Domain of Change: Resilient Cities for Children

Resilient Cities is one of the four inter-related domains of change identified within WV's *Cities for Children (CFC) Framework[1].*

Concept of Resilient Cities

The discourse of disaster risk reduction has shifted in recent years to the concept of resilience, defined in various ways by UN agencies, international NGOs, think tanks, academics and others. All these definitions see resilience as (a) the notional opposite of vulnerability, (b) the ability to recover from catastrophic events or chronic events, (c) the capacity to improve or grow after (despite) a disaster event, and (d) intricately linked with other critical development areas and priorities. Most organizations focus on resilience of individuals and communities, with only a few emphasizing organizations, networks and systems. Although keeping individuals and families at the centre of the discourse is critical, it is equally important to look at the complex, integrated urban systems as a whole, exploring dimensions such as physical, economic, social and cultural resilience, in order to achieve long-lasting impact of resilience-building efforts. Definitions of resilience vary across organizations. Clearly, international development discourse has as yet not achieved consensus on a unified definition of resilience/ urban resilience/ resilient cities. This is most likely due to the fact that resilience constitutes one specific area of development (concerned with the capacity to withstand / recover from disaster), while also broadly encompassing all other areas of development which determine / contribute to this capacity; such as health, safety, prosperity, etc.

In the New Urban Agenda (NUA), urban resilience takes on a distinctive focus among the three transformative commitments for sustainable urban development; a commitment to an "environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development". The NUA commits to "*strengthen the resilience of cities and human settlements, including through the development of quality infrastructure and spatial planning by adopting and implementing integrated, age- and gender-responsive policies and plans and ecosystem-based approaches in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, mainstreaming holistic and data-informed disaster risk reduction and management at all levels, reducing vulnerabilities and risk, especially in risk-prone areas of formal and informal settlements, including slums, enabling households, communities, institutions and services to prepare for, respond to, adapt to, and rapidly recover from the effects of hazards, including shocks or latent stresses*."[2]

In its Resilience Theory of Change, developed in 2014, World Vision conceptualizes resilience programming as integrated and long term which focuses on building three critical capacities: absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and transformative capacity. It largely focuses, however, on individual and family resilience, rather than that of communities, settlements, cities or systems as a whole. Therefore, much of the discussion has centered on resilience capacity in behavioral rather than material terms.[3]

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[1] World Vision International (WVI) (2016). Cities for Children Framework: A Strategic Framework for Urban Programming.

[2] United Nations, General Assembly, *The New Urban Agenda,* A/CONF.226/4, *(*29 September 2016), available from https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/

[3] WVI (2014) Resilience: Theory of Change Narrative. Draft version 1.0, February 2014. World Vision International.

Issues of urban resilience, especially for children and youth

Over the past few decades, over three quarters of casualties of disasters in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have been children[4]. While the impact on children varies in different types of disasters, in all circumstances, the long-term well-being of children is likely to be compromised due to displacement, reduction in household income, disruption to education, loss or sickness of family members on whom they depend for care, as well as distress and trauma due to some or all of the aforementioned factors[5]. In the event of sudden or rapid-onset disasters, children are not only more likely to suffer fatalities and injuries, but also separation from the family and community and the distress and trauma caused as a consequence. Preparedness for evacuation and emergency relief needs of children is therefore different from that for adults. Children who are in schools that are not built to withstand hazards, are at high risk of death or injury. At the same time, children who are out of school, either working or providing care for family and siblings at home, or living on the streets, are particularly vulnerable as they may not be aware of key disaster preparedness measures, which are more likely to reach children in school. Initiatives focusing on building safer schools, too, would not benefit children who are out of school. World Vision's experience also concludes that children are more likely to be aware of everyday hazards around them than the risk of a sudden shock event, especially if they have not experienced it before, and therefore less likely to be prepared for it.[6]

Children living in urban slums, on precarious sites such as along drains, near landfills or on low-lying land, in chronic poverty, with little access to basic urban services as well as healthcare and education, are highly vulnerable to slow-onset disasters. They are frequently exposed to physical hazards, such as polluted water, open sewer systems, lack of local safe play areas or cultural facilities, and overcrowding, all of which severely restrict their independent mobility and opportunities for play and recreation, while increasing their exposure to hazards, violence and unintentional injuries.[7] Among urban children, some groups were found to be more vulnerable than others, particularly migrant children, children living in informal housing, children living and working in the streets, disabled children and child laborers. This is because of the lack of adequate protective mechanisms in the surrounding physical, socio-economic and politico-legal environment[8].

