

Confidence – Service – Governance

The Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee 1998 to 2003

Closing Lecture, 19 December 2003

Dedo Geinitz¹

1. Why food and nutrition security?

Food and nutrition security is a key focus of German development cooperation². This is underlined through the support to the international food aid system as well as through bilateral projects in partner countries. Integrated Food Security Programmes (IFSP) support the transition between emergency situations and emerging development. This involves a complex mix of intervention strategies with elements from relief, rehabilitation and development, whereby the focus is more on development than relief.

Food and nutrition security has little to do with 'food' as commonly perceived, but has its very focus on the development of livelihoods confronted by situations of crisis and / or affected by violent conflict. Though conflicts are an integral part of societal interaction, it is the escalation into violence, which causes crisis and war. Post-war or post-conflict often only means the phase before the next escalation of conflict. Crisis prevention strategies that include nutrition and food security need to be rooted in a post-conflict rehabilitation and development approach³.

The concept of integrated food and nutrition security distinguishes four dimensions:

- Availability of food at all times (through increased production at household and village level or available at local markets)
- Access to food at all times (through increased purchasing power or other entitlements to buy food and through better local logistics)
- Use and utilisation of food according to sufficient dietary standards (through diversified nutritious foods and good health which enables people to absorb it).

All interventions and activities of Integrated Food Security Programmes are expected to support stability, which in turn constitutes the fourth dimension of nutrition and food security:

- Stability in an environment of conflict and crisis (through establishing capacities to work in and on conflict and the contribution towards local and regional market development).

To overcome at least some of the constraints of the protracted ethno-political conflict in the north and east of Sri Lanka, the IFSP Trincomalee had emphasised community mobilisation, people's participation and institutional as well as human capacity building. This should in the short- and medium-run encourage the use of local resources, enhance the demand for better services and at the same time increase the contribution towards

¹ The author was GTZ advisor to the IFSP Trincomalee from August 1998 to December 2003. I thank Rohini Singarayer, C. Sivayoganathan and Shanti Sachithanandan for their comments and critical suggestions.

² BMZ, Integrated Food Security Programme in German Development Cooperation. A Guideline for Project Work, 1998. The availability of food on household and village level, the economical and physical access to food as well as the health and nutrition related aspects of the concept of food security are embedded in the 8 UN Millennium Development Goals of September 2000

³ B. Korf, Get the Institutions right! Reconciling Societies in Post-War Recovery. In: Pravada, Vol. 8, No. 3

rehabilitation and reconstruction. The focus on the dimensions of the conflict required interventions, which reflected basic needs and priorities of war-affected people.

Improved food and nutrition security as promoted by the IFSP Trincomalee gives priority to the promotion of the diversification and intensification of locally available resources. Enhanced advisory and extension services and policy planning are expected to integrate food and nutrition security into the programmes of government institutions and non-government organisations⁴.

A peaceful reconciliation of interests through confidence building by dialogue is expected to promote local and regional stability. A facilitating process with and amongst communities on the questions who is vulnerable, who should receive support first and who else is to be addressed allows to arrive at consensus, which in turn is a precondition for contributions from communities and capacity building. Transparency of all interventions from the level of planning to active implementation, which includes public insight into investment and public auditing, contribute to social integration and also to conflict mitigation. Capacity building contributes to governance.

The prime goal of IFSP Trincomalee was the re-establishment of livelihoods. Three vulnerability criteria were developed and applied for a systematic and exemplary targeting of communities, viz. i) war affectedness, ii) social deprivation and iii) structural and / or seasonal food insecurity. These criteria were used for identifying the prioritised needs of communities and poverty groups within most affected and vulnerable villages. They were also used for mobilising communities and individual families during the support process with the aim of enhancing self-reliance.

The approach was explicitly participatory and people centred. Target groups were subsistence farmers, specialised farmers, small farmers, fishermen and landless wage labourers, internally displaced persons, women headed households, orphans and unemployed youth. All three communities, viz. Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim were treated adequately.

Contrary to the 'entitlement protection' concept, which is based on welfare, relief and emergency food aid and which may be effected by state institutions and relief agencies, Integrated Food Security Programmes focus on 'entitlement promotion'. This involves medium- to long-term development and in particular enable vulnerable groups to cope with food insecurity by themselves.

Integrated Food Security Programmes follow a multi-sectoral approach and concentrate on three particular fields of intervention, which combine different activities at various levels into a network: i) productive physical resources, ii) human resources and iii) institutional capacities. The activities under the interventions complement each other. The mix of interventions depends on the local situation.

2. What were the effects of the conflict in Trincomalee?

The ethno-political conflict and civil war in the north and east of Sri Lanka has led to the destruction of the social infrastructure, agricultural resources, private business and the loss of lives and property. Displacement, chronic poverty, social deprivation and severe malnutrition are the effects of war.

In 1999 Trincomalee district had a high incidence of malnutrition: 51% of the children

⁴ This presentation makes use of the IFSP working papers and technical papers. It refers to the IFSP-CATAD projects 1999 and 2001 and to various research papers related to IFSP. All material is available on www.ifsp-srilanka.org.

below five years of age were underweight, 27% stunted and 26% suffered from wasting. Almost 50% of all women showed severe signs of malnutrition. More than 75% of the population depended on state support. Agriculture had drifted into subsistence farming. The IFSP poverty – vulnerability profile of 1999/2000 underlined the prevalence of serious structural constraints.

