Resilience Framework: Christian Aid's approach

This paper sets out one of Christian Aid's priority approaches to ending poverty. It outlines our understanding of resilience and illustrates how our country programmes respond to the multiple risks and pressures that affect marginalised and vulnerable communities in the countries in which we work.

What is resilience?

Christian Aid's goal is to empower people to live with dignity, able to respond successfully to disasters, risks and opportunities. We see resilience both as a process (steps taken to achieve an end) and an outcome (an end result). We define resilience as a capacity-building process to enhance the ability of individuals and communities to '**anticipate, organise for and adapt to change**'.

Building on our original framework, Thriving Resilient Livelihoods, published in 2012, and based on learning since, we have developed this new Resilience Framework aimed at improving integration of different programmatic areas for sustainability and long-term impact.

Why resilience?

Poverty, inequality and vulnerability are interconnected: poor people face disproportionate exposure to a variety of risks and pressures that limit their ability to improve their lives. They lack the power to make decisions that would help them withstand continual change and exploit its potential benefits.

Christian Aid's corporate strategy, Partnership for Change, aims to put power into the hands of poor and marginalised people, so that men, women, girls and boys develop a strong voice in the decisions that affect them, grow more resilient to risks and gain opportunities to thrive. We believe we can promote a virtuous circle, whereby people are supported to strengthen their livelihoods by capitalising on opportunities, while simultaneously managing risks that threaten them.

Rasmata Sawadogo is head of the women's group in Masbore, Burkina Faso. The participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment (PVCA) has helped empower women like her to speak up about their problems and ask for support from local authorities, partners and Christian Aid. As a result of its lobbying, the community now has a maternal health clinic.

In our corporate strategy, we identify three goals for empowerment:

- power for people to live with dignity, responding successfully to disasters and the opportunities and risks they face

- power for people to ensure that the world's resources are fairly and sustainably shared with everyone

- power for people to share in the vital decisions of life and take a full part in society and the economy.

*(Partnership for Change: The power to end poverty, 2012)*

Our Resilience Framework

Our experience shows that a **holistic, adaptive and integrated approach** is needed for men and women living in poverty to manage the risks they face and to make the most of opportunities that arise. Partnerships, brokering relationships and integration are key to this. Such an approach is also key to achieving the global sustainable development goals. This process must be inclusive and accountable, and led by people and communities.

Our Resilience Framework recognises that we work at different scales and levels: global, national, regional, district and with individual households. All levels are dynamically linked and influence how communities and individuals experience vulnerability to risk. The framework is equally applicable across each of the levels. At the core of our framework is our belief that **individual and community resilience can be enhanced by empowering poor and vulnerable women and men, boys and girls to manage risks and improve their wellbeing, so that they can live with dignity.**

