

**Brazilian Perspectives on
Human Security**

Ilona Szabó de Carvalho
Raphael M.C. Corrêa

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Ilona Szabó de Carvalho¹

Raphael M.C. Corrêa²

Centre for Policy Studies

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¹ Coordinator of the Human Security Program of Viva Rio, Brazil; Specialist in Public Policy Analysis (ilona@vivario.org.br, ilonaszabo@yahoo.com).

² Researcher of the Human Security Program of Viva Rio - Brazil (rmillet@vivario.org.br).

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Centre for Policy Studies
1st Floor
Rosepark South,
6 Sturdee Avenue,
Rosebank,
Johannesburg, South Africa

P O Box 1933
Parklands
2121
Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel +27 11 442-2666
Fax +27 11 442-2677
e-mail: portia@cps.org.za
www.cps.org.za

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to advance discussions on human security and how the concept serves as a tool for approaching new (and longstanding) issues of internal and external security in the Latin American context, more specifically in the Brazilian context. It begins by examining the concept of human security, considering its links and practical applications to the problem of violence. It is argued in this paper that human security is more than a normative framework and must be reformulated into an operational and analytical tool. Human security-oriented analysis needs to be more clearly focused on armed violence, a growing phenomenon in Latin America and other parts of the Southern hemisphere. A short review of the current problems in Brazil is undertaken and a case study of Viva Rio, a NGO that works within the human security framework, is discussed. Finally, the paper provides some recommendations for increased cooperation among organizations of civil society, government and private enterprise within and among southern nations. It also makes recommendations for the consolidation of a common international agenda.

2. HUMAN SECURITY

The term ‘human security’³ first came to prominence with the publication of the 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report*.⁴ Before that an early definition would introduce the concept in the global policy debate with Lincoln Chen’s report of the *Common Security Forum* in 1992.⁵ Like most attempts to conceptualise this somewhat elusive idea, the UNDP definition focused on a broad range of threats (economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political) to *individuals*. Traditional security concepts, in contrast, focus on a narrow range of external (military) threats to the territorial and political integrity of *states*. In fact, we are now dealing with new scales of security that faces not only the security issues linked with the territory and nation but also with its population and individuals. From a social theory standpoint that does not mean we are changing from a macro scale point of view to a micro scale point of view. The complexity of the idea of security from a human perspective incorporates the unpredictability of social events that does not subordinate the “simple” to the “complex”, or the “small” to the “large”. It is more interesting to deal with an

³ On the history of the concept of Human Security, see Charles-Philippe David, Jean-Francois Rioux, “Le concept de Sécurité Humaine”, in Jean-Francois Rioux (ed.), *La Sécurité Humaine*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2001.

⁴ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994 - New Dimensions of Human Security*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994 (available at <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1994/en/> at 06/18/06)

⁵ The *Common Security Forum* set out the definition of Human Security as “inclusive of but extending beyond the human dimensions of military conflict - incorporating health and population dimensions of political, ethnic, economic and environmental security as well”, Lincoln Chen, Appendix 3.2, *Report on Plans for a Common Security Forum 1993-1997*, 1992 apud Sara Edson *Human Security: an extended and annotated international bibliography*. Centre for History and Economics, University of Cambridge, UK, 2001, p.4. See also Sabine Alkire. *A Conceptual Framework for Human Security* Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, CRISE. Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 2003

alternative “order of perception” that recognizes the configurations of events as isomorphic, in the sense that social events can be regarded as equally complex despite their recognition as a micro or macro insertion.⁶

Currently, support for the concept of human security stems mainly from the fact that much of today’s physical insecurity derives from armed conflicts that take place within national boundaries, rather than from wars between states. These may take the form of civil wars or less clearly-defined clashes between armed gangs or terrorist groups, sometimes supported directly or indirectly by states with a weak commitment to human rights. Ironically this scale change on security affairs has not made the issue simpler. On the contrary, the multiplicity of causes, and therefore the possibilities to deal with them, seems as complex as the traditional “large” inter-state Cold War era security affairs.

The concept of human security is innovative due to its emphasis on guaranteeing individual security, focusing on individual protection and empowerment, pursuing individual development and ensuring individual rights. The protection of human security is considered the principal task of international order, even where this is in opposition to the will of individual states, which are cited as one of the main sources of individual insecurity. The people-centred approach is the main contribution of this concept. As state security has long meant protecting territorial boundaries and institutions, threats to individual security include threats that have not been classified as such to state security. The concept offers the possibility of exploring international and domestic aspects of security issues. However, in spite of its focus on individuals, human security cannot be considered in isolation, but must take into account the institutional frameworks, in particular nation states that uphold or infringe human rights. The notion of human security is, therefore, inextricable from creating and or strengthening democratic institutions.

