

Report

LEARNING EVENT: Resilience

21 March 2016; 9:00 – 17:00, Helvetas office, Bern

Frame: [For several years now, strengthening resilience to disasters and other risks is high on the agenda of the development and humanitarian community. It is acknowledged that in the face of uncertainty, fragility, resource overuse and economic constraints, a holistic perspective is necessary. Applying a resilience lens to our work provides that needed perspective and enables to better anticipate, prepare for, manage and recover from shocks and stresses and makes sure that development gains are preserved.

Learning event: How to apply that lens and how to work with the concept of resilience will be at the centre of the learning event. In cooperation with Partners for Resilience, a practitioners network from the Netherlands, the learning event will address the following: 1) introduce participants to the concept of resilience and embed the concept in common work on DRR and humanitarian aid 2) share selected approaches to frame resilience and 3) support participants in applying a resilience lens to their projects.

Objective: Participants have an enhanced understanding of what constitutes resilience at the community level and have applied a resilience-lens to their own working context

Programme Outline:

Time	Content	Responsible
9.10 – 9.30	Welcome and overview of Learning Event	Jana Junghardt
	Part 1: Conceptual overview of resilience	
9.30 – 10.15	Introduction to the Resilience concept and link with DRR	Bruno Haghebaert
	Part 2: Resilience frameworks and case studies	
10.15 – 10.45	Partners for Resilience (PFR) work in Nicaragua	Maya Schaerer
10.45 – 11.00	COFFEE BREAK	
11.00– 11.15	GNDR's Frontline methodology	Jana Junghardt
11.15 – 11.40	Swiss NGO DRR Platform experience in Haiti	Patricia Gorin
11.40 – 12.00	Zurich Insurance Flood Resilience Alliance	Michael Szoenyi
12.00– 12.30	Plenary discussion: Your own reflections on Resilience	
12.30 -13.30	LUNCH BREAK	
	Part 3: Putting resilience in practice	
13.30 -14.30	What tools can be used to apply a resilience approach in programming? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zurich Insurance Measuring Tool - PFR checklist and screening tool - Oxfam Resilience Companion 	Bruno Haghebaert/ Michael Szoenyi Group discussion
14.30 – 14.40	Introduction to group work	Bruno Haghebaert
14.40 – 15.30	How to apply resilience in practice (1) : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-sectoral work / Working in partnership 	Group work
15.30 – 15.45	COFFEE BREAK	
15.45- 16.15	How to apply resilience in practice (2): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working across scales / Learning culture 	Group work
16.15- 16:45	Plenary feedback and conclusion	Bruno Haghebaert/ Jana Junghardt

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Summary of Learning Event Results:

Part 0: Welcome & Introduction

Participants' expectations from this learning event could be grouped in three categories:

- Be better informed about concept and application of resilience and how it differs from 'usual' DRR/DRM approaches
- Share exchange and discuss about different approaches to resilience
- Get concrete inputs for strategic and content-related use of resilience concept in own organization

Part 1: Conceptual overview of resilience

When asked about their spontaneous ideas on resilience, some major similarities could be detected among participants:

- The idea of springing back to an acceptable (functioning) state when confronted with a shock
- The idea of flexibility and ingenuity to adjust and adapt to the changing circumstances
- The idea of bouncing forward despite negative shocks and stresses

Bruno Haghebaert, the facilitator and resource person of this learning event, followed up on the participants' understanding of resilience and stressed in his presentation that there are many definitions of resilience but that there is not a universally accepted one yet. He underlined that in these definitions two sides of looking at resilience could be identified.

Either a static, reactive view that stresses the ability to absorb, accommodate and recover from a shock or stress after the impact, a view that is still promoted in the definition of UNISDR or, more and more so, a dynamic, pro-active perspective on resilience that stresses the ability to anticipate, adapt and transform or 'bounce back forward'. The '**bounce back forward**' notion takes up the idea of learning, whereby an individual, community or system is not only able to recover (bounce back) but also to transform its experience with the shock or stress into some sort of learning, adjustment enabling it to bounce forward, to develop. More and more, the focus on resilience has shifted towards this **pro-active lens**.

