Building Resilience to Food Security Shocks in the Horn of Africa

Current Situation

In recent decades the Horn of Africa (HoA) has faced continuous cycles of crisis. These are the result of complex interactions between political, economic, social and environmental factors. In spite of efforts to respond to these interactions, the recent drought crisis coupled with conflict and chronic poverty in the region is estimated to have threatened the lives of thirteen million people. The collective response to the drought crisis, conflict and the food security emergency that resulted has exposed the shortcomings of international aid practices and national/regional policies.

Increasing Resilience: A Strategy for Addressing Immediate and Long-term Problems

The starting point for reversing the downward spiral in the HoA lies in understanding that while the frequency and severity of drought are likely to increase as a result of climate-related change, this trend exacerbates other underlying factors such as poverty, degraded ecosystems, conflict and ineffective governance. It goes without saying that the combination of these and other factors result in considerably different contexts in each of the countries commonly considered to lie within the Horn of Africa (i.e., Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan).

In each of these countries, a relatively mild stress on chronically vulnerable households – such as delayed or inadequate rains – can lead to major livelihood shocks due to their lack of ability to respond. Building the resilience of affected people so they can respond positively to these changes requires helping people to cope with current change, adapt their livelihoods, and improve ecosystem health so they are able to avoid problems in the future. This means not only helping people directly but also developing good policies, plans and programs to support wider development. In order to positively impact people's lives, projects must be implemented at sufficient **scale** and **over a long enough time period** to have lasting benefits. **Community solidarity, engagement, ownership of resources, and the capacity to organize** are also critical for building resilience. When people are empowered to draw on their own capacity, strengths, and values, rather than viewing themselves in a situation of hopeless poverty, resilience is strengthened.

This shift in emphasis from emergency responses to building resilience has been shown to provide good value for money. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) estimate that "one dollar invested in disaster preparedness can save seven dollars' worth of disaster-related economic losses."[1] Thus investing in resilience programming that reduces exposure to risk is significantly more cost-effective than post-disaster responses.

Designing programs to increase resilience requires bringing together a range of different skills to strengthen the ability of vulnerable populations to adapt by: **1) addressing gaps in critical livelihood assets** such as cash, skills, leadership, knowledge, health, food;**2) improving access to public assets** such as roads, power, water, schools, markets and health facilities;**3) strengthening the operation and capabilities of formal and informal institutions** within governments, the private sector and communities;**4) supporting livelihood diversification; 5) resolving conflicts and building peace;** and **6) re-building degraded ecosystems**.

To accomplish these objectives, two specific actions are critical. First, governments, donors and implementing agencies must adopt a wider view of the issues by acknowledging that **ecosystem health and effective governance** are critical for enabling countries, communities and households to attain sustainable food and livelihood security. Second, all stakeholders must play their part in reducing the **artificial divide between humanitarian emergency assistance and longer-term development**.

[1]World Meteorological Organization (WMO). 2009. Fact sheet #1Climate information for reducing disaster risk.

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What is the Meaning of Resilience?

A lot of research has gone into defining the properties, principles, and processes that strengthen resilience at the individual, household, community, institution and ecosystem levels. As a result of this research, and ongoing programming experience, many definitions of 'resilience' have been developed. For this discussion paper, the following definition of resilience will suffice:

> "...the ability of countries, communities, and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses – such as earthquakes, drought or violent conflict – without compromising their long-term prospects."[2]

Vulnerability and resilience are often described as opposites. Both terms can be used to describe the ability of individuals, households or communities to deal with stresses or shocks.[3] Building resilience reduces vulnerabilities in communities at risk from drought and consequent shocks and stresses. Given the inter-dependence of social and ecological factors affecting vulnerability in the HoA, achieving resilience will also depend on the capacity of socio-ecological systems at the regional, national and local levels to learn from past experience to better respond to changing conditions in the future.

