
UNIT 16 HUMAN SECURITY IN INDIA

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16.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept, meaning, nature and scope of the human security have been dealt with extensively in the previous Units of this course. The preceding Unit, Human Security in South Asia, has dealt with its various dimensions. This Unit examines the situation of human security in India. India presents a curious case because of many factors. Firstly, when we look into the history, we would know that India has attracted people of all cultures, faiths and beliefs. It has been ruled by various kingdoms and has absorbed all with equanimity, be it through love or through conquest. It presents a perfect platform for different cultures and has always remained a land of diversity. Though unity of all has been an underlying factor for its survival, it has done so under trials and tribulations too. Even to this day, India remains multicultural and accommodative despite of all odds. Nevertheless, as we have already studied in the previous units, various factors operate in society that disturbs its equanimity. Violence is an inherent trait in all human beings and has taken its toll in different forms. India too has experienced it all and continues to do so. This Unit deals with many of these factors in detail.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to:

- identify the dimensions of human security in India
- describe the measures taken to ensure human security
- explain the future course of action that needs to be taken up for a peaceful and inclusive society.

16.2 HUMAN SECURITY: INDIAN SCENARIO

‘There is little doubt that many of the security threats facing the world in the 21st century revolve around issues such as poverty, underdevelopment, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, pandemics, illegal migration, people smuggling, drug trafficking and conflicts arising from poor governance leading to state failure. While these threats are

not new, in an era of advancing globalization, they are increasingly transnational and interlinked in nature. Moreover, these threats directly and deeply affect the safety and well-being of people, even when the system of states that comprise the contemporary international order may remain superficially stable. The international community therefore needs to rethink the concept of what security means and how best to realize it. A comprehensive people-centric understanding of security is warranted, as a more appropriate framework of reference and action for today's world than the traditional notion of national security' (Amitav Acharya, 2011, p.xii). Human security has thus assumed a completely different dimension as opposed to the traditional concept or pattern of security that is in vogue in various nations.

As has already been mentioned, India is a diverse state characterised by different ethnic groups. India is unique case where, different communities live and have been consistently managing to retain their identity. Many a time, this has given scope for inequalities to great extent; there are divisions in society based on caste, creed, class, religion, community, and so on. Time and again, some groups feel marginalised and perceive themselves as being at the receiving end of the society. Though it has been a fact that such discrimination exists even today, it is also notable that these groups too have become assertive in voicing their protests and sending elected representatives to present their cases at the highest legislative bodies. Similarly, on the economic front, various welfare schemes are being implemented to mete out economic and social justice to the downtrodden and deprived in the society. There is now an increasing awareness among various groups about their legitimate rights and claims that make it easier to demand the provision of human security. Simultaneously, the state is also cautious in giving the citizens their due share through the implementation of various policies and programmes. It is now engaged in the task of taking care of its citizens on all fronts.

The human security dimensions, though not exhaustive, cover the following areas: political, economic, social, cultural, communitarian and environmental security. These will be dealt with in precise manner so as to appraise the learner regarding these dimensions.

Political Security: The state is primarily responsible for ensuring the security and make sure that the apparatus is well equipped to deal with any kind of eventuality. India's territorial integrity has been closely guarded ever since its independence. The strategic position of India has made it vulnerable to threats from many quarters. The challenges of keeping the nation integrated have been numerous and have been put to test from time to time. India's northern side and north-eastern side have been particularly vulnerable and the insurgent and militant groups have been consistently making attempts to destabilise the nation. The challenges are many in this task: The state's capacity to cope up with untoward incidents often breaks down; Government officials infrequently perform their duties; Law and order enforcing agencies often face hurdles in the remote areas from where the insurgent/ militant groups operate; parallel governments are run especially in the Naxalite (Maoists) violence prone areas; further there are challenges relating to the preventing the proliferation of small arms, drugs and trafficking. Many experts propound human development as a prerequisite for human security as the inequalities tend to take a downward turn due to enhanced development levels and the availability of basic needs. The availability induces a security factor that prevents crime rates from soaring. It is, therefore, necessary that the policy makers keep in mind those measures that ensure welfare of all.