Human security promotes new forms of multilateralism by taking away the longstanding exclusive emphasis on sovereign nation-states. No longer are states the sole actors. The emergence of new stake-holders in the debate is vital for the concept’s dissemination and legitimacy. Today regional and international organizations, and non-governmental actors, in particular NGOs, play a central role in the human security debate.⁷

2.1. Contending Definitions

Thus, just as there are different actors, there are also several different views on human security circulating on the international scene. The Human Security Commission - presided by

⁶ For this conception of isomorphism in social theory see Casper B. Jensen. *Infrastructural fractals: revisiting the micro-macro distinction in social theory*. (available at <http://abaete.wikia.com/> at 03/27/06)

⁷ On new forms of multilateralism, see the excellent review by Shepard Forman, “New Coalitions for Global Governance: The Changing Dynamics of Multilateralism”, Center on International Cooperation, 2004.

Sadako Ogasa and Amartya Sen - proposes a broad definition of the concept. According to the Commission, human security is a concept that addresses both "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want". It defines the concept as "the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfilment."⁸

The Human Security Network, composed of 14 member nations, states that human security has become both a new measure of global security and a new agenda for global action. Safety is the hallmark of freedom from fear, while well-being is the target of freedom from want, "in essence, human security means freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety or even their lives". Human security and human development are thus two sides of the same coin, mutually reinforcing and leading to a conducive environment for each other.⁹

The EU High Representative for Common Policy and Security Policy presents a more precise strategic focus¹⁰ based on the diagnosis that inter-state conflicts have decreased while new dangers related to "...lawlessness, impoverishment, exclusivist ideologies and the daily use of violence"¹¹ have gained prominence. Hence, the five key threats to Europe are: "...terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, failing states, and organized crime."¹² The main sources of these threats are authoritarian states with repressive policies or failed states that shelter state- and non-state-sponsored armed groups. The EU High Representative proposes to advance a clear legal framework for justified interventions. It also calls for operations on the ground that are based on the principles of human rights, clear political authority, multilateralism, bottom-up approaches, regional focus, the use of legal instruments, and the appropriate use of force.

2.2. The Contribution of the Concept

Despite the different definitions, the outstanding contribution of the human security approach is its interrelation of security and development issues without reducing one to the other. A security agenda that is insensitive to issues of global and national inequality, epidemics, environmental degradation, the frustration of expectations and relative deprivation, will be condemned to fighting a war against symptoms. Therefore, the contemporary security agenda from a human security perspective is not a synonym for the human development agenda, nevertheless it is somewhat inseparable from it.

⁸ Available on: <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html>

⁹ Official web site of the Human Security Network - <http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org>

¹⁰ *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe*, The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities, Presented to EU High Representative for Common Policy and Security Policy Javier Solana, Barcelona, September 15, 2004. Although the report is more detailed, it is unclear in its definition of what should be included within the notion of insecurity. In page 8 it mentions to food, housing and health as possible candidates to be included in their definition of Human Security, although also indicating that "...their legal status is less elevated."

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

On the other hand, human security remains a contested concept, and one that has yet to make much impact in the field of international relations (IR), or security studies. The IR bibliography criticises the concept of human security¹³ by stating that it does not incorporate the notion of power or the political institutions that are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of human rights, including repression, whenever necessary. It further accuses the human security concept of diluting the specific problem of controlling physical violence in an agenda that, ultimately, includes every possible source of insecurity, leading to a confusion of different causal factors. This discussion will be addressed further ahead in this paper.

However, we need not adopt the concept of 'human security' in its entirety, in order to support what is perhaps the concept's single most important contribution to contemporary academic security studies, namely the designation of the individual, rather than the state, as the referent object of security. It is, in practice, necessary to look for a human security agenda built from the ground up, from the local towards the global, instead of the current tendency to produce global concepts and apply them locally to national situations.

3. HUMAN SECURITY - A LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Today, the nature of conflicts around the world are changing: the greatest security threats no longer come from inter-state conflicts but from a new form of high-intensity violence in which the main 'battlegrounds' are urban centres and 'combatants' are generally young, poor, and socially marginalized men. Latin America is perhaps the region that best illustrates this shift and the range of related security problems, including: weak public institutions; ineffective, corrupt, and violent policing; extremely high levels of interpersonal and especially gang-related violence in the context of drug trafficking and other criminal activities; the proliferation of guns; *machismo* or male chauvinism, and its associations with violence and repercussions in violence against Women; and a lack of effective violence diffusing strategies. An operational and analytically relevant concept of human security should provide a clearer definition of the concept of 'insecurity' so as to better address the new range of threats described above.

The core concept of human security should be the protection from organized or uncontrolled armed violence that is capable of threatening the stability of local democratic institutions, and/or the physical safety of the population. Hence, humanitarian crises related to famine, health epidemics, or natural or ecological disasters would not be included in a more focused concept of human security, which is the focus of this paper. This analysis differentiates between humanitarian (or ecological or health epidemic) crises and destruction produced by intentional human violence.

¹³ See various contributions in Jean-Francois Rioux (ed.), *La Sécurité Humaine*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2001

3.1. The Latin American Context

Latin America is the region with the lowest level of armed conflict between states and the lowest military expenditure in relation to GNP (gross national product), in the world. The region has consolidated borders, and for the most part, is devoid of intra-religious conflicts and marked ethnic hatred. Latin America is the only region in the world in which all countries have adhered to an anti-nuclear weapons treaty. Despite all this, the region has the highest rates of armed violence - yet it is a region in which, with the exception of Colombia and Haiti, there are no officially recognized armed conflicts.

