



15 September 2021

BUILDING RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS IN PROTRACTED CRISES:

Recommendations for Operationalising an Integrated Local Food System Resilience Approach

^A Gerrit-Jan van Uffelen, ^A Charleen Malkowsky, ^B Rojan Bolling, ^A Bart de Steenhuijsen ¹ PETERS

BACKGROUND PAPER



Table of Contents

01

Introduction and Purpose of the Paper

02

The Concern for Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises

03

A Call for Innovative Approaches

04

The Promise of Food Systems Resilience

05

Step 1: The foundation: current Innovation and Transformation in the Aid Architecture

06

Step 2: How does Food System Resilience adds Value as a Concept?

07

Step 3: What can we learn from Programmes that take Food Systems Resilience as a Starting Point? The case of FNS-REPRO

08

Recommendations for Policymakers, Donors and Experts



1. Introduction and Purpose of the Paper

Protracted crises are becoming more common with the growing number and intensification of conflicts being a key reason behind the recent growth in world hunger levels, this following decades of steady declines. This rising trend is confirmed by the most recent report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020:² “The magnitude and severity of food crises worsened in 2020 as protracted conflict, the economic fallout of COVID-19 and weather extremes exacerbated pre-existing fragilities.” In 2020, 155 million people faced food crises or worse (GRFC, 2021)³

It is critical to address food insecurity in protracted crisis contexts if the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger is to be achieved. This paper argues for a shift from a siloed to an integrated food system approach, building food system resilience in areas that are vulnerable to the impact of shocks (such as drought, conflict, market failure) and stressors (such as climate change, soil fertility loss, the increase in extreme weather events, political conflict, and instability) that threaten development outcomes. The paper specifically attempts to raise policymakers’ awareness of the reasons why hunger is on the rise again, what is the promise of a food systems approach, and what needs to happen in the aid architecture to enable practitioners to overcome current programming challenges in countries affected by protracted crises.

Through the use of four cases from the Horn of Africa, and by highlighting the complex challenges faced by organisations in implementing interventions in protracted crisis settings, the authors show how the aid architecture is evolving, and how an integrated food system resilience approach can create added value. The paper draws on interviews with practitioners, as well as evidence from selected projects, to demonstrate the key obstacles to building resilience in protracted crisis situations through a food systems approach that are rooted within the current aid architecture.

We also present the Food & Nutrition Security REsilience PROgramme (FNS-REPRO, hereafter REPRO) as an example of how to operationalise a food system approach to build resilience for improved FNS outcomes as well as concluding that structural reforms in aid architecture are required for using an integrated food system resilience approach to drawing in humanitarian, development, and peace actors.

¹ The authors would like to express their gratitude to the reference group that provided feedback throughout the realization of this paper. Particularly the authors would like to thank Bram Peters, Inge Vos, Peter Zoutewelle, Teshale Endalamaw, Gilbert Aluoch, Ahmed Mohamed, Margot Loof, Johan te Velde, Marlene Roefs, Eelke Boerema and Merlijn van Waas for their various comments and inputs provided. The authors would also like to thank Emma Termeer and Deborah Bakker for their contributions to the content development of this paper. As well as to FAO, specifically Koen Joosten, for their contribution to the FNS-REPRO project and subsequent events that were part of the learning process on which this paper is based

² The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World. <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2020/en/>

³ This fifth annual Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC, 2021) results from months of collaboration among numerous members of the international humanitarian and development community. The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) coordinates this process, facilitating multiple partners at global, regional and national levels to share food security and nutrition data, analysis and valuable insights.

There is increasing policy awareness and action with regards to the importance of building food system resilience in the most food-insecure areas as⁴ illustrated by Action Track 5 of the Food Systems Summit. This paper makes both policy and practical recommendations on how to operationalise a food systems resilience approach in protracted crises and what enabling actions are needed from policy, practice, and academia to support this.

Cordaid works on food security in protracted crisis in its South Sudan Agribusiness Development Programme in Yambio, Bor and Torit counties. The programme uses maize, sorghum, cassava and groundnuts value chains as an entry point for the transition from subsistence to markets. As part of these activities, farmer groups are supported to increase their resilience to disasters, including work on conflict and peace.

ZOA works on food security in several of its Sudan programmes focused on natural resource management in conflict-affected areas and promotion of the gum Arabic value chain through provision of income generating activity support targeting vulnerable women and youth in East Darfur, Sudan.

CARE works on food security in Somaliland and Puntland, with a focus on rehabilitating land, rangeland management, increased fodder production and support to people engaged in fishery. The projects aim to strengthen the capacities of communities and government regarding natural resource management, resilience to droughts and floods; and land governance.

The Food and Nutrition Security REsilience PROgramme (**FNS-REPRO**) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), funded by the Government of the Netherlands, is a four-year plan addressing the cause-effect relationship between conflict and food insecurity in Somaliland, South Sudan and Sudan. The programme employs a livelihood and resilience-based approach in regions where interventions are normally exclusively of a humanitarian nature, thereby aiming to set an example of how to build food system resilience in protracted crises and strengthen cooperation between humanitarian and development actors (FAO 2020, FNS-REPRO programme).

2. The Concern for Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises

2.1 In Protracted Crisis Contexts, Hunger is on the Rise

After years of decline hunger is once more on the rise,⁵ threatening global efforts in achieving SDG 2. For the 746 million people facing severe food insecurity, much of this recent increase can be attributed to the greater number of conflicts, exacerbated by climate-related shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁴ FAO, IFAD, WFP 2015 Strengthening resilience for food security and nutrition

⁵ http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/online/ca9692en.html#chapter-executive_summary

The 2021 Global Report on Food Crisis confirms this trend. The report found that, in 2020, a total of 155 million people were in food crisis. In addition:

- Conflict/insecurity was the main driver of acute food insecurity in 23 countries where nearly 100 million people were experiencing food crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above).
- 66% of the 155 million people in food crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) were in 10 countries/territories (Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan being 3 out of these 10 countries).⁶
- 28.4 million people were in food emergency or worse (IPC/CH Phase 4 and 5) in 38 countries and need urgent action to save lives and livelihoods (Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia being 3 out of the 8 countries having more than 1 million people in emergency).

