

# A REVIEW OF A MULTI-SECTORAL EVIDENCE PERSPECTIVE ON PATHWAYS TOWARD RESILIENCE WITHIN SYSTEMS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recurring shocks and stressors and their acute and downstream impacts present significant challenges to ensuring stable agrifood and market systems, health systems, social protection systems, and child protection and education systems. Resilience-focused humanitarian and development activities have the potential to bolster these systems in anticipation of future shocks and stressors, while simultaneously reducing the need for future interventions.

Despite the tremendous potential for benefits from resilience-focused programming, substantial gaps exist in our current understanding of how to achieve resilience in diverse contexts, and in view of the differing contributions to resilience that stakeholder groups make in each context. Resilience interventions often lack long-term focus, thereby limiting our understanding of the differences in acute vs. protracted responses to shocks/stressors and how these responses impact resilience. Additional gaps exist in a) scaling predictive analysis that contributes to anticipatory action, b) the representation of long-term impact evaluations, c) insights from interventions in fragile contexts, and d) systems-level approaches to resilience measurement.<sup>1</sup>

To address these gaps and propose a more holistic, systems-oriented approach to resilience, World Vision commissioned an analysis of peer-reviewed and grey literature exploring the intersection of systems, resilience programming, and policy within low and middle-income country contexts, based upon resources published within a ten-year period through May 2024. This literature review informed the creation of World Vision's multi-sectoral resilience framework and white paper. Key sources for peer-reviewed literature included Web of Science, EBSCO, and Google Scholar. Development "grey literature" was drawn from TANGO International, J-PAL, and CaLP, among others. All searches were conducted using MeSH search terms and Boolean operators, when appropriate. The research team identified 87 articles for inclusion in the initial review conducted in 2022, reflecting the priority systems described above; an additional 36 articles contributed to the May 2024 revision, totaling 123 included articles.

While variability exists in terms of operationalization, measurement, and evaluation of resilience, the high-level concept of resilience continues to be one defined by donors and implementers as the ability to respond to shocks and stressors in ways that do not create adverse consequences. With more comprehensive definitions, such as the Interagency Resilience Working Group's highlighting that efforts should not hinder long-term outcomes, specifically the "ability of countries, communities, and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses without compromising their long-term prospects."<sup>2</sup> Results suggest that resilience is context-specific and that all systems identified are complex and interconnected, necessitating an awareness of the relationships between systems and how intended and unintended effects of interventions can influence it. The COVID-19 pandemic literature provided a unique and rich opportunity to learn about systems resilience.



## INTRODUCTION

This literature review was conducted to support the development of the World Vision Multi-sectoral Resilience Framework, centering around agrifood and market systems, health systems, child protection and education, and social protection and financial inclusion. Highlighted here are some of the key and emergent themes that influence resilience across levels of these systems, considering exogenous factors, including conflict, COVID-19, and climate change, the role of the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, and how partnerships can be leveraged to build more resilient systems. This review includes both peer-reviewed and grey literature from development and practice to incorporate holistic perspectives, theories, and lessons learned.

## KEY FINDINGS

1. **Coupling resilience-focused activities with Protective Safety Net Programs** may allow for improvements across all streams of interest.
2. There is an **urgent need to incorporate climate change into resilience programming**, especially in our consideration of agrifood and market systems and livelihoods.
3. **“Lessons learned” from COVID-19** should be considered and integrated into planning response to current and future shocks.
4. Given the difficulty of collecting data in fragile settings, **building resilience to conflict and in conflict settings is a clear gap** in the literature.
5. **Digital literacy is a powerful tool to support resilience.**
6. There is a severe **shortage of studies conducted in urban areas.**
7. **Social cohesion** should underpin all resilience efforts.
8. Missing from the literature is the **role of faith and religion in building resilience.**

## AGRIFOOD AND MARKET SYSTEMS

- COVID-19 posed a major threat to agrifood and market systems, though its impacts on these systems were mixed. Other shocks, such as conflict and climate change, have similar downstream impacts on these systems.
- Agrifood and market interventions, including with vendors and intermediaries, are needed in urban contexts. There is a large emphasis on rural development, and urban areas represent a key area of expansion.
- Supply chain intermediaries, including street vendors, are often overlooked in interventions but play a critical role in ensuring the success of markets. Vendors should be supported through resilience-focused activities, such as providing access to credit, strengthening supply chains, and improving access to markets.
- Interventions within agrifood and market systems should be climate-sensitive with a focus on crop diversification, reliance on local knowledge, and integration of climate-resilient agricultural activities.
- Agrifood and market systems interventions should incorporate a gender-sensitive lens, including making land more accessible to women, providing training and support, and increasing access to credit.

- Access to markets and livelihoods can prevent conflict,<sup>3</sup> and it is essential to bolster existing market infrastructure to support vendors and consumers.

## **HEALTH SYSTEMS**

- Community monitoring and engagement with the socio-cultural context of the setting before a crisis is necessary to build resilient systems.
- Embedded efforts to promote mutual trust and respect between health actors (e.g., healthcare workers, ministry of health) and the communities they serve is critical for engagement with care. Community health workers may be able to bridge the gap between healthcare systems and communities they serve.
- People-centered health systems coupled with resource capacity building (e.g., availability of services, sufficient staffing) is critical for building health systems resilience.
- Some elements of resilient health systems include successful coordination, transparent communication and functional surveillance (including community surveillance), efficient leveraging of resources, adequate supply of a trained and motivated workforce, and an undisrupted and wide array of healthcare services.
- Innovative approaches and technologies (e.g., telehealth, integration with pharmacies) may be useful for triage and care without overburdening health systems.

## **CHILD PROTECTION AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

- Child protection programs should be multifactorial and multi-sectoral, considering gender equity, supporting effective policies for enabling child protection, strengthening the capacity for community-based care, and empowering children to participate in decisions to improve their resilience.
- Existing community structures and partnerships should be strengthened to avoid undermining local child protection mechanisms.
- An understanding of sociocultural context is necessary to build resilience for youth; there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to resilience in child protection and education.
- Disasters can decimate structures and systems that families and children depend on; it is critical to ensure consistent access to services to build resilience.
- Providing youth with training and job referral improves labor force participation and increases access to income. Evidence suggests these results were maintained even during unanticipated shock (i.e., COVID-19).
- Digital/technological literacy represents a major gap and opportunity to build resilience among youth, especially in education.

## **FINANCIAL INCLUSION**

- Regular, planned cash transfers over long periods of time have great potential to help households meet immediate nutrition, economic, and health needs. Lump-sum transfers may provide longer-term economic enhancement for households.
- Cash transfers during extreme shocks allow for future planning and can set the stage for livelihood support.

- Coupling cash transfers with resilience-focused livelihoods interventions, trainings, and resources may yield transformative results.
- Saving and borrowing may not be adequate when populations are coping with larger shocks, and cash may be needed to smooth shock. If this space contracts, resilience activities may collapse.
- Financial inclusion should be gender-sensitive to ensure equity in decision-making and provide women with opportunities for saving, investment, and engagement with markets.
- Social infrastructure in the form of loans groups (e.g. VSLAs) may be a good strategy to ensure consistent access to forms of economic and social capital, especially for women.
- Digital literacy is critical to improve access to and use of bank accounts, cash transfers, and savings accounts.

## **SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS**

- Social safety nets provide critical resources. Access to resources, especially cash, has the potential to improve outcomes, but as a standalone may not improve resilience.
- Gender influences the skills, strategies, and mechanisms that individuals use to cope with shock, therefore, gender equity/integration is a critical component for improving resilience.
- Strengthening social networks, providing links to formal and informal government structures, and empowering collective action can be useful for increasing resilience, especially for women and youth.
- Integrating resilience programming into social safety nets can increase the contributions social protection makes to the anticipatory capacity of national institutions and systems to better respond to shock.
- Women should be treated as equal agents of transformative change, and there is a need to build an understanding of the gender-specific implications of resilience-building interventions.

## **BACKGROUND**

Recurring and unexpected shocks and chronic stressors present a significant challenge to stable agrifood and market systems, health and social systems, child protection and education, and multi-sectoral resilience. Shocks can be idiosyncratic (i.e., endogenous), such as loss of primary household income source, or covariate (i.e., exogenous), such as drought, flooding, inflation.<sup>4</sup> Shocks can be slow- or rapid-onset and predictable or not.<sup>4</sup> Types of shocks and stressors broadly fall into geophysical/meteorological (i.e., flood, drought, hurricanes), human-induced (i.e., terrorism, conflict), biological (i.e., COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, Ebola), and technological (i.e., nuclear failures).<sup>5</sup> Shocks and stressors can have significant acute and downstream consequences. For example, COVID-19, the ultimate stress test for resilient systems, led to increased morbidity and mortality,<sup>6</sup> loss of livelihoods,<sup>7</sup> market disruptions,<sup>8</sup> and deterioration of social connections.<sup>9</sup>

Humanitarian assistance historically has provided critical resources to mitigate adverse outcomes to shocks and stressors, but has done little to build resilience to bolster communities, households, and individuals against future events.<sup>10,11</sup> Therefore, resilience-oriented programming has emerged as a powerful complement to humanitarian interventions with the potential to address the consequences of acute shocks while simultaneously equipping actors with resources to improve their response to future shocks and stressors. Resilience-focused programming can also yield substantial economic impacts for donors. A USAID report in 2018 found that for every \$1 spent on safety net or resilience programming, ~\$2 in assistance costs were offset, and when avoided losses were incorporated, ~\$3 was saved.<sup>12</sup> Humanitarian Assistance Averted (HAA), or the alleviation for the need for humanitarian assistance as a direct effect of resilience-focused interventions, has the potential to benefit donors, implementing partners, and recipients of humanitarian assistance.

However, although the literature has identified critical knowledge that shapes our understanding of what makes systems resilient, several key limitations exist. First is the **dearth of resilience studies with a long-term focus**. A recent systematic review of resilience literature indicated that most empirical studies had a scope of one year or less.<sup>1</sup> This severely limits the measurement of pre-shock and long-term post-shock resilience. Second was the **difficulty of predicting shocks and stressors**<sup>1</sup> despite the availability of early warning systems and emerging machine learning tools.<sup>13</sup> Third was the **under-representation of empirical resilience research in fragile settings**.<sup>1</sup> Fourth was the limited application of resilience measurement in impact evaluations.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, reliably measuring **systems-level resilience** is a gap that is critical to address and holds promise as an innovative approach.<sup>14</sup>

Although much attention has been paid to resilience, there is no universally agreed-upon definition of resilience or how to measure it, and it is “heavily contested.”<sup>15</sup> Resilience, broadly defined, is the ability to manage change by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses without compromising one’s long-term prospects. Some scholars posit that resilience is only achieved when households escape poverty.<sup>1</sup> Though, the modern shock context demonstrates that escape from poverty may be an artificial threshold for resilience to shocks and stresses.<sup>16</sup> Other thought leaders emphasize the importance of building capacities that enable individuals, households, and communities to manage shocks. Capacities aim to enable households, communities, and societies to absorb, adapt, or transform in the context of shocks and stresses so that they can better manage these contexts.

