



Preliminary remarks

Fact sheets: The contribution of rural development to increasing resilience

The drought crises of the 2010s have rekindled the debate in both international and German development cooperation (DC) on the extent to which people have the resources and skills to absorb crises or to adapt accordingly, and whether they are in a position to make changes to key areas of their lives (transformation). In the worlds of research, politics and development cooperation there is consensus that one central concern of development interventions must be to strengthen people's resilience, adaptive capacity and transformation capability. The challenge is to operationalise such efforts to boost resilience, in other words to incorporate them into individual programmes and projects.

If the aim is to stabilise the living conditions of people and households suffering from the impacts of crises and shocks, it is essential to have precise knowledge of the circumstances in which they live (their systems). The livelihood system describes a household's social and economic situation within its wider setting. The state of the agro-ecosystem as well as the conditions for using that system are vital factors in the survival of people who have to feed themselves in rural areas. Traditional and state-run social security systems can

cushion imbalances, and political systems determine the people's freedom of action.

Intervening in systems in order to produce resilience impacts at individual and household level – how does that work? What factors need to interact in such cases? How can the results be made measurable? These are questions posed in this collection of fact sheets. The first sheet leads us towards a definition of the idea of resilience, and describes the underlying concepts from various perspectives. The definition can be traced back to the early days of the vulnerability debate in the 1990s. The document goes on to explain the relations between fields of activity in development cooperation and summarises the current state of the debate in German and international development cooperation.

This introductory text is followed by selected fact sheets¹ that illustrate how resilience can be enhanced, using specific examples of activities in rural development. The series of fact sheets makes it clear that the range of strategies used to boost resilience is broad. Some will be new, while others are tried-and-tested measures that need to be looked at in a new light or call for slight adjustments to be made.

¹Expert support for preparation of this series is provided by three sector projects (Sustainable Agriculture, Combat Desertification, Development of Rural Areas) implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. These sector projects provide advisory services for the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Responsibility for coordination lies with the sector project on Development of Rural Areas.

