K4D | Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Mainstreaming institutional resilience and systems strengthening in donor policies and programming

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Question

What are key aspects of mainstreaming institutional resilience and systems strengthening in donor policies and programming in FCAS contexts? Sectors of interest include nutrition (food security), health, WASH and the economic sector. Is there any information on ways in which to monitor the extent to which it is embedded in programming and policies?

Contents

1. Summary

Institutional resilience is the ability of a social system (society, community, organisation) to absorb and recover from external shocks, while positively adapting and transforming to address long-term changes and uncertainty (Anderson and Tollenaere, 2020; Juncos & Joseph, 2020; Aligicia & Tarko, 2014). Investing in strong, well-functioning and adaptable social systems, such as health, education and social protection systems, can build resilience, as these help to cushion the negative economic and social effects of crises (Strupat & Marschall, 2020).

While development actors have established guidance on how institutions can be made more effective, inclusive and accountable, there is much less literature on institutional resilience and how development actors can help to foster it (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). Much of the literature notes a lack of systematic evidence on applying the concept of resilience. These gaps extend to a dearth of guidance on how development actors can mainstream institutional resilience and systems strengthening into their policies and programmes. This rapid review thus draws on common factors discussed in the literature that are considered important to the strengthening of resilience and particular systems. These may in turn provide an indication of ways in which to mainstream institutional resilience and systems strengthening into development policy and programming. They include:

Risk assessment and analysis: Effective interventions for fostering resilience require well-designed programming based on a comprehensive multi-hazard, multi-sector assessment of all the contextual factors that affect the system(s) under study. This informs the theory of change (Frankenberger et al., 2014). The OECD's Resilience Systems Analysis tool, for example, aims to build a shared understanding of key risks in a given context and existing capacities within those societies to cope with such risks (OECD and Sida, 2016).

Systemic thinking: A systems-level theory of change and approach explores what intervention or set of interventions will tip a conflict system to a non-violent system that is improving over time (see Juncos & Joseph, 2020). A systemic view also requires consideration of how to adapt and absorb repeated shocks and to understand how these shocks affect different sectors (Gilson et al. 2017; cited in Hanefeld et al., 2018). Data analysis in resilience-oriented evaluation should be concerned with interactions, pathways and trajectories (Constas et al., 2020). In order to promote institutional resilience, cross-sector programming, across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, should be the norm (Carey et al., 2020). Policy makers should incentivise a 'whole-of-government' framework for addressing global systemic risks, allow for longer-term horizons, and remove unnecessary barriers to collaboration (Carey et al., 2020; Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018).

Local knowledge and sources of resilience – and scaling up: To strengthen institutional resilience, development actors are encouraged to identify, support and build on local knowledge, experience and sources of resilience, rather than create new structures (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020, 191). Local structures and systems that have survived during protracted conflict need to be proactively rebuilt through improving capacities, incentives, ownership, and participation of the communities (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021). Repeated exposure to crises can also generate new sources of endogenous resilience (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). In Liberia, the resilient community networks that were critical to survival during the civil conflict also enabled the country to mount an effective, community-led response during the Ebola outbreak. Development actors subsequently designed Liberia's response around these systems (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). Institutional resilience can be further strengthened by expanding and replicating local-level successes (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). Scaling up should be considered from the beginning

of planning and implementing an intervention, rather than asking 'what next' at the end of a project (Begovic et al., 2017).

Social capital and social cohesion: Internal capacities of societies, such as social capital, networks and leadership, are often highlighted in the literature as key to fostering community resilience and enabling institutions to adapt and innovate (Juncos & Joseph, 2020; Lee, 2020; Barma et al., 2014; Frankenberger et al., 2014). Institutions that build relations with citizens and gain citizens' trust are also more resilient (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). Although institutional resilience is often attributed to charismatic leadership, various case studies highlight that leadership is not exercised by a single individual, but rather a network of core group of senior technical staff and managers (Barma et al., 2014). In other instances, self-help groups or women's groups in rural communities have been integral to knowledge sharing on adaptation and coping mechanisms, providing loans during crises, and linking women to formal institutions that they could rarely access individually (Liru & Heinecken, 2021). Donors can support local networks by expanding their ability to connect and learn from each other (Barma et al., 2014).

