

HORN OF AFRICA RESILIENCE WORKSHOP

APPLICATION OF EVIDENCE FOR DECISION MAKING

MAY 13-16, 2019 | ENTEBBE, UGANDA

Summary Brief



Overview

The Horn of Africa Resilience Workshop gathered more than 100 participants for four days in Entebbe, Uganda, to discuss and understand emerging resilience evidence from the region and translate it into action. Participants included field- and headquarter-based resilience analysts, policy makers, and program staff representing USAID and implementing partners in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Understand evidence emerging from resilience research in the Horn of Africa
- Explore common resilience trends and themes across countries
- Translate learning into next steps for countries and a future learning agenda

For a more detailed overview of the workshop, please see this [brief](#). The workshop agenda can be found [here](#).

The following sources of resilience evidence served as the primary basis for discussion and planning during the workshop:

Country	Source(s) of Resilience Evidence
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement and Market Expansion (PRIME) Project – Endline Evaluation Livelihoods for Resilience (L4R) Activity – Baseline Study Food for Peace-funded Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs) – Resilience modules of Baseline Studies
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food for Peace-funded Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs) – Resilience modules of Baseline Studies
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth Programs (PREG I, PREG II) – Endline Evaluation / Baseline Study
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing Resilience and Economic Growth (EREGS) Project – Recurrent Monitoring Survey (RMS)
South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilience Profiles developed by IFPRI/DAI
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food for Peace-funded Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs) – Resilience modules of Baseline Studies

Prior to the event, key findings from each of the studies were included in a compendium of briefs that can be found on the [event website](#).

[Three infographics](#) developed for the event also helped visualize several key findings and cross-country trends and themes related to resilience analysis.

The workshop was designed to promote both in-country and cross-country discussions and learning, by enabling participants to engage with each other in country-specific teams as well as plenary and according to interest in cross-cutting themes. The country-specific teams discussed the implications of the evidence presented for their own resilience policies, strategies and programs. Those interested in country-team discussions of resilience evidence, priority areas for continued resilience learning, and items for follow-up action can review summary notes [here](#).

Resilience Trends in the Horn of Africa


Based on data from the seven studies in five different contexts, a number of trends and themes were identified related to *shocks*, *adaptive strategies*, and *resilience capacities*.

Shocks and Stresses

Shocks are pervasive and compound throughout the region. Drought and food price increases were identified as significant shocks by participants in all seven studies. In five of seven studies, households also reported the following as common shocks:

- Crop disease/pests;
- Excessive rains;
- Flooding;
- Livestock disease; and
- Variable rain (early/late)

In the year before the survey, households experienced an average of **5.4 shocks** in the DRC DFSAs, **5 shocks** in Uganda DFSAs, **2.6 shocks** in Ethiopia DFSAs, **5 shocks** in Somalia, and **2 shocks** in Kenya



These shocks are interconnected, and downstream effects (e.g. insufficient fodder, livestock disease, and declining sale prices for livestock and agricultural goods) are evident in each of the countries for which analysis is available. Understanding the severity and impact of shocks requires both objective measures and insight into the subjective perceptions of affected individuals.

Coping and Adaptive Strategies

Research findings revealed a number of common responses to the shocks and stresses affecting food and livelihood security throughout the Horn of Africa. In plenary, participants discussed the analyses and highlighted the important difference between short-term (and sometimes adverse) coping strategies and more proactive efforts on the part of households and communities to adapt to changing conditions. Across the studies, various coping strategies were identified, however the respondents recognized the following as the four most common:

- Reduce household food consumption;
- Participate in Food for Work/Cash for Work (FFW/CFW);
- Livestock sales (distressed sale); and
- Reduce household expenses (school fees, water, health care, etc.)

Analysis across different contexts reveals that while households can initially manage shocks by drawing on coping capacities, doing so often increases their exposure to subsequent shocks and downstream effects.

