

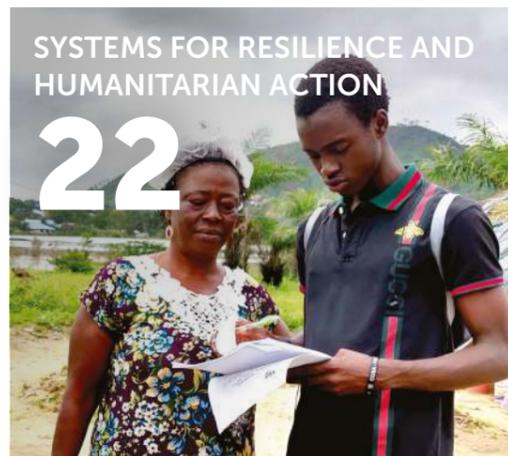


# RESILIENCE BUILDING HANDBOOK



**EU Aid Volunteers**  
We Care, We Act





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# FOREWORD

From the Resilience Lead Advisor



In a world which is increasingly uncertain, VSO's programmes and our relational volunteering approaches bring together people from different backgrounds, expertise and experience. In doing so, it generates new insights and

solutions which are becoming increasingly urgent and important. As an organisation, we believe that to deliver impact within our programmes, primary actors and those who the programmes are intended to reach must be at the heart of our decision making. This is also true for the monitoring, design and implementation of our approaches. Our volunteers work closely with our primary actors and are embedded in communities, services and systems upon which they depend.



VSO volunteers in Cambodia learning about resilience and humanitarian actions through EU Aid Volunteers Initiative.

Over the past three years, we have committed to embedding resilience as a core approach into all our programmes and approaches. This is alongside our other two core approaches: social inclusion and social accountability. It is in fact these core approaches - combined with our technical sectoral expertise in health, education and livelihoods; our volunteering approach; and our 'people first principles' - which gives VSO a clear added value and role. This is because, as an organisation, we work to build the assets and capabilities necessary to respond to the risks that individuals, households, communities and the systems upon which they depend. This enables VSO to play an active role in supporting the transformative change necessary at all levels to reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience in a sustainable way.

This handbook brings together not only our collective experience as an organisation in embedding resilience, but also the ideas and experience of our resilience volunteers and programme staff. It outlines some unique 'VSO' tools and approaches which we have designed specifically to support resilience building within our programmes, and many external approaches which we have adapted within our work. Our experience and belief is that everyone has a role in building resilience at individual, community and systemic level, and that our primary actors and volunteers are the most experienced practitioners of resilience building. Therefore, the language, concepts and approaches that we use within the handbook are intended to be inclusive, simple and practical. Although primarily intended to support our volunteers and programme staff to integrate resilience building approaches within their work, we hope that anyone who wants to learn more about resilience, volunteering, and inclusive, primary actor led approaches to resilience building, will find it useful.

## Clodagh Byrne

Lead Adviser for Resilience  
VSO International

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

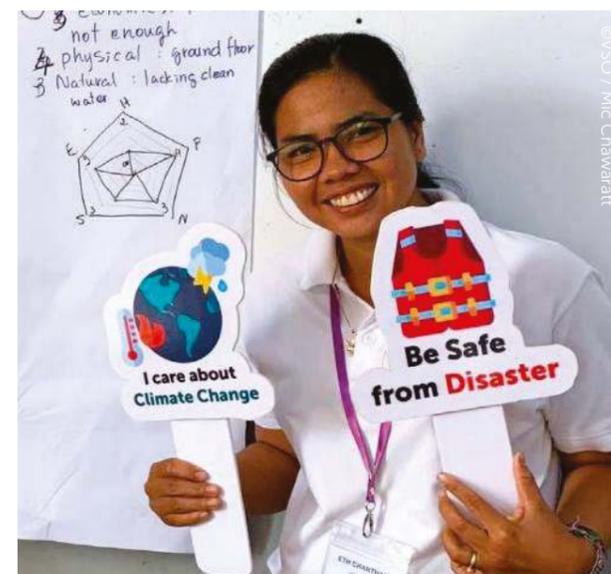
From EUAV – BE CAPABLE Global Project Manager



As the number of disasters in the world has significantly increased in recent years, so too has the need for capacity building in the areas of resilience, disaster preparedness and humanitarian action. Since 2018, VSO has

been working with the European Commission - Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) on the EU Aid Volunteer Initiative. Through local action, the BE CAPABLE Project supported by the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, aimed at strengthening the capacity of volunteers and staff to deal with disasters in nine VSO Country Offices in Asia and Africa (Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Philippines, Nepal, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Sierra Leone). Throughout the year, VSO developed the resilience and humanitarian aid training modules. Numerous capacity building activities have been delivered in the nine country offices that participated in the BE CAPABLE Project. Now six more country offices (Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Myanmar, Tanzania and Nigeria) are following this pathway in the Prepared for Resilience (P4R) project.

It is my pleasure to introduce this handbook which outlines VSO's approach to resilience building. I would like to thank everyone who participated in the development of the handbook including our global BE CAPABLE and P4R teams. The input from our volunteers and staff from each project has been extremely important, as has been the input of all our countries who have been building resilience through our DFID Volunteering for Development grant. In particular, my heartiest thanks to Clodagh Byrne for developing the content of this handbook, together with our consultant team: Roz Keating, Kirsi Peltola and Lydia Baker whose passion, commitment and tireless effort has ensured the diverse experience across our organisation on resilience is reflected. My sincere thanks to Zsuzsanna Ujhelyi, Sarah Henderson, Tom Parker and Marcus Oxley whose invaluable contributions and accompaniment have made this handbook possible.



VSO volunteers in Cambodia learning about resilience and humanitarian actions through EU Aid Volunteers Initiative.

Working in partnership at the global and local level is at the heart of VSO's mission to combat marginalisation and poverty. By working with the European Commission – EACEA and DFID on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative through our volunteers, VSO is making a lasting difference on the ground in contributing to the EU's humanitarian efforts.

I sincerely believe that this handbook will inspire our volunteers, youth volunteers, staff and partners to be prepared for disasters.

## Chawaratt (Mic) Chawarangkul

EUAV – BE CAPABLE Global Project Manager  
VSO International

August 2019

# HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

## Section 1

**The handbook is designed to give insights into how to operationalise resilience in your work.**

Section 2 to Section 5 provide information on the background, principles, systems and standards of resilience and humanitarian action. As volunteers and staff work in very different countries and situations, the handbook covers resilience areas generally. We hope that through the ideas and examples you can apply them into your own context.

We are actively integrating resilience in VSO programme areas through both development and humanitarian work. Section 6 of this handbook

provides practical guidance for working with communities, sectors and systems to promote resilience. Section 7 introduces VSO's organisational preparedness approach. A number of links and references have been included where you can find more materials and information.

We hope this gives you confidence in supporting others to increase their resilience to cope with everyday hazards and potential bigger disasters.



Members of a women's farmer group tend to their communal crops.

# VSO AND RESILIENCE

## Section 2

### 2.1 Global Trends

The impacts of disasters, climate change, conflict and fragility are increasing across the world. In all of the countries where VSO works, the lives, livelihoods and protection of girls, boys, women and men are affected by different types of hazards every day. Poverty, environmental degradation and population growth all contribute to increasing the negative impact of disasters, in the poorest and most marginalised communities. VSO aims to tackle these disasters by building resilience into everything we do, as well as implementing targeted resilience programmes. This short section considers the global trends of disasters and climate change, conflict and small-scale disasters.

#### Disasters and climate change

Climate change is happening more quickly and having more impact than we ever thought possible. According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the past four years have been the warmest on record. Climate change together with rapid urbanisation and environmental degradation is contributing to increasing the frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters such as drought, heatwaves, typhoons and floods. The number of disasters per year has

already increased from an average of 100 per year in the 1980s to an average of 200 per year today. In 2018, there were 281 recorded weather-related events affecting over 60 million people and displacing 17.2 million people across the world.<sup>1</sup> 35 million people were impacted by floods in 2018 and over nine million people were affected by drought worldwide, including persons in Kenya, Afghanistan, and Central America. Changes in climate are a key driver behind the recent rise in global hunger and one of the leading causes of severe food crises. The impacts of these disasters are far-reaching but they do not affect everyone equally. Women and children are 14 times more likely to die in a disaster than men and evidence suggests that Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) against women and girls can increase following the impact of a disaster.<sup>2</sup> Persons with disabilities also face a number of challenges. One survey suggests that only 20% of people with disabilities felt that they could evacuate without assistance in the event of a sudden onset disaster. Furthermore, older people - especially older women - are at increased risk of abuse and neglect. Yet their voices and needs are often not taken into account in resilience planning activities.



Esnalda received various types of food from VSO volunteers in Manica Province, Mbaiana zone, Mozambique after Cyclone Idai.

1 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CREDNaturalDisaster2018.pdf>

2 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/236656/women-girls-disasters.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/236656/women-girls-disasters.pdf)



A fragile state is characterised by a weak governance capacity or legitimacy, leaving citizens vulnerable to a range of shocks.

### Fragility and conflict

A fragile state is characterised by a weak governance capacity or legitimacy leaving citizens vulnerable to a range of shocks. It is estimated that one billion people live in states which are fragile or conflict affected. Even in countries which are not considered fragile, we can find fragile spaces. For example, communities, districts and regions which have low access to services and high levels of vulnerability to shocks and stresses. Conflict and fragility are major drivers of chronic poverty, resulting in a lack of access to services such as education or health, and consequences such as displacement and violence. In conflict-affected states, health and education facilities, as well as people working in or using those facilities, are often direct targets of attack. Health care workers, teachers, children and their families can be subjected to threats of violence. Schools, hospitals and health centres may also be damaged during a conflict. One estimate suggests that, every week, health care workers suffer attacks, and between 2016 and 2018, there have been 1,200 attacks on health facilities in 16 countries.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in many countries, schools are being used for military purposes such as shelter or storage of arms and many children lose access to or face interruptions in their schooling as a direct result of conflict. Between 2013 and 2017, 28 countries have experienced attacks on schools. Conflict also drives displacement, and in 2018 there were 10.8 million people newly displaced as a result of conflict.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-health-care-workers-suffer-attacks-every-single-week>

### Small-scale, everyday disasters

In addition to large-scale events and intensive risks such as earthquakes, there are a number of small-scale, everyday disasters that affect people's lives. For instance, local floods, fire and pest outbreaks may often go unreported, but their impacts can be devastating over time as cumulatively they erode livelihoods and impact on poverty. These are known as extensive risks which can be low-severity and high-frequency events and are mainly, but not exclusively, localised hazards. Climate change is increasing the severity of extensive risks, resulting in unpredictable seasonal patterns and changes in access to water, which in turn affects agricultural livelihoods. Globally, 2.5 billion people – many of them women - rely on agriculture for their livelihood. A lack of food security also affects nutrition. Children - especially children under two - are worst affected by malnutrition as it affects their growth and development. Estimates suggest there could be 25 million more malnourished children by 2050 as a result of climate change.

It is clear that there are many global trends affecting communities, partners and governments that VSO works with. We need to be ready to respond when a disaster occurs, but also proactively build resilience into what we do before a disaster strikes. In the next section we look at VSO's approach to resilience, including how we define resilience, as well as our resilience framework.

## 2.2 VSO Approach to Resilience

Over the past three years, VSO has introduced three core approaches: gender and social inclusion, resilience and social accountability. These three core approaches underpin everything VSO does as an organisation under our People First Strategy.

### VSO resilience definition

VSO sees resilience building as a process which we can apply through taking clear steps at individual, community or system level to:

1. identify risks, vulnerabilities and capacities (risk assessment),
2. identify interventions to respond to vulnerability and further build capacity (action planning),
3. support the delivery of resilience actions and mobilisation of multiple stakeholders to support.

Resilience building is necessary at all levels - from individuals to systemic levels - so it is important to recognise the interactions between these different levels. We should be working at all levels as much as possible to achieve lasting and sustainable change.

### People First

Through its People First strategy, VSO aims to bring people together to address marginalisation and poverty. For VSO, understanding the drivers of vulnerability and the disproportionate impact disasters have on marginalised groups is essential to effective resilience work. People First is about taking an inclusive approach and making sure the communities and people we work with have agency and ownership over resilience interventions - not just that they are included. Space should be created to ensure people who are most affected by poverty and exclusion - including girls and boys, persons with disabilities, minority groups, older people and women - are leading efforts to plan, implement, advocate for, and measure change in their own lives and communities. Another important strand of the People First strategy is global engagement and mobilising active global citizens to implement participatory, people-led approaches.



Joseph Yokie, a local community leader, using a water pump installed as part of VSO's Ebola response in partnership with Water Aid and Engineers Without Borders

VSO defines resilience as:

“The capacity of an individual, household, community or system to anticipate, absorb, and recover from shocks and stresses without compromising long term sustainability”

## VSO Resilience Framework

In 2017, VSO developed a resilience framework in order to guide VSO volunteers and programme teams in some key considerations when implementing resilience activities. The framework highlights how VSO takes a comprehensive approach to resilience that focuses on risk reduction, preparedness and, increasingly so, in recovery and humanitarian response.

VSO works with primary actors to achieve change. Primary actors are the girls, boys, women and men who live in the communities where VSO programmes and volunteers are based. They are the primary users of the education, health, livelihood services that VSO programmes are designed to strengthen. They include teachers, health workers, local government representatives and other actors with whom VSO works to achieve positive changes in the lives of the poor and marginalised. Primary actors are active agents in the design, delivery and monitoring of our programmes.

The key guiding principles for VSO in its resilience framework are:

### 1) Putting Primary Actors at the Centre of our Work:

For VSO, primary actors - particularly marginalised and at-risk individuals - are at the centre of resilience building approaches. They are the key stakeholders and decision makers within our resilience programming approaches.

### 2) Multi-Sectoral Resilience Programming:

Participatory risk assessments and action plans to increase the resilience of the most at-risk groups and communities are key to VSO's resilience approach. We apply risk assessments and action plans to health, education and livelihoods services and systems, to identify strategies which can increase their resilience. In fragile contexts, we develop multi-sectoral programmes directly responding to risk assessments which incorporate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Health, Livelihoods and Education and other areas as required. This enables us to address vulnerabilities and reduce the risk of disaster. You can find out the different ways we are building resilience in practice within our Disaster Risk Reduction, Education, Health and livelihoods programmes in Sections 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5.

**3) Volunteers and Resilience Building:** Volunteers - including national and international volunteers, 'informal volunteers', community-based volunteers and volunteer placements - all play vital roles in resilience interventions and helping those affected to respond and recover from disasters. Community volunteers especially are often the first on the scene in an emergency and have a unique understanding of the communities they work with. You can find out more about our approach to volunteering and resilience in Section 6.7.

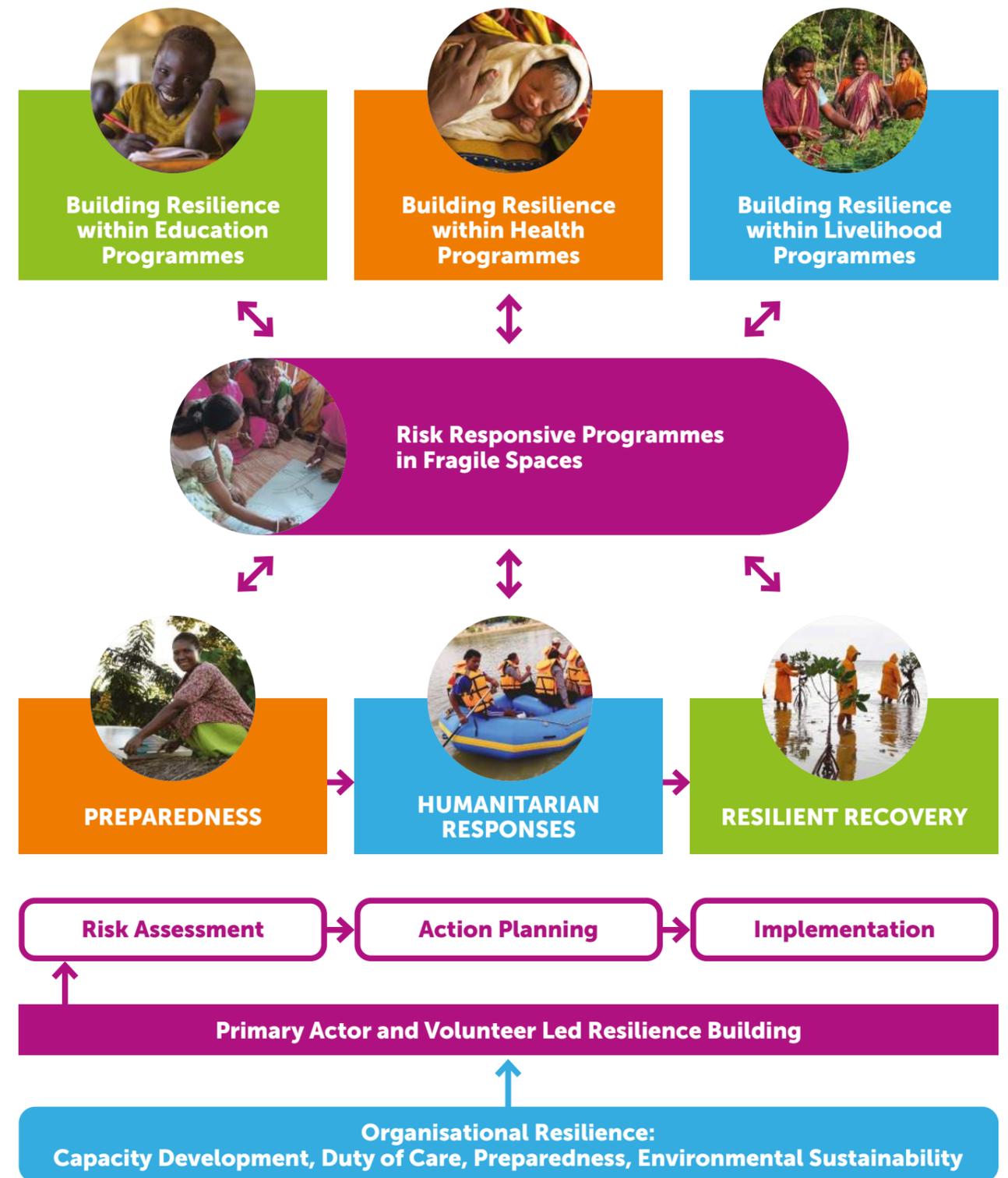
**4) Organisational Resilience:** VSO is committed to strengthening resilience at organisational level by identifying how our systems can be better prepared to anticipate and respond to the risks impacting our programmes as well as contributing towards environmental sustainability. VSO recognises that the global trends of climate change, disasters, fragility, biodiversity loss and everyday risks will continue to impact VSO's programmes and primary actors; this is why investing in preparedness, environmental sustainability<sup>4</sup> and resilience is a key part of our approach. This includes strengthening our internal resilience capacity and learning processes as an organisation, development of emergency preparedness plans at country and organisational level, delivering our environmental sustainability commitments, and ensuring a duty of care for volunteers and staff.

