well as a clinic and a water network servicing the whole area.

Sri-Lanka: Rebuilding Communities in North-East Sri Lanka

Aiming to restore human dignity of the urban poor through community empowerment and the provision of basic infrastructure, the *Rebuilding Communities in North-East Sri Lanka* programme focuses on a wide definition of urban poverty looking at empowerment and upgrading as concurrent contributions to improving human security. It was launched in the aftermaths of the peace agreements with the Liberation Tamil Tigers Elam but its

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[3] Though data about unemployment are not available, data from the Afghanistan Central Statistics Office as well as the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit show a significant high unemployment rates in urban areas particularly among the young.

implementation took place when the conflict broke out again. It was implemented in areas where public investment declined dramatically in the past twenty years because of the conflict, engendering a critical lack of infrastructure and basic services provision.

The programme's main objective was to empower poor communities to improving their living environment through Community Development Councils and to shoving their integration in the urban context. The in-war reconstruction context, coupled with the destruction the physical and socio-economic fabrics had suffered from both conflict and natural disaster, makes the programme rather unique.

Notwithstanding the enduring unstable situation of the past years, most communities in the area have been able to maintain some social cohesion. The programme is based on their direct involvement. It fights deprivation and vulnerability by promoting the social reintegration of the residents and the improvement of their living environment. In this framework, it supported a range physical improvements and social projects, including saving- and loan operations. In fact, beside basic infrastructure as drainage and road paving, most communities showed a pressing interest for social and economic facilities as community centres, public markets, libraries and children playgrounds.

Programme background

Sri Lanka presents a relatively low rate of urbanization with approximately 35% of the population being classified as urban. However, the number of towns is significantly lower in the northern and eastern parts of the island than in the central, south and western provinces. The lower urbanization rate is mainly the consequence of the lower level of economic development, the North East contributing only 5% to GDP, compared to 48% of the western provinces. In the north-east side of the island the population concentrates mainly along the coast in small and medium size urban centres.

The four cities selected by the programme in the North East are steadily growing, following a much less dispersed pattern than in the rest of the country. In this mixed rural-urban context Kattankudy, one of the project areas, has recently acquired the status of Urban Council while Kilinochchi, originally the southern part of Jaffna district, was established as an independent District Secretariat.

Though Sri Lanka HDI is significantly higher than South Asia average, this has not translated into adequate levels of human security in large parts of the country, where most people continue to be exposed to poverty and deprivation. The last Census data for the North and East dates back to 1981, the conflict having prevented the collection of data in the past twenty years. Though this makes rather difficult to define performance indicators for the North East, the socio-economic situation is assumed to be significantly more problematic than in the rest of the country. Estimates are that as a consequence of the conflict 300,000 housing units have been either partially or totally destroyed, the school dropout rate has risen by 15 percent; 11,000 km of roads have been damaged or had no maintenance work. The 2004 tsunami only exacerbated the situation: though the consequences on the housing stock have not yet been fully assessed, a high number of dwellings were lost or badly damaged contributing to the displacement of significant though still unrecorded numbers of people.

In terms of poverty reduction policies the Sri Lankan government record is highly positive, particularly in the housing sector. The Waste Land Ordinance passed under colonial rule, through which all unoccupied land was declared Crown property, left the government with large amounts of public land. Sri Lanka is well known for the massive housing programmes it has launched over the years, namely the One Hundred Thousand Houses and the succeeding

One Million Houses programmes. In addition, the government has often resorted to regularization as an answer to the illegal occupation of land. As a result, illegal settlements are not a main feature of Sri Lanka cities, though some of them can still be found on vacant land and along railways or major roads.

However, as a consequence of transactions of old properties that were never officially registered and of deeds lost because of the war and the seizure of displaced people's plots, quite a number of urban residents continue to lack security of tenure, especially in the North East where the government did not implement its housing programmes. To support the post tsunami North East Housing Reconstruction Programme and to make sure that it would reach the targeted beneficiaries, in 2005 a Land Task Force was set up within the District Secretariats. In nine months, the Task Force has examined almost 100,000 land disputes, of which 18,649 in Batticaloa, 12,724 in Kilinochchi and 5,884 in Jaffna.

Programme objectives and results

The programme is being implemented in 10 settlements in the north-eastern cities of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa and Kattankudy, all conflict and natural disaster affected areas essentially excluded from government interventions and outside areas benefiting from post-tsunami aid. The absence of assistance programmes for the areas is considered by the local population as more evidence of the lack of attention paid for by the government and may thus spur more conflicts. Ten Community Development Councils have been organized in each settlement to select, implement and monitor the projects through the Community Action Planning approach.

From May 2005 to July 2006, a considerable number of projects were realized, from a minimum of three up to eight in each community. The projects dealt with a wide range of issues, including training and awareness raising, water and sanitation, home-gardening, children and sport playgrounds, public markets and community libraries as well as the establishment of micro-credit groups, particularly important for women seeking to increase their incomes.

