

This brief provides a summary of the concept of resilience as it applies to protracted crises. The increasing focus on resilience is driven by the desire to avoid repeated impoverishment and suffering caused by recurrent shocks. Definitions of resilience vary but have the common elements of capacity to bounce back after a shock and the capacity to adapt to change. While it is not easy to define resilience in general, resilient communities tend to share the characteristics of having sufficient physical and social assets and technical knowledge to be able to innovate and respond flexibly to shocks. To help build resilience, aid programmes need to ensure there is a common understanding of success that is shared by all actors, focus on the long and short term at the same time, be responsive to change and remain focused on outcomes rather than outputs.

They cannot risk failure and hence avoid investment in activities that offer higher returns but are riskier. For example, Ethiopian farmers use little fertilizer because of the risk that the investment will be wasted if the rains fail. Helping households find the right balance between taking risks and coping with shocks is critical².

Some adaptations that are used by people to cope with adversity are unsustainable, and undermine longer-term resilience. In Darfur, as the economy contracted and large numbers of people moved from rural to urban areas, increasing competition for work in a saturated labour market forced more and more people to become dependent on collecting and selling natural resources, especially firewood, and on brick-making. This led to devastating environmental degradation in ever-widening rings around Darfur's main towns.

KEY ISSUES

Building greater resilience to shocks requires clear decisions about the balance between the kind of resilience and what risks need to be included in specific contexts. But effective responses to certain shocks may create other, greater stresses elsewhere or erode the capacity for future resilience. Resilience needs to be understood from a systemic perspective, not just in relation to specific sectors, levels or time periods. Central to this is the question of who needs to be made more resilient to what kind of shocks and over what kind of time scale. To reduce the need for repeated humanitarian interventions, the starting point for analysis must be the people who are repeatedly thrown into crisis. They are usually rural, poor and derive their income from agriculture. This means greater focus on, and investment in, smallholder agriculture with an emphasis on enabling those most affected by protracted crises to make informed choices among viable livelihood options.

What resilient livelihood options are available depends on the ecological, economic, political and social context they operate in. It is therefore difficult to be prescriptive about what is needed for resilience in general. It is possible to note the basic ingredients that help. A 2011 Oxfam study³ found that five themes consistently emerge as important components in improving resilience in the face of food-related stresses and shocks:

- Assets – from land to tools and livestock, and from social capital to education;
- Institutions and entitlements – in particular ways of being able to influence and guarantee rights and access to key resources, markets and assets;
- Knowledge and information – for example, seasonal weather forecasts or agricultural extension services
- Innovation – which in turn relates to whether systems (governance systems, communities, ecosystems and so on) are able to adapt and change;
- Flexibility and foresight – often challenging when governments or individuals are struggling to cope with the present, but nevertheless a crucial component of what makes actors resilient to shocks.

PRINCIPLES OF RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING FOR PROTRACTED CRISES

- Support a transition in the balance of effort and resources from humanitarian assistance toward longer-term disaster-risk management, climate-change adaptation, livelihood diversification and social protection.
- Recognize and respond to the different needs, capabilities and aspirations of the most vulnerable groups (women, orphans, elderly, displaced, conflict-affected, unemployed/uneducated youth).
- Promote healthy ecosystems through ecosystem-based planning, payment for ecosystem services and support for farmer-managed natural regeneration.
- Support greater investment in human capital to enable households to maintain health, diversify livelihood options, build social capital and exercise their individual and collective rights.
- Enable community participation by identifying and engaging customary institutions and valuable forms of traditional knowledge for coping with climate variability, conflict and food insecurity.
- Advocate for and support more effective formal and informal governance, peacebuilding and conflict mitigation.
- Facilitate livelihood diversification in response to actual (and potential shocks) based on thorough risk assessment (including analysis of local political economies and drivers of conflict).
- Enable greater gender equity by enhancing women's access to productive assets and strengthening their roles in community and household decision-making.
- Improve access to public and productive infrastructure (roads, markets, water infrastructure, power, etc.) and financial services and facilitate greater participation in markets.
- Strengthen market participation by enabling profitable engagement of smallholders in value chains.
- Develop strategic partnerships (including with the private sector) that complement donor funding and provide financial incentives for investment in livelihoods.
- Contribute to improved knowledge management by addressing key knowledge gaps and documenting evidence of promising resilience-building practices.