A proposed **Framework** for understanding, analyzing and promoting resilience is provided at the end of this discussion note (Figure 1). The framework illustrates the role of context, shocks, institutions and livelihood strategies in determining whether households will be vulnerable or resilient. The conceptual framework for resilience provides a graphic depiction of the specific elements and processes that contribute to resilience. It also clarifies the types of information needed to engage in a thorough problem analysis within various contexts and identifies key areas for action. In doing so, it allows for identification of key leverage points for prospective interventions, thereby increasing the likelihood of achieving impact, and ensuring a satisfactory return on investment.

[2]UK Department for International Development (DFID). 2011. Defining Disaster Resilience: A DFID Approach Paper.
[3]Bahadur, A.V., Ibrahim, M. and T. Tanner. 2010. The Resilience Renaissance? Strengthening Climate Resilience Discussion Paper 1, September 2010, p.5.

Principles for Better Resilience Programming

Development specialists involved in resilience work at the international and regional levels have identified a number of core principles to guide resilience programming. They explain that resilience programming should:[4,5]

- **Support a change, over time, in the balance of effort and resources** from humanitarian assistance toward disaster risk management (DRM), climate change adaptation (CCA), livelihood support, and social protection (SP);

- **Recognize and respond to the different needs, capabilities and aspirations of different people,** especially those of the most vulnerable groups (women, children, orphans, elderly, displaced);

- **Build the capacity of formal and informal institutions** for equitable natural resource management, conflict mitigation and social protection;

- **Advocate for and promote improved governance** among government institutions and civil society by supporting responsive policies, transparent resource allocation and greater accountability;

- **Inform coherent policy formulation and program design** that responds to ongoing change in environmental, social and economic conditions;

- **Enable community participation** by identifying and engaging customary institutions and valuable forms of traditional knowledge for coping with climate variability;

- **Promote empowerment of women** by creating greater opportunity for their involvement in key institutions and decision-making processes;

- Be **owned at the country level** by linking with national policies and investment plans consistent with the CAADP and the Hyogo Framework for Action;

- Build **effective partnerships**, drawing on the comparative advantages of a wide range of stakeholders; and

[4]DFID. 2011.
[5]Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2011. Inter-Agency Plan of Action for the Horn of Africa. 30 September 2011.

-   **Do no harm:** Ensure that neither humanitarian responses nor development initiatives undermine the ability of vulnerable populations to achieve livelihood security over the long-term.

Key Entry Points for Operationalizing Resilience Programs

If resilience programs are to succeed in reducing the effects of droughts in the HoA then there is a need to change the way we do things. While our understanding of resilience programming is growing based on lessons learned from current activities, some important lessons have emerged from current practice that suggest important ways forward.

Chief among these are development of programs that make **longer-term investments** (7-10 years) to address underlying causes of vulnerability. It is critical that such long-term investments have built-in response capacity for dealing with periodic shock. Programs must also achieve **sufficient scale** to ensure lasting impact on food and livelihood security of affected communities. Finally, stakeholders must find ways to promote **improved coordination** at the global, regional, national, and local levels. Potential entry points for programming in support of enhanced resilience include:

-   **Develop and use ecosystem-based planning** that enables improved access to and management of the natural resources upon which people depend. This will require regional approaches to address cross-border issues and ensure coexistence of livestock and wildlife;

-   **Compensate communities for conserving landscapes and ecosystem services** (biodiversity, water catchments, soil protection and wildlife);

-   Create **effective and efficient linkages** between humanitarian assistance and longer-term activities. For example, in Ethiopia resilience can be promoted through linking protection of basic social services with the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), the Household Asset Building Programme (HABP) and wealth creation through engagement in agricultural value chains;[6]

-   Support greater spreading of risk through **risk financing** mechanisms including weather-indexed crop and livestock insurance;

-   **Provide skills training** to enable greater employment and income-generating opportunities for especially vulnerable populations (women, asset-poor youth, displaced);

-   Seek opportunities to **utilize cash/vouchers** as a more efficient and effective alternative to direct food aid;

-   **Address the multiple aspects of malnutrition** including sustainable food production, improved child care and hygiene practices, and access to health services, safe water and sanitation facilities;

-   **Promote livelihood diversification** by supporting involvement of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in commercialization through value addition and enabling out-migration;

-   Promote **increased engagement of pastoralists and smallholder farmers in markets** by enabling greater access to financial services, market information, market infrastructure, and trade associations;

