



Community Based Resilience Analysis (CoBRA) Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Commissioned by UNDP Drylands Development Centre

Under the framework of
Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department of the European Commission's
Drought Risk Reduction Action Plan





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Resilient nations.*



Humanitarian Aid
and Civil Protection

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DRRAP

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Funded by ECHO

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the last decade, the drylands of the greater Horn of Africa (HoA) have been affected by repeated drought-related disasters. The most recent drought crisis in 2010-2011 has generated a major reconsideration about how development and humanitarian actions can be better coordinated so as to minimize the impacts of shocks such as drought on lives and livelihoods. In this context, the term 'resilience' has gained much traction amongst Governments and other agencies working in the region. This is largely perceived as a positive step, since it helps fill in the gaps of traditional risk and vulnerability oriented approaches, extending their focus to potentials, opportunities and capacities of disaster-prone populations to cope with inevitable future shocks and stresses.

Nevertheless, there are still significant challenges in translating the resilience concept into practice on the ground. Different organizations have different understandings and interpretations of resilience. The concept has the great potential to integrate various actions in different operational sectors under one umbrella with a common vision. However, identifying where and how to build resilience in practice is proving to be elusive. As a result, while a significant financial commitment has been made for resilience enhancement in the region (i.e., as much as 1.3 billion US dollars¹), numerous "resilience" initiatives have been implemented in a largely fragmented manner with little coordination and synergies with each other. The lack of consensus and consistency as to the most appropriate approach to measure resilience undermines the ability of stakeholders to objectively monitor and verify the success (or failure) of their efforts for programming to build resilience.

It is in this context that the UNDP Drylands Development Centre (DDC) initiated the Building Drought Resilient Dryland Communities in the HoA project in 2012, with the financial support from the European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO). Under the framework of the ECHO's Drought Risk Reduction Action Plan (DRRAP), the project intends to build on the ongoing efforts to measure resilience and introduce a robust analytical tool, i.e., Community Based Resilience Analysis (CoBRA), through which to understand resilience at the community and household levels. In particular, it focuses on assessing how communities define and experience resilience and linking these findings with development and humanitarian interventions for drought in the HoA region, inter alia Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

1.2 Project Overview

The project was designed with an overall objective to reduce drought/disaster risks and improve human livelihoods in disaster-prone communities. More specifically, it aims to establish an integrated enabling DRR planning and programming framework at national and regional levels in the HoA, effectively promoting local resilience building and vulnerability reduction. Towards this objective, at the project inception, CoBRA was devised as a conceptual framework and methodology for measuring and assessing the impacts of community-based DRR interventions on local resilience building. It has become clear in the development and testing of the methodology, however, that the multi-dimensional and longer term nature of resilience makes assessing the impact of any one specific project on resilience outcomes in the short term difficult, if not impossible.

At the same time, it became evident that CoBRA helps identify both contextual and more universal characteristics of resilience. These findings are instrumental in informing the ongoing region-wide efforts to develop measurable composite resilience indicators of change.

Using qualitative, process-oriented tools, CoBRA intends to identify the key building blocks of community resilience and assesses the attribution of various development/humanitarian interventions in attaining these resilience characteristics. Inter alia, the CoBRA methodology has four broad objectives:

¹ Downie, K. (November, 2013). Technical Consortium: Our Approach to Resilience. Presentation made at Food Security and Nutrition Working Group Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya. Available at: http://www.disasterriskreduction.net/fileadmin/user_upload/drought/docs/Katie%20Downie%20-%20Technical%20Consortium%20presentation%20to%20FSNWG%20211113.pdf.

1. Identify the priority characteristics of disaster resilience for a target community;
2. Assess the community's achievement of these characteristics at the time of the assessment (generally carried out during a 'normal' period) and during the last crisis or disaster;
3. Identify the characteristics and strategies of disaster-resilient households; and
4. Identify the most highly rated interventions or services in building local disaster resilience.

A CoBRA assessment then uses these findings to develop specific conclusions and recommendations for relevant stakeholders working to build resilience locally.

This conceptual framework and methodology have been developed and refined in a highly participatory manner through a series of consultations, field testing and feedback sessions, as follows:

- The first draft framework was prepared based on an extensive review of existing literature and consultations.
- The document was presented at the 2nd Africa-Asia Drought Adaptation Forum, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2012 and revised further based on consultation feedback.
- The prototype methodology was field-piloted in Marsabit, Kenya, and Karamoja, Uganda, in November-December 2012.
- An updated conceptual framework and methodology based on the field assessment results was presented at the 5th Africa Drought Adaptation Forum, held in Arusha, Tanzania in February 2013, for additional feedback and revisions.
- Four full CoBRA assessments were undertaken in Kenya (Marsabit, Turkana and Kajiado) in partnership with the National Drought Management Authority and Uganda (Karamoja) in partnership with the Office of the Prime Minister in June-August 2013 and the assessment findings collectively reviewed and validated by the community representatives and the local technical stakeholders in September-November 2013. The validated results have shaped this revised methodology.
- One additional assessment was undertaken in Ethiopia (Yabello) in December 2013 with the leadership of the Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the African Center for Disaster Risk Management. The preliminary findings of the exercise also provided critical inputs to the document.