The resilience literature emphasizes the notion that we can only know if resilience has been achieved by monitoring well-being outcomes, such as improved nutritional status, reduced poverty levels, or food security (i.e., latent variables).<sup>1</sup> Empirical studies have attempted to outline pathways to resilience in various ways. These include 1) resilience as a set of capacities (absorptive, adaptive, and transformative); 2) resilience as a normative condition; and 3) resilience as a return to equilibrium.

The first is **resilience as capacity**, which views resilience as a set of individual, household, or community capacities that prevent long-term adverse outcomes following stressors and shocks.<sup>1,17</sup> TANGO International, one of the first organizations to measure and conceptualize resilience, provided a framework identifying the linkages between pre-shock conditions, capacities and wellbeing outcomes. This framework was further developed by the Interagency Working Group, which formalized a comprehensively articulated analytical framework. The FAO RIMA approach offered a latent class analysis of empirical cross sectional household data<sup>1,17</sup> which measure four “pillars” of food security resilience: 1) access to basic services; 2) assets; 3) social safety nets; 4) and adaptive capacity.<sup>1,18</sup> This conceptualization views resilience as a latent construct that captures the capacities of actors across levels of the socioecological model (e.g., individual, household, community, etc.) to limit the adverse consequences of stressors and shocks.<sup>1</sup> Resilience capacities, as defined by TANGO are absorptive, adaptive, and transformative.<sup>19</sup>

**Absorptive capacities** are the ability to minimize exposure to shocks and stressors, absorb a shock to mitigate the impact through prevention, and employ coping strategies to avoid permanent adverse outcomes and recover quickly from shocks and stressors.<sup>19</sup> Absorptive capacities include asset ownership, bonding social capital (i.e., between community group members), and access to informal safety nets.<sup>19</sup>

**Adaptive capacities** allow for proactive and informed decision making about livelihood strategies in response to change.<sup>19</sup> Adaptive capacities include bridging (i.e., between members of one group to members of another) and linking social capital (i.e., vertically between groups).<sup>19</sup>

**Transformative capacities** are conditions that cultivate lasting resilience<sup>19</sup> and include bridging and linking social capital, access to services, markets, women’s empowerment, and governance.<sup>19</sup>

Transformation, as a resilience approach, has also been incorporated into frameworks developed by Barrett et al., 2021 and further conceptualized by Asadzadeh et al., 2022, where shocks and stressors are seen as opportunities to change the trajectory of resilience outcomes without any adverse effects to developmental progress.<sup>1,20</sup>

Resilience as a set of capacities is widely used in the literature,<sup>28,29,32,55–57,58,59,60</sup> and has several strengths, including that it can integrate over multiple domains using a systems approach, has broad applicability, and treats resilience as an outcome that can be measured, which is useful for monitoring and evaluation.<sup>1</sup> The weakness of treating resilience as a capacity is that it is difficult to measure and often relies on multiple indicators, complicating analyses.<sup>1</sup>

Other conceptualizations of resilience including viewing it not as a capacity,<sup>29</sup> but rather as a **normative condition**, used to avoid adverse consequences to reach a pre-shock standard using “pro-poor” framework.<sup>1</sup> This approach overlooks social aspects, such as exclusion, capital, and solidarity<sup>29</sup> and although fairly-widely employed,<sup>31,36,61,62</sup> is controversial due to



concerns about the limitations on resilience measurement imposed by a normative standard.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the conceptualization of **resilience as a return to equilibrium** views resilience as a return to the state prior to incidence of a shock or stressor and assesses the post-shock effects on outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Although this view has gained some traction,<sup>17,19,29,32,33</sup> if the pre-shock environment was not desirable, return to equilibrium may carry inherent consequences inhibiting resilience.<sup>1</sup>

Developing impact frameworks for measuring intervention strategies that strengthen capacities to achieve resilience is a work in progress. Impact evaluations require that target populations experience hazards or shock events that can be compared with and without resilience-focused interventions. This means that monitoring around shock events and long-term high-frequency monitoring of well-being outcomes is essential.

## OBJECTIVES

The objective of this review was to outline existing frameworks and evidence to emphasize the ways that resilience can support cohesion at the systems level, with attention to agrifood and market systems, health systems, child protection and education, and social protection and financial inclusion. In this review, there were two specific objectives:

**Objective 1:** Outline donor definitions of resilience, resilience measurements, and strengths and weaknesses of approaches.

**Objective 2:** Review and summarize peer-reviewed and grey literature on resilience to build an understanding of resilient agrifood and market systems, health systems, child protection and education systems, and social protection and financial inclusion.

## METHODS

This review aimed to identify the most important research related to the specified scope while balancing the quality of peer-reviewed and grey literature to inform the evidence base for the World Vision Resilience Framework. This review is not exhaustive but was conducted using similar approaches to a systematic or scoping review. Literature searches were performed in online peer-reviewed databases (i.e., Web of Science, EBSCO, JSTOR, and GoogleScholar). Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and Boolean “AND,” “NOT,” “OR” operators were used for key search terms in peer-reviewed databases. Searches varied slightly across databases and evolved iteratively. Systematic and scoping reviews were included, when possible.

Because much of the literature on resilience is published outside of an academic context, grey literature was reviewed using research published and cataloged by J-PAL, CaLP Network, Oxford Policy Group, FSN Network-REAL, TANGO International, and hand searching. Searches were not restricted by language or publication date, though the scope was primarily limited to 2016 and onward to account for innovation in technology and the field more generally. An update was conducted in May 2024, and search dates were restricted to February 2022 through May 2024.

Each search had specific terms based on initial identification by World Vision. Agrifood and market systems key terms included poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, and financial inclusion (savings groups). Other terms that capture elements of food security and resilience, such as coping strategies, psychological resilience, absorptive capacity, dietary diversity, etc. were included (Table 1). Health systems terms included health service delivery, health workforce (including surge capacity), health information systems, access to essential medications, health systems financing, leadership and governance, and One Health. Social systems terms included social behavioral change, faith identity, social cohesion/social capital, community-based approaches, gender equity, social inclusion, social protection, governance, and social accountability. Community-based child protection systems include laws, policies, standards, and regulations, services and service-delivery mechanisms, capacities, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration mechanisms, accountability mechanisms, circle of care, child resilience, life skills, and participation.

Table 1. Sample search strategy terms for agrifood and market systems section of systematic literature review

Search strategy	Indicators	Outcomes	Restriction of sample	Exclusions
1	(food security and resilience capabilities OR food security and resilience capacities OR resilience capabilities OR absorptive capacity OR adaptive capacity OR transformative capacity OR food availability OR food utilization OR food access OR food consumption score OR coping strategies index OR food coping OR dietary diversity OR household food expenditure OR nutrition)	AND (resilience OR (community resilience OR psychological resilience OR psychosocial resilience OR development resilience OR food security resilience OR build back better OR resilient systems OR resilient households OR resilient individuals OR resilient communities OR resilient markets OR resilience capabilities OR absorptive capacity OR adaptive capacity OR transformative capacity)	AND (low-income countries OR middle-income countries OR LMIC)	NOT (engineering) NOT (electrical) NOT (ecology) NOT (psychology)

Searches were performed across several streams: agrifood and market systems, health systems, child protection and education, and social protection and financial inclusion, keeping World Vision sector strategy outcomes in mind. The World Vision team identified 20 key documents from the grey literature that outlined critical information about systems-level resilience. These documents were incorporated into the review. Grey and peer-reviewed literature were restricted to low- and middle-income countries, and unrelated fields (e.g., engineering, ecology) were excluded. Additional searches were conducted for literature related to COVID-19, conflict, climate change, and the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus.

All available articles underwent a multi-step screening process. Titles and abstracts of results were screened, and any that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded. Studies that met the inclusion criteria and passed the title and abstract screen underwent full-text review. Full-text articles were incorporated into a tabular literature review that documented year of publication, type of shock, type of document, abstract, database where the article was found, and key findings.

## **RESULTS**

In the initial review, 87 results were included. More than half of included articles were drawn from grey literature (61%). Most articles focused on building resilience to non-specific or environmental shocks. All included articles were published after 2011, with most published in 2016 or later. In the update, 36 articles from peer-reviewed sources were included and focused largely on food and health systems resilience. A total of 123 articles were included in the initial and updated version of the review.

### **SECTION 1: DONOR DEFINITIONS OF RESILIENCE**

To the first objective, donor definitions of resilience, resilience measurements, and strengths and weaknesses of approaches have been outlined in Table 2.

All potential donors had definitions of resilience, with some convergence. Most donors with explicit conceptualizations of resilience included verbiage about the ability to recover from shocks and protect against future shocks through learning, transformation, improved growth, a focus on disaster risk reduction activities, or some combination of these strategies. USAID, OECD, FAO, and World Bank viewed resilience as a capacity, and were largely in agreement on the use of absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities. ODI, OECD, AFDB, and ADB outlined a specific focus on fragility and/or vulnerability, which may limit the ability to view potential beneficiaries as actors of transformative change.