Prolonged conflicts and war-like situations⁵, which result in complex emergencies, have various inverse consequences on the livelihoods of people. The local public infrastructure, personal property, food stocks, livestock and other production assets such as irrigation systems and markets are destroyed. Farming is prevented due to lack of access to land, farming inputs and by the fear of attacks, terror or forced recruitment. The social infrastructure, health and education facilities in particular is either destroyed or not functioning. Conflict can be both a cause and an effect of hunger. Food insecurity and emergencies are closely related.

We have witnessed the effects of emergencies such as social disorganisation, displacement, migration and political isolation of communities. Conflict situations affect livelihoods and food security even for households and individuals living far from the conflict regions. National economies are put on a 'war footing'. Opportunities for investment and growth remain extremely limited. The allocation of state budgets and development aid for protracted relief hardly serve the purpose of reintegrating conflict and war affected communities into the local and regional economy⁶. The lack of funds and capacities has resulted in the negligence of the maintenance of the social and physical infrastructure.

Particularly affected were women and children, refugees and internally displaced people including their host communities, and also elderly and socially marginalised groups. Resettled families were without adequate infrastructure and market integration. These vulnerable groups faced elevated malnutrition and poverty. Destroyed health care services and non-functioning social services institutions limited opportunities across generations.

3. How did we start – what did we do – what was achieved?

Since August 1998 until December 2003 the IFSP Trincomalee had supported people at food risk and affected by the conflict. The objective was to diversify and intensify the food and income sources and to improve the diet and health care. This in turn was expected to contribute to a sustainable improvement of the basic needs situation, as a precondition for a peaceful coexistence of the ethnic groups and communities.

Starting a programme with such an ambitious objective and quite demanding results that were to be achieved called for proper targeting, cooperation and coordination and short-term action. Who were the conflict affected food insecure poor? What were their needs? Who were service providers? What could be done to enhance their capacities? How could short-term results be initiated and how best medium-term capacity building?

IFSP Trincomalee had addressed three-stages, which are crucial to the implementation of the concept of nutrition and food security:

- Assessment of baseline conditions
- Action oriented start-up

⁵ In 1996 armed conflicts observed worldwide put at least 80 million people at risk of hunger and malnutrition. About 30 million people lived in zones of active conflict, and war. 11 million people depended on humanitarian assistance. 14 million people required humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of war

⁶ NPC of Sri Lanka, The Economic, Socio-political and Human Cost of the War in Sri Lanka, Colombo 2001

- Large scale implementation and transfer.

Baseline assessment

The baseline conditions were addressed through an organisational analysis of the capacities of the government institutions in the 'green sector' (October 1998), a health and nutrition survey (February and March 1999), an inventory of the minor irrigation schemes in the district (February 1999), a vulnerability – poverty assessment, which covered all 582 villages in the district (early 2000) and initiatives towards conflict analysis (December 2000).

The nutrition and health baseline survey was conducted for 500 households in 20 villages from different communities (Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese). Results showed very high malnutrition rates amongst women (48% BMI<18.5) and children under five years of age (27% wasting), with significant differences amongst the ethnic groups. Food shortages, monotonous diet along with difficult access to health facilities, poor hygiene and lack of safe drinking water were identified as the main causes of malnutrition. In cooperation with the Department of Health Services a village health programme was initiated, which included recruitment and training village health volunteers, awareness training for communities and initiatives for better hygiene and sanitation⁷.

To focus on partner institutions and their service delivery, IFSP had started with an organisational analysis of service capacities of all departments in the 'green sector' and the Department of Health Services. Opportunities for cooperation and support for getting services back to work were identified. The analysis resulted in quite a large number of small-scale projects for improving the social and production village infrastructure. Implementation was commenced in late 1998, partly through food-for-work / food-for-assets and cash-for work as confidence building measures. Food-for-work / food-for-assets, always to be of temporary nature, addressed seasonal food deficits, generated larger scale rural employment, mobilised rural self-help potential and created assets for economic and social development⁸.

The inventory of minor irrigation schemes (minor tanks) served the purpose to support the Department of Agrarian Development to launch a rehabilitation and development programme for neglected and destroyed tanks. Being the core resource of the village economy, the rehabilitation of minor tanks was expected to significantly contribute to household and village food security. The inventory resulted in an assessment of the hydrological capacities of the minor tanks, the preparation of planning maps and the identification of 75 schemes, of which 50 were developed until end 2003⁹.

To facilitate the selection process of villages for project implementation and to give clear answers to demands for specifically addressing certain groups and locations, IFSP had focused on the three core levels of vulnerability, viz. conflict affectedness, social deprivation and food insecurity through a large survey in 1999/2000. For all 582 villages in Trincomalee district an assessment of poverty and vulnerability as the result of war and conflict was done and a database was established.

The Village Data Sheets – Trincomalee District Poverty Profile¹⁰ became the base for decision making and monitoring of change over time. Initially, IFSP was challenged to address all communities 'equally'. However, the results of this vulnerability – poverty profile, which was based on 40 parameters, seven sub-indicators and the three main

⁷ Baseline Survey on Health and Nutrition, Working Paper 24, 1999

⁸ Agrarian Services in Trincomalee District. Assessment and Potential for Implementing the Integrated Food Security Programme, Working Paper 1, 1998

⁹ 75 Minor Tank Rehabilitation Programme. Preliminary Assessment Survey, Technical paper 2, 1999; IFSP Minor Tank Development Programme, Technical paper 21, 2002; Impact Assessment of the Minor Tank development Programme, Working Paper 56, 2003

¹⁰ Village Data Sheets – Trincomalee District Poverty Profile, Technical paper 10, 2000

vulnerability indicators provided a comprehensive resource profile and clearly showed that the term 'adequately' was more appropriate. This allowed targeting conflict affected communities without having to argue along the perceptions of ethnic entitlements, spatial interest or political dominance. The vulnerability – poverty profile became a tool for dialogue on development priorities with government institutions, non-government organisations, projects, agencies and LTTE. They further served the purpose of impact monitoring.

