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Food and Nutrition Security - How to Meet Basic Needs?

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Food or Nutrition Security - How to meet Basic Needs?

GTZ Experiences in Trincomalee¹

Introduction

Trincomalee is with 350.000 inhabitants one of the smaller districts in Sri Lanka. Mainly due to a few large-scale irrigation schemes the periphery of the district is a rice surplus area (e.g. Kantale). Nevertheless, rural areas in Trincomalee suffer from significant deficiencies in availability and access to food. Prevailing conflict continues to restrict restricting cultivation and transport.

Core Problem of Trincomalee District

In the Trincomalee district food deficiency and poverty affect an alarmingly high percentage of the population. The main reason for this is the ravages of war over the last 15 years: The war has affected almost the entire population of the district.

Many villages have been displaced during civil unrest and the basic social and economic infrastructure has been destroyed. A large number of houses, village infrastructures and the production base are destroyed. Drinking water facilities and agro wells do not function anymore. Irrigation facilities are dilapidated and do not allow the cultivation of the most important crop, irrigated rice (paddy)

Large sections of the population are suffering from alarming chronic and acute malnutrition; Children and women are amongst the most affected groups. This impairs the development prospects of a whole future generation.

Particularly affected are people who recently returned from refugee camps to their home villages, are now without any means of livelihood. Food deficiencies and lack of investment capital do neither allow the re-settlers to restore their physical capacity nor to build up the minimum infrastructure for survival.

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Potential

Despite this difficult situation there appears to be potential for development amongst the target population as well as on institutional level. Trincomalee has a well functioning civilian administration with government institutions in place and a large number on non-government organisations (NGOs) working.

The district shows a communal of all three communities, viz. the Sinhalese the Tamils and the Muslims. An equitable treatment of all three ethnic groups in their efforts to improve their food and nutrition situation is likely to help foster mutual understanding and channel common efforts towards development. In the end, IFSP might contribute to conflict mitigation.

Present policy

Government institutions have become the main service providers in this area. However, services are comparatively poor due to lack of specified staff and appropriate facilities. About two third of the population depends to a certain extent of government support for their livelihood, e.g. food stamps. Dependency on government services as well as on relief measures provided by national and international organisations is continuously increasing. Co-ordination between the various government departments as well as NGO's is rather unsatisfactory.

There is very little presence of private institutions and lack of co-operation with the government and the population in need.

Budget lines and "packages" determine the services provided by the government, rather than the real needs expressed and defined by of the target group themselves. Potential and self-help capacities of the rural population are more and more neglected and due to the ongoing conflict eroded.

In the absence of clear defined policies on food and nutrition security, development agencies like GTZ and to a certain extend NGO's play an important supportive role vis-a-vis service providers and target groups.

Food and Nutrition Security –to overcome Poverty and to Meet Basic Needs

According to the World Bank Food Security has four dimensions: physical and economical access, sufficiency (availability), security (sustainability) and time (MAXWELL and FRANKENBERGER 1992). With regard to the time dimension transitory and chronic food insecurity can be distinguished.

In addition to that the different levels of food security have to be distinguished, e.g. national, regional, household- and individual level.

The concept of nutrition security goes beyond food security. Malnutrition is considered the outcome of nutrition insecurity. In addition to access and availability of food (food security), adequate dietary intake, diseases, maternal- and child care, education as well as health services and environmental conditions are determinants for nutrition security.

Role of Food and Nutrition Security within GTZ - Integrated Approach

Food and nutrition security is a key focus of German development co-operation. This is underlined through the German support to the international food aid system as well as through bilateral support to partner countries.

Integrated Food Security Programmes (IFSP's) are targeting food insecure households and provide direct support for population groups facing malnutrition. They intend to combine short-term food security via transfers (food-for-work) with measures assuring long-term development. A multisectoral approach is applied to tackle the multiple causes of malnutrition in an integrated way on different levels.

Food-for-work is a tool for development and serves a number of purposes. It bridges seasonal food deficiency encountered by people, generates large scale temporary rural employment, mobilises and strengthens rural self-help potential and creates assets for economic and social rural development. It is to be of temporary nature and must not interfere in the local rice market.

Community participation is one of the guiding principles of IFSPs, to facilitate the problem identification and to search for appropriate socio-economic, technical and institutional solutions. Priorities are set by the target group themselves with the aim of reaching high identification with the project objectives and activities, leading to sustainable development (BMZ 1994).

