From the Environment and Human Security to Sustainable Security and Development

SANJEEV KHAGRAM, WILLIAM C. CLARK and DANA FIRAS RAAD

Sanjeev Khagram is Assistant Professor of Public Policy and William Clark is Harvey Brooks Professor of International Science, Public Policy and Human Development at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and Dana Firas Raad is a Fulbright scholar graduate of the School

Abstract   This paper argues for a broader emphasis on sustainable security and sustainable development, and for examining both opportunities as well as threats to security. The authors note that many of the significant risks arising from human and natural interactions do not emerge at global or local levels, but at intermediate scales. They look at what different conceptual frameworks have to contribute to our understanding and review lessons from experience, illustrating where possible with work on water. The authors conclude by offering implications for an agenda of action, including interconnected frameworks, coalitions for change, interlocking institutional arrangements and disaggregated goals and indicators.

Key words: Environment, Sustainable Development, Human Development, Human Security, Water, Disaster, Sustainable Livelihoods

Introduction

The relationships between the environment and human security are certainly close and complex. A great deal of human security is tied to peoples' access to natural resources and vulnerabilities to environmental change — and a great deal of environmental change is directly and indirectly affected by human activities and conflicts. In this paper, however, we argue for a broader emphasis on sustainable security and sustainable development. To the extent possible, we illustrate our arguments in the area of water.

On the 'environment' side, we argue that work in the field of 'sustainable development' has been fundamental in capturing the emergent scientific and social understandings of the intimate coupling of nature and society. Although controversies abound, the fundamental insights that launched the idea of 'sustainable development' two decades ago are even more firmly established today: efforts to protect nature will fail unless they simultaneously advance the cause of human betterment; efforts to better the lives of people will fail if they fail to conserve, if not enhance, essential resources and life support systems.