Resilience as a development paradigm implies that a "resilience lens" is applied to all development challenges, which in turn can lead to a more holistic approach to development interventions. There is, however, little agreement within the international development community on how to incorporate resilience into everyday development assistance (rather than humanitarian/development interventions in the aftermath of a disaster).

Responding to the challenge - Emergence of the Resilient Cities approach

WV's proposed *Resilient Cities for Children Framework* was inspired by several existing frameworks outlined in the Resilient Cities literature review; but particularly informed by UNISDR's Making Cities Resilient Campaign, ICLEI's resilient cities, Rockefellers' 100RC campaign, UN-Habitat's Cities Resilience Profiling Program and the recently released ARUP-USAID-Plan International-Sweden Government's child-centered urban resilience Framework. Those frameworks bring

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[4] UNICEF (2012) The State of the World's Children 2012: Children in an Urban World. New York: UNICEF.
[5] Turnbull, M., C. L. Sterrett, A. Hilleboe (2013) Toward Resilience: A Guide to Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing Ltd.
[6] WV (2013) Cities Prepare! Reducing Vulnerabilities for the Urban Poor. Asia Pacific Disaster Report. World Vision Asia Pacific
[7] IIED (2015) It's raining, it's pouring: Urban children and climate change vulnerability in secondary cities in Asia. Asian Cities Climate Resilience Policy brief 2015. London: IIED
[8] Chatterjee, S. (2015) Climate Change Risks and Resilience in Urban Children in Asia. Synthesis Report for Secondary Cities: Da Nang, Khulna, and Malolos. Asian Cities Climate Resilience Working Paper Series 21. London: IIED.

forward the urban / systems element in resilience building approaches that is currently missing from WV's Resilience Theory of Change that largely focuses on individual and family resilience, rather than that of communities, settlements, cities or systems as a whole.

The Framework identifies four categories of Resilient Cities for consideration based on the issues identified above. These are:

- Resilience to rapid-onset disasters
- Resilience to slow-onset disasters
- Resilience in situations of conflict, protracted crises and chronic violence
- Resilience as a development paradigm

The present Framework based on a comprehensive literature review on Resilient Cities' theories of change, initiatives and approaches internal and external to WV, proposes overarching goal and entry points using the strategic pillars and enablers of change identified in the *Cities for Children Framework*[9]. For greatest impact, these interventions are encouraged to utilize both a lifecycle approach and city wide programming strategy to advance urban resilience at local, city and national levels.

Achieving Resilient Cities for Children

The goal of the Resilient Cities domain of change is "*to ensure children and their families are prepared to respond to, recover and rebuild from urban shocks, stressors and vulnerabilities.*" Below, we describe the approach to achieve this goal using the **strategic pillars** and **enablers of change** of the *Cities for Children Framework*. The Framework proposes a number of **entry points** that assist practitioners and policy makers develop issue-based focused interventions using a lifecycle approach that responds to the needs of children and youth in cities prone to and affected by urban disasters and conflicts.

Strategic pillars

- **Strategic pillar 1: Building *social cohesion* among diverse communities and promoting inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups**

Beyond infrastructure, governance and information solutions, social cohesion among city residents is key for building collective actions for addressing day-to-day challenges, dealing with shocks and stressors and engaging in the development, implementation and monitoring of resilience plans. Enhancing social cohesion at neighborhood and city levels would entail having a fair representation of different groups in community based disaster management activities and plans, organizing cultural events and celebrations that will bring people together, peace education in formal and informal education, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources among others. Entry points for this strategic pillar would include (1) building social capital and promoting collective action, (2) poverty reduction, and (3) peace building and conflict prevention programs. An example is the urban pilot in Beirut working with highly diverse urban populations exacerbated by the rapid influxes of refugee populations which indicates the importance of social resilience underpinning any form of collective action and broad-based programming interventions.

