



RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

DISCUSSION PAPER

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CARE	CARE International
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FP	Family Planning
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MSI	Marie Stopes International
NAP	National Adaptation Plans
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
PE	Process Evaluation
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
UKAC	UK Aid Connect



INTRODUCTION

Women and girls will be disproportionately affected by the rapid rate of climate change over the next decade (UNFPA 2021). Access to sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) can help build resilience to the effects of the climate emergency. There is a great need for gender sensitive climate policies and innovative programming that recognise the link between quality SRHR and resilience.

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The effects of climate change are gendered. The disruption and uncertainty created by climate change hits women and girls hardest because they are disproportionately affected by poverty, subject to gender discrimination and have poorer access to resources, food and sources of income (UN 2012). In order to effectively respond to events like drought, coastal erosion and desertification they need support to build their resilience. Building resilience, or having the capacity to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses (UKAC 2021), can help affected communities adapt to the challenges presented by climate change and mitigate some effects. Ensuring access to sustainable SRHR services and supporting the ability to choose to access services can contribute to resilience (MSI 2021), and this resilience may contribute to improved SRHR (Hardee 2018).

Research and programmatic approaches have gradually explored the relationship between SRHR and building resilience to the effects of climate change in low- and middle-income countries over the last decade. In the build-up to COP26, both unilateral and multilateral actors and organisations have launched a call to action for SRHR to be included in climate policy (UNFPA 2021) (Women Deliver 2021) (IPPF 2016) (MSI 2021). COP26 represented an opportunity to influence the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that will outline how member states respond to climate change over the next five years in alignment with the Paris Agreement. The pressure remains on to ensure that an emphasis on gender and SRHR make it into these plans (UNFPA/Queen Mary 2021). Governments are beginning finance and develop approaches and partnerships that seek to build resilience to the effects of climate change through strengthening health systems, of which SRHR services are a crucial part (FCDO 2021).



WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE LITERATURE

There is currently a lack of attention on SRHR in NDCs and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). A review by UNDP of 50 NDCs by UNFPA found that only six plans had direct reference to SRHR (UNFPA 2021). Most policies place more emphasis on air pollution and health co-benefits from climate change mitigation (UNFPA 2021). The UNFPA review also noted that the references made to SRHR were often vague and imprecise. The plans referred to maternal mortality, access to family planning services, gender-based violence and people living with HIV but omitted other key SRHR issues altogether, such as sex trafficking and early marriage (ibid).

As well as a lack of a holistic understanding of SRHR in policy, governments are prioritising health systems adaptation in the NAP processes but with limited attention to gender considerations. The NAP Global Network gender responsive toolkit recommends developing plans that recognise needs of women and girls and also acknowledges their unequal opportunities to participate and influence decision-making processes and access financing (NAP Global Network 2019). Adaptation planning needs to be transformational, tackling not only the gendered impact of climate change but also the inequalities that further limit women and girls' resilience to its effects. The impact of the climate crisis will worsen over the next decade, with an estimated 14 million women at risk of losing access to contraception due to climate-related displacement (MSI, 2021). MSI Reproductive Choices suggests that with reproductive autonomy, women are better placed to take on decision-making roles at community and national level, enabling women to have a seat at the table in finding climate solutions (MSI 2021).

Beyond addressing gender inequality and including SRHR more meaningfully in national contribution and adaptation planning, there is also a need for investment in innovative programming and tools that support women and girls vulnerable to climate change, and gender sensitive monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approaches to measure their effectiveness. There is currently a lack of evidence-based programmes that have produced resilience related outcomes, but the resilience framework, developed by the UKAC ASPIRE programme, funded under UK Aid Connect (UKAC) by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), could contribute by providing a conceptual framework upon which programmes that build resilience by improving SRHR can be built.

The ASPIRE Programme: Advancing SRHR through the promotion of Innovation & Resilience is funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office under the UK Aid Connect fund and implemented by consortium partners: MSI Reproductive Choices (formerly Marie Stopes International), Blue Ventures, CARE International, Itad and ThinkPlace.

The programme was developed to test and generate evidence on innovative, sustainable and scalable approaches to reaching some of the world's most marginalised groups with comprehensive SRHR, by exploring the intersection between SRHR and resilience in both climate change impacted and fragile settings. Through two outcomes, consortium partners designed innovative solutions to improve access to quality SRHR and build greater resilience behaviours among underserved groups, focusing on refugees in Uganda and climate change impacted communities in Madagascar and Niger. The approach aimed to generate learning in how to evaluate how the programme's innovations build peoples' and organisations' capacities, knowledge and skills to change their practices, and how they are adapting in response to these interventions.

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the UK economy and resulting reduction in the UK Government's official development assistance, the programme will close early. From April - November 2021, consortium partners used the closeout period to maximise the investments made in the programme's co-creation/design phase by focusing on implementing key implementation activities as well as documenting learning and dissemination.



