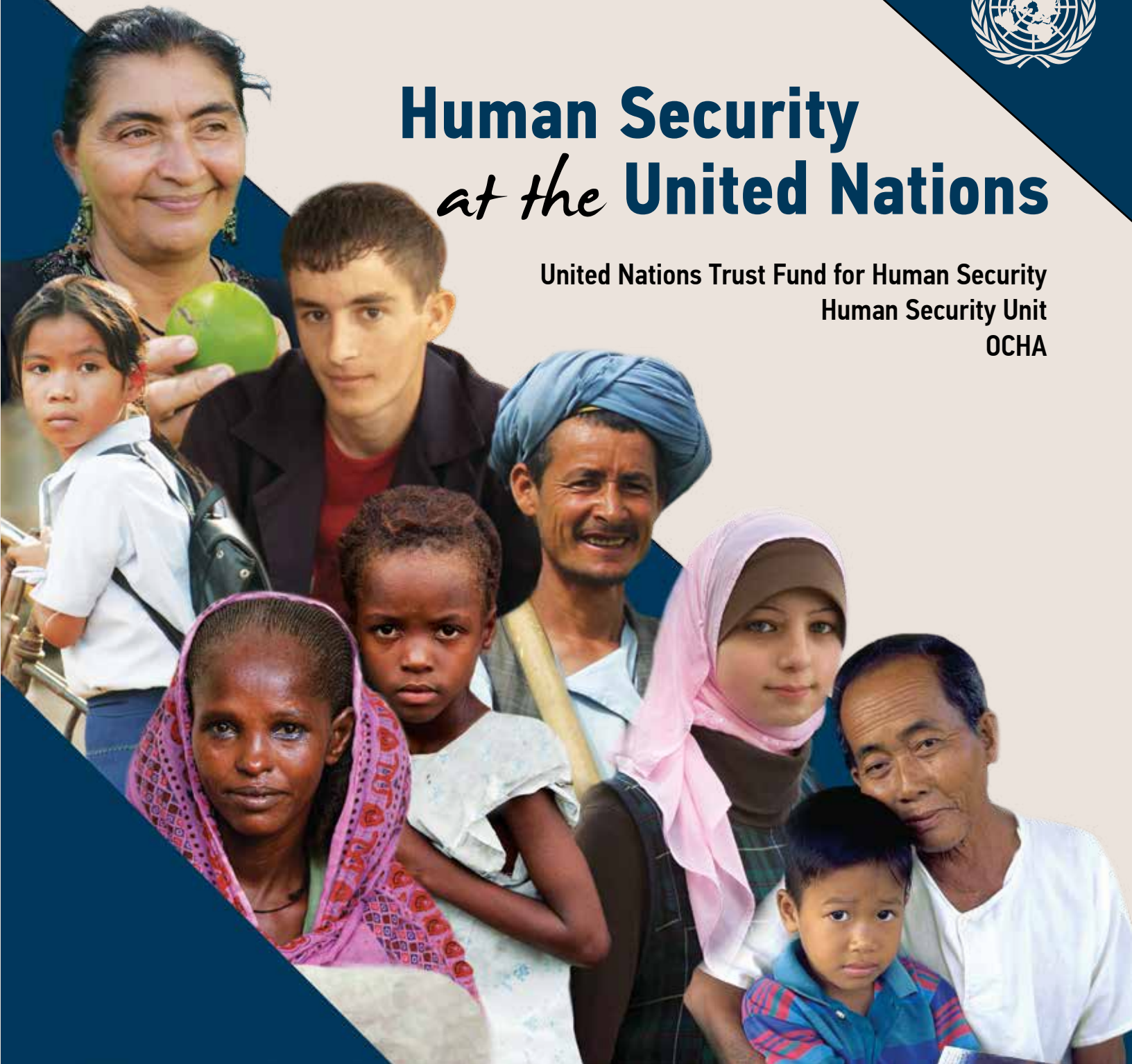