Macrae and Harmer (2004) define protracted crises as 'those environments in which a significant proportion of the population is acutely vulnerable to death, disease, and disruption of their livelihoods over a prolonged period of time'.

These protracted crises contexts are defined by chronic and severe insecurity and instability combined with weak governance structures and intervention mechanisms. People in such crises face the effects of often multiple shocks and stressors (including periods of violent conflict and displacement) resulting in chronic food insecurity. Conflict and instability interrupt food production, deplete food stocks and seed reserves, disrupt markets, deepen hunger, and exacerbate malnutrition contributing to the displacement of millions of people.⁷

2.2 A Triple-Nexus Approach and Investment in Local Capacities

In protracted crises humanitarian assistance is the principal intervention mechanism used by the international community to address immediate food needs. However, it does not tackle the root causes of why these food needs arise: A conflict-sensitive approach that aligns immediate humanitarian assistance, longer-term economic development, and that sustains peace and stability is required to ensure food systems deliver food security for affected populations. In other words: to build resilient food systems in protracted crises, organisations must work through the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus.

Since the 1980s, the debate on 'linking-thinking' - and how to put it into practice - has been a recurring topic of discussion. Early discussions focused on the relationship between disaster impacts and poverty, which show how and why the poorest people are often the most vulnerable in the face of hazard hits (Macrae, 2019). These discussions highlighted in particular the limited impact that compartmentalised relief and development aid had on reducing vulnerability over the long term.

Approaches to disaster risk reduction and resilience arose from these deliberations, which can be seen as efforts to bridge the humanitarian-development nexus, also known as the 'double' nexus (Macrae, 2019, Heijmans, 2017; Maxwell et al., 2017). However, it is particularly important in protracted crisis contexts to also integrate peace/stability into programming, which was made an official goal at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (ICVA, 2020). The need for this integrated, cooperative, systematic 'HDP nexus' approach is now widely acknowledged.

⁶ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification / Cadre Harmonisé <http://www.ipcinfo.org/>

⁷ SOFI (2018)

Nevertheless, despite these aspirations HDP nexus programming is still difficult to put into practice; Linking-thinking alone is insufficient, instead there is a need for linking-actions and producing concrete results (Macrae, 2019).

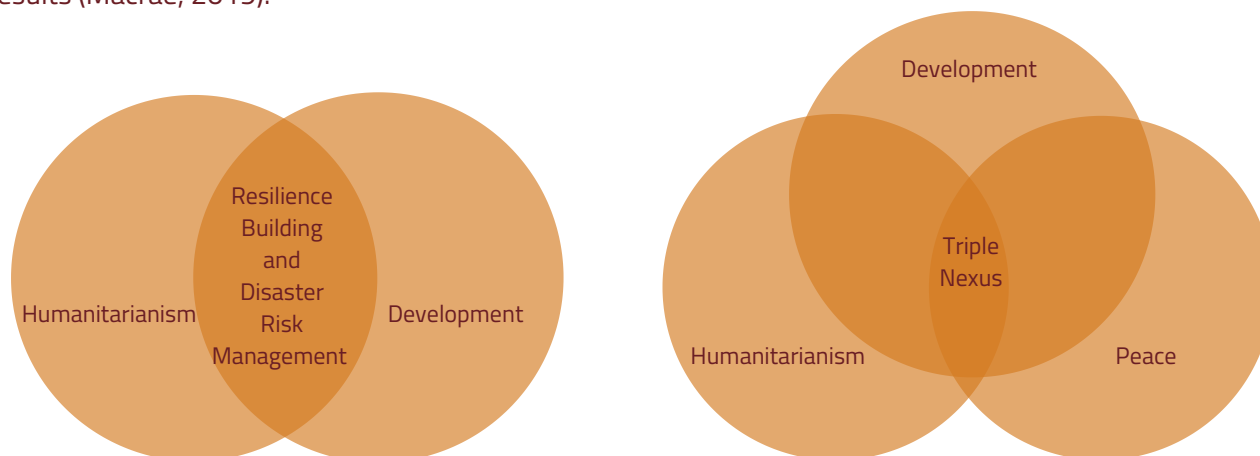


Figure 1: Positioning resilience and DRM in the double nexus in contrast to the HDP nexus

3. A Call for Innovative Approaches

To put linking-thinking into practice, there have been several international high-profile calls for developing innovative approaches and coordinated action. These calls show the political commitment to an agenda that promotes the HDP nexus and local approaches, which can be achieved by a food systems resilience approach.

3.1 The Grand Bargain 2016

The Grand Bargain agreement from the 2016 Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul where donors and humanitarian organisations both made a commitment to put more means into the hands of people in need, and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. The Grand Bargain 2016 commits to more joint, localised, and flexible approaches & innovative programming, and implementing the humanitarian-development nexus is integrated in all its work streams.⁸

3.2 UNSCR-2417

The unanimously adopted United Nations Security Council Resolution 2417 (UNSCR-2417) on conflict-induced food insecurity in 2018, which highlights the strong link between armed conflict and food insecurity.

