



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# The United Nations (UN) Common Guidance on Resilience for Humanitarian-Development-Peace Actors

Webinar – 22 October 2019

## SUMMARY POINTS, QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



### Speakers:

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Sylvie Wabbes, *Agronomist and Resilience Advisor, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

Thomas Pitaud, *Programme specialist, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*

### Moderator:

Laura Tiberi, *Emergency and Rehabilitation Officer, FAO*

Webinar organized by the Knowledge Sharing Platform on Resilience (KORE) within the INFORMED programme.  
*The opinions expressed in this webinar report are the speakers' own and do not reflect KORE's views.*

## Background

This webinar was presented as part of a series of webinars organized by the Knowledge Sharing Platform on Resilience (**KORE**) within the INFORMED programme and dedicated to sharing knowledge on resilience building. This series of webinars is the result of a collaboration between EU-DEVCO and FAO strategic programme on resilience.

## Introduction

The **Preparedness and Resilience Working Group (PRWG)** aims to guide and support in-country **Food Security Cluster (gFSC)** on necessary preparedness and resilience-building activities to contribute to bridge the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, as strengthening the resilience of vulnerable households, communities and systems is central to achieving food security and improving nutrition in the face of shocks and stressors. Efforts to strengthen resilience, understood as the ability of a system to anticipate, resist, absorb, accommodate and recover from the effects of a hazard, should primarily target those who are food insecure or at risk of becoming so. In most cases, this means individuals and groups living in extreme poverty or close to the poverty line in rural areas, as well as those living in fragile environments where conflict, natural disasters or other major events can disrupt food systems or impede access to adequate and nutritious food for at least part of the population.

**Over the past decade, strengthening resilience has emerged as an important means to prevent, mitigate and prepare for risks associated with a range of threats to development.** Resilience is also a common thread across the three UN pillars of development, human rights, and peace and security – and is reflected in many important global policy agendas and frameworks that acknowledge risks and their effects that can hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Whilst the global policy frameworks articulate the importance of resilience in achieving sustainable development in various sectors, contexts and scales, they are largely implemented in institutional silos, focusing on specific types and drivers of risks, be they violent conflict, natural and man-made hazards, epidemics or displacement, among others. The interlinkages between risks and their compounding effects are often not considered.

**To strengthen coherence in UN resilience-building efforts at the regional, country and local levels,** the Chief Executive Board (CEB) of **the UN decided that a UN resilience framework was needed**, covering all types of hazards and risks and promoting greater horizontal collaboration and joined-up efforts across the UN System and partners.

## Summary points

### 1. The role of the gFSC PRWG

Presented by Normann Steinmaier

The presentation on the work of the gFSC PRWG pinpointed the importance of this webinar to allow for interaction with a wider scope of actors interested in resilience building across sectors beyond food but also applicable for the agriculture and food security related sectors. It stressed that humanitarians must be sensitized for resilience building as they are the ones witnessing the results of vulnerability and multiple risks of individuals, institutions, and systems exposed to shocks. In that sense, humanitarians are knowledge holder on the lack of preventing, anticipating, and coping capacities, and loss and damage caused by shocks in the field, as well as on the needs for transformative interventions to achieve sustainable development. This determines humanitarians to be knowledge brokers and advocates for managing risks for individuals, institutions, and systems by demanding and contributing to risk informed and risk driven resilience building with humanitarian, development and peace actors around joined up programming.

### 2. The UN Common Guidance on Resilience

Presented by Thomas Pitaud and Sylvie Wabbes

The presentation sought to promote a common understanding of resilience that is based on shared principles, and to offered operational and practical guidance for resilience building to the UN System and its partners. This ultimately aims to enhance coherence among existing normative frameworks and documents, and to integrate a resilience lens into existing work of the gFSC in line with the *UN Guidance on Resilience*, which intends to provide an UN-wide guidance on building resilience for delivering the 2030 Agenda.

## Questions and answers

*Collective and collated answers provided by the speakers*

- **On providing feedback:**

- 1. How can we provide feedback on the draft UN Common Guidance on Resilience—especially at the grassroots level?**

All feedback and perspectives are welcome on the draft *UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies*, especially what works for you, by leaving a comment on the dedicated [webinar page](#) on the KORE website.