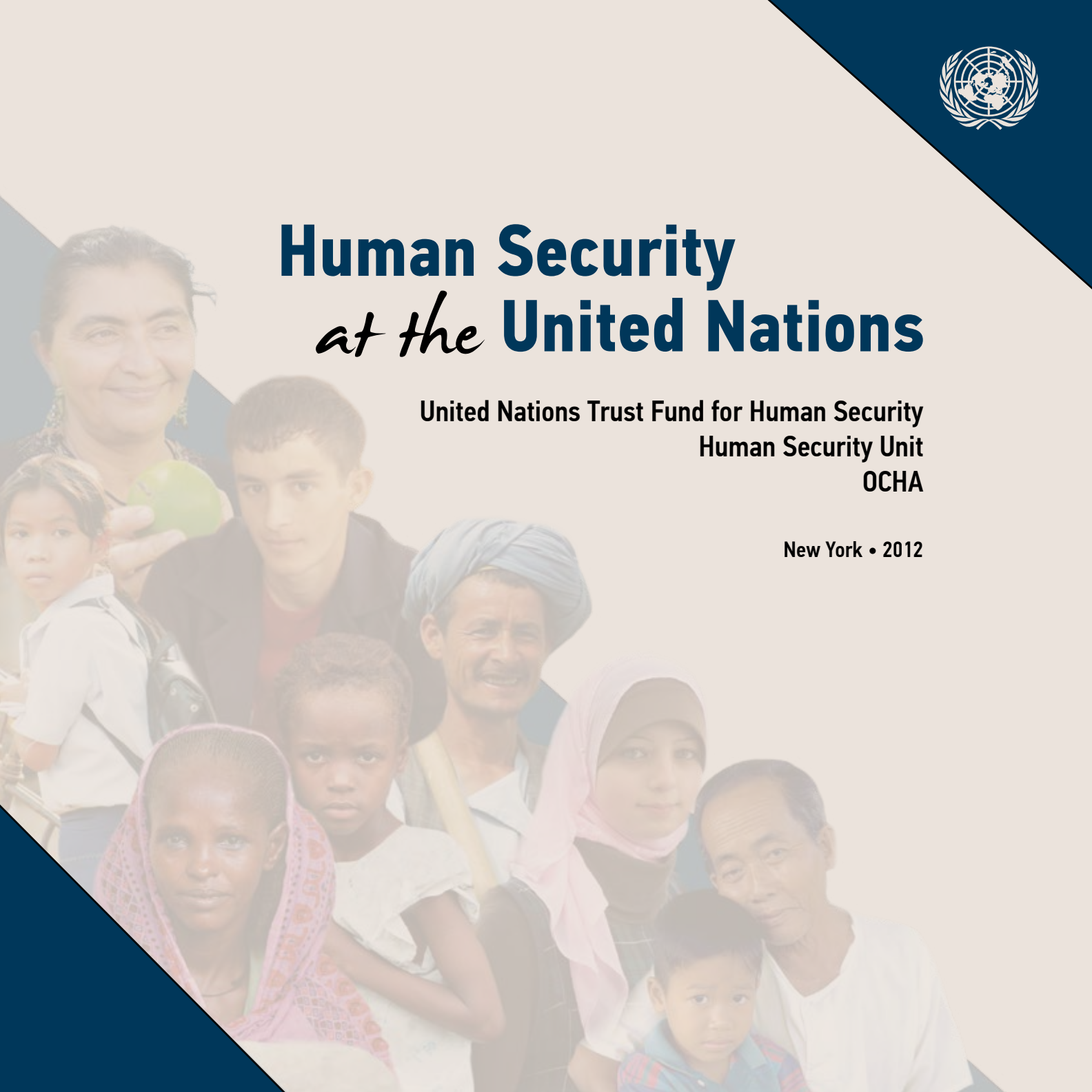
Human Security *at the* United Nations

