

# **The Rapid Assessment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security**

## **Overview Report**

**May 8, 2013**

## Introduction

This is a global and largely strategic assessment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security that was commissioned by the Advisory Board on Human Security in January 2013. **The Objectives of the RAPID ASSESSMENT were to:**

- To assess the added value of the Human Security approach
- To assess the impact of the Human Security approach (i.e., people-centered, context-specific, comprehensive and multi-sectorial solutions that are reinforced through the protection and empowerment framework)
- To present the usefulness of UNTFHS projects in addressing unaddressed areas of human security
- To present lessons learned and to determine the added value of the Human Security approach to situations where there are threats to Human Security

These four themes constitute the framework of this Overview Report.

A Rapid Assessment differs from a formal program evaluation. While the two share many common characteristics, several features are unique.

- A rapid assessment is usually much more tightly focussed on a narrow set of policy related issues, as opposed to the more broad approach which is inherent in formal program evaluation.
- This Rapid Assessment has focussed largely on issues related to Relevance. These issues related to Relevance are the core of the policy and programmatic challenges which face the UNTFHS.

In short, this Rapid Assessment represents a purpose built tool to address specific policy and program challenges in a very timely and focused manner.

The Table below highlights the key phases of the Rapid Assessment.

Inception	January 2013	Development of an Inception Report
Research	January and February 2013	Field missions to Uganda, Colombia, Uzbekistan and Mongolia plus Desk top reviews of Congo, Vanuatu, Madagascar
Reporting	March - April 2013	Validation Workshops and drafting
Presentation	May 2013	Presentation to this High Level Event

We adopted a set of evaluation-based methodologies to ensure the broadest possible coverage and the greatest degree of data triangulation. Care had to be taken to ensure that our work was not simply a compilation of country case studies, and to ensure that the methodologies selected were designed to allow comparability and also to allow the elaboration of broadly relevant findings at the global level which affect the Human Security approach as a whole and not highly country-specific findings.

## Value Added

### To assess the added value of the Human Security approach

One of the key issues which underpinned the commissioning of this Rapid Assessment relates to the added value of projects that have been supported by the UNTFHS and by extension, the added value of the principles that underpin the Human Security approach within the context of individual interventions. This notion of “added value” however, is qualified to largely relate to changes in behaviors and attitudes of UN staff as they have worked within the Human Security approach in comparison to more traditional approaches.

The elements of value adding, in relation to the design and delivery of UNTFHS-supported projects, largely concentrate on the synergistic qualities of the project model itself. The most recent set of administrative guidelines highlight the requirement for a participatory approach involving two or more UN agencies in addressing an area of unfulfilled challenges to Human Security; in short, a programmatic gap. The evidence points to the conclusion that supported projects have in fact filled these gaps; but more importantly is how they have done so.

The requirement to work together, to plan together and to ensure an active voice of the affected peoples, those whose security is at risk, has resulted in a new way of thinking about the interconnectivity of the threats to Human Security and how traditional approaches cannot respond to multi-dimensional challenges. There is clear evidence that the demonstration projects are resulting in a change of thinking among UN staff at the field and country level about “whole of problem” solutions as opposed to simply “fixing” something. Another dimension of the added value of the Human Security approach relates to how the people affected participate. The current project model requires the active participation of potential beneficiaries, individuals or their communities, in the design and delivery of a project. There is ample evidence to demonstrate the fulfillment of this requirement and also to show that the affected populations, by being actively engaged as participants, came to have a higher sense of their own worth and dignity. There was, in a number of instances, strong evidence of local pride of ownership and local determination to expand from the project basis into the community at large, for example, in relation to micro-financing in Northern Uganda or democratic outreach in Colombia. We also witnessed the positive value adding benefits of the comprehensive, multisectoral, context-specific and people-centered approach which is the crux of the HS approach.



## The Usefulness

To present the usefulness of UNTFHS projects in addressing unaddressed areas of human security

If the theme of “added value” spoke largely in the context of UN organizations working together and the benefits of doing so; then the theme of “usefulness” addresses the more programmatic issue of the extent to which unforeseen needs or threats to Human Security were addressed through the projects supported by the UNTFHS. It is very important to understand that the unforeseen needs in this context, and thus the usefulness, transcend normal single-support developmental or humanitarian challenges. In the context of the Human Security approach, these unforeseen needs must be multi-dimensional, reflecting the philosophical concept that threats to the well-being of human kind are seldom linear, seldom one dimensional. Rather, the Human Security approach reflects the recognition of the 360 degree nature of the challenges to the well-being of humanity, and therefore the necessity to attempt to ameliorate these threats in an integrated manner, as well as one which embodies the empowerment of individuals to determine their own well-being.

