

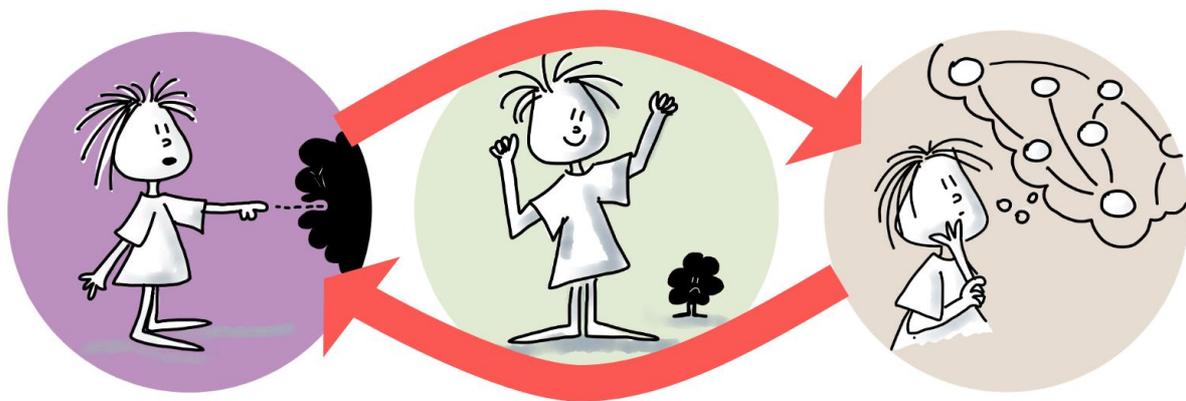
Resilience thinking – as simple as 1, 2, 3!

This is a short introduction to resilience thinking. If you want to know more, please take the short online training on the FABO platform, at fabo.org/smc/resiliencematters

The three shifts of resilience thinking

Resilience thinking helps to smooth “bumps” in our lives, things that can go wrong and affect lives, livelihoods, living styles. It helps to better respond and adapt to challenges ahead, and as we anticipate threats, to embrace transformative opportunities.

Resilience matters for everyone. Even more so for most marginalized, vulnerable people, who are living with very limited resources and opportunities. Any bump in their lives, even “minor” ones, can seriously undermine their attempts to fulfil their basic rights, to move out of need, and out of fear. **This is why supporting their resilience – as a form of empowerment – is key.**



1. Think ahead!

Be aware of existing and likely shocks and stressors. Anticipate future challenges and opportunities. Who needs to be resilient? to what? For what? Where?

2. Acquire, use capacities!

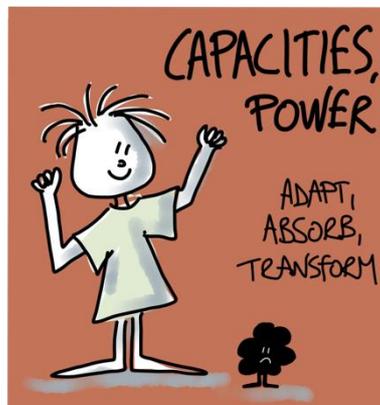
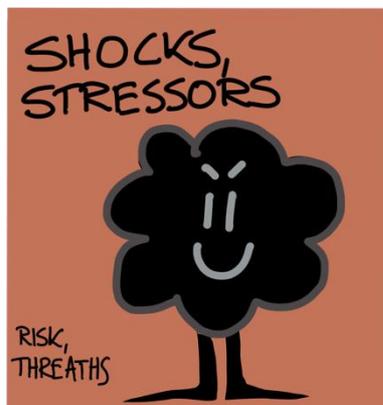
Acquire diverse capacities to deal with threats: absorb; adapt; transform. They connect anticipated challenges with flexible solutions.

3. Deal with complexity

Think adaptively: understand how different capitals interrelate to support resilience. Use them in flexible ways.

What is resilience anyway?

