



RESILIENCE

Concept and Practice at Welthungerhilfe

Overview

Global demand for humanitarian aid has grown substantially, and pushes the humanitarian system to the limits of its capacities. For a long time, the international community mainly focused on the management of emergency situations. This increase in demand also creates a need for measures that allow threatened communities to withstand recurring disturbances and long-term stresses, and adapt to the same.

A desire to decrease the vulnerability of communities to the effects of crisis and disasters has been one of the key tasks of humanitarian aid and development co-operation for decades. The objective of strengthening the resilience of these communities to the effects of extreme natural events and political conflicts has been anchored in the context of disaster risk reduction since the approval of the Hyogo Framework for Action through the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction: *"Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters"*. Strengthening resilience is a long-term task and hence a part of development processes. Resilience has become a key term of the new *"language of preparedness"*.

This "impulse" indicates what Welthungerhilfe has undertaken to date to reduce vulnerabilities, and provides ideas as to what is required to take into account resilience as a general objective in humanitarian aid and development co-operation.

The Resilience Concept

Welthungerhilfe pursues the objective of sustainable food and nutrition security. Because significant collapses of societal systems pose a great threat to food and nutrition security, Welthungerhilfe works towards at least cushioning the effects of disruptions due to political conflicts, extreme natural events and climate change. Development opportunities must be secured and future generations must have access to as many decision-making options as possible.

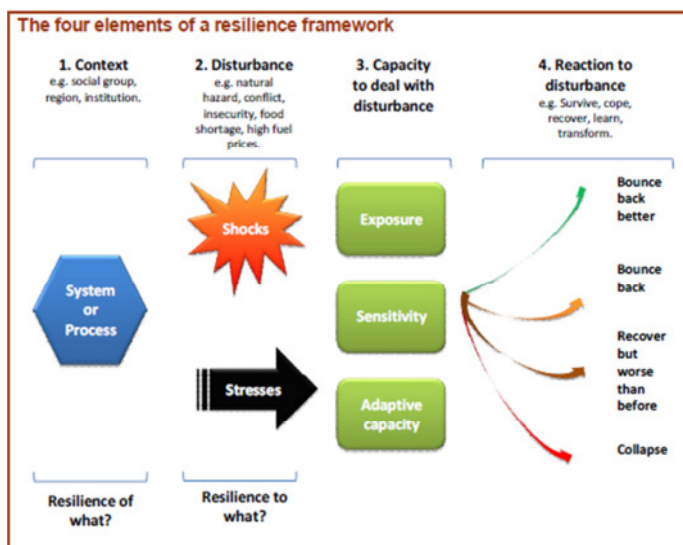
The term resilience has already been used in the context of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation for some time, often complementary to the term of vulnerability: The objectives of reducing a community's vulnerability and strengthening its resilience have become guidelines for humanitarian aid and development co-operation.

In its "Special Report on Managing the Risk of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation", the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) views disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as complementary approaches that increase the resilience to extreme weather events.

The European Commission defines resilience as the ability of an individual, household, community, country or region to withstand stresses and disruptions (e.g. droughts, violence, conflicts or extreme natural events), and to adapt and quickly recover from the same. It locates action to strengthen resilience at the interface of development co-operation and humanitarian aid, and sees a need for a joint understanding and coordinated priorities to ensure

coherence and complementarity as well as to reduce the vulnerability of the poorest household against disruptions and contribute to food security.

In the view of the BMZ, communities can be described as resilient if they are able to manage extreme events without putting their living standard and long-term development opportunities at risk.



Source: DFID 2012

In addition to reducing risks from disasters and conflicts, strengthening resilience also means increasing the resistance of threatened individuals and communities, and hence also improving quickly-acting management and adaptation mechanisms.

In view of the design of Welthungerhilfe programmes, it is noted that resilience must be understood as a structural and dynamic system characteristic. Resilience can be seen in the interplay of a system's identifiable elements and the resulting dynamics. Within the system, social actors can influence not just the system structure but also the relationships within the system and the interactions between the various hierarchy levels.

This is where the main distinction to the vulnerability concept lies. While vulnerability focuses on the vulnerability of infrastructure, economic and ecological elements, the concept of resilience focuses on the interaction between the various elements. This also points to a change in perspective: Instead of looking at reducing weaknesses, we now look at the action potential of the actors, their resilience.

