



2012 Autumn School

## “Resilience” – buzzword or useful concept?

29, 30, 31 October 2012 in Plaisians (France)

### INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, many in the humanitarian sector were unfamiliar with the concept of “resilience” but it has now become very fashionable. With the strategic importance it has been given by DFID and the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, Kristalina Georgieva (initiatives in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel), it is now everywhere. Resilience has also become a priority for development agencies as recently expressed by Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator<sup>1</sup>. **A number of high-level initiatives aimed at fostering resilience have been launched**, such as the partnership for resilience to food crises in the Sahel (*AGIR – Alliance Globale pour l’Initiative Résilience – Sahel*) which was launched in June 2012 in Brussels, the Global Alliance for Action for Drought Resilience, launched in April 2012 in Nairobi for the Horn of Africa, and The Political Champions for Disaster Resilience.

**The concept of resilience brings together a series of theories and practices that have been developed over the years:** Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Build Back Better (BBB), vulnerability and poverty reduction and Climate Change Adaptation. Introduced in 2005, the Hyogo Framework for Action provides a very useful reference as its goal is to help communities to build their capacity to absorb shocks and manage disasters more effectively. It encompasses risk reduction, preparedness and response, as well as the capacity to recover quickly in the event of a disaster. It thus contributed to the emergence of the concept of resilience.

Among the most recent threats facing humanity which require even greater resilience is climate change and its likely consequences in terms of aggravated turbulence, unpredictability and increasingly frequent extreme climatic events.

**All around the world resilience is being stretched**, as can be seen from the agro-pastoral crises in the Sahel, the small Island Communities who have seen their land reduced by rising sea levels and the inhabitants of coastal areas who are subject to increasingly frequent typhoons and tropical storms.

### Remaining Questions:

- Is there a common definition of resilience among the different bodies involved in aid?
- What are we talking about: Resilience to what? Whose resilience? Resilience at what level - community-local authority-central administration?
- How can resilience and the impact of resilience-focused projects be measured?
- What concrete examples are there of this concept being implemented in programmes? What are the first lessons learnt?
- Could the concept of ‘resilience’ be the basis of a shared analytical framework for both development and emergency actors?
- Should ‘resilience’ be an operational objective for organisations? How can organisations include ‘resilience’ in their strategic frameworks?
- Is strengthening resilience a political objective for states? Is it an advocacy issue for organisations and donors?

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<sup>1</sup> Humanitas 2012 Visiting Professorship in Statecraft and Diplomacy, Putting Resilience at the Heart of the Development Agenda, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 16 April 2012

The 2012 edition of the Autumn School on Humanitarian Aid<sup>2</sup> will provide a platform for these topics to be discussed. Bringing together the various actors working on the issue of resilience, it will be an opportunity to exchange views and experiences, to explore operational opportunities (guidance, tools, experience in the field, etc.) and review best practices so that we are all able to apply this concept in as substantial a way as possible.

### THE AUTUMN SCHOOL CONCEPT AND THE 2012 EDITION

The 2012 edition of the Autumn School will bring together between 30 and 40 representatives from different EC institutions, Member States, UN agencies, research institutes, NGOs and the Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement, both from the development and humanitarian sectors. The specific target group is policy makers and senior level management. Participants will receive personal invitations, and will be selected on the basis of their previous work on these specific issues.

The event will be held under the Chatham House Rule.

However, the main results of the event will be presented in a report which will be sent to the participants and will also be made available to a wider audience.

### AGENDA

The Open Space method has been used as a facilitation tool in previous editions of the Autumn School and we propose to use it for this year's event. Apart from the presentations sessions, the agenda will not be pre-designed and participants will be invited to propose what they think is useful to discuss.

The proposed agenda for the event is as follows:

#### **29<sup>th</sup> October**

Afternoon: Arrival of the participants, registration

Evening: Welcome, Dinner and evening activity (Key Note speaker)

Projection of a film produced by the RESILIENCE Project

#### **30<sup>th</sup> October**

Morning: Introduction,

2 presentations

First set of open space sessions (about 4 groups)

Afternoon:

2 presentations

Second set of open space sessions (about 4 other groups)

#### **31<sup>st</sup> October**

Morning:

Wrap up of the two open space sessions

Elaboration of an Agenda for change

Conclusion

Afternoon:

Departure

*With support from the European Commission*



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<sup>2</sup> Groupe URD has organised the Autumn School on Humanitarian Aid for the last 10 years. The main idea underpinning the concept of a two-day seminar in Group URD's HQ in Provence is to offer practitioners a different atmosphere in which they can take time for reflection and explore a complex subject related to humanitarian affairs in greater depth. Participants at each edition have confirmed that this is the added value of the event.