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Fostering Resilient Systems: A Multi-sectoral Framework for Use Across the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Nexus

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Acknowledgments

Contents

1. ABOUT THE WHITE PAPER

Resilience approaches that intentionally integrate within social systems have strong potential to sustain and scale program outcomes across the humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) nexus within low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

This paper defines World Vision's framework for multi-sectoral resilience with attention to the role that agri-food, health, and social protection systems play in shaping resilience outcomes. In addition to the primary focus on describing an evidence-based approach relevant for effective program design across HDP contexts, this paper also highlights World Vision's principles for learning, adapting, and scaling responses in the face of the increasingly complex range of shocks that affect the developing world.

The framework presented in this paper reflects key findings from a literature review conducted by research partners at Tulane University, as well as collaboration among technical experts in food security; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); sustainable livelihoods and resilience; maternal and child health; nutrition; fragility; child protection; humanitarian response; peace building; and education.

> ### *World Vision's White Paper Series:*
>
> *For more on World Vision's integrated approaches, also read:*
>
> - *Our Agrifood Systems technical publications*
> - *Our Climate Action & Environmental Stewardship commitments*

2. BACKGROUND

About World Vision

World Vision is a global humanitarian and development organization committed to addressing the root causes of poverty and injustice in the most vulnerable parts of the world. With core expertise in offering holistic, community-based approaches, we facilitate locally led, multi-stakeholder solutions to both long- and short-term problems experienced by low- and middle-income societies around the world.

Across health, agriculture, education, environment, WASH, economic empowerment, and other areas, World Vision places an emphasis on investing in the next generation, fostering child well-being across development and humanitarian contexts, leading to long lasting sustainable outcomes. We work closely with local and national actors to integrate and scale services. Through these partnerships we aim to build systems capacity for reducing vulnerabilities to risk and to promote sustainable development outcomes in food and economic security, health and nutrition, WASH, education, and child protection. Resilience continues to provide a critical lens for understanding and addressing vulnerability risks in each of these contexts.

Defining Resilience

The international development community has defined resilience in a variety of ways, each of which commonly includes the ability to recover from and manage shocks and stresses without impacting long-term wellbeing (Collins & Mock, 2024). In this paper World Vision offers a revised perspective that reflects our multi-sectoral commitments, embraces the contribution of faith identity to social cohesion, and promotes gender equality and social inclusion.

Resilience is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes elements of **process, mindset and capacity.** As a concept, resilience includes the pathways and mechanisms—or the process—that individuals, households and communities use to respond to critical challenges (i.e., 'shocks') that undermine at least one aspect of well-being. A resilient mindset relates to individual, household, and community ideation that shapes behaviors for addressing risks and dealing with shocks. Resilience capacity commonly refers to near-, medium- and long-term potential for navigating shocks (Consta et al, 2014; Smith et al, 2018; Barrett et al, 2021).

Importantly, shocks and vulnerability occur in stable and in fragile contexts, resulting in even more vulnerability and fragility in both instances. The duration and scale of the impact of the shock also varies widely depending upon the source. This means that donor-funded interventions within LMICs benefit from the critical lens that resilience framing provides for effectively anticipating and contributing to a focused, appropriately scaled, locally led response to shocks and vulnerability risks.[1]

The Current Global Case for Resilience

Since 2020, fragility resulting from complex shocks has grown in prevalence, severity, duration, and cost across the globe (OECD, 2022).

Though some areas of the world are repeatedly affected by risks resulting from state fragility and violent conflict, climate change, and other hazards, the global scale of lingering effects from the recent pandemic, coupled with protracted, globally impactful crises in Yemen, Gaza, Ukraine, South Sudan and elsewhere, have increased the focus of the international development community on resilience.

Despite the great potential for benefits from resilience-focused programming and impressive progress in understanding the conditions under which resilience can be achieved, substantial gaps exist in the current resilience evidence base. Among these are the lack of long-term focus; limited understanding of acute and protracted responses to shocks/stressors and how this impacts resilience; the difficulty of predicting shocks and stressors; the under-representation of long-term impact evaluations; the limited work in fragile contexts; and the lack of systems-level approaches to resilience measurement (Resilience Evaluation Forum, 2023).

In June 2023, The Global Resilience Partnership (GRP) held the Resilience Evidence Forum (REF). This three-day interactive gathering aimed to take stock of the latest evidence on resilience and its implications for policy and programming, and to spark further collaboration and exchange of capacity across geographic contexts, sectors, and actors. While a full report from the REF produced by GRP and USAID is forthcoming, participants' initial takeaways centered on the importance of focusing on communities to build resilience, including insights such as:

* Communities can and should be empowered to identify their own needs.

* Communities need to co-lead evidence generation, and evidence should be usable by the community.

* Community involvement should be sincere and respectful.

* Indigenous knowledge is valuable and can be complemented by scientific knowledge (SouthSouthNorth, 2023).

At the closing of the meeting, and in anticipation of the upcoming report, USAID shared key takeaways including:

* Development actors must recognize that **resilience work must be problem- and context-driven** instead of only sector-specific. This is also true for peacebuilding and conflict mitigation.

* **Financial inclusion is key to building resilience.** Village savings and loan models improve lives and build social cohesion.

* Donors focus on **geographic contexts that face recurrent and compound shocks and stresses** because this is a key example of where problem- and context-driven development is needed (Resilience Evaluation Forum, 2023).