What has Welthungerhilfe already done in this regard?

As early as 1998, Welthungerhilfe has created the structural conditions for integrated aid through the amalgamation of the previously separate departments for development co-operation and emergency aid and the bundling of technical competencies in Regional Desks.

Strengthening resilience requires a long-term commitment to the conceptual cooperation between emergency aid, reconstruction and development co-operation in

consideration of socio-political as well as natural and climate hazards. In the year after the Hyogo Framework for Action was approved, Welthungerhilfe commissioned the Seminar for Rural Development at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin to conduct a study on disaster risk reduction as a principle of rural development. During the reorganisation of its sector portfolio in 2007, Welthungerhilfe was guided by the LRRD approach (Linking relief, rehabilitation and development).

In the context of reducing disaster risks, resilience must be viewed as a general principle. Projects designed to strengthen resilience require interdisciplinary action to build the capacities of individuals and communities. The old idea of "help to self-help" is thus accorded a new dimension. With its position paper for the promotion of civil society in the partner countries and as part of its current strategy, Welthungerhilfe has underlined its commitment to the cooperation with local partners.

To strengthen resilience, the country/regional programmes must address the causes of vulnerabilities (see also Hyogo Framework for Action). Measures for food and nutrition security and drinking water supplies, sustainable resource management and local economic development / income creation, have been a part of Welthungerhilfe's development cooperation portfolio in all programme countries for decades, and have been expanded by the linking of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation during the last decade.

Paths to strengthening resilience

Welthungerhilfe's core mandate is comprised of the various steps towards food and nutrition security, as part of emergency aid, reconstruction and development cooperation from cultivation, land use and resource management, storage, processing and marketing to consumption. These are associated with measures for the provision of drinking water and hygiene. Successful measures for reviving agricultural products after crises and disasters and for the promotion of subsistence agriculture and value chains contribute to a reduction in vulnerabilities.

Participation by the population

The establishment and strengthening of resilience within families requires a comprehensive understanding of the role of women within the respective community. Gender-specific vulnerabilities and potentials must be taken into account when designing projects and programmes.

The empowerment of civil society actors and the targeted strengthening of vulnerable societal groups are essential aspects in this regard. In this context, it is important to activate memories of previous extreme events and capture traditional management strategies. This forms the first step towards sharpening the awareness of existing hazards and own possibilities and subsequently forwarding and anchoring the required knowledge and skills at the level of the community.

Co-responsibility and self-responsibility

A sense of responsibility must be anchored in the communities. Co-responsibility for planning. Self-responsibility for self-organisation. The threatened population must be understood and included as the protagonist of its own future. There is no resilience without a self-aware population!

A close collaborative relationship between local and national authorities and other actors is required to ensure that periodically occurring extreme events can be managed in an effective and efficient manner, e.g. the national Red Cross / Red Crescent Society or government civil protection organisations, which should be reflected in coordinated emergency plans.

Risk assessment

Strengthening resilience is more than a requirement to overcome the effects of current crisis. The ability to manage the causes of recurring crises is much more important for the purpose of sustainable development. Measures designed to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable population groups therefore form a key component of poverty alleviation.

Resilience as the ability of a system to withstand external influences initially demands in-depth knowledge of this system. Therefore risk assessments must include the relevant actors and take into account scientific insights. At the end of 2012, an instrument for assessing the drivers and causes of disasters will be in place; it was developed on the order of the German Committee for Disaster Reduction, which also included insights by Welthungerhilfe from Pakistan.

The risk assessment forms the basis for Welthungerhilfe's climate proofing. Even if this method focuses on the risks brought about by climate change, it can also be used to assess the risks of extreme weather and environmental events.

Risk f = (natural) hazard, location and vulnerability

Once the insights from the risk assessment have been made available, it is usually necessary to apply an interdisciplinary approach, which bundles the technical knowledge of the various sectors. With respect to Welthungerhilfe in particular, this means that the organisation must link its expertise in the emergency aid and reconstruction sectors, WASH, food and nutrition security and resource management even more stringently. Disaster risk reduction in the more general sense of the Hyogo Framework for Action and Climate Change Adaptation, as well as the equal participation of genders in development processes, flow into the design of the projects and programmes as cross-cutting tasks.

