

Preface

The Fletcher Journal of Human Security: PRAXIS aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice as it pertains to the four main pillars of human security: human rights, humanitarian assistance, international development, and conflict resolution. Our 2008 issue addresses the complexities of conflict resolution as it pertains to moving beyond the brutality of war and the political, legal, and human resources needed to arrive at an environment for peace.

Violent conflict is a current reality in many countries around the world. Far beyond the physical security ramifications, people living in the shadow of war are threatened by adverse economic and livelihood repercussions, healthcare limitations, as well as various human rights abuses and atrocities. A conflict can rage on for many years, decades even, and the unfortunate reality is that the end of fighting does not necessarily translate into the end of human suffering or even a lasting peace. In fact, according to the World Bank, countries coming out of war face a 44 percent chance of relapsing within the first five years of peace.¹ And even with rapid economic and political progress, it can take a generation or longer for communities to return to their pre-war living standards.

A human security approach considers all the factors that threaten a person's ability to live in peace and security including poverty, disease, human rights' violations, as well as cultural and historical tensions. These issues can often lead to or prolong a conflict and likewise, they can stand in the way of reaching a lasting peace. Our 2008 issue is predominantly concerned with the processes, mechanisms, and institutions that can foster conflict resolution and enable subsequent peace building efforts such that they protect and promote the human security needs of a population living in or recovering from war.

We begin by considering the use of two different and relatively recent conflict resolution instruments—Jeremy Sarkin's exploration of reconciliation in Iraq and Medina Haeri's examination of advocacy as a means of ending "genocide" in Darfur. We then move on to an analysis of various transitional justice mechanisms and their respective abilities to address issues of peace and justice in countries recovering from the ravages and atrocities of war. In her article about sexual violence, Kathryn Birch considers the different protection strategies used during war and the subsequent societal recovery implications for women in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Amy Senier examines the potentialities and limitations of local custom as a transitional justice mechanism through a comparative case study of post conflict justice in Rwanda and East Timor. Margherita Zuin's article then proposes a model of transitional justice to address both restorative and retributive justice in Somalia.

Finally, the discussion transitions to the rebuilding of societies following the cessation of conflict whereby Peter Uvin reflects on the need for effective institution building and good governance using the case study of Burundi. We conclude with an examination of the importance of the rule of law in creating peace and stability in post conflict societies as reflected in our interview with Professor Aucoin and his account of the drafting of the Constitution in Kosovo. Taken together, these pieces serve as a useful blueprint for the pitfalls and the potential inherent in the field of conflict resolution particularly as it pertains to a holistic consideration of human security.

The final section of the journal, entitled *Views From the Field* incorporates the perspective of practitioners as to how these human security initiatives are shaped by real-world considerations. To what extent does academic theory reconcile with practice and how is the experience of a researcher shaped by these theoretical paradigms? Marc Sommers and Natalie Parke contribute to this section by narrating their respective experiences of researching and working in Rwanda and Uganda.

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1 Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries, <http://go.worldbank.org/BE237C0PI0>