Complexity, flexibility and iteration: Complexity, a key feature of a resilience approach, forces development actors to think about how to address problems that cannot be fully resolved or that may have no endpoint (Joseph and Juncos, 2019). Policies and programmes aimed at fostering institutional resilience and systems strengthening need to adopt flexible and adaptable processes that allow the system to adjust to changes and new pieces of information quickly - and that allow for experimentation (Shakya et al., 2018; Aligica & Tarko, 2014). Financing strategies and mechanisms to support resilience initiatives also require flexibility, linked to multidimensional analyses and long-term horizons (Carey et al., 2020).

2. Background

Resilience in the context of violent conflict, fragility, stability, and peacebuilding represents the capacities of a system, household, community, institution, or wider society to resist, absorb, adapt, or transform stressors that might otherwise damage systems and lead to violent conflict (see Aall and Crocker, 2019; Baker, 2017).[1] Institutions that otherwise perform well in times of stability can become deficient or collapse during times of crisis or can have difficulty recovering from a shock (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). Promoting institutional resilience thus goes beyond institutional effectiveness, accountability and inclusion. Institutional resilience is the ability of a social system (society, community, organisation) to absorb and recover from external shocks, while positively adapting and transforming to address long-term changes and uncertainty (Anderson and Tollenaere, 2020; Juncos & Joseph, 2020; Aligicia & Tarko, 2014). It entails the ability to deliver and enhance results over time. This, in turn, engenders trust, legitimacy and credibility, which also comprise sources of resilience (Anderson and Tollenaere, 2020).

Given the importance of and growing attention given to the concept of resilience, there are calls to better incorporate resilience in development projects and programming. The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG), for example, finds that while the World Bank has increasingly integrated resilience characteristics in assessed operations, which is likely to lead to more resilient

[1] Resilience encompasses a range of processes: the ability to absorb stress (to bounce back from a shock and return to original condition); to adapt (to cope with shocks while retaining much of the entity's original identity); or to transform (a complete change in the structure and modes of operation from the original state, when it can no longer cope in its existing form), while maintaining the same purpose (Aall and Crocker, 2019; Baker, 2017).

outcomes, integration has been inconsistent (World Bank, 2019). It recommends that the design and implementation of projects that build urban resilience systematically incorporate resilience characteristics and articulate their application throughout the project cycle (World Bank, 2019). This could be done, for example, in project appraisal documents. The IEG also recommends that the Bank Group systematically identify and track progress of interventions that build urban resilience to chronic stresses and acute shocks (World Bank, 2019).

There is also growing attention to systems strengthening and systems thinking in the literature. On a theoretical level, systems thinking highlights that crises are intrinsic to complex systems such as public health or financial markets (Hynes et al., 2020). In turn, health systems resilience, for example, is about the system's ability to adapt its functioning to absorb a shock (e.g. a pandemic or natural disaster) and transform if necessary (Hanefield et al., 2018).

On a practical level, policymakers need to factor in the inevitability of system failure when making policy, even if preparation does not appear to be cost-effective until after the crisis has occurred (Hynes et al., 2020). Investing in strong, well-functioning and adaptable social systems, such as health, education and social protection systems, can build resilience, as these help to cushion the negative economic and social effects of crises like COVID-19 (Strupat & Marschall, 2020).

Limitations in evidence

While development actors have established guidance on how institutions can be made more effective, inclusive and accountable, there is much less literature on the topic of institutional resilience and how development actors can help to foster it (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). Much of the literature notes a lack of systematic evidence on applying the concept of resilience. Existing empirical evidence tends to lack comparability as it is drawn from diverse contexts and is of highly uneven quality (Barrett et al., 2020). Further, there is limited to no evidence demonstrating whether the resilience framework is effectively helping people to become more capable of surviving shocks or getting them out of poverty (Malik et al., 2020).

Despite growing interest from the development community on fostering resilience through policy and programme interventions, there is a lack of consensus on an empirical methodology that could estimate resilience outcomes in an impact assessment framework (Garbero & Chichaibelu, 2019; Serfilippi & Ramnath, 2018). This undermines the ability of development actors to objectively monitor and verify the effects of programmes designed to build resilience and to generate lessons learned (Garbero & Chichaibelu, 2019; Serfilippi & Ramnath, 2018).