Action oriented start-up

The assessment of base conditions resulted in developing concepts based on state of the art and good practices available elsewhere, e.g. application of participatory methods, livelihood systems approach, community mobilisation, development of minor irrigation schemes. Pragmatic concepts were then tested and adjusted before large-scale implementation was promoted. The simultaneous development, testing and application of such concepts allowed to a certain degree that they were absorbed by partner institutions and local communities. Good examples are the 'project book approach' and the manual for participatory project management, which involved the stakeholders through all stages of the project cycle in a transparent manner and contributed to ownership. Experience shows that concept development in a pragmatic manner, combined with physical support had a positive impact on the service providers.

To identify the target groups (conflict affected and food insecure poor), to encourage service providers and to direct project activities towards livelihood development, a number of initial planning exercises were launched. In parallel, small-scale projects, which were proposed by partner institutions and communities were approved for implementation to promote trust and confidence and to show short-term results.

While gaining experience in the cooperation with communities and intensifying the dialogue with partners, clear procedures for planning, implementation and monitoring were developed and put into practice. Community projects such as minor irrigation schemes, irrigation channels, rural roads, utility buildings, common wells and agro-wells, seed paddy outgrowing were implemented through partner institutions and CBOs. Poverty projects such as home gardening, paddy cultivation, small-scale business and employment were complemented by a health programme, which established and trained village health workers, promoted hygiene awareness and health education for communities, initiated a school feeding programme, facilitated water supply and sanitation and addressed behaviour change.

Large-scale implementation and transfer

Planning, conducting surveys, effecting training and supporting capacity building went along with intensive support for project implementation. The large number of village projects – community projects and poverty projects – which were completed until end 2003 covered the four results IFSP was expected to achieve: i) social and production infrastructure is promoted, ii) village health care and nutrition is improved, iii) services are facilitated and iv) capacity building is enhanced. This in turn was expected to contribute to peaceful coexistence. All projects and activities aimed at improving food availability, access to food, enhancing its use and utilisation and also to promote the stability, i.e. the reintegration of communities into emerging local markets.

Dialogue for planning and implementing larger scale projects from early 1999 onwards and during the following years was initiated with and through e.g. the Departments of Agriculture, Agrarian Development, Animal Production and Health, as well with Divisional Secretaries and the Department of Health Services and also with competent Trincomalee based non-government organisations. This process saw agreements to implement the minor tank development programme, the school garden and home garden programme, the promotion of coconut cultivation and village livestock projects and also raised project

ideas for e.g. intensive vegetable cultivation, seed paddy out-growing, aquaculture and agri-business. Included were the identification of training needs and physical support for capacity development¹¹.

In addition to partner institutions, community based organisations (CBOs) were addressed as potential implementing partners at village level at an early stage. The proliferation of local CBOs and also the handout mentality – NGOs and government institutions distributed food, tools and financial aid without asking for contributions from people – made it very clear that village development in a complex emergency situation required the active involvement of local communities. IFSP initiated therefore participatory approaches in an institutionalised manner with the aim to address and eventually overcome vulnerability and dependency.

Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA) became the core tool for the dialogue with communities. The concept was drafted by IFSP itself and later developed to fit the local conditions of partner institutions and communities by the 'CATAD-IFSP Project 1999'¹². In fact, an approach to not only identify specific needs of people living in the context of conflict, but to address their potential for development, PNA saw an intensive involvement of communities in the process of identification, discussion and decision making on village development projects. PNA encouraged communities to raise their voice. The motto 'food first' meant to promote self-initiative and capacities to mobilise own resources for the rehabilitation and development of the production infrastructure. Projects were identified on community as well as on household level. The modes of cooperation and the beneficiaries' contribution were discussed and agreed upon.

Training of government officers and staff from NGOs for a pragmatic application of the components of PNA, which was done by the village communities themselves and facilitated by service providers, initiated a process towards creativity and also empowerment. The widespread perception that participatory methods are not suitable for application by government officers in their dialogue with people was addressed by successfully conducting quite a large number of village PNAs, which were recorded and finally resulted in having projects implemented. This process contributed to develop skills of government staff, however, it was considered essential that heads of department were involved to accept participatory methods as management instrument.

The introduction of PNA in a 'tailor made' way called for continuity of the dialogue with partners and village groups. In this context, PNA was from the year 2000 onwards related to and combined with the concept of Community Mobilisation¹³ and the Livelihood System Approach, LSA, which was specifically applied to the conditions found in Trincomalee district. The conceptualisation of the LSA was the outcome of the 'CATAD-IFSP project 2001'¹⁴.

The Livelihood System Approach allows identifying how people combine their capital assets, i.e. resources while carrying out their common economic and social activities in order to achieve food security and sustain their livelihoods in a situation of stress and threat. The approach is looking into the mechanisms of adjusting and coping. It further addresses how people access structures and processes and use them, i.e. markets, public administration, reacting to security constraints or responding to threats of the armed actors.