Resilience Capacities

Resilience analyses across contexts also provided insight into factors that enable affected individuals, households and communities to apply their **absorptive**, **adaptive** and **transformative capacities** to mitigate context-specific shocks and stresses throughout the region. Components associated with recovery from shocks across multiple programs in the region include:

- Asset index (productive, livestock, and/or durable goods);
- Access to cash savings;
- Shock preparedness and mitigation;
- Exposure to information;
- Social capital (bonding, bridging, linking);
- Availability of formal safety nets; and
- Local government responsiveness
- Aspirations

Participants noted that the importance of specific elements contributing to resilience capacities varies significantly according to the specific shock profile. Likewise, households and communities will often draw on specific elements of their resilience capacities in a rational, sequential manner, e.g. bonding social capital (borrowing from family, friends) is typically a first line of defense, but can be quickly eroded in the event of large-scale shocks.

Discussions highlighted a common interest in identifying the specific policies, activities, and assistance modalities that have proven most effective in strengthening resilience capacities in the region. Differences in culture, social norms, government policy, and economic stability are among the range of factors that make that determination difficult.

Evidence Related to Key Resilience Learning Themes

Prior to the workshop, and based on analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, organizers identified a range of thematic areas with particular relevance for strengthening resilience in the Horn of Africa. Participants were instructed to self-select into topic-specific and country-specific breakout groups to discuss the implications of evidence and learning for future resilience programming.

Plenary and breakout group discussions of the evidence presented during the workshop also raised a number of areas for further resilience learning throughout the Horn of Africa. Participating USAID representatives, implementing partner staff, and other stakeholders agree that additional research into these areas would directly inform resilience policy, programming, and analysis in individual countries and the region as a whole.

Complex Risk Environments

Within the dynamic environment of the Horn of Africa, populations are often exposed to concurrent and inter-related shocks and stresses. Drought, conflict, and price increases are pervasive shocks throughout the region. To these, participants added the following causally related shocks:

- Degraded infrastructure
- Water stress
- Ineffective governance
- Hyper-inflation
- Forced displacement
- Conflict/Violent extremism
- Domestic violence
- Disease (e.g. cholera)
- Substance abuse
- Demographic change

In this environment, capturing coherent, robust resilience evidence is critical for identifying the leverage points where programming can be most effective. Since the long-term impacts of critical investments may not be demonstrable in the near future, it is important that monitoring systems track progress toward intermediate outcomes in the context of a longer-term vision. Complex risk environments also underscore the importance of joint planning with government counterparts, implementing partners and the private sector to promote collective action as part of longer-term resilience strategies. In such environments, program designs must be [shock-responsive](#) in order to sustainably strengthen the resilience capacities of vulnerable households and communities.

Following a series of shocks and in the context of current downward spiral of conflict fueling food insecurity in South Sudan, the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (**PfRR**) is bringing diverse actors together across sectors and agencies to converge ideas, people, efforts and resources on geographically focused resilience programs. Following principles of colocation, coordination, and collaboration, the PfRR is piloting collaborative resilience solutions in seven Partnership Areas across South Sudan using a common Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) and Joint Work Planning.

AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING

- Further evidence is needed on the specific combinations of interventions that directly contribute to sustainable improvements in resilience among extremely poor household in high risk environments.
- In the Horn of Africa, more evidence is needed on ways in which conflict influences the ability to manage other shocks (market fluctuations, land degradation, livestock disease, etc.).
- More evidence is needed on the relative effectiveness of conflict mitigation efforts in strengthening household-, community-, and systems-level resilience.

- Further clarification is needed on distinct and complementary approaches to analyzing resilience to “shocks” versus “stresses.”

Local Government Responsiveness

Despite its obvious relevance, participants agreed that the topic of governance remains under-explored in the field of resilience programming. When discussing critical aspects of both traditional and formal governance systems, participants focused primarily on issues related to service provision, resource allocation, and common principles of participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability.

Participants cited the challenging fact that formal governments in the region are often not consistent and transparent when it comes to reporting the severity and impact of certain shocks. At the same time, traditional governance systems can be compromised by parallel formal government structures which are often less accessible to marginalized populations. In fragile states (e.g. Somalia, DRC) citizen trust in traditional governance tends to be stronger given the weak capacity of formal government institutions.

