07 RESILIENCE-BUILDING IN PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 crisis has severely tested recent efforts to build resilient systems using a nexus approach across humanitarian, development and peace efforts. While progress on integrating resilience in development co-operation is evident, including in the growing bank of knowledge and key resources for practitioners, the pandemic has drawn attention to areas of weakness and remaining gaps. In an increasingly interconnected world with multidimensional risks, strengthening resilience is an urgent task that requires new approaches to co-ordination, programming and finance.

1 Special thanks to Rachel Scott, Senior Policy and Partnerships Advisor, UNDP for her input.

- The COVID-19 crisis demonstrates that development co-operation actors need to dedicate substantially more resources to building resilient systems.
- Development actors have a wide range of policy guidance and practical toolkits to draw from to inform their resilience-building strategies.
- A shift in mindset – from minimising risk to building multidimensional resilience – is needed to respond better to future shocks.
- Integrated action must be taken to build resilience across the three key pillars of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus: co-ordination, programming and finance.

The COVID-19 crisis has put resilience to the test

The urgent, wide-ranging and rapidly evolving nature of the COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that decision makers must do more to integrate risk-based and resilience-based approaches into their policies and strategies. Understanding the distinctions between these two approaches is an important starting point. Risk-based approaches aim to catalogue and minimise, to the greatest extent possible, identifiable threats. A resilience-based approach *accepts the inherently uncertain, unpredictable and even random nature of systemic threats* (OECD, 2020[1]) – and aims to mitigate the impacts of threats that inevitably come to pass (Lindborg, 2020[2]). Broadly, building resilience means enhancing the capacity of systems to not only absorb (or cope with) shocks, but to be ready to adapt and transform when shocks occur in order to minimise their impact (see Box 7.1 on resilience terminology).

Resilience has gained traction on the international agenda in recent years, particularly following the 2008-09 financial crisis and in light of growing recognition of the interconnections among different types of risks such as violence and conflict, climate change, and disasters and specific risk factors such as urbanisation and ageing populations (OECD, 2013[10]). The current crisis is having multidimensional effects across all levels of societies, confirming the need to build resilience, starting from immediate responses right through to long-term recovery efforts (UNDP, 2020[11]).

A potential downward spiral of multidimensional impacts linked, in part, to COVID-19 is now threatening political stability, security, and economic and social outcomes. This can be seen in Gambia, for example, which is experiencing both economic and political impacts (OECD, 2020[12]) and in Lebanon, where a massive explosion in the Port of Beirut exacerbated the crisis (Box 7.2). Additionally, economic exposure due to declining remittances is having detrimental impacts on populations in developing countries (Thompson, forthcoming[13]). These impacts demonstrate how quickly

BOX 7.1. RESILIENCE TERMINOLOGY

Resilience approaches work alongside disaster and risk management strategies to crisis response; their aim is to better address changes in the complexity of risks, including heightened uncertainty. One key barrier to effective implementation may be the range of terminology, definitions and interpretations in the literature. Current, key definitions include the following.

Resilience refers to the ability of nations, communities or households to absorb shocks and recover from them, while positively adapting and transforming their structures and means for operating/living in the face of long-term stresses, change or uncertainty.

Well-being is fundamental within resilience, referring to a state of being with others and the natural environment in which human needs are met such that individuals and groups can act meaningfully to pursue their goals and are satisfied with their way of life (Armitage et al., 2012[3]).

Resilience-building, as applied to development co-operation programming, is a process that aims to enhance the combined absorptive (or coping), adaptive and transformative capacities of nations, communities and households while assuring that such programming does not undermine the social, political or economic structures in place or the well-being and living standards of groups of people and individuals impacted directly or indirectly.

A resilient system is one in which the components (or characteristics) of various layers of society collectively enhance capacity to **absorb, adapt and transform**. Integration of these components results from applying resilience-building strategies that better align risk management actions with programmes for development, vulnerability and poverty reduction, and other long-term goals:

- **Absorptive capacity** refers to the ability of a system to – using predetermined coping responses – prepare for, mitigate or prevent the impacts of negative events in order to preserve and restore essential basic structures and functions (Béné et al., 2012[4]; Cutter et al., 2008[5]; UNISDR, 2009[6]).
- **Adaptive capacity** reflects the ability of a system to adjust, modify or change its components (or characteristics) and its actions to moderate potential future damage and to optimise opportunities, all in order to continue functioning without major qualitative changes in structure or functions (Béné et al., 2012[4]; IPCC, 2012[7]).
- **Transformative capacity** is the ability to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic or social shocks make the existing system untenable (Walker et al., 2004[8]).