**Table 2. Identified donor definitions/conceptualizations of resilience, measurement approaches, benefits, and limitations**

<b>Donor</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Measurement approach</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
USAID	The ability of people, households, communities, countries and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.	Resilience Measurement Practical Guidance documents	Focus on resilience as a capacity	Wide measurement and conceptualization of resilience may limit strength of interventions
ODI	<p>Making people, communities, and systems better prepared to withstand catastrophic events (both natural and manmade) and able to bounce back more quickly and emerge stronger from these shocks and stresses<sup>34</sup></p> <p>Resilient development enables people, socioeconomic and environmental systems to “cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation”</p>	BRACED Rapid Response Research (RRR)	Focus on iterative feedback and risk-informed development may allow for faster turnaround in “lessons learned”	<p>Narrow focus on risk and vulnerability limits the potential to measure and conceptualize resilience sufficiently</p> <p>Focus on “development” vs. humanitarian response</p>

OECD	<p>Ability of households, communities, and nations to absorb and recover from shocks, while positively adapting and transforming their structures and means for living in the face of long-term stresses, change, and uncertainty</p> <p>Follow resilience as a capacity approach.</p>	Resilience systems analysis (RSA)	Recognizes resilience as a capacity	Focus on risk and vulnerability may limit impact of resilience-focused programs
FAO	The capacity of a household to bounce back to a previous level of well-being (for instance, food security) after a shock	Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA II)	Recognizes resilience as a capacity	Does not measure dynamic nature of resilience and food security; unclear which resilience capacities are acquired or deployed in the short, medium, and long term



World Bank	Resilience as a context-specific and operation-specific capacity	Results Monitoring and Evaluation for Resilience Building Operations (ReM&E)	Recognizes resilience as a capacity	Focus on context- and operation-specific capacity may limit reach
AFDB	Institutionalization of fragility agenda focuses on both fragility and resilience	NA	Transition Support Facility assists regional member countries in fragile or transition settings	Focus on fragility may limit impact of resilience-focused projects (i.e., focusing on weaknesses rather than strengths)
ADB	Resilience activities are committed to prosperity, inclusivity, and sustainability for communities in Asia and the Pacific	NA	Interested in supporting urban resilience, <sup>35</sup> and social protection <sup>36</sup>	Focus on risk may limit impact

## USAID

USAID conceptualizes resilience as “The ability of people, households, communities, countries and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.”<sup>11</sup>

Standard indicators for resilience are guided by the Resilience Measurement Practical Guidance Series<sup>37</sup> and include resilience assessment, measuring shocks and stresses, resilience capacity measurement, resilience analysis, design and planning for resilience monitoring and evaluation at the activity level, and recurrent monitoring surveys.

USAID focuses on resilience as a capacity, but the comprehensive measurement and conceptualization of resilience and disagreements between Bureaus within USAID of what resilience is and how to measure it may limit the strength of interventions.

## ODI

ODI conceptualizes resilience as the capacity to make “people, communities and systems better prepared to withstand catastrophic events (both natural and manmade) and able to bounce back more quickly and emerge stronger from these shocks and stresses.”<sup>34</sup> ODI views resilience through the lens of risk-informed development, which “enables people, socioeconomic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation.”<sup>38</sup>

This conceptualization seeks to avoid creating complex risks through poor development choices and focuses on increasing resilience, decreasing vulnerability through development, and promoting iterative and continual learning to build in sustainability. ODI has outlined “good practice principles” in risk-informed development that focus on 1) inclusivity and transparency; 2) phased and iterative development; 3) flexibility and adaptability; and 4) continuous learning and reflection.<sup>38</sup>

### *Inclusive and transparent*

ODI’s “good practice principle” of inclusivity and transparency requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure that marginalized actors and livelihood-dependent critical ecosystems are represented. This ensures transparency and inclusivity in decision-making and data collection to decrease risk and improve sustainability.<sup>38</sup>

### *Phased and iterative*

The phased and iterative “good practice principle” requires risk assessment and an understanding of risk tolerance in monitoring and evaluation in order to reflect, review, and adjust development objectives based on feedback.<sup>38</sup>

### *Flexible and adaptive*

The flexible and adaptive “good practice principle” outlines that development contexts, capacities, and resources for acting are not homogenous and that actors (e.g., donors, beneficiaries, investors, etc.) have varying priorities. Risk-informed development allows flexibility in identifying and addressing threats and risks according to priorities, resources, and capacities of stakeholders and the context.<sup>38</sup>

### *Continuous learning and reflection*

The continuous learning and reflective “good practice principle” indicates that development pathways, threats, risks, and knowledge are constantly evolving, and that development is not an end point, but that risk analyses and evaluations should be re-assessed as situations change. It stresses the need to learn from past failed responses to avoid repeating mistakes and reduce vulnerability to emerging threats.<sup>38</sup>

ODI measures resilience using the BRACED Rapid Response Research (RRR) approach,<sup>39</sup> which uses mobile phones to collect information from households affected by disasters and measures resilience using subjective methods. The benefits of this approach are that it focuses on iterative feedback and risk-informed development, which may allow for faster turnaround of “lessons learned.” However, significant gaps in information collection and use persist across donors, competitors, and the sector, more generally, so this can only be an innovative and useful approach if enacted effectively.

Limitations of ODI’s approach are the narrow focus on risk and vulnerability, that even when coupled with rapid iterative feedback and subjective perceptions of resilience, may view resilience as the opposite of vulnerability instead of conceptualizing it as a capacity that can be improved.

## **OECD**

OECD conceptualizes resilience as a capacity and defines resilience as the “ability of households, communities, and nations to absorb and recover from shocks, while positively adapting and transforming their structures and means for living in the face of long-term stresses, change, and uncertainty.”<sup>40</sup>

OECD uses Resilience Systems Analysis (RSA), which is a tool that facilitates multi-stakeholder resilience analysis workshops, informs design of a roadmap to boost the resilience of communities and societies, and integrates the results of the analysis into development and humanitarian programming. This approach builds on risk management approaches by addressing complexity of risks, accounts for uncertainty and change, merges risk forecasting and critical reflection, examines the role of power dynamics in resilience, and accounts for covariate and idiosyncratic shocks.<sup>40</sup> Similar to other potential donors, OECD focuses on risk and vulnerability, which may limit the impact of resilience-focused programming.

## **FAO**

FAO views resilience as the “capacity of a household to bounce back to a previous level of well-being (for instance food security) after a shock.”<sup>18</sup>

FAO uses the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA II)<sup>18</sup> tool to monitor and evaluate resilience-focused programming. RIMA II consists of direct and indirect analytic components and quantifies resilience using four distinct variables: access to basic services (ABS), assets (AST), adaptive capacity (AC), and social safety nets (SSN). RIMA II conceptualizes resilience as a capacity, where food security and shocks are modeled as variables separate from resilience capacity. Food security is considered as an achievement of resilience.

Key limitations of this approach are that they do not measure the dynamic nature of resilience and food security. Because resilience is dynamic, and communities routinely face recurring shocks, it is unclear which resilience capacities are acquired or deployed in the short-, medium-, and long-term horizons.

## **World Bank**

World Bank views resilience as a context- and operation-specific capacity.

World Bank uses the Results Monitoring and Evaluation for Resilience Building Operations (ReM&E).<sup>41</sup> World Bank views resilience as a capacity, mirroring other actors that focus on resilience-building activities focused on adaptive, absorptive, and transformative capacities. Beyond this, World Bank recommends operationalizing resilience by translating definitions and concepts (e.g., socio-economic, geographic, and sectoral) to the context of the operation and adopting an operation-specific definition of resilience. An operation-specific definition characterizes shock/stress type, systems and people who are vulnerable to the shock/stressor, and the ability of entities to anticipate, respond to, and recover from shocks/stressors.<sup>41</sup> Although this approach may be useful for understanding context/operation-specific capacities and vulnerabilities, the focus may also limit reach and exclude key actors.

## **African Development Bank Group (AFDB)**

AFDB frames resilience as counter to fragility, using a fragility agenda. AFDB has put a transition support facility in place that assists regional member countries in fragile or transition settings with improving resilience to future shocks. However, a focus on fragility may limit impact of resilience-focused projects.

## **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

ADB’s resilience activities are committed to regional prosperity, inclusivity, and sustainability, with a clearly articulated interest in supporting social protection<sup>36</sup> and urban resilience,<sup>35</sup> the latter being a critically overlooked area of resilience programming. Similar to other donors, the focus on risk mitigation and vulnerability may limit the impact of resilience-focused programs.

## SECTION 2: REVIEW AND SUMMARY OF RESILIENCE LITERATURE

To the second objective, peer-reviewed and grey literature on resilience has been reviewed and summarized to build an understanding of resilient agrifood and market systems, health systems, child protection and education systems, and social protection and financial inclusion.

Across sectors, there was a strong concentration of studies in East Africa (Ethiopia n=21; Kenya n=15; Uganda n=13) and the Sahel (Niger n=9; Nigeria n=9, Burkina Faso n=6) (Figure 1). There were some differences across sectors; for example, Ethiopia had the greatest concentration of studies in agrifood and market systems and social protection, but Nigeria and Brazil had the highest concentration of health systems studies (Figure 2). Twenty-one studies were multi-country. More research on resilience was available for agrifood and market systems than other sectors.

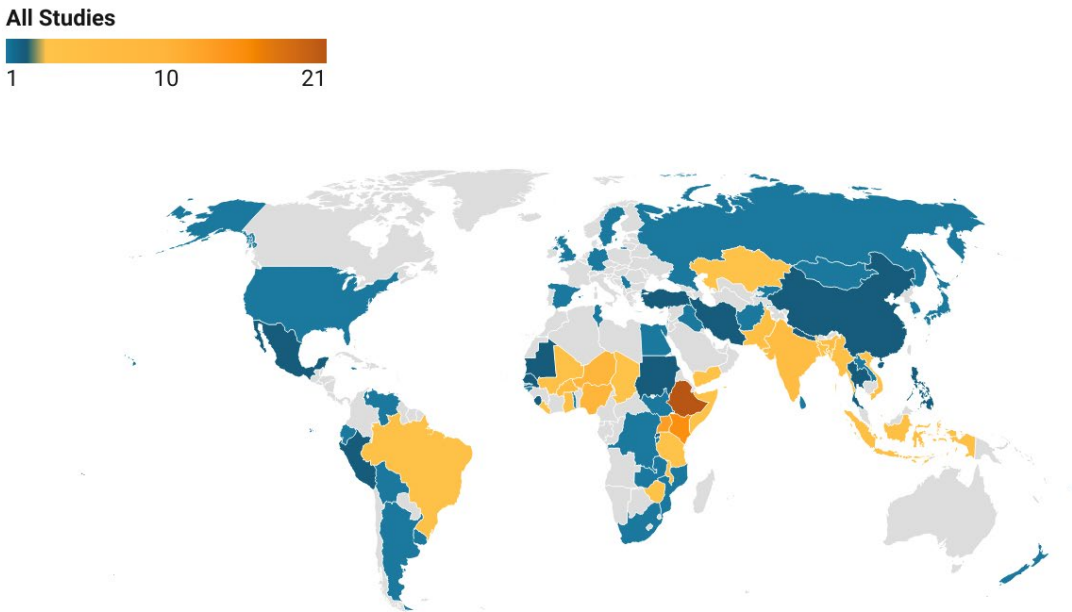


Figure 1. Concentration of all studies by country (excludes literature reviews)