These gaps in evidence and coverage in the literature extends to a dearth of guidance and lessons learned on how development actors can mainstream institutional resilience into their policies and programming. There is correspondingly no discussion of how to monitor the extent to which it is embedded in programming and policies. Given these limitations, this rapid review draws on factors and characteristics discussed in a range of literature, including sector-based studies, which are considered to be important to the strengthening of institutional resilience and particular systems (e.g. nutrition, WASH and health). They may provide an indication of ways in which institutional resilience and systems strengthening can be mainstreamed into development policy and programming.

Aspects of promoting institutional resilience

A recent case study published by the OECD finds that these four practical methods of institutional development, drawn from the literature and based on experience, are useful for building institutional resilience (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020, 192):

- Identify and leverage domestic sources of resilience.
- Build on what already exists, replicating and scaling-up what works.
- Adopt local social norms and values where feasible as such cultural norms are enduring and typically designed to solve collective problems.
- Take advantage of institutions' social capital. Institutions that build relations with citizens and gain citizens' trust are ultimately more resilient.

Development actors seeking to foster institutional resilience thus need to adopt a long term perspective; prioritise the use of local knowledge, experiences and resources; and move away from technocratic institutional blueprints towards locally embedded, iterative interventions that promote institutional responsiveness and flexibility (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020).

This mirrors other literature, which finds that the concept and practice of promoting resilience draws attention to complexity; a systems/systemic approach; a shift towards local capacities; and human agency (Juncos & Joseph, 2020).

3. Risk assessment and analysis

Effective interventions for fostering resilience require well-designed programming based on a comprehensive multi-hazard, multi-sector assessment of all the contextual factors that affect the system(s) under study. This, in turn, informs the theory of change (Frankenberger et al., 2014).

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, development agencies often operate with a lack of baseline data, security threats, and tremendous time pressures (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021). This may result in: a rapid reconstruction of the previously existing infrastructure, for example, which may have been deficient and not resilient in the context of armed conflict, or in the establishment of parallel emergency supply systems. Reconstructing infrastructure that is not conflict-resilient, in a state that is likely to experience repeated cycles of destruction, implies a high risk of subsequent system failure (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021). Further, it neglects the possibility of drawing on local coping mechanisms that have emerged during conflict, which may have strengthened modes of self-organisation and community-level problem solving (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021). See the section below on 'Local knowledge and sources of resilience'.

The OECD has developed technical guidance, the Resilience Systems Analysis (RSA) framework, which aims at building a shared understanding of the main risks (conflict, natural disasters, disease, economic shocks etc.) in a given context as well as the existing capacities within those societies to cope with such risks (OECD and Sida, 2016). The analysis is then used to identify gaps in programming and to develop a 'roadmap' to boost resilience, outlining what should be done, by whom and at which level of society (OECD and Sida, 2016). The RSA's focus on assets that help people and institutions to protect their well-being and remain resilient in the face of a varying risks and stresses highlights where people are vulnerable and helps to better identify priorities for strengthening the assets of poor and marginalised groups. The analysis also aims to better identify how programming at national and sub-national levels is connected to and has an impact for the most vulnerable communities and households (OECD and Sida, 2016).

4. Systems approach

A systems-level (rather than project-level) theory of change and approach, a key feature of resilience, explores what intervention or set of interventions will tip a conflict system to a non-violent system that improves over time (see Juncos & Joseph, 2020). Resilience building thus encourages cooperation and integrated programming, through a cross-sectoral (versus silos) approach, which aims to address multi-level and multi-causal processes (Constas et al., 2020; Hynes et al., 2020; Juncos & Joseph, 2020; Béné et al., 2016; Frankenberger et al., 2014).