Often, a crisis demands that these three capacities be exercised collectively. For example, a coastal community in Bangladesh might use its absorptive capacity to protect livelihoods against annual flooding, applying traditional skills developed in past experience of managing such crises. As sea level rise associated with climate change progressively increases the salinity of traditional water sources, people may use adaptive skills to alter how they cultivate crops and collect drinking water. To enhance resilience overall, communities may transform the way they manage income by seeking to change attitudes on natural resource exploitation, the roles and collaboration of different community groups, and the inclusion and roles of women.

Source: Mitchell, A. (2013[9]), "Risk and resilience: From good idea to good practice", https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k3ttg4cxcbp-en

urgent human needs can arise and how an international crisis can set back progress in areas of humanitarian action, development co-operation and peace.

While crises can also create opportunities, for example through ceasefire agreements or potential rebalancing of global value chains, it appears that actors are not yet seizing, on the scale possible, opportunities inherent in this crisis. The relatively small number of ceasefires agreed, for example, is having little effect on overall violence worldwide (Gowan, 2020[16]).

Although resilience is now widely referred to in development co-operation strategies and policies, the shortcomings of the

BOX 7.2. HOW MULTIDIMENSIONAL FRAGILITY AND COMPOUNDING SHOCKS UNDERMINE RESILIENCE: THE CASE OF LEBANON

On 4 August 2020, a catastrophic explosion in the Port of Beirut caused over 200 deaths and 6 500 injuries. An estimated USD 15 billion in property damage left some 300 000 people homeless. The explosion has the potential to exacerbate existing fragility, leading to a reversal in Lebanon's prospects for sustainable development and peace. A resilience-based approach in Lebanon is therefore essential to address the potential for these reversals and build back better from the crisis.

For many years before the explosion or the onset of COVID-19, Lebanon had been facing severe and entrenched challenges. A litany of governance failures, including the inability to make essential reforms, has led to the collapse of critical public services and created a crisis of public distrust. A deteriorating security situation and the ready availability of weapons are linked to an uptick in violence.

In turn, a deep economic recession has pushed ~55% of the population below the poverty line while skyrocketing consumer prices have placed basic goods and services beyond the reach of ordinary citizens. The ongoing strain of hosting 1.5 million refugees and the more recent impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbate the crises. In turn, dwindling foreign currency reserves may force the government to eliminate subsidies.

Frustrated by a lack of hope for the future, citizens who can – particularly youth, the middle class and the educated with access to capital – are leaving Lebanon, vowing never to return. Those who cannot leave are at risk of resorting to violence – or may ultimately suffer at the hands of those who do.

In Lebanon, resilience is a dirty word. For too long, people were expected to be resilient, despite being faced with compounding shocks. International actors designed programmes and invested in individual resilience. However, people cannot individually be resilient faced with systemic failure. The development community's failure was in not investing in resilient systems – systems that could anticipate shocks, limit exposure to those situations and where one system could compensate for stress in another area.

Sources: EU, UN and World Bank (forthcoming$_{[14]}$), The 3RF: Reform, Recovery and Resilience Framework; International Crisis Group (2020$_{[15]}$), "Avoiding further polarisation in Lebanon", https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/b81-avoiding-further-polarisation-lebanon.

pandemic response call for a step change in co-ordination, programming and finance. Enabling a resilience approach to response and recovery from COVID-19 requires mobilising all actors across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This implies a strong role, alongside traditional development and humanitarian actors, for diplomatic actors, who often take the lead in peace and development efforts, and for external security actors, whose presence creates space for peace processes and lowers the risk of conflict recurrence (OECD, 2020$_{[12]}$). Investments in peace building will also need to be increased: in 2018, Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members disbursed only 13% of their

The development community's failure was in not investing in resilient systems – systems that could anticipate shocks, limit exposure to those situations and where one system could compensate for stress in another area.

bilateral ODA in fragile contexts to the peace pillar (Desai, 2020[17]).

Opportunities are also emerging for actors to collaborate more closely on programming responses. For example, as advanced and developing economies alike seek to provide support to populations economically impacted by the crisis, humanitarian and development actors could strengthen the coverage of social protection systems to reach the most vulnerable populations by working together (Box 7.3).

