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# Integrating Gender into Resilience Analysis



A Conceptual Overview  
October 2017



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REAL is a consortium-led effort funded by the USAID Center for Resilience. It was established to respond to growing demand among USAID Missions, host governments, implementing organizations, and other key stakeholders for rigorous, yet practical, monitoring, evaluation, strategic analysis, and capacity building support. Led by Save the Children, REAL draws on the expertise of its partners: Food for the Hungry, Mercy Corps, and TANGO International.

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## I. Introduction

Populations around the world work every day at maintaining a level of stability in their lives as they face ongoing challenges linked to poverty. With or without the necessary resources, they do their best to feed their families, maintain a roof over their heads, and provide a sense of safety and security for their households.

Recurrent crises pose an additional strain on these populations and their resources, but those people, households, communities and systems that are more resilient are better able to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.<sup>1</sup> Resilience analysis encompasses a context-specific set of shocks and stresses, resilience capacities, and well-being outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Among the resilience measurement community, there is widespread acknowledgement that when people are faced with shocks and stresses, households' capacity to cope with and proactively respond to adverse events are critical factors in determining certain well-being outcomes such as food security, health, and economic opportunity.<sup>3</sup>

*USAID defines resilience as:  
“the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.”*

## II. Integrating Gender into Resilience Frameworks

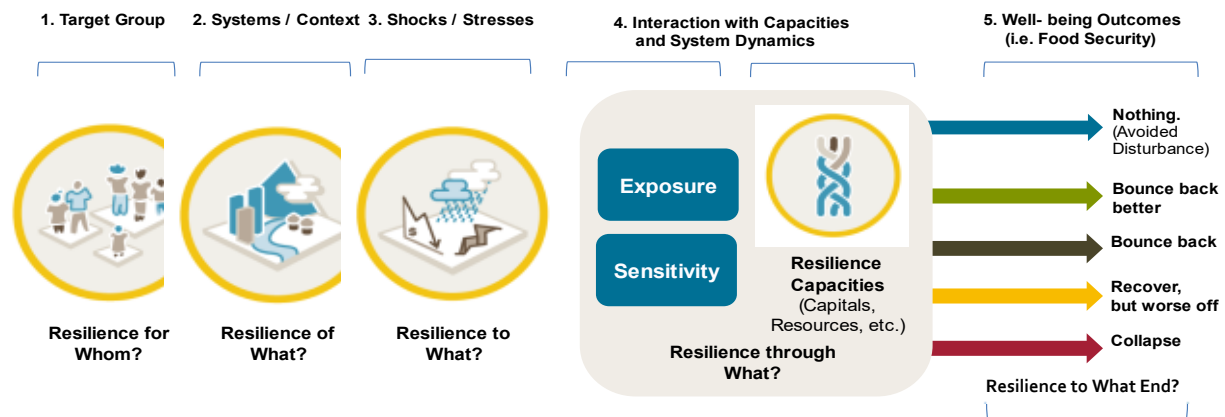
In order to accurately understand, analyze and effectively promote greater resilience among vulnerable populations, it is critical to acknowledge that women, girls, boys, and men bring different abilities to contribute to resilience at multiple levels. This Overview outlines proposed gender-related considerations when leveraging resilience conceptual frameworks (Figure 1). In doing so, it highlights significant factors related to gender that can inform resilience strategy, program design, monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaptive management. Recognizing important gender differences in each of these areas not only enables more effective design of resilience programs, but also helps ensure that implementation avoids unintended, negative consequences.

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<sup>1</sup> USAID's 2012 Policy and Programming Guidance on Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDResiliencePolicyGuidanceDocument.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Overseas Development Institute (ODI). (2016). Analysis of Resilience Measurement Frameworks and Approaches. The Resilience Measurement Evidence and Learning Community of Practice. [http://www.measuringresilience.org/pdfs/ODI\\_report.pdf](http://www.measuringresilience.org/pdfs/ODI_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> USAID. (2012). Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis: USAID Policy and Program Guidance. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDResiliencePolicyGuidanceDocument.pdf>

Figure 1: Integrating Gender into Resilience Frameworks<sup>4</sup>

Gender-focused resilience analysis confirms that **shocks and stresses** are perceived differently by men, women, boys, and girls. This finding is not surprising given that factors related to gender influence exposure and sensitivity to, and therefore the impact of adverse events. Factors affecting the social and economic empowerment of men and women (e.g. social capital, asset holdings, exposure to health and environmental risks) influence how they respond to shocks and stresses, within and between households and communities.