Since past efforts to address food insecurity in protracted crises did not appear to be effective, UNSCR-2417 calls for new and innovative approaches to reduce the number of those affected by food crisis by emphasising the importance of people in accordance with the Grand Bargain, all whilst taking root causes of crises into direct consideration.⁹

⁸ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification / Cadre Harmonisé <http://www.ipcinfo.org/>

⁹ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13354.doc.htm>

3.3 The Food Systems Summit

The Food Systems Summit 2021,¹⁰ specifically Action Area 4,¹¹ focuses on building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stresses through systemic approaches. Action Area 4 is designed to develop an international action agenda to realise SDG-2 by 2030 and calls for game changing and systemic solutions. One of the three Action Area coalitions is dedicated to food systems resilience, focused on the HDP nexus.¹²

4. The Promise of Food Systems Resilience

In line with these high-level processes, the concept of food systems resilience as a practical approach has been gaining traction as a way to unify different calls for innovative approaches in tackling the challenges arising from protracted crises by combining people-focused, localised, and systemic methods.

Following UN definitions, food system resilience refers to the capacity of food systems to maintain functionality, recover from adverse effects and, ideally, to reach a better state despite shocks and stressors, be they conflict and environment based, or health and economic in nature (UN, 2020). Understanding the food system and its inherent interactions and reactions over time helps to better comprehend how various resilience capacities can be developed to support food systems performance and outcomes.

Taking a systems perspective can help policy makers, donors, and other stakeholders to identify entry points for interventions that improve system performance resulting in more robust outcomes. But can this emerging approach deliver on its promise? How can a food systems approach contribute to improved food and nutrition security (FNS) outcomes in protracted crises? This paper will explore these questions from a practical perspective to see how a system approach can address programming challenges in an aid architecture that, in practice, still operates from a siloed design.

4.1 Exploring the added Value of a Food Systems Approach in three Steps

With complex concepts like food systems and resilience there is a real risk that, despite all calls for action, a change in language will not lead to a change in practice, or better outcomes for people in need. To move from linking-thinking to linking-actions, it is key to ensure that a transformation of the aid architecture, and thus the design and delivery of interventions, results in more robust food systems that can deliver on the promise of improved FNS outcomes for people living in protracted crisis contexts.

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

¹¹ Formerly: Action Track 5

¹² <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/action-tracks>

For the purpose of this exploratory paper, it is most practical to cover the promise of food system resilience and its added value in three steps: firstly by looking at current aid practice and how that builds on ongoing transformation and innovation in the aid sector; secondly, by looking at food system resilience as a framework and how it adds value as a concept; and thirdly by exploring emerging evidence on food system resilience as an approach, by reflecting on what we learn from current programming.

5. Step 1: The foundation: current Innovation and Transformation in the Aid Architecture

Over recent decades, the way aid has been conceptualised, funded and delivered has changed as lessons were learned, objectives, priorities and insights shifted, and the inherent power dynamics of the aid system became an objective for change. This evolving system, which structures aid funding, facilitation and delivery can be summed up as the aid architecture.

Looking at current forward thinking aid practices in this evolving system engaging in countries facing protracted crises, we have identified three key areas on which an operationalised a food systems resilience approach builds. Firstly, a sector that moves from addressing consequences to tackling causes of food crises; secondly, a sector that moves beyond (funding and accountability) siloes towards integrated systems approaches; thirdly, a sector that moves towards a localized approach, starts from existing local resilience capacities. A food systems resilience approach builds on these developments, and they can be seen as its foundation.

5.1 Awareness that Humanitarian Assistance is not a Solution to Ending Food Crises

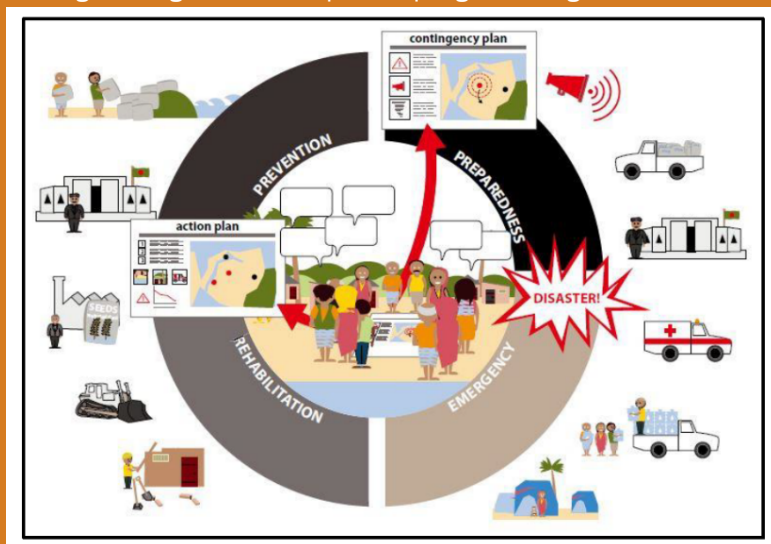
In situations of protracted crisis, humanitarian interventions that focus on individual food security outcomes like food assistance do not have the potential to prevent or resolve food crises and famine, nor do they contribute to existing resilience capacities. Even so, the current aid architecture for dealing with protracted crises is dominated by the provision of short-term humanitarian assistance which aims to 'save lives' and, to a far lesser extent, address structural causes which aim to 'save livelihoods'. Even though protracted crises often persist for decades.

In the aid sector, this increasing awareness that something more than humanitarian assistance is needed in these crises has resulted in some changes in funding and programming. Some donors (but certainly not all) have recognised that the need for funding in protracted crises goes beyond humanitarian assistance and allow for a longer-term, more structural perspective. Accordingly, NGOs are able to programme with longer-term objectives in mind which go beyond addressing immediate needs and attempt to address root causes of the crises, thereby mitigating the persistence of food crises. In practice, this is reflected by approaches that have evolved to bridge the timeline cycle of relief, recovery, resilience, and development. For instance, by linking relief to development, by promoting disaster risk reduction and/or, building resilience.