Economic Security: While the economic disparities continue to exist, the measures undertaken to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor have been rather inadequate. Poverty is one of the problems that have been stalling the growth of India. With the introduction of economic liberalisation, it has been expected that the impending economic problems would be resolved. But India's liberalisation policy and its consequent measures have left the nation in further widening the gap between the rich and the poor. In fact economic disparities and discrimination have led to the spread of Left-wing radical ideology and subsequently to violence. These have assumed unlimited proportions as the state failed to control this menace. The root cause of this violence is basically economic in nature and is likely to further increase in frequency and range. Economic empowerment is a major factor that contributes to economic security. Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy state that 'progress in economic development and especially in human development (growth with equity) reduces the risk of conflict situations and the temptation to wage war for greed. When a population is empowered and has opportunities for its own personal and human development, then reasons to go to war can no longer play on the greed or economics model, this applying especially within states, and being particularly relevant in times where conflicts are mostly intra-state and no longer opposing states' (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007, p.113). Wars place further stress on the economy of the nation thereby multiplying the losses and decreasing the gains.

Food Security: Food security is one of the most crucial aspects related to human survival. The absence of this has disastrous consequences for those who are deprived of the basic need in the society. Poverty, hunger and food security are closely interrelated. The deprivation of food leads to starvation and subsequently to ill-health. It also leads to the impairment of one's ability to work and career. Malnutrition reduces one's immunity to diseases and affects one's health negatively the whole lifetime. It adds up to hunger, poverty and disease and makes people frail and unproductive. The provision of food constitutes an important element of human development and the deprivation of the same means a stunted human growth. The denial of this makes the concept of development meaningless because food is a basic necessity for human survival and when the very question of survival is at peril, the plans for meaningful development take a retreat. It also questions the very capability of the state wherein it fails to provide basic necessities to its citizens. Food security is of great importance in a society. Attempts are being made to bring in legislation that ensures this basic right for all but we need to remember that this is a gigantic task and needs immense determination to make it possible. India is home to millions of malnourished and undernourished population. Therefore, the task becomes all the more important because of the high levels of targets to mitigate hunger and poverty.

Health Security: Health is an important component of human development and survival. It needs the assurance from the state as well as local communities so that the health of all members of society is taken care of. In India, there are primary health centres in most of the villages but they are least equipped to tackle even minor health problems. The public access to health in many places is rather dismal and the situation in rural areas is all the more pathetic. The urban areas also suffer as most of the people living in slums and unhygienic conditions cannot afford adequate health facilities. The private sector is more commercial in nature and does not cater to the health needs of the poor. Though there is a provision of the private hospitals extending health care to the poor, the implementation of this scheme is rather tardy. The general trend that has been in vogue includes lack of awareness among the rural population regarding popular measures like

immunisation of mother and child, maternal health care, and infant mortality rates. This sector needs reforms that would ensure health for one and all.

Environmental Security: Environmental security has been gaining importance because of the very evident degradation of the environment, climate change, depletion of ozone layers, and massive industrial pollution. There has been an increasing awareness regarding the impact of developmental policies on the natural environment. With more and more industrial, mining, and developmental projects getting clearance from the governmental authorities for industrial/ commercial purposes, it has now assumed significance at the local, national, regional and global levels. The undue exploitation of the natural resources has led many nations to come together on a global platform and undertake measures to reduce environmental degradation. Various International Conventions have been brought into policy frameworks so as to enable the nations to adhere to these conventions. This is an important dimension of human security for it enables one to live in pollution-free environment and also sustain our natural resources for our future generations. Some of the important conventions like the one related to climate change need to be addressed and discussed thoroughly so that the future generations are safe from increasing climatic variations and their negative effects. There should be a binding commitment on the part of all nations to implement it sincerely. India too has its share of legislation on environment and the most telling feature is its judicial activism in the arena of environmental protection. Since India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, its development efforts are likely to disturb its ecological balance. It needs to work harder on this aspect keeping in view its traditional knowledge and wisdom that depended more on fine balance of nature-man relationship.

Individual and Community Security: It is widely accepted by one and all that human security and its prime goal is the protection of the individual. This means protection from any form of violence that threatens the security of the individual. This not only means protection from any kind of violence that erupts in situations like terrorist attacks or wars but also from other non-traditional security threats like hunger, poverty, displacement and so on. The concept of human security, as has been mentioned in the previous Units, is closely related to the concepts of human rights and human development. It also deals with community security apart from individual security. It is the communities that collectively face the threats in most of the situations. These threats emanate from day-to-day events, threatening the safety of daily life and dignity of individuals/ communities.