United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security
Human Security Unit
OCHA





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New York • 2012

Guided by the principles of the United Nations Charter, human security highlights "the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair ... with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential"

(paragraph 143, General Assembly resolution 60/1)

Within the United Nations Secretariat, the Human Security Unit oversees the advancement of human security.

Responding to the complexity and interrelatedness of insecurities facing people

Over the past two decades, the international community has been working towards a broader understanding of security. Drawing input from Governments, scholars, civil society groups and intergovernmental organizations, this notion – known as human security – refocuses the attention of States and the international community on the survival, livelihood and dignity of people as the basis for achieving peace, development and human progress.

While national security remains pivotal to peace and stability, the complexity and interrelatedness of old and new threats – from chronic and persistent poverty, to violent conflicts, climate change, human trafficking, health pandemics, and economic and financial crises – reveal our shared vulnerabilities to a growing risk of threats that are widespread and cross-cutting. Because these challenges can spread rapidly within and across nations and give rise to more intractable crises, human security emphasizes the need for a new framework that combines the agendas of peace and security, development and human rights in a more effective, efficient and prevention-oriented manner.

Based on national ownership and international cooperation, human security strengthens the development of integrated solutions that together yield much greater force in responding to current and future insecurities.

... human security emphasizes the need for a new framework that combines the agendas of peace and security, development and human rights in a more effective, efficient and prevention-oriented manner.

What are the key principles and framework for advancing human security?

Through the **protection and empowerment framework**, human security promotes **people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific** and **prevention-oriented** measures that seek to reduce the likelihood of conflicts, help overcome the obstacles to development and promote human rights for all.

People-centred

Human security considers the broad range of conditions under which the survival, livelihood and dignity of people, particularly those most vulnerable, are seriously threatened. Essential to human security is the advancement of political, social, economic, environmental, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks for achieving peace, development and human progress.

Comprehensive

By understanding how a particular threat can negatively affect freedoms that are universal and interdependent (freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity), human security calls for responses that are comprehensive, multi-sectoral and collaborative. This ensures coherence, eliminates duplication and advances integrated solutions that give rise to more effective and tangible improvements in the daily lives of people.

Context-specific

Recognizing that the causes and manifestations of threats vary considerably within and across countries, and at different points in time, human security advances solutions that are embedded in local realities and are based on the actual needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of Governments and people.

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Prevention-oriented

Looking at the root causes of a particular threat, human security identifies the structural (external or internal), as well as the behavioral changes that are needed to help mitigate the impact, and, where possible, prevent the occurrence of current and future threats.

Protection (top-down) and empowerment (bottom-up)

The protection and empowerment framework further guarantees the development of appropriate responses to a particular threat. By combining top-down norms, processes and institutions, including the establishment of early-warning mechanisms, good governance and social protection instruments, with a bottom-up focus in which participatory processes highlight individuals' roles in defining and implementing their essential freedoms and responsibilities, human security improves local capacities, strengthens social networks, and ensures coherence in the allocation of resources and policies.

A brief history of human security at the United Nations

1994 The UNDP Human Development Report *New Dimensions of Human Security* coined the term "human security" within the UN system. The report highlighted four characteristics of human security: **universal, people-centred, interdependent and early prevention**. It further outlined seven interconnected elements of security: **economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political.**

1999 In March, the Government of Japan and the United Nations Secretariat established the **UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS)** under the management of the Office of the UN Controller, with an initial contribution of approximately US$ 5 million.

1999 **The Human Security Network (HSN)**, a group of foreign ministers from 13 countries, was formed to promote the concept of human security as a feature of all national and international policies. HSN members include **Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand**, with **South Africa as an observer**.

2000 At the UN Millennium Summit, then Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on the international community to advance, as the goals of the new millennium, the agendas of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" in United Nations efforts to develop better responses to old and new challenges.

2001 The independent **Commission on Human Security (CHS)** was established under the co-chairmanship of Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen to (i) mobilize support and promote greater understanding of human security, (ii) develop further the concept as an operational tool and (iii) outline a concrete action plan for its implementation.

