

Protecting Rights to Life, Livelihood, and Human Dignity



The range of threats that identify fear and want

“Human Security” is a concept that gained attention in 1994, when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced it in its Human Development Report (HDR). In 2003, the Commission on Human Security collated their work into a report titled “Human Security Now.” One of the co-chairs at the time was Mme. OGATA Sadako, who became JICA president soon after. Since then, JICA has carried out its programs with the aim of making Human Security a reality.

More than 25 years have passed since its first appearance in UNDP’s HDR, but the importance of Human Security has only increased. The COVID-19 pandemic directly threatens the lives of millions of people. This crisis is forcing more people into desperate conditions, especially those who have long faced social or economic difficulties. In addition to infectious diseases, there are many other threats to people’s “lives, livelihoods, and dignity.” These include conflict, terrorism, intolerance against ethnic or religious minorities, poverty, malnutrition, and

more. We are also facing the rise of new and increasingly complex threats, such as growing inequality, non-communicable diseases (NCD), the health and social protection challenges posed by ageing societies, the frequent and severe natural disasters accelerated by climate change, the widening digital divide, the impact of the advancement of science and technology on society, and the suppression of freedom and human rights. Recognizing these serious threats to freedom from fear and want, JICA aims to achieve Human Security by building societies where people are free of fear and want and can live with dignity.

Responding to new challenges

JICA is implementing a range of activities in response to the renewed importance and current needs for Human Security in today’s context. When the idea of Human Security emerged in the 1990s, conflicts were rampant, and the number of refugees and displaced persons grew rapidly. Consequently, Human Security was generally seen in the contexts linked to conflicts and

refugees. However, in a longer-term, preventing the recurrence of conflicts requires fostering a culture of reconciliation and establishing the rule of law. Improvements in poverty reduction, health, and education are also essential if people are to live in dignity. Furthermore, this will require basic infrastructure such as clean water as the foundation of public health, as well as roads and electricity. Today, it is also essential to reduce and prepare for disaster risks to protect people from frequent natural disasters. In addition to these areas unless we address the digital divide through better quality education and capacity

building, we will not be able to realize Human Security.

At the same time, this new era also allowed us to find new solutions. Through IT-based innovations and collaborating with a diverse range of partners, we are now able to respond to issues that were hard to solve in the past. For example, the Maternal and Child Health Handbook for refugees and displaced people is now available as a smartphone app, and has become easier for accessing and protecting data. Smartphones and drones are also being used to provide medical services to remote areas. Such new solutions are helping us to accelerate the achievement of Human Security.

Recommendation from Mme. OGATA Sadako, Co-Chair for the Commission on Human Security

Dr. OGATA Sadako, having finished her term as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, was appointed as co-chair of the Commission on Human Security that was formed in 2001 by the proposal of then-prime minister, MORI Yoshiro. She proposed the construction of a concept of Human Security and outlined the measures required from the international community. Additionally, she emphasized the necessity of expanding the focus of security from the nation to the individual. Further, the report defined Human Security as “protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment.”