According to various international reports, Latin America has the highest rates of gun violence and gun-related deaths of any region in the world;¹⁴ it is responsible for 42% of the world's total number of homicides by fire arms. Hence, one may say that the real forgotten conflicts today are those that have not been officially recognized.

This region clearly represents the dynamics of the worldwide shift from open conflict to informal but statistically significant armed struggles referred to as urban violence. This highlights the continued risks faced by both men and women in a context that cannot be accurately described as war or peace¹⁵ and has begun to be addressed as the "newest wars".¹⁶ Nevertheless, the challenges posed to the region are very similar to those emerging in post-conflict scenarios in Africa, Asia and the Balkans. This includes ineffective or weak public security institutions, increasing youth involvement in gang-related violence in the context of drug trafficking and other criminal activities, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These challenges are common to many nations, particularly in the Southern hemisphere and to a lesser degree, in specific countries in the Northern hemisphere. This new environment demands new approaches, which seek to address the multiple factors underlying insecurity, it also calls for integrated policies and actions that address security issues, while at the same time respecting human rights and developmental needs. Human security provides a different outlook and tools to better address this new reality. It is, therefore, crucial that the concept gains support and becomes the base for a new international/regional agenda.

¹⁴ Latin America has the highest homicide rate among young people between ten and twenty-nine years of age, at 36.5 per 100 000: World Health Organization (2002). With an average of 16 homicides per 100,000 residents, the Latin America and Caribbean region has the highest rate of gun violence in the world: Small Arms Survey (2003).

¹⁵ Dowdney, Luke. *Neither War nor Peace, international comparisons of children and youth in organised armed violence*, 2005. Viva Rio, ISER and IANSA. Comparative study on children and organized armed violence in 10 countries, including Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Jamaica, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Philippines, South Africa and USA.

¹⁶ Moura, T. *Newest wars, newest peaces*. Conceptual and political challenges. VIII Congresso Luso-Afro-Brasileiro de Ciências Sociais. Lisboa, 2004

4. THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

Brazil has a population of approximately 180 million people. From the second half of the 20th century the country was characterised by a process of rapid urbanization. In 1950 some 70% of the population lived in rural areas and by 2000, this figure had decreased to less than 20% of the population, or approximately 32 million people.¹⁷ This process with its complexities, especially the absence of a habitation policy and the poor labour absorption capacity of the economy, has brought with it a deterioration of the quality of life in the urban centres, and today poses structural problems that present immense challenges to city administration.¹⁸

In 1998 Brazil was ranked the 8th strongest economy in the world, but slow growth in recent years resulted in a drop to 12th position in 2002, with a slightly recovery to the 11th place in 2005,¹⁹ placing the country between South Korea (10th) and India (12th). In 2005 it had a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 796,284,000, a growth rate of 2,3%, and a per capita income of USD 4,323.31.²⁰ However, if we estimate GDP with Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) calculations that take into account the relative cost of living and inflation rates between countries (rather than just the exchange rates, which have the potential to distort the real differences in income) Brazil jumps to 9th position, while India stands at 4th and South Korea at 14th.²¹

Despite its large economy, Brazil is one of the most unequal countries in terms of income distribution, in the world, with a Gini Index of 0.61 for 2005. The upper class, constituted of 9,28% of the population, receives 41,47% of the Brazilian income, while the poorest 7,73% receive only 0,78% of national income.²² Nevertheless it is significant to take into account recent researches that show a conjunctural decrease of inequality by an income increase of the poor in Brazil despite the modest overall economic growth. By a new methodology capable of measuring a “pro-poor growth” it is possible to see that during the 2003-2004 period the *per capita* income growth reached 14,1% between the poorest, while the general *per capita* income growth stayed at 3,56%. This figures represent a 10,55% reduction in inequality, mostly due to redistributive national policies.²³ The social inequality scenario continues and as does the huge income gap; the latter highlights an important factor for consideration - education policies that lag behind by decades as well as the low

¹⁷ Brazil urbanization rate: 1950 (30,8%); 2000 (79,7%) - source: Anuário estatístico do Brasil 1979. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, v. 40, 1979 and Pesquisa nacional por amostra de domicílios 1999, IBGE, 2000.

¹⁸ For a comprehensive view of populational, social, political, cultural and economical statistics on Brazil during the 20th century see *Estatísticas do século XX* / IBGE, Centro de Documentação e Disseminação de Informações - Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2003 (also available at www.ibge.gov.br/english/default.php)

¹⁹ International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2006 at www.imf.org

²⁰ Brazilian Central Bank, BACEN at www.bacen.gov.br

²¹ International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2006 at www.imf.org

²² Rodrigues, J. J. Carga tributária sobre os salários (texto para discussão 01). Secretaria da Receita Federal. Brasília, 1998, p.17 (Brazilian Federal Revenue and Customs Administration available at www.receita.fazenda.gov.br). Income distribution for de year 1996.