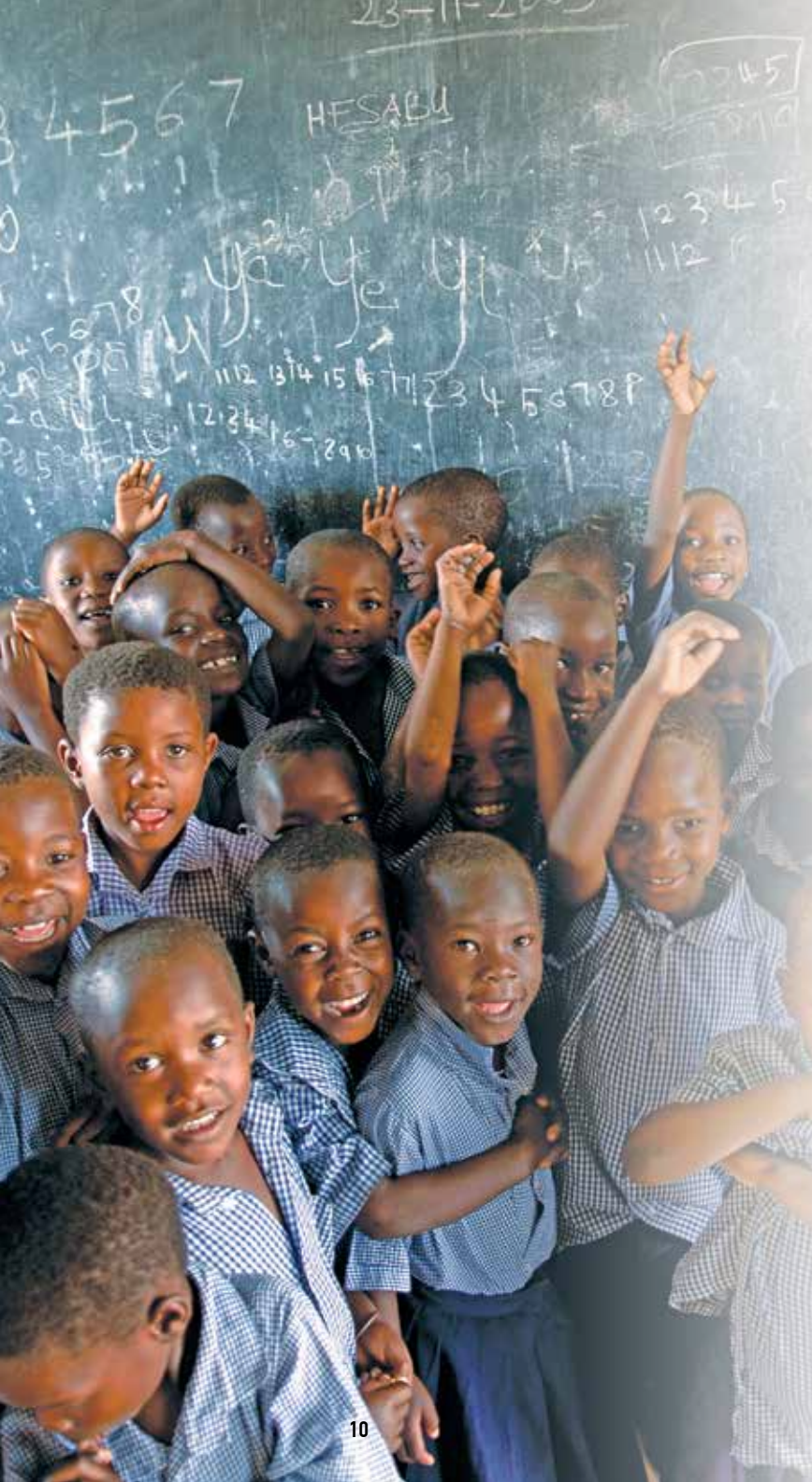
2003 To mobilize support and provide a concrete framework for the application of human security, the **CHS published its final report *Human Security Now***.

