

CIVIL SOCIETY AND HUMAN SECURITY- CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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Draft



FOPRISA

Research for Regional
Integration and Development

REPORT....

FOPRISA Annual Conference
Centurion Lake Hotel, Centurion, South Africa
18-19 November 2008

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the conceptual literature on civil society and its role in the promotion of human security, regional cooperation and integration. Civil society is closely linked to the concept of human security. Often referred to as a critical security perspective, the human security agenda, introduced by the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report identifies individuals and collectives as the objects of security. The concept emphasises human rights, good governance and more general quality of life issues as the central dimension of international security. Non-state actors, and in particular civil society actors, are regarded as key actors for advocating the concept of human security. Within this perspective, civil society is also tasked with launching policy initiatives that may translate this concept into concrete policy initiatives that address the sources of human insecurity.

This concept paper suggests that the notion of security and security threats present in the concept of human security is of particular relevance to the Southern African region as security threats linked to poverty, infectious diseases and in particular the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environmental degradation and the pressing refugee crisis are threats that cut across state boundaries and demand regional and international solutions. Furthermore, experience has shown that states may constitute a significant threat to the security of citizens and regional networks of civil society associations working closely with local associations may be in a better position to address these security threats than national governments. It is therefore of great interest to critically address the role of civil society in the promotion of human security within the SADC organisational structures and the region more broadly.

However, while the notion of civil society is used widely, there is no clear agreement on what the concept really entails despite being frequently used by all. In the context of human security concerns, arguably, the notion of civil society is closely linked to a Western concept of non governmental organisations operating on a global level. Critical questions regarding both national and international non-governmental organisations must be asked in relation to their legitimacy and representativeness. It is also a concern that the international donors, by funding a set of associations and excluding others, are empowering particular sets of civil society actors. A particular feature of the Southern Africa region is that many of its current governments have emerged out liberation movements that traditionally have incorporated many of the 'civic' associations into its movement and later party structures. The concept of independent associations outside the state has proven difficult to integrate to the liberal notion of civil society across the region. How does this affect the relationship between civil society groups promoting a human security agenda and the states of southern Africa? What roles does SADC here play? Similarly, critics of the concept of human security have argued that its vagueness has undermined its effectiveness and it is therefore unclear whether the concept of

human security can serve as a practical guide. In the context of the southern African region, and SADC in particular, it may be questioned how far this notion of security has evolved as the organisation still applies a strong focus on states and the members states autonomy from external intervention.

The paper is divided into four main parts. Following the introduction, section two assesses the conceptual and current debates around the concept of civil society and problematises this concept in the SADC region. Section three introduces the concept of human security and shows how it is closely linked to global, regional and domestic non governmental associations. A final section discusses the role of civil society in the promotion of human security and its application to the SADC region. A set of research questions are proposed intended to guide the empirical analyses of various aspects of civil society and its role in promoting human security in the SADC region.

2: THE CONCEPT OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

The concept of civil society is contested but it is generally agreed that it constitutes the intermediary associational realm between state and family populated by organisations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed on a voluntary basis by members of the society to protect their interests or values (White 1994, 379). Civil society may be differentiated from political parties in that they do not explicitly seek political mandates through presenting candidates in elections.

In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, civil society organisations are often grouped into four different forms of associations

- Grassroots organisations that are organised for economic or social purposes operating at the local level such as burial societies, water groups etc. According to Chabal and Daloz (1999) this is the only 'real form' of civil society in sub Saharan Africa as it is grounded in real local concerns.
- Professional or vocational organisations such as farmers and business associations, lawyers associations, trade unions and churches.
- Media institutions (print houses, radio and television)
- Non governmental associations established with a task of addressing either developmental, environmental or human rights concerns. In the context of sub-Saharan Africa these associations are very often established and funded with significant donor support which may affect their sustainability.