Background of the IFSP Trincomalee

Since August 1998 an **Integrated Food Security Program (IFSP)** is implemented in Trincomalee District under the Development Co-operation between Sri Lanka and Germany. The Ministry of Plan Implementation and Parliamentary Affairs through the District Planning Secretariat is implementing partner of the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ). The IFSP is planning and implementing its activities together with relevant government departments, Divisional Secretaries as well as local and international NGOs. The present phase is scheduled from August 1998 to March 2001. Ampara district is included in the IFSP with a food-for-work component.

IFSP intends to contribute to re-development and re-construction in the rural areas of Trincomalee district. The project purpose is, to enable poor groups in Trincomalee District, who are at risk of food insecurity and are affected by the conflict, to diversify and intensify their food and income sources and improve their diet and health care. This is intended by improving social and economic village infrastructure, health service, availability of additional employment opportunities and provision of financial services. An equitable treatment of the three ethnic groups will also help foster mutual understanding and channel common efforts towards development.

For the IFSP a German budget contribution of about Rs. 170 million plus an equivalent of 3,000 metric tons of rice amounting to an additional Rs. 58 million have been made available. A substantial Sri Lankan contribution is expected in terms of human resources, facilities and support of field activities estimated at about Rs. 40 million.

Purpose of the IFSP Trincomalee

The purpose and objective of the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee is as follows:

“People who are at risk of food insecurity and who are affected by the conflict, diversify and intensify their food and income sources and improve their diet and health care.”

This purpose contributes to the broader objective of the IFSP:

“The basic needs situation, especially food security and nutrition status, of the population affected by the conflict has improved, contributing to peaceful co-existence and cooperation of the ethnic groups.”

Target Groups of the IFSP

IFSP intends to concentrate its activities on population groups that:

- are affected by the conflict
- are in continuous or seasonal food deficiency
- have potential in active participation and contribution to development

Main target groups are communities affected by the conflict through displacement, loss of family members, destroyed production base and infrastructure, loss of income resources, assets and property.

All communities - Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim - are supposed to be addressed equally.

In this first phase of August 1998 to May 2001 a total of 8,000 to 10,000 families are expected to be reached.

For this present phase five priority areas (Divisions) are addressed, covering both, "cleared" and "uncleared" areas. These division have been selected during the initial planning workshop in 1997: Padivisiripura (Sinhalese), Kuchchaveli (Tamils), Gomarankadawela (Sinhalese); Muthur (Muslims and Tamils), Eachchilampathai (Tamils). In addition to that, IFSP co-operates with community based organisations (CBO), Divisional Secretaries, government departments and NGOs throughout the district. Accordingly some IFSP activities have been implemented in all 11 Divisions of Trincomalee as experienced to date.

Expected Achievements

It is essential to implement relevant activities, which promote nutrition and food security. Therefore IFSPs aim at short- and long-term impacts.

On a short-term basis the focus is on balancing acute food deficits and mobilising human resources.

The long-term perspective is to establish the productive and social basis for sustainable food security through an improved:

- basic needs situation (food, housing, education, health, sanitation etc.)
- food security and nutrition status
- co-operation of all institutions working in the field of food security

Key elements of IFSP are

- food-for-work and cash for work measures to counterbalance temporary and/or structural food shortages
- support to service providers (government and non government) for better addressing the needs of target groups
- provision of material and equipment.

In addition, IFSP activities include agricultural production and market access, employment and income generation, improving access to basic health services, providing nutritional advisory services and support communities in organising themselves.

Guiding Principles of IFSP

The prime precondition for the project is satisfactory security in the project region. The project aims at contributing to conflict mitigation, overcoming ethnic animosity and achieving sustainable food and nutrition security through target group efforts. The project is therefore geared to direct poverty alleviation. IFSP Trincomalee has formulated a number of key principles to be applied in planning, implementation and co-operation with the village population and all partner institutions.