¹¹ Train the Trainer. Participatory Development Approaches, Participatory Needs Assessment. Training Workshop, 2 to 24 March 2000, Technical Paper 3, Trincomalee 2000

¹² Food Security and Conflict. A Participatory Development Concept for the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, Berlin 1999; PNA Field Guide, Technical Paper 6, Trincomalee 1999 (approx. 1,000 copies in English, Tamil and Sinhala were made available to partners and CBOs)

¹³ Community Mobilisation – Principles and Practices, IFSP 2003

¹⁴ Conflict – Threat or Opportunity? Land Use and Coping Strategies of War-affected Communities in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, Berlin 2001

From the very beginning structures and processes of the prevailing system of governance in the district were addressed for effective project intervention. Though the focus was mainly on administrative structures, the outcome of field work, dialog with communities, partners and armed actors and the reflection on what aid in conflict could possibly achieve, resulted in addressing political processes at the local level.

The challenge was

- To produce quick and visible results
- To promote self-initiative from the start of the project cycle for active reconstruction and recovery while reviving local capital assets, local decision-making and leadership structures
- To reduce the communication gap between the 'uneducated' villagers and the officers and experts.

The application of participatory approaches during a tense situation of conflict from 1998 until end 2001 was by and large the key factor for activating communities. Experience underlined that the following dimensions that were covered contributed to a reasonable development of livelihoods:

- Ensure that village communities are involved in the targeting, which is to be based on transparent criteria, decision making and procedures (e.g. project book approach)
- Cooperate with elite-based CBOs and with informal action groups of the vulnerable to minimise polarisation between groups
- Enlist local contributions – contrary to the widespread belief that victims of conflict are 'too poor to contribute' – in cash or kind to ensure a sense of ownership and sustainability
- Ensure that participation leads to tangible results through guided technical and community based support packages and, as far as possible, institutionalised community mobilisation
- Address food availability, access and utilisation through a multi-sectoral approach that takes account of the dimensions of an emergency
- Create ownership for processes amongst service providers.

Altogether, 560 village development projects in 170 villages and 9 DS Divisions were completed. About 25% of the population of the district was directly addressed and approximately 65% indirectly. Implementing partners of village development projects were predominantly local community based organisations. A total of Rs. 405 million was effected for village projects and local initiatives (€ 4.05 million). IFSP Trincomalee was a factor in the district economy with respect to procurement of goods and services and employment.

A few figures underline the physical dimension of the programme.

- Infrastructure: 260 km rural roads and 50 minor tanks were rehabilitated and developed, storm water drainage and irrigation channels and structures were constructed, cleaned or rehabilitated, 380 low cost houses for returning internally displaced families were constructed, 13 schools and pre-schools were constructed or repaired, one agrarian service centre was reconstructed.
- Health: a school feeding programme benefited about 8,000 children in 60 remote villages, the construction of 1,585 toilets and 75 wells were supported, regular de-worming and immunisation campaigns had addressed 35,000 school children, a village health team and village health committees were activated.
- Services: home garden and school garden programmes benefited thousands of families, livestock projects, aquaculture and the promotion of trade and crafts

generated small-scale business, coconut cultivation was revived, seed paddy out-growing and the establishment of a seed processing centre contributed to agri-business.

- Capacity building: human resources management had addressed about 200 individuals from government departments, non-government organisations and IFSP directly and many village CBOs, the supply of IT equipment, technical equipment, logistic facilities enabled partners to work to their mandate, knowledge management improved skills and managerial capacities.

Dialogue and confidence

Continuous dialogue with both conflicting parties was necessary to guarantee the security for staff and goods. Service providers were and still are severely constrained by lack of qualified human resources and facilities. Project staff, service providers and the target population underwent severe stress. They have experienced fear and trauma. In a complex emergency situation a certain degree of 'protection' is essential to be able to work. We had to 'move between the lines'.

Carrying flags and corporate symbols on vehicles to be identified by friend and foe, having communication equipment installed, following strict security regulations and also briefing, de-briefing and coaching project staff and personnel from partner institutions are preconditions for being able to work. Providing 'protection' generates capacities to work with communities. The safety of personnel as well as their perceptions and feeling needed to be addressed to encourage self-confidence and also to confirm the caring and the strategic competence of the project management.

IFSP had practised open dialogue with all partners and parties, as far as this was possible. Sharing information and knowledge, contributing to coordinated development and promoting transparency, are key factors that determine the reputation of a project and institution respectively. The dialogue with the security forces at least reduced the suspicion against agencies, projects and also government officers that was experienced before the MOU. Dialogue with the LTTE was instrumental in achieving a certain degree of understanding of what professional development meant and what the civilian society is in a position to offer. Information sharing contributes to knowledge management, which was practised from the very beginning.

Dialogue was practised in the form of a triangulation process. Communities raised their thoughts and ideas that were reflected by IFSP and partners. The process allowed incorporating views and opinions of all stakeholders to arrive at an acceptable consent. The process further contributed to and supported concerted action.

Conflict analysis and sensitisation of project personnel helped to shape attitudes and understanding how to behave and act vis-à-vis armed actors and communities in particular. Conflict analysis became part of the day-to-day work from 1998 until signing of the MOU in February 2002 and thereafter¹⁵. In cooperation with the IFSP management, experienced team instructors briefed, de-briefed and coached staff. Workshops helped to reflect the feelings and perceptions encountered under stress experience. We had to ensure that we did not become 'victims' of conflict due to either becoming target or due to over emphasising our 'caring' role and capacity for communities. The principle of 'do no harm – do some good' guided the work during the height of the conflict. The annual work programmes of IFSP included specific peace oriented support for inter-community activities¹⁶. The support provided to victims of sporadic violence that had erupted in April and May 2003 had a strong focus on restoring normalcy.