Since the early 1990s the promotion of democracy has become an explicit focus of aid and foreign policy and programmes to support civil society has been heavily emphasised by most donors. Throughout the developing world, the number of (pro-democracy) NGOs mushroomed as a direct consequence of civil society assistance

programmes. As argued by Ottaway and Carothers (2000:98) in the case of Africa, “[i]f success is measured by the number of NGOs formed in the late 1990s, civil society assistance to Africa has been extremely successful”. In many instances, the infusion of donor assistance helped to strengthen civil society organisations in countries which already had strong civic traditions and comparatively rich networks of associational life. However, in many other cases, international assistance was instrumental in creating the first truly independent voluntary associations, and therefore a new form of civil society, following decades of authoritarian rule.

Critics have argued that donors have tended to reduce the concept of civil society to a depoliticised technical tool (Jenkins 2001, Robinson and Friedman 2005). Secondly, as the international community has employed a rather limited definition of civil society that has tended to equate civil society with Western-style advocacy groups or NGOs, their assistance has been focussed on a narrow set of organisations. In particular, organisations that form an important part of civil society in most advanced democracies, such as sports clubs, cultural associations and religious associations, have been absent from most programmes (Carothers and Ottaway 2000). Thirdly, in many instances the views of the NGOs that emerged as a response to democracy promotion programmes have reflected the donors’ view of democracy both in their immediate goals and in the means they use to pursue them. Fourthly, many of the NGOs favoured by democracy assistance programmes have a small membership and therefore lack a mandate from a wider constituency, putting both their sustainability and representativeness in doubt. Finally, there is evidence that donor assistance can actually militate against grassroots participation because the NGOs it helps to bring about are perceived as depoliticised, too closely aligned with donor service delivery agendas, too dependent on external funding, and out of touch with the grassroots (Howell and Peace 2001). Taken together, these factors have often meant that donors have focused their attention and funding on particular types of social organisation (urban-based and poorly rooted in society, top-down rather than grassroots, trustee rather than representative organisations and heavily reliant on external funding for their continued existence). As a result they have bypassed other significant agents of social and political change.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXTERNALLY FUNDED NGOS AND THE STATE

The question remains whether this form of donor assistance represents a direct interference in political processes. This issue has given rise to heated debates between governments, the donor community and civil society. NGO activities, such as the promotion of human rights and monitoring elections, are viewed with suspicion by developing country governments and in some countries (for example, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe) such NGOs have been subjected to government harassment. Furthermore, close linkages to the donor community have made it very difficult for these associations to build productive relationships with government. The fact that changing aid policy affects the power relationship between the government

and civil society is an issue that seldom is reflected in evaluations of democracy assistance.

It may also be argued that *international* NGOs (INGOs) are the part of civil society that has taken on the most prominent role in the new political realities formed by the PRSPs (Florini 2000). The large international NGOs with local branches/partner institutions in the South have taken on something of a sub-contracting role. They have also taken on key roles themselves where national civil society has been weak or where an authoritarian government has allowed only limited independence to local NGOs.

The new and prominent role of international NGOs, not least linked to the human security agenda, raises new issues about the basis for both NGOs and INGOs' legitimacy. Do they have a right to represent poor peoples' interests in national policy processes? To whom are they accountable? What are the implications of being representative for their own internal governance and organisational structures? There are no easy answers to these questions. While it is undoubtedly true that INGOs have made important contributions to democratisation efforts in the developing world, it is also worth considering whether the presence of these (relatively) large international NGOs may not have an adverse impact on the capacity and sustainability of home-grown NGOs, which tend to be much smaller and to lack the resources to compete with their international counterparts (for funding, skilled personnel, policy influence, etc) (Rocha and Rogerson 2006). It is important for both donors and policymakers to be aware of these potential tensions given their strong emphasis on INGO financing as a means of supporting democratisation.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

A particular feature of the Southern African development community is first of all the late liberalisation and independence and the liberation movements that have later become incumbent governments, very often dominant parties. Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa were all characterised by the unity within the liberation movement. This has a clear effect on the mode of government and nature of civil society. According to Melber (2002), former liberation movements coming to power are characterised by structural flaws that impede the creation of democratic institutions. In many instances, the military organised structures are transferred into government institutions, leading to an uneasy relationship to autonomous associations, opposition and liberal democratic values more generally.