Participants agreed that the concept of resilience is complex and evolving. And while the forum did not result in further agreement on how best to define resilience, it did result in greater stakeholder consensus on the need for development practitioners to more fully and frequently share implementation experiences while continuing to deepen community partnerships toward resilience.

The international development community have raised HDP coherence as critical for addressing this complex risk environment. This can be readily evidenced in recent publications such as the updated USAID Resilience Policy (2024) and the Gates Forum II Background Research Forum report (2023).

Historically, humanitarian and development assistance have been "stove-piped" into separate funding streams, programs, and organizational cultures. Humanitarian assistance, though in some contexts often provided over decades, is thought of as a short-term response to crisis events. In contrast, development programs are planned without designing for the hazard or risk context. This has generally resulted in very inefficient use of resources, lack of long-term development progress, as well as undue human suffering.

A resilience lens to address this problem re-orients interventions by advancing HDP coherence as a pathway toward enabling stakeholders at all levels to effectively manage risks to reduce human suffering and supports continued development progress.

Prioritizing Systems within Resilience Programming

Recurring shocks and stressors and their acute and downstream impacts present significant challenges to ensuring stable agrifood systems (including market systems), health systems, social protection systems, and child protection and education systems. Resilience-focused humanitarian and development activities have the potential to bolster systems to prepare for response to future shocks and stressors while simultaneously reducing the need for future intervention.

The international humanitarian and development community increasingly recognizes the need to move towards systems-focused resilience as a precondition for achieving sustainable well-being outcomes in the face of shocks and stresses. For example, USAID flagship funding mechanisms within the food security, education, and health sectors have evolved to incorporate a combination of systems outcomes with community-based service delivery. The 2024 USAID Resilience Policy also highlights the need for systems strengthening to improve resilience. However, at the industry level, integration of systems-thinking within resilience program design is not yet standard practice. Civil society organizations, international NGOs, and their donors currently prioritize micro-level and community-based resilience programming, providing multi-sector support that is not scalable. Likewise, within the broader humanitarian and development community, program opportunities have historically been focused on addressing resilience outcomes through single-sector interventions, often without robust design connections to other private sector, national government, or program sectors.[2] Shifting global momentum towards ensuring that all efforts are integrated within social systems requires a new way of thinking about the role of international NGOs in this process.

This new thinking better accounts for the complexity of the risk landscape both locally and globally, providing methods and tools to leverage change at a large scale with limited resources. For example, while humanitarian interventions typically involve service delivery to an affected area or population group, achieving resilience to hazards and shocks requires robust systems that moderate the impacts of risks. Donor and implementing partner resources will need to be more effectively sequenced, layered, and integrated across humanitarian and development programs

to build resilient systems at scale. Systems-oriented resilience approaches would also support HDP nexus coherence.

Generating and Sharing Evidence for Resilience

Two major constraints continue to limit adaptive management, anticipatory action, cross-learning, and rapid response within resilience programs:

1. **The inability of stakeholders to leverage rapid learning is a key constraint to building resilience.** Despite the glut of available data on resilience indicators, there is a significant disconnect between data availability, synthesis, and use to inform interventions.

   - There is a critical need to identify 'tipping points' at which data collection is good enough to inform decision-making. It is essential to bolster the architecture of rapid data collection, synthesis, analysis, and reporting in real-time to ensure that it reaches stakeholders quickly. This would also allow resilience to become an iterative and adaptable learning enterprise

   - There is an equally critical need for donors to have and provide implementers with more flexibility to adjust project objectives and activities during implementation based upon new information and program learning. While some funding mechanisms currently allow for partial redesign and reallocation of resources to adapt for emerging shocks, resilience approaches would benefit from wider application of this principle across funding streams.

2. **The practice of harvesting insights on what works to outline where real progress has been made is insufficiently widespread.** Harvesting promising practices and 'lessons learned,' especially related to HDP nexus, conflict, climate change, livelihoods, and social protection, is crucial. There is a clear need to document strategies that work and understand the success, results, and impact that allow for targeted future efforts.

3. WORLD VISION'S SECTOR PROGRESS TOWARDS FOSTERING RESILIENCE

World Vision's multi-sectoral resilience framework reflects the consent that resilience is not a static outcome. The framework is grounded in our years of experience of grant-funded resilience program implementation and insights gained from the documented outcomes of these programs. Importantly, World Vision's grant-funded resilience programs have traditionally been implemented within the confines of each of our core programming sectors rather than through the multi-sectoral resilience framework, which is the more holistic approach we seek to embrace. As such, the overview below highlights a mix of best-in-class, sector-specific resilience programs. Some have begun to integrate systems approaches while others reflect an expanded focus of layered and sequenced community-based interventions that borrow design elements from more than one sector.

World Vision's child sponsorship-funded area program approach provides a strong track record for holistic, transformational development. Through this approach, World Vision makes a long-term commitment (15 years on average) to partnering with vulnerable LMIC communities in pursuit of child and household well-being through a mix of sectoral interventions that include education, health, child protection, food security, faith and development, and WASH. The area programs' focus on well-being provides a valuable building block for blending insights from current grant-funded resilience programs with flexible, longer-term operating models.