²³ Kakwani, N., Neri, M., Son, H. “Linkages between Pro-Poor Growth, Social Programmes and Labour Market: The Recent Brazilian Experience”, UNDP, FGV, Brazil; 2006.

educational average of the Brazilian population when compared with countries of similar economic potential. Although it is clear that the country has moved towards the universalization of education, especially at basic level, it also performs badly in international evaluations which reflect the low priority of educational policies in the country. While South Korea invests USD 2,135.00 *per capita* in its primary school students, Brazil invests only about USD 870.00 per student.²⁴

The political transition from the authoritarian military regimes (1964-1985) to a democratic one, was accompanied by an economic transition that was unable to achieve a significant reduction in poverty. The Public Debt Crisis and the budget cuts necessary for economic restructuring mainly affected the lower classes of the population. The net public debt today amounts to 51% of Brazilian GDP.²⁵ Yet it is very important to acknowledge that the democratization process accomplished a number of egalitarian feats. Some of these important aspects of democratic construction in Brazil involve the formation of active Social Movements and effective collective action promoted by popular sectors, democratic institutional mechanisms and considerable transformation of the urban universe, along with a progressive universalization of education and cultural participation. The material inequalities have persisted and a growing egalitarian consciousness has been forged - evidence of the absence of effective citizenship.²⁶

Democracy did not bring an end to political clientelism, a heritage from both the colonial and dictatorial periods. Corruption is also a big challenge to government institutions and is partially behind the embezzlement of funds destined for social welfare and infrastructure projects. The lack of democratic controls over the ruling class has been combined traditionally, with the denial of human rights to the poor.²⁷ This scenario has been fertile ground for the dramatic increase in the levels of violence in the country since the 1980's. Today insecurity is among the top concerns of the Brazilian population.

4.1. Human Insecurity in Brazil - Focusing on Armed Violence

In 2002, some 38,088 people in Brazil were killed by firearms - the highest recorded rate of any country in the world, including countries at war. Clearly, urban violence is one of the most pressing developments, alongside security and health issues, facing the country today, even though it is a quite recent phenomenon (starting in the eighties and acquiring alarming proportions during the nineties). The urban aspect of armed violence and its high mortality and morbidity rates has led to it being looked at from a public health perspective as social

²⁴ See *Education at a Glance* - OECD/1998 available at www.oecd.org (these are 1995 data)

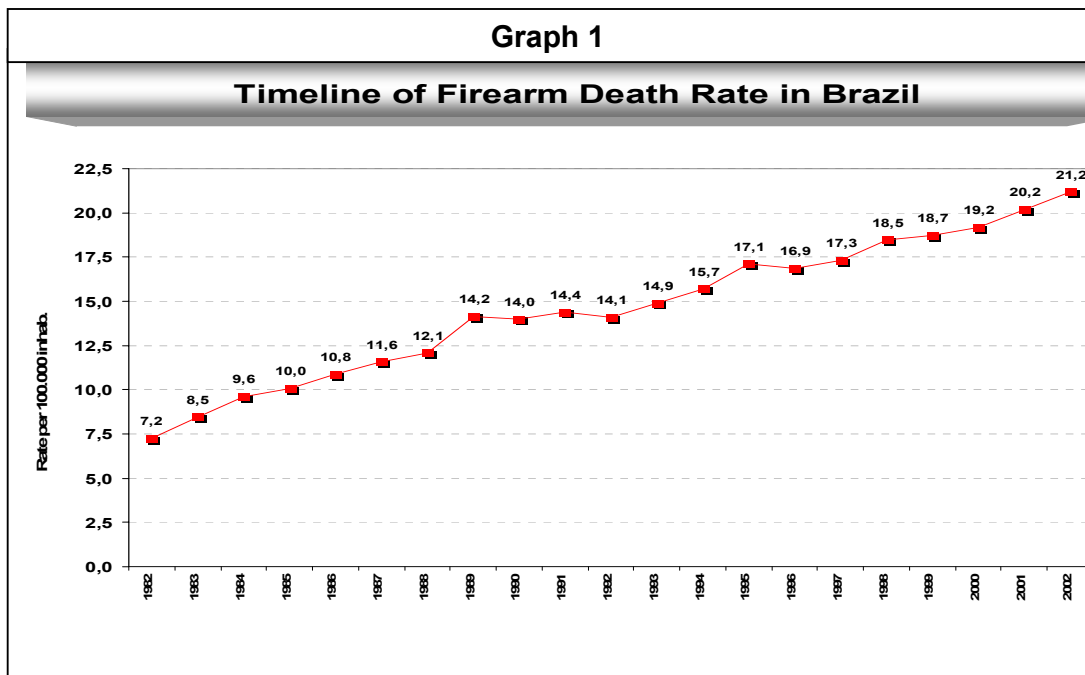
²⁵ Leeds, Elisabeth, *Um seculo de Favela*, 1998 (pp. 234)

