



## Key tips for integrating resilience in humanitarian action

*Practical advice on how to integrate  
resilience into humanitarian action*



## Why is integrating resilience into humanitarian action important?

The frequency and intensity of disasters and numbers of people worldwide affected by them continue to grow. CARE's humanitarian mandate requires us to respond quickly to save lives in such disaster events. But many disasters and crises are also becoming chronic and multidimensional, forming 'a new normal' within these settings. This 'new normal' requires new ways of working to reduce risks, mitigate the impacts of disasters to

save lives and protect livelihoods, and to harness development gains from recurring disasters. While saving lives remains CARE's immediate priority in humanitarian action, increasing the resilience of those affected by disasters to better deal with future shocks and stresses as they arise is critical to achieving CARE's vision of a just world, without poverty.

# Key principles for integrating resilience into humanitarian action

**1** Participation of women, girls, boys and men, including those from marginalized groups, among the affected community is vital for increasing resilience (as well as delivering relevant assistance!).

Some examples of ways this can be done are by building on local knowledge, skills, and technologies to find locally relevant solutions to meeting life-saving needs, by establishing or strengthening local structures that can be used to deliver assistance during emergencies, and by growing ownership of longer term change processes that reduce future risk.

**2** Risk, and particularly vulnerability, must be understood, monitored and reduced.

Risk and vulnerability are not static but highly dependent on a wide range of factors such as the wider context, gender and cultural norms, and the different assets and capacities that women and men have. Longer-term development programs should include robust risk and vulnerability analysis. Where feasible, all humanitarian programs should incorporate appropriate risk reduction actions. Needs assessments in response to disasters should consider how risk and vulnerability may have changed as a result of the shock, and these risks and vulnerabilities must be continuously monitored over time. Response interventions must do no harm, and not perpetuate or increase risks or vulnerabilities.

**3** Integrated approaches are needed.

No single sector programme can adequately address the multiple interconnected factors influencing resilience, particularly in complex, protracted crises. Designing interventions that work across sectors is key to respond to the vulnerabilities that women, girls, boys and men face.

**4** We need to work differently in the face of growing humanitarian needs, more complex crises, and increasing unpredictability due to climate change. These require different ways of working, both in terms of what we do (together with communities), and how we do it. Innovative ways should be explored and scaled such as:

- Including crisis modifiers into all programming to build in flexibility for unexpected shocks and stresses. It is recommended that crisis modifiers be incorporated into both development and humanitarian programming in disaster-prone contexts.
- Learning from women and men in communities in disaster-prone contexts and others about good practice – both new practices and reviving traditional and indigenous practices.
- Advocating for multi-year humanitarian funding, particularly for protracted crises, and including resilience building as key components of such funding.

**5** Long-term and coordinated planning across development and humanitarian operations. Building resilience into humanitarian action means that considerations around risks and vulnerabilities should be an essential part of humanitarian response as well as part of long-term development strategies in the countries where we work.

**6** Preparedness planning should aim to ensure that humanitarian interventions build on our existing programs and vice versa. In order to do no harm, our strategies should support a shift from humanitarian assistance to early recovery and longer-term strategies as quickly as conditions allow. To be effective in crisis-prone contexts; short-, medium-, and

long-term strategies need to be joined up, consistent, and mutually reinforcing. Very practically, where possible and relevant, programming should be designed jointly by humanitarian and development staff.

**7 Anticipate crisis scenarios.**

During preparedness planning and with development colleagues, collect and assess critical data and information from reputable sources (such as that pertaining to market stability, climate trends and weather forecasts). Engage with standard information channels and sources such as seasonal forecasts and regional and national early warning systems.

**8 Partner with a long-term aim of building resilient local organizations and structures.**

Work and support local and national actors as first-responders to crises, including women-led civil society organizations. Build equitable partnerships that shift power to local civil society organizations, support capacities to enable them to prepare, prevent and respond to disasters in their own communities.