While examples were cited of effective collaboration with local governance (e.g. animal quarantine/vaccination services), many participants acknowledged that given the complexity of relationships and responsibilities, it has been challenging for donors, implementers and governments to articulate and coalesce around a common vision for resilience.

AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING

- How can evidence generated from PRIME, PREG and other large-scale resilience investments in the region be most effectively institutionalized within Ethiopia’s and Kenya’s devolved government structures?
- The design of the PREG 2 study will allow us to look at the impact of different constellations of interventions. It is important to capture total investment, and particularly local government investment.
- Improved understanding of the constructs of “community” in program areas can help identify viable entry points for local government response to shocks and stresses.
- How can resilience analysis inform effective coordination between donors, implementing partners, and other key actors in the absence of functioning local government structures (Somalia, South Sudan, DRC)?

Role of Savings and Financial Services in Managing Shocks

Resilience evidence from the Horn of Africa confirms that access to financial services helps households smooth consumption, diversify livelihoods and obtain key services. At the same time, savings can help buffer against declines in productivity and enable recovery in the wake of a significant shock.

Establishment of saving and financial services (e.g. village savings and loan associations) can also enhance resilience by strengthening the social capital of vulnerable participants.

However, when designing and implementing activities aimed at improving financial services, participants agreed it is vital for external actors to be mindful of existing social networks and avoid any activity that compromises the effectiveness of informal social protection mechanisms.

Other important factors related to financial services and resilience include:

- Trust and confidence in financial institutions is critical to engagement of vulnerable participants;
- For both chronically and acutely vulnerable, it is important to diversify / tailor financial services to their particular needs and capabilities;

- Conflict, displacement and other shocks tends to have a significant effect on repayment rates to micro-finance institutions;
- Sustainable provision of financial services is made more challenging by the need to establish a profit incentive for private micro-finance institutions

AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING

- How does savings through informal village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) differ from credit provided through private micro-finance institutions (MFI) in terms of helping vulnerable households recover from shocks?
- How does reliance on agricultural/livestock traders and informal money lenders for credit influence the resilience of borrowers?
- What are the effects of participation in VSLAs on empowerment and decision-making roles of marginalized populations (women, youth)?

“I was challenged. The workshop provoked me to reflect on different development pathways through a resilience lens and to think creatively but inclusively and collaboratively.”

Workshop Participant

Regional Markets and Trade

Workshop participants agreed that markets and trade are directly relevant to resilience in the region for a variety of reasons:

- They support diversification of food and income sources;
- They support exchange of vital goods, services and information;
- They can help improve terms of trade by enabling vulnerable households to engage directly with the private sector (rather than relying on middle-men); and
- They can provide needed access to productive assets and inputs

Alternatively, market interventions that are not adequately informed by context-specific assessment can contribute to existing inequalities among different populations by favoring specific groups over (or at the expense of) others.

Increasing market access can also lead to increased market linkages (e.g. to international livestock markets). While this presents opportunities, it can also present additional risks if local traders cannot adapt to evolving terms and product standards. In certain areas of the region, illegal trade can undermine formal systems.

Together these factors demonstrate the importance of incentivizing key market actors (e.g. suppliers, traders, transporters, regulators, etc.) to contribute to the absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities of local populations.

AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING

- How can donors, implementing partners, and government actors improve access to information, services, and support networks to ensure markets effectively reach the poor in shock-prone areas?
- What incentives are most effective in encouraging key actors to strengthen the absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacity of local and regional markets?

Social Capital

Analysis of resilience evidence from the Horn of Africa and discussions during the workshop confirm that social capital is a critical component of resilience to shocks and stresses. At the same time, due to the complex and interrelated nature of social relations, it is inherently difficult to measure the influence of social capital and resilience.