Resilience within the Food Security & Livelihoods sector

World Vision's Food Security & Livelihoods (FSL) approach works at the intersection of agri-food systems, livelihoods, resilience, and social and behavior change to achieve and sustain child and household well-being. The sector contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals related to reducing poverty and improving food security and nutrition outcomes. At both sector and organizational levels, World Vision also includes faith identity as a catalyst for sustainable development. This commitment aligns with our organization's mission and reflects the critical role played by faith-related institutions, beliefs, and social norms in the places we work.

Driven in part by increased global fragility, there is an established pattern for large-scale, multi-sectoral donors to invest in resilience approaches that emphasize disaster risk reduction programming, social safety net services, graduation models, and selected nature-based entry points, such as watershed management. Yet relatively limited funding exists for resilience programming that draws a through-line between micro-level levers of agrifood systems change, the integration of which is essential to achieve sustained resilience outcomes.

FSL SECTOR CASE STUDY:

BANGLADESH'S NOBO JATRA RESILIENCE FOOD SECURITY ACTIVITY

The southwestern coastal region of Bangladesh is recurrently exposed to cyclones, tidal surges, floods, drought, and saline intrusion. This has a direct bearing on livelihoods, as more than 85% of people in the coastal zones depend upon agriculture as a core economic activity (World Bank, 2016). Around 30% of the population in this region lives on less than $1.90 per day (the UN definition of extreme poverty during the life of the project), and only 4% of women participate in economic activity, in comparison to the national average of 31%. In addition to the climatic and economic vulnerability of households, the region's broader food, health, financial and social protection systems are weak and disconnected, which further contributes to a lack of resilience in communities and households.

To address these challenges, World Vision implemented the Nobo Jatra Project (NJP), a Resilience and Food Security Activity funded by USAID from 2016-2022. NJP was designed to improve gender-equitable food security, nutrition, and resilience for 856,116 vulnerable participants in southwest Bangladesh. NJP used a multi-sectoral approach that addressed maternal and child health and nutrition, WASH, agriculture and livelihoods, gender equality, good governance and social accountability, and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). This design was based on evidence from World Vision's resilience programs worldwide that have demonstrated that successful and sustainable outcomes benefit not only from multi-sectoral approaches, but also from intentional efforts to foster resilience within and across systems.

One of the resilience building approaches NJP used was the Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) model that provides extremely poor households with a pathway out of poverty by helping families engage in a productive and resilient livelihood. NJP conducted a cross-sectional, mixed-method study of the UPG model that uncovered three major takeaways:

1. **UPG Livelihood Interventions:** The UPG program built household resilience through diversified livelihoods, livestock ownership, and market links. Three-quarters of respondents reported increased incomes during the most recent five-year period

2. **Layered DRR and WASH Interventions:** Participants in UPG+WASH+DRR programs reported increased asset ownership and a 20% lower likelihood of living in extreme poverty compared to those participating only in the UPG program. Access to WASH was associated with a 37% lower probability of income loss.

3. **Empowering Women:** Women who reported making major household decisions independently or jointly with spouses had a 29% higher probability of increased income. Members of savings or credit groups were 44% more likely to have increased income, showcasing the importance of social empowerment.

This study affirmed that NJP's use of layered interventions, particularly when combined with UPG, contribute significantly to sustained escape from extreme poverty in coastal Bangladesh. It underscores the importance of building resilience through multifaceted approaches that address the complex challenges faced by ultra-poor households, providing valuable insights for the design and implementation of future development programs.
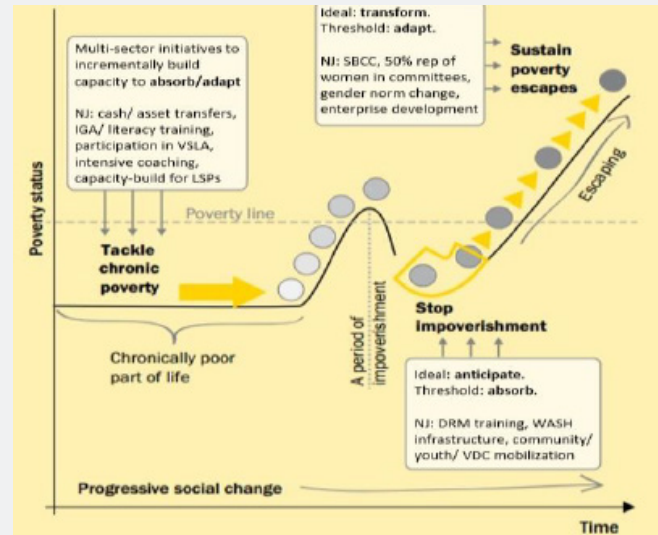
Resilience within the Health & Nutrition sector

World Vision's Health and Nutrition sector is focused on the sustained improvement of the primary health status of 80 million of the most vulnerable mothers, newborns, children, and adolescents—including persons with disabilities—in the countries we serve. World Vision's approach to health programming aligns with the global World Vision Partnership and key donor goals, focused on strengthening community and health systems in conflict and fragile settings, ensuring continuity of program activities with minimal disruption. For effective collaboration and contextualized efforts, we engage with many stakeholders, especially local organizations, faith leaders, and the national government.