VSO's commitments to environmental sustainability include reducing our carbon footprint; providing environmental awareness opportunities for volunteers, staff and partners; and ensuring that environmental sustainability is central to our programming, policy engagement and partnerships.



Eililoy Kamwendo, aged 62, has trained as a solar engineer on VSO's Solar Mamas pilot project in Malawi.

VSO's resilience framework shows how we are embedding resilience building throughout our programming and organisational processes through supporting primary actor led risk assessment and action planning, ensuring volunteers and programme staff have the skills and capabilities to support these processes, and strengthening our organisational preparedness, duty of care and environmental sustainability strategies.



<sup>4</sup> VSO's commitments on climate and environmental sustainability are outlined within VSO's Position Paper on Environmental Sustainability.

# RESILIENCE AND HUMANITARIAN CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

## Section 3

In this section, we will explore some of the key terminology, concepts and principles of resilience and humanitarian work. It includes a number of definitions and concepts relevant to resilience, as well as an introduction to humanitarian principles.

### 3.1 Resilience Concepts and Principles



#### TIP BOX FOR FACILITATORS

There is a lot of new vocabulary and, particularly with communities, we do not need to go through all of them. Many languages would not have specific words for all of them anyway, so please consider how you will best get your point across without getting too stuck with definitions. The key issue is understanding that if we think about risks beforehand, we can reduce them. Use practical examples, as much as possible. Pictures and graphs are very useful, especially the tools that they themselves can work on. As the discussions created by the tools are really more important than the final product, make sure to leave sufficient time for them.



©VSO / Pakigdal Inc

Mangrove planting in the Philippines to protect coastal communities, tackle climate change and more volatile weather patterns including storms, and to improve ecosystems.

#### 3.1.1 Definitions

Both humanitarian and resilience work largely revolve around disasters. But what exactly is a disaster?

The picture below shows the connection between disaster, hazard, and vulnerability. If these primary actors below lived further away from the mountain, there may be no risk of disaster at all.

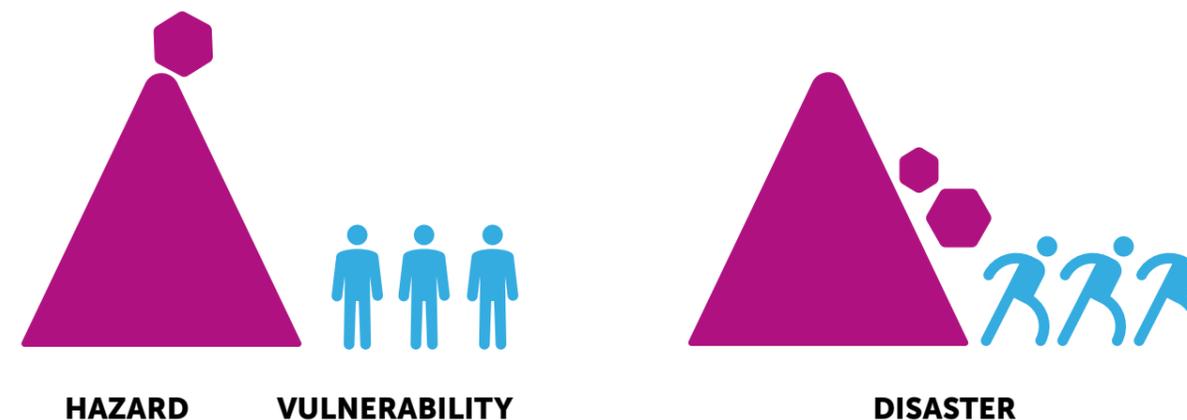


Figure 1

Figure 2

**Hazard** is defined as a dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity or condition that may cause: loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage. A hazard can be defined simply as a disaster in waiting. As shown in Figure 1 above, the large boulder balancing at the top of the hill is a hazard which is posing a threat of loss of life or injury if it falls. See further explanation below.

**Vulnerability** is the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards. As shown in Figure 1 above, the people are vulnerable due to their physical location at the bottom of a hill which has a large boulder that could fall at any time. See more under 3.2.2.

A **disaster** is a serious disruption in the functioning of a community, which involves widespread losses and impacts, and exceeds the ability of the affected community to cope. Note that there is always some

hazard that triggers it. It will only become a disaster if people or things are vulnerable to the hazard. As Figure 2 shows, the hazard (a boulder) is now rolling down the hill. It is causing a disaster to happen as it is impacting on the vulnerable people living at the bottom of that hill.

But, what about shocks and stresses? A **shock** is defined as, 'a sudden event that impacts on the vulnerability of a system and its components'. In case of slow onset hazards, this happens 'when the event passes its tipping point and becomes an extreme event'.<sup>5</sup>

A **stress** is a 'long-term trend that undermines the potential of a given system and increases the vulnerability of actor within it'. For example, a community that has been battling with drought or poverty for a long time (stress) may no longer be able to cope without support when the third annual rains fail or a large number of people migrate to their area (shock). When we discuss hazards, we are referring both to shocks and stresses.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/34093\\_34093acf2013resiliencetoshockandstr.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/34093_34093acf2013resiliencetoshockandstr.pdf)



Aftermath of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

### Types of Hazards

There are many different kinds of hazards, and while we might not be able to prepare for all of them, it is important to consider the chances of any of them happening. Below are examples of the most common hazards, grouped as per their origin. Generally, we know that with climate change, several kinds of extreme weather events are likely to increase.

#### AIR (atmospherical)

- Storms, hurricanes
- Extreme temperatures or rainfall
- Snow or hailstorms
- Tornadoes

#### EARTH (geological)

- Landslides, mudslides
- Earthquake
- Tsunamis
- Volcanic eruptions

#### WATER (hydrological)

- Floods
- Droughts
- High waves, storm surges

#### HUMAN-INDUCED (manmade)

- Fires
- Epidemics; locusts
- Accidents
- Conflicts
- Technological / industrial

Hazards and shocks do not always occur suddenly. Some hazards can slowly build up into shocks and even disasters, with drought, ethnic conflicts or excessive rains being good examples. It is important to remember that these do not all happen in isolation but can often combine into more complex disasters. For example, in Mozambique after Cyclone Kenneth, a conflict zone was affected by a cholera outbreak. And in Syria, the conflict there was preceded by a long drought which led to migration and urbanisation.

Hazard is just the event, and risk is the negative impact that it can have. For example, a flood or storm (=hazard) can do damage (=risk) to our house, fields or property – or even health or life. A cyclone hovering over the ocean might not pose a significant risk until it crosses from ocean to land.

**“A resilient community is not a one-time checklist item; it is a continuous cycle of learning and understanding our risks and vulnerabilities and strengthening our capacities.”**

VSO volunteer, Myanmar

### 3.1.2 Disasters vis-a-vis development

Most of our work in VSO is about supporting the capabilities and overall development of the communities we work in. However, a shock or stress can reduce the level of development within a community. In the case of a shock this will happen suddenly; in the case of a stress it will occur over a period of time. This negates many of the positive changes our work has supported, and can lead to a disaster, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



However, by building resilience into our core programme areas and embedding it in our projects we are able to understand the shocks that may impact on the communities we work with. From there, we can work with our primary actors to plan for how to ensure both the community and our projects can reduce those risks. If risks are managed well, a shock or stress

should not derail development. In preparing for them well, we can ensure shocks and stresses have a smaller impact on our communities and projects, leading to a faster recovery. It can also, through the recovery stage, support communities to quickly rebuild anything lost and continue on in their development path (as is shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2

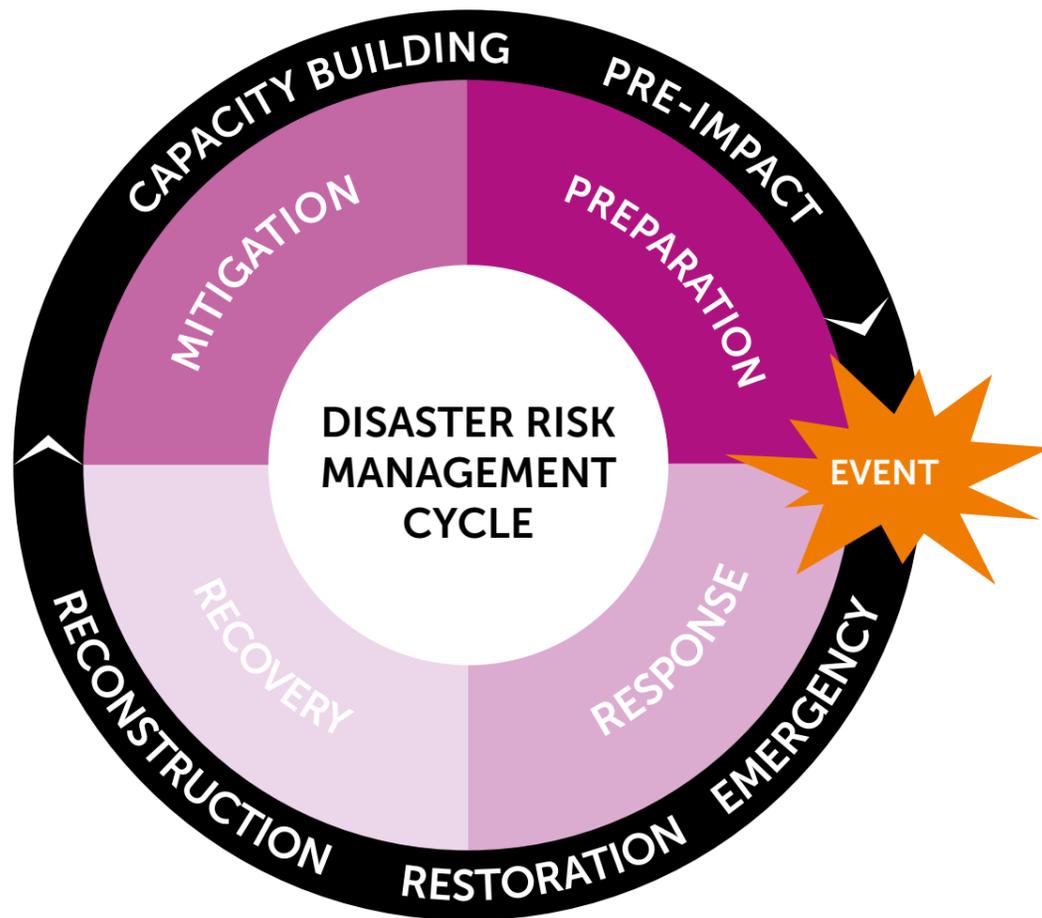


If you are working on a development project, consider beforehand which activities could be continued in the event of a disaster. Think about how you would modify

the other ones, during the humanitarian response, to still be able to progress through the long-term development objectives.

### 3.1.3 Disaster risk management cycle

Disasters hinder development (mostly!), and humanitarian assistance takes a lot of resources, which is why we need to consider and reduce the risks beforehand. The graph below demonstrates the areas that we need to work on to reduce risks before, during and after disasters. Note that these areas are not exclusive phases but often overlap with each other.



**Preparedness** means trying to get communities and systems ready for a disaster, including activities such as emergency drills, early warning systems or preserving food and pre-stocking relief items. Good preparedness can reduce the impact of the disaster and make the response easier and shorter - however, after a disaster it is too late to prepare!

**Recovery** activities help communities to return to normal life, and where possible a more resilient life (Build Back Better), such as livelihoods development or formal education. Recovery activities can start when the disaster has stabilised; however, in complex emergencies such as conflicts, this is often not possible.

(Humanitarian) **Response** takes place post-disaster, with the objective of saving lives, reducing suffering and maintaining dignity. It aims at understanding needs and responding to them (including rapid assessments, provision of food and non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene services and shelter interventions). Humanitarian professionals are invaluable; however, in the immediate aftermath, it is most often primary actors who are first to respond, so they need to know what to do.

Last but not least: **Mitigation** should be thought about during all phases. It refers to activities aimed at reducing the causes of vulnerability and hazards (trying to make the impact of a disaster smaller - if prevention is not possible), e.g. building schools to be more earthquake resistant, identifying drought-resistant crops or planting trees on the riverbanks to reduce erosion and floods. This is the heart of resilience.

### 3.1.4 Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster. It aims to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities to disaster as well as dealing with the environmental and other hazards that trigger them.

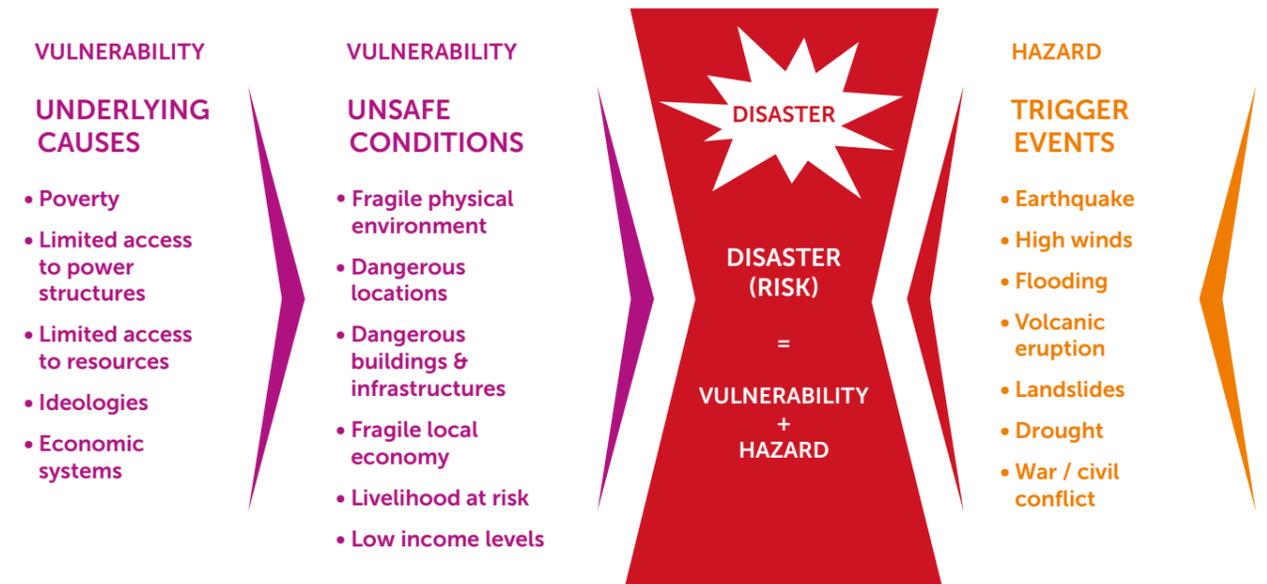
Note that a hazard does not automatically become a disaster, only when it encounters vulnerability. A hazard becomes a disaster when it causes significant damage to people, property and / or infrastructure. Remember that disasters are not natural, hazards are.

There are many factors as to why some communities are more vulnerable to disasters. Whilst poverty is one of the main challenges, other factors such as lack of safe infrastructure, limited government support, lack of risk awareness and lack of social protection all play their part.

The Disaster Crunch model helps us to clarify the relationship between hazard and disaster. Due to different underlying causes and stresses, people might not have access to important assets, leading to unsafe conditions. In normal, everyday circumstances, the community can still cope; however, even a small hazard could trigger a disaster.

The Disaster Crunch Model states that a disaster happens only when a hazard affects vulnerable people - when these two elements come together. As the primary actors in the red zone get pressured from both sides, we can support their resilience through impacting the other pillars (which means that a lot of the work that you already do reduces vulnerability and promotes resilience!). To make our approach sustainable in the long term, we should particularly focus on the underlying causes.

#### The Disaster Crunch Model





Older people participating in resilience and preparedness planning with VSO Cambodia.

## 3.2 Vulnerability, Capacity and Inclusion

Here we explore what vulnerability and capacity means, and discuss closely connected concepts: inclusion, participation and assets.

### 3.2.1 Vulnerability and Capacity

At community level, we need to identify who the most at-risk people are in order to ensure that their voices are heard and their specific needs are considered in resilience as well as humanitarian response. While it is important to understand what makes them vulnerable, it is also important to recognise that different at-risk groups and individuals have existing capacities and experience. Once they have identified their vulnerabilities to a shock or stress, and existing capacities, it is possible for them to identify how to further build their capacity. For instance, any person on regular life-saving medication should always have an emergency grab bag ready including their medicine; children who remember their guardians' details (name, mobile number, address) by heart can be reunited much quicker with their families; persons with disabilities need to know the evacuation routes that they can take, and who would help them in case of a disaster. Every individual and every community is different but there are some groups which are particularly high-risk. If in meetings, consultations or committees there is nobody speaking on behalf of these groups, we might be overlooking the most at-risk or most vulnerable individuals. However, we must take care not to put them on the spot or alienate others in the community as this could raise tensions.

### 3.2.2 Participation and Inclusion

VSO's People First approach highlights how primary actors and at-risk groups should not only be targets of action but participants in their own right and experts on their own issues and priorities. It is important to make those who often aren't included feel welcomed and supported. You may want to identify facilitators who are most able to help primary actors from more at-risk groups open up, such as using female facilitators in female focus group discussions. For persons with disabilities, older people and children, ensure accessibility and a suitable mode of communication. And encourage the community to see diversity and inclusion as positive things as well as emphasising voluntary participation without any pressure. Crucially, remember that the process is always more important than the end product.

While we want to involve primary actors as much as possible, participation should never put them at risk. This applies particularly to children, who are entitled to special protection by international law.

#### People First

Building capacity is the best way to reduce vulnerability.