²⁶ *Violence et démocratie, Le paradoxe brésilien*, Paris, Balland, 2001 (also available in portuguese: *Violência e democracia. O paradoxo brasileiro*,. São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 2001)

²⁷ Pinheiro, Paulo Sergio, *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America*, 1997 (pp.264)

violence.²⁸ Without neglecting the structural aspects of violence created by the various modes of oppression - introduced by specific economic, cultural and political systems - social science experts acknowledge that armed violence related to actions that are recognized as socially outlawed, has become an urgent issue on the political agenda. The well being and basic rights of the population are continuously being threatened by a conflict involving increasing levels of firearms. The mortality rate has increased from 2% in 1930 to 15% in the 1990's, becoming the second largest general cause of death in Brazil next to cardiovascular diseases.²⁹

Official health data shows that the risk of gun-related deaths in Brazil is 2.6 times higher than in the rest of the world, and the great majority of these deaths (90%) are homicides. Further, gun violence rates have tripled in the past twenty years, from 7.2 per 100,000 residents in 1982 to 21.2 per 100,000 residents in 2002 (Graph 1).



Although public insecurity has been a growing concern in Brazil since the 1980s, civil society groups have only focused specifically on guns and gun violence for just over a decade, from around the mid-nineties. Activists used public health data from the outset, and

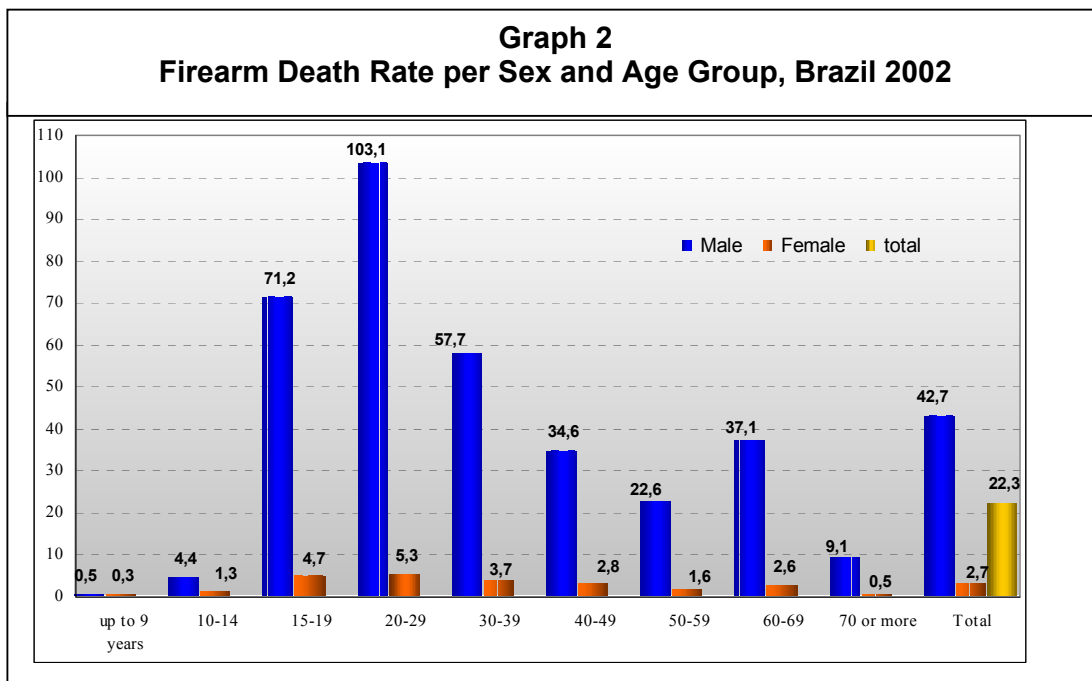
²⁸ The urban aspect of armed violence derives from the fact that its lethality is concentrated in Brazil's metropolitan areas.

²⁹ Minayo. M.C.S. Social Violence from a Public Health Perspective. *Cad. Saúde Publ.*, Rio de Janeiro, 10 (supplement 1):07-18, 1994

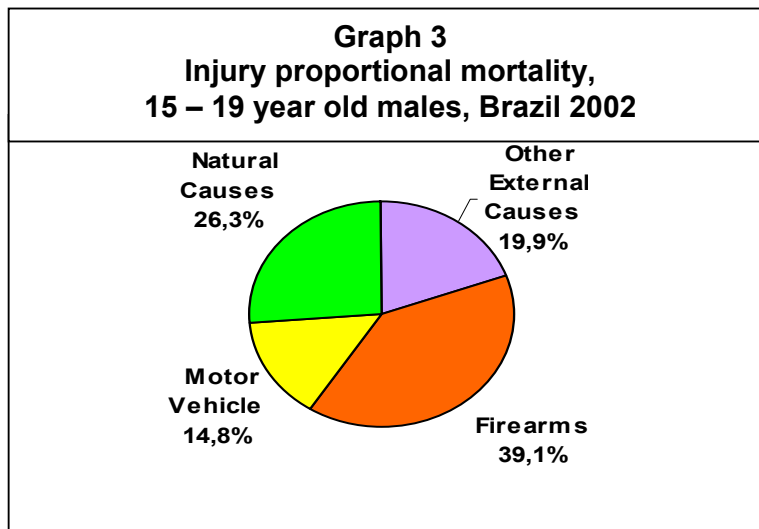
also adopted public health terminology: guns came to be seen as a “vector” of the “epidemic” of violence, making them more lethal and prolific.