Finance for COVID-19 so far has tended to focus on "masks and budget support", with little funding for the vast range of programming across the spectrum of development co-operation (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2020[19]). While this reflects the scale of need for health and humanitarian support and macroeconomic injections, it also reveals that a resilience approach that deals with the pandemic's social, environmental, security, political and human aspects has remained elusive. By early November 2020, the special, expanded Global Humanitarian Response Plan had received approximately USD 3.4 billion in funding, which still falls far below its total requirement of USD 9.5 billion (UNOCHA, 2020[20]). But funding to address socio-economic impacts – which would be necessary to enable the systems approach embodied in the concept of resilience – was only USD 63 million (MPTFO, 2020[21]). As noted in Chapters 1 and 3, across Africa and in other developing countries, COVID-19 has triggered a socio-economic crisis more than a health emergency. Applying a resilience or systems approach to examine the multiple dimensions of how COVID-19 has affected people's well-being would enable a measured, systems-based response.

Boosting development agencies' capacity for a resilience approach

In an effort to define a resilience approach – and determine how it could be applied – in 2013, the OECD established an Experts Group on Risk and Resilience, bringing together around 280 professionals from DAC members, United Nations organisations, non-governmental organisations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, development banks, policy makers, think tanks, and the private sector (OECD, n.d.[22]). The group's work resulted in guidelines relevant for current and future work on resilience and a suite of tools (OECD, n.d.[22]).

The experts group identified three categories of challenges to implementing a resilience approach, which persist today (Mitchell, 2013[9]):

- **Contextual challenges** – factors in the overall environment of partner countries that determine and shape how all donors can operate.
- **Programmatic challenges** – factors that influence the way development co-operation, humanitarian assistance and risk management programmes are designed and implemented by donors and their partners.
- **Institutional challenges** – structural factors that determine how donor processes function at both capital and country team levels.

In practice, integrating resilience into programming calls for a continuous cycle of analyses of risk and resilience to inform planning, core programming with additional resilience-building activities, and application of tools to measure resilience (See Figure 7.1). Measuring resilience is an ongoing activity that must also consider the change and uncertainty inherent in the risk landscape which provides the overall context for programming activities.

Developing a resilience approach has not been without controversy. In the humanitarian community, for example, some organisations treated the concept as a "buzzword" with limited behaviour change (Hussain, 2013[23]). Others engaged in serious reflection around the ethical nature of resilience, i.e. whether the international community was "right" to move away from solidarity with those affected by shocks to place a greater focus on helping to build their

BOX 7.3. HUMANITARIAN CASH PROGRAMMES OFFER A LIFELINE, OPEN THE DOOR TO STRONGER SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

By Caroline Holt, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Cash and voucher assistance has become the primary instrument by which governments are providing short-term emergency assistance as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds. Even in non-crisis times, cash and voucher assistance has been shown to contribute to poverty reduction, shore up access to health and education services, and protect livelihoods. Its application during the pandemic has been particularly valuable. The World Bank estimates that 212 countries or territories are planning some form of social protection, with cash programmes being the most popular (Gentilini et al., 2020[18]).

Through more than 14 million volunteers in 192 countries, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies engage with communities to identify and support the most vulnerable. Each year, National Societies deliver cash to approximately 6 million people in more than 80 countries, with the total adding up to USD 850 million. This is set to increase: the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is committed to scaling up its cash programming such that, by 2025, it will deliver 50% of its humanitarian assistance through cash and voucher assistance.

In Turkey, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Turkish Red Crescent Society have partnered with the Turkish government and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations to launch the Emergency Social Safety Net. Now in its fourth year, it supports up to 1.8 million people each month with cash for basic needs, making it the world's largest humanitarian cash programme. Modelled on Turkey's social protection system, it builds on existing infrastructure to deliver cash at scale. In June/July 2020, the Emergency Social Safety Net demonstrated its ability to respond to shock by scaling-up to provide a one-time, additional disbursement to those economically impacted by the pandemic.

Humanitarian actors have unique access to the people most in need of support, often a massive segment of the population that is not covered by social protection programmes. As cash and voucher assistance emerges as the response mechanism of choice, a strategic moment exists to strengthen humanitarian-development linkages to build more resilient emergency response and social protection systems. This requires:

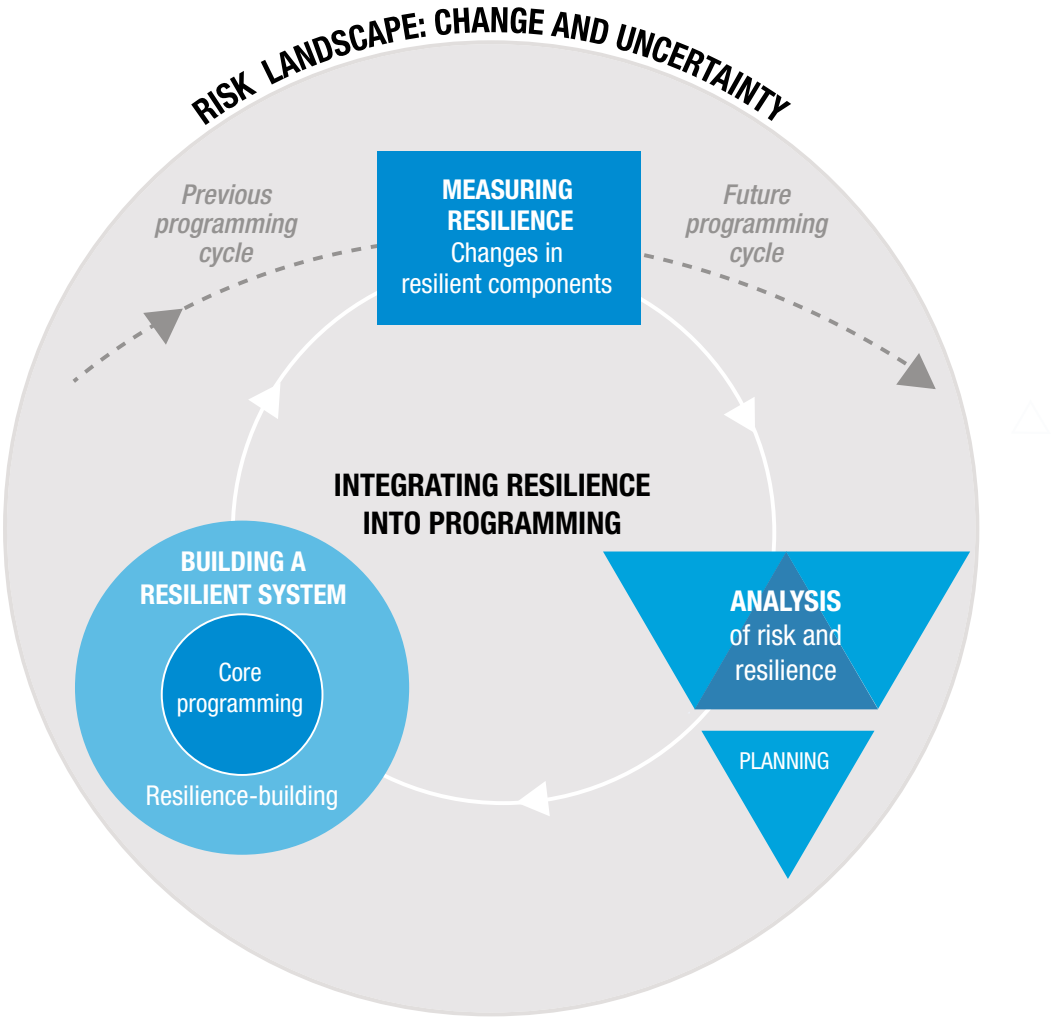
- Collective agreement to utilise and optimise existing social protection systems, rather than replace or duplicate them. Humanitarian actors will need to fully consider national systems when designing their programmes.
- Joint investment, of both financial and technical resources, in preparing response approaches and building capacities of local and national actors. Supporting system-building with predictable, long-term finance will be a key role for development actors.
- Continued advocacy across the development community for unconditional, multisector cash and voucher assistance funding and programming to effectively meet the needs of the most vulnerable in a holistic manner.

Closer alignment between humanitarian and development outcomes will support a more efficient, effective and accountable approach to addressing the immediate and long-term needs of crisis-affected households.

self-reliance (Labbé, 2014[24]). More recently, debates have moved on to refine the concept of "resilience" as meaning building "resilient systems", rather than trying to enhance the ability of individuals to cope with more and more shocks.

By the time the OECD experts group wound up (in 2017), the concept of resilience had solid political buy-in. The EU Council's Conclusions on Resilience (Council of the European Union, 2013[25]), for example, made operational tools for designing resilience approaches – many built on the OECD Resilience Systems Analysis tool (OECD, 2014[26]). Additionally, DAC members had tested the approach across their programming portfolios, including, for example Sida, Sweden's international

Figure 7.1. Strengthening resilience across the practice of development co-operation



development co-operation agency (OECD and Sida, 2016[27]).