In India, the list of susceptible groups is broadly classified into minorities and specifically, all the more deprived people from different sections of society. These include caste and tribal groups, women and children. While the issues relating to women, children and minorities (be it religious or linguistic) is more universal in nature, the issues pertaining to the tribals and people from lower strata of society is more India-centric. These groups are part of the system and are prone to structural violence. Further, when it comes to poverty and hunger, it afflicts all the poor and makes them the most vulnerable in society, fighting against their own systems that have created imbalances at various stages. Further, there is a major delineation and is manifested mostly in rural areas. The backward communities often face social differentiation and inequality and are the most deprived sections in the society. These groups do not have access to essential social and economic goods and the discrimination towards them is mostly due to the imbalanced stratification of society that is based on caste, class and religion. Their isolation from the mainstream for ages has made them vulnerable to the core.

Violence against women is a common feature in all societies; it is a transnational issue. The crimes against women take place in both rural and urban areas and these are the most vulnerable groups in society. In any kind of violent situation, it is the women who suffer the most. Children too have become the most vulnerable section as they are often forced into domestic work, as labour and are also the victims of human trafficking. In India, the condition of women presents a contrasting picture: on one hand, we have women progressing towards betterment as professional executives, political leaders, environmental activists, social workers and pioneering reformers and business leaders. On the other hand, the condition of women in rural India is not very promising, primarily owing to lack of education and awareness regarding their rights and duties. Though laws are being enacted to improve their lot, the efforts are yet to take off. Children too have been at the receiving end with massive levels of low education, employment as child labour in industries, hotels and so on. The Right to Education law aims at providing them equal rights to education and working towards their betterment. The domestic helpers too come under the category of people who do not have access to right education, employment and security. These are the pertinent issues that need to be redressed and resolved thereof.

16.3 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SECURITY

In one of the previous Units, you have learnt about the interdependence between human rights, human development and human security. It is to be noted that the violation of one of these automatically leads to the violation of the other. Finally, human insecurity becomes a dominant feature. Therefore, what are the measures that are to be taken if we have to ensure human security?

Human development is a crucial factor in this context. It is important to cite what Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy observe in this regard: 'Human development or lack thereof, is critical to sustain certain levels of human security, downturns in development and extreme poverty almost systematically triggering conflict, whether open through warfare, or through growing social unrest, tension and stress. Progress in human development will enhance the chances of progress in human security, while failure in human development will increase the risk of failure in human security. From a practical standpoint as well, most aspects of the maximalist definitions of human security simply cannot be delivered without a certain level of pre-existing development. Indeed, definitions that emphasize the need within human security, for instance, for 'social safety nets' to mitigate downturns, must acknowledge that setting up such institutions needs an already relatively significant level of development and state stability to finance such social security and economic security schemes. Only progress in the developmental field can bring the capacities to then make sure, through human security, that no steps are made backwards, and no one lags behind' (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007, p.114). They also observe that human security also could be made a pre-condition for human development. Minimum guarantee of human security should be ensured before one moves forward to greater levels of development. One must be assured of protection from calamities, wars, poverty, hunger or displacement to name a few. Development would take place only when there is an ambience of peace and security. For example, many civil wars or disturbances lead to little or no development and vice versa, wherein the absence of development is likely to trigger a conflict. Symptoms like political instability, economic deprivation, social unrest, eroding of cultural factors, displacement and weakened state institutions do lead to massive human insecurity conditions. These afflict all states alike, be it developed or developing, rich or poor.

The quality of human development and human security are dependent on the promotion of peace and harmony in society that is sustainable in nature. These are more of intersecting points define the security in a society. 'Human development and human security thus appear as two parallel processes that go hand in hand. Progress in one enhances the chances of progress in the other, when failure in one enhances the chances of failure in the other. Human security and human development are therefore overall sister-concepts with mutually beneficial cross-contributions. Narrow human security is the pre-condition for development, the initial impetus of development then helping to widen human security concerns, while human security is also a way to prioritize efforts, which is sometimes lacking in strict development thinking' (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007, p.116).

It is worth noting that while human rights could be enforced through consistent advocacy and human development could be achieved through systematic targets, human security can neither be enforced nor can be achieved within a limited time frame. It is dependent more on the willingness of the state and other actors who could contribute to achieving this. As Gandhi pointed out, the seven social sins could contribute to imbalance in society. These are:

1. Politics without principles
2. Wealth without work
3. Knowledge without character
4. Pleasure without conscience
5. Commerce without morality
6. Science without humanity
7. Worship without sacrifice.

