



Security, Reconstruction and Peace

Food security in the context of conflicts and natural disasters

The challenge

Armed conflicts and natural disasters are threatening the livelihood of many millions of people. Poverty, food insecurity and rising food prices trigger new conflicts, especially with regards to access to natural resources such as water and land. In many countries, this situation is further aggravated by a high level of vulnerability to natural disasters, such as flooding, hurricanes or cyclones, and persistent drought. The vicious circle of hunger, conflict, natural disasters and the often unsustainable survival strategies, adopted by the population affected, is a permanent source of food crises.

The challenge for food security in the context of conflicts and natural disasters is to break this vicious circle and restore the foundations which ensure survival of the local population.

Our approach

An integrated concept is used to overcome precarious food situations swiftly and effectively. This comprises measures to stabilise the social and economic foundations of society and elements which help to de-escalate conflicts and to reduce the risk of natural disasters. The local population, as well as local organisations and administrative bodies are actively involved in the process.

Our services

Generally, the projects and programmes are designed for a three-year term. Depending on the situation, the following instruments can be combined:

- **Improving food availability:** As a short-term instrument, temporary food aid is a possible solution. Wherever possible, food is purchased on local or regional markets. In the medium term, the agricultural production base must be restored.

Farmers receive support, for instance through diversifying agriculture, distributing improved seed and tools, and the application of food-for-work measures (FFW). At the same time, local farmers are introduced to basic agricultural production techniques, to improve skills and know-how.

- **Facilitating access to food:** Income-generating measures, small-scale loans and business start-ups, as well as transfer payments in the form of cash-for-work (CfW) programmes, boost purchasing power and enhance access to food.
- **Improving the use of food:** Improved drinking water supplies and the provision of additional minerals and vitamins help to prevent and to treat deficiency diseases.
- **Conflict management:** In the wake of armed conflicts in particular, it is important to strengthen non-violent conflict management capacities. To this end, traditional authorities are trained. Local peace committees are supported and dialogue and mediation channels are established.
- **Disaster risk management:** In areas at risk, it might be necessary to complement food security measures with disaster risk management measures. Municipalities and local authorities are trained in disaster risk management and to apply relevant planning instruments (risk analysis, risk mapping, establishment of disaster protection plans and early warning systems).



The benefit

In the wake of armed conflicts and natural disasters, food security measures reduce hunger, defuse conflicts and counter the pressure to migrate.

(Re)construction of the productive and social base of a society fosters long-term food security and, in the final analysis, the ability of people and institutions to help themselves.

GIZ offers innovative concepts, competent and skilled staff and many years of experience in implementing pertinent projects, especially within fragile states. We cooperate with national as well as international partners and use our methods globally in regions of our partner countries, which suffer from crises or conflicts. Food aid is available at short notice, if required.

An example from the field

The region of Guéckédou in Guinea borders Liberia and Sierra Leone. Throughout the civil wars in the neighbouring countries, the region found itself home to as many as 300,000 refugees at once. Now that the refugees have returned home, the local population has been left to deal with the devastation which remains behind.

The food situation in particular has been critical, due to the many years in which the region was home to vast refugee camps. Food scarcity is triggering new conflicts between disadvantaged population groups.

Our work in this region combines elements of food security (including measures to boost production and generate income as well as encouraging the better use of food) with structure-reinforcing measures. Sustainability is strengthened through the inclusion of local cooperatives into the national farmers' association. Our activities are part of local village-, and municipal development plans.

Positive results have been achieved, for instance, in the field of boosting agricultural production. Between 2006 and 2007, harvests of upland rice rose by 40%, while harvests of lowland rice were up by 80%. More than 320 hectares of oil palm plantations have been planted, as well as almost 10 hectares of cola nut and cacao seedlings, and smaller banana plantations. Parallel to this, by improving the food and hygiene knowledge of nursing mothers, undernourishment among infants has been reduced. Access to drinking water has been improved, thanks to the construction of 19 small-scale structures to tap springs and seven closed wells. By encouraging dialogue forums and capacities between various groups within society (e.g. the local population, civil society, the state, municipalities and the forces of law and order), but also cross-border dialogue with neighbouring countries, a major contribution has been made to achieving structural stability, which is a precondition for the introduction of a self-supporting, sustainable development process.

Contact

Holger Zahn
E holger.zahn@giz.de
T +49 61 96 79 2622
I www.giz.de

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Registered offices:
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5
65760 Eschborn, Germany
T +49 61 96 79-0
F +49 61 96 79-11 15
E info@giz.de
I www.giz.de