

"Human security starts from the recognition that people are the most active participants in determining their well-being"



From protection to empowerment

The growing inequalities between the well off and the poor, as well as the social, economic and political exclusion of large sectors of the society, make the security paradigm increasingly complex. In turn, human security has broadened to include such conditions as freedom from poverty, access to work, education and health. This expansion consequently requires changing the focus of perspective from "state security" to "people-centred security". Moreover, community empowerment builds a wider notion of security based on the direct involvement of the population whose varied interests have to be incorporated into a common strategy. This is particularly true in countries still affected by war like Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, and in post-conflict countries like Cambodia, where reintegrating refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and enhancing their human security is an arduous task.

Informal settlements in Afghanistan have been established in marginal land by people who are very poor and do not have any access to land. These settlements are often characterized by lack of basic infrastructure and services. On the other hand formal planning and development of cities often tends to bypass the demands and needs of the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged. In view of these conditions, human security for slum dwellers in informal settlements is often impaired.

In North East Sri Lanka the city infrastructure has suffered from damage and neglect during the war and population are forced to live without basic services and facilities, exposing themselves, particularly women and children, to health hazards and unhygienic circumstances. Due to migration, displacement and years of mistrust, communities need to be rebuilt physically, socially and economically.

In Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia, squatters and other urban groups represent more than twenty five percent of the total 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.

Therefore, to ensure both human and state security, particularly in conflict and post-conflict areas where institutions are often fragile and unstable, the rebuilding of communities, by a seamless transition from protection to empowerment, becomes absolutely integral to the promotion of peace and reconciliation.



Afghanistan

Upgrading of Informal Settlements in Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and Jalalabad

Causes of human insecurity in informal settlements in Afghanistan where more than 70 percent of city population reside are numerous. Social exclusion, lack of tenure security, poor sanitation, lack of safe drinking water, high vulnerability to natural disaster, absence of health and education facility is a common character of any informal settlement in the country. The project therefore aimed to empower people to respond to critical and pervasive threats that undermine their survival and dignity. This was achieved by strengthening social protection measures through organization of people, creating opportunities to reduce poverty by providing employment opportunities, raising living standards by improving access to services that were not available and removing the constant threat of eviction by confirming security of tenure.

Forty eight neighborhoods were selected from the three partner municipalities, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and Jalalabad, in close coordination and full consent of their authority. The primary beneficiaries of this project were local communities mainly returnees, IDPs, vulnerable families, widow-headed households living in the selected informal settlements in 3 cities. The total household covered by this project was 12,732 approximately. This project directly served more than 100,000 individuals in all 3-partner cities. Community Action Planning (CAP) was the process by which the community had identified, negotiated and prioritized projects that helped to improve the living conditions of that particular community.



"CDC's representatives were trained in project management activities, including monitoring and evaluation, strengthening the cooperation 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"

Community Mobilization and Empowerment

This project was fundamentally based on the philosophy of community mobilization and their empowerment, where target communities actually led the process of planning, implementation, monitoring and maintenance of the project. Local communities were at the centre of the process of decision-making and hence all activities performed at local level were recognized and owned by them. Community Development Councils (CDCs) were formed based on democratic election process in all selected 48 neighborhoods of three cities. The list of projects identified under CAP in all CDCs had included nearly all types of basic infrastructure (shelter, roads, drainage, sewerage, electricity) and services (water, sanitation, solid waste, school, clinic) that were minimum essential requirements for healthy living. In addition, women's CDCs showed keen interest in projects which provided individuals the opportunity to get directly involved and overall, were often projects related to skill development and income generating activities.

Training, Workshop and Capacity Building

Numerous trainings and workshops were organized involving all key stakeholders at different stages and times. They had been supported by the practical knowledge and ground experiences gained from the project implementation which invariably helped them to formulate more realistic and pragmatic policies towards integration of informal settlements into the regular city fabric. Lately the local communities were found more organized, aware and exposed to community based local development efforts.



Sub-contract Projects

Community Action Plans developed in all CDCs had identified and prioritized neighborhood level projects on consensus basis. The process of sub-contract project implementation was simple, systematic and transparent. The project successfully implemented 110 sub-contract proposals, including women focused projects, in all three cities. All sub-contract proposals were implemented through the "community contracting" mechanism where local communities played the lead role and entailed responsibility for all kinds of labour management, procurement, quality maintenance, progress reporting, and timely completion.