For many decades, the global health sector has been a frontrunner in recognizing and addressing the need for systems-level thinking. This work has been guided mainly by the World Health Organization's long-time emphasis on strengthening health systems, including the provision of clear definitions and tools. In more recent years, the health sector has begun to articulate the specific role that the strengthening of health systems plays in fostering resilience. Collins and Mock (2024) note that "Resilient health systems have several well-established components: a committed, well-trained, and distributed workforce; sufficient supplies, including equipment, logistics management, and emergency stocks; information systems that provide surveillance and early warning; adequate and predictable financial systems; sufficient governance, leadership, and management; undisrupted and diverse service delivery capabilities (including surge capacity); adaptive resilience to manage shocks in real-time; and values that align with the communities that are being served." A number of these components are directly relevant for agri-food and market systems as well as social protection systems, suggesting some potential for their adaptation and adoption within these areas.

HEALTH SECTOR CASE STUDY:
THE CORE GROUP PARTNERS PROJECT (CGPP) IN SOMALIA

The emergence of COVID-19 in Somalia in March 2020 threatened to overwhelm an already fragile health system as the country struggled to contain and respond effectively. The pandemic emphasized the need for quick, efficient vaccine distribution—especially in Somalia where the Ministry of Health is highly dependent on donors and aid for routine operations. With funding from USAID and working through the CORE Group Partners Project (CGPP), World Vision contributed significantly to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and to building resilience in local health systems.

Across the country, Somalia has more than 2,400 sites serving the needs of internally displaced persons. These sites have limited resources, are logistically very complex, and are subject to pervasive misinformation, all of which serve as barriers to crucial vaccination efforts. Due to limited funding and other competing challenges such as drought, flood, famine, and several infectious disease outbreaks (polio, cholera, and measles), Somalia struggled to distribute vaccines in hard-to-reach regions. However, CGPP played a key role in building a more resilient health system by accelerating vaccine distribution among communities in Badhadhe, Dhobley, Afmadow, and Elwak Districts of the Gedo and Lower Juba Regions.

In the effort to raise public awareness, address misinformation and disinformation, and build trust among communities, CGPP sensitized, trained, and collaborated with religious leaders, elders, youth, and women leaders from the project districts to garner support for COVID-19 vaccinations and build resilience in the health system. Sessions were conducted for community leaders about the importance, safety, and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines. Activities to increase vaccine demand were implemented: in total, the project conducted 40 community sensitization forums and reached 1,600 influential people the communities. Additionally, CGPP trained and deployed Community Mobilizers in all project areas and carried out house-to-house visits, identifying individuals that met community case management requirements, and referring potential cases to health professionals. To ensure that more communities were reached—especially marginalized and hard-to-reach, nomadic, and displaced communities—CGPP engaged local radio stations to air COVID-19 awareness and vaccine uptake messaging. Through vaccination campaigns and other community engagement activities, a total of 286,230 people were reached with health education messages regarding COVID-19 and vaccine uptake.

CGPP's efforts to foster household resilience through health systems resulted in the vaccination of 14,360 persons in IDP camps, cross-border and hard-to-reach areas, and in urban locations in Kismayo. The project supported vaccine transportation and conducted assessments to ascertain functionality of cold-chain systems to ensure uninterrupted COVID-19 vaccination activities.

Resilience within the Child Protection & Education sector

World Vision aspires to see all children cared for, protected, and participating in their communities. Through the work of our Child Protection and Education sector, we have helped reduce violence against three million of the most vulnerable children over the past four years. World Vision's Child Protection sector also makes a difference in the lives of children by strengthening child protection policies and practices. This includes promoting a protective environment for children through programs that reduce violence against children such as child labor, child marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, and household- and gang-related violence.

Complementing child protection efforts, World Vision's strategic focus on education seeks to ensure equitable access to high quality education, improved retention and learning for all girls and boys, including those with disabilities, especially in the areas of reading and life skills. Over the past four years, 1.2 million children have benefitted.

International development program trends in child protection have evolved in recent years, shifting away from direct service provision to focus increasingly on systems strengthening, capacity building and improving institutional knowledge. Donor trends have also sought to increase engagement with civil society and local actors as a strategy to improve local ownership. As a result, social protection efforts, including those in the education sector, are seeking to improve resilience by ensuring systems and structures adhere to standardized frameworks and priorities. For example, World Vision uses a holistic, inclusive, and equitable education systems-strengthening approach that supports key resilience elements within the USAID Reading Matters Framework, such as children being well-nourished,

having good health, and being safe and protected from traumatic stress.

Climate change has also undermined resilience within educational systems, with weather and environmental stressors eroding hard-fought gains in literacy and childhood nutrition (UNICEF, 2021). In this changing landscape, both child protection and education interventions must be multi-layered, flexible, and inclusive of community feedback to ensure impact at the individual, household, community, and system level.
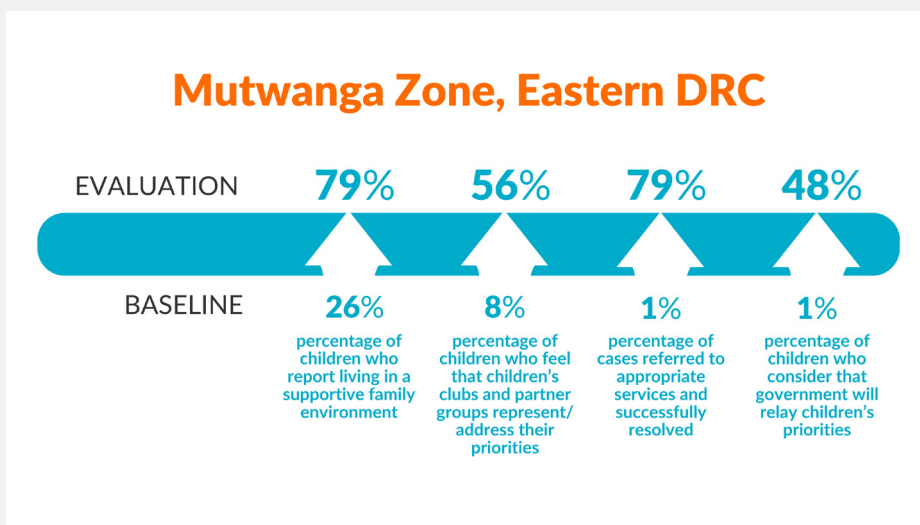
CHILD PROTECTION AND EDUCATION SECTOR CASE STUDY:

FRAGILE CONTEXT RESPONSE IN THE DRC

In the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), World Vision has adapted our system strengthening approach to fragile contexts. Through the Fragile Contexts Action Learning Project (CP&A), World Vision worked with community partners and stakeholders to consider the fragility and uncertainty of existing systems and structures. Participants were guided through a scenario-planning exercise to anticipate future disruptions, specifically the potential impact on violence against children, and then to create plans to best position the system to respond to these changes in the environment.

Building upon experiences of operating during Ebola outbreaks, World Vision established adaptive capacities and processes in the early phases of the project to enable teams to continue adaptation and implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic and during times of armed conflict. Approaches were adapted to meet immediate needs whilst still maintaining the focus on strengthening and leveraging the existing child protection system. The approaches included livelihood, education, and social cohesion interventions to respond to the direct needs of the most vulnerable children and at the same time address the root causes of sexual exploitation and recruitment of children into armed conflict. Additionally, World Vision drew on our experience working in emergency contexts to engage in child protection interventions that included psychosocial support, healthcare, identification, documentation, tracing, and reunification for unaccompanied and separated children (during attacks and for flood survivors).

The CP&A project resulted in significant gains in child resilience, parenting skills, and reporting, referral, and resolution of child protection cases. The graphic at right shows the positive impact these interventions had on child wellbeing.

The outcomes of the CP&A project reinforce that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding needs in fragile states and protracted crises are interlinked. A systems approach helps to address simultaneous survival needs for targeted vulnerable children and at the same time addresses the systemic root causes of vulnerability.

Mutwanga Zone, Eastern DRC

EVALUATION	**79%**	**56%**	**79%**	**48%**
BASELINE	26%	8%	1%	1%
	percentage of children who report living in a supportive family environment	percentage of children who feel that children's clubs and partner groups represent/ address their priorities	percentage of cases referred to appropriate services and successfully resolved	percentage of children who consider that government will relay children's priorities

Resilience within the Humanitarian Response sector

World Vision is a leader in the HDP nexus. Within our emergency response programs, we have adapted a range of signature project models including Ultra-poor Graduation (UPG), Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM), Savings for Transformation (S4T), and Community-led Capacity Strengthening for Fragile Contexts (C4FC) across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

World Vision's CBDRM programming engages local partners and community organizations during steady-state contexts as an important step in building long-term

resilience capacities, creating a disaster-risk-aware culture, and sustaining gains made. A critical entry point for resilience-facing program design is in building community understanding of vulnerability and disaster risk to promote community ownership, scalability, and sustainability of programs.

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RESILIENCE CASE STUDY:

COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT IN VIETNAM

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A recent study of World Vision's disaster risk reduction programming in the Asia Pacific region showed that CBDRM often leads to institutional improvements in national preparedness plans, making it a 'systems level' approach. While nearly half of projects included in the study had sustainability statements, only Vietnam's community engagement and child sponsorship plan, implemented within all 27 area programs, included indicators of ownership and partnership, and these indicated a high success rate—86% for ownerships and 89% for partnership.

This same study identified eight projects that included identifiable scalability practices; these mostly involved monitoring the production of policy documents and government trainings. For example, the Increasing Community Resilience to Disaster in Bangladesh Project (ICRDB) developed and implemented 364 hazard risk reduction plans and policies across multiple levels of government. While the quantity of these outputs is impressive, country offices should focus on monitoring outcomes, such as the adoption of CBDRM models by law and the implementation of the law.

On the other hand, Vietnam's community engagement and sponsorship plan successfully influenced the amendment of law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control leading to the adoption of World Vision's model as a national one, resulting in sustainability, scalability, improved national resilience capabilities and strengthened coordination between communities, local organizations, and government entities.

Resilience within Gender Equality & Social Inclusion

World Vision ensures the systematic integration of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) across program interventions through our GESI continuum approach, which is used to improve a program's design, adapt a program during implementation, and inform program evaluation. World Vision defines GESI as a multi-faceted process of transformation that:

1. Promotes equal and inclusive access, decision-making, participation, and well-being of the most vulnerable;

2. Transforms systems, social norms, and relationships to enable the most vulnerable to participate in and benefit equally from development interventions;

3. Builds individual and collective agency, resilience, and action; and

4. Promotes the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable children, their families and communities (World Vision, 2023).