The framework aims to help Christian Aid's country programmes and partners to support communities to identify the risks they face, act on their own behalf, exercise their rights, access resources, and respond appropriately and effectively to achieve sustainable results.
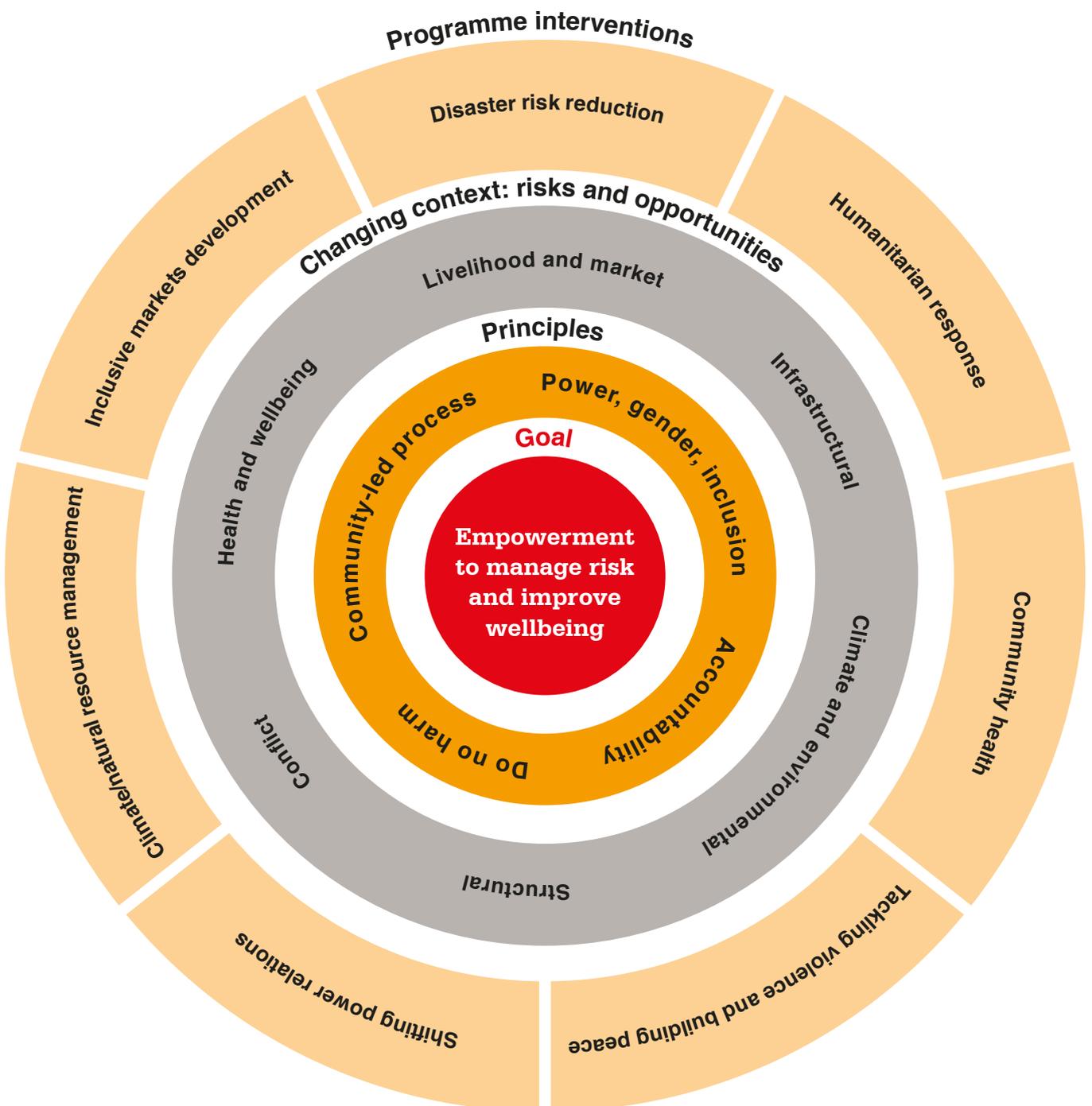
How we go about it

How we build resilience is crucial to the outcome. The principles for implementing the framework include:

- **Community-led processes** (especially participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments – PVCAs): focused on putting communities and individuals at the centre of change, increasing awareness of risks, uncertainties and their root causes, building on local capacities and identifying mitigation strategies in an active cycle of analysis, action and advocacy activities, informed by local and external knowledge such as climate information and market analysis.

- **Power, gender and inclusion:** power, gender and inclusion analysis focuses on providing targeted assistance (such as protection) aimed at tackling power dynamics, encouraging meaningful participation, and promoting and measuring transformational change.

- **Accountability:** including the sharing of information, genuinely inclusive participation and the embedding of feedback mechanisms throughout the whole programme cycle. Programmes need to adapt to the local context, integrating social, cultural and/or spiritual considerations.

- **Do no harm:** programmes should have a deep understanding of the wider context to avoid reinforcing existing or underlying community tensions and inequalities and transferring environmental, social or economic risks to other areas, communities or social groups.

All these elements are fundamental in building shared understanding, trust and long-term solutions.

The changing context: risks and opportunities

The risks and opportunities identified by communities are different in every context. For example, risks and stresses are often multiple, interlinked and complex at various scales. These issues and opportunities can be classified under six broad headings:

Structural: how power is distributed and exercised in the operation of management, decision making, service delivery, and governance structures, and the ways in which social norms, gender, representation and inclusion are addressed.

Climate and environmental: potential adverse effects due to environmental change and degradation, including loss of natural resources, pollution from effluents and energy use, hydro-meteorological and geophysical change.