In line with this development, the Grand Bargain agreement inspired ZOA to start investing more in cash programming to better link relief activities to recovery (see box). ZOA started using the Red Rose system (digital system for cash based transfers) to professionally implement this; and to better link up to market-based programming extends the use of cash modalities¹³ to livelihoods programming, for example to allow beneficiaries to select their preferred agricultural inputs. For Cordaid, the merging of the Making Markets Work for the Poor Approach (M4P) or Market Systems Development Approach (MSD) with the context awareness required in fragile or disaster-affected settings has been a crucial step to address longer term, structural issues.¹⁴ This approach rests on the idea that markets are always there before, during and after conflict or crisis situations; and that communities and farmers need different capacities that are about planning and anticipating, but also building up of assets and external linkages to shorten the period of coping when crisis hits (see box).

Similarly, CARE invests in Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) as a way to build resilience and already lay the basis for longer term development in crisis-affected areas. Anecdotal evidence from CARE shows that VSLAs build resilience and allow communities to economically bounce back from crises better than communities without savings groups. But a prerequisite for this is to monitor for resilience results from the start, instead of just monitoring the amount of savings. Through such monitoring, CARE learned, the effects of VSLAs on household resilience could be improved, for instance by planning to release savings before an annual hunger gap instead of on a standard schedule.¹⁵

Cordaid, a Dutch NGO, aims to contribute to resilient communities in all phases in the disaster cycle: emergency response, recovery, mitigation and prevention, preparedness, and promotes the inclusion of risk awareness and strengthening into development programming.



Graphic courtesy of Cordaid

ZOA, a Dutch NGO, works mainly in conflict-affected areas. Their approach usually starts with relief, followed by (early) recovery, although this is not a linear process. The two phases overlap, and in many cases relief activities are needed in its recovery programmes, for example when conflicts flare or a natural disaster or disease outbreak occurs. ZOA's engagement is long term and may last years and in some cases even decades and includes building the resilience of local livelihoods through attention for stable income and production. ZOA's resilience approach directly addresses sources of fragility and conflict, such as land tenure insecurity.

¹³ <https://www.redrosecps.com/about.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.nlfoodpartnership.com/food-systems-transformation/comm-of-practice/food-security-and-stability/market-systems-development-fragile-and-conflict-affected-settings/>

¹⁵ <https://www.careneland.org/careexpertise/publication/addressing-root-causes-of-instability-in-south-sudan/>

5.2 Understanding the Need to Break Through Silos

Despite such efforts to better link relief, recovery, development and resilience, literature acknowledges - and programming practice shows - that “humanitarian assistance, accompanied by a risk-informed approach to development [is] not enough to prevent and respond to crises. Political action is needed” (Macrae, 2019, p.17 via KUNO). However, political action is not the focus of humanitarianism or development – it requires cooperation with other actors, including international to local peace/stability actors (the peace architecture or infrastructure) and national and/or local governance actors, both formal and informal.

In 2019, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) therefore adopted the recommendation on the HDP nexus, which highlights the need for such cooperation. The goal is to assist people in need by building a resilient community through long-term development, and by reducing/mitigating the risk of conflicts. This can only be achieved by bringing together a diverse range of actors through a shared understanding of both risk and vulnerability and what is needed to address those.¹⁶

Current practice attempts to apply this knowledge but cooperating with peace and stability actors on an often politically charged level remains a challenge since extensive cooperation with other silo expertise, such as governance or peace building, is often limited due to donor’s funding policies/portfolios.

Programmes focused on resilience may include a focus on governance, for instance to manage interest of different stakeholders involved in Natural Resource Management. In Somalia, CARE for instance worked with the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism of Puntland to build capacity of policymakers and support development of an environmental law and policy.

CARE – Rangeland Management for Food and Nutrition Security & Climate Resilience

This programme improves agricultural and fodder production through rehabilitation of degraded land. It builds community capacity to improve and maintain land productivity. Combining this with institution strengthening and capacity enhancement to improve linkage between the communities and the central government. The programme applies the Farmer Managed Natural Restoration approach, and promotes rotational grazing, proper land management practices, aiding the prevention of resource-based conflict., The programme helps to re-introduce customary laws and connect this to formal governance institutions.

Often such governance approaches aim to prevent conflicts between groups around land (such as farmers and herders) as well. In its Peace Under Construction programming, CARE for instance supported ‘peace clubs’ in South Sudan that managed conflicts at village level. The intersection between food and peace was illustrated well when one of these peace clubs worked to re-open a local food market to bring together different communities through trade.

As reflected in the DAC recommendation, it is widely accepted that compartmentalisation of foreign aid into different ‘silos’ (humanitarian aid, economic development, peace building) means that the structural and interrelated causes of food insecurity in protracted crises cannot be addressed in a comprehensive manner. Moreover, the nature of the aid architecture places NGOs and other actors on the ground in strong competition with each other to access donor resources rather than enabling these actors to work together in a well-orchestrated way to build a more resilient food system.

¹⁶ Cordaid (2021)

One way in which to address this limitation in the aid architecture is to encourage cooperation as a grant requirement, for example through consortia, which donors increasingly do. This enables NGOs to programme across silos. However, in practice, this type of funding is not yet the norm in protracted crises.

In its relief and recovery programming ZOA takes an integrated approach, by combining cash programming with livelihoods support (see box). Both ZOA and CARE observe that working with the right local implementing NGOs is a key aspect of integration through working in consortia. When staff is used to humanitarian ways of working, it is more difficult to link up to other approaches. Similarly, when crisis response has been the default way of working in a region the broader local institutions needed for recovery and long-term development also erode these capacities – perpetuating the focus on short-term solutions over a structural approach.