The fragility framework outlined in the OECD *States of Fragility* report has further developed a resilience approach, recognising that effective interventions to end fragility must address resilience across five dimensions – economic, environmental, political, security and social – and fully consider their interactions (OECD, 2016[28]). In addition to emphasising risk, the fragility framework goes further, taking into account pre-existing levels of resilience and necessary pre-conditions for resilience. Strengthening resilience requires commitment to local ownership and local co-ordination, along with mechanisms that harness and reinforce political will, underpinned by a financing approach that is flexible enough to respond to changing situations (OECD, 2020[12]). The fragility framework continues to evolve as a resource for identifying risks and areas to build resilience across different dimensions of fragility. In 2022, a "human" dimension will be added to the *States of Fragility* report, recognising that health, education and other social services are both sources of resilience and key building blocks to sustainable development (Forichon, 2020[29]).

Implicit in the idea of systemic resilience is that resilience-building is highly context-specific, requiring different types of strategic action at different geographic levels and times. The reality that states operate in a

complex, interconnected global system necessitates the build-up of an additional level of global resilience that addresses current fragmentation (Nadin, 2020[30]). The OECD's New Approaches to Economic Challenges recommends the following approach to building resilience to systemic threats (Hynes et al., 2020[31]):

- design systems, including infrastructure, supply chains, economic, financial and public health systems, to be recoverable and adaptable
- develop methods for quantifying resilience and recognise trade-offs between resilience and efficiency
- map system linkages and minimise complexity where possible to ensure failures in one area do not spill over into others
- design appropriate connections and communications across interconnected infrastructure
- add resources and redundancies in parts of the system that are crucial to functioning
- develop real-time decision support tools that effectively integrate data.

Ultimately, resilience-building aims to ensure systems are better prepared and equipped for rapid change, high uncertainty, and plausible future shocks. This multi-layered aim will require deep understanding of system components and their interactions, evidence-based methods to anticipate plausible shocks and the ability to stimulate effective action. Thus, resilience-building should incorporate the combination of complex systems thinking, foresight analysis and behavioural science which could be used to stress test existing systems based on informed scenarios (Box 7.4).

Next steps to integrate risk and resilience into development co-operation systems

Delivering across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is ultimately about long-term resilience. Critically, the OECD DAC recognises that no single actor or set of actors can address risk or build resilient systems: it will require collective effort. Coherent, complementary and co-ordinated strategies across the nexus are fundamental to identify complex risks and build sources of positive resilience in fragile contexts, as set out in the *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus* (OECD, 2019[37]). Room exists for optimism in terms of behaviour change as more international organisations adhere to the recommendation, for example the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the International Organization for Migration. The recommendation was also recently reaffirmed in the DAC's joint statement on COVID-19 (OECD, 2020[38]).

As set out in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus recommendation, integrating resilience in development co-operation requires common approaches to co-ordination, programming and financing (OECD, 2019[37]).

- Co-ordinating implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus recommendation requires joint, risk-informed analysis that bolsters resilience. Globally, it depends on the ability of agencies to work across different geographies and thematic priorities. This implies being able to leverage existing tools and frameworks, such as those provided by the OECD Expert Group on Risk and Resilience. Additionally, agencies should create co-ordination structures that support rapid, flexible response when unforeseen shocks occur (OECD, 2020[12]). In parallel, policy makers should plan a "whole-of-government approach" that leverages capacities and co-ordination structures across different levels and links national response to activity in the global arena.
- To strengthen programming across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, policy makers should incentivise a framework for addressing global systemic risks. Setting long-term time horizons to enable agencies

BOX 7.4. BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH SYSTEMS THINKING, FORESIGHT AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

By Krystel Montpetit, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic adds urgency to recent calls to build resilience capacity across the development co-operation system. Proactively integrating complex systems thinking, foresight and behavioural science into decision making can be an efficient pathway to enhanced resilience.

Complex systems thinking is a holistic approach to analysis that focuses on how the constituent parts of a system interrelate, as well as how systems work within the context of larger systems and evolve over time. Systems thinking contrasts with traditional analysis, which studies systems by breaking them down into their constituent parts. With its analysis of causality, feedback loops, emergence and interconnectedness, complex systems thinking (Acaroglu, 2017[32]) makes it possible for policy makers to see the entirety of a system and to uncover – in advance – unintended negative consequences that could be caused by taking a particular decision or to identify potential positive outcomes.