THE RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

The UKAC ASPIRE resilience framework was developed, based on resilience thinking built from food security and conflict response programming. The UKAC ASPIRE framework conceptualises building resilience in terms of absorptive, anticipatory and adaptive capacities to cope with stressors and shocks (Bahadur 2015). The framework responds to individual contexts using the target locations of Niger and Madagascar, both severely affected by desertification, drought and coastal erosion as a result of climate change.

The framework situates SRHR within strategies to build resilience. It is intended to assist with planning, development, and evaluation of UKAC ASPIRE programmes but has the potential to be transferred to other programmes and contexts. The framework takes as its unit of analysis; 'who' is at risk of the shock or stressor, be it an individual, household, community or even a health system and then breaks down resilience into three interrelated capacities drawing on literature on resilience to natural disasters: ability to absorb, anticipate, and/or adapt (UKAC 2021) (Bahadur et al 2015) (Faulkner & Villanueva 2018) see figure 1. The framework represents a resilience approach that can be applied to understand the factors that are creating vulnerability in a particular context as well as the factors that may increase or build resilience.

The use of a resilience framework helps implementors think through the core components of a resilience approach, consider how SRHR interventions relate to these component and begin to integrate pathways to resilience when integrating SRHR into livelihoods programming. The framework can also be used to support monitoring and evaluation in conjunction with other MEL approaches.

BOX 1: THE 3 A'S:

Absorptive capacity is the ability, using available skills and resources, to face and manage adverse conditions, emergencies, or disasters.

Anticipatory capacity is the ability to anticipate and reduce the impact of a shock or stress through preparedness and planning. This may mean raising awareness and improving early warning systems for climate variability and extremes (O2) or forecasting periods of peak demand or funding shortfalls in the health system.

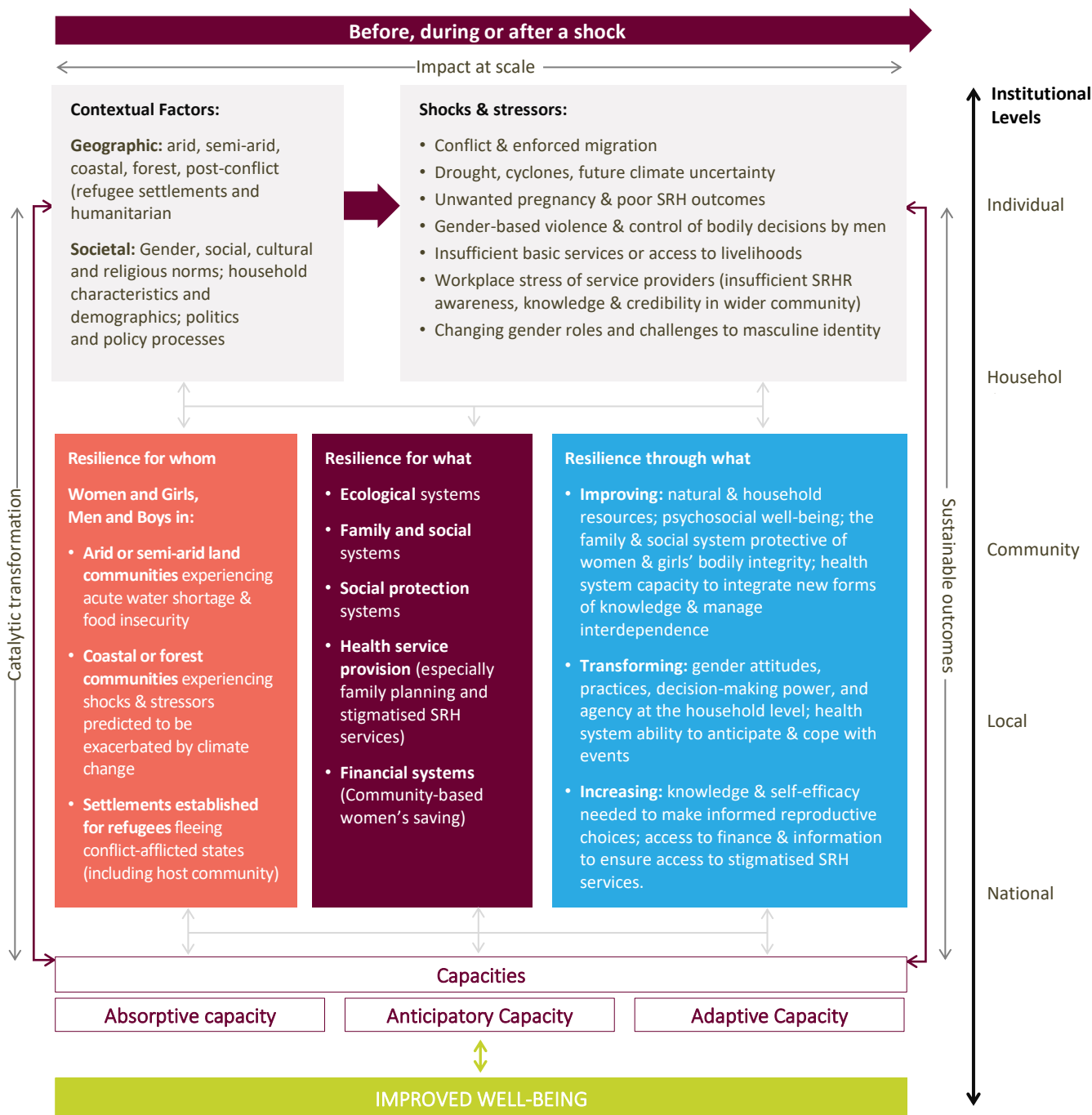
Adaptive capacity is the ability to change strategies to address multiple, long-term and future risks, and also to learn and adjust after a stress event. It is the capacity to take deliberate and planned decisions to achieve a desired state even when conditions have changed or are about to change.