A systemic view also requires consideration of how to adapt and absorb repeated shocks and to understand the pattern by which these shocks occur and affect different sectors. Countries may experiences multiple shocks, such as political and economic crisis, followed by conflict or disease outbreaks, compounding the effects on societies and systems (Gilson et al. 2017; cited in Hanefeld et al., 2018). Food security shocks may generate health shocks which may interfere with livelihood functions (Constas et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that a health crisis can trigger a global economic crisis, making it necessary to abandon traditional, linear, compartmentalised ways of making and applying policy (Hynes et al., 2020). Data analysis in resilience-oriented evaluation should thus be concerned with interactions, pathways and trajectories (Constas et al., 2020). A health system that is coherent and well-integrated internally (e.g. financing, information systems, human resource planning etc.) and into wider systems (e.g. socio-political system) is likely to exhibit greater resilience to shocks (Hanefeld et al., 2018).

In order to promote institutional resilience, cross-sector programming should be the norm, such that crisis response adequately addresses secondary impacts (Carey et al., 2020). The RSA has been successful in helping to dampen the silo approach and in strengthening multilevel and cross-sectoral programming (OECD and Sida, 2016). USAID's Joint Planning Cell strategy in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa is another example of how greater coordination and collaboration among a range of agencies, funds and programmes is being promoted as part of the resilience strategy (Constas et al., 2020). The World Bank's work on urban resilience also promotes coordination between agencies, sectors, and jurisdictions to design and support integrated responses in the face of stresses and shocks (World Bank, 2019).

Longer term, humanitarian-development approach

The focus on resilience bridges humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming to better address overlapping risks and stresses, enabling dialogue and partnership across disciplines (Juncos & Joseph, 2020; Malik et al, 2020). Meeting humanitarian needs during conflict needs to be combined with efforts to protect institutions and community assets, especially human capital and social capital, which are critical for sustained recovery (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018). In the case of nutrition, a resilience perspective helps to promote interventions that address the immediate causes of malnutrition and food insecurity and longer-term development interventions that consider the underlying, structural dimensions of malnutrition and food insecurity and their longer term dynamics (Béné et al., 2016).

In order to strengthen resilience programming across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, policy makers should incentivise a 'whole-of-government' framework for addressing global systemic risks, allow for longer-term horizons, and remove unnecessary barriers to collaboration between development and humanitarian actors (Carey et al., 2020; Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018). Such an approach also requires a joint, risk-informed analysis, which can help to promote rapid, flexible response when shocks occur (see Carey et al., 2020; OECD & Sida, 2016).

Policy makers, donors, and practitioners also need to be able to distinguish between and bridge programmes that do some good and/or are humanitarian in nature and those that are genuinely transformative (Baker, 2017). Such assessment requires long-range thinking, clear benchmarks and guidelines, reliable data that reveals trend lines over time, and convincing evidence that local populations are benefiting from the interventions (Baker, 2017).

Coordination of humanitarian and development initiatives have been supported through UN-supported thematic clusters, for example, which have been instrumental to data exchange and coordinated action (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018). A study on the RSA finds that it has been helpful in promoting greater coherence between humanitarian, development and political objectives, bringing actors in these fields together to adopt a common understanding of context (OECD & Sida, 2016).

In order to coordinate resilience building in a given area, the FAO has outlined drivers of coordination for resilience and tools that can help to capture the progress of different meetings and follow-up action-points.

Drivers of coordination for resilience

Drivers coordination for resilience Causes of strengths and weakness	*Example of indicators of strengths and weaknesses (from the Coordination Tool Box and Needs Assessment tool)*
1. Leadership and commitment (ownership)	*Participation follow up tool (Key actors' involvement)* *Action points tracking and alignment with key institutions (R&D) (ToR, roles and responsibilities - backbone organization[5])*
2. Joint work and capacity for joint action	*Coordination as ONLY sharing information* *Coordination as ONLY joint planning for avoiding duplication of efforts (% or number of the members planning together)* *Coordination as joint implementation for avoiding duplication of efforts (% of the members implementing together)*
3. Common framework	*Agree basic coordination protocols and standards (accountability)* *Use of coordination indicators AND use of common planning and monitoring tools (3Ws or 4Ws mapping)*
4. Trust and continuous communication	*Existing incentives for attending meetings (information, funds)* *Existing use of reporting and communication protocols and tools*
5. Knowledge management	*Information, learning and good practices shared and used to take decisions (vertical or horizontal) (meteorology, situation reports)*
6. Gender mainstreaming in coordination spaces	*Gender balance in coordination spaces* *Indicators for planning and monitoring include gender*

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Systems strengthening and analysis

A recent study, aimed at better understanding how the effects of crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, interact with social systems, finds that development cooperation can help countries to strengthen their social systems and, in turn, bolster resilience by (Strupat & Marschall, 2020):

- Supporting increased fiscal capacities to tackle short-term economic crises;
- Expanding social systems to include people who are being left behind; and
- Making social systems, including health care and social protection, more adaptable so they can better respond to any new emerging crisis.