Stand-alone measures of disaster risk reduction

Even if disaster risk reduction must in principle be viewed as a cross-cutting issue and as a prerequisite to achieve sustainable impacts of humanitarian aid and development co-operation, stand-alone projects for disaster risk reduction can nevertheless be a suitable instrument to strengthen resilience, which are either tailored to cyclical hazards such as e.g. the El Niño – phenomena and hurricanes, or to unforeseeable events such as earthquakes.

The possibility that extreme events can result in disasters despite precautionary measures cannot be completely excluded. In this context, a reduction in risk causes must also be accompanied by preparations for the effective management of disasters.

Projects of this kind generally consist of risk mapping (also for land use planning) and community-based early warning systems, as well as the strengthening of disaster management capacities and qualification of local disaster risk reduction committees, the training of and equipment for rescue teams and the development and coordination of emergency plans. Where required, these projects also consist of building measures to strengthen community infrastructures. In the end, such measures are only successful if the local communities are included and are able to carry and continue the processes that have been initiated.

Welthungerhilfe transfers its long-standing experience from Nicaragua (since 2001) and Tajikistan into other programme countries, such as Mozambique, India and Pakistan.

Welthungerhilfe recognises that we can't prevent drought, but can use improved and smarter programs to create greater resilience and improve livelihoods. Welthungerhilfe is committed to connecting more effectively our humanitarian and development efforts through coherent programs that do more than meet immediate emergency needs. Working with communities and partners, Welthungerhilfe has included in its emergency assistance a focus on building community infrastructure namely harvesting rainwater and improving irrigation, improving livelihoods for women, and repairing degraded landscapes for better grazing and agricultural production. Welthungerhilfe builds productive safety nets and productive assets that help people to move from crisis towards sustainable livelihoods.

Elvis Lumbasio, WHH Regional Office, Kenya

In addition, the organisation increasingly draws on insights from international Early Warning Systems with regard to droughts and harvest losses, as is the case in East Africa, and takes these into account during programme planning to be able to initiate the required measures in a timely manner.

Safety nets

Another instrument to strengthen resilience, which can be used especially for risks related to recurring cyclical weather events and their effects, such as droughts, flooding or the destruction of agricultural infrastructure, is the establishment of seasonal safety nets or innovative micro-insurance concepts. They are designed to catch the households that are most at risk, before they fall into dire straits as a result of a crisis situation such as the loss of a harvest. These safety nets generally consist of cash payments, which are provided to the poorest either without conditions or as payment for work or participation in training measures during those seasons in which cash and food reserves are at their lowest level.

Climate change adaptation

In view of climate change, programme planning must consider national development plans and poverty alleviation strategies as well as the national plans for adapting to climate change (NAPAs). In the context of land use and food and nutrition security, it is worth taking a look at the concept of "Ecosystem-based Adaptation" (EbA). Ecosystems influence the climate at the local, regional and global level. Protection and the sustainable management of water- and carbon-storing ecosystems (forests, moors, mangroves) contribute to alleviating the negative effects of climate change and increase resilience to climate change.

In developing countries, many disadvantaged population groups are greatly dependent on the ecosystem services that are provided by tropical forests. EbA also integrates the traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous people and local communities. The use of buffer zone management near nature conservation areas can improve the living conditions of the local population and hence reduce the pressure on the core areas of the protected areas. Poverty alleviation is linked with the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity.

Welthungerhilfe and its partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Asia as well as in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia have gained extensive experience in this context. An ecosystem-based adaptation of grazing management is important in pastoral societies such as East Africa.

Strengthening of infrastructure

Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation also require investments in infrastructure, which is built so as to withstand extreme natural events as well as possible. This is associated with an adherence to and possibly the increased use of building standards for earthquake-safe and hurricane-safe buildings. Economically justifiable and technically feasible measures will always be associated with a certain level of residual risk.

Challenges for the international community

The insight that strengthening the resilience of threatened communities requires long-term approaches at the interface between humanitarian aid and development co-operation has now become established. Implementing this insight into practice requires a corresponding adaptation of the (co)financing architecture of public donors. The coherent and continuous financing of measures as part of the collaboration of emergency aid, reconstruction and development co-operation must be warranted. Actors must have access to long-term financing or secure follow-up financing (e.g. in Germany from AA to BMZ and from EG ECHO to DG DEVCO within the European Commission), so that planning security can be warranted and resilience can be strengthened in a consistent and continuous manner.

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