Infrastructural: potential adverse effects resulting from the failure of physical structures – including buildings, roads, power supplies and protective infrastructure, such as flood protection embankments – resulting

from misuse, internal weakness, and/or poor design and maintenance.

Livelihood and market: income, household food and nutrition security, control of productive assets, access to business opportunities, operation of and access to markets, fluctuation of global prices, and the ability to maintain sustainable and profitable livelihoods.

Health and wellbeing: physical, mental, spiritual and social wellbeing affecting lives and livelihoods, and social stresses that erode personal, family and communal cohesion and strength.

Conflict: physical and psychological violence, destruction of assets and dislocation of communities, breakdown or absence of governance/state structures and services and where there is no rule of law.

Programme interventions

These contextual risks can be addressed through work in seven broad complementary programmatic areas working towards our understanding of resilience as an outcome:

Shifting power relations. Achieving equal power relations – at household to national levels – and protecting rights by increasing community influence over decisions that affect members and empowering them to exercise their rights to demand effective responses to risks and vulnerabilities and the provision of quality services such as education.

Climate-resilient agriculture and natural resource management. Sustainable management of land, water, soils, forests, agriculture and agro-pastoralism that reduces poverty and hunger in the face of climate change, improving the resources future generations will depend on.

Inclusive markets development. Supporting producers to gain increased control over, and access to, information, credit and markets so that they can build sustainable livelihoods, increase income and create savings.

Community health. Strengthening community health systems to improve access to services, adoption of appropriate practices and integrated interventions which include promoting equitable social norms and institutions and integrated disease programming, enabling people to maintain healthy and productive lives, and promoting health and wellbeing.

Disaster risk reduction. Putting in place community-focused risk reduction and risk management measures and policies such as preparedness, early warning systems and mitigation activities, both structural and infrastructural, to address natural and human-made hazards and cascading risks.

Humanitarian response. Partners and communities are organised and empowered to manage emergencies when they arise.

Tackling violence, building peace. Increased protection for those most vulnerable to violence, equipping them to address the causes of violence, to tackle impunity, and to develop peaceful and effective alternatives to violence and armed conflict.

These programmatic areas are neither sectoral nor mutually exclusive but are interconnected and work across scales. An integrated approach is necessary. The context will shape the types of interventions that are required according to the risks. For example, an environmental risk such as flooding can be addressed through different types of intervention, such as the construction of a protection embankment or dyke (DRR), or via advocacy, lobbying local authorities to improve community participation in urban planning. The context establishes the priorities and potential opportunities for addressing the risks appropriately.

Implementing the framework

The circular process of analysis, learning and action starts at programme level with a macro-context analysis, which includes power analysis and vulnerabilities and, where appropriate, a conflict analysis. This initial analysis will inform selection of target areas and partners. At community level, the process should begin with a power analysis focusing on gender and inclusion, and where appropriate, a local-level conflict analysis. Through a community-led process, informed by the macro and local analysis, community members review their risks, vulnerabilities and capacities, and develop an integrated community-owned plan of action and advocacy activities framed by the changing context (risks and opportunities). Where appropriate, opportunities to scale up and link with different levels of governance should be pursued. Accountability, meaningful participation and a systematic process of review and learning at community, partner and programme level are fundamental to sustainability and long-term impact.

How Christian Aid adds value

Our Resilience Framework bridges the gap between humanitarian and development work.

We acknowledge the complexity and scale of risks and pressures, and recognise that to be successful and transformative, we often need multiple actors and platforms, working across different sectors, levels and scales.

Our partnership approach adds value because we collaborate to achieve shared goals, facilitating and brokering partnerships to promote integration and accountability, empower civil society, broker coalitions, leverage resources and enhance advocacy.

Building resilience ultimately relies on iterative analysis and learning by communities, partners, Christian Aid and other stakeholders. However, without tackling power inequalities, we will be unable to deliver transformative social change and people will remain locked in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

Additional frameworks, core standards and approaches to assist those working on the various risk areas can be found here: christianaid.org.uk/resources/policy/programme-practice.aspx

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Christian Aid is a Christian organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice.

We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.

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