

CRISIS PREVENTION AGAINST HUNGER

BUDGET CUTBACKS ALSO JEOPARDIZE THE RIGHT TO FOOD

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Overview

Prevention rather than management of violent conflicts that have already broken out – this is the basic idea of civilian crisis prevention. Since May 2004, the German government has seen civilian crisis prevention as a cross-sectoral task within the framework of the Action Plan "Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace-Building". Now it faces drastic cutbacks. The Federal Foreign Office's budget bill for 2011 not only plans severe cuts in the fields of humanitarian aid and human rights but also a 30 percent reduction of funds for civilian crisis prevention. If the proposal goes ahead, many important measures currently implemented by government and non-governmental organisations in this field will no longer be sustainable. This will also have long-term consequences for many development goals, because civilian crisis prevention helps not only to prevent violence but to reduce the number of poor and starving people.

"Peace and stability are prerequisites for development and prosperity. Conversely, peace and stability are not sustainable without development." This insight was the basis of the Action Plan "Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace-Building" which was adopted by the German government in 2004. In view of the "growing number of challenges to peace and security" and "Germany's increased international responsibility", the German government reaffirmed its determination "to support peace, security and development in a preventive way and to use primarily civilian means to do so". On the one hand, this meant finding ways in which the government can "use foreign, security and development policy more intensively for civilian crisis prevention", on the other crisis prevention was supposed to be addressed on a broader base by economic, financial and environmental policy. Two governments and six years later, very little is left of these plans. In the coalition agreement between the CDU, CSU and FDP, there is no mention of the Action Plan. The Federal Foreign Office's budget bill plans to reduce spending on crisis prevention, peace-keeping and conflict resolution by around one third. For an area of politics more dependent than most on long-term planning and continuity, this is a bitter blow. Moreover, there are many arguments – from ethical to economic – that are not only against cutbacks but are actually in

favour of an *increase* in civilian crisis prevention.

Action Plan Civilian Crisis Prevention

The Action Plan "Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace-Building" is a cross-sectoral political strategy paper. It was adopted by the red-green coalition government on 12th May 2004. The Action Plan embraces not only direct crisis prevention measures – such as the support of negotiation processes, diplomatic negotiation or the development of democratic and constitutional structures – but also other political fields, e.g. development and environment policy, which have a more indirect impact on crises prevention.

The Action Plan still forms the political frame of reference for the German government's crisis prevention policy today. The majority of measures are taken within the framework of multi-lateral organisations, including the UN Peace Building Coalition, the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union (CSDP), the OSCE and OECD as well as the World Bank. Among the most important instruments on a national level are the Civil Peace Service (ZFD), the zivik programme of the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (IFA) and the Centre for International Peace Operations (ZIF). Every two years, a report on the implementation of the Action Plan is submitted to the German Bundestag.

Responsibility to Protect

Since the genocides of Rwanda and Srebrenica, at the latest, there has been a general understanding in the international community that we bear a responsibility – and that we also bear responsibility for the suffering of people at the other end of the world. This was expressed in the concept of the "responsibility to protect" (R2P). At the UN reform summit of 2005, 188 states committed themselves to the concept, although this has still not taken the form of a binding international law.

Responsibility to Protect

Developed by the "International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty" (ICISS), the concept states that governments are not only responsible for protecting their own people but that they must also protect populations whose governments are unable or unwilling to protect them themselves. Protection should be, first and foremost, of a *preventive* nature, however, in certain cases, it may also be asserted through military force. ICISS formulates clear conditions under which military force may be deployed in the interests of protection, namely in the event of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Further prerequisites for military intervention stated by the ICSS document are use of force only as a last resort, the proportionality of means, the right intention and reasonable prospects of success. None of the current ongoing national and international military operations can be justified with R2P, although intervening states repeatedly try to do so.

Civilian crisis prevention is at the heart of the R2P agenda, because "responsibility to protect" should be implemented, above all, in a *preventive* way; it does not take effect when it is already too late. Germany has only just been elected a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. The government should now fulfil the obligation that comes with this role by demonstrating greater commitment to civilian crisis prevention.