There are many different definitions of resilience. Different people, organizations, specialists have different perspectives and focus. This generates and emphasizes different aspects. Rather than choosing one definition we highlight the three key ingredients we believe should be included.



Resilience involves dealing with shocks or stressors or anticipating them when they are still threats.

Resilience is a way of being, a set of capacities - absorb, adapt, transform.

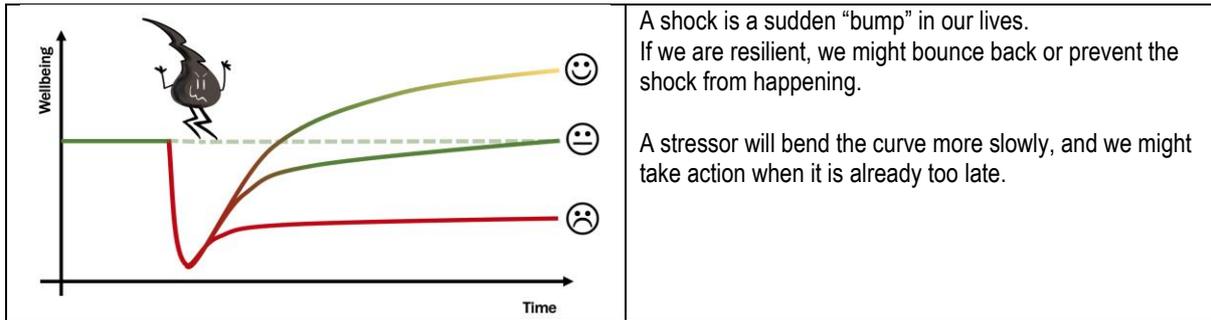
If you embrace a right perspective, then resilience is best seen **as the right to be safe despite shocks and stressors**. And is an essential step in achieving other rights.

1. THINK AHEAD

Be aware of shocks and stressors, learn to anticipate them and recognize opportunities



When we think about the future, we want to believe that life will go on easily, that our plans will happen, and we are in control. But life is full of “bumps”, things go wrong. **Shocks** are things that go wrong suddenly (for example: an earthquake, a road accident). **Stressors** are things that go wrong little by little, for example climate change.



A shock is a sudden “bump” in our lives. If we are resilient, we might bounce back or prevent the shock from happening.

A stressor will bend the curve more slowly, and we might take action when it is already too late.

Resilience involves both being capable to respond to shocks and stressors when they happen but also being good at **anticipating** them, knowing what can go wrong and what opportunities can arise. We cannot control the future, but we can better equip ourselves to anticipate threats and possibilities which impact on our plans and aspirations.

Resilience is a useful concept only when is related to **specific** threats. Saying “we are resilient” does not mean much but saying “we are resilient **to...**” is different.

	<p>Resilience TO what? Focus on specific threats. Specific shocks and stressors emerge as major challenges, with a major impact on the communities, groups.</p> <p>For WHOM? Look at specific individual, groups, communities. Identify why they are vulnerable and what exposes them to multiple threats.</p> <p>Resilience FOR what? Address resilience in relation to another goal. Ensure that the achievement of this goal will not be undone by something getting in the way.</p> <p>Resilience WHERE? Context matter, being the physical one (which often shapes many threats) or the social one!</p>
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To address resilience, we need to make resilience **specific and real** by asking how a specific group in a specific location or context can become more resilient to a specific threat which might prevent them to achieve this something.

<p>WARNING!</p>	<p>To find the best responses to these questions there is not one set starting point. Start from any of these questions and then consider the others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You might start by identifying a threat, and then checking where is most acute, who is the most at risk, and what rights is this threat most likely to affect. You can start by focusing on a group of people, within their context, and assessing what threats they are most vulnerable to, and their potential impact on rights.
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2. CAPACITIES

Resilience is empowerment.

It is the power to absorb, adapt, transform.