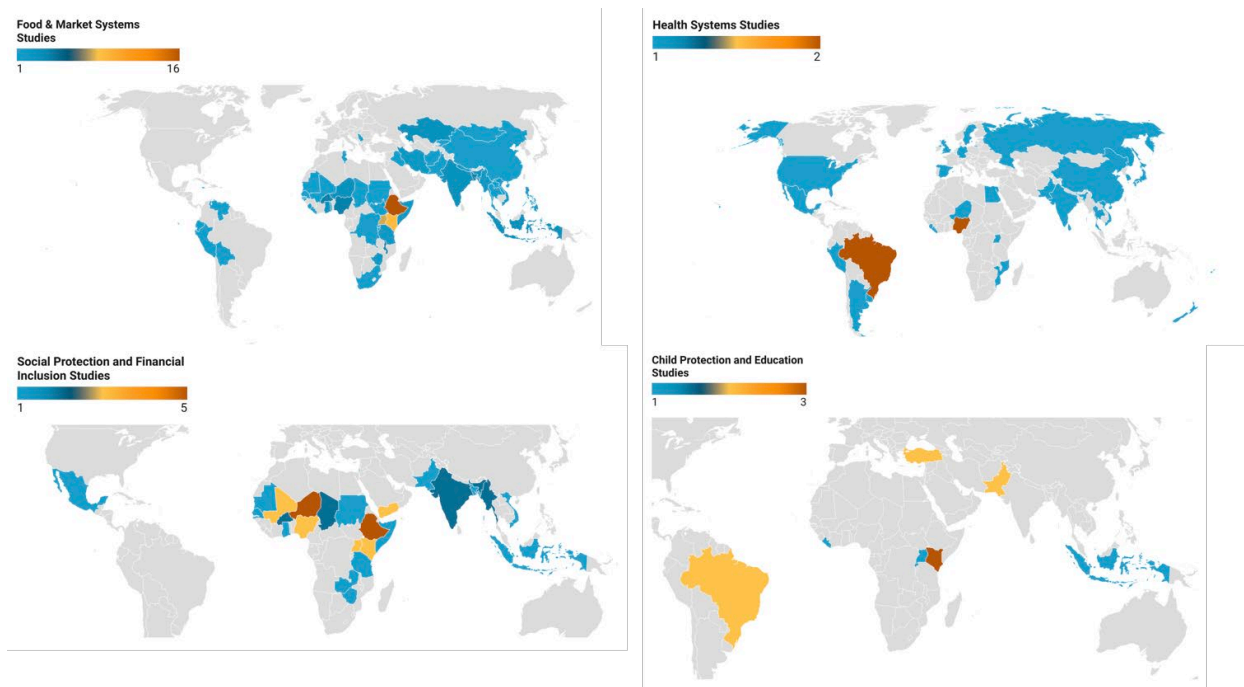


Figure 2. Concentration of studies by country across sectors

## INTERSECTING FINDINGS

Although streams are evaluated independently of one another here, they are strongly interdependent and interconnected. Social protection provides access to education and food through social assistance (e.g., cash and voucher assistance, public works programs, fee waivers) and labor market programs, child and social protection through social care services, and healthcare through social insurance (e.g., insurance). **Coupling resilience-focused activities with Protective Safety Net Programs may allow for improvements across all streams of interest.** However, results of <sup>a</sup>productive safety nets alone may be modest,<sup>42–44</sup> and interventions should be tailored to contexts.

Most of the resilience literature centers around droughts, flooding and other climate-related shocks. There is an **urgent need to incorporate climate sensitivity into resilience programming**, especially in our consideration of agrifood and market systems and livelihoods. World Vision’s position on climate change and focus on environmental stewardship through advocacy, relief, and ecologically sound development activities is uniquely positioned to shape future climate-sensitive resilience activities and frameworks.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> <https://www.acdivoca.org/what-we-do/tools/market-systems-diagnostic/>

<sup>b</sup> <https://www.abtassociates.com/what-we-do/focus-areas/environment-energy/mitigating-risk-and-building-resilience>

<sup>c</sup> <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/program-areas/resilience>

<sup>d</sup> <https://www.crs.org/resource-center/integral-human-development-overview>

<sup>e</sup> <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/topics/resilience/>

<sup>f</sup> <https://www.wvi.org/our-work/climate-change>

**COVID-19 should be considered retrospectively for “lessons learned” and prospectively for planning and integration.** COVID-19 was a litmus test for our evaluation of the strength and resilience of systems spanning all the identified streams. COVID-19 also presented the unique opportunity to assess where systems have failed and how they can be strengthened. Much like the 2014 Ebola outbreak, COVID-19 exposed the limitations of health systems in their engagement with community stakeholders and illuminated a lack of mutual trust and respect between health actors and the communities they serve that limited the effectiveness of interventions, despite the availability of resources. COVID-19 also revealed the fragility of the supply chain, and the actors within it, to provide essential goods and resources and shifted our attention toward a better understanding of how to bolster these systems toward resilience.

**Given the difficulty of collecting data in fragile settings, building resilience to conflict is a clear gap in the literature.** Although some studies have been conducted in fragile settings, more attention should be paid to how systems can be strengthened to provide essential resources when populations are under severe duress and how resilience can be built at each critical juncture. Incorporating the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus is emerging as a powerful tool to affect change in fragile and post-emergency/disaster settings and should be incorporated into resilience-focused programs.

**Digital literacy is a powerful tool to support resilience.** Digital literacy has the potential to be transformative across sectors, connecting people with resources, allowing for data collection and dissemination among hard-to-reach populations, enabling cash and voucher assistance, providing education and training opportunities to improve information equity, and strengthening social networks. Some examples of promising practices are outlined here:

- **Agrifood and market systems:** Smallholder farmers can access information about climate-sensitive agriculture, connect with extension agents, and learn from other farmers. Vendors and livestock owners can monitor market prices to have autonomy over when and where to buy and sell goods. Households can access vouchers and mobile money remotely. Online services can provide tools that decrease women and children’s time spent getting to and from food distribution points.<sup>45</sup>
- **Health systems:** Hospitals can monitor admissions and discharges, pharmacies can monitor stocks to prevent stockouts and theft, insurance schemes can be expanded to enroll difficult-to-reach populations, and staffing can be managed digitally to ensure sufficiency of healthcare workers and meet surge capacity.<sup>46</sup>
- **Child protection and education:** Digital learning platforms can provide high-quality, culturally appropriate education to youth, child protection reporting can be streamlined and directed to appropriate authorities, and access to child-safe social media can connect youth to social networks.<sup>47</sup>
- **Social protection and financial inclusion:** Cash transfers can be sent remotely, serving populations in hard-to-reach areas. Digital literacy can improve access to mobile money for cash and voucher assistance and remittances. Mobile applications can provide resources or serve as a “panic button” for gender-based violence.<sup>45</sup>

**There is a severe shortage of studies on agrifood and market systems conducted in urban areas.** Much of the resilience literature is focused on rural households and particularly on food security and livelihoods. As communities begin to shift into urban areas, there is a need to support interventions aimed at building urban resilience (e.g., bolstering urban markets, supporting intermediaries).

**Social cohesion should underpin all resilience efforts.** Social cohesion has impacts across agrifood and market systems, social protection and financial inclusion, child protection and education, and health systems resilience. Social cohesion efforts can be used in non-fragile settings and can transition or be coupled with peacebuilding efforts ad hoc in fragile settings and complex emergencies. Social cohesion can be driven by faith and religious group inclusion. This is a critical gap that World Vision is well-suited to fill. Although some evidence exists that faith/religious affiliation can provide a source of strength and allow for psychosocial coping during shock, resilience literature has largely overlooked supporting faith/religion as a component of resilience.

### **RESILIENT AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS**

Agrifood systems include all of the inputs and outputs related to the production, process, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food.<sup>48</sup> This includes the encompassing environment, individuals, institutions, processes, and infrastructures that enable the system to function, and the outputs, including food for consumption and waste.<sup>48</sup> In low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), producers are comprised of individuals who engage in smallholder and subsistence agricultural practices, such as fishing,<sup>48</sup> and markets typically operate through the sale of products through brokers who act as intermediaries, selling goods to customers through open markets, street vendors, and stores.<sup>48</sup>

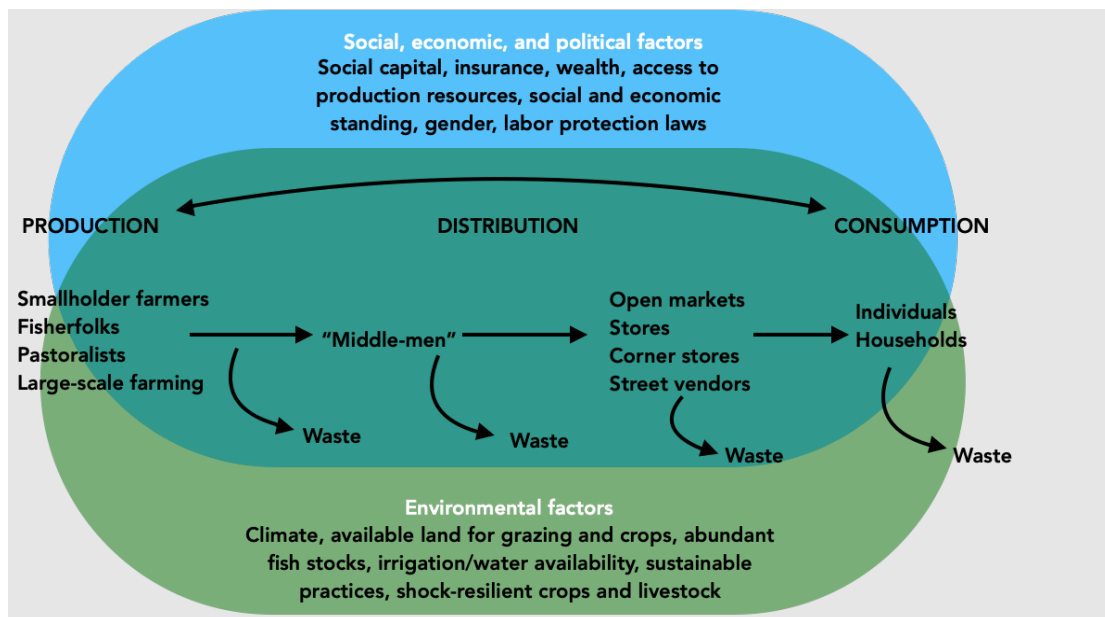


Figure 3. Social, economic, political, and environmental factors influencing food and market systems production, distribution, and consumption in LMICs

Shocks differentially impact the market across production, distribution, and consumption. Smallholder farmers may be unable to access production resources, such as seeds and farming implements due to increased prices. Changes in regimes may create wider gender inequity that precludes women from engaging in markets. Intermediaries may upcharge to profit on goods, creating loss for producers and inflating market costs. Market infrastructure may be disrupted due to conflict or natural disaster, and individuals may be unable to purchase goods, driving down consumption and production (Figure 1).