Discussion of the approach to developing resilience profiles in South Sudan provided a concrete example of how contextual and cultural factors can be taken into account when collecting and analyzing data on bonding, bridging and linking forms of social capital. Participants in this breakout session agreed that when designing and implementing interventions to strengthen social capital as an element of resilience programming, practitioners should:

- Consider that it's not always *what* we do, but *how* we do it. The way in which we engage distinct groups in resilience programming can strengthen—or in some cases damage—existing social capital.
- Understand that there can be a 'dark side' to social capital (e.g. instances in which analysis reveals strong bonding capacity, weak bridging capacity) where power dynamics may be entrenched and not supportive of the extreme poor; and
- Remember that it is possible for vulnerable populations to deplete their already limited social capital, especially in instances of covariate shock.

AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING


- The role of established and influential organizations to advocate for systemic, transformational change and contribute to collective action and linking social capital.
- The ways in which project interventions contribute to, and benefit from, improvements in social capital.
- Traditional (indigenous) social structures and their relationship to resilience capacities.
- More effort is needed to refine data collection and analysis related to the relationship between social capital and psycho-social wellbeing; the influence of social capital on aspirations; distinctions between social capital and social cohesion; and linkages between social capital at the household and community levels.

Key Takeaways

The plenary discussions during the workshop provided an excellent opportunity for USAID representatives, implementing partners, and their regional counterparts to review findings from analyses and discuss implications for resilience programming at the country and project levels. Common points of discussion included the following:

INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION

- Participants agree on the importance of ensuring that development of USAID Mission-led resilience policies, portfolios and cross-border initiatives are coherent and strategically coordinated at the national and regional levels. This should be supported by the updated version of the *Horn of Africa Resilience Network (HoRN) Regional Resilience Framework* (forthcoming).
- As part of countries' *Journey to Self-Reliance*, continued effort must be made to institutionalize existing resilience evidence and resilience analysis principles among national governments and other key stakeholders.

- 
- Several participants felt coordination and consistency of resilience analysis would be improved through establishment of a centralized database for resilience information, including data and tracking of interventions.
 - Given the volume and complexity of the evidence presented during the workshop, USAID representatives and partner staff would appreciate greater lead time to review and digest findings before similar events in the future.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

- Given the complex risk environment, resilience programming in the Horn of Africa must be flexible and responsive enough to adapt as priorities shift. This requires development and refinement of resilience monitoring approaches specifically designed to inform adaptive management;
- Different types of decision makers need access to distinct types of resilience analysis to inform the specific decisions that they are responsible for. Examples include decisions on how best to coordinate multiple programs to strengthen resilience at the systems level versus decisions related to activity design and implementation to strengthen resilience at the individual and household levels;
- There is substantial interest among practitioners in identifying the specific investments and combinations of interventions that are most effective and cost-efficient for building distinct resilience capacities in the context of specific shocks (drought, conflict, price increases, etc.);
- While resilience evidence from impact evaluations is interesting and particularly useful for informing USAID resilience policies and strategies, it often does not adequately reflect contextual differences within the program area or provide insight into the specific combination of program interventions that most effectively strengthens resilience capacities.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

- More direct and consistent practitioner engagement in resilience monitoring is dependent on concerted efforts to strengthen the analytical capacity of field-level M&E and technical staff;
- Participants were interested in learning more about differing approaches to measuring stresses (as opposed to shocks).

EVOLVING ANALYSIS NEEDS

- USAID and regional partners are increasingly focused on facilitating systems-level change. Part of this entails achieving a better understanding of how to capture system-level changes (e.g. markets, governance) and their influence on resilience at the community and household levels.
- Given the emphasis on facilitative approaches to systems-level resilience programming, additional evidence is warranted on the contribution of “exposure” to improved wellbeing outcomes (as opposed to active “participation”).
- There is significant interest among practitioners in exploring other areas related to analysis of resilience dynamics in the Horn of Africa, including the role of gender, the influence of health, education and nutrition on resilience at multiple levels, and resilience analysis to inform emergency and early recovery activities.