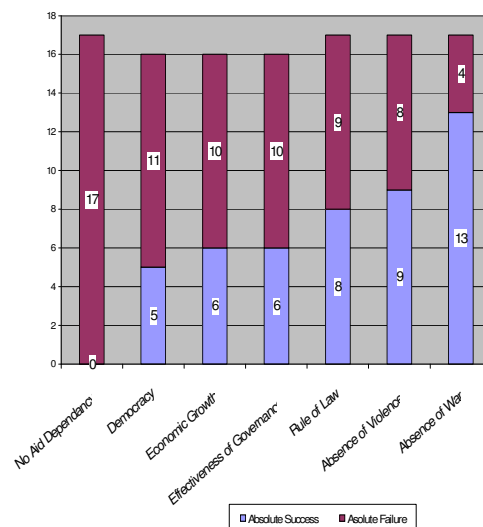
In this way, it could also make a contribution towards eliminating hunger, because civilian crisis prevention not only helps prevent physical violence, it also indirectly helps combat hunger and poverty. Armed conflicts and civil wars drastically intensify poverty and hunger. According to the World Hunger Index of 2006, almost all countries involved in civil war record a low gross national income (GNI) per capita and consequently rank lowest in the Index. Even after armed conflicts have been resolved, crisis-ridden countries rank far lower than countries not affected by conflict. After the end

of a civil war, the income of the people is on average 15 percent lower than in countries that are at peace (Welthungerhilfe 2006).

Military interventions only moderately successful

Another argument against cuts in spending on civilian crisis prevention is that investment in military operations to manage conflicts and subsequent "state-building" processes can rarely be considered successful. In 1995, for example, the United Nations' intervention in Somalia ended in disaster. Not only did troops fail to secure peace. Far worse – new trouble spots flared up as a result of the intervention, leaving the country in an even more dire state after the military's withdrawal than before. In Afghanistan, too, attempts to create a stable and secure state by military action are doomed to failure. According to a recently published study, 13 of 17 investigated UN missions managed to contain violence to such an extent that the level of violence five years after the intervention was significantly lower than before (below the threshold of war). However, other goals were achieved far less frequently through military intervention: in nine cases, full monopoly on violence was not secured. Functioning government institutions were established in fewer than half of the states in the first five years after the intervention, and in only eight cases were constitutional legality and better governance established. Only six cases recorded a higher level of economic growth after the mission, and democratic structures were improved in only five cases (Zürcher 2006).

Diagram: Success of 17 UN missions



Source: Zürcher 2006

High military expenditure

This balance is also problematic in view of the costs incurred by military interventions. The cost of military "after-care" amounts to billions. The German Institute for Economic Research estimates that the cost of Germany's involvement in the war in Afghanistan will total 26 to 47 billion euros, depending on how long Germany is involved in the mission. This is between 2.5 and 3 billion euros annually.¹ According to the Bund für Soziale Verteidigung, military expenditure in 2009 was around thirty times higher, at 31 billion euros, than the cost of civilian crisis prevention (900 million) (BSV 2009). Compared to these figures, cuts in civilian crisis prevention spending seem almost petty.

Moreover, civilian crisis prevention clearly has a successful track record. Although the effects of civilian crisis prevention are difficult to prove – prevention, after all, is about an incident *not* occurring – several examples suggest that the eruption or spread of violence was prevented by civilian intervention.

Civilian crisis prevention works

For example, in the crisis following the elections in Kenya in 2007, the use of diplomatic means combined with non-governmental initiatives was exceptionally successful. Announcements of the election results had sparked political unrest in the country, soon developing into a fully-fledged conflict between various ethnic groups because the declared winner of the elections, Mwai Kibaki, and his strongest opponent, Raila Odinga, belonged to different ethnic groups. Members of the Kikuyu tribe, to which Kibaki belongs, were attacked because they were suspected of ballot rigging. An estimated 1,500 people were killed and over 600,000 people fled the country during the unrest. Diplomatic mediation and support of the Kenyan government in resolving the crisis prevented an even worse outcome. After numerous African politicians tried to negotiate a solution, Kofi Annan achieved a breakthrough. He persuaded the opponents to form Africa's first grand coalition. Civilian organisations and grassroots initiatives are still supporting the conflict management and reconciliation process today.