### World Vision sector strategy outcomes

Outcomes prioritized by World Vision’s food security and livelihoods sector are 1) improved access and availability to food (measured by household and community production, income, and consumption); 2) decreased stunting and wasting; 3) more equitable distribution of intra-household roles, responsibilities, and benefits between genders; 4) more equitable and inclusive agrifood and market systems; and 5) improved management and conservation of natural resources.

Markets are part of a complex, interconnected, and nested hierarchical system with clear connections across value chains, which are connected to and dependent upon service and markets, processing, and distribution (Figure 1).<sup>49</sup> These systems have asymmetrical production, processing, and retail, and may be a function of the demand of distant markets, producing homogenous foodscapes (e.g., by generating cash crops) and reducing crop and breed diversity and buffer capacity.<sup>50</sup> The interconnections and dependencies of markets and their inequities amplify the effects of shocks and stressors. Efforts should support market systems to build resilience capacities internally at the systems level for more impactful outcomes.<sup>49</sup>

COVID-19 severely impacted global and local agrifood and market systems through supply chain disruptions, ability to access food, and market closures. COVID-19 is just one shock mentioned here; there are similar downstream effects from climate change, environmental shocks, and conflict,<sup>51,52</sup> among others.<sup>51</sup> Some evidence indicates that supply chains were actually quite resilient and recovered fairly quickly in some contexts after major disruptions.<sup>51</sup> One study in India found that states with better supply chain logistics recovered more quickly and had fewer disruptions and higher rates of food consumption, with staple food items having the greatest increase in costs.<sup>53</sup> In this study, rural and urban areas had similar levels of vulnerability to supply chain disruptions.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the expectation that supply chain disruptions led to worse food insecurity, evidence to support this supposition was mixed.<sup>44,48,54,55</sup> One review<sup>48</sup> found major effects of COVID-19 on food system actors and food security vis-à-vis income and purchasing power, which created worse outcomes than increased food prices.<sup>48</sup> Lockdowns and restrictions impacted the ability to access traded food, and some local markets closed due to restrictions, creating reliance on distant food outlets.<sup>48</sup> A peer-reviewed comment indicated that urban populations in Africa had some of the highest rates of vulnerability to COVID-19–related fluctuations in food prices and food security; the support for this claim was mixed.<sup>56</sup>

Another study, conducted in rural Liberia and Malawi, found that although there were high levels of awareness and behavior changes due to COVID-19, and large declines in market activity among households and food vendors, there was no evidence of increased food insecurity.<sup>54</sup> This study also found that changes in food prices were indistinguishable from seasonal price fluctuations, making seasonal and lockdown price trends impossible to disentangle.<sup>54</sup>

Conversely, a study conducted in urban Burkina Faso found that COVID-19 resulted in lower food consumption scores, although dietary diversity and per capita food expenditures did not change.<sup>55</sup> In the most severe cases, households in this study reported spending more of their income on food items than non-food items and liquidating assets to purchase food.<sup>55</sup> Households that had access to income-generating assets or precautionary savings were better able to adjust to shock.<sup>55</sup> A study among households in southeast Nigeria found that household food insecurity increased by more than 50% due to COVID lockdowns and social distancing.<sup>57</sup>

The differences in outcomes between households in these studies may be driven by context. A study across 35 countries indicated that programming should be tailored to the context and engage communities to successfully build resilience.<sup>58</sup> This analysis also highlighted that diversification of income sources, education, and access to land, livestock, and agricultural inputs were critical to ensuring household-level resilience.<sup>58</sup> Urban households were excluded from this analysis, and this is representative of a larger gap in the literature. It is likely that COVID-19 restrictions and subsequent effects on livelihoods and market access and urban conflict (e.g., Ukraine) have specific adverse outcomes for rural and urban contexts. This may



be especially true for groups within urban settings who are already vulnerable to food insecurity, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), female-headed households, those with low education and lack of access to basic services, and individuals living with disabilities.<sup>59</sup> This example, and the lack of resilience research in urban areas,<sup>60</sup> necessitates further attention to urban resilience, especially as populations urbanize.

COVID-19 created a bidirectional ripple effect, where adverse consequences for one group spilled out onto others, both from producer to consumer and vice versa.<sup>48</sup> Farmers are considered to be the most economically vulnerable value chain actors, and most research on food security focuses on agriculture and rural development, and resilience downstream is not modeled.<sup>61</sup> COVID significantly disrupted farmers<sup>62,63</sup> and fisherfolks<sup>64,64-66</sup> livelihoods and resilience. For example, in India, restriction of farm labor and supply movement and disruptions in food supply chains and logistics resulted in both lower point-of-sales and overall sales for agricultural products.<sup>67</sup> Improving access to agricultural inputs<sup>67-69</sup> (e.g., indigenous seeds, common-pool seeds<sup>69</sup>) and providing available labor to households improved resilience among these communities and others identified by the literature.<sup>67</sup>

Another key gap in the literature is the resilience of intermediaries (i.e., processors, traders, vendors) to react positively or anticipate shocks or stressors.<sup>48</sup> Most studies emphasize individual value chain actors and overlook other steps in the value chain.<sup>61</sup> In Malawi and Liberia, food vendors experienced significant market disruptions, including difficulty sourcing supplies, increases in costs of supplies, and reduced business hours or closing businesses altogether.<sup>54</sup> In Ecuador, farmers and intermediaries both reported loss of sales as a direct outcomes of COVID-19.<sup>70</sup> One study in Burkina Faso, found that traders were most affected by COVID-19–related market closures.<sup>55</sup> Another found that conflict resulted in a contraction of local food trader activities by approximately half of pre-conflict levels, resulting in a collapse of the food system, despite individual actor resilience and positive deviance.<sup>71</sup> Post-conflict market strengthening may, however, have unintended consequences. In a study from northern Uganda, improving market resilience had adverse impacts on food security, child nutrition, and gender-based violence, undermining resilience at the community level.<sup>72</sup>

A study on traders, customers, and households across African, Asian, and Latin American cities found that traders played a crucial role in market infrastructure,<sup>73</sup> with the loss of a regular trader resulting in decreased purchasing power. This is important, because during urban food security crises, customers favored informal markets over formal food shops,<sup>73</sup> even if it resulted in greater food insecurity,<sup>74</sup> illustrating the interconnectedness of marketplaces and household vulnerability. Although traders may shift to petty trade when they are unable to act as market vendors, this may be more indicative of a lack of options and incapacity to change income-generating activities than a desire to diversify livelihoods.<sup>50</sup>

Vendors and other intermediaries are also overlooked actors within the supply chain and may suffer when market activities reduce or collapse.<sup>50</sup> They may also be unaware of their legal rights, unable to advocate for better and more equitable labor conditions,<sup>50</sup> and subject to regular eviction from markets and/or confiscation of their goods.<sup>75</sup> Even when facing punitive

actions, many vendors resume trading in marketplaces instead of finding new sources of income.<sup>73</sup> Middle actors within the supply chain should be supported through resilience-focused activities, such as providing access to credit, strengthening supply chains, and improving access to markets. Analyzing or anticipating ripple effects from shocks across the system and its actors is needed.<sup>48</sup>

Relatedly, although environmental and ecological capacities are the foundation of food systems resilience, they are often overlooked.<sup>61</sup> A review of agrifood systems in low- and middle-income countries found that most studies of the topic in LMICs either 1) modeled global impacts on crop production while disregarding downstream value chains; 2) analyzed the resilience of farmers (i.e., smallholder (subsistence, subsistence and market), national market (medium size) and international market (large-scale)) to climate change and related phenomena; and 3) examined the resilience of food systems based on existing studies.<sup>61</sup> One study of resilient food supply chains found that a key determinant of resilience was the ability to “pivot” (e.g., limit imports to avoid displacing locally grown crops; shift to e-commerce).<sup>51</sup> Collectively, a larger focus on value chain resilience and impacts on consumers, and an embedded consideration of the environmental (e.g., arable land, water availability) and social systems that drive markets is needed.<sup>61</sup>

Relatedly, for communities that rely on natural resources for survival, there is a need to maintain environmental integrity. Two examples from pastoralist and agropastoralist households in Ethiopia indicated that reduced land access for productive pastoral livelihoods worsened household resilience, whereas diversification of livelihoods and communal pasture access improved it.<sup>76,77</sup> A study among Iranian farmers found that land area and water availability were two components necessary to ensure resilience to food insecurity.<sup>78</sup>

Climate change undoubtedly impacts agrifood and market systems. As the effects of climate change become more severe, food inequities will worsen and extreme weather events will become more frequent, with countries that already experience high levels of hunger and recurrent shock being most affected.<sup>79</sup> The impacts of shocks on food systems configuration and resilience likely differ based on context; therefore, studies at the individual, household, community, and society levels are needed to provide sufficient spatial resolution and differentiation.

As climate change becomes increasingly more prioritized by donors and implementers, there is clear evidence to support the need for investment in climate-sensitive systems.<sup>79,80</sup> One such strategy to support climate-sensitive agriculture is identifying locations of high vulnerability within the agricultural sector to plan for adaptation.<sup>81</sup> Enhanced exposure to adverse weather events worsens climate vulnerability in fragile regions and diminishes adaptive capacity, necessitating strategies for reducing exposure and sensitivity.<sup>81</sup> Gender should also be taken into account to avoid widening inequity between male and female actors within food systems.<sup>82-84</sup>

An illustration of this type of response was found in a study among farmers in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.<sup>85</sup> The study evaluated a mixed-farming approach, coupling shrimp and rice farming, compared to monoculture rice farming and extensive shrimp farming, and found that farmers who cultivated both rice and shrimp were most resilient to several adverse climate-related events, including drought, saline intrusion, and unpredictable precipitation.<sup>85</sup> Although monoculture rice growers had the highest level of resilience to climate-related events, rice-shrimp farmers could continue to farm despite being affected by climate change while retaining a higher income.<sup>85</sup>

In Ethiopia, farmers using moisture-stress crops and intensive irrigation were less vulnerable to drought risk than farmers using on-farm income-based livelihoods.<sup>86</sup> Across five countries in East Africa, fortified, drought- and pest-resistant crops increased productivity; effective land and water management led to higher crop yields; and improved crops and livestock breeds, crop-livestock integration, farmer capacity building, sustainable soil and water management investments, and rainfall sowing/syncing led to better outcomes.<sup>87</sup> A study in Myanmar found that diversification of agricultural activities also improved overall resilience.<sup>65</sup> An additional study among smallholder farmers in drought-prone South Africa found that adaptations such as planting early-maturing and drought-tolerant crops, changing planting schedules, diversifying crops, and irrigating were important methods to ensure resilience.<sup>88</sup> In northern Ghana, agricultural intensification improved resilience.<sup>89</sup> In southeastern Kenya, having access to land, conservation-focused agricultural practices, and climate forecasts improved resilience.<sup>90</sup> These strategies suggest that although there are some commonalities in approaches that improve resilience through agriculture, others may be context-specific. Interventions that incorporate agroecological principles<sup>87</sup> or that are based on indigenous knowledge<sup>91</sup> may promote overall biodiversity and social aspects, such as the co-creation of shared knowledge and fostering of traditions.