Resilience thinking knows that resilience is not something to be achieved once and for all. It is about having capacities to withstand shocks and stressors, and to deal with future threats. Capacities are:

<p>ABSORB Reactive resilience Focusing on immediate effects Response oriented</p>	<p>ADAPT Adaptive resilience Mitigation of threats Flexible solutions</p>	<p>TRANSFORM Transformative resilience Focusing on deep root causes Challenging the status quo</p>
<p>Absorptive capacity is about mitigating impacts of shocks on lives, livelihoods, basic needs. We can bounce back.</p>	<p>Adaptive capacity is about reducing the potential impacts of threats and their likelihood. We can live with threats.</p>	<p>Transformative capacity is about getting to a new state through innovation, reforms or cultural shifts. We live differently.</p>

Capacities are diverse and each one is important. Resilience is often mistakenly associated with the capacity to absorb, as if resilience was the capacity to withstand the same threat over and over. But resilience does not mean to accept repeated negative experiences, saying: "bad luck, you live in a challenging situation, be strong in the face of it"! Resilience is to actively react to a threat and challenge its root causes. Remembering that, even when facing "natural disasters" what put people most at risk are often human choices and interventions, power imbalances, unjust access to rights and resources.

	<p>To increase resilience, different capacities should be combined. No capacity is more important than others and they might be all needed at the same time. The more capacities interlink, the better!</p> <p>For example, if you are trying to transform a situation of risk (for example addressing global warning) you might still need to adapt to its effects (create housing more flood resistant, changing your farming practices) and deal with the occasional disaster (creating early warning systems, school shelters).</p>
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3. DEALING WITH COMPLEXITY

Resilience thinking appreciates complexity

Things are interrelated



That resilience is complex does not mean it is complicated, but rather that change does not always happen in the same way, with the same processes and results. Complex means to acknowledge that different factors will interrelate differently in different situation. Resilience is about understanding which factors are at play, and how they can link to **absorb, adapt, transform**. It requires to be conscious that there is not only one solution, several options will evolve.

Capitals are resources that can be used to build resilience. There are many different capitals, money is one of them. Some capitals are very important, yet they tend to be forgotten. It is important and empowering to learn how to identify different types and to be specific when describing them as an asset for resilience. For example, a school building is a physical capital, but a functioning school includes several capitals which work together.



Financial	All that is concerned with money. For example: availability of cash, savings, loans.
Social	The connections amongst individuals and groups. For example: partnerships and alliances, setup of groups and clubs and personal connections.
Natural	The ecosystem resources. For example: forestation, quality of water, fertility of soil, climate, etc
Spiritual	The deepest values and beliefs held by individuals and communities. For example: faith, spirituality, trust, motivations.
Institutional	The rules and policies of institutions of any group. For example: organization which can set norms within society, families, government, traditional governance, schooling and religion.
Human	The skills, attitudes, and strengths of individuals. For example: their knowledge, their physical strength or their confidence.
Physical	People-made goods and infrastructures. For example: machinery, buildings, road networks, mobile phone networks...

	<p>We often think that if we do something, then change will happen. This thinking often fails to see the full picture and understanding what is at play, what factors are driving change, how they interrelate. Looking at this means to appreciate complexity.</p> <p>The factors which support, or hinder resilience are many and varied. Most obvious factors include money, physical assets, infrastructures but the less tangible factors are often more important. This tool proposes to look at different capitals, which can contribute to strengthen or to limit the power of people to face threats. The large circles represent types of capitals. The first step is to acknowledge diverse capitals. Then it is important to see how they work together, as a system. How do they link? How might they flow into each other? As the arrows show, there are many options.</p>
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Once we understand the **system**, we can form our intervention strategies. There are many **options**, and different people faced with similar challenges and systems will chose according to their context and preferences.