The added value of thinking along the lines of resilience are manifold. First of all, resilience stresses the fact that people and communities at risk also possess capacities which can be built upon and strengthened. As such it is a more positive approach than when a vulnerability perspective is applied whereby people are largely seen as victims of underlying socio-economic processes. As a result a community resilience approach **tends to be more solution-, agency- and action-oriented**. Moreover, because it is an overarching term which cuts across disciplines it allows for an integration of a variety of sectors such as DRR, CCA, health, NRM, food security, livelihoods but also working in fragile contexts. Especially for the DRR-community, it allows to create a bridge between humanitarian and development approaches and as such facilitates a dialogue between both fields, which has been challenging in the past. Finally, it also helps to see the connection between short-term shocks and longer-term stresses, a perspective which has been often overlooked in traditional DRR work. Resilience has managed to bring the importance of risk reduction higher on the international agenda with the aim at looking at risks more holistically. Exemplarily, Partners for Resilience (PFR)¹, a consortium of 5 Dutch organizations from the fields of DRR, Climate Change and Ecosystem management, developed a set of principles and building blocks that allowed their partners and members to understand and apply resilience across their projects.

¹ <http://www.partnersforresilience.nl/>

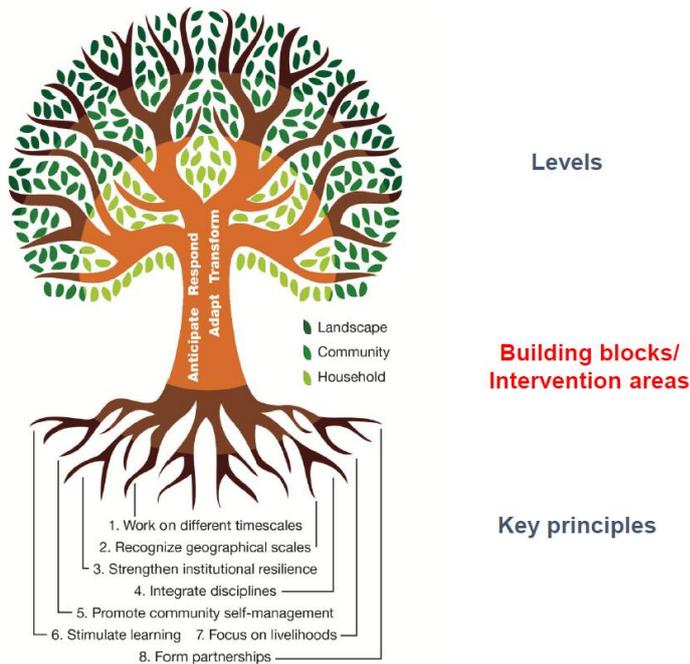


Figure 1: Vision of resilience, Pfr (2013)

done already and that focusing on resilience instead of vulnerabilities depoliticizes DRR because resilience tends to be blinder to power struggles.

Q&A:

- Participants discussed the relation between vulnerability and resilience, stressing that resilience could be also understood as ‘bouncing back’ (in the original sense of the word) and the vulnerability reduction would be the prerequisite for ‘bouncing forward’ and that therefore, a more sophisticated analysis of how vulnerability and resilience are linked (does more resilience equal less vulnerability and vice versa?) is needed.
- Participants found the notion of uncertainty particularly challenging to digest. Especially in the DRR community and in general in assessments one tends to look for experiences made to take decisions for the future. With climate change and socio-economic transformations the approach of assessing the past for learning for the future may not be sufficient. The DRR community has tried to address the issue of uncertainty in different ways: with regard to changing risks as a result of climate change by strengthening collaboration with meteorological agencies, aimed at translating scientific information into action-oriented decision making (using e.g. the Early Warning, Early Action approach ²). In more general terms uncertainty has been addressed by applying more robust and ‘no-regret’ measures (i.e. interventions that yield benefits independent from the risk involved).
- The presentation referred to a critical resilience level: How do we find out about it in reality, e.g. in a programme? It was discussed that depending on the scale, parts of a system can be resilient while others are not. A broader range of overall functioning of the system may indicate a comparatively higher critical resilience level. In our work, it is therefore crucial to enquire about the key questions – Resilience of whom? To what?
- Participants agreed that the principle of “focus on livelihoods” was very much in line with their experience from projects across sectors → to work comprehensively one has to find connectors and

It is important to try to deconstruct resilience in order to make it more tangible for practitioners in the field. The danger is that programmes and projects geared towards resilience lack focus due to the multiple risks addressed through different approaches. The challenge for practitioners is therefore to analyse and assess resilience holistically, beyond natural hazards (also as DRR-practitioners) and then identify areas that one as organization can address directly and others that may be beyond reach of one’s organization and can either be addressed by the community, other NGOs or governmental or private stakeholders. This approach is important to also counter one of the criticisms that are

brought forward to the application of the resilience concept: that it is a new buzzword for what has been

² <http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/ew-ea-2008.pdf>

identify co-benefits. Livelihood strengthening, with a long-lasting and improving resource base, was perceived as a key co-benefit or even prerequisite for resilience.