2003 Following the CHS conclusion, the **Advisory Board on Human Security (ABHS)** was established as an independent advisory group. It was tasked with advising the UN Secretary-General on the propagation of the human security concept and the management of the UNTFHS.

2004 **The Human Security Unit (HSU) was established in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)** with the principal objective of placing human security in the mainstream of UN activities. As such, the HSU works with different stakeholders to highlight the added value of the human security concept through its application under the UNTFHS and other activities.

2004 The report by the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, "*A more secure world: our shared responsibility*", makes use of the human security concept within the broader agenda of institutional reform in view of the new threats of the twenty-first century.

2005 In his final proposal for UN reforms, then Secretary-General Kofi Annan, while not making specific reference to the term "human security", nevertheless uses its three components: **"freedom from fear", "freedom from want", and "freedom to live in dignity" as the main thematic principles** of the report titled "*In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*" (A/59/2005).



2005

Paragraph 143 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1) notes that **"all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential"**. This reference to human security was pivotal in advancing the acceptance and understanding of human security in the United Nations.

2006

The **Friends of Human Security** – a flexible and informal group of supporters comprising mainly UN Member States and international organizations – was formed to provide a forum to discuss the concept, and to explore possible collaborative efforts to mainstream human security and formulate joint initiatives at the United Nations.

2008

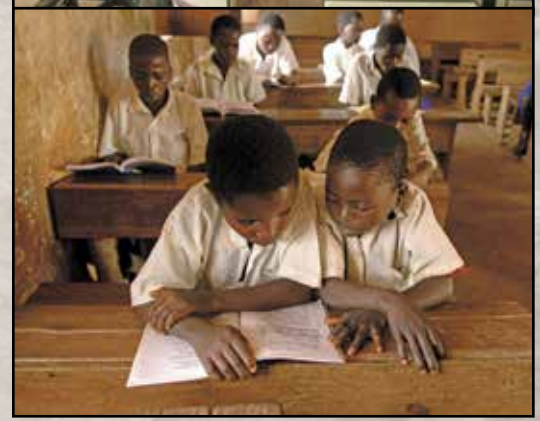
In May, the Office of the President of the General Assembly convened an informal thematic debate on human security, attended by more than 90 Member States. The debate focused on the notion of human security, its multidimensional scope and its added value to the work of the United Nations.

2010 The **first report of the Secretary-General on human security** (A/64/701) was released on 8 March. It provided an overview of discussions on human security, and outlined the principles and approach for its advancement and application to the priorities of the United Nations.

2010 On 20 and 21 May, a panel discussion and plenary meeting of the General Assembly was convened to consider the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/701).

2010 On 27 July, the **General Assembly passed resolution 64/291**, "Follow-up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome", **in which Member States recognized the need to continue discussions on human security and to agree on its definition in the General Assembly (A/RES/64/291)**.

2010 The Secretary-General appoints Mr. Yukio Takasu as his Special Adviser on Human Security in December.



2011 As a follow-up to A/RES/64/291, on 14 April, the Office of the President of the General Assembly convened an informal thematic debate and panel discussion on human security. While the need for continued consultation was emphasized, inputs by Member States confirmed the emergence of a level of consensus by which the notion of human security could be framed.

2011 In November, Mr. Takasu convened informal consultations with Member States to ensure broad participation and inputs on the notion of human security, and possible areas in which its application could bring added value to the work of the United Nations.

2012 The **second report of the Secretary-General (A/66/763)** was released on 5 April. The report proposed a common understanding on human security based on the views expressed by Member States.

2012 A plenary meeting of the General Assembly was held on 4 June to discuss the report of the Secretary-General.

2012 On 10 September, the **General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 66/290**, "Follow-up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome" **in which Member States agreed on a common understanding on human security (A/RES/66/290)**.

What entities in the UN Secretariat work on human security?

The Human Security Unit

Established in 2004 in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Its goals are to:

Underscore the importance of human security for all. The HSU manages the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) as well as supports ongoing discussions within the UN General Assembly on human security.