The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 presents the conceptual framework that underpins the CoBRA model, including a presentation of the existing evidence base on resilience, as well as a discussion on approaches to measuring resilience.
- Section 3 presents the CoBRA model.
- Section 4 describes in brief the methodology that supports the model. A full guide to the methodology can be found in the CoBRA Implementation Guideline.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Why a methodology to measure resilience?

In order to help communities onto a path of resilience building, rather than increasing vulnerability, it is clear that a multi-faceted approach at scale is required. This is in sharp contrast to the current fragmented, largely sectoral and project-based approach to interventions. In drought affected areas, where protracted crises with spikes in need are the norm, tools are required that help to take an integrated approach to resilience, documenting evidence of groups of interventions that have high impact.

The rationales to develop a methodology to measure resilience include:

- Currently, limited tools exist to measure resilience as a long-term multi-dimensional concept. Programme/project monitoring tends to be undertaken on sectoral basis, and national level monitoring of many development indicators is not done frequently enough, or at a scale that allows for differentiation across livelihood groups, ecological zones or wealth groups.
- All actors need to prioritise interventions which best spur positive change in steering households and communities towards resilience pathway rather than addressing all sectors equally or providing the assistance based on the political will/fund availability. A multi-faceted approach can help to engage decision making that looks at issues more holistically, recognising the interconnection between different facets of resilience.
- A resilience measurement tool will provide a valuable basis upon which to develop a composite set of context-specific multi-sectoral resilience indicators. It is often the combination and interaction of these factors that drive or undermine resilience. Baseline data for some of the individual keystone indicators on the current conditions of the individuals, communities or systems may be available through existing regular data collection mechanisms such as Household Economy Approach (HEA), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), risk profiling, etc. However, at present, these indicators are largely analysed separately. For example, data on the number of households with members who have completed secondary or tertiary education is rarely analysed alongside data on the diversification of household incomes or levels of conflict and insecurity.
- Key indicators affecting resilience are not comprehensively collected using any widespread agreed methodology, and hence there is no mechanism for consolidating and comparing findings. Peace/security and governance are the prime examples.

2.2 Building on the Existing Evidence Base

2.2.1 Common Definitions of Disaster Resilience

Numerous definitions of resilience exist, and for the most part, they broadly reinforce each other. The UNDP defines resilience as: “an inherent as well as acquired condition achieved by managing risks over time at individual, household, community and societal levels in ways that minimize costs, build capacity to manage and sustain development momentum, and maximize transformative potential.”²

The United Kingdom Department for International Development’s (DFID) definition also links resilience with long term development: “disaster Resilience is the ability of countries, communities and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses - such as earthquakes, drought or violent conflict – without compromising their long-term prospects”.³

DFID attempts to analyse the levels of resilience by raising a question: when a group of people experience a shock or stress, what pathway do they follow? Those who collapse, or recover but are worse than before, are not resilient, and are likely to fall deeper into a vulnerability pathway. Those who bounce back, or bounce back better, can be said to be on a resilience pathway.

² UNDP (2013). Changing with the World: UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017. New York: UNDP.

³ DFID (2011). Defining Disaster Resilience: A DFID Approach Paper. London: DFID.

When examining the concept of resilience, it is important to note that resilience, like vulnerability and risk, is a dynamic concept. In addition, resilience is multi-dimensional that requires the simultaneous measurement of several factors, both short and long term. This goes against the current orthodoxy of monitoring and evaluation practice, which tends to be highly sectoral.

For the purpose of this publication, the term resilience refers to disaster resilience rather than drought resilience. Although drought is recognised as the most frequent and major stress experienced by communities in the drylands of the HoA, it is not the only shock/stress experienced. While it is important that shocks and stresses are not pre-determined or limited, this needs to be balanced with the need to define what a community is resilient to, and whether it actually experiences disaster or is chronically vulnerable.