Part 2: Frameworks and Case Studies

The following three case studies gave insights into approaches to assess and apply resilience.

PfR experience from Nicaragua: Maya Schaerer presented her experience on an IWSM-project in Nicaragua, linking DRR, CCA and ecosystem-management approaches, while keeping in mind the key principles and building blocks of the PfR approach. Scales and principles were much easier to understand by project staff than the building blocks (respond, anticipate, adapt, transform) so they tried to integrate the building blocks into the principles. Some principles are highlighted here. To *work across timescales* meant to make understandable how the reality in the target regions could look like in 10-20 years and how much it might be influenced by climate change, resource depletion and socio-economic pressures, and which influence the programme could have to shape the situation in a more positive way. In terms of cross-sectoral work, the PfR programme already set some frame on the focal areas. However, the assessment revealed many other concerns that could not be directly tackled. It was then assessed where there might be co-benefits and the communities were supported in finding alternatives for realizing their other concerns. The resilience vision of PfR, while top-down at the beginning, was embraced by the project staff and local community and perceived as a stimulus to think beyond the usual and trying to identify systemic co-benefits for people and the environment.

Swiss NGO DRR Platform experience in Haiti (based on Frontline methodology):

Patricia Gorin from HELVETAS shared her experience and results from the application of the Swiss NGO DRR Platform resilience framework methodology³ in Haiti, which was applied in two different places: in a rural mountainous area and a sub-urban coastal area, both in a context of high risk of disasters. Based on the four key questions of Frontline (threats, consequences, actions and barriers), participants learned that the main actions that enhance resilience are community participation, increased social cohesion, capacity building, good organizational structures and processes, which address threats/risks and consequences. Moreover, the most important barriers identified by the communities are very much related to the external environment factors of the socio-political and economic national context. Actions and barriers are therefore good indicators where to further strengthen key actions, identifying and addressing the gaps in future project planning.

A challenge that remains with the Frontline methodology and that also remained with the Platform resilience framework assessment was how to derive action from the various threats and impacts that were identified. It was suggested that instead of the ranking alone, applying a problem-tree would be supportive of getting a better grip of how the different impacts are linked.

Presentation on Zurich community flood resilience programme:

Measuring resilience needs to identify specific threats (e.g. flood resilience in that case). No such thing as overall, measurable resilience. Zurich resilience approach: 5C → SLF Capitals; 4R → resilience dimensions robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness, rapidity. 5C-4R reflects then both community-based and systems-lens. For example, having a physical asset (a capital in the 5C model) such as a community center that doubles as a classroom during the floods adds 'redundancy' (a property in the 4R model) to the system, and so is considered a source of resilience.

According to Zurich, four factors need to be taken into account to measure resilience:

³ <http://drrplatform.org/index.php/publications> : **Community Resilience Framework - Lessons from the field (2015)**. A guidance on community resilience based on a framework developed by the Swiss NGO DRR Platform. Report, methodology and case studies available.

- There is no one-size-fits-all solution or tool;
- Resilience is too big a concept to be measured in its entirety;
- Efforts to increase resilience in one part of a system may undermine resilience in another;
- And any system measuring resilience should apply to a specific peril.

To measure community resilience to floods, Zurich has developed a sophisticated indicators system, currently at 88 indicators to be gathered and validated through various methods. The approach combines quantitative and qualitative data based on the 'sources of resilience.' These can then be graded, and with the expertise of trained resilience assessors, based on the outcomes of the analysis, actions can be identified to enhance resilience.

Reflection session:

- A dilemma was raised between a holistic assessment, an open approach and the donor requirements that most often are very specific and ask for a very concrete planning down to the activities level. To foster a resilience approach, donors should be more flexible in the planning stage on the means to achieve a certain goal, the kind of solutions, not necessarily the detailed steps how to get there. Also, the timing question was raised. It is irrational to request "resilience building" in a project of 18 months → reality check needed. What can be achieved? Or alternatively being more flexible on timing from the side of donors.
- We as NGOs should also be more flexible in the application of resilience and see what this potentially offers. The example of a project in Tajikistan was given, where the introduction of energy-efficient cooking stoves are linked to less use of firewood and thus less pressure on forest vegetation, whose loss is closely linked with increased flood and landslide risk. Understanding these linkages and tapping into different pots of donor funding (how do we want to label a programme: DRR? CCA? NRM? Food Security?) is a potential that a resilience approach can offer.
- Shall we speak of 'resilience' or of 'resilience to a specific threat', e.g. flood resilience? The audience was divided in that regard but tended towards that the assessment phase should allow a wide range of challenges to which resilience should be strengthened but then to ensure that a targeted approach addresses the most relevant and making sure working on one problem does not make another more problematic.

