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Exploring the Security/Education Nexus

Aim

To present a brief overview of how Education underpins the goals of Human Security.

Background

To protect people (is) the first key to human security, (therefore) their basic rights and freedoms must be upheld. People's ability to act on their own behalf—and on the behalf of others—is the second key to human security.¹

Education plays an intrinsic role in the two key elements of human security: *protection* and *empowerment*. While *protecting* people requires their involvement in identifying gaps in infrastructure and reaching solutions, *empowering* people provides the tools to realize potential and more importantly to act proactively and independently when faced with threats to their security. There are many facets to achieving security, but it is education that provides people with the tools to achieve their own human security. Basic numeracy and literacy increase participation in activities that directly reduce vulnerability, such as wealth generation, private enterprise, and the provision of basic needs. Conversely, illiteracy and innumeracy are forms of human insecurity, leaving people unprotected by impeding progress in overall development and basic human rights.

Human security focuses on eliminating threats against the individual, such as war, hunger and disease and in doing so fosters human development and the advancement of basic human rights. A number of pre-existing conditions must be in place to achieve human security in a society. These include good governance, economic security, and a strong civil society that includes and represents all of its members. Education underpins these conditions, facilitating an environment for the creation and advancement of societies strong in human security. War, drought and disease threaten all societies regardless of relative wealth

¹ *Human Security Now*, Commission on Human Security, pg 11.

or poverty. The severity of impact and rates of recovery varies drastically due to the efficiency or inefficiency of a society's structures (e.g. police, fire brigades, government). More importantly, the robustness of a society depends on the strength and development of its individuals. Education minimizes threats to the individual, thus providing a foundation for the solid infrastructure of a functional, self-sufficient society.

Objectives

This case study explores the security/education nexus by examining the contribution that education makes to some of the pre-existing conditions necessary for human security to thrive. These conditions include good governance, economic security and a strong participative civil society. The case study will also look at the quality and other aspects of education that must be present to strengthen human security.

Education as a Driver of Good Governance

Education empowers people to understand and have access to their own governments. In 2002, Kofi Annan indicated that 'good governance at the local, national and international levels is perhaps the single most important factor in promoting development and advancing the cause of peace.'² Ultimately, governments are set up for the educated. Illiteracy is a form of human insecurity when it shuts out those who cannot read. Legislation requires literate people, who have power within governments and who are often key representatives and decision-makers.

The rapid decline of Zimbabwe has only worsened with 500,000 professional workers leaving in recent years.³ This exodus of the educated has affected every social sector, particularly education. The government's recent Operation Murambatsvina (literally, 'throw out the trash') waged war on the country's informal sector forcing 300,000 school children out of school.⁴ By forcing children out of school, and the professionals to seek livelihoods outside of the country, Zimbabwe has severely handicapped the future of its government.

Education enhances Economic Security

Basic education is shown to have a dramatic effect on economic security and higher levels of education correlate with stronger economic growth. Not only does an educated person boost his or her own human security, studies show that increasing education levels have a direct impact on a nation's economic growth. A Statistics Canada study⁵ found that increased literacy rates had a direct and profound impact on a nation's economy. The study showed that:

² UN General Assembly 2002, p11

³ UNDP, *Human Development Report, 2003*

⁴ Actionaid International, *Zimbabwe Demolitions, 2005*

⁵ The findings are based on analyses of data from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) obtained for 14 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries between 1960-1995. Statistics Canada, 2004

- A 1% gain in the average literacy/numeracy skill level in Canada would create a permanent increase of \$18.4 billion per year, in the country's GDP.
- Investment in human capital (literacy and skills training) is three times as important to economic growth over the long run as investment in physical capital (machinery and infrastructure).
- Education is not just the product of economic growth. It shows clearly that education play(s) a role in creating economic growth; and that gains in skills actually lead to gains in economic growth.

The study goes on to 'suggest that differences in average skill levels among OECD countries explain fully 55% of differences in economic growth since 1960.'

Professor Paul Collier maintains that 'the dominant factors (for a country entering a civil war) are economic.' He goes on to explain that the three factors are a country's level of income, its rate of growth, and its structure. If a country is poor, in economic decline, and is dependent upon natural resource exports, then it faces a substantial risk that sooner or later it will experience a civil war⁶. Africa is the signature region of the world for an economic over-reliance on natural resources as well as for violent conflicts over control of those resources. As stated in the Canadian literacy study, countries with the most economic success arrive at that through human capital investment (i.e. education), therefore creating a heterogeneous economy. Educational access builds human capacity reducing the 'downside risk' of war.