There are of course significant differences within the Southern African region and autonomous civil society associations are in some countries providing significant insights and alternative voices to the policy making process. Nevertheless, the potential conflicts between a largely 'donor sponsored' cluster of autonomous NGOs and a set of associations traditionally tied to the liberation movement/dominant party is in important area of research. It is also important to analyse how many governments in

Southern Africa have attempted to control and limit the space of civil society through various forms of registration and licensing laws.

Linked to regional developments and policy issues affecting the region more generally, it is also important to question what civil society organisations that are the driving forces in these processes. South Africa has by far the most extensive and best organised network of civil society associations. The question is whether the norms and values of a liberal democratic agenda, and the key role herein provided civil society associations, are being translated to the Southern African region via South Africa organisational 'filters'. To the extent that South African CSOs are influencing the policy agenda for CSOs in the region, what are the impacts for the role of CSOs in terms of promoting human security issues? Does this affect the representativeness of the views presented? Can it be argued that the voices of civil society represented in regional fora represent the views of the majority of the regions citizens? These are questions that so far has not received much attention in empirical analyses

3. THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN SECURITY AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

Human security will here be understood as a new paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities. The proponents of the concept challenge the notion of national security arguing that the referent for security should be individuals and not states. Thus, human security – as opposed to a traditional notion of security - centres on a 'people-centered' notion of security holding that this understanding is necessary to secure national, regional and global stability.

The United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report is considered a key publication in the field of human security. This report presented the argument that ensuring 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' for all persons is the best way forward in order to tackle problems of global security. Following this path-breaking study, human security is now frequently referred to in a wide variety of global policy discussions and often part of university curricula. The 'mainstreaming' of the concept was secured when the 2005 World Summit outcome document committed the UN General Assembly to discussing and defining notions of human security. The 1994 HDR defines human security as; economic security, food security; health security; environmental security; personal security; community security and political security (Suhrke 1999, Shawki 2004).

The central argument of authors writing from a human security perspective is that global policy problems, as opposed to military threats that have traditionally dominated security research and policy, pose the greatest security threats in today's world. Criticising the prevailing and mainstream notions of security, they advocate a shift in our thinking about what security constitutes, about who the objects and

beneficiary of security policies should be and about the entities that can provide security (Hoogensen and Carothers 2001).

Table 1 below shows how the concept of human security departs from the traditional security concept. As indicated by the table, the two perspectives on security are overlapping as people are also the centre of attention within traditional security, however within state boundaries.

Table one: Notions of security: Traditional Security and human security¹

	Traditional security	Human security
Referent	Designed to promote demands ascribed to states, other interests are subordinated to those of the state. Traditional security protects a state's borders, institutions, people and values.	People-centered, focus shifted to protect individuals. The important dimensions are to entail the well being of individuals and respond to ordinary people's needs in dealing with sources of threats.
Scope	Seeks to defend states from external aggression- the states' ability to deter or defeat attack. Emphasis on protecting territory from external threats.	In addition to protecting the state from external aggression, human security expands the scope of protection to include a broader range of threats such as environmental pollution, infectious diseases and economic deprivation
Actors	The state is the sole actor, decision making power is centralised in the government and the execution of strategies rarely involves the public. This notion of security assumes sovereign states operating in an anarchical international environment without any world governing body enforcing international rules of conduct.	The realisation of human security involves not only governments but a broader participation of different actors such as regional and international organisations, non governmental organisations and local communities.
Means	The building of national power and military defence.	Seeks to protect and empower people and societies as a means of security.

But, human security and traditional notions of security are not mutually exclusive. The 1994 HDR originally stated that that human security agenda required attention both to

¹ Author's summary of literature. See Hampson 2002, Liotta 2002, Roland 2001 and Suhrke 1999

the well being of individuals and to respond to ordinary people's needs in dealing with sources of threats. A division has later emerged over the scope of protection (e.g. over what threats people should be protected from) and over the appropriate mechanisms for responding to these threats. Attempts to implement the human security agenda has emerged into two schools of thought - freedom from fear and freedom from want. Arguably, the 'freedom from fear school' is placed relatively close to more traditional notions of security.