Foresight is a structured, systematic way of using evidence to anticipate future possibilities and better prepare for change. It seeks to explore different plausible futures that could arise and identify the opportunities and challenges they could present. With its consideration of multiple potentialities in decision making, foresight reduces the degree of risk associated with uncertainty. It also helps policy makers challenge assumptions, which could be wrong. Furthermore, by enabling the study of the plausible cascading effects of a given policy, foresight helps policy makers map out future negative evolutions linked to given decisions.

Behavioural science is a branch of social science that investigates human action and often seeks to understand the motivations that underpin human behaviour. It typically integrates elements of psychology, sociology and anthropology.

An efficient pathway to increasing system resilience may be a combination of all three disciplines: 1) complex systems thinking provides a holistic view of the present, as opposed to a fragmented one; 2) foresight provides multiple views about the future; and 3) behavioural science can help policy makers keep their cognitive biases in check when analysing the present and planning for the future. For example, together these approaches could help to counter a human tendency that neuroscientists refer to as "irrational optimism" (Popova, 2012[33]), which is linked to cognitive biases that make people approach challenges with overly optimistic mindsets. Research supports the hypothesis that such optimism has been selected by evolution because positive expectations enhance the odds of survival (Popova, 2012[33]; Sharot, 2011[34]).

In policy making, approaching uncertainty with overly optimistic mindsets can be detrimental: it may lead to decision makers having a tendency to prepare only for the best plausible outcomes, rather than for both good and bad outcomes. Policy makers should tap into the energy of optimism while guarding against is potential pitfalls.

Integrating systems thinking, foresight and behavioural sciences into preparedness for health pandemics, such as COVID-19, would prompt policy makers to develop a framework that supports a range of potential scenarios and responses. An overly optimistic scenario that revolves around rapid development and deployment of a low-cost, effective vaccine which confers long-lasting immunity might arise as the ideal solution. Keeping optimism in check, decision makers must also pursue other trajectories; in the case of COVID-19 responses, investments in antiviral and antibody treatment and investigating the potential to repurpose existing drugs for COVID-19 are important to counter-balance the ideal solution. In parallel, improving test and trace protocols, and increasing the number of intensive care unit beds, ventilators, as well as overall resuscitation capacity are valid policies to pursue. To be fully prepared, planning for more pessimistic scenarios is also crucial. In the case of confinements, for example, this integrated approach would consider not only the possibility to reduce infection rates, but also how to promote certain behaviours while also taking account of the socio-economic consequences on people's health and well-being.

BOX 7.4. (CONTINUED)

The current climate crisis could be considered an example of how irrational optimism about climate sensitivity, as per recent modelling data (Palmer, 2020[35]; Williams, Hewitt and Bodas-Salcedo, 2020[36]), have, for decades, led to miscalculations. As they face and tackle the climate and COVID-19 crises, to maximise system resilience, policy makers must invest the funding and time required to integrate insights from complex systems thinking, foresight and behavioural science into decision making for development co-operation.

to engage in resilience-building is a key enabler of this fundamental task. Cross-sector programming should become the norm, such that crisis response adequately addresses secondary socio-economic impacts**. Recognising that lack of data hampers** analysis, decision making and programming, the OECD has made filling data gaps a priority area, particularly in relation to women, children, the elderly, the disabled and other groups likely to be poorly served in fragile contexts (OECD, 2020[12]).

- Establishing finance strategies and mechanisms with sufficient flexibility, which are linked to multidimensional analyses, and have long-term horizons underpins more effective co-ordination and programming (Thompson, forthcoming[13]). At the global level, the financial architecture of humanitarian and development co-operation must be reoriented to tackle systemic risks (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2020[19]). The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that such threats require a well-structured balance of emergency financing, long-term development financing for recovery and ongoing spending on previous priorities. With resources stretched by the current pandemic, implementing coherent and complementary approaches to financing across the nexus is more important than ever.

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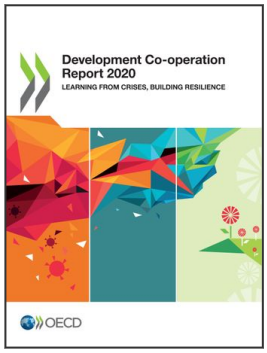

From:

Development Co-operation Report 2020

Learning from Crises, Building Resilience

Access the complete publication at:

https://doi.org/10.1787/f6d42aa5-en

Please cite this chapter as:

Carey, Eleanor, Jonathan Marley and Harsh Desai (2020), "Resilience-building in practice", in OECD, *Development Co-operation Report 2020: Learning from Crises, Building Resilience*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/204755cb-en

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