Sri Lanka

Rebuilding Communities in North East Sri Lanka

The Rebuilding Communities in North East Sri Lanka Project (RCNES) was a project designed to assist the poor living in the under-served neighbor neighborhoods in North East Sri Lanka who had suffered from a violent civil strife during the last twenty five years. The project adopted the principle that people in the communities would know best what they need. The people's participation in selected settlements (Jafna, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa and Kattankudy) was secured through innovative approaches of community mobilization by the formation of Community Development Councils (CDCs), Community Action Planning (CAP) and Community Contracting.



The physical projects included access roads, preschools, play grounds, children parks, wells, drainage and toilets, while the socioeconomic projects focused on vocational training and livelihood activities. All these projects contributed to assuring the economic, food, health, environmental, personal, social and political security of the communities.

Apart from the physical improvement of the communities and the skills obtained by its members, one important outcome of this project has been the restoration of the sense of community. By involving the communities in the selection, planning and implementation of the project activities, the process of joint decision-making and cooperation have brought back the communities together again. It has restored their trust and human dignity.



Community Assessment of Needs

UN-HABITAT implemented the "bottom-up" approach, which is a planning process by the people guided by project or government facilitators. The real beneficiaries (the community) involved themselves in identifying their needs and prioritizing them. This allowed people to understand their circumstances and initiate action with their own creativity for change. The mobilization of the community into CDCs and the CAP workshops empowered the community to bring in a change in the traditional planning methodology. The innovative CAP approach assisted the community to widen the range of their choices, strengthen their capabilities to equip them to face the challenges with confidence and increase the access to means, goods, services and facilities.

Project Identification and Prioritization

Community Action Planning workshops have been conducted at the CDC level. Each city conducted CAP workshops for the ten CDCs. The projects identified were prioritized by consensus, taking into consideration the opinion of all the participants. The city office prepared the estimates and bill of quantities for the projects with the assistance of the engineer and the technical officer. The number of projects identified by each of the communities in the four cities was around 546 at an average of 136 projects per city.

Strengthening Capacity

Besides the infrastructure needs, the communities realized the needs for competency development. They wanted their knowledge widened, skills developed and the right attitude formed. Consequent to this expressed interest, the project implemented several training programmes on proposals made by the CDCs such as vocational training, awareness building programmes, personality development programmes and livelihood programmes. This was a clear indication that the community wanted to be empowered and was moving in the right direction for human security.

Cambodia

Partnership for Urban Poverty Reduction - Slum Upgrading



The project was set up to strengthen the self-confidence, enhance the competence and raise the dignity of communities living in the slum and squatter settlements of Phnom Penh by reducing their vulnerability, poverty and social exclusion. The project has demonstrated that small community infrastructures like wooden footbridges, concrete lane and toilets have discernible impacts on the human security issues of the poor. It has also demonstrated that the slum and squatter settlements could be upgraded efficiently and economically. Thus, it has reinforced the idea that physical improvements of human settlements have profound impacts on improving the human security of poor communities.

While the primary aim of the project was to accord adequate human dignity to the urban poor, this was achieved by enabling communities to form local institutions (community organizations) to manage community consultations on local problems and priorities, and by financing the execution of site improvements schemes identified by them. This involved communities taking the initiatives to negotiate resolutions of various issues with the municipality, in the process building a working link between the two. As a result, 162 community organizations with 13,292 families as members have been formed as a community institution.

Rebuilding Communities

The project's aim was not only to improve community infrastructures, but through these activities, to re-build and empower these communities and increase their solidarity to the level which they can assert their voices vis-à-vis government authorities. These newly organized communities were able to prepare their community proposals for financing from the Project as well as other sources. More than seventy percent of the people participating in these communities were women and children.



Community-based Infrastructure

A total of 178 projects proposal was evaluated and approved through the channel of *Sangkat* and *Khan*. In preparing these proposals, Community Action Planning (CAP) method was used for communities to prioritize and agree on the implementing strategies. Communities carried out these activities by themselves to benefit more than 30,000 families. These 178 community-based infrastructure activities included 245 projects such as the construction of concrete lanes, drainage, wooden footbridges, laterite roads, concrete bridge and soil filling. In addition, more than 19,000 people have been benefited from the urban basic services provided by the Project, including water and sanitation.



From insecure living conditions to improved human security