The GESI approach features five domains of change that are required for gender equality and social inclusion:

access, decision-making, participation, system, and well-being. Designing programs with these domains of change in mind results in programs that address the underlying causes of inequalities and exclusion, and transforms harmful norms, roles and relations. The GESI framework moves programming from simply reaching development goals to challenging and shifting stereotypes, discriminatory practices, and unequal power relations. In this way, gender equality and social inclusion are promoted across critical domains, such as access, decision-making, participation, and representation within larger systems.

In recent years, World Vision has made notable gains in integrating GESI within resilience-focused agri-food systems. In collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, much of this work has sought to build the agency and participation of marginalized individuals. GESI-responsive food security and livelihoods programming is focused on livelihood interventions that are aimed at household-level economic change with integral components of social empowerment and women's economic empowerment (World Vision, 2022). These integrated components encourage greater engagement in societal affairs and systems of power to influence development outcomes ((Lenhardt et al, 2021).

In 2022, World Vision conducted an agri-food systems GESI assessment of Kenya's Omena fishing industry, which is largely divided by sex and gender roles. This assessment showed that the combination of (a) supporting greater dialogue and joint decision-making between men and women at the household level; (b) providing support for greater engagement by men; and (c) increasing the participation of vulnerable groups in local governing bodies and management committees, all leads to the creation of systems that benefit all members, including those with disabilities (FAO, 2023). Furthermore, in the Nobo Jatra project in Bangladesh, GESI was a cross-cutting theme critical to implementation of all project activities as well as an integral stand-alone pillar with targeted interventions related to male engagement and youth development. This approach significantly increased positive changes in perceptions related to gender equitable practices at the household level, with 89% of men believing that women should be consulted on household budgeting and other purchases in comparison to 43% at baseline (World Vision, 2021).

Resilience within the Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene sector

World Vision is the largest global, non-governmental provider of water. Our water programs are core to community resilience and are best addressed through water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs, largely in the form of systems-level water security interventions. To address the complex water security challenges facing the countries where we work, World Vision partners with communities and governments to strengthen integrated water resources management (IWRM) with strategies to enable downstream water supply services while also improving the management of the upstream water resources on which those services depend.

World Vision's primary entry points for improved water security include advocacy and support for watershed rehabilitation and protection, watershed management plans to support sustainable drinking water systems, and water safety plans to protect public health from "catchment to consumption."[3] Groundwater monitoring and management is fundamental to the responsible stewardship of life-sustaining clean water resources.

WASH SECTOR CASE STUDY:

INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SOMALIA

Groundwater monitoring in World Vision programs in Somalia demonstrates that such stewardship requires the collection, analysis, sharing, and use of timely and accurate hydrological and meteorological "hydro-met" data on groundwater quality and quantity. Understanding the overall water level trends as well as the community borehole recovery period after each pumping session is critical to tracking the sustainable management of groundwater resources (World Vision, 2023).

To understand the scalability and sustainability of IWRM programs, hydro-met stations are strategically positioned to gather data from multiple aquifers in order to identify the impact on larger, regional groundwater systems, with the data being shared at multiple levels. In Somalia, World Vision connects communities with the Somalia Water and Land Information Management system and with state governments to better manage groundwater resources and maximize the availability and application of the data generated by the expanding network of groundwater sensors. Outcomes are reflected in the number of hectares supported with watershed management plans.

4. WAY FORWARD: TOWARDS A SYSTEMS-ORIENTED RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

Key findings from a Literature Review

Building upon lessons learned from sector-specific resilience programs and reflecting the broader directional shift towards systems-oriented resilience interventions, World Vision commissioned Tulane University to conduct a review of peer-reviewed and grey literature from around the world related to evidence of links between resilience gains and systems approaches. The first stage of the literature review took place from December 2021 to February 2022 and concentrated upon literature published between January 2012 and May 2022. Tulane then conducted a supplemental literature scan to incorporate new publications released between May 2022 and May 2024. The Tulane researchers used Web of Science, EBSCO, and Google Scholar to conduct their review, and they drew development grey literature from TANGO International, J-PAL, and CaLP, among others. Across identified streams of interest (i.e., agri-food and market systems, health systems, social protection and financial inclusion, and child protection and education), Tulane included 87 articles in the initial review, adding an additional 36 articles in 2024.

Overarching findings show that coupling resilience-focused activities with nascent and established protective safety-net programs can improve food security, health, and wellbeing across sectors and prevent relapsing into greater poverty and vulnerability.

The enabling environment is a critical determinant of resilience, and there is an urgent need to incorporate activities related to climate, infectious disease (e.g., COVID-19, Ebola, HIV), and conflict-sensitivity into resilience-focused programming. However, for urban contexts, there is a scarcity of evidence, which presents an opportunity for expansion of resilience-based programming and evidence-building.

Another key area of expansion is to operationalize resilience as a learning enterprise—harvesting promising practices to understand where real progress can be made, which strategies are working or failing, and how this information can be disseminated to relevant stakeholders to inform practice.