Finally, another way is to develop programming towards a systems approach, such as Market Systems Development, and combine this with resilience programming, as done by Cordaid in South Sudan (see box). This is similar to how the food systems resilience approach works, which takes an even broader perspective than markets through its food systems perspective. For Cordaid in South Sudan this market systems focus helped 23 farmer groups in South Sudan to seize the opportunity during crisis to sell groundnuts and maize to the World Food Programme, keeping the local market functioning when food aid was necessary.

Cordaid – Market Systems Development

Cordaid's agribusiness development programme in South Sudan works from a market-system based development (markets for the poor) approach that works towards multiple outcomes (access to organization, inputs, technology, finance,). It combines this with disaster risk and conflict risk reduction and through this integrated approach involves a broad variety of actors. Next to the core activities of increasing the link between farmers and markets, the programme works on community organisation and emergency preparation plans to ensure a speedy recovery for the entire community, should a shock occur. An example of the link between market system development and resilience is for instance the establishment of a partnership with the South Sudan meteorology department, to monitor weather data in project locations.

ZOA – Combining cash-based support with livelihoods support in Darfur

ZOA's EU funded cash programming work (2019 -2020) that targeted South Sudan refugees in camps and settlement areas in East Darfur, Sudan focused on livelihoods sustainability including food production through kitchen gardens. The programme had a mix between direct unconditional cash transfers and support of various livelihood activities to youth and women groups in addition to the kitchen gardens.

5.3 Acknowledging the Significance of Local Capacities

When looking to work beyond siloes and integrate relief, recovery, development, and resilience responses the local perspective is a natural place to start. Crisis-affected populations tend not to operate with the same distinctions between sectors that structure the international aid apparatus.¹⁷

Moreover, people living the day-to-day reality of protracted crisis know how to manage risks and are likely to have, to a certain degree, effective resilience strategies in place. People may be vulnerable, but simultaneously, are often resilient since they adapt their livelihood strategies to volatile circumstances to maintain basic livelihoods and, in extreme situations, ensure their survival.

Academics and practitioners alike have long promoted the idea of making local perspectives more central to programming, especially when it concerns monitoring and evaluation for impact.¹⁸ Accountability by donors is important to avoid the misuse of aid money and to allow donors to argue projects' contribution to pre-defined policy goals. Yet accountability to local actors and stakeholders, including communities, still often loses out by being downplayed, despite them being the ones who this aid structure should serve in the first place (Nanthikesan & Uitto, 2013).

During programme design, Cordaid, CARE and ZOA use various methods to gather local inputs such as needs assessments, group discussions, and input from local partner organisations. But with thousands of potential beneficiaries and issues like language barriers it remains challenging to truly include communities in programme design – especially if you are new to a region. During programme implementation therefore, both ZOA and CARE implement feedback, input, and complaints mechanisms for their programming; whilst creating community groups as another way to stay in touch with community priorities.

OECD DAC – Recommendation on HDP nexus urges: “international actors, particularly those with capabilities across humanitarian, development and peace actions, to also invest in local capacities and ensure that, wherever possible, local actors are an integral part of their response with the ultimate goal to gradually end dependence on humanitarian assistance by fostering self-reliance and resilience”.

Whereas in the past, donors and their policy goals have determined the direction of aid actions rather than community priorities, donors have now recognised the need for localisation through the Grand Bargain, through which donors commit to revising their way of funding to provide more support and funding tools for local and national responders. Despite this recognition,¹⁹ the challenge is to move from rhetoric to practice. Recent experience of the Dutch Relief Alliance shows that donors still prefer to have INGOs in charge of the administration of funding, instead of delegating this to local partner organisations.

Current practice increasingly acknowledges the importance of understanding the local context and its dynamics, and the importance to build upon existing (resilience) capacities.

¹⁷

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1542316620922805>

¹⁸

The call for localisation in the sector was already captured in the Paris Declaration (2005), and Accra Agenda (2008) but has been increasingly brought into practice and has gained further traction with the Grand Bargain of 2016.

¹⁹

A coalition of 14 Dutch INGOs that jointly coordinate to address humanitarian crises, Cordaid, CARE and ZOA are all members.

ZOA's European Commission funded resilience project (2019-2021), implemented in East and North Darfur States is a case in point where an array of resilience projects ranging from improvement of primary school infrastructure, development/ improvement of water infrastructure, to the formation of village savings and loans associations (VSLA) groups, and provision of donkey ploughs are provided based on local needs as proposed by local beneficiary committees (see box). While in South Sudan Cordaid prioritises self-organisation as a key mechanism through which communities, farmers and entrepreneurs approach economic development, market negotiation and adaptive planning combined with a resilience approach (see box). The South Sudan Agribusiness Development project supported the organisation of Cooperatives, Farmer Economic and Market Associations, Community Resilience committees, and helped establish Business Support Centres.

ZOA's Context Analyses

ZOA works in protracted crises situations with seriously disrupted food systems. Yet, finds it important to build on the local markets and systems that are still well-functioning. Response in protracted crises may include short-term emergency supply-based interventions, but also attention is given to the long term effects of these interventions, and awareness not to hinder patterns of resilience. ZOA's interventions are therefore always based on a thorough context analysis that includes a participatory needs assessment split among different groups, input from local partners with experience in the area, group discussions and further data collection.

Cordaid uses a community resilience approach to enhance sustainable livelihoods in protracted crisis.

- 1) Train staff from partner organisations and community facilitators on the approach;
- 2) Facilitate Participatory Disaster Risk Analysis (PDRA), including hazard, vulnerability (exposure) and capacity assessment;
- 3) Develop and implement community resilience action plans (with support from local government);
- 4) Community organisation, e.g. the creation of resilience committees in which everyone is represented;
- 5) Participatory monitoring & evaluation and knowledge development & learning (incl. documentation);
- 6) Use of best practices for upscaling, through fundraising and lobby & advocacy towards policy makers.