Supporting social cohesion and bolstering social connections may also improve resilience to climate change. A study in Samoa found that for mixed-subsistence communities, food sharing and social capital were associated with resilience, and that market participation did not impact the size of social networks.<sup>92</sup> Across households in Asia, social capital had major impacts on household hunger.<sup>60</sup> A study in Kenya found that social group participation allowed farmers to exchange ideas, address challenges, access credit from commercial banks or through group savings schemes, and work on each other's farms, addressing a labor shortage.<sup>93</sup> In Zimbabwe, farmer groups improved social capital, resulting in increased resilience and dietary diversity.<sup>94</sup> An evaluation of village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) in Somalia indicated that belonging to a VSLA and participating in preparedness and early warning activities was associated with positive coping mechanisms and better food security.<sup>95</sup> Access to credit through savings and credit associations strengthened household resilience, enabled consumption smoothing, protected and enabled the growth of herds, supported wealth accumulation, allowed for improved farming activities through the purchase of resources and implements, and provided capital to support investing and scaling up income-generation activities in Uganda.<sup>96</sup> In Ghana, VLSA participation reduced household food insecurity and improved climate resilience among households without access to a

formalized bank.<sup>97</sup> Literature on savings and loans groups indicates that they can be a source of financial and social inclusion.

Evidence from Ethiopia,<sup>98,99</sup> Kenya,<sup>98</sup> Uganda,<sup>98</sup> Niger,<sup>98</sup> and Burkina Faso<sup>98</sup> suggests that social capital positively impacts food security and helps households recover from and mitigate the effect of shocks. In a study of households in Kyrgyzstan, trust and group membership were the key components of social capital that drove this relationship.<sup>100,101</sup> Studies from Malawi,<sup>102</sup> Indonesia,<sup>103</sup> and Bangladesh<sup>104</sup> reinforce this, indicating that bolstering social capital/social networks is a way that resilience can be built in response to climate shocks. However, benefits of social capital may be unequally distributed, with wealthier households disproportionately benefitting from social capital more than poorer households, since households with greater assets are more able and likely to engage in social reciprocity.<sup>98</sup> Social capacity may be eroded in the early phases of prolonged covariate shocks and their downstream effects, such that strengthening social capital may not be sufficient to build resilience.<sup>98</sup> Social capital can also differ between men and women, necessitating a gender-sensitive lens.<sup>105</sup>

Beyond diversification of livelihoods and social cohesion, providing information, training, and resources was useful for building resilience among rural smallholder farmers. In Ethiopia, the availability of microfinance services, early warning and information, extension support, non-farm sources of income, training and skill development, expansion of infrastructure, and small-scale irrigation were all valuable strategies to build adaptive capacity to climate change.<sup>77,106</sup> Similarly, rural households in Iran that owned land; had higher crop variation, water access, income diversity, livestock and asset ownership. Rural households with access to extension support were also more resilient.<sup>107</sup> Households in Kenya with improved agricultural practices and higher income diversity had higher yields, whereas those with smaller land plots and less livestock had higher risks of food security.<sup>93</sup>

Lack of knowledge about available resources, such as agricultural extension, may limit their uptake and use.<sup>93</sup> For example, sub-optimal access to capacity-building interventions in Kenya limited farmers' production choices, and insufficient access to credit limited adoption of improved seeds in Niger.<sup>50</sup> Many of these resources could be made available through digital platforms, illustrating the usefulness of digital literacy and access to technology that could improve food security and resilience.<sup>45,108</sup>

Coping strategies also have the potential to create a cascade of adverse events across the agrifood and market system and for the environment.<sup>48</sup> Positive responses that allow actors to anticipate, adapt, or mitigate the impact of a crisis (e.g., capacity to rapidly shift to other input suppliers when usual suppliers are unavailable, ability to find substitute workers, use of shock-resilient crops, livestock, and agricultural practices) can have beneficial impacts across the system. In contrast, negative coping can hinder future resilience. Diversification of livelihoods was consistently associated with better food security and resilience,<sup>19,93,95,106,107,109,110</sup> though maladaptive livelihoods diminished these effects.<sup>111</sup> Diversification of livelihoods is useful in areas where significant non-climate-sensitive options (e.g., non-livestock, non-farming) offer opportunities to engage in high-return income earning activities. However,

livelihood diversification may not lead to better adaptation or recovery from shock, even when combined with remittances, gifts, and assistance.<sup>112</sup>

Humanitarian assistance often yields better outcomes<sup>95</sup> but can result in recidivism if not sufficiently resilience-focused<sup>95</sup> and may not always meet needs following a major shock.<sup>19</sup> Livestock transfers have shown promise in improving livestock ownership and earnings, especially for women, and reductions in sexual violence.<sup>44</sup> Cash transfers have shown some evidence of reducing marital control. Gender mainstreaming, including providing access to land and training, may improve resilience to shock.<sup>45</sup> Humanitarian assistance interventions should incorporate resilience-focused programs to prevent collapse of systems after support is no longer provided.

### Key takeaways

- Shocks such as COVID-19 (and subsequent impacts), conflict, and climate change are persistent threats to agrifood and market systems, though the impacts on these systems are mixed and may be contextual.
- Interventions are needed in urban areas. Most support is given to rural areas, and urban areas represent a key area of expansion.
- Vendors, including street vendors, are often overlooked in interventions, but play a critical role in ensuring the success of markets; vendors should be supported through resilience-focused activities, such as providing access to credit, strengthening supply chains, and improving access to markets.
- Interventions within agrifood and market systems should be climate-sensitive to have the most significant impact.
- Agrifood and market systems interventions should incorporate a gender-sensitive lens, including making land more accessible to women, providing training and support, and increasing access to credit.
- Access to markets and livelihoods can prevent conflict,<sup>3</sup> and it is essential to bolster existing market infrastructure to support vendors and consumers.

### RESILIENT HEALTH SYSTEMS

Health systems are comprised of all the inputs and outputs related to the provision and receipt of healthcare. This includes the encompassing environment, individuals, institutions, processes, and infrastructures that enable the system to function and the outputs in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The health system is composed of a workforce, health information systems, supplies and infrastructure, finance, governance, leadership, management, and service delivery.<sup>113</sup> Contextual factors, such as decentralization of health centers,<sup>114</sup> availability of insurance schemes, and environmental stability are major determinants of health systems success. Individuals providing care can range from highly trained technical staff (i.e., nurses, surgeons) to non-technical staff, such as community health workers. Institutions include ministries of health and other health architecture.<sup>113</sup>

## World Vision sector strategy outcomes

Outcomes prioritized by the World Vision health sector are to 1) reduce deaths of children under 5 years of age; 2) reduce maternal deaths; 3) combat HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, neglected tropical diseases, pneumonia, diarrheal diseases, and other infectious diseases; and 4) improve the availability and accessibility of seven proven and affordable interventions for pregnant women and 11 interventions (7-11 strategy) for children under 24 months of age.

## Health systems

Resilient health systems have several well-established components: 1) a committed, well-trained, and distributed workforce;<sup>113,115</sup> sufficient supplies,<sup>113,115–118</sup> including equipment, logistics management,<sup>113,115</sup> and emergency stocks;<sup>113,115–118</sup> information systems that provide surveillance and early warning;<sup>113,115</sup> adequate and predictable financial systems;<sup>113,115</sup> sufficient governance, leadership, and management,<sup>113,115–118</sup> uninterrupted and diverse service delivery (including surge capacity<sup>119</sup>);<sup>113,115</sup> adaptive resilience to manage shocks in real-time;<sup>113,115</sup> and values that align with the communities that are being served.<sup>113</sup> Adding to this, a review of qualitative studies of health systems resilience during COVID-19 in low- and middle-income countries indicated that successful coordination structures, transparent communication and functional surveillance, and efficient leveraging of resources were additional elements of resilient health systems.<sup>113,115–118</sup> It should be noted that women may experience more challenges in accessing healthcare due to restricted access to economic resources, inhibited access to health services due to social and economic barriers, protection concerns (e.g., gender-based violence, intimate partner violence) that limit health-seeking behavior, and impeded support for prenatal and postnatal care.<sup>120</sup> A gender-sensitive approach should be incorporated across resilience-focused health systems interventions.

Evidence on health systems strengthening during the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa suggested that community monitoring improved child health and reduced mortality among Ebola patients.<sup>121</sup> Successful community monitoring was built on a deeper foundation of mutual trust and respect between healthcare workers and the communities they served.<sup>121</sup> Reviews of resilient healthcare systems have found that trust, and especially institutional trust between communities and health systems, is a prerequisite for resilience.<sup>113</sup> Engagement with community health workers as a liaison between health systems and the communities they serve has been shown to build such trust.<sup>122</sup> Additionally, quality of care facilitates trust. In healthcare facilities that received non-financial awards, such as letters of recommendation from district health officials, overall quality improved, which subsequently<sup>121</sup> increased reporting of Ebola symptoms and willingness to seek treatment.<sup>121</sup> Similar findings were found during COVID-19, where the influential elements of health systems resilience was contingent on social capital.<sup>115</sup>

Conversely, a lack of trust in health facilities undermines the legitimacy of healthcare providers and national and global epidemic response actors.<sup>122–124</sup> Mistrust in motives, intentions, and capacities of formal response personnel led to under-reporting of Ebola symptoms and persistence of social practices that increased rates of transmission.<sup>123</sup> Fraud,

mismanagement of funds or procurement, lack of transparency, and fraudulent recruitment of healthcare workers was seen as a significant barrier to achieving resilience in the Nigerian health system during COVID-19.<sup>125</sup>

Health systems resilience largely relies upon the context and ability of global actors to engage with local stakeholders.<sup>123</sup> Complex health crises such as outbreaks often result in contrasting and competing priorities between health and non-health actors.<sup>123</sup> Health systems resilience is therefore highly context-dependent; interventions that are effective in one context may have the opposite effect in another.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, it is critical to harvest best practices in similar contexts to inform interventions.<sup>121</sup> It is also necessary to support health ministries as active learning organizations with the capacity to foster resilience, which the literature suggests is not only a possibility, but critical for progress in health systems resilience.<sup>126</sup>