Part 3: Putting resilience in practice

Zurich - Measuring resilience – Indicator tool: 88 indicators are currently identified. Now they are tested and being validated and weighed in the field to narrow them further down. Introduced to the web-based measurement platform, participants were walked through the tool step by step. In the end, the performance on the indicators yields a grade from A to D (with A being the strongest grade). For each indicator, questions have been pre-defined to ensure comparability but the interviewers can choose the methodology from primary data collection at individual, community or representative level to secondary data. Very few open questions.

Other tools

PfR Checklist & Screening tool: The checklist and screening tool have been developed as part of the Partners for Resilience initiative. The **checklist's** aim is to ensure that a community resilience approach is sufficiently taken into account in the design and development of **future** project proposals. It thus provides an instrument, which based on a number of set criteria, helps the user to develop and design a project/program which will effectively contribute to community resilience. For that purpose, the tool allows the user to assess to what extent the different livelihood capitals, resilience building blocks and key principles are being taken into account. The findings and conclusions of the assessment then identify certain strong points of the proposed

project/programme and mentions where there is still scope for improvement in terms of effectively contributing to community resilience.

The **Screening Tool**'s objective is to provide an instrument , which will help the user in assessing the extent to which an **ongoing** project/program has the ability to contribute to community resilience. For that purpose, projects/programs will be screened related to their relevance for the livelihood capitals, resilience building blocks and key principles. This methodology also provides a visual overview of the approach taken in a project, identifying strengths and weaknesses and proposing ways to further enhance the community resilience component.

Resilience Companion

This Guide ⁴, developed by Oxfam for its partners in Asia, provides practical guidance for people designing and implementing programmes that aim to increase the resilience of at risk communities. The structure of the guide follows the basic sequence of project (or programme) cycle management: creating a vision, project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Learning comes from all parts of this sequence. The Companion also includes a practical Resilience Checklist of things to consider when aiming to enhance resilience at project and wider programme levels. Although this Companion is developed for Oxfam staff, its approach is also relevant for other agencies interested in applying a resilience lens to their programmes as it takes the user through the full project cycle.

Group works: How can the resilience principles be applied?

Cross-sectoral work	Working in partnership
<p>Resilience is certainly a good concept to break down the silos and existing clusters (see UN and other institutions). It allows to develop common objectives among different sectors. These objectives are results oriented, an added-value of working together.</p> <p>Nevertheless, when it comes to implementation, there are still timeframe issues among sectors, ex. social and technical experts. Moreover we often see a culture resistance: some sectors are strong in one topic and reluctant to build bridges with the topic of resilience with which they are less familiar with.</p>	<p>Because strengthening resilience, as already mentioned, requires a cross-sectoral approach, complementary partnerships are required. These partnerships can connect organisations with different mandates in e.g. health, DRR, CCA, food security or environmental care or it can bring together a variety of stakeholders such as government agencies, private sector enterprises, civil society organizations or knowledge centres.</p> <p>Challenges: Establishing and sustaining partnerships is time-consuming, decision making is often complicated and partners may fear that they will lose their identity or independence if integration of approaches goes too fast. So partnerships have to be carefully developed whereby sufficient trust is established, complementarity and knowledge exchange potential identified and respect for the identity and mandate of each of the partners is guaranteed.</p>

Working across scales	Learning
<p>Identify community resilience and working with local community is rather easy, but it becomes more</p>	<p>A resilient system (community, organization) is one that is able to learn from its own experiences (and</p>

⁴ <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/a-companion-guide-to-resilience-595570>