	<p>Faced with the same challenge and a similar system, some might choose to diversify options. Some prefer to stick with a few but do more of the same. Some might invest in community self-organization by building ownership or building local institution on board. Others might value the importance of learning and sharing knowledge. Some might try to scale up their initiatives. All these strategies might be valid.</p>
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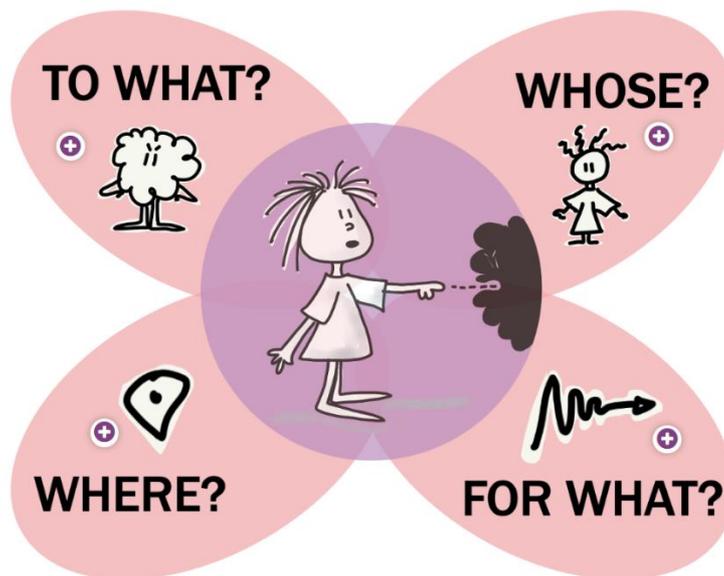
What is the different with resilience thinking?

There are three shifts of resilience thinking which challenge conventional ways of working in humanitarian aid, development or peace building work.

Think ahead!	Capacities	Deal with complexity
<p>Even when planning ahead, it is easy to ignore shocks and stressors. It is natural to focus on the usual and on what we think we can control rather than hazards. An example is how the global community is dealing with climate change.</p>	<p>Resilience is first and foremost a process of empowerment and not the provision of assets. Unless people exposed to threats acquire stronger capacities, resilience is not achieved.</p>	<p>Resilience requires adaptive thinking and appreciation of complexity. The common control of result-oriented management is not fit for purpose. Acknowledge diverse capitals and how they work together, as a system.</p>

4. TOOL: IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING THREATS

What should you consider to identify and anticipate threats?



Resilience TO WHAT?

- What shocks and stressors?
- Resilient... to what?

Starting from this elements means to chose a threat (for example, climate change) and then understand:

- who is likely to be negatively impacted by it [WHOSE RESILIENCE]
- in what geographical areas the threat is more relevant [WHERE].
- what aspirations, rights, activities, objectives are most challenged because of this threat [RESILIENCE FOR WHAT?]

WHOSE resilience

- Who is affected by shocks and stressors?
- Who is vulnerable?

Starting from these elements means to focus on a group or a community (for example: young girls within a community) and then understand:

- what threats are most likely to affect them [WHAT THREAT]
- where is this most likely to happen [WHERE].
- what aspirations, rights, activities, objectives are most challenged because of this threat [RESILIENCE FOR WHAT?]

Resilience... WHERE?

- what are the resilience challenges in this place?

Starting from this elements means to focus on a location (for example: an urban neighborhood) and then understand:

- what are the main hazards in this location? [WHAT THREAT]
- which individuals, groups, communities living in this area are most likely to be affected? [WHOSE RESILIENCE].
- what is prevented to happen, what rights, aspirations, objectives are at risk in this location? [RESILIENCE FOR WHAT?]

Resilience... for WHAT?

- What might threaten this developmental goal?

Starting from this elements means to look at the intended outcomes of a project, of a course of action (for example, the setup of a cooperative). And then check:

- what can put this achievement at risk? [WHAT THREAT]
- which individuals, groups, communities are most likely to fail to achieve the outcomes? Or to see their rights denied because of this threat? [WHOSE RESILIENCE].
- in which locations this is most likely to happen? [WHERE]