- Equal consideration of all three communities and support for joint initiatives wherever possible
- Active participation and contribution from target groups expected
- Improve self-help capacity and strengthening of CBOs
- Focus on long-term development (not relief and emergency)
- Participatory methodology in planning, implementation and monitoring
- Village development approach
- Open dialogue and transparency

Activities of IFSP

Community projects	(village infrastructure):	tank rehabilitation irrigation channels drainage facilities agricultural roads
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Poverty group projects	(for vulnerable groups)	agricultural extension home garden goat and poultry rearing saving and credit groups
	(for village community)	drinking wells school gardens/plant nurseries agro wells
Health programme		training of community health workers nutrition and health awareness training for community improve sanitation and hygiene improve sewage and waste disposal

Achievements of IFSP up to Date

The IFSP commenced in August 1998. In fact, in 1997/98 a first round of food-for-work was initiated through the District Planning Secretariat which paved the road for intensified work at village level. Communication and cooperation has been established with institutions and organisations through: mobilising workshops, planning meetings for preparing preliminary work plans, budgets and modes of implementation, participation in district meetings and committees and, implementation of a large number of small projects. A steering committee has been established in May 1999.

Food-for-Work Projects

The IFSP has a food-for-work component of 3,000 Mt tons of rice for the present phase. Food-for-work activities were implemented 1997/98 and 1998/1999 through the District Planning Secretariat. 14 agreements for 51 projects in villages were signed with implementing partners (service providers), GOs, local and international NGOs. The work undertaken focuses on the repair and renovation of minor irrigation schemes, roads and various infrastructure works. About 2,500 families have been reached in 58 villages. For the Food-for-Work measures in 1999/2000 1,000 MT of rice are to be made available. This rice shall be predominantly used for the rehabilitation of minor tanks

Fast Track Projects

The fast track projects are limited in size, they are technically simple and clear structured and they are ready for implementation. Under local grant this cash-for-work budget that compliments food-for-work projects. They focus on the rehabilitation of small scale village

infrastructure, predominantly on repair works and rehabilitation of medium and minor irrigation schemes. Furthermore they address individual farmers and families and shall particularly target resettled families. Between December November 1998 and January 1999 a total of 16 projects were agreed upon, reaching an additional number of about 1,600 families. All together about 4,100 families or 20,000 persons have been benefiting from both, Food-for-Work and Fast-Track initiatives in almost 80 villages during the 1997/98 and 1998/99 seasons.

Rehabilitation of Minor Tank

In cooperation with the Department of Agrarian Services a programme to renovate/ rehabilitate 75 minor irrigation schemes has been launched, aiming at the following outputs:

- i) 75 minor irrigation schemes renovated/rehabilitated
- ii) 2,750 ha of paddy land and dry land for about 3,500 farm families re-cultivated
- iii) 11,000 MT of paddy expected to be produced additionally.

Home gardening

A programme to establish plant nurseries at 11 schools in five divisions was successfully tested and shall be expanded to a "55 School Garden Programme". This programme shall be a major entry point for: agricultural extension, home gardening, commercial horticulture, awareness creation for nutrition and health, rural education and social mobilisation.

Baseline Survey on Nutrition and Health

A survey on nutrition and public health was conducted in 20 villages, covering both, cleared and uncleared areas. 5 villages of each community, (Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim) were randomly selected in the cleared areas of the IFSP project area and in addition to that 5 villages in uncleared areas (Tamil).

Prevalence of *wasting* (low weight-for-height, indicator for acute malnutrition) is extremely high amongst all three ethnic groups. (>25 % on average, more than 10% is already considered as a public health problem). Observations showed very poor hygiene conditions, both personal and environmental hygiene. Amongst seasonal food shortage and infectious diseases this is very likely to be the major reason for the high percentage of wasting.

Stunting (height-for-age, chronic malnutrition, which manifests itself in the form of retarded growth) is applied as an overall indicator of the long-term health and nutrition situation of a population. Findings in the cleared area (22% stunting) are in the range of the national average, although the Tamil population seems much more affected (34.4% Tamil, 16.4%

Muslim, 15.0% Sinhalese). In the uncleared areas 44% of the children under five years were found to be stunted.

Prevalence of *malnutrition of mothers* is alarming (30-50% depending on the ethnic group), and the reasons for that are likely to be the same as for malnutrition amongst children (hygiene, seasonal food shortage, disease) but this needs to be further investigated.

The mean *consumption pattern* of main food items showed, that the consumption of beans, green vegetables, other vegetables as well as oil and fat was lower than on a weekly basis amongst the Tamil and Muslim population. Consumption of fish was low amongst the Sinhalese population (less than weekly) Consumption of fruits as well as milk products was low amongst all three communities (monthly basis).