By allowing for analysis at the individual, community or systems level, the framework also incorporates intersectional thinking; taking to account other vulnerabilities that impact resilience, such as age, race, and sexual orientation (Women Deliver 2021). The framework also captures and analyses transformational change by acknowledging the underlying drivers of vulnerability to shocks and stressors that women often experience due to gender inequality and other structural barriers.

In conjunction with the intersectional and transformative dimension of the framework, UKAC ASPIRE also applies a rights-based approach: 'to fulfil the rights of all individuals to choose whether, when, and how many children to have' (FP2020) (UKAC 2021). It centres around the concept that if SRHR is part of livelihoods and climate change resilience programming, people are more able to make the decision to access SRHR services and this links to generalised health and well-being, and therefore greater resilience to shocks and stressors.



FIGURE 1: THE ASPIRE RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK.



Adapted from Ihalainen et al 2020



THE CASE OF MADAGASCAR

Madagascar has a rich biodiversity threatened by cyclonic activity and drought; events whose magnitude and frequency are expected to increase with climate change. A UKAC gender analysis found that women in target areas of Northern and Southern Madagascar are affected by unequal division of labour, unequal social status and lower decision-making abilities, lack control over assets such as property rights, compromised mobility to access services and public spaces and less participation in public decision making than men. Gender based violence is also a reality for many women and girls and decisions around family planning are mostly made by husbands or male partners. The UKAC ASPIRE programme has piloted approaches to combining SRHR and resilience and using media and youth groups as a mode for awareness raising; linking SRH activities with disaster risk management in the northwest region; and integrating SRHR awareness and services with climate change resilience activities in the domains of agriculture, livestock, fishery, forestry, and water & sanitation in the south.

The resilience framework as a tool can assist with designing programmes that build SRHR into climate change responsive programming. Given the deepening situation in the places hardest hit by climate change, like Madagascar, greater investment is needed. In September 2021 southern Madagascar experienced its worst drought in 40 years and communities are facing extreme poverty. The SRHR of women and girls have also been impacted. Alongside insufficient access to natural resources and livelihoods, transactional sex, sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and forced marriage are rising while access to SRHR services is declining (Reliefweb 2021).

The resilience framework aims for scalable, sustainable, and replicable results in the medium and longer term for individuals, communities and systems, but it remains largely untested. The UKAC ASPIRE programme is currently undertaking a process evaluation (PE) of pilot activities that will help us to understand how the programme's theory of change has played out, focussing on Madagascar. The PE will explore programme implementation and utilisation and the change pathways towards achieving the intended programme outcome: to increase resilience in climate change affected communities through integrated SRHR, conservation, and livelihoods programming. This presents an opportunity to test the framework as a means of conceptualising at multiple levels the integration of SRHR with resilience capabilities and applying this in design and implementation.

THE WAY FORWARD

Despite calls for SRHR to be meaningfully included in NAPs and NDCs within the media coverage adjacent to COP26, time will tell if governments recognise the urgency of the situation for women and girls in places like Madagascar. We need commitment to climate action that speaks to rights-based, gender transformative approaches that have the power to drive sustainable change. Tools like the resilience framework view resilience not as an end point but a strengthening journey and provide a potentially flexible instrument that can inform future programming by conceptualising and capturing resilience in the context of SRHR and wider shocks and stressors including climate change. But if there is no investment in research and programming, tools like this will go underutilised.

There is still much work and research to be done to understand the problem and fill data gaps on the direct and indirect effects of climate change on SRHR. There is also more work and collaboration between actors necessary to develop the solutions. There is also a need for evidence-based evaluation approaches that can fulfil the MEL needs of understanding programmatic outcomes from approaches that integrate SRHR and resilience. Tools like the resilience framework and the UKAC ASPIRE programme remain at the vanguard of tackling the vulnerabilities of women and girls to the effects of the climate emergency and go some way to helping us unpick the realities of resilience for diverse groups in situations of shock and stress due to climate change.



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