2.2.2 Existing Models for Disaster Resilience

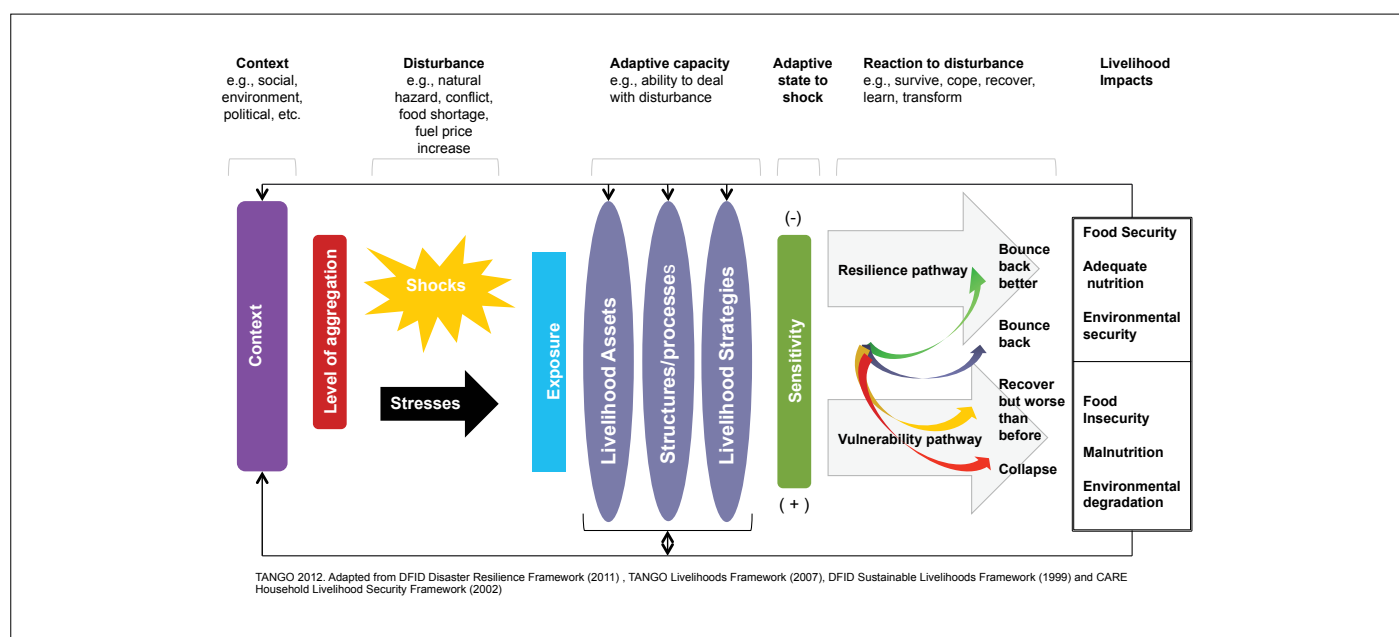
Existing resilience models can be categorised generally into two groups:

- Models that attempt to capture and describe a system-wide approach to resilience (e.g., DFID, Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations [TANGO], Practical Action, Fraser, etc.); and
- Models that attempt to define and measure the characteristics of resilience at a community level (e.g., Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], Oxfam, Tulane University, etc.).

The framework presented here draws from and builds upon part of the both models. However, CoBRA also differentiates from these models in that it is designed to be a participatory and community based methodology and a practical package that can be applied in many contexts. Annex 1 outlines a brief summary of the above mentioned and other existing resilience conceptual models.

The first step in assessing the impacts of interventions on community/household level resilience is a careful understanding of the characteristics of resilience that are to be measured. The CoBRA methodology intends to analyse community and household level characteristics of resilience, which can be used to develop indicators for quantitative impact assessment, and identify the underlying factors or interventions that have the greatest impact on building resilience through participatory qualitative approaches, namely focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs).

Figure 1: The TANGO Resilience Assessment Framework



System-Wide Approaches

CoBRA is not a system-wide model for disaster resilience, which encompasses a much wider range of factors than those captured in this study. However, it is very important to relate the model developed here to the

wider system, as the findings that come out of this approach will need to be informed by other processes and actors.

System-wide approaches seek to define a range of activities, actors and processes that are part of a resilience building system. For example, a recent paper by TANGO International presented a composite framework for assessing resilience, with a specific focus on food security shocks in Africa (Figure 1).⁴ It is adapted from the DFID Disaster Resilience Framework (2011), TANGO Livelihoods Framework (2007), DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (1999) and the CARE Household Livelihood Security Framework (2002). The overall objective of the TANGO resilience assessment framework is to enable policymakers and practitioners to have a comprehensive understanding of the factors and processes influencing vulnerability and resilience at the household and community levels.

The main focus of the CoBRA on community or household level resilience is largely in line with the adaptive capacity section of the TANGO model – the three blue ovals in Figure 1. Specifically, the aim is to measure the ability of households to cope with shocks or stresses by determining and measuring the common characteristics of those households over time and monitor if they are on a resilience pathway or a vulnerability pathway.

Characteristics of Resilience

Numerous efforts are ongoing to define the characteristics of resilience at a community and/or household level. The results generated from these efforts are rather diverse with fewer consensuses. The characteristics recommended across the different models thus far encompass income, food security, assets, access to basic services, social safety nets, ecosystem health, livelihood strategies, adaptive capacity, governance, and stability, to name a few.

The methodology presented here is intended to draw from these existing tools and processes. While there are many factors that contribute to resilience, in order to ensure the practicality of the methodology, CoBRA seeks to select a reasonable number of representative resilience characteristics. On one hand, it acknowledges the multi-faceted and multidimensional nature of the concept, which cannot be represented by a few indicators; on the other hand, a tool that captures all possible facets of resilience would be too cumbersome to be of any practical use.

With these points in mind, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is used as a method of categorising and mapping the potential characteristics of resilience. SLF presents the main factors that affect people's livelihoods and typical relationships between them. It identifies five core asset categories or types of capital upon which livelihoods are built: financial, human, natural, physical and social (Figure 2 and Table 1). It is important to note that the CoBRA adopts SLF as the building blocks of resilience but as means to group indicators into relevant categories for ease of comparison.

Capital and Capacity

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