



TOPIC NOTE

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www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/resilience

Beyond “temporal” resilience: results that withstand the test of time



Scholars and development workers may have different opinions on **what resilience in the context of human development is**. However, all their definitions and actions revolve around understanding shocks and stressors and their effects on individuals and communities, and around building people’s capacity to adapt and transform their livelihoods in order to withstand damage and recover from it.

In implementing resilience-building interventions, the rigor in identifying, understanding, analysing and addressing the multifaceted determinants of resilience is often the driver of success. The complexity of resilience building is underscored by the simple fact **that diverse and often repetitive shocks and stressors, no matter how small, can have significant impacts on persons, communities or systems reeling from the effects of another shock/stressor, regardless of their magnitude**. This presents a challenge for projects aimed at resilience building and for determining the time frame in which the impact of such programmes are evaluated. An individual deemed “resilient” today could in a short period lose all the capacities he/she has to deal with predictable shocks.

I believe that researchers and development workers need to identify and model successes in building resilience by taking into account not only the coherence and results of the interventions, but also the time frame in which the results could be sustained by the people concerned. My assumption is that short-term interventions and results build “temporal” resilience that only holds within the limits of a given time frame and context, and for only a finite number of predefined vulnerabilities. The compounding reality is that programmes often focus on large-scale shocks and stressors, but not so much on microlevel ones that could affect individuals and communities in no particular pattern or sequence.

With this in mind, **I would like to invite members to share and discuss experiences or studies that address the question of whether or not a minimum time frame exists in which an individual, community or system should remain resilient to actually qualify as “resilient”**. I would avoid considering short-term outcomes as successes in building resilience.

The literature I found on temporality or the time-bound nature of resilience is (surprisingly!) not very recent. A number of publications can be found at this link: <https://cybergeogeo.revues.org/25554>.

Looking forward to a fruitful discussion.

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