There is ample evidence to show that the projects which have been supported by the UNTFHS were the result of consultative processes where people themselves articulated the challenges that they faced. Clearly, it is unreasonable to assume that the citizens in a district in Northern Uganda or a barrio in Colombia, or a soum in Mongolia reached out to the UN themselves to seek support. Rather, what the Human Security approach has fostered, which is different from many other types of developmental or humanitarian action, is the degree to which the UN partner organizations listen and respect a bottom-up approach. A corollary to this benefit also is the degree to which the Human Security approach in the projects reviewed encouraged levels of government to become directly involved, not just being the passive beneficiaries of external support, but the active partners in the delivery of programming that reflects the needs of their citizens. In Colombia, Mongolia and Uzbekistan, there is ample evidence to show the degree to which local levels of government have embraced project elements and are striving to ensure their sustainability and in some instances, the expansion of elements to other geographic areas.



On balance, the questions of usefulness or value added, in many respects need to be considered outside of the things that are done or the people who do them. It became evident that the most successful applications of the Human Security approach within the context of this Rapid Assessment, were those where UN participants came to recognize that Human Security was not a mechanism for delivery. Rather, it embodies a new way of thinking about the relationships between the UN as a whole, people, and their governments as the three confront fundamental threats to the well-being of humankind, to Human Security.

## The Impact

### To assess the impact of the Human Security approach

Although it is very important to be able to report about the value added and usefulness of UNTFHS-supported projects, there is a much more important question: Do these projects actually make a difference and do they do so in ways that relate to the principles that underpin the Human Security approach? There is ample evidence to show that the projects in question have contributed to improvements to the human condition and have done so in a multi-disciplinary fashion which is not characteristic of traditional developmental or humanitarian programming.

For example, in Colombia, individual beneficiaries reported, confirmed by other organizational stakeholders, that the combination of social programming and support for nutrition combined with health programming resulted in improved overall livelihoods and a greater sense of community worth. Respondents there stated that they were continuing to apply the advocacy skills they had learned. In Uganda, the combination of activities to improve the milling and marketing of cereal grains, combined with training for local people to establish community-based micro-financing has resulted in improved overall economic and livelihood security. In Mongolia, the linking of improvement in community health services combined with infrastructure enhancements in the provision of clean water and sewage facilities has resulted in lower instances of disease and because of the nature of the involvement of the local government, a transferal of the support for these initiatives from UN partners to the local government. In Uzbekistan, the combination of increased outreach to combat TB, combined with the training of local community health representatives, the provision of enhanced diagnostic equipment and the strengthening of the infrastructure by solar powered electric generation, is addressing the complex public health challenges in a depressed rural region. Furthermore, in Uzbekistan, a combination of community outreach programming to women at risk combined with vocational training has resulted in the establishment of eco-tourism opportunities and income generation, transforming women at risk to women having dignified employment. In Uganda, the combination of infrastructure improvements (road building) combined with promotion of community-based financing is generating the capital needed for local residents to pay school fees and thus, with transport improvement, increased the rate of access to education.



All these are tangible impacts that have affected the lives and livelihoods of people that are at risk. There is, however, an equally positive intangible impact which was witnessed in virtually all the projects under review. It is that the participatory Human Security approach, when applied at the project level,

seems to result in a greater sense of individual and collective empowerment, less of a sense of being simply a beneficiary and more of a sense of being a participant in changing one's own future.

## Lessons Learned

To present lessons learned and to determine the added value of the Human Security approach to situations

The mandate for this Rapid Assessment included a request for an analysis of the lessons that have been learned as a result of recent projects that have been supported by UNTFHS. In this context, there are several lessons which relate to the degree of organizational learning that may have transpired among UN partners, especially at the field and country level. There are also several lessons which relate more to the degree of adaptation and change within the Human Security Unit (HSU) which administers the Trust Fund and serves as a prototype of a secretariat for the overall advocacy of the Human Security approach and the preparation of required reports to the General Assembly.

In relation to the lessons learned by the HSU, there is evidence to show that the set of recent amendments to the administrative guidelines has strengthened the ability of the HSU to ensure that the projects selected for support reflect, to the greatest extent possible, the multi-dimensional and holistic principles which underpin the Human Security approach. Doing so, however, has placed a great strain on the relatively few analytical resources of the HSU. A second internal lesson for the HSU lies in the extent to which the management and supervision of supported projects requires a higher degree of hands-on oversight, to ensure that the Human Security-related commitments made in applications transpire. Finally, it became evident that the current approaches to project performance reporting do not sufficiently highlight the degree of the uniqueness of UNTFHS-supported projects in comparison to other kinds of interventions.



Turning to the lessons that may have been learned by UN partners and others, three are paramount.

First, there is ample evidence to show that there are clearly organizational and programmatic benefits to be garnered by UN partners when they work within the context of the Human Security approach.

Second, the demonstration projects supported by the UNTFHS give life and practical reality to the Consensus Resolution (A/Res/66/290), and among UN partners, tend to confirm the viability and worth of the Human Security approach as a whole.

Third, there is an awareness that the Human Security approach is philosophically different and has intrinsic added value over more mechanistic paradigms of working together.



There is, however, a final lesson which was evident throughout the Rapid Assessment. While there has been considerable support for the benefits of the Human Security approach at the country and especially at the project level, there remain strong organizational dynamics within the UN system that tend to diffuse the strengths of the Human Security approach.