<p>complex when linking it with higher scales.</p> <p>The resilience bottom-up approach has increased in the last decade, added more voices to community resilience, but still in some places it is not yet well linked and shared with the government, and is widening the existing gap. The level of trust between different actors varies very much.</p> <p>Information and knowledge on resilience have increased significantly. However, working across scales on resilience depends very much on existing institutions that are in place, how effective and accountable they are. This will also depend on the size of the country.</p>	<p>failures) and is able to adapt and improve its approaches based on this learning, when required. Learning can take place at different levels, internally (learning from each other, among equals), external to internal (incorporating external new knowledge) and internal to external (exchange with others about lessons learned and good practice). Eventually learning needs to lead to behavioral change and improved action. Partnerships are ideal platforms for learning but resources and time need to be dedicated and a learning strategy to be developed. It was also found that stakeholders are not always willing or interested in learning from each other but sometimes prefer to keep/do the learning themselves. Interesting learning platforms are ALNAP (for the humanitarian sector) (www.alnap.org) and Preventionweb (www.preventionweb.net) (for DRR).</p>
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Recommendations : The learning event provided a menu of possible approaches and applications of resilience. Although each participant and each organization may eventually choose for themselves, based on their mandate and strategy, what approaches are most suitable for their respective work context, the following recommendations can be made:

1 In terms of **process**, in order to operationalize a Resilience approach, the following steps may be followed:

1. Develop a Resilience **vision**: identify the relevant building blocks/dimensions, scale, principles, properties and capitals...
2. Identify the **tools** you would like to apply: for assessment, design, monitoring, measurement, overall step-by-step guidance...
3. **Implement** the Resilience program based on the priorities coming out of the assessment. Document the innovative features/successes/challenges for future learning.
4. **Evaluate and measure** its impact. Compare vs. à vs conventional DRR approach.

2. The following key innovative features, strongly related to a Resilience approach, may be considered :

a) The need to address shocks and stresses **in a more holistic way**: this does not mean that one organisation is expected to be able to address all possible risks identified during the assessment. As resilience is a context-specific term (in the same way as vulnerability) a ranking of risks need to take place as part of the assessment. So there will always be an entry point on which the intervention is built. Once this risk (or these risks, which can be beyond the scope of classical DRR interventions) are being identified (e.g. through the Frontline methodology but focusing on a limited manageable number of risks), the novelty is then that this risk is being addressed by a variety of stakeholders who each bring their own added value and expertise (through complementary partnerships and/or consortia → look beyond the usual project setup). So a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach and the need to work in partnership/consortia is a pre-condition. These stakeholders will then be involved in the different steps of the project cycle: assessment, analysis, action planning, implementation, monitoring and bring in their specific expertise to tackle the identified risks holistically. It is well understood that in reality, such an ideal approach will always tend to face limitations: there may be a bias towards certain risks because of the organisations' mandates and the composition of the partnerships.

b) The need to build on existing capacities and apply a **more agency oriented approach**: Starting point is to do a proper assessment of the different livelihood capitals available in a particular context: what capitals are being prioritised for the intervention, what are the already locally available capacities/capitals, what resources need to be strengthened and what gaps need to be filled (using e.g. the PfR or Oxfam Companion checklist). As a community resilience approach envisages a community in a holistic manner, it is important to focus interventions on a variety of livelihood assets/capitals, instead of just concentrating on one type or few assets. Once this assessment has been carried out, the next step is then to apply a strong participatory approach not only in the assessment process but also in the analysis, action planning, design, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. As such local capacity building should be prioritised and a strong ownership by the target group of all interventions is being ensured. The aim of such an approach is to move from a community based to a more community managed/led approach.

Conclusion

- For the DRR sector, Resilience is more than just a buzzword. It provides added value by contributing to more effective risk reduction work through a more holistic, cross-sectoral approach and by building on existing capacities. It also has an important bridging function between the humanitarian and development sectors. It remains challenging that resilience does not bear full consensus on concept and/or practice, resulting in different interpretations and approaches in its implementation.
- Although within the field of DRR, each organisation will eventually have to define its own vision, project design and implementation modalities of a resilience approach, certain generic recommendations can be applied (see above).
- Besides operationalization, other challenges to applying Resilience in a DRR context:
 - Internalisation into strategy and policy
 - Measurement (here, the Zurich approach provides insights worth following)
 - Evidence base

Reference List:

GNDR (2015): Frontline brochure: http://gndr.org/images/newsite/PDFs/Frontline_FINAL_EN.pdf

ODI Resilience Navigator: http://bwa-presentation.co.uk/odi_reviews/index.php

Oxfam: A Companion Guide to Resilience. <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/a-companion-guide-to-resilience-595570>

Partners for Resilience Vision (2013): <http://www.partnersforresilience.nl/about-us/documents/pfr-resilience-vision.pdf>

Partners for Resilience (2015): Nicaragua Case Study (Climate-Proof Disaster Risk Reduction Programme)

Zurich Insurance(2015): Measuring flood resilience – our approach

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