



Kristian Stokke

# GECHS

## Global Environmental Change and Human Security - GECHS

The **GECHS** project focuses on the relationships between global environmental change and human security. Both environmental change and human security are key concerns in the 21st century. Human security, broadly defined by the United Nations as "freedom from fear" and "freedom from wants", refers to multiple aspects and issues related to human well-being. Human security research focuses on the way diverse social and environmental processes combine to affect human well-being, including people's health, economic opportunities, and political freedoms. Environmental changes resulting from both human activities and natural processes pose risks to human security. GECHS situates these environmental changes within the larger socio-economic and political contexts that shape the capacity of humans to cope with and respond to change.

The **GECHS** project considers human security as an outcome of multiple and interacting processes. Human security is achieved when and where individuals and communities:

- Have the options necessary to end, mitigate, or adapt to risks to their human, environmental, and social rights;
- Have the capacity and freedom to exercise these options; and
- Actively participate in attaining these options.



# GECHS

## GECHS Background

**GECHS**, a core project of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) since 1999, promotes cooperative and interdisciplinary research as keys to exploring environmental change and human security relationships. The basic premise underpinning **GECHS** is that global environmental change has significant implications for human security. Global environmental change-related threats to human security are unevenly distributed across and within regions, social groups, and generations. Understanding who is most vulnerable, as well as how these threats contribute to conflict or cooperation, is an important part of **GECHS** research.

**GECHS** is also concerned with the relationships between global environmental change and other social processes such as globalization, the spread of infectious diseases, violent conflict, and urbanization. Together, the outcomes of these changes influence people's vulnerability and response capacities, with implications for equity, sustainability, and human security. From a policy perspective, addressing global environmental change is ultimately tied to improving human security for those individuals and communities that are at greatest risk.



Nils Petter Gleditsch

# GECHS

## Goal and Objectives of GECHS

The goal of **GECHS** is to promote understanding and recognition of global environmental change as an issue of equity and sustainability, both of which are influenced by various forms of social power, as well as by broader social, economic, and cultural changes.

The objectives of **GECHS** are fourfold:

- To support, generate, and promote research activities related to global environmental change and human security;
- To promote dialogue and encourage collaboration and networking among scholars from around the world;
- To facilitate improved communication and cooperation with research groups working on other dimensions of human security;
- To foster greater linkages, dialogue, and exchanges among the research, practitioner, and policy communities.



# GECHS

## Research

**GECHS** research focuses broadly on issues related to global environmental change and human security. Carried out by an expanding network of scientists and practitioners, the project embraces current research activities of SSC members and associated researchers, as well as new projects developed under **GECHS**. Some of the key themes currently addressed through **GECHS** include:

- Environmental Change, Peace and Cooperation
- Environmental Security and Conflict
- Social Vulnerability and Adaptive Capacity
- Global Environmental Change in the Context of Globalization
- Health and Human Security
- Gender, Human Security, and Environmental Change.



Josie Teurlings

# GECHS

## GECHS International Project Office

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*Joni Seager, York University (Canada)*

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Emmanuel Dipo Otolorin / Photoshare

# GECHS

## Southern Africa Vulnerability Initiative (SAVI)

The Southern Africa Vulnerability Initiative (SAVI) project, developed and initiated by **GECHS**, focuses on vulnerability in the context of multiple processes of change, and on identifying responses and interventions that enhance human security. In southern Africa, some of the most important processes of change include the spread of infectious diseases, changes in water access and availability, economic globalization, urbanization, and political conflict, as well as climate and environmental change. Understanding the interactions among these processes is critical to addressing present and future challenges to human security in southern Africa.

SAVI draws together diverse research on vulnerability and considers it within a framework that distinguishes among processes, responses, and outcomes. It is based on dialogues between researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, carried out through projects and workshops and promoted through a common web site: [www.savi.org.za](http://www.savi.org.za). SAVI encourages collaboration and participation of diverse communities concerned with vulnerability in southern Africa.



Clive Shirley/WFP

# GECHS

## The Science-Policy Interface

Human security is a topic of interest and concern to the academic research community, but it also has practical and applied dimensions that are relevant to policy and practitioner communities. Calls for a transition to sustainability and the development of sustainability science demand a closer relationship between science, policy, and practitioner communities.

**GECHS** seeks to work at the science-practitioner-policy interface through:

- AVISO policy briefings that highlight research problems and findings in a concise and accessible manner;
- Participation in processes such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;
- Consultation with practitioners and stakeholders in research design and methods;
- Raising awareness of the links between global environmental change and human security by active participation in research, policy, and media debates, and through contributions to the Wilson Center's Environmental Change and Security Project.



# GECHS

## GECHS Activities

The **GECHS** Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) sets research priorities and implements the project's science agenda in association with a wide network of researchers. **GECHS** activities fall within two broad areas - research and the science-policy interface. Within the research area, **GECHS** focuses on concepts, methods and applied research related to global environmental change and human security. Working at the science-policy interface, **GECHS** engages in dialogue with practitioner and policy communities, and translates **GECHS**-related research into policy briefings, bulletins, and other formats that make results and findings accessible to a wider community.

**GECHS** endorses research projects related to global environmental change and human security (see [www.gechs.org/endorse.htm](http://www.gechs.org/endorse.htm)), and encourages affiliation and participation in **GECHS**-related activities. **GECHS** activities and achievements are highlighted in an electronic newsletter published three times a year.



# IHDP

## International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change

**IHDP** is an international, interdisciplinary and non-governmental science organization, dedicated to promoting, catalyzing and coordinating research, capacity-building, and networking on the human dimensions of global environmental change. It takes a social science perspective on global change and it works at the interface between science and practice.

**IHDP's** mission is to generate scientific knowledge on coupled socio-environmental systems, and to achieve comprehensive understanding of global environmental change processes and their consequences for sustainable development.

- IHDP's Seven Core Research Projects**
- > Global Environmental Change and Human Security (**GECHS**)
  - > Industrial Transformation (**IT**)
  - > Institutional Dimensions of Global Environmental Change (**IDGEC**)
  - > Land-Use and Land-Cover Change (**LUCC**)\*
  - > Land-Ocean Interactions in the Coastal Zone (**LOICZ**)\*
  - > Urbanization
  - > Global Land Project (**GLP**)\*
- \* co-sponsored by IGBP



## Global Environmental Change and Human Security

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