¹⁵ Conflict Mitigation through Food Security? Working Paper 36, December 2000; Trincomalee Dialogue – Development Aid in a Conflict Affected Environment, April 2001, Technical Paper 11; Conflict Analysis Technical Paper 14, September 2001; Unintended Impacts of Development Aid, September 2001

¹⁶ Peace – Conflict Orientation 2003, Technical paper 26, December 2002

We experienced that development in conflict and, to a limited extent also on conflict was possible. The regional expansion of the activities supported by IFSP and also the initiatives that started during the years 2000 and 2001, i.e. NEIAP, government projects and NGOs had an impact on the local dimension of the conflict. The very fine-tuned procedures for obtaining security clearance on this side and acceptance on the other side and the open communication may have resulted in a lower number of incidents. Both sides were in fact supportive to development since it was pursued in a professional manner and showed tangible results. It can be assumed that 'protection' and the intensity of development also contributed to local stability.

Making services work for people

The application of knowledge and good practices through external support cannot compensate a comparatively weak government structure. Getting integrated into structures and processes required quite some support for the capacities of partner institutions. Before the MOU became effective, the project was challenged to shoulder more tasks and responsibility and take over a higher degree of involvement in planning, supporting implementation, monitoring and facilitating dialogue. At the same time, the request from IFSP for an increased intensity of cooperation and communication with partners in line with the commitment of the Sri Lankan Government showed clear limits at their level to deliver services beyond what was considered the common average.

We were at times more confronted with 'problems' than that ideas were forwarded for solution, not to mention opportunities and also with the 'I told him ...' mentality, which simply means that responsibility is not accepted. This indicated a kind of a 'duck down' mentality. The response from our side, to quote Mahathma Gandhi, was, 'an intelligent person transforms problems into opportunities; only a stupid man creates problems out of opportunities'.

Here, we need to address the service attitude and capacity of partners. The common perception is that the state has the obligation to provide services free of charge. Services, and even statutory functions, cost money and the resources needed for good service's provision need to be mobilised through the economy. What is the perception of the people about the value or worthiness of services vis-à-vis the costs charged? Have we been experiencing a failure in governance by pretending that an all-out service's delivery is possible and desirable?

The state needs to move away from the prevailing perception that its institutions have to deliver. The state lacks the capacity and the resources. The role of the state would rather be to mediate between the competing interests of the groups of the society in order to ensure that resources and opportunities are apportioned in a reasonable, fair, transparent and efficient manner¹⁷. Governance has to promote consensus, even if it means compromise for and by societal groups. Only then would communities realise that not group interests but common interests are pursued.

According to our experience, communities are ready and willing to contribute to development. The application of participatory project management in hundreds of projects and local CBOs confirms this. People are to a large extent in charge of the project and are comparatively close to the system of services delivery. The representatives of CBOs by and large have honoured the agreements conducted with IFSP. This included their contribution, which ranged between 25% and 65%.

Initiatives by and contributions from the Sinhala community were far higher, followed by the Tamil and the Muslim communities. Reasons may be that the social fabric in Sinhalese villages is more intact compared to Tamil villages, particularly when we

¹⁷ B. Smith, Governance: Who Cares? In: CHA, PCIA Newsletter, Vol. 1, Issue 3, October 2003

consider that they were apparently far more affected by the conflict. The comparatively low contribution and activity observed in Muslim villages may be the result of the prevailing economic pattern, combined with ideology perceptions. Taking serious views and interests of communities ensures firm agreements and adequate contributions. It also brings them closer to the service providers.

Contributions from the two funding partners, e.g. the German government through GTZ and the Sri Lankan government through the Ministry of Eastern Development were instrumental in getting the project established. However, only the combined contribution from all stakeholders allowed to successfully approach the many village development projects and to expedite services. From the total direct local expenditure for projects implemented through the years 2000 to 2003, 40% was made available by the Sri Lankan side, viz. government (19%), local CBOs (18%) and government departments (3%) whereas 60% were from German funds.

Intensive community mobilisation, which also involves the state delivery system, has improved the relation between communities and the system. Village communities feel better addressed and government extension officers feel that their services are in demand and are better received¹⁸. The service provider is directly accountable to the community and the community in turn needs to cover his efforts. On the other hand, we observed when asking a Farmer Organisation, who owns the minor tank, who cultivates and who does the harvest, obvious answers. The question, however, whose responsibility was the maintenance of the system, was referred to the state. Here we observe a misconception of the delivery system, basically due to the 'spoon feeding mentality' that prevails. Notwithstanding the quality of public services, the challenge is whether individuals and communities will pay for services from the public sector.

Capacity building

IFSP had supported capacity building through a large number of training initiatives, which covered conceptual and practical topics. A single intervention is not in a position to reverse the brain drain and a conflict shaped mentality, simply because competent and qualified professionals have good opportunities elsewhere and those who stayed experience frustration and loss of opportunities in life. However, investing in the human capital generates enormous short- to medium-term benefits. Project staff became competent and through e.g. coaching and de-briefing, participating in management meetings, joining in sectoral training, participating and exercising conflict impact assessment, training on the job, and is today in a position to take over more responsibility. Being able to shoulder responsibility, guide, coordinate, manage and effect specific tasks is an achievement that opens opportunities beyond IFSP.

We have supported efforts of partner institutions during the conflict and during the prevailing transition period that may contribute to change, e.g. agri-business, behaviour change in the health sector, promotion of the application of IT¹⁹, use of good practices, knowledge management. The IFSP documentation, which covers all relevant subjects under the four strategies and includes about 100 documents, some of which are in very good demand, allows to access all experience, the lessons learnt and good practices, which are recommended to be applied and replicated. The placement of the IFSP internet site, www.ifsp-srilanka.org, was an initiative to lobby for information sharing and for channelling knowledge to the north and east.