Respond to different situations of human insecurity. Through the UNTFHS, the HSU helps to translate the human security approach into concrete activities to improve the lives and livelihoods of people faced with complex and multidimensional situations of human insecurity.

Develop practical tools. The HSU develops frameworks and tools for applying the human security approach in programmes and projects. These practical tools provide step-by-step guidance on the application of human security in UN programmes and projects.

Disseminate lessons learned and foster collaboration. The HSU works with Governments, academic institutions, regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as foundations to foster tangible and innovative initiatives for advancing human security.

The UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS)

Established in 1999 by the Government of Japan and the UN Secretariat. From 1999 to 2006, the UNTFHS was funded solely by the Government of Japan. Since 2007, the Governments of Greece, Mexico, Slovenia and Thailand have also contributed to the Fund.

Finances activities that lead to practical actions at the country level. The UNTFHS funds programmes and projects carried out by UN organizations and/or designated non-UN organizations that apply the human

security approach to complex situations of insecurity. Priority is given to countries where insecurities of people are most critical and pervasive.

Finances activities that demonstrate the added value of the human security approach. The UNTFHS also supports activities carried out by UN organizations and/or designated non-UN organizations that promote the human security approach and highlight its added value to complex and multidimensional situations of human insecurity.

Projects aim to:

- Provide concrete and sustainable benefits to people and communities threatened in their survival, livelihood and dignity.
- Take into account the people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented aspects of the human security approach.
- Implement the protection and empowerment framework by including top-down protection and bottom-up empowerment measures.
- Promote partnerships with local entities (Government and non-governmental) and ensure national ownership and greater sustainability.
- Concentrate on those areas of human insecurity that are currently neglected, and avoid duplication with existing programmes and activities.

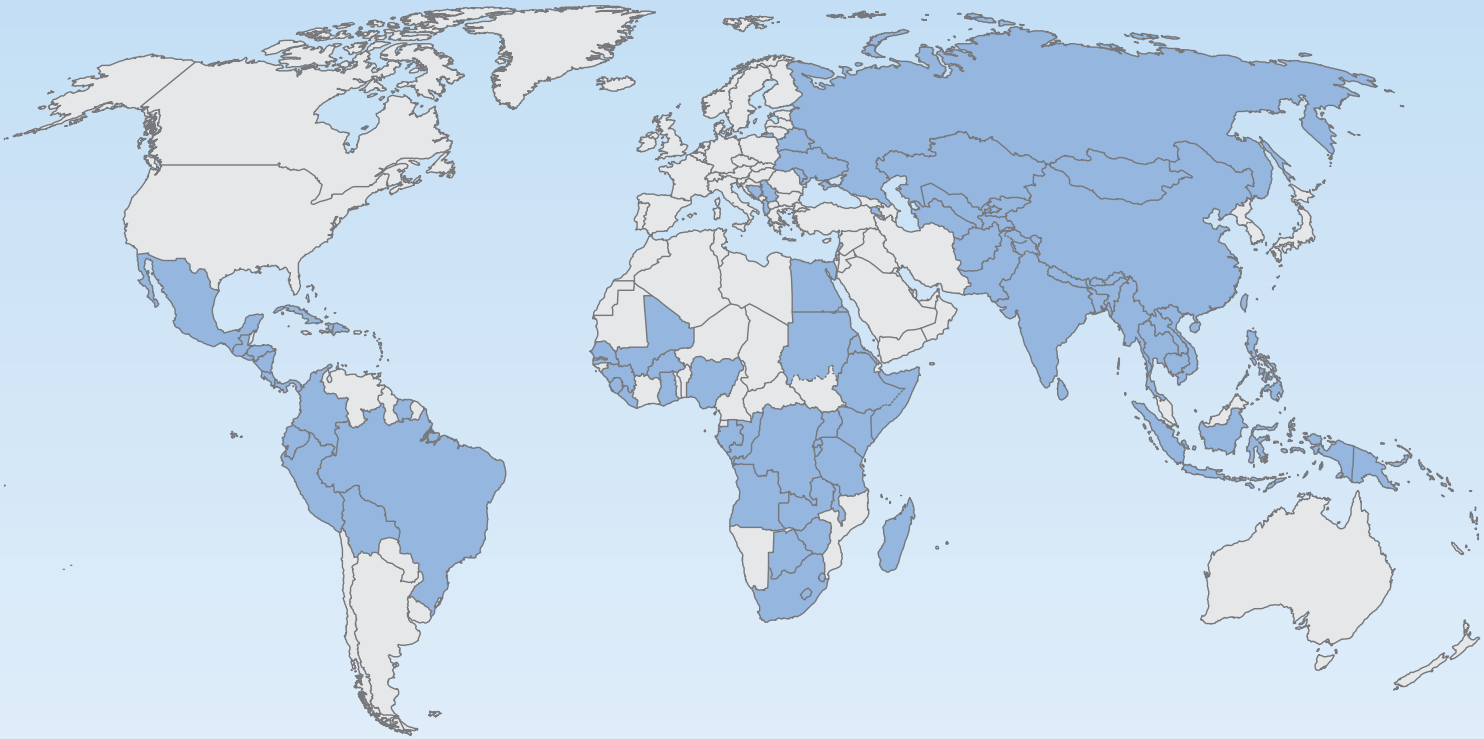
The Advisory Board on Human Security (ABHS)