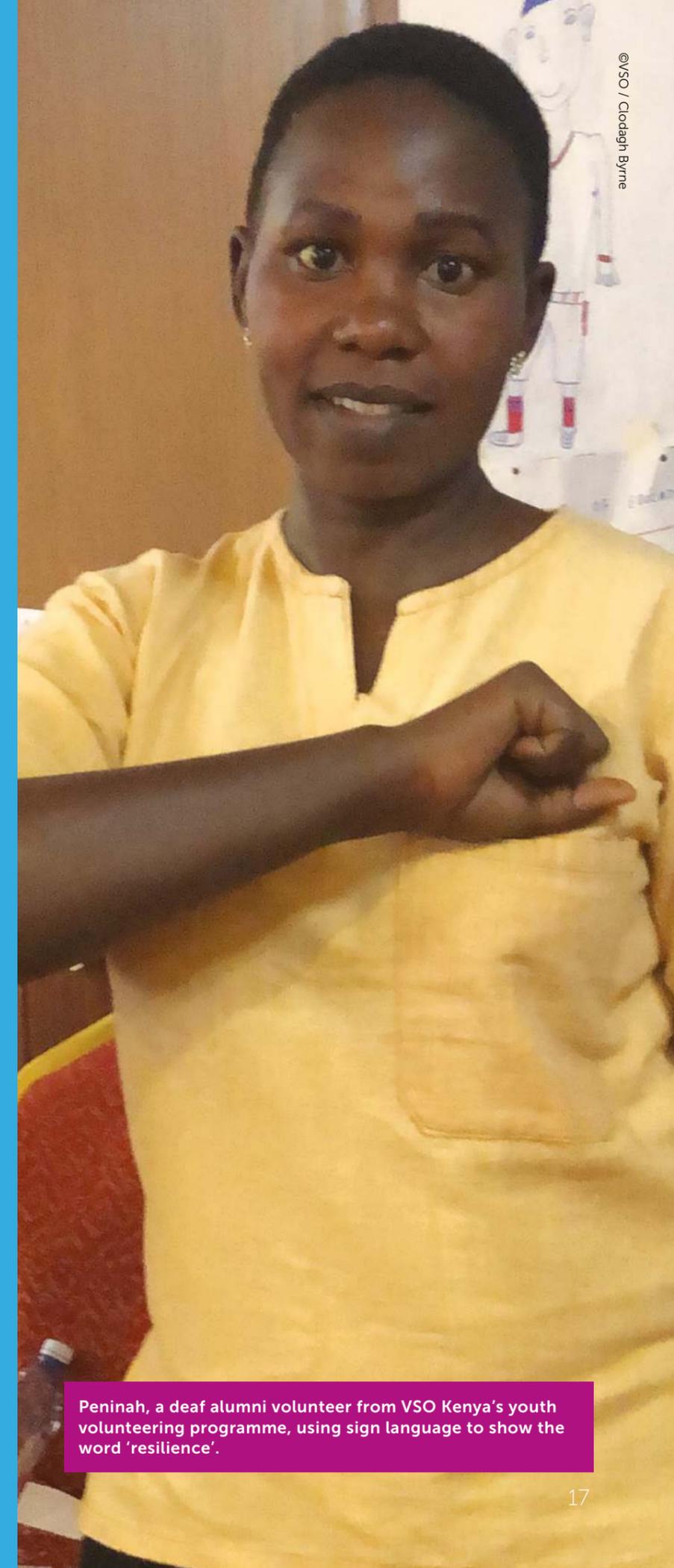


### Including persons with disabilities in risk assessments and action plans

In Garba Tulla in Northern Kenya, there is arid and semi-arid land where the community mainly practise pastoralism. However, climate change has gradually increased drought, resource-based conflicts, diseases and poverty.

Prior to VSO working with the community, they thought NGOs' only purpose was to provide them with short-term relief when faced with adversity. However, this has now changed, and the most marginalised primary actors are involved. This includes people with physical impairments and deaf people who share their ideas about resilience and being included in decision making. Through inclusive resilience assessments, the community identified interventions they could make themselves. They also identified issues where the government had not provided adequate facilities or structure and started joint advocacy on them, supported by the Social Accountability programme team.

The preparedness plan will be followed up by the community members to ensure ownership of the intervention plans. They have now realised the importance of long-term approaches in reducing risks through capacity building. And they have learnt how to organise themselves in responding to disasters through relevant committees and authorities.



Peninah, a deaf alumni volunteer from VSO Kenya's youth volunteering programme, using sign language to show the word 'resilience'.

## Child Participation

As child participation is one of the core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>6</sup> and as VSO volunteers and staff are often engaging with children, it is key to ensure the participation is good quality. The adjacent list introduces the nine basic requirements for effective and ethical child participation,<sup>7</sup> which can help you better include all children in resilience work. Even when you are not directly engaged with girls and boys yourself, you can still promote their participation. For instance, if in a community meeting about hazards you advocated that their ideas be heard and incorporated, this could be a simple step to making the adults see the value of children's voices. Be prepared for this to take some time and don't feel disheartened if it doesn't go as well as you had hoped at first. The more opportunity you have to build the capacity of communities, the more likely it is that there will be a positive impact for children. By incorporating the basic requirements you, along with the community, will have a systematic approach to including children in the best and safest way possible. Sometimes only the top students are promoted to be involved in any form of activity regarding children's participation, but it is often the ones who are not in school that have fewer assets and are thus more at risk.

### UN's 9 Basic Requirements for Child Participation

Make sure children's involvement is:

- Voluntary
- Accountable
- Safe and sensitive to risk
- Responsible
- Transformative and informative
- Relevant
- Child friendly
- Respectful
- Supported by training

Children are usually keen to get involved and can greatly contribute to resilience building. However, children are sometimes told to participate in activities that may not be safe, or in line with the 'do no harm' principle. Such activities include: building a well for the communities, travelling far for water sources, putting out fires or being part of the search and rescue team etc. If this happens, it is vital to discuss with the community children's right to protection, and plan with them safer activities that children can be involved in.



**Tariku, 10, was born with hydrocephalus and is paralysed from the waist down. He is now going to school for the first time with the help of nineteen children who have volunteered to take him there everyday.**



### TIP BOX FOR FACILITATORS

Child participation is a skill, which can be learned. If you are working with young children, adapting the methods to suit the age group can make it a more inclusive approach. For example, in Malawi for the school preparedness plans, VSO volunteers worked on modifying the tools so that younger primary school children could be involved. Instead of doing the body mapping to share what they saw, heard and felt, they used games to identify the risks faced by children. They ranked them by doing an action to show which was the order of impacts from the most to the least. Following this, in groups, the children carried out role plays to express their thoughts about risks.



## Including children in risk assessment and action plans

Whilst training teachers on resilience in Myanmar, one head teacher informed VSO that her school is closed annually due to monsoon floods. VSO Myanmar then carried out an in-school risk assessment with children aged 6 to 13, even though many stakeholders were skeptical about involving them. Once the activity began, it was evident that the children were very knowledgeable about the everyday and seasonal risks they face, and even spoke about risks in the community. The children identified, for example: snakes in the unmaintained grass and bushes, mosquito breeding around water sources and the play area, flooding of toilets during the rainy season, gunfire and communal conflict, discrimination by teachers, drug users and alcoholics, and fear of being asked to leave school to take care of family. By contrast, parents and teachers did not mention any of the risks identified by the children.

By including children, it often brings a new and fresh perspective, as children are vivid in their details and have a shorter memory time frame. How they perceive a safe learning facility is often very different from how an adult perceives it. They include what adults may perceive as minor details, and often support us in identifying small, logical interventions as part of the bigger picture.

### 3.2.3 Assets and Resilience

A person's vulnerability and capacity is determined by their access to assets and their ability to utilise them in reducing the impact of a stress or shock. And, by assets, we don't just mean physical things such as money, food or a bicycle, although resources and savings can make us much more resilient. Human (information, skills, knowledge), social (relationships, access to services) and environmental (natural surroundings, water, soil, forest) assets are equally important in ensuring resilience of at-risk people to shocks and stresses. At the heart of VSO's resilience building approach is an understanding of which assets different people and groups within communities rely on (and have access to) in times of stress and shock. For example, the assets a child in a flooded urban community would need to access are likely to be very different from those assets which are critical to an older indigenous woman experiencing a resource based conflict.

It is important to consider:

- What are the human, social, economic, physical and environmental factors that individuals / systems can access which help them cope with a shock or stress?
- What are the assets / services that they might not have access to which makes them vulnerable?

The assets can be divided into five categories:



#### HUMAN

...within a person (e.g. access to information, health, education, nutrition knowledge).



#### SOCIAL

...based on relationships with others (e.g. social support systems, community leadership, relationship with local government / service providers / duty bearers).



#### ECONOMIC

...related to existing livelihood activities or access to finance, savings etc.



#### PHYSICAL

...around us due to infrastructure (e.g. roads, irrigation and communication systems, livelihood assets, infrastructure related to services).



#### ENVIRONMENTAL

...around us, due to the natural environment (e.g. vegetation or forest coverage, soil quality, water access and quality etc).

See Section 6.1 for conducting capacity and vulnerability assessment in communities, which looks at these different assets

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/how-convention-works>  
<sup>7</sup> <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf> – page 26



©VSO / Bless Ngonhama

Manuel Andre and one of his four children after receiving food from VSO, after Cyclone Idai, Manica Province, Mozambique.

### 3.3 Humanitarian Principles

When communities cannot cope anymore, humanitarian workers support them in two important ways:

**Humanitarian Assistance** aims to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity. For example, providing food, repairing or building a school or health clinic and distributing tents for shelter are typical forms of assistance.

**Humanitarian Protection** seeks to protect the lives and dignity of people at-risk of armed conflict or any other type of violence. For that we first need to understand the threats and risks that people face.

As work in humanitarian contexts can be even more complex than in development contexts (consider the conflict, tensions, and the urgency), it is guided by specific principles.<sup>8</sup> The four key principles are derived from the core principles, which have long guided the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross. These principles lie at the heart of VSO’s work already, so they do not imply that we should have a very different approach in emergencies.

**Humanity:** Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. In VSO, we would always try to identify the most vulnerable people when planning, providing or monitoring assistance. It is also important to show some humanity when meeting affected people, as big humanitarian machinery can be quite intimidating.

**Neutrality:** Humanitarian aid must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute. During crises, we must be able to put our own opinions and biases aside and focus on helping people. Advocacy behind the scenes is great but no matter what we think of the disputing parties, we do not criticise them publicly or work with people on one side of the conflict.

**Impartiality:** Humanitarian aid must be provided on the basis of need alone, without discrimination. As volunteers we give priority to the most urgent cases of distress, without favouring people from our religion, ethnic group, area, political opinions etc. Watch out for hidden discrimination: e.g. if aid is distributed only to the heads of households, will the women and children benefit?

**Independence:** Assistance must be autonomous from political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented. This is more difficult than it sounds, as humanitarian donors have their own strategies and priorities and might be more inclined to support a certain area, country or sector. It is our job to analyse the needs and situation carefully and convince the donors when we disagree with their priorities.

“We cannot just work with them when the sun shines and leave them when there is rain.”

VSO Resilience Technical Specialist, Prepared For Resilience Project.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples\\_eng\\_June12.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf)

# SYSTEMS FOR RESILIENCE AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## Section 4

As VSO is increasingly involved in humanitarian responses, understanding how humanitarian and resilience systems and structures work is vital if we are to engage or challenge them. In this section, we will explore the cluster system and share some ideas on how to engage. We will also consider other coordination structures that exist in country during non-emergency times and can be key partners for resilience.



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A community volunteer captures feedback from a local lady on the cash transfer support she had been given after the flash floods in Sierra Leone, August 2019.

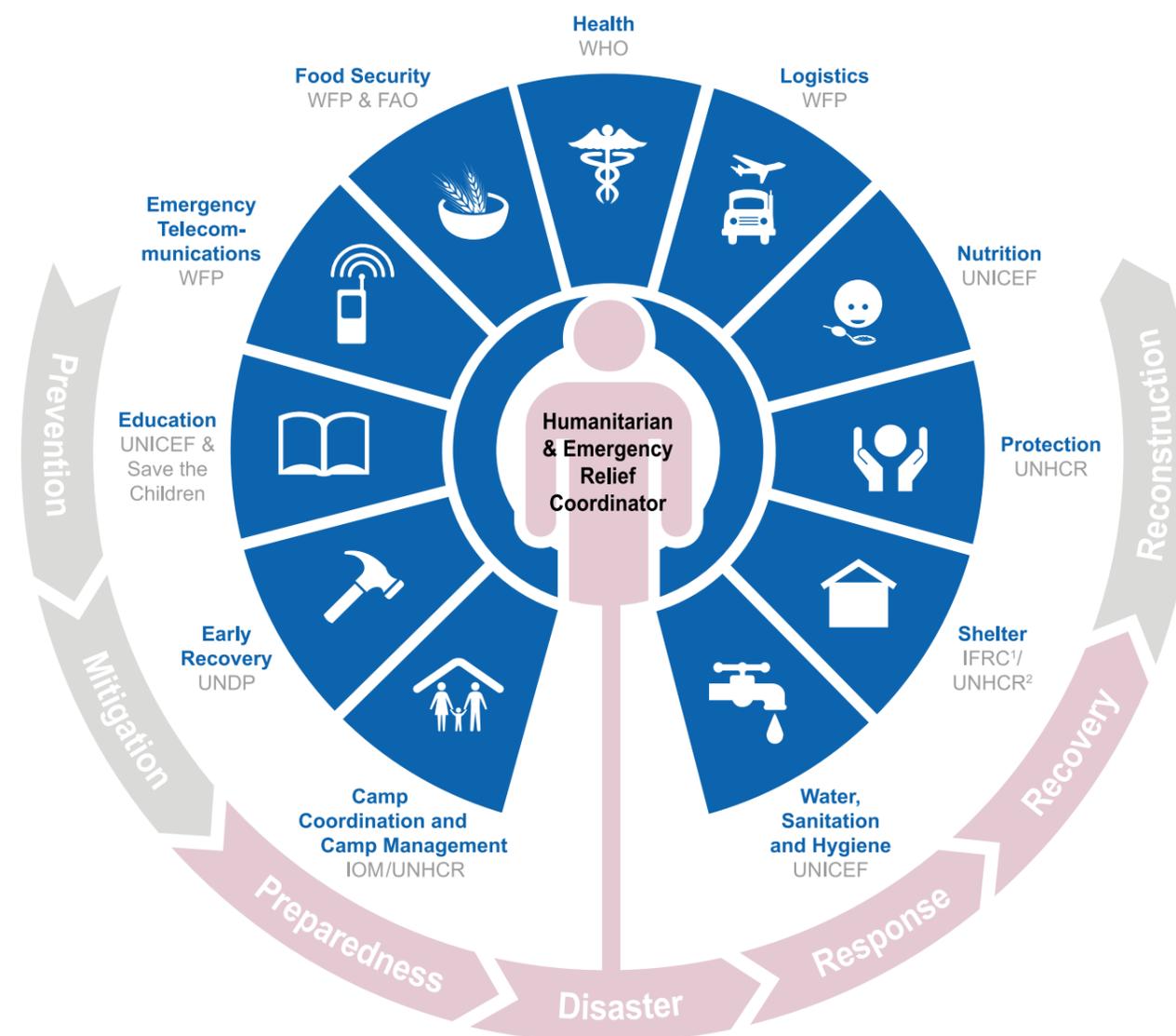
## 4.1 Cluster System

Under the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and with the support of UN OCHA, the cluster system seeks to enhance coordination and cooperation during an emergency response.

The cluster system ensures that in all the main sectors of humanitarian response, predictable leadership is in place when preparing for and responding to emergencies. Each cluster brings different organisations (including government) together to promote a sense of understanding about the priority of saving lives - ensuring protection mechanisms are in place, and the provision of essential services.

Some of these clusters may also be active in non-emergency settings to focus on preparedness for future humanitarian responses.

Governments have overall responsibility for responses and the clusters can only be activated with their say-so. The cluster system can also look very different in each country. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the clusters are known as pillars and there are nine of them in total. In other cases, the health and nutrition clusters might be merged and some countries may use their own system entirely for coordination.



The text in blue is the name of the cluster, and the grey text is the lead agency of the cluster.

Each of the 11 clusters is outlined in the table below with a summary of their main purpose, aims and examples of how VSO country offices already have these skills in their development work. It highlights that resilience and humanitarian response work is not separate from our day-to-day work. VSO volunteers and staff already have many skills that we can use during a response.

Cluster	Purpose:To	Aims:To	VSO Related Interventions
<b>Camp Coordination and Camp Management</b> 	Ensure equitable access to services and protection for displaced persons living in communal settings whilst always being accountable to the host Government and the UN.	Support field operations with tools, guidance & capacity building to coordinate & manage displaced populations effectively.	VSO is working with displaced people in countries such as Bangladesh, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia supporting primarily emergency education and / or livelihood services.
<b>Early Recovery</b> 	Establish and maintain standards and policy, build response capacity and operational support.	<p>Ensure a holistic and system-wide response that include national and local actors to improve aid effectiveness and reduce vulnerability to shocks.</p> <p>Pave the way to sustainable development by strengthening linkages between humanitarian and development frameworks using the nexus approach.</p>	<p>In Nepal, VSO has provided disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and early education support to flood impacted communities and schools.</p> <p>In Zimbabwe, VSO provided psychosocial support for children, elderly and vulnerable inmates who were impacted by Cyclone Idai.</p>
<b>Education</b> 	Uphold education as a basic human right and core component of humanitarian response.	<p>To ensure education agencies and organisations responding to an emergency take a coordinated approach and work alongside national authorities.</p> <p>Provide physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection to children, adolescents and youth affected and made more vulnerable by crisis; disseminating life-saving messages about environmental and health risks; and facilitating a return to normalcy and overall stability for children, as well as families and communities.</p>	VSO has been active in coordinating with the Emergency Cluster in Myanmar to share information on conflict and flooding risks impacting on education programmes. VSO has strengthened coordination within the cluster whilst responding to the 2019 floods in Mon State.

The purpose and aims for the clusters are a combination of information from the UN different cluster websites and volunteers' experience with clusters.