- **On system thinking:**

- 2. How do we take system thinking from the planning stage to the level of execution?**

One important element and key for successful execution of a resilience-building plan is how the different actors/stakeholders of a given system work collectively together towards common objectives and through a shared approach. In this regard, it is important to establish a strong coalition of actors from the early stage of the planning process, and from the start consider issues of risks and resilience building as a core contribution to the development effort. Supporting an inclusive and participatory planning process in a “co-creation” spirit that include not only UN agencies but also national/local authorities, NGOs, donors, communities, CSOs, the private sector, etc., will facilitate future execution of the plan. This will also be facilitated by using an area-based approach that is very much linked to the contextualization of resilience building action. Tools such as joint work plans can help to coordinate the effort and make sure that all stakeholders work in a synchronized and co-located manner; that the different activities implemented complement each other and are articulated within the broader national context and development strategy. In addition, strong coordination and information management mechanisms should be put into place in order to monitor closely the evolution of the context and the impact of the action, and adapt it if necessary.

- 3. If considered system thinking, would it relate to circular economy? If so, would it have any principle that addresses consumption-based risks to global food security?**

The *UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies* recognizes that resilience building must be contextualized. In that regard, it recommends that a risk and resilience analysis should be conducted in order to understand better the underlying factors of risks and drivers of resilience at the local level. The scope of this analysis should be discussed and agreed upon collectively by the country team. Therefore, if a country team considers circular economy as a key component of their system and/or context and that consumption-based risks are identified as an important threat to the development of that system, then it should be assessed and analyzed by the risk and resilience analysis. This

analysis will provide insights on how to address, and will then help the country team to identify resilience building activities and to prioritize them accordingly.

- **On early action:**

- 4. How can we do things differently? For example, how do we promote the need for Governments and donors to act early on the known threats and risks?**

Doing things differently means that we have to change many aspects of the way we operate differently. The biggest paradigm shift needed at all levels is to manage risks and not only manage crises. The anticipatory thinking means to understand risks before shocks hit. Thus, there needs to be an increase in focus on the risk management and the anticipation and prevention actions, not solely on response to emergencies, disasters and conflict when they hit. Anticipatory measures are central to resilience building, including acting early—and acting early not only means acting before emergencies, but also taking risk-driven measure that reduce both current and future risks.

- **On resilience measurement:**

- 5. To improve and orient the way we work on resilience there is a need to have robust evidences. Is there an agreed upon set of indicators or a common methodology to be used for resilience measurement and for monitoring of strategies and programs?**

The Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) and a respective RIMA-II Technical Paper are striving to provide a common methodology and guidance on resilience measurement and analysis. However, it must be noted that this is focusing on food systems and food security. In this sense it recognizes the food system concept, considering the household as the entry point and ending up with the food insecurity concept, considering the household the place where all the risk management decisions are taken. Furthermore it describes the fundamental pillars of resilience and discusses the most important indicators adopted for each of the following pillars: (1) Access to basic services; (2) assets; (3) social safety nets; (4) sensitivity; and (4) adaptive capacity. Finally it stresses that considering the described resilience pillars, a resilience-oriented survey should include the following aspects: (a) income and income generating activities; (b) access to basic services; (c) access to infrastructure; (d) productive and non-productive assets; (e) formal and informal safety nets; (f) social networks; (g) shocks; (h) food security indicators; (i) institutional environment; and (j) climate change.

- 6. How can we measure resilience across sectors given the many tools available by different organizations?**

Resilience has two dimensions, in that it is both cross-sectoral and sector-specific. It is a systematic system-thinking approach. Depending on the system one is looking at, then it will cut across the various sectors. However, if, for example, you are working like FAO on

agriculture and food systems, this is more sector-specific. But, even in such area of work there will be sub-specifics, e.g. livestock, fisheries, forestry, crop farming etc. Once you answer the following question(s) “Is your intervention multi-sector and multi-risk?”, then you go for a proxy that does the overall resilience measurement.