It is, therefore, necessary that these factors be balanced if there has to be human security in society.

16.4 INTERVENTIONS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

In the previous Units, much information has already been provided as to what constitutes human security and how it could be ensured from time to time through various measures. This section deals more with the implications of positive and negative externalities of intervention that often takes place for ensuring human security. Human security could be guaranteed under certain favourable conditions. These include political stability, peace and harmony, flourishing of multiculturalism, economic empowerment of people, liberal atmosphere, liberal education, gender equality, positive transformative development and promotion of interdependence and sustainable development. There is no place for greed or unjust reasons to go to war only for economic gains. Further, the grievances should be addressed so as to ensure fair or just system. There also needs to be an atmosphere where conflicts could be prevented or resolved for the good of the humanity; effective political institutions and prevalence of democratic norms and space. To a great extent, international aid and cooperation also play an active and important role in contributing to enhanced human security. Most of the nations around the world have some time or other come under interventions of external powers/ agencies. But the increased dependence on international factors is likely to lead to the latter's dominance in the domestic/ national

affairs which, in turn is again a matter of insecurity. Therefore, a fine balance needs to be maintained between various contributing factors like collective responsibility and commitment to uphold positive values, freedom, rights and dignity of the humanity. At the same time, there are many risks along with the positive factors that accompany the nature of intervention from outside. These have been enlisted exclusively in the paragraphs below:

Positive and Negative externalities of human security interventions

Economic Security

Threats stem from poverty, unemployment, indebtedness, lack of income, etc.

Possible interventions and assistance by international donors

- Relief aid and public aid
- Micro-credit projects (self-employment)
- Poverty eradication strategies
- Safety nets and social welfare programmes
- FDI and long term investments.
- Trade facilitation
- Debt relief: low interest rate or cancellation of loans

Possible positive externalities in other domains

- Increase in income (linked to food security)
- Social inclusion (linked to personal security)
- Empowerment of women (community security)
- Boosting the private sector (political security)
- Reducing inequality (community and personal security)

Possible negative externalities in other domains

- The state can become more dependent on foreign donors and is no longer accountable to the population (political insecurity)
- If solely targeting women or IDPs or other vulnerable groups, there are risks of marginalization in the community (link to community insecurity)
- Conditionality and politicization of aid could affect the political system (political insecurity)
- Unregulated private sector can increase gap between rich and poor (linked to personal and community security)
- Increase competition between groups (community insecurity, political, and personal insecurity)
- Quick fix projects can harm the environment (linked to environmental insecurity)

- Relief aid can have negative long-term consequences for sustainability (linked to food insecurity).

Food Security

Threats stem from hunger, famines, and the lack of physical and economic access to basic food

Possible interventions and assistance by international donors

- Public food distribution system
- Crop distribution and improved farming techniques
- Midday meals in schools
- Food-for-work programmes.

Possible positive externalities in other domains

- Hunger relief (responding to immediate need)
- Increased and improved agriculture (linked to economic and environment security)

Possible negative externalities in other domains

- Discourage local agriculture (decreased livelihoods and job security for farmers)
- Affect the population metabolism by changing what they eat (linked to health insecurity)
- Crops might not meet the soil condition (linked to environmental insecurity)
- Food distribution may be inequitable (linked to community insecurity).

Health Security

Threats include inadequate health care, new and recurrent diseases including epidemics and pandemics, unsafe environment and, unsafe lifestyles)

Possible interventions and assistance by international donors

- (Re) building the public health care system
- Technical cooperation
- Health education programmes
- Safe and affordable family planning
- Primary care
- Prevention strategies
- Regulating private health care.

Possible positive externalities in other domains

- Balance (re) attained in mortality/ fertility rates (linked to personal and community security)

- Equal access to health care (personal, community security)
- Gender empowerment (personal, community security)
- Healthy environment (linked to environment security)
- Healthy labour force (linked to economic security)
- Nutritional programmes that are sustainable (linked to food security).

Possible negative externalities in other domains

- Replacement of the state's responsibility in providing healthcare (lack of trust in institutions, political insecurity)
- Family planning may go against local cultures (community insecurity)
- Stigmatization of disease and isolation of patients (community, economic and personal insecurity).

Environmental security

Threats from environmental degradation, natural disasters, pollution and resource depletion

Possible interventions and assistance by international donors

- Installing environmental sound management practices
- Environmental awareness programmes
- Implementing strict environment laws
- Cleaning community water resources.