The USAID-funded Local Health Systems Sustainability Project (LHSS) evaluation found several interventions that promoted local health systems resilience. These included 1) shifting from donor-funded embedded advisors to government partners; 2) creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with trainings to meet national and global healthcare guidelines; 3) providing mentorship for financial management, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting and facilitating relationships between actors in the health sector and their government counterparts; 4) incorporating a gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) lens for effective solutions to provide care and address inequities for migrants, women, and vulnerable populations;<sup>127</sup> 5) improving monitoring and evaluation systems to assess enrollment, dropouts, and service utilization for social protection schemes and programs; 6) conducting rapid health systems assessments to identify opportunities to support health systems; 7) providing online and in-person training courses to improve healthcare provider competencies related to COVID-19 and other outbreaks; 8) increasing budget execution rates to make resources available more quickly for health spending; 9) aligning with private sector stakeholder priorities to secure more private investments in health; 10) cross-task training for healthcare staff to reduce patient load and improve healthcare outcomes, and 11) building digital financial services, which can help service users, governments, and providers to do more with scarce health funds.<sup>46</sup>

Integrated health service delivery (IHSD) also presents a potentially promising approach to improve health systems resilience. A scoping review of IHSD in low- and middle- income countries found that service delivery, health workforce, medicine, and technologies were the most frequently integrated components of health systems during COVID-19. Some of the innovative approaches align with other evidence, supporting the use of digital health technologies and integration across health sectors.<sup>128</sup>

### **Key takeaways**

- Community monitoring and engagement with the socio-cultural context of the setting before a crisis is necessary to build resilient systems.



- Embedded efforts to promote mutual trust and respect between health actors (e.g., healthcare workers, ministry of health) and the communities they serve is critical for engagement with care; social capital may be one avenue to cultivate this.
- People-centered health systems coupled with resource capacity building (i.e., availability of services, sufficient staffing, etc.) is critical for building health systems resilience.
- Some elements of resilient health systems include successful coordination, transparent communication and functional surveillance (including community surveillance), efficient leveraging of resources, adequate supply of a trained and motivated workforce, and undisrupted and wide array of healthcare services
- Innovative approaches and technologies (e.g., telehealth, integration with pharmacies) may be useful for triage and care without overburdening health systems.

### **RESILIENT CHILD PROTECTION AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

Child protection and education systems are in place to ensure that children have a right to healthcare, education, and other forms of social protection that prevent poverty and exclusion across the lifespan. Children exposed to shocks may be at greater risks for discrimination, violence, and exploitation. It is crucial that child protection systems provide access to fair and just social services to grow children into healthy, productive adults.

#### **World Vision sector strategy outcomes**

Outcomes prioritized by World Vision's child protection and education sector are 1) children are protected in their own communities; 2) community and caregivers effectively contribute to child well-being and learning outcomes; 3) children are achieving literacy and numeracy skills; 4) young laborers' rights are protected and they are enjoying decent work conditions; 5) children receive quality child protection and education services; 6) adequate national investment in the child protection and education services.

#### **Child protection and education**

A systems approach to child protection document published by World Vision indicates that child protection interventions should 1) advocate for effective national policies, resources and programs that enable child protection at the community level; 2) catalyze community awareness and conscientization around child protection and care beliefs and practices, including discriminatory attitudes and actions; 3) build gender equity to ensure the best care of children and prevention of harmful traditional practices, discrimination and gender-based violence; 4) strengthen reporting and referral mechanisms at the community level; 5) strengthen community-based care and support mechanisms for vulnerable families; 6) strengthen capacity and will of child protection duty bearers, teachers, and health workers to prevent and respond to abuse exploitation and vulnerabilities; 7) empower civil society actors, children, and families to hold government to account for delivery of protection at the local level; 8) advocate for access to and strengthening community-based care and services for children who have suffered abuse or exploitation; 9) empower children to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and build their skills as advocates for protection of others.<sup>129</sup>

Disasters can overwhelm or decimate systems that children and families rely on.<sup>130</sup> To promote resilience in these systems, understanding the connectedness of children, youth, families, communities, societies, and ecosystems is necessary.<sup>131</sup> However, there is a need to build on existing community structures to avoid undermining existing systems and mechanisms.<sup>132</sup> The capacity for children to respond to shocks is contingent upon how well their families are doing and if their embedded environments support individuals, families, and systems to recover.<sup>130,131,133</sup> Addressing poverty and discrimination and initiating multiple interventions across socioecological levels may be beneficial for improving child protection interventions.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, strengthening linkages with local schools promotes safe/child-friendly school initiatives; providing integrated case management and referral systems can strengthen child protection measures and address the needs of vulnerable children; and bolstering communities can improve child and youth outcomes.<sup>132</sup>

Youth also have their own coping mechanisms, sometimes relying upon self-management strategies such as cognitive reappraisal or emotional regulation to internalize problems. Youth also rely on family, peers, and/or elders for support.<sup>135</sup> An overview of child and youth resilience during COVID-19 found that despite high rates of anxiety and depression, some exposure to adversity and challenges is important for cultivating resilience and growing capacity and skills for handling stressful situations.<sup>133</sup> Resilience often emerged from ordinary adaptive systems, such as close relationships with competent and caring adults and peers, effective schools and communities, opportunities to succeed, and self-efficacy.<sup>133</sup> Youth may also link religious and cognitive responses in their framing of resilience, which could be an area of critical impact that World Vision is poised to respond to.<sup>135</sup> Despite the observation of resilience across multiple settings, a systematic review of mental health among conflict-affected children suggests that socio-cultural context and the relationship between context and resilience is a critically-important determinant, stressing the importance of avoiding a “one-size-fits-all” approach.<sup>136</sup>

Further, youth have the capacity to be active participants in their own resilience. In a study of youth in Turkey, Kenya, Pakistan, and Brazil, regardless of cultural and contextual differences in resilience responses, youth did not see themselves as passive recipients of assistance.<sup>135</sup> An impact evaluation in Liberia found that engaging youth in a sports-for-change intervention that improved soft skills resulted in increased labor force participation, especially among more disadvantaged youth, including women, and those with less education and without previous vocational training.<sup>137</sup> In Kenya, a tech training program incorporating training and job referral increased youth monthly earnings and reduced unemployment, especially among women.<sup>138</sup> Participants in the program also reported higher levels of current and projected life satisfaction than the comparison group.<sup>138</sup> Among refugee youth in Uganda, providing livelihoods programs in place of secondary education, which is sometimes less available in emergency contexts, presents a useful strategy to provide youth with opportunities that divert them from engaging in risky behaviors.<sup>132</sup> These findings suggest that active youth engagement using familiar and acceptable pathways is a critical component of building resilience to shocks and stressors.

Finally, COVID-19 highlighted severe inequities in the digital divide and unequal access to information and communication technologies. The rapid transition to virtual learning left many children and their families with inequitable access to education. Improving digital literacy and promoting equal opportunities to distance learning has the potential to narrow learning and digital gaps.<sup>47</sup> Conversely, the pandemic had the unanticipated benefit of providing youth an opportunity to strengthen social bonds between their close networks and promote intergenerational learning.<sup>47</sup> These findings suggest that although building digital literacy and technological connectedness is critical for promoting equity, traditional relationships should also be nurtured to improve youth resilience.

### Key takeaways

- Child protection programs should be multifactorial and multi-sectoral, taking into account gender equity, supporting effective policies for enabling child protection, strengthening the capacity for community-based care, and empowering children to participate in decisions to improve their resilience.
- Existing community structures and partnerships should be strengthened to avoid undermining local child protection mechanisms.
- An understanding of sociocultural context is necessary to build resilience for youth; there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to resilience in child protection and education.
- Disasters can decimate structures and systems that families and children depend on; it is critical to ensure consistent access to services to build resilience.
- Providing youth with training and job referral improves labor force participation and increases access to income; these results were maintained even during unanticipated shock (i.e., COVID-19).
- Digital/technological literacy represents a major gap and opportunity to build resilience among youth, especially in education.

## RESILIENT SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Social protection systems are mechanisms that assist individuals and households in coping with crises and shocks, building livelihoods, improving productivity, investing in health and education for themselves and their children, and protecting the aging population.

### Social protection and financial inclusion

Social safety nets, while providing critical resources to vulnerable populations, have been evaluated for their effectiveness when coupled with resilience interventions. An evaluation of the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) indicated that individuals who received payments reduced the impact of drought shocks by more than 50% and eliminated the adverse effects of food insecurity within two years. PSNP participation also strengthened the resilience of beneficiaries against shocks, with the largest impacts for individuals with little or no land. However, it did not result in household asset building or livestock accumulation, nor did it lift households out of poverty, even after graduation from the program.<sup>44</sup> Social safety nets are necessary in contexts of chronic poverty and vulnerability, but on their own may not be sufficient to ensure resilience to chronic shocks and stressors. There is currently an

evidence gap in the capacity of social protection programs to contribute to long-term adaptation and sustainable livelihoods.<sup>139</sup> Social protection programs should consider the implications of pressing risks, such as climate change, to avoid maladaptation and any subsequent unintended impacts.<sup>139</sup> They should also allow for flexibility in cash transfer use to prevent obstruction of autonomous positive coping strategies households may develop.<sup>140</sup>

Much of the literature suggests that regular, planned cash transfers<sup>141</sup> or the existence of a predictable minimum income<sup>140</sup> allows households to achieve a level of basic security and provides stability to incrementally adjust livelihoods over time.<sup>141</sup> Other evidence specific to lump-sum vs. regular transfers have found that monthly cash distributions may be better for improving food security, whereas lump sums may be better for supporting livelihoods and durable purchases and may provide long-term income enhancement.<sup>142-145</sup>

Integration of resilience activities into cash transfer programs in areas with protracted or recurring crises can strengthen purchasing power, incentivize behavior change, and increase the probability of adopting new, more sustainable practices.<sup>146</sup> Findings from an evaluation in Somalia indicated that cash voucher assistance provided life-saving financial boosts for individuals who were most vulnerable in the population, highlighting their usefulness for improving outcomes to shocks and stressors.<sup>147</sup> Unconditional cash transfers are appropriate for building short-term absorptive resilience and can act as makeshift welfare nets, whereas sustainable longer-term gains require more complex programming.<sup>146</sup>

Productive inclusion programs that combine cash transfers with training and other support hold promise as a complement to national safety nets. Findings from Niger suggest that receipt of productive inclusion packages in addition to monthly government cash transfers improved outcomes for female participants after six and eighteen months of program participation.<sup>141</sup> Women experienced improved food security and household consumption, increased business investments, higher business revenues, and better participation in savings groups.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, an evaluation of cash transfers in Yemen suggested that cash-based initiatives and multi-purpose cash interventions improved nutrition outcomes for women and potentially impacted equity in household decision-making.<sup>148</sup> However, multi-purpose transfers were not sufficient as standalone activities; basic needs support was required to ensure access to critical resources, while cash transfers allowed for investment in common resources and livelihoods. Without meeting basic needs, resilience activities can collapse, negating progress.<sup>148</sup>

Despite the expansion of social safety nets, poverty and vulnerability remain high in sub-Saharan Africa, where recurrent shocks are particularly burdensome for chronically and transiently poor who are often not covered by social safety nets.<sup>149</sup> There is a pressing need for these programs to improve equity and resilience through opportunities for vulnerable populations.<sup>149</sup> Projects should avoid perpetuating and reinforcing social inequalities<sup>b</sup> by incorporating gender-sensitive approaches. Women, who are often seen as vulnerable actors

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<sup>b</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialprotection/overview#1>

in emergencies, are equal agents of transformative change and should not be considered victims.<sup>150</sup> Gender equity and social inclusion impact resilience at multiple levels across societies, not just at the individual level.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, interventions should focus on addressing gender inequity and discrimination across socioecological levels in order to be effective.