¹⁸ Focused Impact Assessment 2003, Working Paper 54, 2003

¹⁹ Information System for the North-East Provincial Administration – First Assessment, Working Paper 31, October 2000; An integrated Information System for IFSP and Partners – Database Management, GIS, remote Sensing, Working Paper 49, May 2002; Information Systems for the North and East – Contribution to Post-conflict Development, Working Paper 51, March 2003

We need to encourage capacity building at all levels for catching up with advanced knowledge, new technologies, and good practices. We can no longer afford the knowledge gap between the village and the centre, amongst the common man and the professional and between state institutions and private establishments. The knowledge gap we have observed is quite big. It not only strikes back in understanding conflict, it also prevents people to approach emerging post-conflict opportunities. As the north and east, and also the south, are peripheral to Colombo, Colombo is peripheral to the north and east, at least from the perception that prevails over here. Knowledge needs to be transferred and needs to be firmly rooted in the region. The same applies to human resources.

Change at the level of day-to-day governance needs to also address change of attitude and behaviour. It should incorporate modern management, teamwork, use of expert knowledge and the establishment of information systems. Our experience shows that development programmes not only contribute to stability at local level, they have the capacity to address higher levels as well. The institutionalisation of peace oriented development initiatives could be easily incorporated into existing structures. The establishment of the Centre for Information Resource Management, CIRM, as the de facto successor of the knowledge base created by IFSP is a good example that underlines the effectiveness of institutional change. To make such efforts work requires a higher degree of sensitisation as well as capacity of administrators and decision makers.

4. How have we experienced development aid and governance?

External actors in development aid need to focus on their internal partners, structurally, institutionally, professionally and personally. A project like IFSP Trincomalee, which started in a tense conflict situation and was confronted with immense expectations, had to ensure that its contributions fit into local and regional structures and processes.

The scope of cooperation had to be addressed from the very beginning to understand what was needed and who would be benefiting from the comprehensive and partly proactive approach that the Sri Lankan – German Development Cooperation was offering through the IFSP Trincomalee²⁰. Factual development on the ground also involved changes at the institutional level, which required frequent adjustment, proactive and reactive. At the same time, we had to realise that the district and provincial administration continued to function in its given / perceived mandate, showing little innovative capacity and appeared to remain rather non-involved in the discussion on root causes and dynamics of the local conflict pattern and the options for practical solutions.

How mature is the conflict that peace is inevitable? Waiting for something to happen results in facing facts created by those who do not wait. Do we really need that much of additional time? What is to happen while we wait? Are we prepared for peace and are we ready to capture the opportunities that peace offers? People have taken advantage of the changes the MOU has created, though no definite solution is in sight. We may experience a prolonged phase of ‘muddling through’ with all impediments and new realities that may be created.

Nevertheless, concerning the peace process, there is a considerable change in the ‘atmosphere’ within Trincomalee district since the signing of the MoU. It is continually stated, that although sporadic incidents occur and restrictions remain, albeit reduced, the general attitude of people has become more open and relaxed. One of the factors that have helped this opening is the reduction in restrictions on the movement of people. This

²⁰ The strategies of donors / agencies to respond to development in and on conflict was well described by Arve Ofstad in: Countries in Violent Conflict and Aid Strategies: The Case of Sri Lanka, World Development Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 165-180, 2002

has also had a direct impact on IFSP resulting in quicker progress of village development projects through enhanced local participation and contribution, greater relaxation on the transportation of materials and equipment, as well as being able to be in the field for much longer hours.

In the absence of a comprehensive regional framework for post-war to post-conflict development, funding proposals and new projects appear to lack coherence. Coordination and cooperation are weak and do not really contribute to local capacity building. An approach towards concerted action is yet to be developed. As it is essential to focus on practical and visible improvements, it is to support local and regional capacities for investment. People want to experience that their livelihoods benefit. Livelihood support would be the core for enhancing local stability. The transition from policy to practice is a thorny process. Talking peace is something completely different than working in and on conflict.

What is our role as external development professionals? IFSP Trincomalee had addressed the micro and meso level, but has also responded to requests from the macro level. We anticipated change and promoted continuous and open dialogue, brainstorming in particular and identified with partner institutions pragmatic solutions that addressed specific issues, which supported trust, confidence and understanding. Participatory methods applied at grass root level are suitable to facilitate dialogue and decision-making at higher level.

We still perceive a certain antagonism between the public and private sector and non-government. Institutions and projects hedge against knowledge sharing. The official bodies that are mandated to coordinate remain entangled in administrative procedures and are politicised. They lack capacity to absorb donor support, but appear hardly in a position to effectively make use of the information the system generates. If for example the 'consolidated final accounts', which contain all relevant physical and financial information about development initiatives and are prepared by government departments and projects at the end of the year, were used as monitoring instrument, then we had a good overview on development initiatives and outcome. What ails good cooperation and coordination?

IFSP Trincomalee started in a situation determined by hostilities, relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. We had addressed four different dimensions:

- Physical rehabilitation and reconstruction of infrastructure
- Restoring economic opportunities
- Contributing to restoring social relations, rebuilding trust and confidence
- Contributing to re-establishing governance.