Source: Tim Frankenberger, Mark Langworthy, Tom Spangler and Suzanne Nelson. 2012. *Enhancing Resilience to Food Security Shocks. White Paper (DRAFT)*, May 2012. Tucson, AZ, USA, TANGO International, Inc

2. Stefan Dercon & Luc Christiaensen. 2011. Consumption risk, technology adoption and poverty traps: evidence from Ethiopia. *Journal of Development Economics*, 96(2):159–173.

3. Alex Evans. 2011. Governance for a resilient food system. Oxfam Discussion Papers. Oxford, UK, Oxfam. Available at: http://www.cic.nyu.edu/scarcity/docs/evans_oxfam_resilientfood.pdf.

Designing, implementing and monitoring programmes to foster greater resilience in protracted crises is inherently difficult. Addressing the causes and symptoms of environmental, social and economic constraints in such contexts calls for regular and comprehensive assessment of vulnerability to different shocks and greater synergy between emergency assistance and longer-term development initiatives. It also requires more flexible funding mechanisms that enable programmes to be operated at large-enough scale and sufficient duration to be effective. In these environments, achievement of resilience among chronically vulnerable groups will largely depend on the proper sequencing and combination of interventions and enabling conditions. These will include support for healthy ecosystems, effective formal and informal governance, engagement of the private sector, and provision of social safety nets. Given the depth of the structural issues contributing to protracted crises, effectively building resilience in such situations will also require that donors, governments and humanitarian organizations coordinate at multiple scales (locally, nationally, regionally and globally). This may not always be possible at the national level in failed states⁴.

CHALLENGES AHEAD: CHANGES NEEDED TO ENABLE GREATER RESILIENCE

Protracted crises often go hand-in-hand with conflict and are not the ideal context for resilience-building initiatives and approaches. Constraints and limiting factors include instability, lack of governance, large-scale movements of populations, poor access and weak or non-existent monitoring and reporting systems. Nevertheless, there can be opportunities to support local resilience strategies, as long as interventions are based on knowledge of the context, understanding of local strategies, ability to connect with local networks and solidarity systems, and adoption of “do-no-harm” approaches.

Building resilience is both an outcome and a dynamic process that unfolds in response to stresses and shocks, singly or more often in combination. This implies that programmes that seek to enhance resilience will need to embrace dynamic change. **Rather than prescribing activities aimed solely at the achievement of specific outputs, interventions should focus on fostering the characteristics that enable resilient outcomes from household to national levels.** Particular emphasis should be placed on facilitating processes that empower local actors to prepare for inevitable change and adapt to evolving risk and vulnerability contexts.

Resilience is best promoted using both short-term and longer-term measures simultaneously and in a coordinated manner. This so-called “twin-track approach” is one of the Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security. The first “track” – short-term measures – aims at meeting the immediate needs of those who are unable to meet their food and nutrition requirements in order to avoid further erosion of resilience. This is commonly the role of humanitarian assistance. The second “track” – longer-term development interventions – focuses on enhancing livelihoods and food

security, including efforts to address underlying causes of the crises and building capacity to adapt to change, mitigate and manage risk and enhance sustainability⁵.

Delivering this twin-track approach is constrained by the way aid delivery is structured – so-called “aid architecture”. Typically, humanitarian assistance (short-term assistance aimed at saving lives) and development assistance (longer-term assistance aimed at building institutions and assets outside of times of crisis) are funded through different mechanisms, are implemented by different actors and work independently of one another. But practitioners of resilience programming need to design projects capable of addressing **immediate needs and longer-term outcomes simultaneously**.