Gender is a critical component of resilience; skills, strategies, and mechanisms individuals use to cope with shocks and stresses are influenced by gender. Women and girls especially need access to and control of capital to transform unequal relationships and systems, empowerment through the engagement of gatekeepers, and inclusion in program integration.<sup>152</sup> Access to and control over productive inputs, including land, financial services, and agricultural resources (including extension services and technologies) are critical components of resilient and gender-sensitive systems.<sup>152</sup> Evidence from a “Cash Plus” approach that provided ten monthly multi-purpose cash transfers indicated that transfers supported female resilience by improving decision-making power over the use of household money. VSLAs provide an avenue for women and girls to build social and financial capital by creating and strengthening “safe spaces” and granting access to some of these necessary inputs.<sup>152</sup> Individuals participating in a Saving for Change (SfC) program in Mali were more likely to have received loans in the past year from a savings group instead of through social networks, and less likely to be chronically food insecure.<sup>153</sup> The use of social networks for borrowing and loans limits the ability to build up assets, establish or further develop businesses, or increase wealth, and limits access to capital in emergencies.<sup>154</sup> The shift toward using a savings group loan suggests uptake of social savings schemas and potential improvement in outcomes as a result of resilience-focused savings and loan programs.<sup>154</sup> Engaging women in financial inclusion ensures equity in decision-making and provides women with opportunities for savings, investment, and engagement with markets.<sup>154</sup> Social infrastructure (e.g., VSLAs) may be a good strategy to improve access to economic and social capital for traditionally excluded individuals.<sup>154</sup> However, saving and borrowing schemes may not be sufficient when households are coping with larger shocks.<sup>154</sup>

Saving and borrowing associations, insurance, and related schema require context-specific tailoring.<sup>155</sup> For example, insurance, while useful in some settings, may reduce adaptive capacity in others.<sup>154</sup> Strengthening financial infrastructure is necessary to provide the enabling environment for improvements in financial inclusion and depth. Improving capacity through strengthened financial infrastructure and improving financial literacy and trust in the financial system is needed to build resilience.<sup>154</sup> Strategies to build capacity for savings, loans, and insurance programs include integration into community infrastructure by building the trust of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, the inclusion of disaster risk reduction, preparedness and business skills, awareness of social and gender consideration, and collaboration with religious communities to develop practices that are appropriate for the sociocultural context.<sup>154</sup>

Informal social safety nets are another critical source of resilience, especially in conflict. One study from Yemen found that social connectedness and strength of connections within social

networks are essential to mobilize tangible and intangible resources, especially during conflict.<sup>156</sup> Households provide food, money, labor, shelter, information about livelihoods, and emotional support essential for meeting immediate needs and ensuring survival to shocks and stresses.<sup>156</sup> Social standing is driven by social reciprocity—households that are able to share resources but choose not to may diminish their social standing within their community, limiting their ability to mobilize future support through social networks.<sup>156</sup> Understanding social context and the drivers of informal social safety nets is critical for bolstering social connections to improve resilience.

Finally, digital literacy represents a major opportunity to build social inclusion and financial protection. A study on financial inclusion in Bangladesh found that respondents with financial accounts and those who saved money were more likely to be resilient than those who did not.<sup>157</sup> Yet, worldwide, over one billion adults do not have access to formal financial services.<sup>158</sup> Digital literacy has the capacity to engage individuals in financial services and promote resilience-building behaviors through the use of online banking, mobile money, and other platforms that can facilitate informed and efficient saving and borrowing decisions.<sup>158</sup> A study from Indonesia found that internet access and owning a mobile phone were associated with increased resilience, but that being unable to access formal banking services limited the potential to “bounce back” following shock.<sup>159</sup> Among households in Ghana, sending and receiving mobile money provided financial resilience, but saving money was more effective for improving resilience than owning a formal or mobile money account.<sup>160</sup> Digital literacy will become increasingly more important as mobile financial systems are more widespread. It also has the potential to reach “underbanked” populations. Interventions should continue to place an emphasis on saving to build resilience; the incorporation of digital tools could improve these endeavors.

### **Key takeaways: Financial inclusion**

- Regular, planned cash transfers over long periods of time have great potential to help households meet immediate nutrition, economic, and health needs. Lump-sum transfers may provide longer-term economic enhancement for households.
- Cash transfers in extreme shock allow for future planning and can set the stage for livelihood support.
- Coupling cash transfers with resilience-focused livelihoods interventions, trainings, and resources may yield transformative results.
- Saving and borrowing may be inadequate when populations are coping with larger shocks; cash may be needed to smooth shock, and if this space contracts, resilience activities may collapse.
- Financial inclusion should be gender-sensitive, to ensure equity in decision-making and provide women with opportunities for saving, investment, and engagement with markets.
- Social infrastructure in the form of loans groups (e.g. VSLAs) may be a good strategy to ensure consistent access to forms of economic and social capital, especially for women.

- Digital literacy is critical to improve access to and use of bank accounts, cash transfers, and savings accounts.

### Key takeaways: Social protection

- Social safety nets provide critical resources. Access to resources, especially cash, has the potential to improve outcomes, but as a standalone may not improve resilience.
- Gender influences the skills, strategies, and mechanisms that individuals use to cope with shock. Gender equity/integration is a critical component for improving resilience.
- Strengthening social networks, providing links to formal and informal government structures, and empowering the collective action process can be useful for increasing resilience, especially for women and youth.
- Integrating resilience programming into social safety nets can increase the contributions social protection makes to the anticipatory capacity of national institutions and systems to better respond to shock.
- Women should be treated as equal agents of transformative change, and there is a need to build an understanding of the impact of gender-based violence on resilience-building interventions.

### Current gaps in the resilience literature

There is clear evidence that existing empirical studies of resilience have been primarily limited to cross-sectional quantitative surveys,<sup>1,161</sup> though more recently a variety of impact evaluations are available or underway.<sup>1,161</sup> Most of these impact evaluations support the claim that resilience-oriented programs do have an impact, though the effects are not sufficient to fully mitigate the effects of shocks. Long-term monitoring of the sustainability of resilience capacities and well-being outcomes is absent. This significantly limits our ability to understand the long-term capacity of individuals, households, and communities to respond or recover from shocks and stresses.<sup>1</sup>

Ideally, resilience measures would capture evidence spanning the socioecological framework over an extended time frame, allowing for analysis of trends over time and comparison with other indicators of interest.<sup>162</sup> Because data collection is taxing, costly, and time-consuming, especially at the individual and household level, there are a number of methodological and reporting constraints that limit the availability of such data.<sup>162</sup>

Further complicating this is the difficulty of predicting shocks. Despite the availability of early warning tools such as FEWS NET, and relatively novel methods such as machine learning,<sup>13</sup> collecting timely data that fully captures pre-shock (*ex-ante*), post-shock (*ex-post*), and long-term resilience is difficult.

Lastly, because resilience may be measured and conceptualized differently across implementers, practitioners, and donors, it can be difficult to quantify<sup>28,31</sup> or conduct meta-analysis of available empirical data.<sup>163</sup> There is perhaps the most room for improvement and the most need in this area. The resilience measurement community supports the need for greater harmonization of resilience measurement efforts.<sup>164</sup>



### **Limitations of this review**

Psychosocial resilience is an area of need among individuals in vulnerable contexts. However, given the focus of this review on systems-level resilience, psychosocial resilience fell outside of the scope of the literature presented here. However, psychosocial resilience is an area that World Vision is particularly well-positioned to address and presents an important opportunity for future learning.

Additionally, graduation approaches were only discussed in three documents and were limited to the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in Ethiopia. More research is needed to understand the long-term implications of the graduation model on resilience, especially in fragile contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This literature review was conducted to support the development of the World Vision multi-sectoral resilience framework. Resilience has not been consistently defined and measured across donors or in the literature. Conceptualizations of resilience generally share the theory that resilience is the ability to respond to shocks and stressors in ways that do not result in adverse consequences. Most donor definitions of resilience focus on supporting adaptive, absorptive, and transformative capacities. A key area of expansion is viewing resilience as a learning enterprise. When viewing resilience through this lens, there is the opportunity to use rapid learning and harvest promising practices to outline where real progress has been made, which strategies are working or not, and how this information can be disseminated to relevant stakeholders to inform practice. Specifically, there is a critical need to incorporate rapid learning into the architecture of adaptive learning and management.

Key insights gleaned from this review include the need to harmonize resilience and disaster risk reduction approaches. This is crucial to ensure that communities are better equipped to prepare for shocks and respond in ways that do not compromise their lives and livelihoods. Resilience and disaster risk reduction are included in 8/17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (1-4, 9, 11, 13, and 15) (Naheed S., 2021), highlighting their critical importance.

Further, policy is a component of the enabling environment that facilitates uptake and success of resilience-focused approaches. More research is needed to determine the magnitude of association between policy implementation and the success of resilience among vulnerable communities.

Given that resilience is a fairly new field, there remains much that can be done to improve our understanding of what makes communities resilient and build thoughtful and evidence-based interventions. Overall, the literature review supports the notion that resilience approaches that intentionally engage single or multi-sectoral systems have strong potential to sustain and scale program outcomes across the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus within LMICs. Consideration should be given to the convergence of emerging global

threats (e.g., COVID-19), conflict, climate change, and other potential shocks that could increase context complexity and make resilience efforts more difficult. Further, engagement with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus has the potential to reduce siloing within sectors and improve collaborative resilience-building efforts.

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