Links between humanitarian and development actors and programming, in particular, can strengthen social protection systems. This could entail a collective agreement, for example, for cash and voucher assistance implemented during emergency response to utilise and optimise existing social protection systems, rather than replace or duplicate them (Carey et al., 2020).

Nutrition and food security: Weaknesses in access to food can be alleviated with a shock-responsive, social protection system (Covid-19 Global evaluation coalition, 2020). The 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa demonstrated the importance of addressing the crisis not only as a medical emergency, but as a broad-based humanitarian emergency requiring attention to other social protection measures including education, livelihoods and food security (Covid-19 Global evaluation coalition, 2020). Lock downs, school closures, and the ensuing suspension of school feeding programmes, have left children vulnerable. In such cases, existing social cash transfer programmes should be strengthened in order to target these vulnerable populations, as was the case during the food security crisis caused by El Niño in 2015/16 in eastern and southern Africa (Covid-19 Global evaluation coalition, 2020).

Concern's approach to building resilience to food and nutrition insecurity in the Sahel also involves a longer-term perspective that integrates humanitarian and development activities in order to address chronic and acute malnutrition (Frankenberger et al., 2014). This involves a multisector approach that aims not only to treat acute malnutrition, but also to address the root causes. Programming combines nutrition-sensitive agriculture, diversifying livelihoods and assets, and attention to child and maternal nutrition behaviours, healthcare access, water and sanitation, and governance capacities (Frankenberger et al., 2014).

WASH: Research on WASH programming in conflict contexts finds that a key factor in promoting resilience is planning for WASH service delivery simultaneously among emergency and development planners; whereas when each is planned separately, it is often challenging to bridge the two, with lack of flexibility shifting between the two phases (Mafuta et al., 2020).

A study on Oxfam's early recovery programme in post-floods Assam, India, finds that a holistic and integrated approach across sectors and phases right from the assessment stage, that links response and recovery with longer-term development goals, helps to promote resilience (Krishnan & Borah, 2013). The community prioritised cash for work intervention to construct raised earthen platforms to be used as flood shelters. Oxfam, in turn, provided WASH facilities (latrine with hand wash facilities, bathing units for women) in these flood shelters. There were opportunities to scale up interventions, through the rehabilitation of the existing water sources, increase in latrines facilities, and further installation of WASH in raised flood shelters (Krishnan & Borah, 2013). Oxfam also worked with the government public health engineering department to

develop a brief contingency plan for them to initiate a timely and effective WASH response, which can contribute to institutional resilience building (Krishnan & Borah, 2013).

Coordinating different sectors is also essential in promoting WASH systems strengthening. In Syria, for example, education has been severely affected by conflict, through the destruction of schools, shortage of teachers, lack of materials, and inadequate access to safe WASH (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021). A case study of donor intervention finds that donor organisations have established parallel education structures, in abandoned buildings or tents, which have required the construction of basic services infrastructure (water supply, sanitation, electricity supply) in the temporary spaces (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021). The concern is that these parallel structures divert funds and rehabilitation efforts from schools. The study discusses instead an integrated basic service supply for schools, such as the Water Project South Syria, established by GIZ. It counters the silo mentality of schools as independent units by rehabilitating not only schools, but also the basic connected services – recognising their interdependence (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021).

Health: The development of responsive health systems in fragile and conflict-affected contexts requires policy making that takes into account the debilitating effects of the context on communities, health workers and institutions (Martineau et al., 2017). A resilient health system is one in which health actors, institutions and populations are able to maintain core functions and maintain good health when a crisis hits, and draw from the lessons learnt during the crisis to reorganise (Russo et al., 2017).