This calls for changes in the way that programmes are both conceptualised and funded. Mechanisms are needed to coordinate the efforts of all actors involved in relief, transition, development and peacebuilding and those that are involved in the different elements of food and nutrition security, while keeping an overall focus on economic and social building blocks of resilience requires a comprehensive plan that is shared and understood at household, government and international levels. An essential first step in achieving this is to **develop consensus on a locally appropriate framework for resilience and a common vision for success**. If it is to succeed, this process must be owned and led by governments and communities. This approach needs to be comprehensive and show how existing development funding (e.g. the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme) can be harnessed, jointly with humanitarian-related funding streams. Donors also will need to allocate – and account for – funding according to assessed need and programming opportunities, and take into account the long time needed to address the underlying causes of protracted crises and build resilience in this situations.

Efforts to build resilience are also unlikely to be successful unless they are based on an understanding of how the private sector can help generate the wealth that is essential for increased resilience. Much more needs to be done to identify **how public action can help foster private investment that is beneficial to the poor**.

Aid programmes aimed at increasing resilience will have to be willing to accept that they will need to react to changing circumstances to ensure programme outputs stay relevant to the outcomes desired. If periodic relief interventions are replaced by social protection systems, measures must be put in place to ensure that increased requirements for social protection can be met quickly and reliably. A long-term change in water availability may need a radical rethink of livelihood options. **Funding supporting resilience programming will need to be long term, flexible and concentrate on outcomes.**

4. Timothy R. Frankenberger, Tom Spangler, Suzanne Nelson and Mark Langworthy. 2012. Enhancing Resilience to Food Insecurity amid Protracted Crisis. Paper prepared for the High Level Expert Forum on Addressing Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises, Rome, Italy, 13–14 September, 2012.

5. United Nations High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. 2010. Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action. Available at: http://un-foodsecurity.org/sites/default/files/UCFA_English.pdf. Accessed 1 August 2012.

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

USA, Arizona State University. Available at: <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/news/publications/resilience-literature-review>.

Bahadur, A.V., Ibrahim, M. & Tanner, T. 2010. The resilience renaissance? Unpacking of resilience for tackling climate change and disasters. Strengthening Climate Resilience Discussion Paper 1. Brighton, UK, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. Available at: <http://community.eldis.org/.59e0d267/resilience-renaissance.pdf>. Accessed 10 August 2012.

Dercon, S. 2001. Assessing vulnerability. Oxford, UK, Jesus College, and Centre for the Study of African Economies, Department of Economics, Oxford University. Available at: <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/70436/4th%20Workshop/Srmafrica/helsinki/pdf/readingmaterial/Assessing%20Vulnerability.pdf>.

FAO Somalia, UNICEF Somalia, and WFP Somalia 2012, Promoting resiliency for at risk populations, lessons learned from recent experience in Somalia. Paper proposed for the High Level Expert Forum on Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises.

Levine S. 2012; Livelihoods in protracted crises. Paper proposed for High Level Expert Forum.

Frankenberger T., et al. 2012, Enhancing Resilience to Food Insecurity amid Protracted Crisis. Paper proposed for High Level Expert Forum.

Justino P. 2012, What can governments, aid agencies and donors learn from the steps taken by crisis-affected individuals, households, communities and institutions to cope and build their own resilience in the context of protracted crises? Paper proposed for High Level Expert Forum.

For a useful library of resilience related publications, see:

<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/publications.4.235c0ace124479a1f7380004881.html>

For an overview comparing the concepts of resilience and vulnerability, see:

Miller, F, Osbahr, H., Boyd, E., Thomalla, F., Bharwani, S., Ziervogel, G., Walker, B., Birkmann, J., van der Leeuw, S., Rockström, J., Hinkel, J., Downing, T., Folke, C., & Nelson, D. 2010. Resilience and vulnerability: complementary or conflicting concepts?. Ecology and Society 15(3): 11. Available at: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol15/iss3/art11/>. Accessed 10 August 2012.

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