Projects financial allocation and type

In Batticaloa – Mamnunay North Municipal Council area (pop. 85,557), 36% of projects expenditures was allocated to roads, 31% to sanitation and 20% to recreation. In Kilinochchi – Karachchi Pradeshia Saba (pop. 72,884) and in Kandavalai, 16 projects concerned road construction, 14 library equipment, 12 furniture provision, 9 skill training, 4 training centers, 4 pre-schools or kinder-gardens, 3 wells construction, with 5 focusing on other issues.

The high number of local associations already active in most villages has certainly helped community participation. Yet, by involving the population in actually deciding on what needs should be addressed first, attendance at CDCs meetings and planning workshops has been significant and has empowered the communities as far as the projects are concerned. Project implementation and monitoring was left mainly to CDCs members. Women actively

participated in the CDCs activities, especially in the educational projects. In Kattankudy, specific Muslim Women Councils were set up whose main concerns were educational and recreational issues, as well as skills development.

Many government programmes, such as the Million Housing programme, did not reach to the North East. With the active involvement of local and customary authorities, the *Rebuilding Communities* programme introduced an approach coherent with the one adopted by the central government, thus partially offsetting its de facto absence and contributing to the peace and reconciliation process. On the other hand, the establishment of CDCs represented an opportunity for endowing the communities with new skills in project management as well as social work on issues such as sanitation, food-security, self-employment and education.

By integrating a wide range of social needs, the programme has widened the scope of intervention on human security, complementing the focus on housing and infrastructure of most post-tsunami international aid. Community approach appears to be quite successful in enhancing reconciliation and institution building within conflict affected societies by promoting the interaction among different aspects of human security in urban areas.

Cambodia: Phnom Penh – Partnership for Urban Poverty Reduction (PUPR) – Phase II, Slum Upgrading

In Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia, squatters and other urban poor groups represent more than twenty five percent of the approximately 1.3 million current population, living in some 600 irregular settlements. These settlements lack basic infrastructure and services while their inhabitants are socially marginalized and have little access to work opportunities.

Phase II of the *Phnom Penh – Partnership for Urban Poverty Reduction and Slum Upgrading (PUPR)* programme is implemented with the objective of improving the human security of the urban poor. It contributed significantly to make settlement upgrading a primary component of government urban policies as well as of the Municipality of Phnom Penh (MPP) planning perspectives. However, PUPR main focus is on reducing poverty and social exclusion by empowering the communities themselves to access affordable basic services and better living conditions in existing informal settlements as well as in relocation sites. In contributing to human security, the ultimate scope of the programme is to strengthen the urban poor self-confidence and to provide the communities with the capacity to promote and manage the self-improvement of their living environment in a sustainable way.

Programme background

Since 1979, Phnom Penh has essentially regained the status and size it had before the Khmer Rouge period. The combination of high concentration of investment, the settlement of returnees-refugees as well as of the internally displaced people and landless rural poor, has contributed to the high rate of migration into the city. Therefore, the demand for land has greatly increased, particularly in the city centre, making relocation a likely prospect for the communities living on the many centrally located informal settlements set up since the 90s. At present one out of three Phnom Penh residents lives in slums or squatter settlements, often in hazardous locations such as boengs (the water reservoirs used to irrigate farm land during the dry season), sidewalks, railways and dilapidated buildings in the city centre.

However, since setting up an Urban Poverty Reduction Unit in 1996, MPP has gradually moved from a policy based on squatters eviction to one of 'voluntary resettlement', while in

2003 the central government made public the objective of upgrading 100 slum-settlements per year. In principle, this policy change has offered low-income families the opportunity to improve their housing conditions, especially vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Yet, the depth and scale of poverty in Phnom Penh remain compelling and require urgent and diverse interventions. Despite the efforts carried out by the Municipality with the support of different international organizations, the number of poor communities, including newly formed squatter areas in the urban fringe, is increasing. A 1999 survey showed that in the squatter settlements water was available only through private vendors, 44% of the population had no toilets, and 88% of the houses were made of easily flammable material such as bamboo and leaves. In addition, most squatters do not have security of tenure making them extremely reluctant to improve their housing and settlements conditions. In addition, most squatters and slum dwellers are excluded from the social as well as the economic potential benefits of city life for lack of educational and income opportunities, political representation and the skills to negotiate with government authorities.

Programme objectives and results

PUPR was set up to strengthen the self-confidence, enhance competence and raise dignity of communities living in the slum and squatter settlements in Phnom Penh by reducing their vulnerability, poverty and social exclusion. Based on site improvements schemes, the focus was on helping establish community organizations and enable them to identify the priorities to be addressed. A survey carried out in the informal settlements of seven urban districts in 2003 revealed that roads and footbridges in flood prone areas were the most urgent needs the residents had to face, as well as water supply, sanitation, and children's education.

In Cambodia the notions of community and community empowerment are not embedded in the country's tradition.   Therefore, the programme's main focus was on promoting community organization in order to strengthen the self-confidence and dignity of the squatter settlements population as well as to increase their solidarity to the level which they can assert their voices vis-à-vis the authorities. With the technical support of the project, which is providing only a minor financial backing; 162 communities or about 28 percent of all informal dwellers have so far been involved in community organizing and empowerment activities.

