

# **The Role of Agriculture and Food Security in Conflict and Emergency Situations: Setting the Research Agenda**

*Berlin, 30 May 2016*

*The KOSMOS Workshop on Emergency Agriculture and Food Security which took place at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin on 30 and 31 May 2016 showcases cutting edge research from different academic disciplines and it facilitates interdisciplinary dialogue. It is sowing the seeds for the inter-disciplinary research networks which will deliver practical policy solutions in the future to strengthen human development even in situations of conflict and humanitarian emergencies. The more than forty participants from over ten countries adopted the following Statement during the KOSMOS Workshop.*

As the first World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul closed last week, the enormous humanitarian and development needs of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people were highlighted once more. Livelihoods, food security, and indeed survival itself are increasingly shaped by violent conflict, institutional fragility, and humanitarian emergencies around the world. While actual levels of development aid and humanitarian assistance remain far below the identified needs, the capacity to prepare for and effectively respond to emergency crises not only depends on resource mobilization. More and better knowledge on how conflict, fragility and emergency interact with people's lives, livelihoods and food security is also critical. There is hence an urgent need for more research to understand better the world's complex and interwoven humanitarian and development challenges, and recommend effective policies accordingly.

This is especially true for research on the role of agriculture to contribute to food security in emergency settings. Despite the notable decline in food insecurity worldwide in the last decade, 795 million people remain undernourished and many more suffer from hidden hunger. In emergency settings, moreover, the availability of, and the access to, nutritious food often continues to be a critical concern for victims of natural and human-made disasters. Ensuring sustainable food security for these people remains a challenge for the international community and national governments in light of unmet needs of and expectations for food aid, and in light of the often substantial environmental trade-offs that agriculture may entail. Under such circumstances, displaced individuals resort to various survival and coping strategies such as cultivating vegetable gardens for self-sustenance, or being forced to exploit natural resources inside protected areas. However, little to nothing is known about the impact of such strategies on well-being and food security, their impact

on food security and the environment, and how interventions can strengthen their effectiveness for human development.

Despite recent advances in academic research and despite the emphasis given to research on food security, for example by the Scientific Advisory Board of the UN Secretary-General in its meeting in Trieste last week, there remain both system-wide knowledge gaps as well as research questions focusing on the role of individuals, groups and institutions in creating, shaping and overcoming food insecurity in emergencies. The reliance only on national measures of food availability during crises disregards crucial individual-level, socio-economic variables relevant to understanding food security. These include, but are not limited to, variables measuring consumption, diet diversification, and malnutrition. With the increasing availability of household and individual-level data sources in emergency settings, it is feasible to provide meaningful measures of food security, as well as to undertake rigorous interdisciplinary causal-effect approaches including impact evaluations and analyses of food production from plants and animals, food access, production, and intake. However, this requires close collaborations both between practitioners and researchers in North and South, and across academic disciplines such as natural sciences, agricultural sciences, development economics, and disaster studies. Without the combination of these perspectives, food security and agriculture in emergency settings could not be understood in their entirety and possible policy responses would likely fail to overcome these challenges.

Against this background, more than 40 researchers and practitioners from over ten countries and many disciplines convene at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin on 30 and 31 of May 2016 to identify knowledge gaps that can and should be closed. New research is evolving at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in close collaboration with its local, national and international partners. These efforts will enable policy makers to respond better to the large challenges facing food security and agriculture in emergency settings.

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