The ABHS is an independent body composed of 13 distinguished international experts known for their breadth of knowledge and deep commitment to human security.

The ABHS advises the UN Secretary-General on:

- The general guidelines for the UNTFHS.
- Methods to increase the impact of projects and activities funded by the UNTFHS.
- Ways to promote and disseminate the human security concept and deepen its understanding and acceptance worldwide.

UN Trust Fund for Human Security



To date, the UNTFHS has funded more than *200 projects* in over *80 countries* worldwide.

Afghanistan
Albania
Angola
Armenia
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belarus
Bhutan
Bolivia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Botswana
Brazil
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cambodia
China
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Democratic Republic of Congo
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Fiji
Gabon
Gambia
Ghana
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea
Haiti
Honduras
India
Indonesia
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Kosovo*
Kyrgyzstan
Lao PDR
Lebanon
Lesotho
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mexico
Moldova
Mongolia
Myanmar
Nepal
Nicaragua
Nigeria
Occupied Palestinian territories
Pakistan
Panama
Papua New Guinea
Peru
Philippines
Republic of Congo
Russian Federation
Rwanda
Senegal
Serbia
Sierra Leone
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Suriname
Swaziland
Tajikistan
United Republic of Tanzania
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Trinidad and Tobago
Turkmenistan
Uganda
Ukraine
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Viet Nam
Zambia
Zimbabwe

* *In accordance with Security Council resolution 1244*

UNTFHS projects have tackled complex situations of human insecurity including:

- Transition to peace and sustainable development in fragile and conflict-affected communities.
- Protecting and empowering refugees, IDPs, economic migrants and others on the move.
- Responding to the multidimensional consequences of climate-related threats.
- Urban violence and its impact on health, education, economic, personal and community security.

- Poverty reduction, social inclusion and community-based development in isolated areas.
- Economic, environmental and social components of health-related insecurities.

UNTFHS-funded projects have:

- Underscored the practical approach of human security for addressing multi-faceted insecurities in a contextually relevant and targeted manner.
- Provided new perspectives for the development of interventions, particularly where existing responses have proved insufficient.
- Resulted in a deeper analysis on the causes and manifestations of complex and interconnected threats and their impact on the survival, livelihood and dignity of local communities.
- Highlighted the lack of protection and empowerment conditions that can perpetuate insecurities.
- Supported the development of mitigation and resilience-building measures that have resulted in notable increases in the human security of the most vulnerable.
- Provided examples of successful multi-stakeholder collaborations that have fortified existing partnerships and promoted avenues for new collaborations among UN organizations, Governments and local communities.