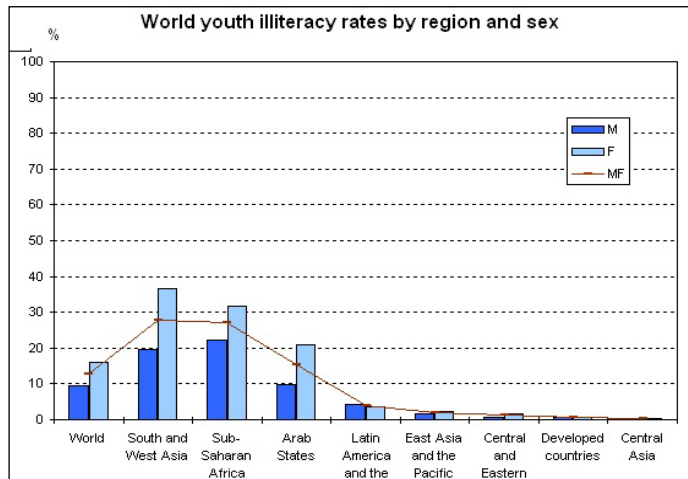
Education strengthens Civil Society

A strong civil society promotes a spirit of equality and genuinely seeks to provide access to opportunity for all of its members. Conversely weak civil societies have marginalized members who are shut out from opportunity. Education provides access to civil institutions and the power to make decisions. Societies have social relationships that exist on power structures and those who have access to civil institutions are generally literate. People require education in order to access the institutions that exist in a society. Those in a society who are uneducated are the most insecure and underpowered when they are unaware of their civil liberties. In turn, these members weaken the civil society and are a form of insecurity. Education strengthens civil society in two key areas: providing gender equity and access to justice and the rule of law.

Education propels Gender Equity

In the poorest regions of the world, women are the most educationally marginalized.

⁶ Collier, *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa*, 2004



UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2007

There are considerable links between educating women and improving the human security for civil society. Complications from childbirth are the leading cause of death among women in many developing countries and for every woman who dies in childbirth, 10-16 more become incapacitated or disabled.⁷ There is much evidence connecting drastic reductions in fertility rates the more a woman becomes educated, thus reducing her chances of childbirth-related death because of increased access to prenatal and antenatal information. In developed countries, 1 in 1800 women die in childbirth as compared to 1 in 48 women in developing countries, where the education levels are significantly lower.⁸ When women are educated, child mortality rates drop and literate women appear to have a stronger impact on economic growth than men. For both GDP per capita and GDP per worker, and for all measures of human capital investment, the impact of a unit increase in skill is always larger and more statistically significant for the literacy levels of women.⁹

Basic education for women is intrinsic to a strong and functioning civil society. The connections between basic education of women and the power of women's agency are quite central to understanding the contribution of school education to human security in general.¹⁰ When roughly half of a society's population is uneducated and therefore in need of representation the result is detrimental to the security of the society as a whole. There is mounting evidence that the positive trickle-down effect of educating women is intrinsic to the case of human security as a whole.

Education pushes forth Justice and the Rule of law

Education provides people the tools necessary to read, understand and then put into action their rights. In order for people to use laws to protect themselves, they must be aware of the rights guaranteed them in their civil society. Effective rule of law shifts the fundamental idea of dictatorial leadership into the development of legal systems that people have access to

⁷ *Human Security Now*, Commission on Human Security, pg 100.

⁸ WHO and UNICEF, 1996

⁹ Statistics Canada, 2004

¹⁰ Amartya Sen, *Basic Education and Human Security*

and follow. In order for people to understand and use the rule of law and justice systems they need to be educated in them.

During Zimbabwe's Operation Murumbatsvina, the justification for demolishing informal market places and unzoned homes was that they were operating and living without legal licensing. The military and police were used as agents to carry out this operation. In this situation, rule of law was warped and one-sided and access to justice denied as the urban poor affected by this operation had no due process of law. Without civic education and understanding of basic human rights, individuals are at the mercy of leaders who use the law to carry out insidious agendas.

In Malawi, a community-based organization called Domasi Village to Village (DVTV) educates citizens on their rights and assists them in accessing justice. One young man, after resolving a conflict with a neighbour remarked that, "I am grateful that I wasn't sent to the police because now I can continue with my primary education and care for my sisters. Through DVTV many orphans like myself who otherwise have no voice or ability to re-claim their rights are being helped."¹¹ This man felt that going to the police for assistance would not have a beneficial result, however because he was educated on his rights, he felt empowered and in turn strengthened his society through positive resolution.

Quality, Content and Access in Education

In both developing and developed societies, even when access to education is commonplace, the quality of education often varies greatly. Does the quality of education impact directly upon human security? In some instances, it could be argued that the presence of an education system in itself, despite levels of quality, may contribute to increased human security at the individual level through child protection; the child attending school in northern Uganda is less likely to be subject of recruitment by paramilitary groups than the children that work in the fields. Similarly, the child in school in Southern Sudan is less likely to fall victim to a landmine than his counterparts collecting firewood.

However, there is a strong argument to support the view that educational quality does impact on human security because a poor education system can act as a tool of oppression and misinformation. When the majority of the population is allowed only basic education while only a small minority gain access to secondary and tertiary educational opportunities, social fragmentation occurs and this can fuel wider conflicts. In Nepal, the educational sector has been a wrestling ground for political parties and their agendas due to the significant differences existing in public and private schools¹². Textbook content and quality can either misinform or incite students to violence and hatred. Recent claims are made that Palestinian schoolbooks encourage students to become suicide bombers and that Israeli books are riddled with anti-Palestinian rhetoric.¹³

¹¹ DFID Case Study, *Supporting access to community-led justice in Malawi*.

¹² Conflict Study Centre, Nepal, May 2007

¹³ *Human Security Now*, Commission on Human Security, pg 124

Issues for discussion

1. Identify strategies that can be used to assist governments in countries to reallocate their funds and focus towards education.
2. Should funding resources focus on building and filling more schools or on strengthening the quality of educational infrastructures already in place?
3. Identify the specific causes to why women remain under/uneducated despite massive international-awareness campaigns. How can these causes be addressed?
4. Identify ways in which village advocacy groups (like the DVTV) can be used in schools to strengthen civic education.