A cross-country study, looking at Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Northern Uganda and Zimbabwe, finds that the disruption caused by conflict or crisis is evident in institutions (Martineau et al., 2017). At one point during the conflict in northern Uganda, for example, there were over 300 health-related organisations, making it challenging to coordinate policies and services and increasing risk of system fragmentation (Martineau et al., 2017). Research on the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone highlights the professional challenges faced by health workers and stresses that the resilience they demonstrated should be reinforced and rewarded (Martineau et al., 2017).

Movement toward universal health care also requires a medium-term to long-term plan to strengthen health systems and to ensure that they are inclusive (Martineau et al., 2017; Russo et al., 2017). In northern Uganda, the reconstruction of health systems post-conflict exhibited limited support to survivors of gender-based violence, paying more attention to the 'hardware' of health infrastructure (e.g. building clinics), rather than the 'software' of health approaches, including accessibility by vulnerable groups (Martineau et al., 2017). Where informal providers coexist with formal health services, policies are needed to bring these different health services in resource-scarce settings under a broad vision of universal health care (Russo et al, 2017).

5. Local knowledge and sources of resilience

Institutional capacity-building and reform initiatives must resonate with a country's social and political fabric in order to achieve legitimacy and durability (Barma et al., 2014). To strengthen institutional resilience, development cooperation actors are encouraged to look for, identify support and build on local knowledge, experience and existing sources of resilience, rather than to create new structures (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020, 191). Repeated exposure to crises can also generate new sources of endogenous resilience (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020).

An analysis of the conflict resilience of infrastructure in the MENA region recommends that local structures and systems that have survived during protracted conflict need to be proactively rebuilt

through improving capacities, incentives, ownership, and participation of the communities (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021). In Liberia, the resilient community networks that were critical to survival and protection during the civil conflict also enabled the country to mount an effective, community-led response during the Ebola outbreak. Development actors subsequently designed Liberia's response around these systems (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). Yemen, prior to the conflict, had relatively well functioning social protection programmes, implemented through various national institutions. These pre-existing capacity and delivery systems, relied upon by government and development agencies, have been instrumental in achieving rapid results for the emergency response programme, addressing multiple vulnerabilities (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018).

Nutrition and food security: More research is needed to understand and tapping into a wide range of resilience activities and strategies in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, such as elderly women selling fruits and vegetables on the street, even if it is difficult to monitor progress in these cases (Béné, 2020). Evaluations of food security interventions demonstrate that participatory approaches with community members have produced innovative solutions to address food security, including unconditional cash transfers using remote means – particularly, important during periods of lockdown (Béné, 2020).

WASH: A survey of WASH practitioners finds that 'planning with communities' is a key way to resolve WASH conflicts (Mafuta et al., 2020). It allows not only for more effective solutions given that local populations are better positioned to identify root causes of the conflicts, needs and solutions at planning stages, but also for greater transparency (Mafuta et al., 2020).

In Yemen, for example, the development of solar energy has helped to address fuel shortages, electricity blackouts and water scarcity due to collapse of service infrastructure. This has been a self-organised and bottom-up adaptation by small businesses, with the use of rooftop solar installations becoming a nationwide phenomenon. Solar energy resilience-building initiatives have extended beyond households in rural communities to health and education systems, whose infrastructure are also to be equipped with solar energy applications (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021).

Health: Emergency humanitarian response is often entrenched in highly medicalised, command and control approaches, with little room for 'non-experts' and local forms of knowledge (Mayhew et al., 2021). This can undermine the effectiveness of interventions and the development of institutional resilience. During the Ebola outbreak in North Kivu, for example, local doctors, scholars and communities were not engaged in decision-making processes or in shaping subsequent responses. Research finds that this may have contributed in part to growing mistrust of international responders among populations in the DRC – and to missed opportunities to achieve various forms of transformation (Mayhew et al., 2021).

Scaling up

Institutional resilience can be built by expanding and replicating local-level successes (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). Scaling up local solutions have the tendency to be more effective and durable than external solutions. It is thus important to identify such pockets of effectiveness and then replicate and scale-up what is working for use in new situations (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). In post-conflict contexts, governments and donors can build on the decentralised 'coping' initiatives established by individuals, communities and donors (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021).