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[9] WVI (2016). Cities for Children Framework: A Strategic Framework for Urban Programming.

- **Strategic pillar 2:** Strengthening the quality of *urban governance*, promoting community engagement, local-led advocacy in order to achieve citywide effective policy impact

Increasingly, there is a need for urban areas to be able to withstand disasters, shocks and stressors, and progressively build the future resilience of their populations. It is critical to rely on effective and inclusive formal and informal governance structures that operate with accountability and transparency and effectively, at the various levels of the city, to enable cities to be resilient. All governance actors will need to be empowered and capacitated to actively and equitably participate in resilience activities and strategies (from community members to local governments to private actors and service providers). Entry points for this strategic pillar would include (1) providing education, training to and building capacities of local actors, (2) providing local governments with technical assistance, (3) influencing regulations and planning principles, (4) establishing multi-sectoral partnerships, and (5) improving financing. One example showcasing WV's assistance to local governments with technical capacities is that of Stepanavan project in Armenia where WV was a key actor bringing together in a network a number of organizations to support a local municipality in developing its resilience plan of action and integrating the latter in the community development plan.

- **Strategic pillar 3:** Supporting knowledge building through enhancing the accessibility, representation, accuracy of data and information to leverage and advocate for transformational change

The diversity of vulnerabilities between different social groups, exacerbated by the fluid dynamism of urban populations and power structures, creates challenging obstacles for inclusive and responsive programming for resilience issues. Gaps in data and information are key constraints in devising appropriate strategies for building resilient cities. As disadvantaged poor urban populations are most exposed to the effects and damages caused by disasters, an understanding of their needs, vulnerabilities and proposed solutions based on their experiences are essential for laying the groundwork for inclusive and equitable resilience planning. Entry points for this strategic pillar would include (1) gathering assessment data (including baseline data), and setting indicators and standards and (2) facilitating resident-led risk and hazards mapping, reporting and analysis. Example is WV Ethiopia's vulnerability risk assessments led by children which helped in identifying different hazards from those identified by adults. Children led assessment included social hazards such as drug use, road accidents, fire, HIV/AIDS, child labour practices, and sewer system damage.

- **Strategic pillar 4:** Improving the quality of the built environment, shared public space and service delivery

Given the density of urban populations combined with a lack of space in cities, urban planning and design becomes a key factor for mainstreaming resilience into conventional planning approaches. It is also an avenue for ensuring broad-based consultative processes in decision-making that directly includes and addresses the needs as experienced by the most vulnerable groups. Whether to address slow-onset or rapid-onset disasters, or mainstream resilience into fragile contexts or development practice more generally, the importance of addressing issues related to urban planning and design of urban spaces and the built environment cannot be overstated. Entry points for this strategic pillar would include (1) facilitating inclusive urban planning and management, (2) improving critical infrastructure and services and (3) improving mobility.

To successfully implement entry points projects to contribute to Resilient Cities for children, four **enablers** of change are suggested to build on the urban advantage. Each enabler for change guides development practitioners and local stakeholders in recognizing and utilizing the assets, capitals and advantages already present in urban environments.

Enablers

The four enablers of change for the Resilient Cities domain of change (common to all domains of changes) are:

- **Partnerships: Establishing strong citywide partnerships with and strengthening capacities of all key stakeholders to promote collective action and collaboration for quality, scale and impact**

Building resilience is a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder process, particularly in urban contexts where the city itself functions as a web of interconnected systems. Long-term investment and commitment must be secured from all levels and tiers of urban stakeholders, allowing for the implementation of both grassroots initiatives focusing on the individual and family, and city/district-wide initiatives aimed at influencing social and administrative policy with a resilience lens. World Vision views the tremendous amount and diversity of human, social and cultural capital present within cities as an important urban advantage and as a sustainable urban resource. This approach is based in an appreciation for the value that existing local actors can bring, including significant contextual knowledge, positioning in various target communities, and potential development successes to build upon. World Vision's work in Beirut in engaging children and youth in various interfaith dialogues was essential in improving community resilience in a post-conflict context of fragility and resource scarcity.[10]