Though it was easy to agree on these dimensions, much more difficult was the prioritisation for ground level projects²¹. Here, the dialogue was based on the mandate of partner institutions, their need and capacity to develop their services and structures and the principles of nutrition and food security. Strategies like the RRR Framework of Sri Lanka and the Poverty Alleviation Strategy were overarching policy guidelines.

5. What have we learnt?

We have experienced that working in conflict and to a certain extent also on conflict was possible under conditions created by us, such as being open in communication, neutral

²¹ B. Korf and E. Bauer, Food Security in the Context of Crisis and Conflict: Beyond the Continuum Thinking. IEED Gatekeeper Series no. 106, 2002

and transparent in action and accepted by the parties in conflict. They tolerated development to a point, where their interests were not affected.

We have experienced that a single intervention as facilitated through IFSP Trincomalee during the height of the conflict and during the transition period from conflict to anticipated peace has the potential to effect change and contribute to reduced vulnerability, dependency and poverty. Multiple interventions on the other hand are a complementary resource for accelerated development, as obvious when reviewing and comparing the vulnerability – poverty profiles 2000 and 2003.

We clearly see an overall improved livelihood in villages where comparatively high support was provided. At the same time we realise certain spill over effects due to the reestablishment of services. Impact assessment has revealed comparatively high benefits from community projects, i.e. collective goods such as roads and minor tanks, but also from poverty projects such as water supply, toilets, houses and agri-business.

IFSP has through e.g. the minor tank development programme significantly contributed to village and household food security. Agriculture based initiatives promoted services and opened market opportunities. The road network was instrumental to improve the access to markets and services. The village health team had a very positive impact on better water supply and sanitation as well as on behaviour change for better personal and public hygiene. Human resources development and physical support for partner institutions impacted on the capacities of service providers.

The balanced combination of hardware and software is the core for motivating partners and communities. In this respect external support for development as practised by GTZ has a threefold comparative advantage, viz. i) development of concepts, ii) testing and fine-tuning according to local conditions and iii) facilitating larger scale application and transfer / exit.

The challenge is getting people back to work and having services ready. We may continue to experience sporadic communal violence, which shows that the conflict is advancing from one stage to another and that local grievances along the line of ethnic and clientele interests prevent common solutions. We have experienced that only if local communities are incorporated into the planning and implementation process of projects they become partners rather than remain passive recipients. Participation can support post-conflict communities to build their own civic institutions and problem-solving capacity.

In fact, we could conclude that IFSP Trincomalee has developed into a 'learning institution', beneficial not only to project personnel, but even more important, to all stakeholders. This was reflected in the sharing of knowledge by documenting approaches, methods, results and the many workshops, public presentations and dialogue fora that were organised in cooperation with and, in many cases, for partner institutions²². It also materialised through the formation of CIRM, which could develop into a focal point for supporting the dissemination of good practices and knowledge management. Capacity building has become far more prominent than originally intended and has developed into a focal objective of IFSP Trincomalee after the MOU became effective. We quite agree with the assessment of a leading provincial decision maker that '... a sideline result of IFSP has been developed into the core of the programme'.

²² GTZ Nutrition and Food Security Network Asia, March 2001; Voiceless Past – Hopeful Future? Farewell Lecture of Dr. Ines Reinhard, June 2001, Technical Paper 13; Nutrition; Stakeholder Dialog on the CATAD-IFSP Project 2001; Presentations of the results of the Lessons Learnt – Best Practices Mission, March 2003, Working Paper 52 and the results of the Focused Impact Assessment, July 2003, Working Paper 54

6. What are our recommendations and conclusions?

IFSP Trincomalee

Important innovations that the programme was able to produce include the development of a series of practical concepts and approaches. These have been field-tested and adapted and could be replicated in other parts of Sri Lanka with little or no additional effort. Innovative approaches such as PNA, community mobilisation, participatory project management, process oriented health and nutrition planning have proved to be very useful integration mechanism, both conceptually and institutionally amongst the service providers²³.

In order to be able to address specific issues a certain amount of data and information collection and assessment is required. Projects often are questioned as to why they undertake so many studies and reports. We have undertaken surveys and studies that have all provided added information and know-how without which targeted measures were not possible. A good example of this is that without the health and nutrition baseline survey and the Village Data Sheets the project would not have been able to identify the vulnerable persons specifically enough to target them directly.

We recommend partner institutions to make use of the Village Data Sheets. Regularly updated on the base of recording all relevant information in the VDS, a main district data base would allow to arrive at a comprehensive monitoring and review of change as the result of development undertaken with the support from government institutions, non-government organisations, agencies and projects.

Finally, it is important that sufficient attention is always given to issues such as concept development, strategic planning, social and community processes prior to starting the implementation of projects. This also includes development of clear criteria for the selection of vulnerable persons. Levels of contribution also have to be clear from the very start, these have to be means-tested, in other words, the levels of contribution should be based on the resources available to a community and their 'willingness to pay'.

Good practices and lessons learnt are available that could be applied by partner institutions at various levels. We would not accept the position, that e.g. participatory project management, a project planning matrix, team management or the principles of community mobilisation are alien to the public administration. We rather see the need to incorporate such good practices into their structures and processes. We also advocate knowledge management because this contributes to well conceptualised approaches.

Best practices as developed and tested by IFSP Trincomalee and other projects and institutions have a focus on the dialogue with local communities, application of participatory methods, livelihood system approach, project planning, community mobilisation, conflict analysis, sector expertise, data base management, impact assessment or human resources management. They also address the transfer of knowledge through training and the development of technical skills for stakeholder personnel. We recommend having a synopsis of best practices prepared.