Social cohesion is a major driver of resilience and should be considered in all activities. Related to this, the role of faith and religious affiliation as building blocks of individual, household, and community resilience is missing in empirical literature. These are key pathways through which World Vision and other faith-based organizations are uniquely able to foster resilience.
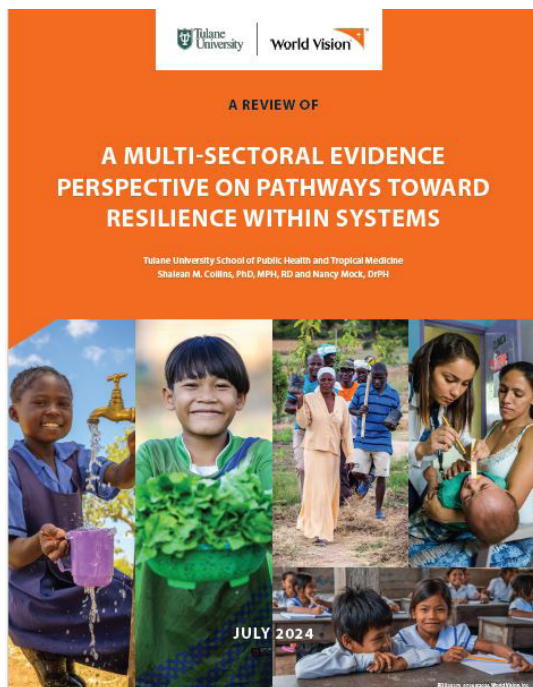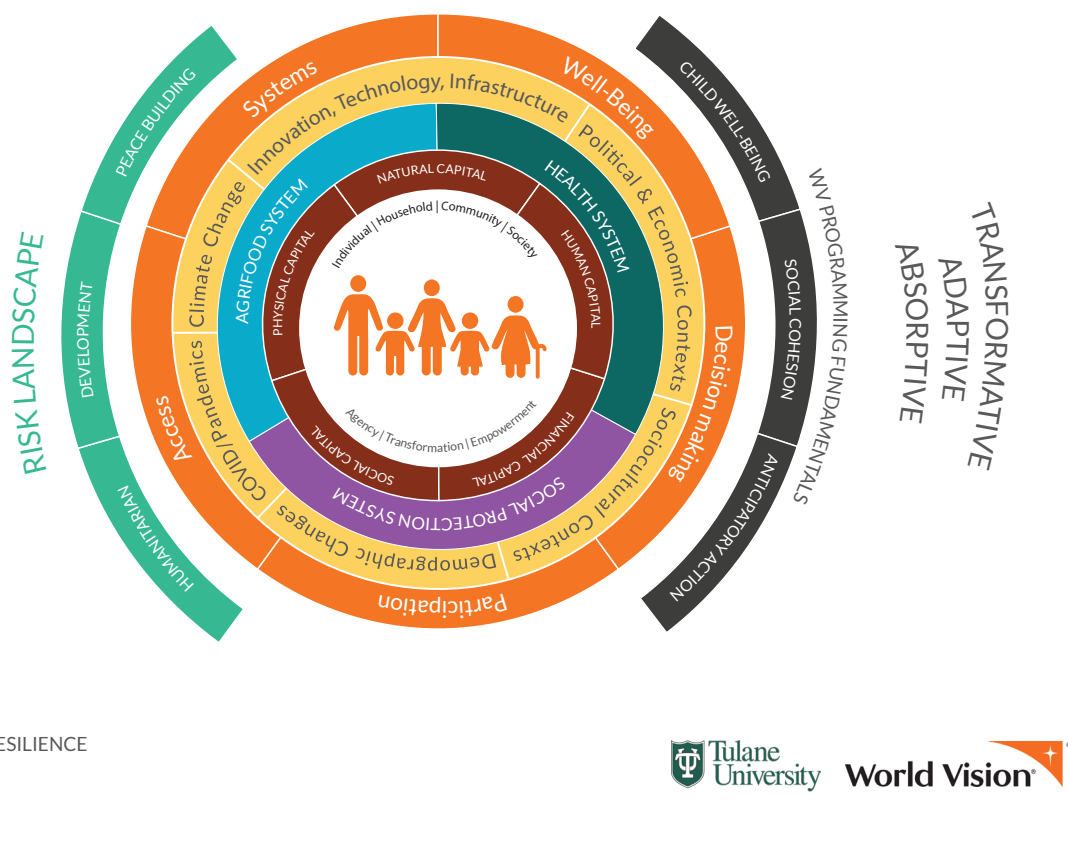
World Vision's Systems-oriented, Conceptual Multi-Sectoral Resilience Framework

The *World Vision Multi-Sectoral Resilience Framework* results from a blend of literature review insights and the thoughtful work of the interdisciplinary task force established to create this framework.

The diagram on the next page illustrates the interactions between and overall sequencing of key factors that donors and program implementers should explore and understand when determining priorities for resilience response. It is structured around a set of evidence-based **design principles** for identifying entry points for action, and subsequent critical pathways towards resilience across food, health, and social protection systems. These design principles are based upon insights from World Vision's interventions; each is an area of our strengthened commitment to design thinking.

Tulane University | World Vision

A REVIEW OF

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

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Conceptual Framework for Multi-sectoral Resilience

Legend:
- GESI DOMAINS
- TYPES OF CAPITAL FOR RESILIENCE
- SYSTEMS DRIVERS
- KEY SYSTEMS

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The <u>first principle</u> is that **resilience-building must be context- and outcome-driven and not merely sector-specific.** Each operating context is unique and requires contextualized, tailored approaches that address problems at their root. With the convergence of conflict and climate change, and in a post-COVID recovery landscape, operational contexts are increasingly complex. These shifting environments often result in new vulnerabilities while deepening pre-existing vulnerabilities. This includes structural vulnerabilities within the systems themselves, and socio-economic and political vulnerabilities across all levels of society.