Climate-related threats and natural or man-made hazards

UNTFHS projects have strengthened the capacity of communities to cope with and recover from climate-related threats, while simultaneously addressing food, health and economic insecurities, and supporting the development of local and national response mechanisms.

Lessons:

A comprehensive and integrated approach helps reduce the social, political, economic and environmental consequences of climate change.

The human security analysis provides useful information for developing evidence-based protection and empowerment strategies that can expand people's welfare and ensure sustainability.

The protection and empowerment framework can also result in improved early warning systems, more resilient coping mechanisms and better tailored adaptation strategies.

Community-based empowerment initiatives can be scaled up to mainstream disaster reduction and risk management into national development plans.

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding

UNTFHS projects have focused on strengthening citizen security, improving the delivery of and access to basic social services, restoring livelihoods, promoting community reconciliation and enhancing conflict-prevention activities.

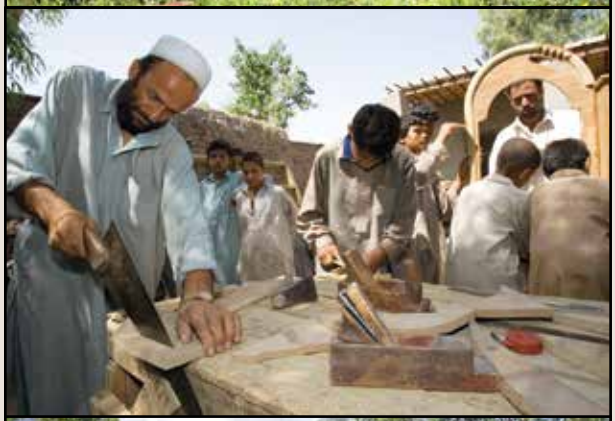
Lessons:

By focusing on bringing the rewards of peace to people and communities, and by emphasizing that a lasting peace hinges on a life free from fear, want and exclusion, the human security approach can help recast efforts towards concrete interventions that address people's needs.

Multi-sectoral strategies that engage a broad range of UN and local stakeholders have been pivotal in producing the peace dividend needed to bolster confidence in consolidating peace and transitioning to recovery.

The human security–based needs, vulnerabilities, and capacity analysis supports more targeted, efficient and sustainable priority setting.

The analysis provides a foundation for capacity-building empowerment strategies that nurture local ownership and promote greater sustainability.



Health and related challenges

UNTFHS projects have addressed the combined impact of factors such as poverty, displacement, violence, the environment, and poor service-and-sanitation infrastructure on the health status of the most vulnerable people.

Lessons:

By promoting a multidimensional analysis, the human security approach highlights the multiple factors that contribute to ill health. This helps strengthen the development of integrated responses across sectors, and capitalizes on the comparative advantages of different actors towards more targeted, efficient and cost-effective responses.

Protection measures aim to prevent, monitor and anticipate health-related threats by developing early warning and response mechanisms, as well as strengthen preparedness to identify and control health-related challenges.

Empowerment measures rely on improving health-care systems, training health professionals, educating and mobilizing the public, and developing local-level health insurance schemes that reach the most vulnerable people.

Urban violence

UNTFHS projects have aimed to empower communities to address the complex challenges of urban violence and crime, while also reinforcing the capacity of local and national mechanisms that respond to citizen security.

Lessons:

Reducing violence and crime requires an integrated and multidimensional approach that can respond to the multitude of interconnected factors at the institutional and community levels, including public order, poverty, education, health and social cohesion.

By promoting participatory processes, the human security approach supports the development of networks of diverse stakeholders. This can increase dialogue between Governments and their citizens, resulting in improved levels of trust and greater civic engagement.

The human security approach focuses on the importance of preventive actions that address the root causes of violence and criminality, and builds on the positive contributions of at-risk community members.

For more information on human security and UNTFHS-funded projects, please visit: www.unocha.org/humansecurity

Human Security Unit
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
United Nations
New York, NY 10017
USA

E-mail: humansecurity@un.org

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