Capacity of Integrated Food Security Programmes

Improving the capacities of local communities and service providers for better nutrition and food security contributes to stabilise livelihoods. Better nutrition and food security reduces the negative effects of displacement and migration of affected communities. Complementing this, it is necessary to support a fairer access to resources, such as land,

²³ The innovative and hence governance promoting outcome of IFSP was identified as a decisive success factor by the progress review mission 2000 and the lessons learn – best practices mission 2003.

education, services, justice and cultural well-being. Lasting food security means lasting peace.

Main pre-conditions for the positive contributions of Integrated Food Security Programmes in the context of crisis and conflict are:

- Adequate programme design, based on identified problems within the frame of available resources (human, financial, local) and the ground conditions
- Adequate targeting in a way that the most vulnerable are addressed and are benefiting, but other relevant groups are included to support balanced local interventions and outcome of development
- High effectiveness of interventions through regular monitoring and assessment of impacts and adjustment of activities
- Strong focus on the capacities of partner institutions with emphasis on cross-sector coordination and cooperation under pragmatic working arrangements.

Programmes should carefully address a few basic issues:

- Emphasise community participation and empowerment of conflict affected groups, to create ownership and new perspectives and to effectively rehabilitate infrastructure as well as human and productive capital
- Incorporate food-for-work / food-for-assets measures in areas with food shortage, to provide a short-term relief on food insecurity combined with restoring livelihood
- Support the rebuilding of local capacities for food security and livelihoods
- Focus more on cooperation amongst communities (even beyond ethnic and religious borders) to avoid negative competition that often causes and prolongs in-built internal conflicts
- Balance between addressing the conflict affected food insecure poor and adequate consideration of relevant groups (winners of war should not be losers in peace)
- Assess and consider existing conflict prevention, conflict resolution and reconstruction strategies
- Incorporate conflict prevention in planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes
- Continuously monitor the risk of aggravating or triggering conflict (do no harm – do some good).

Despite the world wide spread of conflicts since the 1990s and the necessity to invest an increasing share of food and development assistance to meet immediate humanitarian needs, it is necessary to further elaborate and implement equitable and sustainable development programmes that could contribute to mitigate conflicts and promote a new thinking to break the pernicious cycle of conflict, followed by the effects of hunger. Integrated Food Security Programmes can significantly contribute to food security and poverty alleviation through strategies, which actively and intensively promote improved availability, access, use and utilisation of food.

Integrated Food Security Programmes have the unique capacity to conceptually address malnutrition, conflict affectedness, poverty and social integration. They apply strategies and tools that are tested and applicable to local and regional conditions. They promote participation, transparency and public auditing, and support adequate exit strategies that aim at a certain degree of sustainability.

The contribution to conflict mitigation is relevant through the promotion of participation and the encouragement of the conflict affected poor to contribute to development and well being of their livelihoods, thereby restoring hope and removing despair, finally aiming at enhanced local and regional stability. The political capacity to work on the conflict beyond the local and / or regional level is, however, limited.

Governance is the core challenge

Development aid cannot and must not replace political solutions. The capacity to advocate and to further conceptualise adequate strategies need to be incorporated into the political dialogue. A post-war to post-conflict situation as experienced after the MOU still experiences politicised clashes between and amongst communities. We are far from having reconciliation institutionalised. Stability is not yet restored in a way that accelerated mainstream development is happening. The opportunities created with considerable external support are predominantly covering backlog initiatives rather than that they facilitate 'jump-start' development. Even though, in the absence of violent conflict, development has taken a new turn, which raises hope.

What is essential is to address the structural constraints that shadow the conflict. These are outstanding constitutional and administrative reforms, but also the culture of politics that have to change. Since sporadic communal violence erupts over spatial and minority interests, political and institutional solutions need to be found that are mutually acceptable and promote a 'win-win situation' rather than was is presently experienced by 'the winner takes it all' mentality²⁴.

At the local level we advocate the reestablishment of the rule of the law, rebuilding of market institutions, re-establishing trust in markets, regaining normal day-to-day social life, and finally, good neighbourhood beyond minority interests. We also see the need to strengthen the capacities of government institutions and non-government organisations that they are prepared to address anticipated change. Long-term post-conflict food security in the north and east requires assets and public services that only a legitimate system of government can rebuild. Including the rural poor is essential, especially for rebuilding the production and social infrastructure that can increase the productivity of local and regional resources.

However, with the advent of peace new local conflicts are beginning to develop, mainly regarding land ownership and access to resources. Differences are also emerging between those who remained in the villages and those who left and are now returning. While those families who remained have been extensively sensitised by the community mobilisers of IFSP, those returning would require assistance in basic community mobilisation practices. The fear expressed is that the returnees may question the new status quo and may also not understand the development priorities defined by those who remained.

The experience over a period of five years lets us conclude that the issues in conflict are small if not marginal compared to the benefits and opportunities that will emerge from a negotiated settlement. We are rather convinced that the predominant denominator for peace and regional stability is the common economic interest of communities beyond spatial and minority perceptions.

In the end we feel that it was appropriate to commence development at a larger scale before a certain degree of 'normalcy' was restored. The cooperation with partners and communities has resulted to a certain extent in stabilising civilian institutions. We were also in a limited way effective in providing a mental backing in difficult and even desperate situations and were perhaps able to make village communities and partners feel that they were not left alone.

²⁴ B. Korf, Who is the Rouge State? Discourse, Power and Spatial Politics in Post-War Sri Lanka; Paper presented at the 9th International Conference of Sri Lanka Studies (ICSLS), Matara, 28-30 November 2003