

HEALTH AND HUMAN SECURITY



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

*Regional Office of the
World Health Organization*



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Human Security: *core principles and health links*

Recognition that traditional security approaches are limited in the face of today's complex global threats has given rise to the human security concept. Human security broadens the scope of security and gives primacy to people, rather than nations or political boundaries.

The **principal goal of human security is to guarantee three fundamental freedoms:**

- Freedom from fear
- Freedom from want
- Freedom to live in dignity

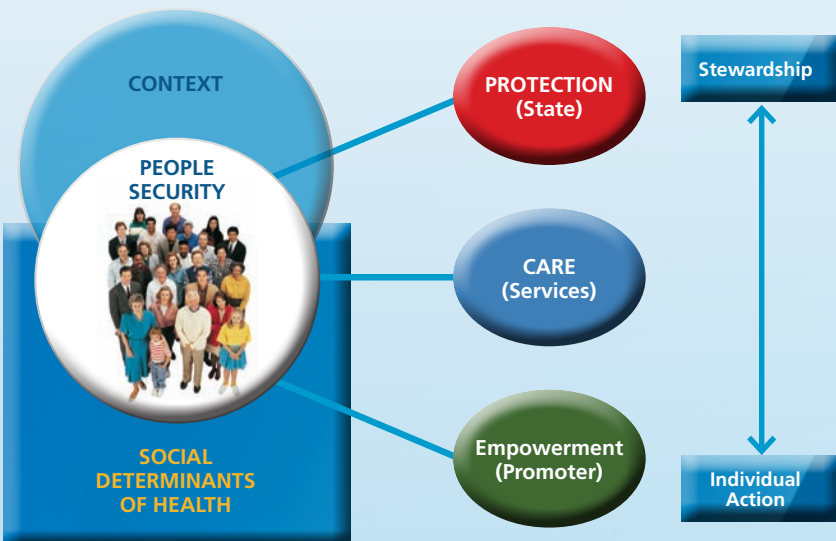
Human security secures these freedoms by protecting individuals against the full range of threats to **survival, livelihood, and dignity**—the “vital core” of life. In this way, human security does not aim to amplify all human capacities indefinitely, but to ensure that *vital* capacities are enjoyed equally by all.

The human security approach **addresses root causes** of insecurity by considering multidimensional threats and the connections between them.

Another core principle of the human security approach is **its focus on prevention** of insecurity rather than response to its negative impacts.

Human security calls for collaboration between actors from all sectors, and highlights the need for dual emphasis of:

- measures to protect people from severe and widespread threats,
- empowerment strategies to build human capabilities and community.



The human security approach identifies seven interrelated dimensions of security threats:

- Economic
- Food
- Health
- Environmental
- Personal
- State/Community
- Political

Health is a key dimension of human security, and the increasing complexity, scale, and urgency of today's health challenges pose increasing threats to this security.

Health and human security are also mutually dependent:

- Good health enhances security, while increased security may increase health and well-being;
- Health challenges can erode social stability, just as insecurity can deepen health vulnerabilities.

Human security approaches are being used to address the **greatest health-related human security threats in the Americas**: infectious and poverty-related diseases; violence and crisis; and emergencies and disasters.

Public Health and Human Security: *parallel approaches*

Public health provides an ideal basis for applying the human security approach in practice.

The following public health principles are mutually complementary with human security and add value to public health and human security efforts alike:

- **People-centered:** individual and community well-being at core.
- **Prevention-focused:** aims to prevent rather than treat disease (e.g. health promotion).
- **Protection:** essential stewardship functions to protect people, create healthy environments.
- **Empowerment:** community participatory and capacity-building strategies key.
- **Holistic:** addresses multidimensional root causes and determinants.
- **Intersectoral:** calls for wide range of actors to collaborate.
- **Participatory:** active community participation in planning and action is key to effectiveness.
- **Vulnerable populations:** prioritizes most at-risk and underserved groups, guided by equity as a core value.



ELEVATING HEALTH TO SECURE LIVES WITH DIGNITY,
FREE FROM WANT AND FEAR

Integrated Public Health and Human Security

Action: *added value*

Advancement of the health and human security concept provides PAHO and Member States a platform for strengthening public health efforts and expanding the reach of programs throughout the Americas.

Public health advances health and human security from theory to practice by providing a basis for application of a health and human security framework—a necessary first step in developing tools and formulating policy for effective health and human security-based action.

Health and human security adds value to public health by elevating the priority of health within all of society and strengthening health sector capacity and comprehensive action to address health problems and their relation to other issues.

In their integration, public health and health and human security mutually benefit from shared knowledge and practices and strengthened collaborative and comprehensive action.

Health and human security and public health are both necessary to secure people's health, well-being and resilience in the long-term, so that they can achieve their full potential and live with dignity in freedom from fear and want.

Together, public health and health and human security generate more effective and sustainable responses to prevent root causes of insecurity, which accelerates gains in human survival, livelihood and dignity.

For more information please contact: Sustainable Development and Environmental Health Area (SDE)