**Resilience capacities** – absorptive, adaptive and transformative – are influenced by context. If it is recognized that girls, boys, women, and men encounter differences in the context in which they live, then their capacities and the ability to use them will vary. Cultural norms can influence the types of skills taught to boys and girls. Norms also determine how each will use what they learn when they are adults. Furthermore, capacities among and between men, women, boys, and girls can strengthen household and community resilience by leveraging existing strengths and opportunities.

The extent to which individuals, households and communities have these capacities, and are able to draw on them in response to shocks and stresses, is a primary determinant of their wellbeing outcomes, including economic security, food security, physical and environmental health. In keeping with the conceptual framework for resilience, evidence demonstrating gender differences in exposure and sensitivity to shocks and stresses, and differences in the ability to draw on resilience capacities in responding to them is useful for interpreting different outcomes among men and women in terms of poverty, food and nutrition security, health, safety and other measures of wellbeing.

<sup>4</sup> Mercy Corps. (2017). Resilience Measurement Practical Guidance Series. Guidance Note No.1 – Risk and Resilience Assessment. <http://www.fsnnetwork.org/resilience-measurement-practical-guidance-series-guidance-note-no-1-%E2%80%93-risk-resilience-assessments>

In addition to posing questions such as “resilience of what?” and “resilience to what?” most resilience analyses pay specific attention to answering the question of “resilience for whom?” Too often, these efforts fail to consider gender dynamics within specific populations. This often results in “gender blind” resilience analyses that overlook key contributors to chronic vulnerability and fail to identify gender-specific capacities that directly influence household and community resilience. For instance, research has shown that:<sup>5</sup>

- Gender directly influences exposure and sensitivity to shocks and stresses;
- Men, women, boys and girls differ in their perceptions of shocks and stresses; and
- Gender influences the skills, knowledge, and strategies employed to cope with and adapt to shocks and stresses (resilience capacities).

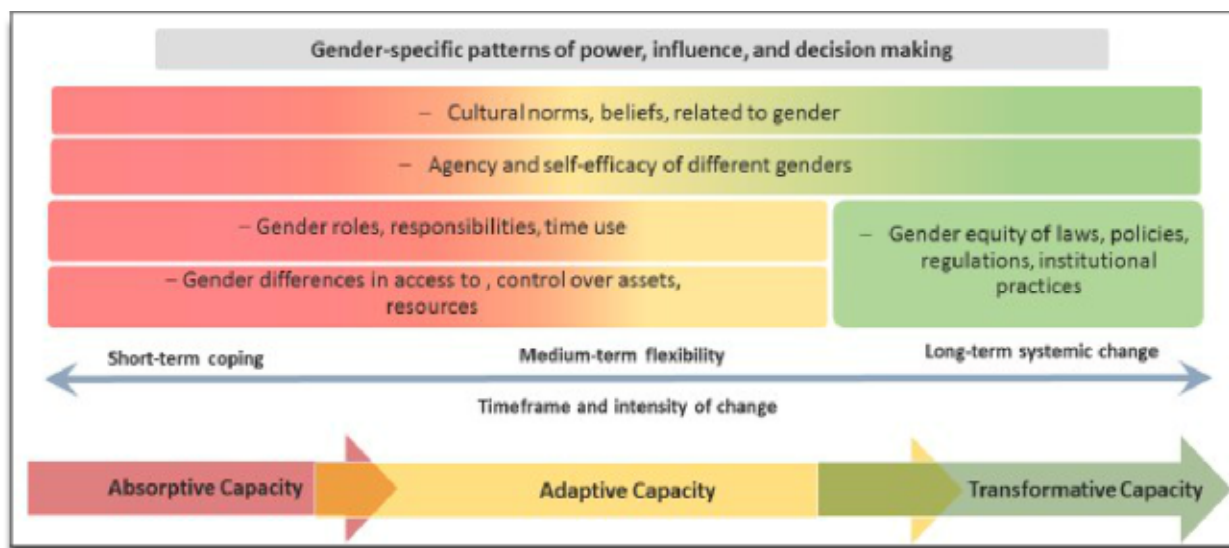
An important step in integrating gender into resilience analyses involves aligning domains of gender analysis with the conceptual framework for resilience. Figure 2 depicts the relationship between commonly identified areas of focus or domains of gender analysis and the three capacities that contribute to resilience. The domains listed in the upper half of the graphic are those most commonly cited by gender practitioners. The shading of domains reflects alignment with the typical timeframe and intensity of change associated with resilience capacities.