## Conclusions

In addition to these four themes, the Rapid Assessment also addressed a series of general questions which complement the themes. For this Overview Report, it is important to highlight our conclusions relative to these questions.

### **Are these projects addressing un-addressed areas?**

In virtually all of the projects reviewed for the Rapid Assessment, previously un-addressed challenges to Human Security were identified. In several, most notably Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Mongolia, the UNTFHS-supported projects were the sole UN response mechanisms. It was also evident that the UNTFHS projects, by emphasizing inter-sectorial activity, responded to challenges that had, in a way, fallen through the cracks. This is a major programmatic benefit of the Human Security approach in itself.

### **Are they different in their conception and execution?**

The evidence related to the conception and execution of UNTFHS projects points very clearly to different modalities of design and subsequent execution that emphasize the need to actually collaborate as opposed to simply participate in a joint project. UN country teams indicated that these different methods of planning and subsequently rolling out combined programming appeared to have resulted in more sensitive responses, and may have been instrumental in engaging governments at all levels in the design and roll-out as well.

### **Are the potential beneficiaries involved at all stages?**

One of the most unique characteristics of projects supported by the Trust Fund is the degree to which people themselves are involved in the design of solutions to the multi-dimensional challenges to their security. The evidence points to a general pattern of the active involvement of beneficiaries in design and to a lesser extent, in the roll-out.

### **How do UN field teams react to the challenges involved?**

The projects supported by the UNTFHS, while obviously designed to better the human condition as a whole, are primarily demonstration projects. Therefore, one of the most important questions relates to the degree to which participation in these projects is impacting on how UN teams work together at the field level. The evidence is relatively clear, that in relation to projects themselves, UN partners recognize the intrinsic benefits of the Human Security approach as opposed to other joint delivery concepts. There even appears to be a sense of pride among field level personnel about the results which they have collaboratively generated. More strikingly, many indicated that they had never worked on a joint project with other UN partners and that the UNTFHS demonstration project constituted a completely new way of thinking and working.

### **Is the UNTFHS breaking new ground?**

It is very clear from the review of projects supported by the UNTFHS that new ground is being broken and that at the field level at least, there is an acceptance of the positive benefits of these new approaches. More specifically, the breaking down of traditional isolated mandates by emphasizing inter-sectorial

challenges to Human Security and inter-sectorial solutions may constitute the most significant “new ground”. However, it is equally important to emphasize that the empowerment mandate inherent in the Human Security approach has been recognized as somewhat different from other approaches that attempt to animate “the voice of the people”.

In conclusion therefore, it is apparent that over the last several years, the demonstration projects supported by the UNTFHS have clearly made a difference. But, it is necessary to place this solidly positive conclusion in the context of the overall magnitude of the work of the United Nations system.

The UNTFHS-supported projects constitute a miniscule fraction of the overall work of the United Nations. Yet, even at this very small level of scale, they are demonstrating that there are new more holistic ways of addressing the challenges that face humanity. They are also demonstrating the extent to which it is possible for a complex and polycentric institution like the United Nations to develop collaborative responses to Human Security challenges that are in themselves multi-dimensional.



The Human Security approach as recently articulated by the General Assembly has proven to be effective at the project level.

- ✓ **Filled unaddressed areas of Human Security**
- ✓ **Empowered stakeholders and governments (especially at the local level)**
- ✓ **Added value that is intrinsic to the three pillars of Human Security**
- ✓ **Resulted in holistic solutions to complex problems**
- ✓ **Are showing beneficiary impact**

**In short, Human Security works.**



## Next Steps

The mandate for this Rapid Assessment asked that we go somewhat beyond merely assessing the intrinsic value of the projects that have been recently supported by the UNTFHS. The above conclusions decisively show that there is considerable merit in the Human Security approach as a whole and that it is highly relevant to the work of the United Nations and all its constituent organizations.

There is a gap however, one which was implied in one of the questions that have guided the Rapid Assessment.

That question asked whether the Human Security approach was being applied across how UN organizations generally function, within planning systems and within resource allocation models.

We witnessed that there remains an unfulfilled need to better integrate the concepts which underpin the Human Security approach into the work of UN agencies as a whole. This may in part be the result of two inter-related phenomena.

First, the General Assembly Consensus Resolution on the nature of Human Security itself was only passed in September, 2012. Thus, it is not unreasonable for organizations to require more time to integrate these approaches.

Second, given the size, scope and complexity of the UN family or organizations as a whole and the diversity of their planning and resource allocation models, it is not surprising that new and challenging approaches like that related to Human Security may have yet to be fully embraced.

Time, however, is running short. It is not unreasonable to claim that the principles which underpin the Human Security approach and which have been proven relevant by this Rapid Assessment could be useful in articulating whatever may become of the next set of strategic global objectives which will follow on from the current Millennium Development Goals. The “whole of the challenge” nature which exemplifies the Human Security approach probably could have a positive contribution to how global goals are to be articulated and how the resources of the planet harnessed to meet them.

Therefore, this Rapid Assessment recommends:

**The UN as a system affirm its support for the integration of the Human Security approach as a valuable tool to promote development, human rights, and peace and security - the three pillars of the United Nations**