All activities in this approach look at gender issues and inclusion based on e.g. age, ethnicity, religion, ability.

6. Step 2: How does Food System Resilience adds Value as a Concept?

The concept of food system resilience has recently gained greater attention, particularly as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on food systems. The concept of food system resilience builds upon existing practice and principles for resilient FNS but takes it a step further by adding a systems perspective to resilience thinking.

6.1 Principles and Practices for Resilient Food Security and Nutrition

20

Programming for resilient FNS is not a new aspiration and is much debated. The Rome-based Agencies identify a number of key principles and practices to strengthen the resilience of food-insecure people in relation to shocks and stressors that affect their livelihoods and food systems:

- Local and national ownership and leadership: people, communities and governments must lead resilience building for improved food security and nutrition.
- A multi-stakeholder approach: assisting vulnerable people to build their resilience is beyond the capacity of any single institution.
- Combining humanitarian relief and development: planning frameworks should combine immediate relief requirements with long-term development objectives.
- Focus on the most vulnerable people: ensuring protection of the most vulnerable people is crucial for sustaining development efforts.
- Mainstreaming risk-sensitive approaches: effective risk management requires an explicit focus on the decision-making of national governments, as well as enhanced monitoring and analysis.
- Aiming for sustained impact: interventions must be evidence-based and focused on results.

These principles are widely embraced by aid architecture actors although the degree to which they are put into practice varies.

6.2 Taking a Food Systems Perspective ...

So, what does taking a food systems perspective add? The food system perspective acknowledges that food systems are inherently complex and dynamic, which means that issues cannot be addressed in isolation and are often time-bound.²¹

This may lead to a number of trade-offs between desired outcomes including those promoted by humanitarian, development, and peace actors.

Humanitarian assistance may undermine development efforts and erode existing resilience capacities. For example, food aid provisioning may, in the short term, address acute food insecurity but often does little to maintain or promote rebuilding local food systems: provision of food aid can save lives but do little to save livelihoods. Food also plays a role in the political economy such as, for example, in Somalia where food and power have been intimately linked for decades ranging from land grabs and the manipulation of food aid to looting and diversion of aid entangled in the geopolitics of the so-called 'War on Terror.'²²

The **food system approach** points to the interrelatedness of drivers, outcomes and activities in the value chain that together comprise our food system. It encompasses all processes associated with food production and food utilisation: from growing and harvesting crops to buying and consuming.

²⁰ FAO et al. (2017)

²¹ Van Berkum et al. (2018)

²² London School of Economics, 2020. Food and Power in Somalia: Business as Usual?

For contexts of protracted crisis, it is especially important to focus on the interrelatedness of shocks and stressors, their causes, and their effects on various components of the food system. Food insecurity in these contexts often has multiple causes, like conflict and environmental factors. On the other hand, food insecurity can also trigger violent conflict (Delgado et al, 2021). Moreover, unsustainable livelihoods can both be a consequence and cause of protracted crises. Finally, to build resilient food systems in these contexts, interventions should always centre around or work on the conflict itself, taking into consideration the complex political environment. Peace is often the link between relief and development (SOFI, 2018).

6.3 ... to Resilience Building

The concept of food systems resilience therefore builds on emerging mainstream approaches to build resilience.

The concept of food system resilience analyses how system components and their actors (from producer, middleman, traders, consumers etc.), are affected by – and respond to – shocks and stressors, accounting for ripple effects across the food system, providing insights into varying existing and required resilience capacities and strategies which enable system actors and components to mitigate, prepare for and recover from negative impacts ensuring desired, (improved) socio-economic, environmental and food and nutrition security outcomes. (REPRO, 2020)

The essence of the food systems approach to resilience comes down to the capacity of local food systems to maintain or improve on FNS (availability, access, and utilisation) and livelihoods, and other outcomes such as positive socio-economic and environmental outcomes, in the face of local shocks and stressors impacting system performance. In the context of protracted crisis, this means building local food systems that can absorb, adapt and transform in the face of adverse shocks and stressors as typical to volatile and often dynamic contexts.

Steenhuijsen et al (2021) highlight the need for working towards a joint understanding of food system resilience and its implications for policy making. For the UN Food System Summit, due September 2021, this is seen as a key challenge since it is difficult to maximise the concepts' potential when there is no agreement on its meaning.

But how can food system resilience thinking move beyond theoretical deliberations to be made practical and actionable on the ground? What can be learned from taking this concept to practice improving food and nutrition outcomes for those whom a protracted crisis is a day-to-day reality?

7. Step 3: What can we learn from Programmes that take Food Systems Resilience as a Starting Point? The case of FNS-REPRO

Food system resilience is difficult to achieve in today's aid architectures and therefore needs a new overarching regulatory framework.

The REPRO programme is, in essence, a pilot programme coupled with an extensive learning agenda, in an attempt to operationalise food systems resilience by capturing good practice and developing policy recommendations to contribute to the emergence of an appropriate regulatory framework. Below, the key aspects of REPRO's food system resilience approach are introduced before explaining how it is operationalised and which lessons were learnt so far.

7.1 The FNS-REPRO approach

The FNS-REPRO approach to building food system resilience can be described along four key lines:

Working in a Context Specific Manner using a Food System Resilience Approach

- Taking a multi-year area- and livelihoods-based approach (taking into account local circumstances and dynamics including context specific shocks and stressors), while deliberately targeting women and youth.
- Focusing on value chains central to strengthening resilience in local food system performance and outcomes.
- Adopting a flexible and adaptive programming approach as required in volatile and dynamic contexts.