The public health approach also allowed policy-makers, activists and researchers to begin to characterize the impact of gun violence and unpack the different ways that different segments of the population are affected by it. As elsewhere in the world, the vast majority of deaths and injuries affect men, especially young, poorer men.

In Brazil the risk of being killed by firearms for young men between 20 and 29 years of age is five times higher than for the rest of the population, and two times higher than for the rest of the male population. The risk of death for these young men is 38 times higher than that of the female population and 20 times higher when compared to the female population in the same age group. (Graph 2). The data makes it very evident that gun violence is a serious problem that will have an important demographic impact in the future if allowed to continue unchecked.



Nothing - no bacteria, virus or motor vehicle - kills more adolescent males in Brazil than guns. Among adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age that died in 2002, some 39.1% were killed by guns (Graph 3).



In nine state capitals in Brazil, guns were responsible for over *half* of the externally caused deaths in this age group: Vitória (70%), Recife (63%), Rio de Janeiro (58%), Salvador (58%), Belo Horizonte (58%), Maceió (54%), Cuiabá (53%), Florianópolis (53%), and João Pessoa (51%). Although the number of women killed by firearms is low compared to men, guns are used in 42.4% of homicides against women. And despite the fact that guns are more regularly used for and by men, women, too, suffer the losses and consequences they bring - they are widowed, orphaned, and left without siblings or children. Fear, insecurity, anger, and financial difficulties are all part of the legacy of the deaths and/or incapacitating injuries caused by guns. Further, even when a gun is not fired, it can be used to threaten and intimidate women, particularly in situations of domestic violence. A rapid analysis of women who denounced domestic abuse at eight of the nine *Delegacias da Mulher* in Rio de Janeiro³⁰ found that among respondents whose abuser had a gun at home: 75.6% said the accused threatened them; 73% said that the presence of a gun stopped them from verbally or physically responding to violence; and 68% said that they wanted to break off their relationship with the accused but did not do so because they feared retaliation with the gun. In order to fully understand the specific impact of gun violence on women, it is important to complement health data with additional qualitative studies and other approaches to information-gathering.³¹

³⁰ Research carried out between 12 September and 13 October 2005; during this month, victim survey questionnaires were distributed at eight DEAMs of Rio de Janeiro's metropolitan area: Belford Roxo, Campo Grande, Caxias, Centro, Jacarepaguá, Niterói, Nova Iguaçu and São Gonçalo; 615 questionnaires were answered. Conclusions were due to be published in August, 2006 as part of a joint Viva Rio and University of Coimbra research called "Women and Girls in Contexts of Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro", by Jessica Galeria and Tatiana Moura.

³¹ An 18-month research-action project "Women and Girls in Contexts of Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro", a partnership between the Rio-based NGO and the Peace Studies Group at the University of Coimbra in Portugal and supported by the Ford Foundation, aims to fill this gap. More information on the project can be obtained by writing jessica@vivario.org.br

The lack of prospects for uplifting one's personal, professional and social status - the impossibility of making dreams come true - generates a feeling of impotence and low self-esteem, mainly among young men, who may resort to armed violence to express these frustrations. If it were possible to measure the value of a life, certainly in Brazil it would be inversely related to the firearms-related death rates. Life expectancy among youth falls in tandem with lowered life expectations. The availability and misuse of firearms, as an alternative to impotence, is one of the reasons behind this extremely worrying situation.

One of the main firearms manifestations in contemporary Brazil is led by young, poor and black men fighting as criminal groups against competitors in the drug trafficking business or with the state police force. Rio de Janeiro is a notorious example of these new social conflicts spaces. As an empirical phenomenon, armed urban conflicts can be described as violent armed struggles between different groups in specific spaces of the urban tissue. The territorial scope of these conflicts distinguishes them from routine police patrols that result in conflict with antagonists, even when firearms are used. The territorial character of the struggle presents its own distinguishable features such as:

- conflict is expected;
- behaviour of the sides involved:
- occupation and dominance logic; and
- the use of terror.

It is well known that the emergence of conspicuous armed conflicts in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro and other big urban centres in Brazil in the eighties coincided with the organization of informal criminal economic activity in Latin America and overseas, that constituted perhaps the first true form of economic integration on the continent: the production, processing, and international distribution of cocaine.³² This economic activity was concentrated in areas where public services were absent during the authoritarian period and, even after that, in areas where the establishment of inclusive policies for lower classes sectors of population was delayed. The common perception of city inhabitants was that the only way in which the state marked its presence within the squatter population in *favela* areas, was with its repressive forces.