The freedom from fear-school: Proponents of this agenda seeks to limit the practice of Human Security to protecting individuals from violent conflicts. The approach argues that limiting the focus is a realistic and manageable approach towards Human Security. Hereunder emergency assistance, conflict prevention and resolution and peace-building are the main concerns. Canada has been a critical player in the efforts among other things to ban land mines and has incorporated the Freedom from Fear agenda as the primary component of its foreign policy.

The freedom from want-school: According to the 1994 HDR, the freedom from want perspective focuses on the basic idea that violence, poverty, inequality, diseases, and environmental degradations are inseparable concepts in addressing the root of human security. In contrast to the narrower concept of freedom from fear, this perspective on human security expands the focus beyond violence with emphasis on development and security. Japan has adopted a broader freedom from want perspective in its foreign policy.

HUMAN SECURITY- THE ROLE OF STATES AND NON-STATE ACTORS

Human security has been suggested to be particularly useful in examining the causes of conflicts that explain and justify humanitarian interventions. It is also a paradigm that may be used for identifying, prioritising and solving large trans-national problems. A central debate within the human security discourse relates to the fact that many concepts under human security, like humanitarian intervention, violate the traditional principles of state sovereignty, which is a deep rooted concept. As states still play a major role in global affairs, the unwillingness of states to give parts of their state sovereignty has made human security approaches less effective. Critical security theorists argue that far from being guarantors of security states in many parts of the world are the main source of threat and insecurity for individuals living within their borders. It may therefore be argued that traditional security concepts are inadequate in terms of dealing with internal threats, civil war and cases where the state is the perpetrator.

The human security perspective entails a fundamentally different understanding of both the object and provider of security: States are not necessarily the sole providers of security – or its object. Rather it is assumed that non state actors may be a major force behind the transformation of the concept of security and a major provider of security.

The keys here are critical social movements. By providing a role for civil society actors/non state actors as both the main object and provider of security, the human security agenda explicitly links human security and civil society by arguing that non state actors will be prominent in advocating the concept of human security. The question is whether a global civil society has been an important force for change in the international security discourse. Furthermore, to what extent have these movements/actors been successful in terms of reaching their goals? What empirical evidence and analysis exists internationally?

Critical security theorists claim that non-state actors can be a major force behind the transformation of the concept of human security and they can be a major provider of security. In particular in contexts of weak and failing states and conflict, the role of CSOs as providers of human security has been emphasised. There are so far few studies that assess to extent to which non governmental associations at the international level have been able to change the international security discourse. The key examples of global civil society movements that have influenced trans-national security concerns and thus aimed to realise a human security agenda are the Kimberly process, an initiative concerned with conflict or blood diamonds; Jubilee 2000, the movement advocating the cancellation of debts of heavily indebted people; and finally the international campaign to ban landmines. Evidence from these international campaigns show that even though these international movements frame their causes and goals in terms of human security concerns, the results of their campaigns do not represent a truly transformative change in international relations (Shawki 2004). Thus, while transformative initiatives have emerged in the global civil society since the end of the Cold war, these initiatives have not been able to turn their visions into reality as there are strong tendencies of maintaining the status quo. While the literature points to some indications of global civil society as agents of change in the discourse and practice of international security, it is still debated how far-reaching the influence of trans-national movements have been given the resistance to change in the international system.

Moreover, the human security agenda still faces difficulties concerning the scope of its applicability. Critics of the concept argue that its vagueness has undermined its effectiveness. As a result, it has become little more than a vehicle for activists wishing to promote certain causes that do not help the research community to understand what security means or help decisions makers formulate good policies. Arguably, it remains unclear whether the concept of human security can serve as a practical guide. Like 'sustainable development' the concept lacks a clear definition. Furthermore, it is argued that the supporters of human security deliberately try to keep the concept vague and expansive so that the concept can keep the coalition of middle power states, development agencies and NGOs (Roland, 2001: 88). Deeper concerns concerning this approach revolve around how this process could be implemented in practical terms and whether or not human security is the best tool for addressing global threats. Arguably, the human security approach, in particular the freedom from want school, may suffer from being too idealistic.