In the short term, women and men may modify their gender roles, responsibilities, and time use as a means of coping with a shock or stress. Coping in the short-term demonstrates direct relationships with the absorptive capacity of men and women. Alternatively, improving agency, self-efficacy, and gender equitable access to assets and resources requires change that is more intensive over the medium term and has a direct influence on adaptive capacity at the individual and household levels. Finally, achieving gender equity in laws, policies, regulations and institutional practices is often achieved through longer-term systemic change and a key element for ensuring transformative capacity and sustainable resilience at multiple levels.

When making these types of conceptual distinctions, it is critical to acknowledge that in practice, the relationships between changes in gender dynamics and corresponding resilience capacities is rarely immediate and may not be objectively observable or solely attributable to specific events. For instance, while adoption of gender equitable laws and policies might change within a year, or over the life of a project, it may take a generation or more to observe systemic change in gender roles at household, community and societal levels.

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<sup>5</sup> Mercy Corps. (2014). Rethinking Resilience: Prioritizing Gender Integration to Enhance Household and Community Resilience to Food Insecurity in the Sahel. [https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps%20Gender%20and%20Resilience%20September%202014.p\\_df](https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps%20Gender%20and%20Resilience%20September%202014.p_df)

Figure 2: Relationship between Domains of Gender Analysis and Resilience Capacities<sup>6,7</sup>

Sources: Adapted from USAID (2017) and Béné et al. (2012)

Consistent application and testing of these domains of gender analysis as part of context-specific analyses of resilience will clarify important relationships between these two concepts. Doing so will enable the development of integrated conceptual and analytical frameworks, and guide the formulation of research to inform resilience policy and programming.

### III. Implications of Conducting a Gender-Sensitive Resilience Analysis

Integrating gender into resilience analyses has implications for strategic planning; program design; monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL); and adaptive management. Synopses of the potential implications are provided below.

#### Strategic Planning

Ideally, a coordinated approach to strategic planning should directly reference and align with policy and programming guidance on both resilience and gender.<sup>8,9</sup> This will enable strategic coordination between development and humanitarian assistance programs, as well as recognition of the potential synergies among existing programs and other gender and resilience stakeholders. To ensure effective and strategic coordination, layering, sequencing and integration of activities should account for the range of partners, projects and communities of practice involved in both resilience and gender programming.

A key consideration during this phase is acknowledging contextual factors that can broaden opportunities for men, women, boys, and girls or result in unintended negative consequences. Gender considerations

<sup>6</sup> Béné, Christophe, Rachel Godfrey Wood, Andrew Newsham and Mark Davies. 2012. Resilience: New Utopia or New Tyranny? Reflection about the Potentials and Limits of the Concept of Resilience in Relation to Vulnerability Reduction Programmes. IDS Working Paper, Volume 2012 Number 405. CSP Working Paper Number 006. Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Centre for Social Protection (CSP). September 2012.

<sup>7</sup> USAID. (2017). ADS Chapter 205 Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/205.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> USAID. (2012). Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis: USAID Policy and Program Guidance. December 2012.