-   Maximize the potential of investments in climate-proof infrastructure that connects regions at risk of drought, agricultural markets and the financial sector by creating greater opportunities for **public-private partnerships**;

-   Seek greater geographic coherence and economies of scale by **clustering investments** in household and public assets, social protection, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction;

-   Advocate for more **timely, flexible, and efficient procurement of resources (e.g., crisis modifiers)** that enables transition from development to emergency activities based on early warning trigger indicators;

-   Look for 'quick wins' by **scaling up initiatives** that have provided promising results in terms of reducing vulnerability over the short-, medium- and long-term; and

-   Contribute to improved **knowledge management** by addressing current research gaps and identifying means of replicating and bringing to scale promising resilience programs.

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[6]DFID. 2012. Programming for Resilience in Ethiopia – a model. DFID Ethiopia.

Measuring Progress

Because resilience is a continuous *process*, it can be difficult to measure. Nonetheless, such information is critical for assessing the value of different ways of building resilience in the face of recurrent shocks. When measuring the impact of resilience programs, priority should be given to approaches that involve the affected communities themselves in assessing the success of interventions in ways that are meaningful to them. Several overarching lessons have been learned for monitoring the effectiveness of resilience building efforts at the regional, national and community levels:

- **Context-specific:** Resilience measures must be closely tied to the local context and the nature of the particular shock (e.g., drought, price volatility, conflict).

- **Shock- dependent:** It is not possible to measure resilience to shock without the implementation of comprehensive baseline assessments and the occurrence of an actual shock.

- **Robust indicators:** Measurement of resilience must include a complementary mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators that have the power to explain *why* certain individuals, households and populations have achieved different levels of resilience than others.

- **Outcome-oriented:** Measurement of resilience must move beyond the traditional focus on outputs to give priority to measurement of outcomes and impacts. Nutrition outcomes have been identified as particularly relevant indicators of resilience programs.

Promising Practices for Resilience Programming

- **Pastoral Livelihoods Initiative (PLI)**
Funded by the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) and USAID/Ethiopia, the PLI primarily focuses on improved livestock production and marketing, support for alternative livelihoods, and early warning for destocking and social safety nets. A particularly innovative and effective component of the PLI is the incorporation of a 'crisis modifier' approach to funding.

- **African Risk Capacity Project (ARC)**
The ARC project is a pan-African disaster risk pool designed to improve drought risk financing in Africa. The overarching objective of the ARC project is to provide

governments with fast-disbursing contingency funds to finance drought responses. Led by the African Union Commission (AUC) and funded by DFID, the ARC provides a framework for drought risk financing (e.g., reserves, contingency lines of credit, weather-indexed insurance, catastrophe bonds) that emphasizes crop monitoring and early warning, vulnerability assessment and mapping, emergency response, and financial planning and risk management.

- **PSNP Plus Project**
The three-year PSNP-Plus pilot project complements food and cash transfers provided through Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) with market-oriented support to achieve beneficiary graduation. Principal components of the project included capacity building for income generation, community-based savings, increased access to financial services, and transfer of productive assets as part of an overall value chain approach to improved food and livelihood security. Lessons learned through PSNP-Plus will be scaled-up through implementation of the government-supported Household Asset Building Program (HABP).

- **Arid and Marginal Lands Recovery Consortium (ARC)**
Implemented by a consortium of five NGOs in the pastoral areas of northern Kenya, ARC focuses on increasing agricultural production to protect and diversify household asset bases, and strengthening livelihood options to increase household purchasing power. ARC has been able to combine various funding streams (EC, USAID) to implement both short- and long-term approaches to building the capacity of pastoralists to deal with drought-related shocks.

- **Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP)**
The ALRMP is a community-based drought management project of the Government of Kenya to enhance food security and reduce livelihood vulnerability among livestock-based communities in the ASALs. Supported by World Bank, the drought management system includes polices and strategies, an early warning system, supporting functioning livestock markets, a funded contingency plan and overall drought coordination and response structure. The Drought Management Initiative (DMI), funded by the EC, operates within the ALRMP framework.