4: HUMAN SECURITY AND NON STATE ACTORS AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE SADC REGION

The perspectives on human security framed in global terms and located at an international policy arena are of great relevance to the challenges facing Southern Africa. The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, persisting poverty, problems of illiteracy, gender differences, limited access to health, and the plight of refugees are some of the major challenges facing the region that are trans-national that demand solutions that transcend the national level. Recent events in South Africa where immigrants have been the victims of mob action and violence point to the need to understand and tackle issues of human security at a regional and international level.

A central component of the human security concept is that it presents a fundamentally different understanding of the state both as the object and the provider of security. Within this perspective, individuals or groups as opposed to states are the objects of security and, states are not necessarily the sole providers of security. The emphasis on actors outside the state as both the object of security and a provider of security is a pressing and highly relevant topic for analyses of human security in the SADC region. Arguably, many states and governments of Southern Africa, far from being guarantors of security, are considered the main source of threat and security for individuals living within their borders.

Within this perspective, SADC as a regional body has an important role to play in terms of protecting citizens of the region from states not fulfilling their obligations toward their citizens. The question is whether SADC as a regional organisation is capable of fulfilling this role. However, to the extent that the security agenda through the application of human security is implemented- how does this affect the state's responsiveness to its citizens: What are the consequences of the states? Is it possible that political leaders and representatives of Southern African states will become further removed from its citizens?

The debates within the human security discourse reflected in this paper reflect also a much repeated criticism of the SADC institution – its perceived lack of ability or will to intervene in member states when political, civil and social rights of citizens are being violated. The question is whether the human security agenda has affected the debates within the SADC relevant organs and perhaps tilted debates more in favour of an actor/human centered notion of security. At this stage, we have limited empirical knowledge about the debates and application of the human security concept in the Southern Africa region. In particular, we do not have adequate understandings of how this debate may have affected SADC as an institution. The kind of non state actors/associations involved, their origins and representativeness is also areas where we have limited knowledge. The questions below provide a starting point for further empirical investigations.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND HUMAN SECURITY: QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

- ✓ In the SADC region who are the regional non state actors capable of assuming some of the security provisions conventionally ascribed to nation states?
- ✓ What are the experiences with global civil society networks in the region? Are there examples of cooperation between INGOs and NGOs in the region that can be linked to regional human security concerns?
- ✓ What is the relationship between SADC, the international donor community and civil society in terms of human security concerns: Where have these issues been voiced? Can driving forces be identified?
- ✓ To what extent and how has the perspective of human security been debated and implemented through SADC fora?
- ✓ At what level and how do SADC as an institution link to civil society?
- ✓ To what extent are human security concerns debated within SADC in relation to violations of human rights within member states?
- ✓ Does the debate on human security within SADC reflect divisions that can be linked to different notions of security (traditional versus human security perspectives)? Where are the potential conflicts located?
- ✓ What legal restrictions are applied to civil society in the various SADC countries?
- ✓ Which associations and umbrellas of associations cut across the region?
- ✓ To what extent does donor funding shape the pattern of civil society associations in the SADC region? Can differences be discerned between aid-dependent and less aid-dependent countries in the region?
- ✓ Is it possible to establish a typology of associations that may be particularly promising in terms of promoting a human security agenda across the region?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The discussion above has aimed to discuss the conceptual literature on civil society and its role in the promotion of human security. In particular, the paper has aimed to provide guidance for empirical analyses of the role of civil society in promoting human security in the SADC region. The paper has assessed the conceptual and current debates around the concept of civil society and problematised the concept when applied to the SADC region. Furthermore, the paper has aimed to show that the concept of human security is closely linked to global, regional and domestic non governmental associations. The discussion has raised a set of research questions intended to guide the empirical analyses of various aspects of civil society and its role in promoting human security in the SADC region.

This paper has argued that the notion of security and security threats present in the concept of human security is of particular relevance to the Southern African region as security threats linked to poverty, infectious diseases and in particular the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environmental degradation and the pressing refugee crisis are threats that

cut across state boundaries and demand regional and international solutions. Furthermore, Southern African political realities indicate that states may constitute a significant threat to the security of citizens. As a result, regional networks of civil society associations working closely with local associations may be in a better position to address these security threats than national governments. It is therefore necessary to critically address the role of civil society in the promotion of human security within the SADC organisational structures and the region more broadly.

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