From the traditional National State perspective, armed violence appears in political theory as theories of revolution, and guerrilla and civil war. However, in the urban armed conflicts in main Brazilian cities the law is being broken by armed groups that are different from guerrillas; these groups confront government and seek to overthrow the state and proclaim themselves the law in the name of justice; the agents of these new urban armed conflicts confront power on behalf of drug trafficking syndicates. The conflict processes are not part of the social transformation and acquire a conservative character. Civil war in

³² Leeds, E. "Cocaine and Parallel Polities in the Brazilian Urban Periphery: Constraints on Local-Level Democratization". *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 31, Number 3, 1996, Pages 47-84

international politics differs from popular violence such as protests and riots. A civil war for international organizations like the World Bank “occurs when an identifiable rebel organization challenges the government militarily and the resulting violence results in more than 1,000 combat-related deaths, with at least 5 percent on each side”.³³ The structure of the newest forms of war has distinguishable features as mapped by COAV Research,³⁴ such as elements of a command structure and power over territory, local population or resources.

It is clear that the new conflict situation that is emerging in the world, and which Brazil’s low intensity territorial armed conflicts is a part of, demands a human security perspective approach. A military solution seems outdated since no enemies of national security are present; instead we have a subtle dialectics where usually the perpetrator of criminal violence can be, at the same time, a victim and symptom of a structural violence situation. The big challenge in this regard is to maintain social order through building social binds rather than destroying them, when new forms of organized violence blurs the boundaries between war, crime and human rights violations. The human security perspective has the potential to be a path to building new alternatives for these new challenges.

4.2. Using Human Security to Overcome Violence: the Case of Viva Rio

Viva Rio is a non-governmental organization based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, committed to field work, research, and advocacy as communication, in preventing urban violence and promoting human security. Viva Rio was created in December 1993 by representatives of diverse sectors of civil society as a direct response to the increasing levels of violence in Rio de Janeiro. Though its work began in response to, and remains deeply engaged with, local problems, the multi-factorial nature of human security has led to its involvement at national and - increasingly - international levels.

As part of these efforts, Viva Rio currently oversees over 2,000 local projects in 82 municipalities, aside from its numerous activities at the national and international levels. In 2005, the organisation worked with 1,405 partner organizations, among them educational institutes, community associations, community radios, NGOs, churches, Police Units and penitentiaries. In the last three years, the organisation’s scope of action has grown from local to regional level in Latin America and the Caribbean.

4.2.1. Viva Rio’s Work

Viva Rio’s main goal is to promote peace and development at the local level and develop the means of overcoming urban armed violence and social exclusion. The organisation relies on

³³ World Bank Staff. *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*. Herndon, VA, USA: World Bank Publication, 2003, p.11

³⁴ Dowdney, Luke. Op.cit. (COAV - Children and Youth in Organised Armed Violence)

the idea of human security as a guiding concept; it believes that “development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing”.³⁵

Although there is no simple causality linking poverty and social exclusion to urban armed violence, once violence starts, those three factors reinforce each other in a vicious cycle. To break the cycle, security, social inclusion and development must be integrated in specific policies. In practice, this means that solutions should combine modernization and democratization of the criminal justice system, with the adoption of preventive strategies aimed at those groups most vulnerable to the dynamics of crime and violence, and the risk factors that aggravate them.

Its purpose is to research, design and test specific solutions that effectively deal with the complex set of problems that this has thrown up. Moreover, its ultimate purpose is to promote solutions deemed successful - through advocacy and communication strategies - for them to gain scale, and ensure that they are adopted as public policy and replicated by agents such as the state, private enterprise or other NGO's. Using a public health approach to violence, Viva Rio has developed a tool that has been used to provide a diagnosis of the urban armed violence epidemic in Latin America. Through this analysis, the organisation has identified four core aspects:

- **Risk Group:** Youth is the main risk group for armed violence in Brazil and other Latin American countries. The group is mainly composed of poor teenagers and young males (15 to 24 years of age) that have dropped out of school before completing elementary education. They are the main perpetrators and victims of armed violence;
- **Vector:** The main vector for the urban violence epidemics in the region are small arms and light weapons (SALW). Most homicides are committed with the use of firearms. Heavily armed non-state actors undermine democracy and civic culture at grassroots level, particularly in poor neighbourhoods;
- **Critical Areas:** The critical areas are *favelas* and urban peripheries, notorious for the lack of public services and (investment in) human social and economic capital. A chaotic urbanization process aggravates the problem; and
- **Security Sector Reform:** Reform of the security sector is critical for efficiency, as well as integrating security, human rights and development goals.

Under this rationale, Viva Rio has developed and consolidated a broad set of actions and strategies specifically oriented to those issues.³⁶ Actions have included projects aimed at reducing the supply and demand of SALW, police training and reform, income generation and

³⁵ 2005 World Summit Outcome, UN General Assembly A/60/L.1

³⁶ More information can be found at www.vivario.org.br

education programs aimed at youth at risk, SALW control campaigns, and conflict mediation centres.