Cluster	Purpose:To	Aims:To	Examples of VSO's involvement
<b>Health</b> 	Relieve suffering and save lives in humanitarian emergencies, while advancing the well-being and dignity of affected populations.	<p>Build the capacity of Health Cluster members in the country and coordinating the provision of health services.</p> <p>Support the provision of medical supplies and facilities such as surgical theatres.</p>	VSO Mozambique and VSO Zimbabwe coordinated with the Health Cluster to access and share information to support their responses to Cyclone Idai.
<b>Food Security</b> 	Save lives through the coordination of the food security response and strengthen the collective capacity of humanitarian actors working in the area of food security.	<p>Address issues of food availability, access, quality and utilisation.</p> <p>Provide life-saving food assistance and critical agricultural assistance, for livelihood restoration and early recovery.</p>	VSO Mozambique coordinated with the Food Security Cluster during Cyclone Idai to design their food distribution response.
<b>Protection<sup>9</sup></b> 	Ensure people affected or threatened by a humanitarian crisis have their rights fully respected in accordance with international law and their protection assured by relevant and timely actions through all phases of the crisis and beyond.	<p>Support the sub-clusters focussing on specific protection issues:</p> <p>Child Protection</p> <p>Gender-Based Violence</p> <p>Land, Housing and Property</p> <p>Mine Action</p>	VSO Nigeria and Tanzania have been integrating protection within their education programmes. In VSO Mozambique's Cyclone Idai response, the team identified protection risks for young girls and early teenage pregnancies.
<b>Nutrition</b> 	Provide guidance and tools for nutrition response.	Safeguard and improve the nutritional status of emergency affected populations.	VSO supported nutrition programmes including food processing and storage for prisons in Zimbabwe. This meant that prisoners impacted by Cyclone Idai had enough food stored to survive.

Cluster	Purpose:To	Aims:To	Examples of VSO's involvement
<b>Logistics</b> 	Provide coordination and information management to support operational decision-making and improve the predictability, timeliness and efficiency in responses.	Facilitate access to common logistics services.	In Nepal, following the 2015 earthquake, VSO volunteers and staff supported the establishment of the National Disaster Recovery Secretariat in order to strengthen coordination and information management between agencies participating in the response across 14 districts of Nepal.
<b>Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)</b> 	Ensure that key WASH stakeholders (sub-national, national and global) have the capacity to coordinate and deliver an appropriate and timely response in an emergency.	<p>Ensure the quality and coherence of WASH assistance.</p> <p>Ensure that the assistance is provided in a manner that is equitable, culturally acceptable and protects the dignity of the people.</p>	VSO Sierra Leone, during the Ebola crisis, coordinated with other WASH cluster organisations to train community health workers to provide WASH support and Ebola prevention information to communities.
<b>Shelter</b> 	Support people affected by disasters with the means to live in safe, dignified and appropriate shelter.	Provide lifesaving shelter solutions that promote appropriate long-term self recovery of the most vulnerable.	VSO Nepal recruited an engineer specialist volunteer to support the rehabilitation of school infrastructure following the 2017 Rautahat floods. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Emergency Telecommunications (ETC)</b> 	In the immediate aftermath of a disaster ETC provides vital security communications services and internet connectivity the response community in their life-saving operations. Within four weeks, ETC services are expanded for continued emergency relief.	<p>Provide shared communications services in humanitarian emergencies.</p> <p>Share regular communication on safety and security related issues among the humanitarian actors.</p>	<p>VSO is a member of NetHope – a consortium which provides essential communication capabilities during emergency responses such as during the West Africa Ebola crises.</p> <p>VSO has also supported communication capabilities between networks of volunteers to monitor conflict in the Philippines and as part of our responses to the Sierra Leone mudslide.</p>

## 4.2 Engaging with Clusters

### VSO volunteers and staff are well placed to bring their experience and expertise to the clusters.

Over the past two years VSO has had increased engagement with clusters at national and sub-national level. This is often led by resilience specialist international and national volunteers who can provide technical capacity due to their dedicated roles being able to prioritise coordination. Prior to any emergency, VSO country offices need to identify where their strengths fit alongside the clusters, and which ones they would best engage with. This is because it is very context specific and dependent on our relationships, partners and programmes in the countries. This is normally done as part of the organisational preparedness plan in Section 7 of the handbook. It is important that this coordination is effective as it will help to minimise duplication of efforts with other agencies and ensure VSO is able to promote resilience building in the cluster system.

It is also worth remembering that the clusters are only as strong as the communication and collaboration in them. This is made more challenging by the big humanitarian machinery bumping into very different cultural customs. The people affected by disasters feel that their opinions are often not considered and the response is only providing short term relief - meaning they're not addressing their real needs. The key to any level of coordination is by engaging with government and existing systems BEFORE a disaster, thus strengthening coordination systems and considering the risks.



VSO resilience specialist volunteer Brosprov and project manager, Ponhrith, supporting flood prone communities in Tonle Sap. VSO Cambodia has been coordinating with the National Food Security, Livelihoods and DRR Clusters.

In line with VSO's focus areas of education, health and livelihoods (under the food security cluster), below are the key themes to engage with.

### Some ideas on what to promote in the education cluster

- School based risk assessment findings: What are the key hazards identified impacting on access and quality of education and children's safety within schools? What are the interventions identified and prioritised by children, teachers and parents to address these?
- Education access for the most marginalised children.
- Advocate as much as possible for schools not to be used as shelters.
- Encourage key messages on safe access to education in terms of physical and emotional needs.
- Building capacity of teachers to provide psychological first aid to students.
- Ensuring Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) are safe and accessible for all children, especially the most marginalised children.
- Share any resilience materials and promote action planning if children highlight risks. Promote the use of child friendly, inclusive DRR resources to be used in future teacher training programmes.
- Promote the concept of national and local level contingency planning and how to engage schools' communities in this process.
- Open discussions on how to support teachers during an emergency. E.g. what extra support do they need?

### Some ideas on what to promote in the food security cluster

- Community based risk assessment findings: What are the risks impacting on food security and nutrition within communities and what interventions are being prioritised by communities to address these?
- Bring the long term resilience perspective into cluster discussions. E.g. how are we building farmers' capacity in a post-disaster situation? Have they learned to think about risks? How can we support them to prepare for or mitigate risks (including farming and non-farming livelihood diversification and monitoring food prices etc.)?
- Promote sharing and learning from each other in the cluster. E.g. what kinds of seeds, dykes or fertilisation work well in the local context? Are we providing appropriate tools and materials (durability, drought- or pest-resistance)? How are the livelihoods options adapting to and / or mitigating climate change and preserving the environment?
- Bring food storage into discussion. E.g. are there traditional ways of preserving foods that could be promoted more? Is there an option to make framework agreement with food providers in case their harvest fails? This could increase chances of having a supply of food from elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

### Build Back Better

As seen in many countries, an emergency response can spark opportunities to improve what was there pre-disaster. Building Back Better is part of the post-disaster recovery process that reduces vulnerability to future disasters and builds community resilience to address physical, social, environmental, and economic vulnerabilities and shocks. Through building human capacity, we can help reduce all these vulnerabilities. Be sure to remind cluster partners about the importance of Building Back Better!

<sup>9</sup> Online resources for livelihoods in humanitarian context: Food security cluster: <https://fscluster.org/>  
Livelihoods and early recovery: <http://earlyrecovery.global/content/livelihoods>

<sup>10</sup> Online resources for health: Health cluster: <https://www.who.int/health-cluster/en/>  
and <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/health>

### Some ideas of what to promote in the health cluster

- Health Centre and Community Risk Assessment findings: What are the key hazards identified impacting on the health of most at risk groups within communities? What hazards are impacting on quality and access to health centres? What are the interventions identified and prioritised to address these?
- Share any knowledge you have on infectious diseases affecting the communities you are working with.
- Share mapping of all the different health services providers which are still functioning and any barriers to accessing health services for marginalised / disaster impacted primary actors in their local areas. This will help to advocate for better health provision.
- Promote an understanding for physical and psychological first aid.
- Collectively identify key health and hygiene messages to reduce further disease outbreaks.
- Advocate for more resources for persons with disabilities and those who have been injured during the disaster. This means they can recover sooner, increasing their chances of a livelihood.
- Promote the need for an increase in mental health awareness to strengthen an individual's coping mechanisms. E.g. is there a way to involve the youth to reduce any stigma towards mental health?
- Encourage capacity building of local health practitioners. E.g. is the priority on training these people so they have more confidence and skills to take on some of the immediate care? Are the methods used adaptable and realistic in remote areas?
- Make links with other clusters such as nutrition, food security, WASH to ensure those affected have access to food, water and decent sanitation.
- Advocate that access to sexual and reproductive health and perinatal health are still essential.
- Within the school setting you should encourage more health awareness. E.g. are the teachers able to recognise when a child is very ill? Do the teachers know any first aid?
- Promote increased medical access for women and children.<sup>10</sup>



VSO volunteers organising food donations in Manica Province, Mozambique after Cyclone Idai.



### Influencing the cluster system in Mozambique

In response to Cyclone Idai, the VSO Mozambique team coordinated with the National Institute of Disaster Management (INGC) and district disaster management agencies within VSO target programme areas. They engaged with the food security and health clusters throughout their response. Through this coordination, they were able to identify where their support was needed most. VSO identified that whilst Beira was receiving the majority of humanitarian assistance, the district of Manica was also highly impacted by the cyclone. VSO directed their support to Manica district, and by engaging with the coordination mechanisms, they were able to identify the most urgent needs: food security, protection, water and sanitation (in response to potential cholera outbreaks). The VSO team were able to seek and receive technical advice and support from others, including WFP for procurement of food items.

## 4.3 Other Coordination Platforms for Resilience

Households and communities live and function within multiple complex systems (market systems, health systems, governance systems and ecosystems) and it is important for us to engage with a variety of different stakeholders and structures for resilience-building. These structures exist at national, sub-national and local level and often meet regularly during non-disaster times to coordinate plans and approaches. They can be a key ally for addressing resilience in the communities in which you work. If they have not been meeting for quite a while, do try to reactivate them! Be sure to map out the systems, policies and structures in your country that help achieve change.

The key question to ask is what would happen if there was a major disaster? Who makes the top decisions, the Prime Minister's Office or National Disaster Management Authority? These government departments are responsible for establishing strong communication and data management, national systems and sub-national standard operating procedures and contingency plans in case of disasters, although they often need support from partners.

Other important actors include government local development, sectoral departments and line ministries such as health and education which are responsible for developing local development plans and budgets. Working with these actors presents an excellent opportunity for sustainability as well as scaling up good practices in resilience. For instance, if you are able to support a community in linking their risk assessment and action plans with local government plans, it is possible the government may incorporate the communities' priorities into their overall plan. The community may also receive funding support to implement their priority activities.

The other main coordination structures for resilience-building include DRR working groups made up of NGOs, UN agencies and often government partners. Participating in these groups can be a great way to learn from others and to also share your experience of what works in resilience and also learning from others. You may also be able to take part in developing materials such as training guides or modules that can be used by other partners in the country where you work. This is a great way to scale-up good practices and influence others.

It is also important to engage with education, health and livelihoods structures as well as sector working groups. These structures may not focus on resilience, so if you can influence them to think about it and build resilience into their work, it can be an excellent way of achieving results at scale. It can also strengthen the links between large sector development programmes, risk reduction and humanitarian response.

Some examples of coordination groups which VSO is currently working with include:

- Office of National Security (ONS) and the Freetown City Council in Sierra Leone.
- The Joint Action Group (JAG) on DRR in Cambodia.
- The committee for women and children that sits under the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in Pakistan.
- Disaster Management Committees in Uganda
- The Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) in Nepal.
- Education in Emergencies cluster and DRR Working Group in Myanmar.

### Top tip

To link and influence government plans, we need to be clear when these plans are prepared. If we share a community action plan six months after the government has completed theirs, we miss the opportunity to influence! Find out the government's timeline and how best to engage.

### Conflict sensitivity

Whilst governments are an important partner for resilience, in fragile or conflict-affected countries, we need to be aware that governments and other stakeholders can be perpetrators of violence against particular groups and communities. In your initial context analysis, make sure you identify any potential risks of working with government and build those into your work. It may mean, for instance, not sharing sensitive information with governments or other partners that could be used against the community you are working with.



Kamamojan women participating in a risk assessment and action plan to build resilience with support from VSO Uganda in collaboration with local government.



### Influencing local development plans in Uganda

VSO Uganda have successfully used the community risk assessments and action plans to influence the Local Development Plans of Agweng sub-county and Lira District.

A lack of a safe, clean drinking water has been a serious problem for many years in the community of Ayami. The community does not have a borehole and they rely on local rivers and streams for their water supply. As a result of the project, and significant advocacy by the local community and VSO volunteers, the community finally received good news from the Chief Development Officer and other sub-county officials. In 2019, the community will get a borehole as the sub-county has allocated budget within their local development plan.

VSO was able to achieve this result by mobilising support for action plan implementation within communities and local government (made possible by volunteers at district level who could give them unique access). VSO volunteers and programme staff participated in various committees including health, education, the office for vulnerable children, and disaster management to ensure the voices of the community were heard in these sectors. This is an excellent example from Uganda of how working at both community and systems level can achieve change.

# STANDARDS FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND RESILIENCE

## Section 5

**In addition to humanitarian principles outlined in section three, clear standards are needed to ensure the quality – and increasingly, accountability – of humanitarian response. In this section we will explore guiding standards.**

Even if you work in development, it is useful to be aware of guiding standards. It means, during crises, that you are then able to help the communities you work with hold the humanitarian actors accountable against them. Remember, however, that the government is still the primary duty bearer, fulfilling its citizens' rights.<sup>11</sup>

It only invites the humanitarian agencies to help when the disaster exceeds its capacity to cope. And while the international agencies' expertise and efficiency is invaluable in crises, the UN now clearly encourage shifting leadership and implementation to national and local actors.



VSO project manager, Rohit, conducting a Post Disaster Needs Assessment during the flood response in Rautahat, Nepal.

## 5.1 The Core Humanitarian Standard

The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) on Quality and Accountability sets out Nine Commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. The CHS is underpinned by the right to life with dignity and the

right to protection and security, and is very much based on the four Humanitarian Principles (Section 3.3). Knowing the Commitments can also help you to understand why humanitarian agencies act in certain ways.

### Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability

This figure shows how VSO's people's first and resilience approaches align with the Core Humanitarian Standard.



<sup>11</sup> Situations with refugees have a more complex governance: see <https://www.icvanetwork.org/node/6434>

These nine quality criteria show what communities and people affected by crisis can expect from humanitarian actors. What could the commitments mean in practice for a VSO volunteer or member of staff?

No.	Relevance for own humanitarian action	Relevance for holding other actors accountable
1	Start with a needs assessment (jointly with others, where possible) and share your findings.	Have the actors analysed the context and needs?
2	Act quickly, but make sure you are very realistic, to avoid false promises. Offer help to humanitarian actors.	If in 2-3 days no agencies have come to the affected community, challenge them.
3	Follow the preparedness and coordination plan where it exists; work with local leadership, including the most marginalised.	Do the community members get enough information? If they feel sidelined, raise the issue with the actors.
4	Make sure people know what they can (and can not) expect from you and VSO.	If the people do not know what they can expect from humanitarian actors, share this information with them.
5	Do the people already have a way of giving you feedback? Encourage them to also raise complaints and queries.	What is their complaint mechanism like? Are they listening to the most marginalised? Are the complaints & concerns replied to?
6	Help the local authorities to understand their responsibilities and to work with clusters. Good data is invaluable!	Do the actors share info and coordinate with local authorities and with other actors? Remind them!
7	What's gone well? What needs improvement? Learn and then share your learning!	Analyse, provide feedback and encourage actors to share their lessons learnt.
8	Clarify what you can expect from VSO and what they expect from you during the crisis.	If the agency staff are not getting the necessary support, can you raise it with the management?
9	Be clear on what budget and resources are committed to the response, and include people in decision-making where possible. Don't forget the environmental impact.	Request planned and actual budget of the initiative. Highlight if any resources are being wasted and request budget is spent on community priorities. If there are risks to the environment request an environmental impact assessment (EIA) / for actors to re-design activities to reduce those risks.



#### TIP BOX FOR FACILITATORS

All these standards are internationally approved so you can share them with the communities if you like. However, it is important that they understand their right to get information from the humanitarian actors and give feedback. During the urgent first phase response, there is very little time for lengthy discussions; however, the community can help by having clear communication points, listing their concerns and ensuring the voice of the most marginalised is heard. Ask about the actors' feedback mechanism.

These are examples of how VSO volunteers and staff have put into action some of the standards:

#### Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant (1):

- During Sierra Leone Flash Floods Response 2019, VSO Sierra Leone were requested by the Office of National Security to lead the needs assessment and registration activities in some of the affected communities. VSO's international and national volunteers trained and led 14 community's volunteers to undertake needs assessments using smartphones. Due to the quality of their work, they are now receiving multiple requests from NGOs and government to support needs assessment in other flood impacted communities.

#### Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback (4):

- During the Cyclone Idai response, the VSO Mozambique team tailored their response with more effective mechanisms to reach the poorest and most marginalised households (through volunteers pre-identifying and organising specific house visits). They adapted pre-designed accountability measures (complaints box and information posters) for communities with low literacy rates. The volunteers and staff briefed the community members on what they had a right to receive and asked them to indicate, through body language, if they were not happy with something.

#### Humanitarian response is effective and timely (2):

- VSO Myanmar received an urgent request from UNDP for food and water to support a community displaced by landslides following heavy floods. The VSO international and national Volunteers were in close proximity to the community and were able to coordinate to ensure that food and water was procured and delivered to them within six hours of the landslide.



A woman arranging her food products after receiving them as part of the Cyclone Idai response at Macate headquarters, Province of Manica, Mozambique.

## 5.2 Sphere and Education Standards



What is good enough and not good enough in different technical areas or sectors of humanitarian response? The **Sphere Standards** are the most important reference tool to plan, implement and evaluate humanitarian response, jointly developed by and for humanitarian practitioners. It is not only useful to know the standards of the sector that you work in but of the other sectors as well, especially for strengthening advocacy and accountability purposes. During an emergency response, the **Sphere Handbook** can be a valuable resource to strengthen the quality of programme design and implementation. It includes the CHS and you can download it in Farsi, Swahili, Portuguese and other languages.

The **Sphere Minimum Standards for Healthcare** has information on health systems and different areas of essential healthcare; with several standards for each. As disasters can have a significant impact on the health and well-being of primary actors, access to life-saving healthcare is critical in the initial stages of an emergency. However, healthcare may also include health promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation at any stage of the response.

The **child health** standards demand that children are vaccinated against preventable diseases during crises and have access to priority healthcare. Regarding **sexual and reproductive health**, people should have access to family planning and healthcare that:

- 1) prevents excessive maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality,
- 2) is safe and responds to the needs of survivors of sexual violence and
- 3) prevents transmission and reduces morbidity and mortality due to HIV.

If you work on **livelihoods**, read through the Sphere Minimum Standards for Food Security and Nutrition already before disaster strikes. The last Standards focus specifically on livelihoods, which help to reduce the underlying causes of hunger and build resilience. Food assistance is not a lasting solution. The Livelihoods Standards remind us to protect and support primary production mechanisms, and to promote equal access to appropriate income-earning opportunities for women and men.