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDResiliencePolicyGuidanceDocument.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> USAID. (2017). ADS Chapter 205 Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/205.pdf>

should be explicitly stated and serve to initiate a proactive approach to mitigate potentially harmful outcomes during the strategic planning phase.

## Program Design

Evidence of gender dynamics and their relationship to individuals' and households' exposure to and severity of shocks and stresses, resilience capacities, and the interrelationship between shocks, capacities and well-being should be clearly articulated in causal relationships and intended outcomes of a program Theory of Change. To contribute to sustainable improvements, the design of resilience programming should: 1) critically examine gender inequalities and roles, as well as norms and dynamics; 2) recognize and strengthen positive norms that support gender equality; and 3) consistently promote women, girls, and other marginalized groups by positively transforming underlying social structures, policies and broadly held social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities.<sup>10,11</sup>

While there is no standard set of interventions for integrating gender into resilience programming, a number of potential activities have been identified through previous resilience analysis and project implementation. They include:<sup>12,13</sup>

- Strengthening the capacity of program staff and management to apply the findings of context-specific gender analyses to resilience programming.
- Ensuring that integrated resilience program design includes targeted efforts to build the social capital (bonding, bridging, linking) of women and girls, boys and men, and the bonds between them.
- Strengthening the capacity of women, men, boys and girls to engage in collective action for greater resilience and gender equality at the community level.
- Designing and implementing activities that increase access to and control over productive resources (land, water, etc.) and essential services (education, health, legal and financial services, etc.) among women and girls, without disempowering men and boys or creating risks of gender-based violence.

Supportive budgeting and resources should be put in place during the program design process. Items include staffing for gender training and determination of assessment and analysis needs, which may require support from a consultant or draw on internal organizational resources.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

A growing wealth of information exists on different approaches to resilience measurement and analysis. While this guidance should follow best practices in terms of sex and age-disaggregating quantitative and qualitative data, more can be done to directly integrate gender into resilience monitoring, evaluation and

<sup>10</sup> Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG). Understanding and Applying the Gender Equality Continuum. [http://sbccimplementationkits.org/gender/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2016/03/Activity-0.1\\_Understanding-and-Applying-the-Gender-Equality-Continuum.pdf](http://sbccimplementationkits.org/gender/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2016/03/Activity-0.1_Understanding-and-Applying-the-Gender-Equality-Continuum.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Scott, Lucy and Vidya Diwakar. (2016). Ensuring Escapes from Poverty Are Sustained in Rural Bangladesh. Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO). LEO Report #2. Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in collaboration with ACDI/VOCA. [https://www.microlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Report20No.203220-Ensuring20Sustained20Poverty20Escapes\\_Rural20Bangladesh.pdf](https://www.microlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Report20No.203220-Ensuring20Sustained20Poverty20Escapes_Rural20Bangladesh.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Mercy Corps. (2014). Rethinking Resilience: Prioritizing Gender Integration to Enhance Household and Community Resilience to Food Insecurity in the Sahel. <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps%20Gender%20and%20Resilience%20September%202014.p df>

<sup>13</sup> Starr, Laurie and Kristi Tabaj. 2015. Resilience Capacities and the Gender Agenda: Moving for Transformative Change. TOPS Knowledge Sharing Event. November 2015. [http://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Resilience%20gender\\_TOPS\\_D.C.V3.pdf](http://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Resilience%20gender_TOPS_D.C.V3.pdf)



learning.<sup>14</sup> Answering critical analytic questions on the relationship between gender and resilience can directly inform modifications to the Theory of Change and should be captured in a project or program Learning Agenda. Potential questions include:

- What gender norms influence the ability of individuals and households to positively cope with and respond to shocks in the short- to medium-term?
- How does gender influence capacity to adapt livelihood strategies?
- What differences exist among men and women in terms of subjective measures of resilience at the individual level (e.g. in terms of aspirations, perceptions of self-efficacy/agency, ability to acquire and apply different types of social capital)?
- How do resilience capacities differ with gender and age (e.g. grandmothers, adolescent girls, young men, fathers)?
- What negative or adverse gender outcomes have resulted from resilience building efforts?