Generally, it is recommended that the resilience measurement be at system-level and not only at household level. Household level is a proxy but not an indicator; i.e. you can have a household that is resilient today but living in a dryland and water-scarce situation, so if you are not looking at the overall agro-ecological situation and the institutional services provided, you may miss out on some of these elements. There is no magic bullet today for measuring resilience; however, the overall centrality is the risk that you want to measure and which systems the risk(s) affect. Following this assertion, you can choose your menu from all existing types of indicators (you can refer to the Annexes in the draft *UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies*).

At the moment, we are still building on the importance to address resilience as part of the sustainable development approach, but there is not yet a common sense of metrics because of the multitude of risks and the complexity of systems.

**7. The open ended-ness of the framework seems to be quite large. In order to identify risks in varied sectors from society to the environment, would there be any platform for each of the sectors that collaborate with the relevant agencies working on sustainability and resilience?**

One of the most internationally recognized platform to identify risks across sectors and hazards is the INFORM platform. INFORM is a collaborative project of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the European Commission. The website is hosted by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Commission's science and knowledge service.

The methodology applied by INFORM in Annex B, includes 53 core indicators covering all risk dimensions, their categories, and components. The INFORM initiative already publishes a global INFORM risk index, which consists of a risk assessment for 191 countries at the national level (Admin Level 0). However, the ambition of INFORM Subnational is to provide respective information on risks for the provincial level (Admin Level 1) or higher resolutions (e.g. districts, municipalities, or villages). For resilience building and sustainability, risk-informed decisions are necessary. In this sense INFORM makes an essential contribution to the work of development actors. It is also important to note that the methodology applied by INFORM in Annex B includes the category of human hazards considering the two components (1) projected conflict risk, and (2) current conflicts intensity. For both, INFORM provides different core indicators. Thus, it links up to the work of peace actors too.

**8. In a programmatic way, how can the resilience indicators be measured in volatile and contexts with recurrent crises?**

This really depends on the situation that is being faced. In some contexts the situation is in such turmoil that measuring resilience might be near impossible without facing critical life-threatening danger. However, resilience measurement should identify and take into consideration first the information that is being collected on a regular basis in a given area, even if for multiple reasons, this information is limited. The country team can then look at the indicators that can be developed based on the information collected and identify what additional information should be collected in order to improve the indicators and the measurement of resilience. To do so, country teams should also work closely with local entities that may have access to areas that are not accessible to the country team of other organizations based outside of the area.

- **Operationalizing the nexus:**

**9. In a community characterized by an ongoing crisis such as Syria, when can we shift from humanitarian to resilience interventions? Can the two interventions work in parallel?**

This is the benefit of taking a resilience approach, which can do two things in parallel: addressing the emergency needs and simultaneously addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities, shocks and stressors. Again, taking a system approach and addressing both the immediate impacts of a crisis/disaster/conflict as well as the root causes of these risks at the same time is ultimately resilience building. This is also resilience building as an essential contribution for securing sustainable development gains. Resilience building is nexus work: you need the humanitarian actors to respond to the emergency needs, the development actions to address the longer-term vulnerability and risk-reduction measures in the areas, and in cases of conflict, the peace and security actors to make sure issues of trust, dialogue and political insecurities are covered.

Affected people usually need several different kinds of support simultaneously, especially during protracted crises. It is often necessary to work on humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, and development measures at the same time, combining them as needed. Making people more resilient should remain a basic principle, also in ongoing crisis contexts such as Syria.

## For more information

- [UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies \(12 December 2018 draft\)](#)
- [Link to join the webinar](#)
- [The global Food Security Cluster](#)
- [Preparedness and Resilience Working Group](#)
- [RBA Resilience Framework on Food Security](#)
- [2015 - Rome-Based Agencies' Collaboration To Strengthen Resilience For Food Security And Nutrition](#)
- [RIMA-II webpage on FAO website](#)
- [RIMA-II technical paper](#)
- [RIMA-II webinar](#)
- [Index for Risk Management \(INFORM\)](#)
- [INFORM - Concept and Methodology](#)
- [INFORM subnational models](#)
- [Welthungerhilfe](#)

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