### People First

Both Sphere's standards and the cluster approach have been criticised. Many people working on the ground have considered them an imposed topdown approach, with overambitious standards and a lot of time spent in meetings discussing irrelevant issues. It is important to note, however, that Sphere proposes an approach that allows for the assessment of a particular situation: working towards Sphere indicators or explaining why it is not possible. With the emergence of the Grand Bargain and increasing prominence of the localisation agenda (which means that the primary actors' voices must be listened to, and more funds should be channelled through local / national agencies), there have been some notable changes. Sphere and its partner standards now fully support localisation. The Sphere Standards were revised in 2018 to integrate CHS and to include a stronger focus on inclusion of at-risk groups. They also emphasised the role of local authorities and communities as actors of their own recovery.<sup>12</sup>

Education is not included in the Sphere handbook, but **Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery**<sup>13</sup> were developed as separate but closely connected standards. They aim to improve quality and access to safe and relevant learning opportunities, and ensure accountability in providing these services. The standards gauge four areas in particular:

- **Access and Learning Environment** (here we need to collaborate with other sectors, as lack of health services, water and sanitation and nutrition or shelter can impede education).
- **Teaching and Learning** (build the capacity of teachers to work in an effective, learner-centred and inclusive way).
- **Teachers and Other Education Personnel** (are there enough qualified teachers? and do they have enough support, supervision and remuneration?).
- **Education Policy** (do the education authorities promote quality standards and continuity of education – for all?).

They are founded on community participation, coordination and analysis, as these are critical for an effective education response.

<sup>12</sup> The What is New In-depth Guide to Sphere introduces the drivers of the revision, and the themes which emerged during the consultations: <https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/what-is-new-in-the-2018-sphere-handbook-in-depth-guide.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Resources on education in humanitarian response: Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies: <https://inee.org/standards> Brief on EiE: [http://educationcluster.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Education-An-Essential-Component-of-a-humanitarian-response\\_EN.pdf](http://educationcluster.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Education-An-Essential-Component-of-a-humanitarian-response_EN.pdf) Cluster information: <https://educationcluster.net/>

## 5.3 Other Relevant Standards and Guidance

These standards can help us to apply social inclusion as our core approach:

- **Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities** help us to understand the needs, capacities and rights of these vulnerable groups, and promote their inclusion in humanitarian action. Look for sector-specific inclusion standards for your technical area. The key inclusion standards complement the CHS, and their messages could well be applied to other marginalised groups as well.

For standards regarding children, see Section 6.6.

Note that these standards can also be a good tool when advocating for equitable representation in the committees and key structures. The most important framework for resilience and DRR is the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**.<sup>14</sup> It seeks to reduce disaster risk and losses, and, most importantly calls on governments to adopt and implement national and local DRR strategies. There are also indirect and direct links to resilience in the **Sustainable Development Goals**.<sup>15</sup> the urgent need to reduce the risk of disasters is recognised and resilient cities and infrastructure are specifically highlighted.

“Without addressing resilience, and empowering the most marginalized, we cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.”

VSO staff member, Nepal

**The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement** guide the work with people, who for any reason, have been displaced within their own country. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) still have the freedom of movement, and the right to request and to receive protection and humanitarian assistance from national authorities. If the state cannot cope and requests that humanitarian agencies help, it is important to make sure the local host population do not feel sidelined because of land or distribution issues.

The situation for **refugees** is more complex, as they can no longer expect protection from their own government. Under international human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement guarantees that no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm. The states that have signed the **Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees** have duty to provide refugees the following: administrative assistance, help issue identity papers and travel documents, free access to courts, elementary education and the freedom to practise their religion.

If you work in a conflict area, it's useful to know the **Geneva Conventions**, which guide how civilians and even soldiers should be treated during war. People must be treated humanely, regardless of whether they are friends or enemies. The sick or wounded must be allowed care, only military targets should be attacked and prisoners must be treated humanely.

While we should not take sides in a conflict, humanitarian principles cannot be protected without dialogue with the military. OCHA has the lead and the best resources for **humanitarian civil-military coordination**.

<sup>14</sup> Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction <https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>  
<sup>15</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goals <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

# RESILIENCE IN PRACTICE

## Section 6

In this section, we explore how you can implement resilience building activities in practice.

We look at the cornerstone of VSO's resilience approach - participatory community risk assessment and resilience action planning. We also explore some simple resilience building steps that can be taken

and how to incorporate resilience in VSO's sectoral approaches of education, health and livelihoods as well as protection.

## 6.1 Community Risk Assessment and Resilience Action Planning Process



### TIP BOX FOR FACILITATORS (Pre-assessment)

First of all, find out what other plans they have made so far. Perhaps some kind of DRR plan already exists and only needs revision and reminders? Or, if the government has requested that all communities should have a development / action / management plan, ask to see it and discuss how you could link resilience plans to that document. Only start the process if key community members seem interested, and you know someone will follow up the implementation and revision of plans in the long term. If not, Section 6.2 includes a lot of lighter options for resilience building. Carefully consider who should be involved (religious leadership, local government, CSOs, elders, teachers and vulnerable groups etc.), so that nobody feels excluded. While trying to ensure diversity and dialogue between different primary actors and leaders, endeavour to make everyone feel comfortable with their group. Be very wary of raising expectations. Allow plenty of time for discussions, and if refreshments are provided, make sure they are nutritious – one important way of strengthening resilience.

The VSO Resilience Toolkit describes the steps of the community resilience process. The toolkit contains a number of simple and participatory tools adapted and developed for VSO. A key focus is to ensure an in-depth assessment of vulnerabilities and capacities is made. There are also many more good tools online, which can be used to complement or build upon the VSO basic risk assessment process. If there are national or local government guidelines, they can be used

instead. However please do review them to ensure they are inclusive and effective in identifying underlying vulnerabilities of different at risk groups. If they are limited in this regard, we can adapt by using some additional VSO tools to strengthen the process.

Here we have added some tips and reminders for each step in the toolkit:



Women mapping their village hazards and resources as part of a VSO risk assessment in Deoghar, India.

### Step One: Hazard Assessment

A hazard assessment allows a community to identify what shocks and stresses are currently impacting them, and understand the future risks of disaster. Considering the different hazards they are vulnerable to will enable the community to prioritise which of them are most important to address. However, you might need to bring up things that they have forgotten, particularly if [www.inform-index.org](http://www.inform-index.org) points out high risks in those areas. Have they considered disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis, which do not happen very often, but can have a significant impact. Are they living through stresses which are so chronic they may be considered the norm (drought, gender based violence, child abuse)? How about the stresses or shocks which are likely to increase due to climate change? We need to consider all possible hazards before narrowing down those which are priorities.

VSO uses a range of tools such as timelines and participatory community mapping to identify and prioritise hazards. Participatory community mapping enables primary actors to identify the places and households within a community which are most vulnerable to disaster, and how different hazards impact the assets and resources within their community. It also enables them to identify safe areas and potential evacuation routes according to specific hazards and stresses. It can be good to ask different at risk groups (women, men, children and persons with disabilities) to draw their own maps. Children can draw fantastic maps and timelines, particularly if they are feeling comfortable. They sometimes prefer to be in a peer group to do this.



While participatory community led mapping should always be the starting point of a mapping process to ensure ownership and inclusion, at times a combination of different mapping methods can add value. In VSO Philippines, a national volunteer working with the Lanao Aquatic and Marine Fisheries Center for Community Development in Mindanao, Southern Philippines, introduced geolocation tagging. This is a technique in which community volunteers can take pictures of the hazards and resources within their community, and use the photos to create a satellite map. This helped primary actors to better engage with local government to prepare a more reliable and relevant Disaster Risk Management Plan.

## Step Two: Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)

VSO uses vulnerability and capacity trees to combine the different steps of a VCA into one very participative process, and to understand how access / lack of access to assets may be strengthening resilience or creating risk for different marginalised and at risk groups.

Each small group can take one prioritised hazard and discuss what within the community is making it vulnerable to that specific hazard (this will be vulnerability tree roots). Then the group will make a capacity tree discussing what within the community is keeping them safe in terms of that hazard (this will be the roots). The leaves demonstrate what would happen to the community in a disaster, while the capacity tree leaves show what a disaster-resilient community would look like.

See the example trees across and overleaf.

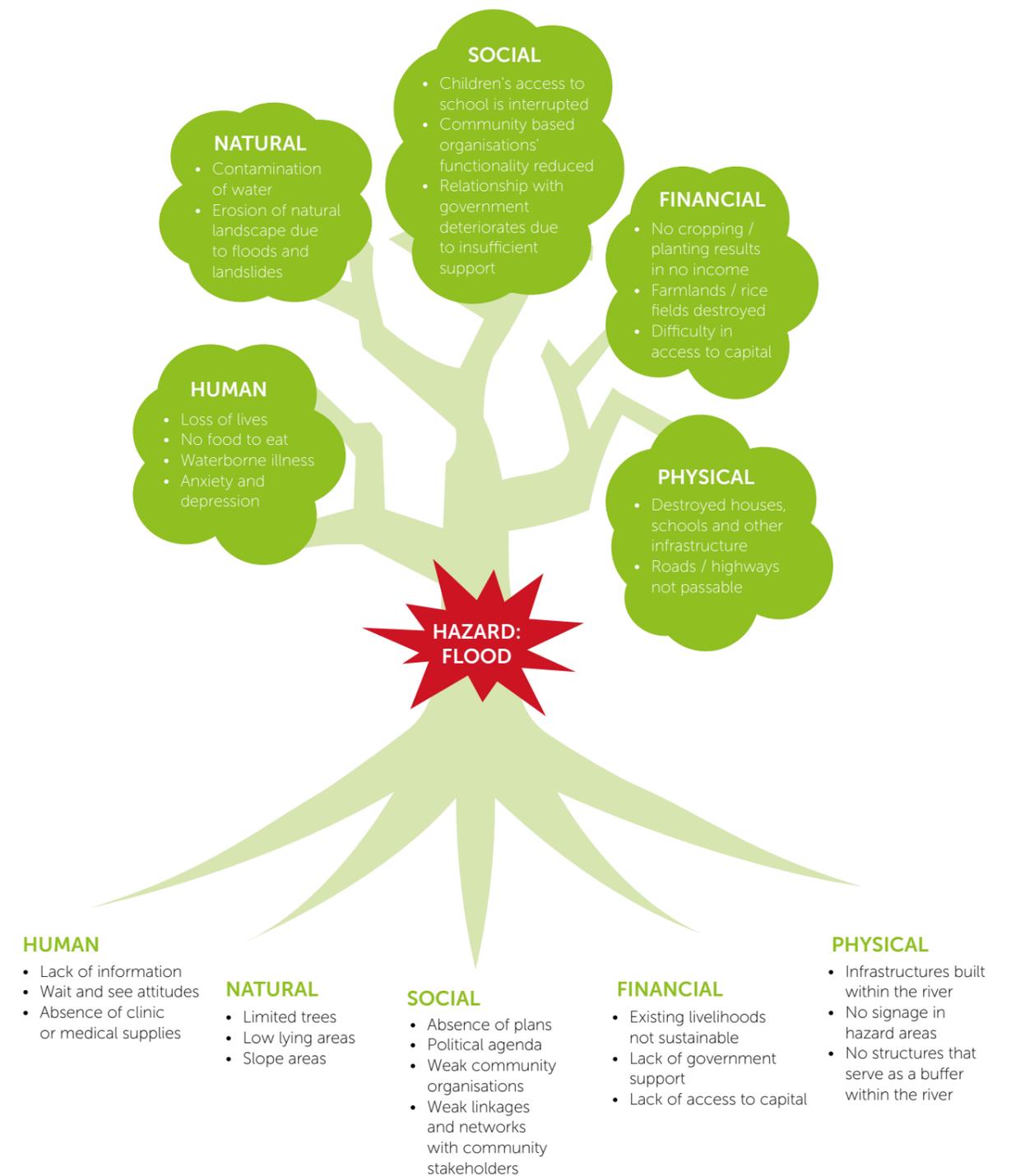
Discuss the most marginalised as well. It is important that the community should themselves identify the most vulnerable people; however, you might need to bring up groups that they have forgotten. Are single mothers or people with mental health issues not vulnerable?

At this stage if people bring up groups that clearly are not represented (e.g. persons with disabilities or children), ask them whether it would be possible to include them in the planning process. Consider holding focus group discussions to allow vulnerable or less represented groups to share their views as part of the process.

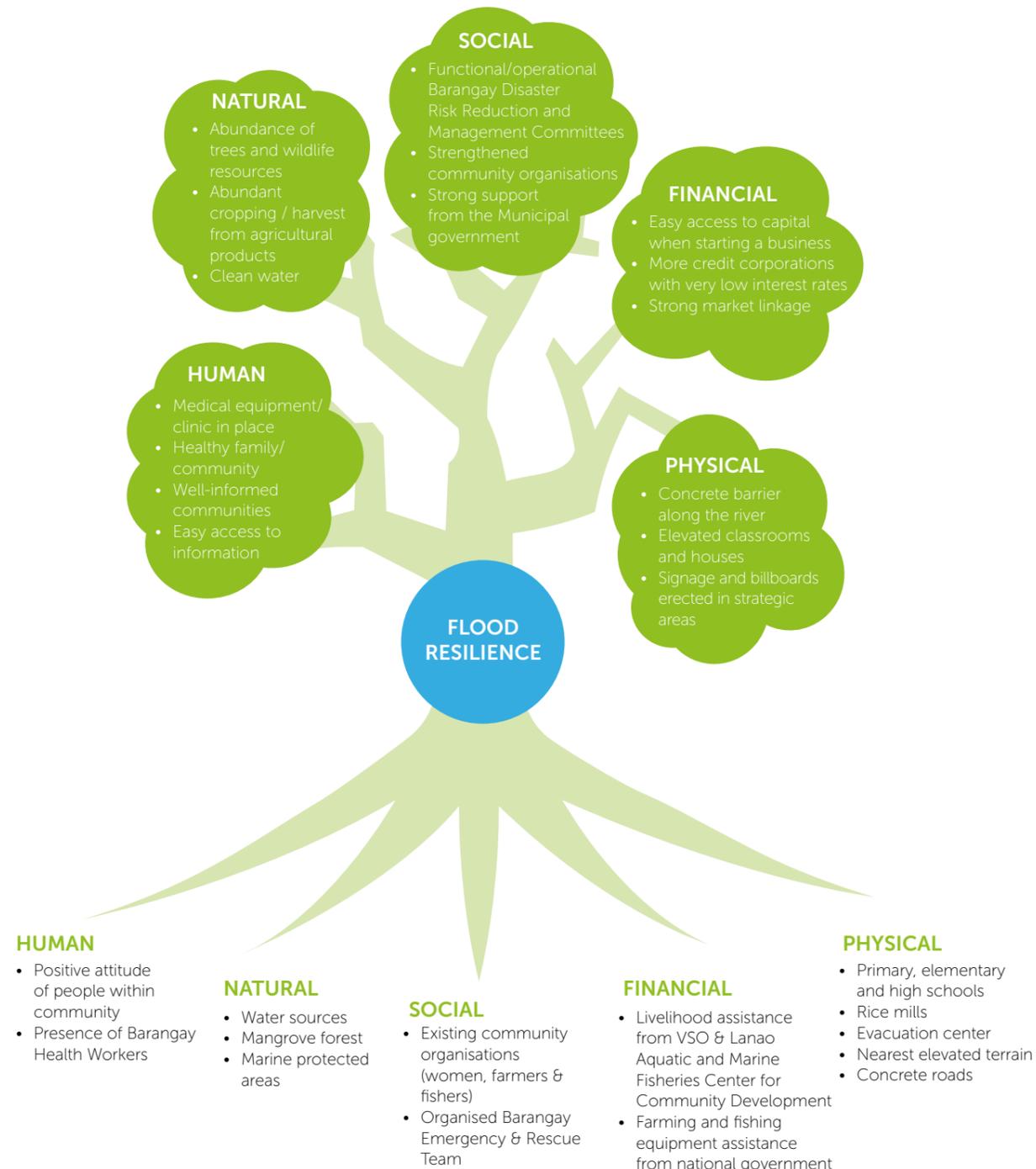
All people, communities and organisations have capacities as well, and it is important to recognise and build on them. How can they use them to further improve their resilience? Where do they need support from VSO, local government or other actors? What effective coping mechanisms already exist?

In Barangay Tagulo, in the Philippines, community stakeholders identified their vulnerabilities and capacities whilst developing their preparedness plan, using the following trees:

### Vulnerability Tree



## Capacity Tree



## Step Three: Community Resilience Action Planning

Action planning is the opportunity to engage primary actors in identifying which interventions they feel would be effective and appropriate to address vulnerabilities and capacities. While motivating primary actors to be imaginative and ambitious, make sure the plan is still very realistic and the community takes the lead. Otherwise they will expect you to provide resources for implementation. Keep it simple. Keep referring back to the findings of the previous analyses, so that the primary actors can see the logic of the process. VSO's action plan template encourages primary actors to plan interventions aimed at strengthening human, social, environmental, physical and economic resilience. It also encourages primary actors to consider whether targeted interventions are required to address the priorities of most at-risk groups (people with disability, women, children etc.).

The action planning process is also critical in ensuring community ownership, while considering the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders (local government, health and education service providers) providing support. It is vital that everyone takes responsibility for something. The action plan can be a very effective social accountability and partnership approach. Where roles have been identified, it is critical to action a follow up with the relevant stakeholder or agency. This ensures engagement and partnerships are formed and strengthened, as the action plan is revised and implemented. There may be actions identified which need technical / specialised support. Volunteers are well placed to help identify and broker potential partnerships. They also support dialogue between community, local government and other actors so as to mobilise and support where needed. Separate action plans can also be developed for each prioritised hazard.