**9 Have a market-based approach.**

Design interventions to protect and/or restore markets the way people access markets before a crisis emerges (based on e.g a pre crises market analysis). **Prioritize cash-based interventions where supported by analysis.** This provides affected people with choices around what is most important for them to meet their immediate needs. But it also supports them to reinvest in productive activities as soon as possible, thus enhancing the resilience of markets against future shocks. Be aware that negative coping strategies and harmful investments made by cash interventions should be avoided at all costs.

**10 Promote and work alongside existing national social safety net systems.**

Social protection is key to fighting chronic hunger and vulnerability among the poorest. Humanitarian projects should consider leveraging social protection programs to support the most vulnerable and at-risk communities or groups.

**11 Understand and utilize the 'first response' value of VSLAs.**

VSLAs are a well-established component of CARE's programming portfolio. They provide a financial buffer in the form of savings and social ('crisis') funds, as well as build solidarity by establishing groups that support each other. These buffers often provide the 'first response' when disaster strikes. VSLAs also have the potential to provide established and trusted social structures through which CARE can deliver humanitarian assistance and/or engage with communities in activities aimed at increasing resilience.

**12 Use the Resilience Marker.**

The CARE Resilience Marker should be used, to assess whether or not humanitarian programming is applying a resilience lens. The aim of the marker and grading is to support thinking and reflection during design, implementation and evaluation. It is also a mechanism to hold ourselves accountable for our commitment to building resilience.

# To improve the integration of resilience in our humanitarian assistance:



## Do

- ✓ Conduct a risk, vulnerability, environmental impact and gender assessment to inform your project design.
- ✓ Tailor activities to local context – consider environmental, resource, social, and gender factors as well as economic viability.
- ✓ Work with everyone in the communities to ensure inclusive participation, ownership, and leadership from women and men, taking necessary action to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised, including women, girls, boys and men with disabilities and older women and men
- ✓ Integrate activities and approaches (holistic, across sectors, without silos).
- ✓ Address governance issues; Work with local authorities. Coordinate and engage in dialogue and build their capacity so that they are better able to support humanitarian actions, provide scale and sustainability.
- ✓ Design actions based on existing social capitals. Aim to strengthen these social capitals, as well as community solidarity and action in order to contribute to people's empowerment.
- ✓ Coordinate and collaborate with partners and peers.
- ✓ “Do no harm” – avoid conflict and marginalisation; prevent sexual exploitation and abuse; and cause no damage to the local environment and sustainability of natural resources.
- ✓ Monitor changing risk and vulnerability of women, men, boys and girls, (including collection of sex-and-age disaggregated data).
- ✓ Change and refine project activities and processes based on monitoring, reflection, and learning.
- ✓ Design and implement sectoral interventions that are risk-informed, incorporate practical risk reduction measures and build back safer.
- ✓ Design activities to strengthen, protect and diversify livelihoods
- ✓ Transition to longer term engagement with communities, and ensure project activities are linked to an appropriate actor or development programme.
- ✓ Ensure project teams are gender balanced to the extent possible, that each team has someone focusing on gender, and that data from women is collected by women.
- ✓ Strive for gender-balance at all levels of the organization, put special accommodations in place as necessary.



## Don't

- X Create new risks or exacerbate existing vulnerabilities.
- X View hazards in isolation of the broader risk and vulnerability context.
- X Forget to monitor changing risks and vulnerabilities of women, men, boys and girls over time.
- X Diversify income generating activities/ livelihoods into activities vulnerable to the same shocks, or other shocks, stresses, and uncertainty.
- X Rely on working with communities alone. Increasing resilience means addressing the drivers of risks and vulnerability that are often outside of a community's direct control.
- X Rely on one type of knowledge (scientific or local). Combine knowledge from a range of sources and informants for a complete understanding of the context, and to maximise impact.
- X Delay life-saving actions for thorough analysis. Manage programming flexibly to adjust as more information becomes available. Analysis is not a one-off event, but a continuing activity in the course of the response.
- X Assume communities are homogenous. What works for many in a community may not work for all, including for instance, women-headed households, people living with HIV/AIDS, women and men with disabilities, older people, etc. Be aware of differentiated risks and vulnerabilities.
- X Limit analysis to administrative boundaries; floods, droughts, conflict, marginalisation, etc., are not bounded in these ways. Risks and environmental sustainability must be considered at a landscape level.