- **Technology: Utilizing existing and new technological capacity and innovations to assist in effectiveness and scale up of urban programming, wherever possible.**

Technological infrastructure is significantly widespread in urban environments. Mobile technology in particular penetrates large segments of disadvantaged urban youth. Effective and strategic use of technology, existing or new innovations, is pivotal for supporting the urban resilience initiatives across all strategic pillars, and can often act as important entry points for initiating interventions. Well-implemented technological interventions have the capacity to be ubiquitous, accessible, and engaging for vulnerable urban communities. World Vision's research[11] indicates that technology has a significant potential for generating accurate and improved data related to hazards, risks, educating urban residents (including children and youth) and contributing to better preparedness and DRR measures in emergencies. An example is WV Armenia project on urban resilience where school students were created risk maps during the field exercises, supported with photos and description of hazards related to specific objects or places in the community. Based on children maps and GIS hazard maps, programs for modelling hazards and consequences were developed.

- **Urban Planning and Design: Ensuring urban planning and design is inclusive, participatory and responsive to the needs and solutions of the most vulnerable groups in urban settings**.

Urban planning and design has a significant impact on improving both short-term and long-term resilience capabilities of urban communities, as well as contributing to development gains. For example, resilience-focused urban planning can act to ensure that housing and building regulations are climate change adaptable, can withstand large-scale natural disasters, and ensure that rapid-response emergency centres are located, designed and resourced to be safe and accessible for all sections of the urban population. To respond to everyday hazards, urban planning can upgrade various citywide infrastructures in a long-term resilience strategy, such as improving mobility through public transport, and

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[10] WVI (2016/2014). Making Sense of the City. Revised ed.
[11] Ibid; WVI (2016). *Resilient Cities for Children: A literature review for World Vision's Just Cities for Children Framework.*

upgrading sewerage and drainage systems. If well planned, resilience-focused urban planning is inclusive and considerate of the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised urban groups, including disadvantaged urban children and youth (e.g. street children, undocumented migrant, refugee and trafficked children, and children with special needs). An example is WV Kenya's mobilization of children from Nairobi slums to participate in the process of developing the masterplan of the city; ensuring children needs and solutions are considered.

- **Urban Policy: Ensuring that urban policy at all tiers of the city, from neighborhood level to city and national level, promotes equity and advocates for sustainable development**

The ability to influence urban policy at all tiers of urban governance (neighbourhood/local, municipal/district, and city levels) can have profound top-down momentum to progress all four strategic pillars. This notion is central to UN-HABITAT's recent City Resilience Profiling Programme (CRPP), which supports an integrated forward-looking, multi-hazard, multi-stakeholder, urban systems approach to planning and developing urban settlements. Utilising urban policy will include equipping local actors with the knowledge, skill set and resources to pursue effective advocacy and awareness raising campaigns; supporting improvements to systems of data collection, analysis and sharing to assist in sound policy decisions and advocacy campaigns;[12] training and capacity-building of all stakeholders in rights-based approaches; empowering of local communities with essential advocacy soft-skills such as negotiation and proposal writing; actively including of the most vulnerable voices (including children and youth) in decision-making and programming processes, and sensitising the media to resilience issues. Stepanavan city in Armenia, as part of UNISDR's Making Cities Resilient Campaign, makes an excellent case for governance reform in urban policy. Among its early advocacy successes have been (a) an amendment of a law of local government to include disaster risk assessments in city planning; and (b) inclusion of their resilience action plan into the mandatory four-year city development plan thus enhancing sustainability of resilience efforts.[13] World Vision's own contribution to this multi-stakeholder campaign included providing training on DRR policy, assisting community mobilisation and awareness-raising, and supporting advocacy on policy amendments that mandates risk assessments.

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[12] Open-source systems are an important component. CrisisMappers.net have shown the power of real-time, open-source information platforms for community empowerment.
[13] WVI (2016). *Resilient Cities for Children: A literature review for World Vision's Cities for Children Framework.*