Here is an example of an **Action plan to reduce insecurity in Aywee village, Uganda.**

Categories	Identified vulnerabilities	Actions to reduce vulnerabilities/ build capacity	Who will the action support	Timeframe	Who is responsible
<b>Human</b> 	Poverty is increasing vulnerability to resource based conflict	Improve agronomic cultivation	Whole community, pastoralist farmers & youth	Short term	VSO
	Poor access to information about conflict, safe evacuation and emergency contacts	Establish public notice boards	Whole community	Short term	Community DRR committee
<b>Natural</b> 	Drought and water shortage leads to conflict	Water conservation and storage	Whole community	Short term	VSO and local government
	Land disputes	Involvement of experienced elderly persons in drawing land boundaries	Older people Whole community	Long term	Village elders and local government
<b>Social</b> 	Conflict over grazing areas with neighbouring communities	Conduct Dialogue Meetings	Whole community Pastoralist farmers	Short term	Community Committee with support from local government
	Violence within families communities	Formation of Peace committees	Youth Whole community	Short term	Youth group
<b>Economic</b> 	Poverty increasing conflict and migration among youth	Business skills training and VSLA for youth	Youth	Medium term	VSO and local government
	Cattle theft	Construction of protected shelters for livestock	Pastoralist farmers Whole community	Medium term	Community
<b>Physical</b> 	Conflict on water points with neighbours	Construction of water sources (water ponds)	Whole community	Long term	Local government and community water committee

### Step Four: Community Managed Implementation, Mobilisation of Resources and Partnerships

Use existing structures, and let the community decide whether there should be new committees or teams established. There should be plenty of small things planned (e.g. digging trenches, cleaning up, evacuation drills and information sharing) that the community can do with its own resources. The leaves of the capacity tree should point us towards the actions needed. However, they often expect some support from those who facilitated the process.

That's why it is recommended to make it clear from the beginning if or how you would be able to support (especially financial or physical assets). Include local government in the process as the key duty-bearer and to identify other potential funding, or partners, ahead of the assessment. Let the community decide when they would want to request local government involvement, and which departments.



### Community search and rescue task forces

During the flash floods in Rautahat District, people in Badharwa, in the Durga Bhagwati Rural Municipality in Nepal, resided near the bank of Bagmati River and nearby dam.

There was heavy rainfall throughout the country in July 2019 which significantly impacted Rautahat District. This resulted in flooding and claimed several lives. Every year, local residents are facing similar disastrous situations as it is one of the most vulnerable flood prone areas. Lalan Mishra, leader of the Community Search and Rescue task force, highlighted that "In this flood we felt more safe and confident to overcome it compared to the 2017 flood because during this year we have taken different types of DRR training and lifesaving skills with the support of VSO Nepal. Just three weeks ago we practiced a flood simulation within the same community which was very effective in this recent flood as we were able to rescue more than 60 people during the flood."

## Community Disaster Preparedness Plan

Where a community faces sudden onset disasters it is vital that the resilience action plan includes preparedness actions or a preparedness plan. A community preparedness plan can help a community to plan what they would do in the immediate aftermath of a sudden onset hazard for example, establishing evacuation routes, identifying how they would support vulnerable community members to evacuate and where the safe location is in the community. Each household should be encouraged to develop household preparedness plans including emergency contact numbers, safe fire/ flood/ earthquake evacuation plans to support more vulnerable household members etc. Many of the components may have been discussed during the resilience action planning process, but you may want to validate key steps, before proceeding to develop the preparedness plan.

If different sub-committees are established, they should not only have clear leadership, a mandate and some capacity building, but also clear responsibilities. For example, the First Aid committee must make sure that vital equipment does not run out. The Search and Rescue committee should know where to find the torches and boats, and be aware of who is assisting each vulnerable person (buddy system).

It is important to link to the national or local Early Warning Systems (EWS). If it is text / social media messages, make sure several community members get it and pass it on effectively. If the radio is the main source of information, some people should be assigned the responsibility for listening and interpreting the information (e.g. when to give an evacuation warning). People can also develop their own EWS. For example, they can assist the village upstream and call the village downstream if the river's water level exceeds a certain point. Or, to know that once they hear the cow horn blow three times they should immediately congregate at the agreed meeting point.

Organising simulation drills is very important, as is ensuring that communities are given the correct advice about how to prepare and reduce their risks during disasters. It is much more likely that children and adults will remember what they have practised if a disaster occurs than if they have just heard what to do. In addition, simulation drills can build support mechanisms to ensure vulnerable or excluded people are reached during a disaster.



### TIP BOX

Key messages about what to do in a disaster can often be life saving and are most effective if combined with simulation drills. Below are some examples of different hazards and what can be done to reduce the impact of these:



#### Fire

- Know how to get out safely and know where to meet and to wait for help. Know how to cover your mouth and crawl out if there is smoke. Never run back into a building on fire
- Practice the stop, drop, roll approach, which can be used if you or the clothes you are wearing are on fire.



#### Earthquake

- Look for a safe exit.
- If it is not possible, drop down on your knees and make yourself small and protect your head to avoid heavy falling objects.



#### Flooding

- Store food and drinking water high above ground in case of flooding.
- Decide in advance how to get out of a flooded area and where is the safest place to evacuate to.
- Ensure children do not play in flood water.

Both children and adults should be encouraged to think flexibly during simulations whilst following best practice advice. For example, evacuation routes may need to change if the original one is impacted by the disaster.

Some detailed practical guidance on key messages can be found here:  
[https://www.preventionweb.net/files/63832\\_05papekmguideslbeng2016.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/63832_05papekmguideslbeng2016.pdf)

## VSO Resilience Tools

VSO have developed a number of tools and guidance documents to support volunteers, programme teams and partners to strengthen resilience in different ways. Please see the table below for more information on these tools, and when they may be useful.

RESILIENCE TOOL	What is it for?
<b>VSO Rapid Risk Assessment and Resilience Action Planning Process</b>	This is a collection of participatory tools which can be used to identify hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities. They can develop resilience action plans to address natural hazards and conflict at community level.  It can be used as the basis of a disaster risk reduction programme, or to assess and address hazards that impact health, livelihood or education at community level.  The tools have been designed and selected for their simplicity but can be adapted or complemented by additional assessment tools.
<b>Community Preparedness Planning Guidance</b>	This guidance supports the design of community preparedness plans as part of the community resilience action planning process. It builds on the VSO Rapid Risk Assessment process outlined above.
<b>School Based Preparedness Planning Guidance</b>	This guidance supports the design of school preparedness plans as part of the community resilience action planning process. It builds on an adapted version of the VSO Rapid Risk Assessment process designed to engage children in identifying the risks impacting on their school access and safety.
<b>Value Chain Resilience Assessment</b>	This is a simple participatory process which can be used to identify risks impacting on livelihood value chain programmes, and to plan measures to strengthen the resilience of value chains. It can also be used to strengthen inclusion and address power relations within value chains.
<b>VSO Emergency Decision Making Matrix</b>	This matrix has been developed to support country teams in the event of a disaster and identify whether an emergency response is required, and whether it is feasible.
<b>VSO Organisational Preparedness Planning Guidance</b>	This guidance supports the development of country level preparedness plans. It is based on VSO's Emergency Decision Making Matrix above. It should be used prior to a disaster to ensure more effective decision making and preparedness.
<b>Resilience Batteries</b>	These are participatory monitoring and evaluation tools. They can be used at the end of a resilience intervention to identify the impact of resilience intervention, including individual, household or community resilience. The batteries can also be used to set baseline and monitor changes in resilience during an intervention. Additionally, they can support the development of resilience action plans at individual, household and community level.

## 6.2 Simple Resilience Building Activities

**It is essential that resilience interventions do not remain as plans – but are implemented as effectively and efficiently as possible. Although some interventions may require more planning, advocacy or engagement with other stakeholders, many can be implemented by the community themselves in the shorter term with minimal resources. This is critical for sustainability and ownership. Below are some ideas that can be included within resilience plans depending on the risks they are addressing.**



### Human

- What would be the best ways of ensuring that everyone gets the key information? Notice board, risk reminders in community meetings, WhatsApp / Viber groups or focal points for persons with disabilities?
- What are some of the basic skills needed to reduce vulnerability to certain/different risks? If for example the community is flood prone, knowing how to swim can be a lifesaver for children and adults.
- It's vital to discuss fire safety with everyone. Check for faulty electrical fires and uncovered fires in the kitchen - and keep matches well away from small children!
- Who could teach basic first aid skills to others? Just being able to stop the bleeding, ensure breathing is not obstructed or call for help (local health practitioner or ambulance) can save lives.



### Social

- What are the key coordination mechanisms (traditional community meetings, committees, groups), and how can we ensure the inclusion of the most marginalised?
- Who makes the decisions? Do they understand their role during crises? Promote resilience approach within the existing structures. E.g. the elders' group could consider the best ways that old people or persons with disabilities do not get left behind.
- Get children and youth involved in the resilience activities, as they often have lots of ideas, enthusiasm and drive.



### Environmental

- Encourage vegetable growing in kitchen gardens, rooftops etc. for better nutrition and self-

sufficiency. Schools are a great place to start.

- Promote local, traditional crops and foods. In many countries there are traditional methods of composting; encourage their revival or teach people how to do simple composting.
- Support community led clean up campaigns.
- Encourage protection of natural resources and promote planting of indigenous trees.
- Support communities to access information about climate trends and bi-diversity loss.



### Physical

- Discuss different potential scenarios with the community so they can list the most useful or valuable items to take with them in case they have to leave home.
- When there is danger of floods or conflict approaching, everyone should have their emergency grab bag ready, with the key items: ID, essential medicines, first aid supplies, water & dry food, some warm clothes, torch, telephone / radio, spare batteries or charger.
- Solar chargers are invaluable for charging communication devices during an emergency.
- Encourage food to be stored in safe places and discuss if there are traditional methods to preserve food.



### Economic

- Discuss the possibility of small savings, so the primary actors will better cope with disasters.
- Encourage sustainable agricultural practice (natural fertilisers, multi-layer or vertical farming, intercropping etc.). Look into indigenous agricultural practices.
- With livelihoods diversification, skills training, encouraging new ideas and creative problem-solving, you will be an effective resilience promoter.

Resilience building examples from VSO programmes:

VSO Bangladesh formed youth clubs with community volunteers, mobilising the primary actors to implement and participate in different social activities and farming. Through the community volunteers, lead farmers and community leaders, it has been possible to encourage the primary actors to implement smarter farming methods.

VSO Sierra Leone volunteers have been involved in cleaning days, reducing waste pollution and clearing drainage canals in order to reduce the risk of flooding. This has led to creating local early warning systems such as river gauges, which tell them when the river is about to flood. In case the floods still happen, the community members have now identified evacuation routes and marked them with local materials and painted them white so they can be seen in the dark.



Amadu, a national volunteer, with the Head of the village and James, a community volunteer with one of the dish racks in Gerehun, Sierra Leone.



James, from Gerehun, Sierra Leone, was trained by VSO on DRR in April 2018 and has been volunteering as a community volunteer for the office of National Security ever since.

After being trained in hygiene and sanitation, James facilitated training with the community on how to build dish racks and clothes lines so that clean dishes and clothes were not drying on the ground, thus reducing the risk of hygiene related infections. However, the community were not initially receptive as they wanted resources to build the dish racks and didn't understand the benefits. But James was not deterred. As he lived in the community, he went out and found the materials needed in the local surroundings - tree branches and sturdy vines which could tie the branches together. He built his own dish rack and began using it. Interest from the community grew and, 18 months on, most houses in Gerehun have their own dish rack - with some community members now building two tier dish racks.



©VSO / Jasper Kasbergen

VSO assists the Ethiopian government with improving education in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, which is home to many children from minority groups and is prone to food insecurity.

## 6.3 Education and Resilience

### Why focus on education and resilience?

Children spend around half of their lives in school yet they are often unsafe places to be. Every year, school buildings are damaged or destroyed from disasters, and many children, teachers and education officials do not know what to do in the event of an emergency. Schools may also be used as evacuation shelters during an emergency which can result in children not having access to education for weeks, months or even years. The impact of disasters threatens children's right to access a continuous, uninterrupted basic education and puts investments made in education programmes at risk.

There are a number of steps we can take to protect investments made in education, and ensure schools are safe and protective environments for all girls and boys as well as education staff.

### Global school safety commitments and standards

The Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES)<sup>16</sup> is a group of agencies that work together to ensure that all schools are safe from disaster risk and that all learners live in a culture of safety. Together they have produced the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) and work to support regional bodies and governments to implement the framework. They also support the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS). 52 countries have signed up to implementing the commitments outlined in WISS - has your country signed up?

Specifically for conflict, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) works to highlight as well as monitor and report the impact of attacks on education. The Safe Schools Declaration is a political commitment made by states to protect education from attack.

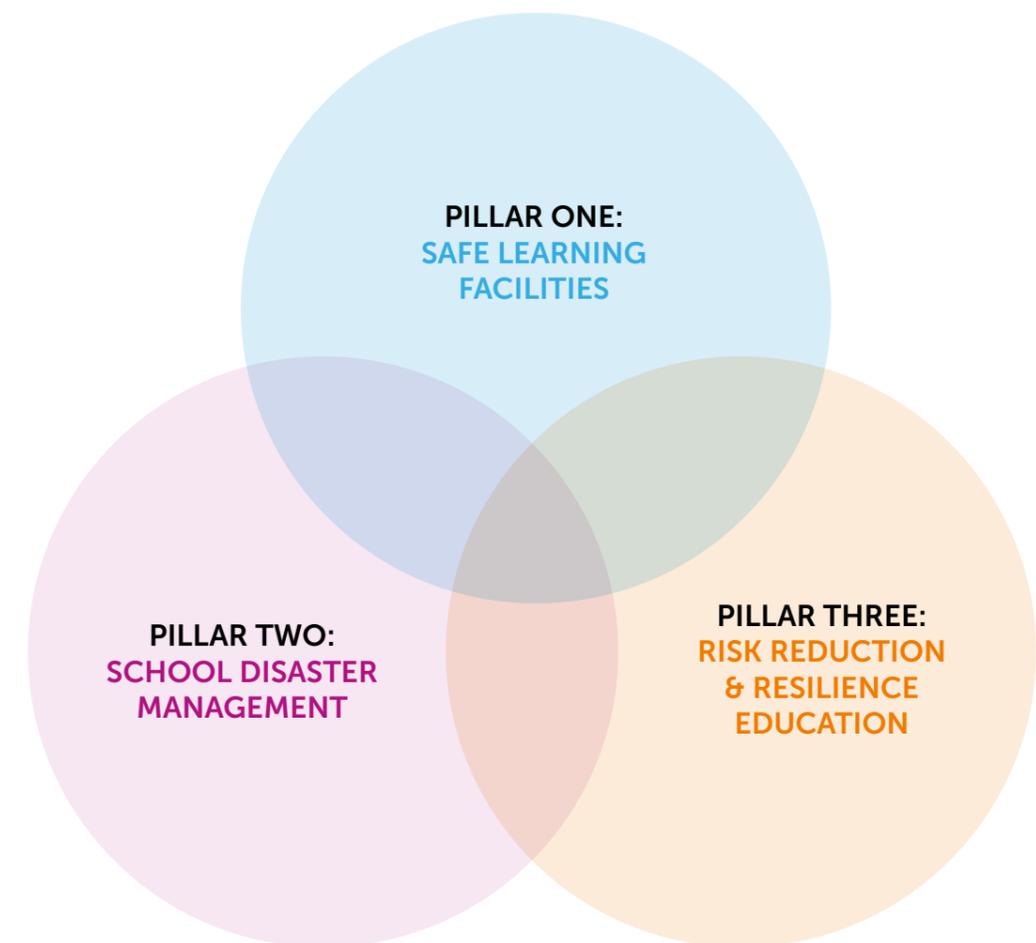
<sup>16</sup> <https://gadrrres.net/>

### The Comprehensive School Safety Framework

The CSSF is broken down into three pillars:

- 1) Safe Learning Facilities
- 2) School Disaster Management
- 3) Risk Reduction and Resilience Education

At the heart of CSSF, there is a need to work with, and through, education authorities and education partners. It is vital to ensure education authorities and partners have ownership of school safety so they can incorporate this work into their ongoing practices and scale up interventions in the long term.



**Pillar One** – Safe Learning Facilities - focuses on safe school construction practices. It involves ensuring that any construction or renovation work within an education facility is safe from future disasters as well as inclusive of children with disabilities.

**Pillar Two** – School Disaster Management – focuses on ensuring that schools have inclusive disaster plans in place and that these plans are connected to overall school management plans. The development of

these plans should be based on a comprehensive risk assessment that is participatory, involving girls, boys, parents, teachers and school leadership. This should include head teachers and school management committees.

**Pillar Three** – Risk Reduction and Resilience Education – explores how to integrate resilience within the national, local and informal curriculum, as well as teacher training institutes.

For more information on the CSSF, please see <https://gadrrres.net/what-we-do/gadrrres-global-activities/comprehensive-school-safety-framework>



In a village in Malawi, during a meeting with the Village Civil Protection Committee, it was discovered that an emergency preparedness plan had been designed but few people in the community had a chance to see it. Many, including children, were not involved in the process of it being made. This led VSO to support the school to carry out a risk assessment and a preparedness plan which actively involved children, parents and teachers. These steps have been key, as the area is prone to strong winds, flooding and cholera. The students in Mtsunga Primary school see their plan every day, and feel motivated to follow the DRR messages which are also highlighted, thus increasing their sense of preparedness for future hazards.



©VSO / Jack Howson

Children participating in VSO's unlocking talent programme, which aims to improve education through innovation. With support from EUAV, VSO Malawi has piloted child led school preparedness plans in risk affected schools.

## How is VSO working in education and resilience?

VSO is committed to ensuring that schools are safe spaces for everyone, and that children are also safe getting to and from school and in their community. In VSO's education programme, resilience is being mainstreamed in five main ways:

- 1) School and community risk assessments** - use a range of participatory and inclusive tools including transect walks, body mapping and drawing to identify the key risks within the school community. This has been implemented in Nigeria, Myanmar and many other countries where VSO works.
- 2) Working with teachers** and training them on what to do in an emergency and how to build the resilience of their students. We help them integrate disaster risk reduction within their lessons (Sierra Leone) and build the psycho-social resilience of children through lessons (Ethiopia), and by adapting positive discipline practices (Nigeria).
- 3) Working with students** to support them in conducting participatory and inclusive risk assessments, and developing action plans. VSO also establishes school DRR clubs so that children can learn about DRR, as well as share their knowledge with their peers, families and the wider community (Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Nepal).

**4) Engaging with duty bearers** to encourage them to support resilience in education (for instance parents and local government).

**5) Working with national education authorities** to mainstream DRR into the curriculum and incorporate resilience into education sector plans (Sierra Leone, Kenya, Cambodia).

**6) Emergency Education in Fragile Spaces**  
In fragile spaces with limited and unstable infrastructure, like refugee camps or regions impacted by disaster and conflict, our projects take learning outside the traditional classroom setting. Instead, we work with families and volunteers to develop home-based early childhood education spaces, whilst training them to become community educators.