Regular resilience monitoring and evaluation should track indicators such as women's and men's access to and control over productive resources, intra-household distribution of labor and food, and access to and use of financial services. The formulation of specific research questions related to gender can help contextualize program design and identify higher-level impact indicators of gender empowerment that have a direct influence on household and community resilience.

In all cases, indicators should be tested among and tailored to the target population.<sup>15</sup> It is important to monitor gender indicators at various stages in the program cycle to inform implementation of and modifications to ongoing activities as well as identify potentially harmful activities or practices resulting from activities.

## Adaptive Management

Technical program staff and managers should demonstrate a willingness and ability to incorporate gender-specific learning into improved program design and implementation. Beyond that, they can help ensure adaptive management at the field level by proactively identifying means of collaborating with key stakeholders involved in gender-based programming and advocacy. They should also be incentivized to try innovative approaches for addressing gender inequality and documenting lessons learned from both successes and failures.<sup>16</sup> Adaptive management for gender-integrated resilience programming can also be furthered by charging gender specialists with skills building of other technical staff and regularly gathering staff to reflect on how gender dynamics are changing within the operating context.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Gender Practitioners Collaborative. 2017. Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality. <http://dldocs.mercycorps.org/MinimumStandardsMainstreamingGenderEquality.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> See Resilience Measurement Practical Guidance Series: Guidance Note No. 1 – Risk and Resilience Assessments. [http://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/resilience\\_measurement\\_practical\\_guidance\\_series\\_guidance\\_note\\_1.pdf](http://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/resilience_measurement_practical_guidance_series_guidance_note_1.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> USAID. (2016). Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Framework and Key Concepts. USAID Learning Lab. [https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/keyconcepts\\_twopager\\_8.5x11\\_v7\\_20160907.pdf](https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/keyconcepts_twopager_8.5x11_v7_20160907.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Mercy Corps. (2015). Managing Complexity: Adaptive Management at Mercy Corps. [https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/keyconcepts\\_twopager\\_8.5x11\\_v7\\_20160907.pdf](https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/keyconcepts_twopager_8.5x11_v7_20160907.pdf)



## IV. Next Steps

From strategic planning to program design and implementation, it is the responsibility of all involved to critically consider how men, women, boys, and girls play a role in resilience programming. Towards that end, important steps forward in the integration of gender and resilience include the refinement of current conceptual and analytical frameworks for resilience to explicitly account for the impact of gender at the individual, household and community levels.

Learning agendas that support in-depth research on gender dynamics and their impact on resilience capacities and well-being outcomes should be established and implemented. To ensure best practices in gender and resilience are reaching stakeholders, it is crucial to continue to exchange knowledge, skills and best practices among gender and resilience practitioners at all levels. Like resilience, gender equality and female empowerment should be seen as an ongoing aim towards improved well-being of individuals, households and communities.

With a common understanding of concepts, continued improvement in analysis, and application of knowledge for refined program design, the paths toward gender equality and resilience will converge to enable practitioners to achieve common goals of sustainable improvements in the lives of vulnerable populations around the world.

## Other Resources Related to Gender and Resilience

- Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of Resilience Interventions: Conceptual and Empirical Considerations - Béné, Christophe, Tim Frankenberger, and Suzanne Nelson (2015)  
<http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/design-monitoring-and-evaluation-of-resilience-interventions-conceptual-and-empirical-considerations>
- Measuring gender-transformative change: A review of literature and promising practices – Hillenbrand, Emily, Nidal Karim, Pranati Mohanraj and Diana Wu (2015)  
[http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/working\\_paper\\_aas\\_gt\\_change\\_measurement\\_fa\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/working_paper_aas_gt_change_measurement_fa_lowres.pdf)
- Gender, Climate Change and Nutrition Initiative (GCAN) <http://gcan.ifpri.info/>
- Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG) <http://www.igwg.org/>