Participation, Co-creation, and Governance

- Involving and participating with relevant local actors and stakeholders including local governance structures, UN, NGOs, private sector, knowledge and research institutes, and local communities.
- Co-creating a shared understanding of how food systems work, are impacted by shocks & stressors and produce food and nutrition outcomes. This is done through joint participatory assessments using tools such as Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA); multi-disciplinary context analysis (value chains, natural resources, conflict, and gender assessments) and a Food System Resilience Assessment.
- Developing food system resilience pathways to build more resilient food systems that enable partners and stakeholders to make coordinated and well-informed decisions for evidence-based local food system resilience programming.
- Grounding food system resilience governance in evidence-based programming and the facilitation of a learning agenda, including Learning Journeys for actors and stakeholders to address critical challenges in building food system resilience, for adaptive Programme management.

Human Resilience and Empowerment

- Enabling targeted investment in line with the food system resilience pathways to strengthen existing and develop new resilience capacities to increase the capacity of vulnerable populations to better manage the impact of shocks and stressors.
- Ensuring national and local ownership and leadership.
- Making training, capacity development and empowerment integral part of the food system resilience pathways.

23

<https://research.wur.nl/en/publications/a-learning-journey-guide-for-building-food-system-resilience-in-p>

Strengthen Foundation, Build Capacities

- Aiming for sustained impact through results- and evidence-based programming.
- Building capacity on conflict-sensitive programming and implementation.
- Facilitating a learning agenda on building food system resilience by engaging both local and national actors to promote food system resilience programming
- Investing in strengthening the capacity of Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Training and Education to build local capacities to address critical challenges in building food system resilience.²⁴

7.2 Operationalising the Approach and lessons learned

REPRO is designed to take an integrated food system approach as a starting point. This requires REPRO to define food system resilience as an instrumental and functional capacity. This starts with building the understanding of actors and stakeholders, including donors, authorities, practitioners, and local communities, of what food system resilience is: resilience of what, to what, for whom, and through what; and what it means within the specific context.

- **Building food system resilience requires an understanding of different perspectives and interests, finding a common ground is necessary to reduce trade-offs and increase synergies for improved food systems outcomes**

For example, when conducting food system resilience assessments, it became clear that different actor groups, even different segments of one actor group, have varying perspectives on what types of resilience capacities are needed, reflecting their understanding of the context and their institutional mandates and agendas.

Building food system resilience that reduces trade-offs and increases synergies requires an understanding of all different interests and perspectives in order to co-develop inclusively beneficial value chain interventions. This is required to improve food system outcomes, and also to create common ground and reduce potential tensions and competition amongst actors' groups. REPRO focuses on particular value-chains²⁵ central to improving food system performance, which was found instrumental to keep the analysis focused and to design food system resilience pathways.

- **Building food system resilience requires an evidence-based approach to adaptive programming – which requires a learning culture and an enabling donor**

The volatile and often dynamic and rapidly changing context requires evidence-based and adaptive programming for resilience building. Creating a learning culture and conversation for evidence-based food system resilience programming requires donors to allow funding for this, including for partners to participate in learning and be flexible to integrate learning for adaptive programming. Whilst REPRO has a flexible donor who allows for integrated learning and cooperation therein, this is certainly not the norm. High demand placed on other agencies and institutions to deliver humanitarian assistance compromises interest and ability to participate in food system resilience assessments.

²⁴ The REPRO programme does this through the Dutch government funded NUFFIC programmes.

²⁵ These are fodder systems in Somaliland, Gum Arabic systems in Sudan and seed systems in South Sudan.

Thus, even if funding is available, motivation to participate in assessments is often limited due to time pressure to fulfil more 'pressing' tasks. Upwards donor accountability in the sector is strong reflecting strict donor conditions, maximising cost efficiency and setting restrictions in financing aid efforts. REPRO's donor, the Dutch government, wants to see local communities placed at the centre providing flexibility and scope for evidence-based programming to ultimately increase the resilience of food systems and reduce the number of people in food crisis or worse.

- **Building food system resilience requires strengthening capacities of local research and educational institutes**

The REPRO programme trains local universities to carry out the Food System Resilience Assessments.²⁶ This is not only practical since they know the local context better, it also builds the capacity of educational and research institutes in support of building local food system resilience. Moreover, their involvement also allows them to connect to local governance structures strengthening approaches and capacities to build food system resilience. The REPRO project did not foresee having a strong focus on working with local universities and research centres. Acknowledging this omission, the same donor developed a call for proposals to strengthen the institutional capacities of local universities and their ability to design and deliver in country Training-of-Trainer courses on topics critical to building food system resilience. This was done by promoting the establishment of long-term North-South-South partnerships amongst universities and training centres.

- **Building food system resilience requires engaging a wide range of actors and stakeholders in learning processes**

To broaden engagement beyond its direct actors and stakeholders, the REPRO programme facilitates a broader community of practice on building resilient food systems comprising of donors, NGOs, local universities and training centres, local government, private sector, and community representatives. Together, these also identify challenges to building food system resilience that can be worked on through 'Learning Journeys' facilitated by experts.²⁷

7.3 Transforming the Aid Architecture

The REPRO programme emerged from a critical shift in thinking by the Dutch government in respect of the UNSCR-2417 call for innovative approaches. REPRO could thus be designed to take a food system approach to resilience building and engage with humanitarian, development, and peace actors. Evidence-based programming and a committed learning agenda allows for adaptive management - as well as cooperation with a wider range of international and especially local actors - is a promising path to a systemic change that offers a new pathway to address food and nutrition insecurity.

However, such funding opportunities are still rare and will need to become more mainstream. Moreover, institutional change is also required to truly increase the ownership and participation of local actors, rather than treating them as subcontractors to building food system resilience. The following section will bring these insights together and conclude with recommendations for practice as well as policy.