Human security in Phnom Penh, as in most cities of developing countries, rests primarily on access to adequate housing and services. Since the government cannot meet the current housing and infrastructure demand, particularly from the increasing number of urban poor, human security can only be improved through partnership among public authorities, private sector, NGOs, civil society groups, and the communities themselves, based on mutual understanding and respect.

A Community Human Security Fund helps the communities to the Community Action Plan based on their own priorities. Most projects focus on community-based infrastructure such as concrete lanes, drainage and footbridges, benefiting primarily the women and children of more than 30,000 families, or approximately 150,000 dwellers.

Several thousand families were organized into communities in all seven *Khans* or districts, all of them registered as CBOs with the local authorities. More than 65 percent of the people participating in these communities are women and children. Once the community is well established, the programme makes available loans to help the creation of small businesses: up

until now approximately 400 households have had access to micro-credits, substantially improving their economic conditions.

Entrusting the communities with the planning and implementation of the projects has greatly enhanced their sense of empowerment and appropriation. As a result, they agreed to increase the community cash contribution to projects expenses from 5 to 10 percent.

PUPR in Facts and Figures (April 2004 - June 2006)	
Number of new communities established	162
Number of infrastructure and services projects implemented	167
Total beneficiaries	146,559
Number of women	58,730
Number of children	44,121
Number of families	30,119
Source: Municipality of Phnom Penh, 2006 (April and June)	

PUPR approach and its achievements have been playing a very important role in alleviating poverty as well as improving human security through direct supports to urban poor communities. The programme has enhanced the recognition of the human security concepts, mechanism and procedures by a large share of residents living in Phnom Penh informal settlements.

Increasing land values are putting pressure on the Municipality to make public land available for new constructions rather than allocating them for the poor, even though slum dwellers and squatters presently living in the city centre have few alternatives, if any. Therefore, political will to support in situ upgrading and to enable communities to assert their rights and negotiate with authorities continues to be crucial. However, community empowerment was quite effective in bringing up stronger and more integrated responses to address human security in slum and squatter settlements.

Restoring security in war affected urban areas

The contribution to human security in Afghanistan, North East Sri Lanka and Phnom Penh provided by UNTFHS is grounded primarily on two aspects: a) the thrust to address the different aspects of vulnerability in war affected areas with a multi-sectoral approach and, b) the seamless transition from a protection to an empowerment centred perspective.

Linking physical upgrading with social development is essential in fostering community mobilization, particularly among women. In fact, raising community awareness is very important to help communities to shift from a short-term emergency approach to more development oriented perspectives. Entrusting the community themselves through their organizations with collecting the information needed to identify needs and priorities is also crucial and can be much more effective than using traditional surveying approaches.

Coupling infrastructure construction with the provision of services the communities themselves identify as priorities, is also an essential part of any programme focusing on human security. In this framework, community grants are effective in supporting projects that may be small in scale but in fact address critical community needs such as footbridges, toilets, literacy courses, home-gardening, vocational training and micro-credit schemes. Requesting a small in kind or cash contributions by the community as a requirement for contracting CDCs is an effective tool to build the sense of ownership and responsibility among community members. Public meetings, community involvement in upgrading activities and in social activities helped build stronger ties among the residents, thus fostering peace and reconciliation.

Secondly, Community Development Councils or analogous community organizations play a fundamental role in conveying the sense of dignity on which human security rests. With the post-tsunami large flow of funds in the North East province of Sri Lanka, changing people 'aid dependency' attitude may take time. However, through the promotion of a transparent decision-making process within their communities, as well as the support to the reconstruction of networks that had been disrupted by conflict, disaster and displacement, CDCs have been quite effective. By taking the projects directly in the hands of the communities, they have been instrumental in shifting the attitude from protection from threats to human security, as confirmed by the high level of participation exhibited by Muslim women groups.

The importance of properly identifying the needs of the different social groups so as to bolster their contribution to local development and to human security is a major lesson international aid should learn. Focusing on measurable outputs almost inevitably diverts the attention from multi-sectoral approaches to quantitative outputs concern, hampering community involvement and undermining the impacts on human security.

An open and effective dialogue between communities and local institutions strengthen their respective roles in sustainable local development. On one hand, local governments provide the technical support needed by most communities to select and implement local projects as well as to mobilize international aid. On the other, the formal recognition of CDCs gives them the legitimacy to negotiate with central and municipal governments on community needs and priorities. In addition, by acknowledging their role as full urban actors, CDCs are driven to adopt a broader urban perspective and sustain the processes of institution building.

Despite the different social and cultural contexts, UNTFHS experience highlights the critical role CDCs have in institution building. Bridging the gap between people and government, CDCs are largely welcome by local authorities as an opportunity to better focus on community needs. They also help improving a better governance context, where customary and modern institutions can cooperate in more effective ways.

Human security is improved by a seamless transition from protection to empowerment and from emergency to development, thus reinforcing the process of both society and state (re)construction so severely needed in conflict affected areas.

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