Possible positive externalities in other domains

- Recovering waste and polluted renewable resources (linked to economic and health security)
- Introducing environment-friendly technologies (linked to economic, food and health security)
- Mitigating the negative impact of man-made disasters (community, economic and personal security)
- Poverty eradication (economic security)
- Improved water (health security).

Possible negative externalities in other domains

- Ignoring agricultural traditions (linked to community insecurity)
- Exacerbating land disputes (linked to community, economic and political insecurity).

Personal Security

Threats include crime and violence

They include threats from the state (through physical torture inflicted by the military or

police), from other states (such as wars, cross-border terrorism, etc.), from other groups of people (such as ethnic or religious conflicts, street violence, etc). They can be directed against women (such as domestic violence, abuse or rape), or against children (such as child abuse, neglect, child labour, or child prostitution).

Possible interventions and assistance by international donors

- Law and order
- Peace negotiations
- Crime prevention
- Demobilization of soldiers
- Curbing domestic violence through education, gender just laws, etc.

Possible positive externalities in other domains

- Freedom from fear, want and indignity (with impacts on all human security concerns)
- Domain development resource (economic security)
- Law and order (which has positive externalities for all security types)
- Strengthening human rights monitoring (tied to economic, community and political security)
- Demilitarization (community and political security)
- Employment (economic security)
- Gender empowerment (community security).

Possible negative externalities in other domains

- Replacing the state (linked to political insecurity)
- Militarization and increasing of policing (tied to political and community insecurity)
- Privatization of security (linked to community, political and economic insecurities)
- Creating stereotypes of ethnic/ religious communities (linked to community security).

Community security

Threats from discrimination and abuse of various groups (including ethnic, gender, language, racial, religious, etc.), from group armed conflicts, from oppression by traditional practices. They also include threats to the integrity of cultural diversity.

Possible interventions and assistance by international donors

- Gender empowerment
- Human rights interventions
- Good migration policies
- Quotas and affirmative action policies within donor projects for most vulnerable groups

- Secular education

Possible positive externalities in other domains

- Social harmony (leading to security of all components)
- Culture of non-discrimination (economic, political, personal security)

Possible negative externalities in other domains

- Exacerbating tensions between communities
- Cultural interference (linked to political, personal security)
- Exclusion if targeting specific groups such as women, refugees, etc. (linked to personal, economic and political insecurities)
- Racist policies (with consequences on economic, personal and political insecurities).

Political Security

Threats can come from political or state repression, including torture, disappearances, human rights violations, detention and imprisonment. They can also stem from mistrust in the capacity of the state to provide and protect.

Possible interventions and assistance by international donors

- Support for transition to democratic practices.
- Reduction of corruption policies.
- Promoting democratic culture.

Possible positive externalities in other domains

- Reduction of political exclusion (linked to community and economic security)
- Reducing corruption and implementing good governance (linked to community, economic and personal security)
- Impact on a democratic evolution of political institutions (economic, political, personal security)
- Respect for human rights (impact on all securities)
- Improving the functioning of markets (economic security).

Possible negative externalities in other domains

- Imposing a particular type of governance system (linked to potential community and economic insecurities)
- Risk of creating new inequalities in distribution of power (linked to economic, political, personal insecurities)
- Lobbying and financial pressure by some groups (linked to community insecurities).

Source: Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007, pp.221-226.

16.5 SUMMARY

This Unit dealt with the human security conditions in India in a comprehensive manner so as to enable the learner know the intricacies of what constitutes human security, its link with human development and the implications of intervention by external forces. Human rights and human development are often subjected to interventions by external forces or agencies like major powers or international human rights bodies/agencies or development institutions. Regarding food security (during the 1960s) and economic security (with the beginning of the liberalisation of the economy), India has been affected by international compulsions. Often the human rights issues are pointed out by both internal and external groups regarding their violations. In this increasingly interdependent world, no nation is exempted from some form of monitoring or scrutiny. It is therefore necessary that human security is guaranteed rather ambitiously so that the targets are met effectively. It needs to be incorporated on the policy agenda and implemented successfully so that the security of the humankind is ensured.

16.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by human security? How is it related to human development?
2. How do you assess the level of human security in India? Are there any effective measures?
3. What are the positive and negative implications of external interventions with regard to the environmental, food and economic security?

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