²⁶

<https://research.wur.nl/en/publications/building-seed-system-resilience-in-protracted-crisis-situations-s>

²⁷

<https://research.wur.nl/en/publications/a-learning-journey-guide-for-building-food-system-resilience-in-p>

8. Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Main Findings and Conclusions

Protracted crisis contexts typically constitute fragile, dynamic, and challenging environments for work on improved food and nutrition security (FNS) outcomes. Taking a food system approach to resilience building offers a flexible approach to evidence-based adaptive programming involving humanitarian, development, and peace actors. Such an approach offers opportunities to identify and address critical leverage points to work on the cause-effect relations of food insecurity and conflict. The co-creation of context-sensitive local food system resilience pathways offers scope and opportunity for concerted actions by relevant actors and stakeholders to build more robust food systems for improved FNS outcomes in the face of expected shocks and stressors.

8.2 Recommendations for Practitioners

To improve FNS outcomes in protracted crisis contexts, there is a need for practitioners to:

1. Co-create understanding on how local food systems work and produce FNS outcomes: finding common ground for building resilience

- Undertake local context analysis involving relevant stakeholders and actors to develop shared understanding on how food system work and produce FNS outcomes.
- Identify existing resilience capacities that can be strengthened & built upon and identify new resilience capacities that are required to enhance food system resilience for improved FNS outcomes.
- Understand that prolonged crisis may have become the new norm, rather the exception, and that relief efforts are insufficient for long-term resolution. Acknowledge also that shortcomings in previous interventions may have prolonged current crises.
- Develop and co-ordinate action on the basis of context specific food system resilience pathways.

2. Address root causes and not only symptoms to improve FNS

- Take a longer time perspective to build the resilience of food systems that are appropriate for people's social organisation and motivation.
- Involve humanitarian, development, and peace/stability actors in building more resilient food systems.
- Invest in integrated risk management and risk reduction measures.
- Observe the needs of specific groups, such as youth to develop meaningful engagement/employment in food systems.

3. Acknowledge complexities and reduce potential trade-offs

- Acknowledge that different groups can have differing priorities, and that between groups, (and even within households), there are multiple paths to resilience for a specific food system (e.g., fodder/ pastoralist pathways).

4. Programme in an evidence-based manner to better facilitate adaptive programme management (as required in dynamic/volatile contexts)

- Build resilience within food systems against likely shocks and stressors as protracted crisis contexts are often dynamic and volatile.
- Adapt programming/programme strategy to account for critical food system behaviour based on newly emerging leverage points.
- Work with/across formal, intermediary, and informal systems and structures to build resilience.

Practitioners will likely struggle to implement these recommendations if the aid architecture does not adapt to provide the space and opportunity for local actors and stakeholders to build more robust and resilient food systems. This raises important recommendations for policymakers.

8.3 Recommendations for Policymakers, Donors and Experts

Policymakers, donors, and experts play a key role in enabling and promoting the building of food system resilience in protracted crises for improved FNS outcomes. This is because they hold the power to develop policies, restructure funding mechanisms and promote policies and programming principles that allow for building food system resilience. Recommendations are to...

1. Commit to the Grand Bargain localisation agenda to catalyse local food system resilience programming.

2. Review funding strategies that balance flexibility and accountability.

- Increase the level of funding for well-coordinated and aligned HDP nexus programming, which uses a food system resilience lens as a diagnostic and programming instrument.
- Provide funding for local food systems resilience assessments in which local actors and stakeholders co-create a shared understanding of food system performance, outcomes and the interventions required.
- Create innovative funding instruments that pool donor funding and can design common strategies around food systems in protracted crises to improve alignment and potential for scaling.

3. Develop a regulatory framework involving the sector/international community for building food system resilience.

- Capture emerging good practices to further inform current policy development and programming recommendations.
- Develop guiding principles for building food systems resilience in protracted crises.
- Allow a programming framework that promotes humanitarian, development, and peace actors to make the HDP nexus work.
- Promote a culture of reflection learning and emphasise evidence-based programming to facilitate adaptive programme management as required in volatile and dynamic contexts.

Bibliography

Berkum, S. van, Dengerink, J. and Ruben, R. (2018). The food systems approach: sustainable solutions for a sufficient supply of healthy food. Wageningen University & Research.

https://knowledge4food.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/20180630_FoodSystemsReport-WUR.pdf

CARE (2016). Increasing Resilience: Theoretical Guidance.

<https://careclimatechange.org/increasing-resilience-theoretical-guidance-document-care-international/>

Cordaid (2021). Recommendations for (Triple) Nexus Programming: Resilience Perspective. Programme Guidelines January 2021.

Delgado, Carloline; Murugani, Vongai; Tschunkert, Kristina (2021). Food Systems in Conflict and Peacebuilding Settings – Pathways and Interconnectedness. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2106_food_systems.pdf

Eakin, Hallie & Bohle, Hans-Georg & Izac, Anne-Marie & Reenberg, Anette & Gregory, Peter & Pereira, Laura (2010). Food, Violence and Human rights.

ECDPM (2019). Think local. Governance, humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding in Somalia. Discussion paper No. 246. March 2019.

FAO, IFAD, WFP (2015). Strengthening resilience for food security and nutrition: A conceptual framework for collaboration and partnership among the Rome-based Agencies. April 2015.

FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO. (2017). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Building Resilience for Peace and Food Security. <http://www.fao.org/3/i7695en/i7695en.pdf>

FAO (2020). Food and nutrition security in times of drought is key to achieving peace in the Horn of Africa. 21/10/2020. <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/fao-in-action/stories/stories-detail/en/c/1316727/>

Uffelen, Gerrit-Jan van, Boerema, E., Brouwer, H. and Malkowsky, C. (2020). Background Paper for HoA Learning Exchange on Food System Resilience Programming. 17 November 2020

UN (2020). Action Track 5 – Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stresses. 2 December 2020.

WFP (2018) 2018 Global Report on Food Crises. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2018>



**BUILDING RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS IN
PROTRACTED CRISES**