The <u>second principle</u> provides an important complement to the first: donor-funded programs must first **acknowledge and harness existing local agency, working closely with local actors to identify what works best** for addressing local vulnerabilities. Whether experiencing chronic stressors, rapid onset shocks, or both, local stakeholders' vulnerability must not be used to limit their agency within the humanitarian and development process. The development community must therefore move beyond exclusively defining its program

audiences as "vulnerable" to better enable transformative solutions that solve for risk and foster long-term resilience.

The <u>third principle</u> is that **donor funding and program design must reflect the realities of timing and geography that are significant considerations for risk identification and risk reduction.** These factors shape individual, household, and community capacity to shift focus and resources to respond to changing vulnerabilities. This principle also ensures that donors and implementers proactively recognize and respond to the risks across the HDP nexus.

The building blocks of resilience (also called resilience capitals) are generally accepted to be financial, human, natural, physical, and social in nature. Each of these helps individuals, households, and communities to buffer and stabilize against new and recurring future shocks. Resilience capitals provide a good starting point for understanding the assets that exist to offset shocks at individual, household, and community levels. This approach also allows donors and implementers to identify potential intervention entry points in terms of geographic location and intervention scale.

Likewise, designing resilience programs around local agency and assets improves donor return on investment by creating stronger traction for sustaining and building upon resilience outcomes. Donors increasingly seek to address multi-dimensional risks and the resulting shocks that are often protracted in nature. Understanding where to begin addressing risks, and how to appropriately scale investments, requires an understanding of the challenges related to the timing and geographic location of interventions.

The fourth principle is to **deeply engage strategic levers within targeted drivers of systems change**, rather than within every element of the system. In any system, a few key drivers can be transformative. For example, health systems can be changed through strengthened and sustained sources of human, financial, and material resources. Technical assistance that does not address these three drivers is unlikely to result in meaningful or sustainable change. Deeper engagement with systems drivers will require that donors continue to invest in bilateral, multilateral, and plurilateral policy frameworks to address macro-systemic issues that undermine the resilience of food, health, and social protection systems. This factor is particularly important for enabling LMICs and their most underserved populations to realize greater benefits from these systems. Deeper engagement will also require that donors expand the mandate of the development, humanitarian, and peace programs they fund to increase focus on systems-level outcomes alongside short- and medium-term services and interventions.

The fifth principle is closely tied to a context-based understanding of drivers and existing resilience assets, or capitals, to address **gender equality and social inclusion**. The World Vision GESI theory of change recognizes the importance of engaging stakeholders across every level of social ecology and through each domain of social change to achieve greater agency, transformation, and empowerment for stakeholders. World Vision's GESI approach describes the key ingredients, or domains of engagement, needed to effect meaningful change in outcomes and impacts for any group intended to benefit from sustainable development or humanitarian efforts. Conceptually, and like the concept of resilience capitals or assets, GESI domains 'exist' at baseline level within any context. Program designers must understand how to optimize the expression of each GESI domain in view of gender, age, and social traits that might lead to exclusion and vulnerability if not deliberately addressed. World Vision considers well-being to be a precondition for benefitting from the other four GESI domains. **We place a special emphasis on child well-being as key to breaking generational cycles of poverty and injustice**; and we recognize that agency,

transformation, and empowerment must exist within each domain to truly address gender and social injustices within any context.

The sixth principle is to **re-orient the design and expected outcomes of HDP interventions to enhance existing areas of productive collaboration and competition among stakeholders within systems.** This principle also ensures that donors and implementers play roles that strengthen enabling environments for for agri-food, health, and social protection systems change, and prioritize, wherever possible, catalytic and facilitative approaches over service delivery. Direct engagement with public and private systems stakeholders helps to minimize HDP program processes that substitute for or run parallel to the mandates of state- and/or private-led structures.

Through this framework, World Vision emphasizes systems thinking, open learning, and information-sharing to maximize collaboration, impact, and sustainability.

Framework Implementation and Learning Priorities

World Vision will develop a companion operational guide to the above conceptual framework, with a view to begin testing the operational version through interventions in late 2024 (World Vision fiscal year 2025). This work will include collaboration with our institutional research partners around the world to pursue existing and new learning questions; identification of additional, critical impact pathways for addressing child well-being; social and financial cohesion; embracing the role of faith identity in fostering resilience; scaling graduation models for resilience; and strengthening anticipatory action across the HDP nexus.

Likewise, identifying and documenting the benefits that social systems derive from intentionally designed resilience interventions requires new, scalable monitoring and evaluation approaches. World Vision will work with our donors, peer organizations, and strategic partners to determine ways of capturing evidence of systems impact, with an emphasis on understanding how resilience interventions affect dynamics between and among stakeholders within targeted systems.

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ENDNOTES

1   This includes analysis and design.

2   As with integrating systems-thinking within resilience programs, in recent years specific donor funding streams have indeed increased focus on promoting cross-sectoral collaboration between programs, including intentional geographic clustering of program investments to optimize collaboration and integration.

3   In line with recommendations from the WHO, water safety plans include the regular monitoring of water quality parameters to ensure drinking water is free from bacterial and chemical contaminants.