



**No. 6**

**GPFS – AT WORK:  
RESILIENCE BUILDING FOR FOOD SECURITY**

The purpose of this position paper is to provide a conceptual framework that contributes to operationalization of GPFS's strategy regarding resilience building in the agriculture/food security sector.

It was widely consulted and received inputs of the A+FS Network.

This series is meant to give guidance and reflects the position of the GPFS.

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Resilience building has currently risen to the top of the agenda for researchers, policy makers, development practitioners, donors and international organizations. The renewed focus on resilience originates in the humanitarian communities' recognition that for many years millions of dollars of emergency assistance have been spent on the same countries/regions for the same problems. The frequency is occurring with greater rapidity due to climate change and continuing conflict. The recent humanitarian crises in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa were turning points in gathering wider political support within the international community for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and resilience-building in general. At the same time, the concept opened up to include as well social, economic and political shocks and less instantaneous stresses.

This position paper shall provide a conceptual framework that contributes to operationalization of GPFS's strategy regarding resilience building in the agriculture/food security sector. It is meant to remind us all that bottlenecks in agricultural and pastoral production systems have to be addressed through application of measures that factor in long term and short term climate risks that undermine food security. Removing these bottlenecks to a significant extent depends on availability of technical solutions. However, it is equally important to integrate interventions at all levels discussed below. To be meaningful, resilience building also requires a minimum of social and political stability.

**Our Understanding**

Resilience is the ability of countries, communities and households to deal with change and, in particular, to anticipate, adapt to, and/or recover from the effects of potentially hazardous occurrences (natural disasters, socio-political and economic insecurities and instabilities) in a manner that protects livelihoods, accelerates and sustains recovery and supports economic and social development, including maintaining the essential basic functions. (USAID, DFID, WB - TANGO complemented)

Resilience is a process of social learning of any social group to permanently deciding on the most appropriate mix of social and economic development strategies.

**How Can SDC Engage in Resilience-building for Food Security?**

We split up the thinking of resilience into three building blocks. This facilitates problem analysis as well as planning and implementation of interventions related to resilience building. Interventions at one or two of the levels may lead to positive outcomes but sustainable and scalable results can only be achieved through an integrated approach addressing all three levels.

**A. PRODUCTION & NRM – the Primary Level of Intervention**

At primary level, resilience building includes those interventions that enhance sustainable agricultural/pastoral production systems and natural resource management (NRM), taking into consideration climate variability and change. Sustaining food production in view of climate variability calls for non-conventional methods of production that ensure the highest level of resource conservation and utilization efficiency. This includes:

- Diversification of cropping systems and livestock, including multiple broad genetic diversity, agro-biodiversity as well as appropriate agronomic and herding practices as potential options. Diversifying production can also have an additional positive benefit of improving nutrition.
- Sustainable Land Management to reverse land degradation and combat desertification; as well as soil nutrient and moisture management through appropriate agronomic and NRM practices.

Sustainable water resources management as this resource is becoming scarcer due to the combined effect of frequent droughts, population growth and competition from other forms of utilization. In pastoral areas building resilience at primary level specifically includes:

- Inventory of resources (grazing land, other sources of fodder, water points).
- Participatory planning at community level for making sustainable use of natural resources.
- Learning from existing coping strategies, indigenous knowledge and technical innovations.

Numerous good examples of how to ensure resilience at production level through biophysical and management measures are available.

## B. HOUSEHOLD & COMMUNITY – the Secondary Level of intervention

Households in rural communities of Africa are custodians of the natural resources they manage individually or through collective action. Moreover, they are key decision makers in the agricultural and pastoral production systems.

This level of intervention focuses on the interaction between households and other actors in the system. Access to formal and informal institutions and the availability and quality of services they offer are key to successfully build resilience at household level. These **interactions** include:

- Input delivery, product marketing and transport.
- Rural advisory services for production and reducing food loss and waste.
- Financial services in its different forms (e.g. savings, credit and insurance schemes, leasing, warrants) depending on needs and contexts of the communities.
- Innovation system for adapted new solutions.
- Diversification of livelihoods by engaging in sectors other than agriculture/pastoralism.

**Local formal and informal institutions** such as cooperatives, service providers, rural advisory agents, and marketing associations are the ones who have direct interactions with farmers/pastoralists and have a huge potential to contribute positively in the resilience building process. These institutions include as well social practices, such as adapting customary rules for resource management, and gender roles among kinships, village members or any other social group. For specific interventions aimed at building resilient production systems, it is worth exploring the role these institutions could play in the process and engaging them in a meaningful way.

**Information** related to weather forecast, market prices and production techniques are indispensable to assist farmers/pastoralists to make the right decision for sustainable agricultural/pastoral production, marketing and related activities such as reducing food loss and waste.

For **diversification of livelihoods** to happen, skills development in areas other than agricultural/pastoral production is key. Availability of and access to technical and business skills development is, however, one side of the coin. This must be matched by structural transformation processes in the overall economy so that people moving out of agriculture and/or pastoralism can be absorbed in other economic sectors, if possible in rural areas or secondary urban centers.

The focus should be on interactions among elements of the system. Traditional networks, self-help groups and collective actions of rural communities that can contribute to resilience building must be strengthened.

## C. MACRO – the Tertiary Level of intervention

The commitment of national governments with support of their development partners to systematically plan and implement national policies and programs that enhance and create a conducive environment for resilience building interventions at the primary and secondary levels is of paramount importance. The particular areas that need specific focus are: (1) a broad based growth in agricultural and pastoral production allowing for free movement of herds across boundaries; (2) regulatory frameworks for financial services; (3) prevention-preparedness-response programs including but not limited to strategic food reserves, safety net programs, national level insurance (linked to re-insurance) schemes, as well as long-term adaptation plans; 4) coordination among agriculture, health and education sectors for improved nutrition. Allocation of adequate and flexible resources by developing country governments as well as a fair share of ODA to the agricultural/pastoral sector is indispensable.

## D. Integration of the three levels of intervention

No single intervention at a particular entry point is in a position to bring about transformation in the resilience building process. This is because of the interdependencies within and between the three levels of interventions described above. Ideally, all three levels of interventions need to be addressed simultaneously. Technical interventions related to natural resources management at production level require to be complemented by bylaws and collective actions at the community level and by relevant policies, plans and programs at the macro level. The provision for environmental service compensation can be an option to be considered.

## Guiding Principles

Systems thinking: Resilience programming is well founded in comprehensive analysis of problems, opportunities, dependencies and interactions among actors and with the livelihood asset base, risks and vulnerabilities, and the different levels of the policy environment and institutional frameworks.

The process of resilience building must be endogenous, fully owned and championed by the communities/national governments. National and global governance need to provide conducive environments to the effort by local and national societies. External capacities such as knowledge, technical expertise and finance should pave the way for and support endogenous resilience building processes but not dictate them.

Monitoring & Evaluation of Resilience: Whether households and/or communities have become more resilient as a result of an intervention has to be judged primarily by the households and/or communities themselves. External views may complement the assessment of communities/households.