Scaling up should be considered from the beginning of planning and implementing an intervention, rather than asking 'what next' at the end of a project (Begovic et al., 2017). A review

of UNDP country programme documents (CPDs) finds that CPDs tend not to consider scaling up or only do so in passing (Begovic et al., 2017). A more systematic focus on scaling up in the CPDs, with attention to opportunities and challenges, and key measures to deliver this objective, could provide a stronger case for engagement with domestic and external partners and for resource mobilisation (Begovic et al., 2017). Country programme staff should also receive training on how to approach the scaling up agenda in the design and implementation of specific programmes and projects (Begovic et al., 2017). Measuring impact along the scaling up pathway is important to ensure the intervention has the desired impact. It can also serve as a tool to generate demand and political support for the intervention (Begovic et al., 2017).

Research on food security finds that engaging with small-scale private sector actors in testing innovations resulted in high uptake and commercialisation of innovations, demonstrating high potential for scaling up practices that could prompt systemic change (Covid-19 Global evaluation coalition, 2020). In the case of South Sudan, the successful establishment and scaling up of water sources, water kiosks, piped connections between the kiosk and the water sources, and an increasing number of connections of households to the piped network, allowed for the water supply system to organically expand (Roach & Al-Saidi, 2021). In Timor-Leste, health infrastructure was destroyed post-independence. Health practitioners continued to deliver community health care through alternative mechanisms, which the subsequent health minister built upon to develop the country's health system (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020).

6. Social capital and social cohesion

Internal capacities of societies, such as social capital, networks and leadership, are often noted in the literature as key to fostering community resilience and enabling institutions to adapt and innovate (Juncos & Joseph, 2020; Lee, 2020; Barma et al., 2014; Frankenberger et al., 2014). A system is resilient if its institutions provide the tools for social cooperation, possibly across conflict lines, that allow for a quick and effective response to possible challenges. (Aall and Crocker, 2019; Aligica & Tarko, 2014). Institutions that build relations with citizens and gain citizens' trust are, in turn, more resilient (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020). This suggests that in addition to looking at the functioning of an institution in and of itself, development actors need to consider its role in mediating state-society relations and the legitimacy or credibility the institution gained as a result (Anderson & Tollenaere, 2020).

Although institutional success and resilience is often attributed to charismatic leadership, various case studies highlight that leadership is not exercised by a single individual, but rather a network of core group of senior technical staff and managers (Barma et al., 2014). After Timor-Leste's independence, for example, a small group of leaders became instrumental in designing the organisational structure and service protocols for the Ministry of Health, drawing upon the expertise of local health professionals who continued to provide services after much of the health infrastructure was destroyed in the violence (Barma et al., 2014).

Donors can support local networks by expanding their ability to connect and learn from each other (Barma et al., 2014). The Nutrition Actor Network comprises a web of individuals and organisations operating within a given country who share a common interest in improving nutrition and who act collectively to do so (Baker et al., 2019). In many rural communities, for example in Kenya, self-help groups or women's groups have been integral in fostering knowledge sharing on adaptation and coping mechanisms, providing loans during crises, and linking women to formal institutions that they could rarely access individually (Liru & Heinecken,

2021). This supports the capacity of women to transform their livelihood strategies and gives them some degree of power and control over agricultural practices and food security. In patriarchal societies, this has also contributed to challenging existing social relations (Liru & Heinecken, 2021).

Social networks can, however, have power dynamics that disadvantage certain members, such as women, and exclude less powerful groups, leaving them even more vulnerable to shocks (Maxwell et al., 2017). There are also instances, where strong social capital may serve instead to undermine resilience building - locking people into a non-adaptive mode (Béné et al., 2016). Some communities in India, for example, where social identity is built around traditional customary management system, may be less willing to 'give up' traditional livelihoods (e.g. fishing) to engage in new economic opportunities (Béné et al., 2016).

Nutrition and food security: As part of World Vision's programming in Africa, it helps to organise farmers into groups, allowing them to pool their yields and transport their harvest to lucrative markets for sale at significantly higher prices. Critical to the success of this initiative is the concerted effort to enhance connections between farmers, traders and buyers (Frankenberger et al., 2014). Local partnerships also enable farmers to obtain loans to pay for planting supplies; receive training in financial management; and obtain crop insurance in case of flooding or drought. These initiatives, based on strong social capital and networks, have provided a strong base for improving the resilience of farmers to shocks (Frankenberger et al., 2014).