The children's *vaccination status* of especially amongst the Sinhalese part of the population is reasonable. Sinhalese mothers use the possibility of prenatal care most frequently and most of the families reported they go for medical treatment in the case of a child suffering from diarrhoea. These findings indicate a fairly good use of the health services, if available.

Nevertheless, *infectious diseases* were highly prevalent (ARI and fever) and mentioned to be the main health problems. *Water shortage* is mainly prevalent during July-September and highly effects personal hygiene and cultivation pattern. Sinhalese and Muslim families seem to be more effected than Tamils.

Food availability in terms of quantity and quality on household level is still a crucial factor. During the critical months (October to January, before harvest) up to 50% of the surveyed families mentioned food shortages. A large amount of agriculture land is abandoned due to security problems, e.g. abandoned irrigation systems etc. Land cultivation is practised close to the village only. Only few families have home gardens. Possibilities new cultivation and re-cultivation should be assessed and supported, such as repair of minor irrigation systems.

Travelling through the survey area showed that in the Divisional Centres food and consuming goods are available in remarkable variety. However, distances to the villages are often very far and transport facilities poor. If accessibility in terms of transport and money can be assured, these goods seem to be easily available. Therefore additional employment opportunities are likely to have a positive impact on food availability, thus possibly also on the nutritional status.

The Tamil population seems to suffer most from the ongoing conflict situation. For most of the assessed determinants of malnutrition, results were unfavourable for the Tamil population. In addition, the population in the “uncleared” areas (nearly 100% Tamils) is even more effected (poor infrastructure and transport, very limited provision of government services, lack of irrigation systems etc.) Government restrictions on the flow of goods, including construction material and medicine, which are additional burdens to the overall difficult situation.

Survey results are alarming and presently being discussed for determining short- and medium-term intervention and follow-up. Immediate action is required, as nutritional deprivation during early infancy is likely to create a huge negative impact on the physical and mental development of the child.

Management Consultancy for the District Planning Secretariat

A review of the mandate and capacity of the District Planning Secretariat is under way. It aims at proposing an approach towards significant improvements in terms of planning, co-ordination and co-operation for the development of the district and, hence for the IFSP. If evolution starts at the level of institutions than efforts need to be undertaken to create a strong partner for development.

Participatory Integrated Village Development Approach towards Food Security

During the first half of 1999, the IFSP developed and tested systematic procedures for conducting Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA). PNA has been conducted in 14 selected villages.

A practical approach towards village development through IFSP intervention/support was established in co-operation with Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany, CATAD - Centre for Advanced Training in Agriculture and Rural Development.

As a result of the PNAs, implementation of promising project proposals has been brought under way. The active involvement of the local population and the support of CBOs have to be ensured. Project proposals cover a large number of needs, viz. water supply and sanitation, small scale irrigation, agricultural extension, agro wells, health services and social services.

Human Resources Management

Different training courses had been conducted (English, management, computer, participatory methods) for DPS staff, department staff and team members of the PNA. A training course on food-for-work for four officers was held in Nepal. Mobilising meetings

with staff assigned to the IFSP have been held. Team building and team formation are planned for December 1999.

Conclusion

Development programmes often define poverty alleviation and the satisfaction of basic needs as their overall goals, whereas activities often only focus on improved access or availability of food in a certain region - only one dimension of food security. The availability of food on household and individual level, as well as the economical and physical access of households and individuals are often neglected.

Food Security is defined as “access by all people at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life” (World Bank 1986). Therefore the present policy, focussing on local or regional access and availability of food is not leading towards the alleviation of malnutrition and poverty.

To tackle the problem of malnutrition, the outcome of nutrition insecurity it is necessary to consider all dimensions of food security. Beyond that the determinants of nutrition security, such as adequate dietary intake, diseases, maternal- and child care, education as well as health services and environmental conditions

Present policy is neglecting the need of a multi-sectoral approach as well as community involvement in all phases of development co-operation: planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes. This needs to be improved urgently to tackle the problem of food and nutrition insecurity, thus to overcome malnutrition and poverty and to meet the populations basic needs.

There is an urgent need to direct agriculture policies beyond food security towards nutrition security and sustainable development.

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