Figure 1. Resilience Framework
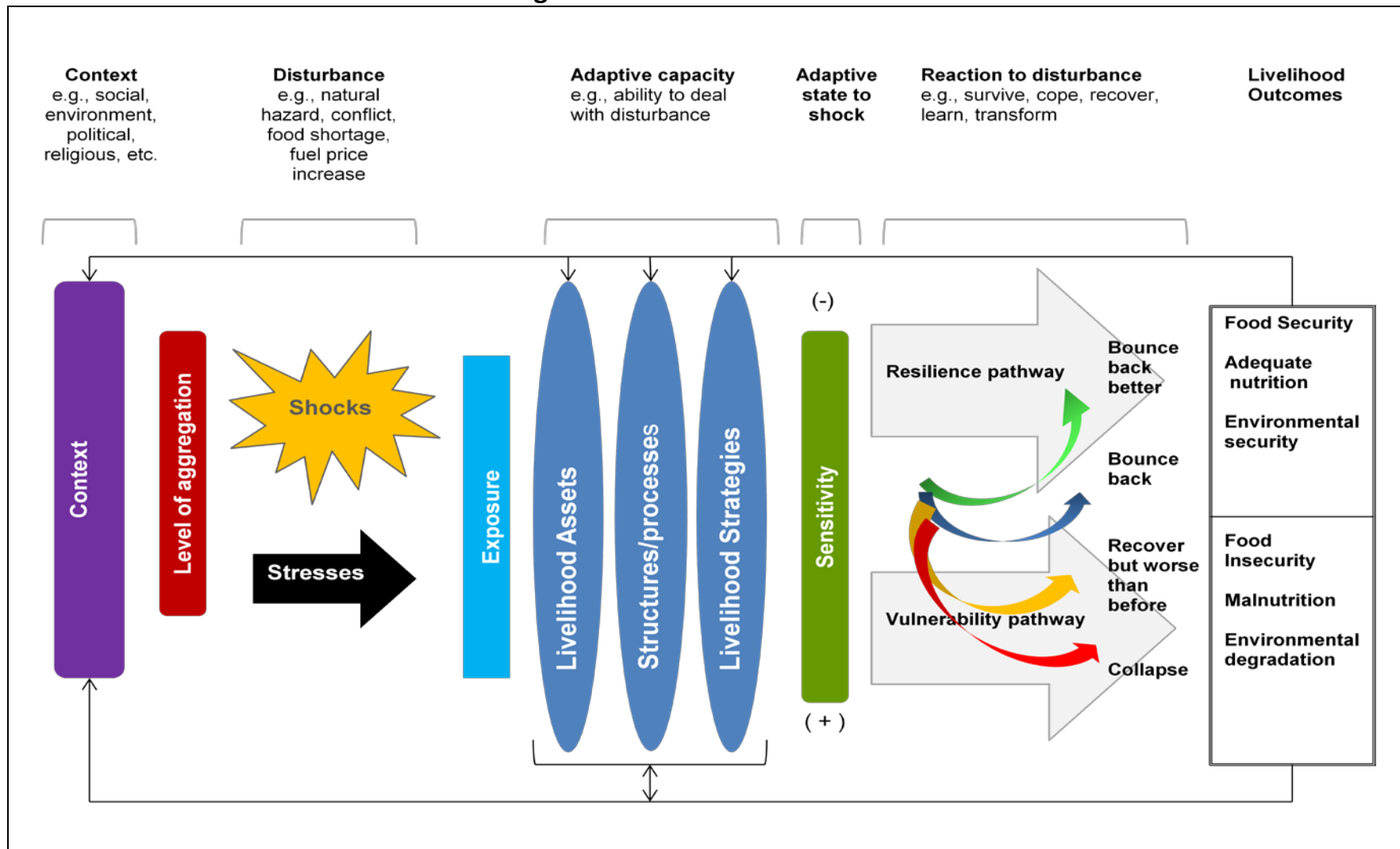
TANGO. 2012.Adapted from DFID Disaster Resilience Framework (2011), TANGO Livelihoods Framework (2007), DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (1999) and CARE Household Livelihood Security Framework (2002).