More information on how to undertake school and community risk assessments and develop school-level action plans is included in VSO resilience tools and resources.



### TIP BOX FOR FACILITATORS

When talking to girls, boys, caregivers and teachers about issues regarding safety issues in and around school, it is highly likely that protection concerns will also emerge. Children may face physical and humiliating punishment in the classroom. They may be bullied by their peers. Or face threats of violence going to and from school. This is why it is important to incorporate protection as part of an education and resilience approach. More on this in Section 6.6.



©VSO / Mahmud Hossain Opu

Rohingya students participate in education in emergencies activities at a learning centre, supported by VSO.



©VSO / Amadu Bah

Children learning from the DRR booklet, which was developed by VSO in partnership with the Office of National Security and the Ministry of Education, Sierra Leone.



### Influencing the curriculum in Sierra Leone

An international VSO volunteer worked in partnership with the Office of National Security (ONS) and the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, as well as community volunteers, to develop a booklet for primary school children to learn about DRR. The booklet, titled "Children learning Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience", has been very successful in helping children understand more about disaster preparedness. It was adopted by the Ministry of Basic Education and officially launched by the Minister of Education. It will be rolled out to all primary schools across Sierra Leone. To date, 150 schools have been reached with DRR focal point teachers. Each school will be identified and trained in how to roll out this handbook.



### How providing teachers with psychosocial skills can heal conflict-affected children and support their progression in school

Zena, a 16-year-old from West Guji, Ethiopia, has been displaced along with over 190,000 children due to ethnic conflict.

In early May 2018, she came home from school to find her home destroyed so, along with her family, she had to flee and leave their farm behind. Zena was no longer able to continue her education.

In order to support youths like Zena returning to school, VSO partnered with UNICEF to train educational personnel, including teachers in psychology, emotional learning, psychosocial support, gender-responsive pedagogies, and classroom management.

Mr. Mideso, Zena's very supportive chemistry teacher, explains that it is about the psychology of emotionally supporting students so they can reduce the pain they feel from conflict and challenges.

Teachers across the region are implementing the new skills learned, including introducing collaborative activities such as group discussions, storytelling, art activities, and sports events. They are building "Child-Friendly Spaces" in their classrooms and encouraging mixed-group activities so students learn from others who have different ethnicities, genders, challenges, or disabilities. They are also learning to identify different emotions in children, and how to respond in a strategic and helpful manner for each child.

Zena sees a difference in the support and teaching methods since last year and says that in the future:

"I want to be the Vice Prime Minister of the country. I want to support the Prime Minister to bring peace, stability and growth for Ethiopia."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/stories/protection-through-education>

## 6.4 Livelihoods

### Why focus on livelihoods and resilience?

Globally 2.5 billion people, many of them women, rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Agricultural livelihoods, especially, are directly impacted by climate change and changing weather patterns which ultimately affect food security and nutrition. At the same time, rapid urbanisation and a growing youth population compels us to think through resilience in livelihoods projects and programmes.

Much of the great work VSO does in the respective programme areas already significantly contributes to resilience. Livelihoods is traditionally most closely related to resilience, as skills, savings and food security

can help primary actors bounce back much quicker after a crisis.

Crises, however, can disrupt many of the factors that people rely on to maintain their livelihoods. People affected by crises may lose their jobs or have to abandon their land or water sources. Assets may be destroyed, contaminated or stolen, and markets may stop functioning or not be accessible any longer. In the initial stages of a crisis, meeting basic survival needs is often seen as the priority. However, during recovery livelihoods is often a priority as it helps primary actors get back to a normal life quicker.

### How is VSO working in livelihoods and resilience?

VSO has incorporated resilience into its livelihoods work in for example in the following ways:

- Supporting livelihood diversification in fragile and post-disaster contexts in e.g. Karamoja (livestock), Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and the Philippines (fisheries and marine conservation).
- Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA): VSO empowers individuals, households and communities through training and supporting organised collectives which increase their bargaining power. VSLA and microfinance groups are invaluable for a rainy day. The funds can be used as a buffer in disasters but can also be used to protect livelihoods before a hazard turns into a disaster.
- In Malawi, communities that were impacted by climate change were supported in mapping and managing their resources. and to engage in reforestation of river banks to reduce soil erosion and to better protect their communities from flood and drought.
- In Cambodia, rice farmers were struggling because of unpredictable rains and a lack of access to markets. This was making farming less profitable. VSO volunteers have introduced a sowing innovation which reduced labour but also the impact of flood and drought on the rice harvest.



### Strengthening livelihoods resilience during the drought response in Pakistan

VSO and Islamic Relief Pakistan worked in partnership during the Balochistan Drought Response 2019. The purpose was to promote volunteerism and to provide immediate and longer term support to drought-affected communities through strengthening the resilience of livelihoods. VSO volunteers were trained to participate in the response alongside Islamic Relief.

Thanks to volunteers' help, livelihood and nutrition support was provided to the most vulnerable households through poultry re-stocking, provision of feed for poultry birds, and fodder for livestock (reaching 300 families, including 46 widows, 38 orphans, 52 older people and 47 persons with disabilities). Vaccination campaigns reached 198 households. VSO trained community volunteers to support and lead the process through a 'Volunteering in Emergencies' training led by VSO specialist staff and volunteers.



### Supporting farmers in Bangladesh to get good interest rates on their loans

During the crop destruction in 2017 - a result of floods in Rangpur and Dinajpur - VSO volunteers in Bangladesh were asked to support local farmers, and their communities, utilise the group savings which had helped the farmers get a loan. In Bangladesh, the interest rate offered by microcredit organisations is usually between 15% and 20%. This figure can be even higher if paid weekly. However VSO, with the support of a local partner, negotiated with Bank Asia to provide the farmers a loan at 9% interest rate. The farmers were only required to pay back the loan after harvesting the crop. This not only meant they could grow potatoes and rice again, it significantly helped them and their families gradually overcome the impact of the flood.

### What else can you do?

All livelihoods interventions should be locally acceptable and consider how to use and / or support local markets. During emergencies, food prices tend to increase drastically. When working with **agri-based value chains**, consider how you could best help the small farmers (both men and women) to also benefit from the price increase, so that lower yields do not lead to much lower income. What are the livelihood assets (e.g. equipment and machinery, raw materials, land, knowledge, access to functioning markets etc.) that the farmers need most, and for which of these assets could you provide support? Where possible, advocate for cash vouchers that do not undermine local markets.

Salt-tolerant and drought-resistant crops can help in adapting to climate change. VSO also has some good examples of improving the resilience of value chains in Nigeria (soya and maize), Cambodia (rice) and Ghana (cocoa). In Uganda the team trained community animal health workers to better identify animal diseases and advise their owners on treatment, which can greatly help to prevent disease outbreaks.

Livelihoods can help build up environmental assets but can also contribute to destroying them. Charcoal burning, tree felling, mining or heavy use of chemicals all increase risks in the long term. It is critical that we understand the environmental impacts of our livelihood strategies and ensure that we identify and build skills in alternative, more environmentally friendly livelihoods.

If you focus on **youth employment and enterprise**, ensure that the young women and men receive equal access to appropriate income-earning opportunities. Consider how the disaster has affected markets and the employment situation, and revise your gender-sensitive market assessment based on the current situation. After a major disaster, there is plenty of work to do; however, we need to ensure that the work is safe and the remuneration is clear (avoid raising expectations). The youth can utilise the opportunity to prove their worth, as that can lead to many other opportunities later on.



As part of their work to improve market access for poor farmers in Battambang province, VSO Cambodia has been working closely with the private sector to support climate smart agriculture for rice farmer cooperatives. This includes introducing a rice planting machine which plants rice at such a depth that it improves drought tolerance, as well as introducing drought resilient rice varieties.



©VSO / Sophal Neak



©VSO / Ginny Lattai



### Village savings and loans build resilience in Uganda

Christine is a 35-year-old woman from Kadilakeny village, Uganda. She is married with 3 children and is a member of a village savings and loan association group, supported by VSO. Christine borrowed 200,000 Uganda shillings and invested it in marble mining at Nanyidik mining site in Rupa sub-county. After extracting 11 heaps of marble, she sold it and earned a sum of 1,400,000 Uganda shillings. She reinvested part of the money in marble mining and used the balance to build a local latrine for her family at home. Soon she was able to pay back the loan borrowed from the group.

After the VSO volunteers conducted the training, Christine commented:

“I have learnt about financial savings skills and am now able to meet the basic needs for my family.”

Christine has developed her business from the group loan and is still able to pay for her shares in the group. Using the profit from the marble mining business she has bought goats as an alternative livelihood source. Her family is now more resilient than ever before.

## 6.5 Health

### Why focus on health and resilience?

The health impacts of disasters can be wide-reaching. The affected population can face physical and emotional trauma as well as acute disease. Disasters can also result in people having to stay in overcrowded and inadequate shelters with poor sanitation and insufficient access to safe drinking water. Disasters

can also result in food insecurity that increases the risk of malnutrition and outbreaks of communicable diseases. Reduced access to healthcare and interrupted medicine supply can disrupt ongoing treatment. Most importantly, people with poor health and nutrition are more vulnerable to disasters.



Newborn baby safely delivered, with the support of VSO volunteers, at Mulu Asefa Primary Hospital, Ethiopia.

### How is VSO working in health and resilience?

VSO has so far implemented the following health and resilience interventions:

- Promoting nutritional food through kitchen gardens in Bukoba in Tanzania, where as part of the RISE<sup>18</sup> project, VSO promoted improving educational attainment through livelihoods interventions. Households were equipped to develop kitchen gardens, leading to increased food security and a more balanced diet.
- Promoting hygiene and sanitation sensitisation activities through DRR clubs. Dramas taught about how to reduce open defecation and promote food hygiene in Sierra Leone.
- Supporting pregnant and lactating mothers through hygiene and sanitation sensitisation. In Uganda, this was achieved through antenatal services, health facility delivery and immunisation, and HIV / AIDS testing and counselling.
- Carrying out risk assessments and action plans. In Zimbabwe, VSO mobilised national volunteers alongside local volunteers to support inclusive multi-sectoral climate risk assessments and action plans within the most vulnerable populations. For example, prison populations and communities affected by climate and health risks.
- Supporting emergency responses in the health sector and health system to strengthen post disaster. In Sierra Leone, VSO has also supported health system strengthening through the Ministry of Health and Water Resource Management post-Ebola, including research into supporting the psycho-social resilience of health workers.

<sup>18</sup> Research for Improving Systems of Education

### What else can you do?

If you focus on **maternal and newborn health** you could advocate within the community, or at an institutional level, for essential services. These are needed to ensure pregnant women are able to give birth safely during a disaster or conflict. You could also think ahead with communities to see what systems could be put into place during this scenario. Contingency planning could increase the chances of survival for the mothers and babies.

As VSO also works in Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRHR), we should consider the impact of disaster and crisis on **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**, too. For example, how do you ensure that vulnerable people are protected from violent sexual assault following a disaster or during a conflict? What can be done to create safe spaces in refugee or IDP camps? How do you ensure safe supplies of essential contraceptives and family planning continues to be available and accessible during conflicts or after disasters? How do you deal with surges in the incidence of transactional sex and its consequences during times of conflict or post-emergency? It is crucial to ensure the most vulnerable people still receive essential information and commodities they need to protect themselves from, for example, unwanted pregnancy, HIV and STIs.

Throughout your work with communities, consider if you can promote health awareness, self-care and environmental hygiene activities. Share any good practice you have seen on this. Are there any traditional health practices that are useful?

If you are engaged in a health response, use this as an opportunity to Build Back Better. For example, if there is a disease outbreak, use it as an opportunity to promote improved hygiene and sanitation among communities and at health facilities. This could be done in parallel with training WASH committees to ensure availability and access of safe water. This can be done by maintaining water sources such as bore holes or promoting rain harvesting. This can dramatically reduce the risk of future diseases.

Whatever you decide to do, make sure to support existing health systems and use the Sphere Minimum Standards where possible - both in your work and in advocacy. It is also possible to work with the Ministries of Health's district offices, health centres and community health workers to support them in undertaking risk assessments and developing resilience action plans to prepare for future disasters.



Girls participating in a VSO project aimed at enhancing the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights services in Zambia.



©VSO / Peter Caton

Baby Andrew was too big for a normal delivery and after having training from VSO, the Community Health Officer knew to refer Mbalu for a caesarean at Makeni hospital rather than attempt the delivery himself. This has been part of VSO's approach to strengthening the health system post Ebola.



### Sierra Leone VSO Ebola Response Strategy

In Sierra Leone, VSO and partners developed a joint Ebola response project and were actively engaged in the response to the Outbreak. In order to contain the spread of Ebola, volunteers and staff were involved in the following activities:

1. National level mass media awareness and sensitisation on Ebola, through the printing and distribution of a large number of IEC materials, broadcasting periodic radio jingles and TV shows. We also used other local means of communication. This included working with WASHNET in developing context specific messaging on radio and TV about basic hygiene practices.
2. Training and capacity building of partners, community leaders and social mobilisers. And the revitalisation of district social mobilisation committees.
3. Encouraging social mobilisation and community engagement to stop the spread of Ebola – including community meetings and home visits by community volunteers.
4. Mainstreaming maternal, newborn and child health and WASH services in the Ebola response, and supplying Personal Protective Equipment to health workers. VSO was also involved in the rehabilitation of community and health centre water wells.
5. Providing technical and psychosocial support to health workers working at Basic Emergency Obstetrics and Newborn Care Centres. Providing counselling sessions to health workers; conducting research to assess stress levels of health workers; and assessed the impact of Ebola in access and delivery of mainstreaming maternal, newborn and child health services.
6. Provided the Ministry of Health with a large flat top screen, enabling messages to be streamed at Lungi airport about Ebola awareness.



©VSO / Qamruzzaman

Arefina, with her daughter Shammi, is a lead member of a VSO pilot group supporting women farmers in rural areas of Rangpur, Bangladesh.

## 6.6 Protection

### Why focus on protection and resilience?

Disasters and conflict can significantly increase the protection risks facing the most marginalised and vulnerable people. Not everyone affected by a disaster can access humanitarian assistance equally. This is why VSO's People First approach is so important in understanding some of those dynamics. Protection risks include gender-based violence, child protection risks, abuse and exclusion of certain vulnerable and marginalised groups. Disasters can also disrupt existing social safety nets and cause displacement. This can bring a whole new set of protection risks including child trafficking. Protection risks are always present, but disasters increase their impact.

It is recognised by humanitarian and development actors that protection must be at the centre of humanitarian action. The definition of protection formally endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) states that protection encompasses

UNHCR is the Global Protection Cluster lead agency and has a specific protection mandate. However, it is recognised that all humanitarian and development actors must incorporate protection in their programming. This can be done through targeted protection interventions or mainstreaming of protection concerns into projects and programmes. By incorporating protection concerns into our work, it means we do no harm and avoid exposing people to physical and psychological abuse. It also compels us to focus on equality and accountability, ensuring everyone has access to services and information. It also means that primary actors are participating in resilience-building as well as humanitarian response. We should also work with existing protection systems, networks and mechanisms as much as possible and identify those structures in our resilience work. This helps us to ensure that any protection cases we identify are referred on to receive appropriate support.

**“all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law)”**

### People First

'Do no harm' is an important humanitarian principle, meaning that we should be aware about not causing any further damage or suffering. We therefore need to carefully consider if our assistance could potentially lead to conflict between different groups and community members.

## How is VSO working in protection and resilience?

VSO has been working to incorporate protection into its work in the following ways:

### Work with existing protection mechanisms:

VSO also works with existing protection mechanisms and structures when implementing its projects and programmes. In Uganda, for example, VSO supports community and local government child protection mechanisms and the child protection helpline. Tanzania and Nigeria are also linking with child protection committees. This means that any child protection cases that emerge during implementation of risk assessments and action plans can be referred on to receive the specialist support they need.

### Mainstreaming protection in our training:

To enhance more local capacity in protection, VSO in Myanmar has also incorporated protection

mainstreaming in its resilience trainings for national and community volunteers.

### Providing psychosocial support:

In countries such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, VSO has provided psychosocial support trainings and outreach.

### People First

As VSO takes a People First approach and focuses on understanding the drivers of vulnerability in its work, volunteers and programme staff are often highly aware of many of the protection risks facing communities. Some of the primary actors, who are the focus of our work in some programme areas, are among the most vulnerable people - including persons with disabilities, children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.



VSO Zimbabwe and partner organisation conducted psychosocial support training for community volunteers in Gutu, Zimbabwe as part of VSO's Cyclone Idai response.



### Psychosocial Support in Zimbabwe

After the devastating Cyclone Idai hit Zimbabwe, VSO prioritised training 120 community volunteers (in Gutu, Bikita and Zaka) on disaster preparedness and psychosocial support. The trained community volunteers will become the first responders in future disasters in their respective areas. Care workers have also been trained on psychosocial support and are assisting the communities in post-disaster trauma counselling. The team have also been working alongside District level political, traditional and local leadership to strengthen District Disaster committees.

## Safeguarding

Ensuring all vulnerable groups are protected in everything you do is fundamental, and volunteers and staff play an active role in this. Reading VSO's Global safeguarding and child protection policy<sup>19</sup> is a key step to really understanding what safeguarding means in practice.

There might be times when you are involved in a humanitarian response that requires you to make decisions about who gets what. This is where it is key that you remember to be as impartial as possible. If you are in a powerful position or favoured by certain people, it could have consequences on the most vulnerable individuals. Building a team that is as diverse as possible and having an open door to share concerns can help to challenge any unconscious bias within any project. For example, having community members on the distribution committee means you

can consult with them about people from vulnerable groups – if that is who you are targeting. It can ensure that the community understands the kind of behaviour it can expect from VSO volunteers and staff how to raise a complaint if that behaviour falls short. This way any issues are identified and raised early.

Make sure you know who your safeguarding focal point is. In case of any questions or concerns, reach out to your own safeguarding focal point. If you are not sure who that is, speak to your Country People Manager. Model ethical behaviour and be a safeguarding champion. **REMEMBER!** If it doesn't look right or doesn't feel right **TELL SOMEONE!** As a VSO representative you have a mandatory responsibility to report all and any concerns to your safeguarding focal point.



Staff member, Nelia, supporting the distribution of food products to older people as part of VSO's Cyclone Idai response in Manica Province, Mozambique.

19 <https://www.vsointernational.org/sites/default/files/Global-safeguarding-and-child-protection-policy.pdf>

## Child safeguarding

Every child regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sex or sexual orientation, has a right to equal protection from harm. In order to ensure they are truly protected during the resilience activities, try to think ahead about the outcomes of certain scenarios. While children can provide invaluable information during participatory risk assessments, and will come up with creative and effective resilience interventions to address the risks that they experience, at times during the assessment process children will identify safeguarding and child protection risks.