Health: Trust in public institutions can be critical to the ability of health systems to withstand shocks, affecting whether and how people access health services, what information they are willing to share with the government, and whether health workers are responsive to local needs (Hanefeld et al., 2018). During the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, there is strong evidence of the self-organisation, cohesion and resilience of health staff, which was critical to addressing community needs (Witter et al., 2017).

7. Complexity, flexibility, and iteration

Complexity is a key feature of a resilience approach (Joseph & Juncos, 2019). It views people as embedded within complex social relations, while social structures and processes are seen as non-linear with no straightforward causes or outcomes (Joseph & Juncos, 2019; Béné et al., 2016). In contrast to prior understandings of conflict and peacebuilding, complexity forces development actors to think about how to address problems that cannot fully be resolved or which may have no endpoint (Joseph and Juncos, 2019). A resilience approach thus reinforces the view that societies are in a constant state of flux (Joseph & Juncos, 2019).

As a result of this complexity, policies and programmes aimed at fostering institutional resilience and systems strengthening need to adopt flexible and adaptable processes that allow the system to adjust to new pieces of information quickly when conditions change (Aligica & Tarko, 2014). Such an adaptable and iterative approach requires learning systems that can cope with surprise, complexity and uncertainty – and that allow for experimentation (Shakya et al., 2018). Institutions require the capacity for longer-term learning, including institutional memory (remembering what works and what does not) (Shakya et al, 2018).

Financing strategies and mechanisms to support resilience initiatives also require sufficient flexibility, linked to multidimensional analyses and long-term horizons (Carey et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that such threats require a well-structured balance of

emergency financing, long-term development financing for recovery, and ongoing spending on prior priorities (Carey et al., 2020). In order to enhance community resilience, the Secure Africa's Future initiative, focused on food security, has adopted funding mechanisms that incorporate a shift from small, short-term grants to large, long-term grants; from limited grant funding to unlimited investment funding; and from a philanthropic-giver orientation to a strategic-investor orientation (see Frankenberger et al., 2014).

Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS)

In 2013, five international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) with long experience in Somalia – Cooperazione e Sviluppo, Concern Worldwide, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, and Save the Children International – formed BRCiS to address Somalia Communities' long-term, recurrent exposure to disasters and destitution. Membership has since grown to six INGOs and 3 local NGOs.

BRCiS defines resilience as 'the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from natural or human-made disasters in a manner that reduces long-term vulnerability'. It takes a holistic approach that cuts across the humanitarian-development spectrum.

Key components of BRCiS policies, strategies and programming include:

- Early action and response to localised shocks through safety nets, provision of basic services, and other strategies to meet the most essential needs of target communities.
- Sustainable livelihood strategies, targeting vulnerable and marginalised communities, in line with the country's long-term development goals.
- Inclusive community engagement to benefit from local knowledge; and that leverages existing local governance structures (formal and informal) to enhance accountability, social cohesion and governance.
- Flexible, multi-sector and multi-year programming that is co-managed with participant communities through continuous adjustments of Community Action Plans. This encourages local ideas, community initiatives and self-reliance. Ongoing adaptation to the delivery of assistance is based on real-time evidence of what is working and what is not. It requires agencies to adopt a learning and change culture, incorporating cross-agency learning.

In 2019, BRCiS rolled out a pilot Community Early Warning System, which collects data on 30 indicators on a monthly basis. This shock-specific framework allows for interventions to be triggered when thresholds are reached. These can be funded through internal re-programming, community contributions, or in case of larger needs, through the activation of a crisis modifier funding mechanism. This has been successfully activated three times since 2019, to respond to drought, flooding and socio-economic impact of Covid-19.

In 2020, the challenge fund was introduced, encouraging BRCiS Members to embrace adaptation and innovation in their current community engagements and community-led interventions, while laying the foundation for grassroots, Somali-led innovations that can be scaled up in future BRCiS programming (Twigg & Calderone, 2019).

Sources: NRC, 2020; Twigg & Calderone, 2019.

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