4.2.2. Thematic Focus

Within a human security perspective, Viva Rio's projects and actions focus on three key themes:

- Youth at Risk, with specific gender-oriented approaches to armed violence;
- Security Sector Reform (SSR); and
- Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control.

4.2.3. Approach

Viva Rio has adopted a three-pronged approach to overcoming urban armed violence:

1. *Policy oriented research under the human security program.* This is comprehensive policy-oriented research, training, and knowledge management on human security issues at both local and regional levels. The main focus is on institutional development of police forces, small arms control, youth in armed violence, and gender in armed violence;
2. *Integrated local action.* This involves the concentration and implementation of human security projects in poor and violent neighbourhoods; contributing to the creation of local development platforms, with multiple partnerships; and valuing local actors;
3. *Communication.* This involves mobilization and advocacy, through public campaigns and new technologies, in the organization's priority areas and target audiences.

4.2.4. Territorial Scope

As stated above, the multi factorial nature of human security issues has led to Viva Rio's involvement at the national and - increasingly - international levels. Nowadays, it is understood that Viva Rio's actions are both local and global because urban armed violence is at once both local and global; demand for SALW is local and supply is national and global. Thus, solutions must be simultaneously global and local.

Based on grassroots experimentation in Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region, Viva Rio develops actions of national and regional import, in tune with the international agenda for

the reduction of urban armed violence. Human security is the organization's guiding concept and analytical tool used to formulate policies and execute projects on the ground.

5. CONCLUSION AND PROPOSALS

The conceptual repertoire of **human security**, as a democratic perspective for overcoming urban violence, certainly represents a powerful point of departure for orienting the work of governments, international and regional organizations, and NGO's. It provides a globally shared language, still in development, and allows for serious on-the-ground initiatives to dialogue with international efforts to overcome the new threats to peace.

The following can be identified as founding principles for the development of activities built around human security in the context of the Southern-Hemisphere:

- **The problems at stake in the South converge with the need for an agenda aimed at the consolidation and strengthening of democracy.** This is a key insight of the human security approach: lasting solutions will be those that are both effective in the local context and convergent with existing institutional and socio-political realities;
- **It is, therefore, crucial to develop and propagate a perspective on security that is at once consistent with democratic values and operational.** Without losing sight of the central goal of moving past the current dynamics of violence and conflict, this perspective must guide, in practical terms, the integration of security, human rights and development policies and institutions in each context;
- **Consequently, reinforcing and disseminating the conceptual basis of the human security paradigm - as well as helping translate it into practical and operational terms - is a key contribution to developing solutions.** The paradigm can be refined by developing more precise definitions for the problems of human security, establishing a human security perspective that takes into account the historical and present reality of each region, and specifying with greater clarity the requisite institutional and policy instruments for its effective implementation in the field.

5.1. Proposals to South-South Cooperation - IBSA

Organizations of civil society from the southern hemisphere should exchange knowledge and practice in order to strengthen each other and learn from each other's challenges and solutions. A network such as IBSA has great potential for advancing human security, which is fundamental to combating the new as well as the old threats common to Southern countries. This does not mean that the divisions between North and South should be reaffirmed and/or

encouraged, but rather that we should cooperate to strengthen positions and agendas in the South that should then be exchanged and negotiated with the North.

Viva Rio is one among many organizations that could and should build partnerships, and contribute toward local, regional and international agendas more suitable to the southern contexts. Human security as a guiding concept can be a useful tool for gathering important data in the field and achieving a better understanding of the emerging threats, both locally and internationally, since the important political and technological transformations consolidated during the 1990's. It is patent that nations of the South can benefit from adopting this perspective for examining their own realities and escape from a path dependency imperative. New approaches for new challenges are being generated from a southern perspective.

We would like to conclude this paper by raising some key questions for those working on Human Security issues in the south. These are:

- How can we establish a fruitful dialogue between government and civil society around security issues?
- How can we contribute to increasing the quantity and perfecting the quality of the work of non-governmental organizations? and
- How can we disseminate and exchange experiences, creating a forum of organizations in the region that work in this field?

One solution lies with promoting and organizing international seminars and training activities, and creating virtual communities to facilitate communication and exchange.³⁷ Knowledge of the dimensions and significance of contemporary problems, with their regional and international commonalities and differences, is a good start for building alternatives that can be realised as public policies and unfolded into practical projects.

³⁷ The interactive web portal: www.comunidadessegura.com, designed by Viva Rio and other partner organizations will be launched on July 21st, 2006, and will be a tool to disseminate, information, knowledge, best practices, and educational materials in its thematic areas. The portal will be trilingual, (Portuguese, Spanish and English) and will be made up of three main themes: Youth and Armed Violence, Police Institutional Development and Small Arms Control, with Gender as a transversal issue. In addition to organizing and disseminating information, the portal will also serve as a tool to facilitate communication among members of networks, partners, researchers, through chat forums, open and closed communities, password-accessible content areas, etc. The Portal will have a digital library, newsletters in three languages and exclusive content in its main areas.