This information needs to be handled with sensitivity and care. It is important that we can address these risks as they arise by linking assessments to child protection and referral systems for effective case management. We need to be careful that community members do not overhear sensitive information or that children do not get into any trouble at home, because we have encouraged them to speak up.

### TIP BOX: Child safeguarding

It is vital to make sure all children and young people are safe during any interaction with VSO volunteers and staff. Also, to look out for them in case you see any concerning signs that something is affecting the child / young person. Building resilience in children and young people is about increasing their well-being. Below are examples of vital things to remember when working with children and young people:

#### DO

- Watch out for signs of abuse or worrying behaviour such as fear to speak out, bruises, in depth knowledge on sexual awareness and excessive anger
- Listen carefully if a child or young person tells you something
- Stay calm
- Reassure the child or young person they have done the right thing by telling you
- Keep any evidence they may give you (letters, photos, gifts)
- Confirm that you may need to let the most suitable person know
- Report all and any concerns you may have about a child or young person to your safeguarding focal point

#### DON'T

- Put yourself in a situation where you are alone with a child
- Touch a child or young person inappropriately
- Behave in a way that could be deemed sexual, exploitative or abusive
- Judge what you are being told
- Ask too many questions, especially if the child or young person is very upset
- Put words into the child's or young person's mouth
- Promise confidentiality
- Suggest anything that makes the child or young person feel it is their fault
- Feel you have to investigate - your job is to report this concern to your safeguarding focal point

## 6.7 Volunteering and Resilience

VSO has a growing number of community, youth, national and international specialist volunteers working on resilience. Working together, community, national and international volunteers are playing vital roles in building resilience before and after disasters and by supporting disaster response and recovery. VSO volunteers are often active within communities which are impacted by disaster and where resilience is being built, in addition to often being present within the services which communities are often dependent on for their resilience – schools, health centres, local and national government agencies.

Each volunteer contributes their unique skills, knowledge and experience to resilience building interventions. Community volunteers often act as role models within the community encouraging community members to participate in resilience interventions and ensuring the most marginalised and at risk community members are able to engage and influence. National and international specialist volunteers can introduce effective processes, such as disaster risk reduction and preparedness plans to enable communities to identify and address risks. Both community and specialist volunteers can support communities to self-organise to implement community based resilience initiatives. They often act as a bridge between different groups within communities and the services they depend on and access local and national government support. Volunteers may introduce innovative solutions to communities or recognise existing innovation within communities and can be brokers of technical and financial support from other stakeholders to communities. There are many ways community, national and international volunteers can work together to increase awareness about resilience. VSO's volunteer relational model is being used to encourage cooperation and skill sharing amongst different volunteers.

### Key facts on volunteers

- An estimated 1 billion volunteers freely give their time to tackle issues that affect their communities.
- The majority of volunteer activity occurs through informal engagement between individuals, primarily undertaken by women.
- Local people, acting on a voluntary basis, are at the forefront of every disaster / crisis that impacts their communities.
- They will be the first to arrive and the last to leave.
- If "localised" development reaches those furthest behind, volunteerism provides a mechanism for channelling individual actions into collective strategies for change?
- VSO's people-first approach to development offers a timely and appropriate way to support formal and informal / local volunteerism as a powerful resource to strengthen community resilience.



VSO and IDS,<sup>20</sup> conducted joint research, Valuing Volunteering, comprised of over eight years of field research into the impact of volunteerism. It has given VSO better insights than ever before into understanding the unique contribution that volunteers make to development. Evidence shows that volunteerism can add value to sustainable development outcomes in eight interrelated ways, which are critical to resilience at community and system level.

<sup>20</sup> The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a global research and learning organisation for equitable and sustainable change.

**Relational Volunteer Methodology:**

Examples of the values volunteers bring to resilience



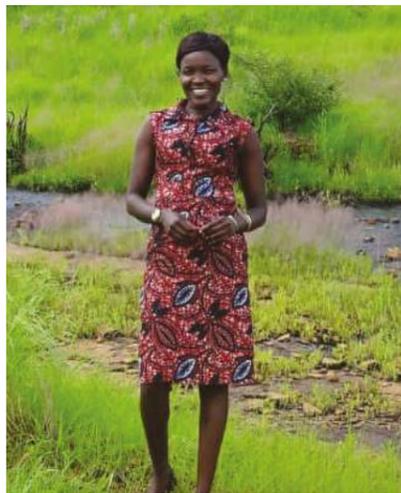
**Inspiration**

Volunteering can inspire new ways of thinking. Khumbo, Ken and Brosrov are National Volunteers from Malawi, Kenya and Cambodia, and have been advocating on climate change issues and inspiring youth to take action.



**Social Action**

Promoting engagement and active citizenship. Raheel, Community Volunteer encouraging youth engagement in resilience, social cohesion and peacebuilding in Pakistan.



**Participation**

Promoting participation by encouraging activities is more responsive and informed by actual community priorities. Jesca, National Resilience Volunteer from Karamoja, Uganda, is supporting inclusive risk assessment and climate adaptation with pastoralist communities in Karamoja.



**Ownership & Agency**

Strengthening local ownership and the agency of people to take control of their own development. Francis, Community Volunteer Sierra Leone, is mobilising communities to engage in disaster risk reduction and advocating with national government.



**Quality & Effectiveness**

Improving the quality and effectiveness of services. Sarah, International Resilience Specialist Volunteer from the UK, has been supporting national volunteers in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Malawi and Tanzania to improve the quality of risk assessments through training and accompaniment.



**Innovation**

Acting as a catalyst for innovation. Neil, National Volunteer in the Philippines, is supporting access to geo-cam technology to support disaster risk assessments in Mindanao.



**Inclusion**

Increasing inclusion by extending the reach of services to the poorest and most marginalised. Gargee, National Resilience Specialist Volunteer in Nepal is leading gender sensitive and inclusive approaches to school based disaster risk reduction and emergency response.



**Collaboration**

Promoting and enabling collaboration across multiple partners and stakeholders. Madhu, International Volunteer from India, is working in Myanmar and leading VSO coordinating with humanitarian disaster risk reduction stakeholders for emergency response and resilience.



## VSO Relational Model

Whilst each individual volunteer has the potential to add value across these eight areas, VSO's approach understands that when volunteers work together in complementary multi-disciplinary mixed teams they can bring about greater, transformational change.

The combination of different types of skills, locals and individuals who could contribute different perspectives leads to the creation of teams that are able to respond to complex problems. In VSO there are many ways in which community, national and international volunteers are working together to build resilience:

- In Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Mozambique and Nepal, VSO national volunteers have been able to strengthen sustainability through engaging with and supporting community volunteers within responses. National and international specialist volunteers have supported the training of community volunteers in needs assessment, distribution of emergency goods, inclusion and accountability and disaster risk reduction. Volunteer specialists also supported coordination with government and other agencies, in addition to technical support for the emergency response. In 2017 VSO Nepal's flood recovery response in Rautahat was made possible through a national resilience specialist volunteer working alongside community and school based volunteers. In addition, a volunteer who was a specialist in engineering supported the rehabilitation of school infrastructure to enable children to return to school following the floods.
- In Uganda, to support the design of climate and conflict sensitive livelihoods, health and education programmes an international volunteer worked with three national volunteers who spoke the local language and understood the local culture and area. Initially the international volunteer trained them in using VSO's resilience assessment and action planning process and then supported them in running training themselves. After the national volunteers understood the participatory processes, they were able to take the tools and adapt them to work in the local context and deliver them in the local language. One year on and they are running the resilience risk assessments very effectively across Uganda.

- In Malawi two volunteers worked hand in hand to support on participatory processes. One was skilled in knowing the country, the language, the culture, how best to engage with different actors, and the other had the technical skills on resilience

In emergencies the volunteer relational model can also be highly effective. For example, during the August 2019 floods in Sierra Leone the volunteer Regional Resilience Advisor came in to support rapid needs assessments and response coordination. The national volunteer's strong partnership with the National Disaster Management Department ensured that VSO was included in the coordination efforts right from the start. As he had also kept contact with community volunteers, those whom VSO had previously trained on DRR joined in with enthusiasm, both from affected and other communities. Their knowledge of the language, area and culture broke down the barriers and made the needs assessment and response a lot smoother. VSO's previous work on resilience with the government helped the partners to also take a long term perspective: not just put a bandage on the immediate problem, but also look at the underlying reasons for the disaster and try to identify ways to reduce risks.

# ORGANISATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

## Section 7

**A core part of VSO's resilience framework is focused on strengthening resilience within the organisation itself. VSO does this by working with its organisational systems to prepare and respond to risks that will potentially impact its programmes.**

### Key emergency preparedness considerations for VSO

#### 1. RESPONSE TYPES

- What type of disasters are we most equipped to respond to?
- Which disasters would we not be equipped to respond to?

#### 2. SECTORS

- What sectors are we most capacitated to respond to?

#### 3. SURVIVOR LED RESPONSES

- How can we ensure most marginalised primary actors are involved in identification and prioritisation of needs in early responses?
- How can we ensure the community volunteers and our primary actors are taking leadership roles in the implementation of any emergency or recovery response interventions?

Each country where VSO works is responsible for developing an Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP). These plans identify the key risks in each country, the organisational resources already in place, and outline their roles and responsibilities as well as procedures. This enables us to respond to a disaster should one occur.

VSO has a guidance note and training module on how to prepare an EPP, as well as a plan template to support country teams to think through different scenarios and how VSO might respond.

**“Resilience isn't something you can manage alone – you have to work on it together.”**

VSO volunteer, Uganda

The Emergency Preparedness Plan template includes the following sections:

- Risk context information
  - Potential programme responses to key risks
  - Early warning systems – sources and access to information
  - Key partners and coordination structures
  - Human resources and role planning, including any surge capacity requirements
  - Capacity-development requirements for VSO teams
  - Any recommended modifications required to VSO systems to enable the response
- #### 4. DUTY OF CARE
- What security and safeguarding risks are likely to arise as a result of the disaster or the planned response? How can we effectively manage and mitigate these risks?
  - How do we ensure appropriate Duty of Care for our volunteers and staff supporting the response?

### What should I do with the Emergency Preparedness Plan?

The Emergency Preparedness Plan should be a living document and updated regularly. All VSO volunteers and programme teams should be familiar with the contents of the plan and understand their roles, responsibilities and who they should contact in the event of an emergency. Make sure you read the Emergency Preparedness Plan in your country and share it with other volunteers. Also consider what type of role you may or may not like to play in the event of an emergency and discuss this with your line manager. Maybe some of the partners you work with would also be interested in preparing a similar plan and require your support?



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Shila Dhakal talking to children in the local community in Lamjung, Nepal, about school and earthquake preparedness.

# REFERENCES AND LINKS

## Online resources:

Useful resilience resources	Content
<a href="http://www.inform-index.org/">http://www.inform-index.org/</a>	Data on estimated risks, per hazard, per country
<a href="https://www.preventionweb.net/english/">https://www.preventionweb.net/english/</a>	UN knowledge platform on DRR (you can subscribe to newsletters)
<a href="https://www.ifrcvca.org/">https://www.ifrcvca.org/</a>	Guidance for community risk assessment
<a href="https://www.goalglobal.org/disaster-resilience">https://www.goalglobal.org/disaster-resilience</a>	Toolkit for measuring community resilience
<a href="https://www.gndr.org/">https://www.gndr.org/</a>	Global network of organisations working on DRR
<a href="https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ml-companion-guide-resilience-040216-en_0.pdf">https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ml-companion-guide-resilience-040216-en_0.pdf</a>	Resilience guide from Oxfam
<a href="https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/UNV_SWVR_2018_English_WEB.pdf">https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/UNV_SWVR_2018_English_WEB.pdf</a>	Report on volunteers' contributions to resilience

Useful humanitarian resources	Content
<a href="https://alliancecpha.org/en/series-of-child-protection-materials/2019-edition-cpms">https://alliancecpha.org/en/series-of-child-protection-materials/2019-edition-cpms</a>	Child Protection minimum standards in Humanitarian Action
<a href="https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/minimum-standards-protection-gender-inclusion-emergencies/">https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/minimum-standards-protection-gender-inclusion-emergencies/</a>	Standards for protection, gender and inclusion
<a href="https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/GBVIE.Minimum.Standards.Publication.FINAL_ENG_.pdf">https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/GBVIE.Minimum.Standards.Publication.FINAL_ENG_.pdf</a>	Prevention and response to Gender-Based Violence
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W01dgbxpyOU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W01dgbxpyOU</a>	Video: Elements of Protection Mainstreaming
<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/world/humanitarian-inclusion-standards-older-people-and-people-disabilities">https://reliefweb.int/report/world/humanitarian-inclusion-standards-older-people-and-people-disabilities</a>	Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities
<a href="https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/including-children-disabilities-humanitarian-action-guidance">https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/including-children-disabilities-humanitarian-action-guidance</a>	Including Children with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action: Guidance
<a href="http://www.internal-displacement.org/internal-displacement/guiding-principles-on-internal-displacement">http://www.internal-displacement.org/internal-displacement/guiding-principles-on-internal-displacement</a>	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

Useful humanitarian resources	Content
<a href="https://www.unhcr.org/about-us/background/4ec262df9/1951-convention-relating-status-refugees-its-1967-protocol.html">https://www.unhcr.org/about-us/background/4ec262df9/1951-convention-relating-status-refugees-its-1967-protocol.html</a>	The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol
<a href="https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm">https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm</a>	The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols
<a href="https://www.unocha.org/es/themes/humanitarian-civil-military-coordination">https://www.unocha.org/es/themes/humanitarian-civil-military-coordination</a>	Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination
<a href="https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/what-is-new-in-the-2018-sphere-handbook-in-depth-guide.pdf">https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/what-is-new-in-the-2018-sphere-handbook-in-depth-guide.pdf</a>	What Is New in the 2018 Sphere Handbook.
<a href="https://inee.org/standards/domain-1-foundational-standards">https://inee.org/standards/domain-1-foundational-standards</a>	Minimum standards for Education in Emergencies Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
<a href="http://educationcluster.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Education-An-Essential-Component-of-a-humanitarian-response_EN.pdf">http://educationcluster.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Education-An-Essential-Component-of-a-humanitarian-response_EN.pdf</a>	Background to education in emergencies
<a href="https://educationcluster.net">https://educationcluster.net</a>	Information on the education cluster
<a href="http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/tools-and-guidance/essential-protection-guidance-and-tools/">http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/tools-and-guidance/essential-protection-guidance-and-tools/</a>	Essential protection and guidance on tools
<a href="http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org">http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org</a>	Information on the protection cluster
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwpzzAefx9M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwpzzAefx9M</a>	Video: Rules of War (In a Nutshell)
<a href="https://www.who.int/hac/network/interagency/news/iasc_guidelines_mental_health_psychosocial.pdf?ua=1">https://www.who.int/hac/network/interagency/news/iasc_guidelines_mental_health_psychosocial.pdf?ua=1</a>	IASC Guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies
<a href="https://www.who.int/health-cluster/resources/publications/filter/en/">https://www.who.int/health-cluster/resources/publications/filter/en/</a>	WHO health cluster knowledge bank
<a href="https://fscluster.org/programme-quality-and-cross-cutting">https://fscluster.org/programme-quality-and-cross-cutting</a>	Food security cluster: people centred approaches and cross cutting dimensions

#### Other Resources used:

Useful resources	Content
<a href="https://www.vsointernational.org/fighting-poverty/partner-us/our-theory-change">https://www.vsointernational.org/fighting-poverty/partner-us/our-theory-change</a>	Has an overview of VSO's theory of change
<a href="https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs">https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs</a>	UN Sustainable Development Goals

Useful resources	Content
<a href="https://au.int/en/treaties/african-union-convention-protection-and-assistance-internally-displaced-persons-africa">https://au.int/en/treaties/african-union-convention-protection-and-assistance-internally-displaced-persons-africa</a>	African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa
Children learning Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience An Introduction to DRR for Primary School Children in Sierra Leone, 2019, VSO	Includes a range of activities to do with children to raise awareness on risks and how to reduce them
<a href="https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/alnap-protection-guide.pdf">https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/alnap-protection-guide.pdf</a>	Protection guide
<a href="http://www.cpaor.net/sites/default/files/cp/CP-Minimum-Standards-English-2013.pdf">http://www.cpaor.net/sites/default/files/cp/CP-Minimum-Standards-English-2013.pdf</a>	Child protection minimum standards
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rucc_1N9cio">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rucc_1N9cio</a>	Video: What Protection means in Practice
<a href="https://www.vsointernational.org/sites/default/files/Global-safeguarding-and-child-protection-policy.pdf">https://www.vsointernational.org/sites/default/files/Global-safeguarding-and-child-protection-policy.pdf</a>	VSO child protection and safeguarding policy
<a href="https://solutionscenter.nethope.org/">https://solutionscenter.nethope.org/</a>	Nethope: solutions centre

#### E-learning opportunities:

Useful e-learning resources	Content
<a href="https://kayaconnect.org/">https://kayaconnect.org/</a>	Humanitarian Leadership Academy learning platform E.g. Introduction to CHS in: <a href="https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=260">https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=260</a>
<a href="https://www.disasterready.org/">https://www.disasterready.org/</a>	Online training for humanitarian workers and volunteers. E.g. Toward Resilience: A Guide to Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation; or Comprehensive School Safety; or Disaster Resilience: Topic Guide
<a href="https://phap.org/credentialing-program-ahpp">https://phap.org/credentialing-program-ahpp</a>	Applying humanitarian principles in practice
<a href="https://www.usipglobalcampus.org/">https://www.usipglobalcampus.org/</a>	Peace & conflict. E.g. Humanitarian civil-military coordination: <a href="https://www.usipglobalcampus.org/training-overview/uncmcoord/">https://www.usipglobalcampus.org/training-overview/uncmcoord/</a>
<a href="https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/child-rights-programming-e-learning">https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/child-rights-programming-e-learning</a>	Short course on how to work with a child rights based approach
<a href="http://earlyrecovery.global/content/e-learning-early-recovery-humanitarian-action">http://earlyrecovery.global/content/e-learning-early-recovery-humanitarian-action</a>	Early recovery: e-learning course

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A girl in flood prone community in Central Terai, Nepal. VSO has been supporting recovery  
and preparedness with schools and communities following floods in 2017 and 2019.  
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