¹ This figure deviates significantly from the official figures issued by the German government because they also include the follow-up costs of the operation – for example, loss of productivity as a result of injuries and death, decline in consumption, suppression of private investments and interest payments to finance various measures.

Another – albeit slightly different - example is the international community's mission in Myanmar in the wake of hurricane Nargis. The refusal of Myanmar's military government to allow foreign aid workers into the country to help with the humanitarian disaster triggered by the hurricane prompted numerous politicians to demand that humanitarian assistance be delivered, if necessary, under coercive military action. There was speculation about a US-led intervention in the Irrawaddy Delta. Eventually, diplomatic pressure and targeted efforts with local organisations proved that much could be done to alleviate the suffering of the population. The Myanmar government gradually opened up under the pressure of the general public so that foreign aid could soon be coordinated by the ASEAN states working throughout the country. NGOs like Welthungerhilfe, that have been working in Myanmar for many years, were able to deliver aid to affected regions with the help of local partner organisations.

Good approach – poor implementation

The development of civilian crisis prevention is important, but so is the improvement in the implementation of the Action Plan. The specially established Advisory Board as well as numerous civilian initiatives have commented on the progress and problems of implementation since the Plan was created. They make it clear that there is still a lot to be done before the German government has a coherent and cross-departmental instrument for civilian crisis prevention, one that is satisfactory for all players involved.

Unfortunately, little importance is attached to the Action Plan by the government coalition. Numerous civilian alliances – including the Advisory Board and Forum Menschenrechte and Bund für soziale Verteidigung – criticise the fact that the Plan is not sufficiently prioritised by the ministries and that the German government's representative for crisis prevention is barely visible in public. The "Ressortkreis" responsible for coordinating activities is considered weak and not sufficiently assertive. It has very little funding of its own. To have a real impact, its institutional anchoring needs to change – for example, through better links to executive levels and more funding being made directly available to the "Ressortkreis".

Another deficit is the Action Plan's low profile. Prevention is in every respect a subject that is difficult to "sell". Unlike disasters or violent conflicts, prevention attracts limited media interest and public sympathy. Most violence-prevention activities tend not to be particularly "spectacular". The task force itself has drawn attention to this aspect and the significance of

public support - but without taking the logical steps itself. There is little evidence so far that the professional communication strategy called for by the Advisory Council for civilian crisis prevention has actually materialised. However, this is absolutely essential if prevention is to be communicated to the public more effectively. The fact that even prevention can be given effective publicity is proven by the health sector: here, prevention campaigns have achieved some very positive results.

Finally, the key issue of bringing together military and civil instruments as emphasised in the 3rd report on the implementation of the Action Plan presents many civilian organisations with major problems. While the Action Plan itself stated that "interfaces between civilian and military crisis prevention" should be taken into consideration, the Action Plan has now been subordinated to the approach of "networked security" (vernetzte Sicherheit). What is particularly astonishing is that the "Provincial Reconstruction Teams" in Afghanistan are cited as prime examples of this type of interaction, since it is in Afghanistan that this approach is threatening to fail so miserably. Moreover, concerns so frequently expressed by humanitarian organisations about the concept of "networked security" and the subordination of humanitarian aid and development cooperation to security issues – for example, regarding the neutrality of humanitarian aid that is necessary in conflict situations and the security of their staff – are completely ignored. The question that also arises is whether closer collaboration between the military and organisations focussing primarily on conflict prevention could actually solve the immense problems facing current international missions, such as those in Afghanistan. It seems quite possible that this is a spurious discussion, and that in reality, it is all about winning over the hearts and minds of the people in conflict-ridden countries with the help of non-governmental development cooperation.

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