



## Building Resilience: The EU's approach

FACTSHEET

### Facts & Figures

In 2013, over 20% of the European Commission's humanitarian funding went to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

More than 62% of ECHO funded projects included disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities, reaching out 18 million people

#### Resilience flagship projects:

##### - AGIR

The EU-led Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) was launched on 6 December 2012 to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable across 9 countries in the Sahel region of West Africa. The Goal of AGIR-Sahel is 'Zero Hunger' in the next 20 years.

##### - SHARE

The EU's 'Supporting the Horn of Africa's Resilience' (SHARE) initiative was born out of the 2011 Horn of Africa food crisis and aims to boost resilience in Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and Somalia.



Cash-for-Work site in Safo, department of Madarounfa (Niger). Photo credit: WFP/Rein Skullerud

### Key messages

- The increasing frequency and intensity of disasters and humanitarian crises and the resulting suffering and losses represent a major threat to long-term development, growth and poverty reduction, in particular in the poorest and developing countries. There is an urgent need to help people and communities to withstand and recover from these increasing shocks and stresses. In other words, help them strengthen their resilience.
- Investing in disaster resilience today is more cost effective than responding to a crisis tomorrow. Action now, to reduce future suffering and loss, is vital in order to ensure better results on the ground, in areas of recurring crises and predictable risks. Focusing on vulnerabilities and addressing root causes rather than dealing with the consequences underpin this approach.
- In 2012, the European Union launched two flagship resilience initiatives: the Supporting Horn of African Resilience (SHARE) and l'Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience - Sahel et Afrique de l'Ouest (AGIR).
- Rapid progress is being made to integrate resilience into programmes in other countries and regions. EU interventions on climate change, disaster risk reduction, agriculture, food and nutrition security and social protection already embed resilience as a policy priority.
- Last year, the European Commission allocated 20% of its humanitarian funding to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Almost two-thirds of all relief assistance projects included DRR activities, reaching out 18 million people worldwide.

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## What is resilience?

Resilience is the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, cope, adapt, and quickly recover from stresses and shocks such as violence, conflict, drought and other natural disasters without compromising long-term development.

One of the ways to boost the resilience of communities to future disasters are through programmes that assist the poorest households before a crisis such as a poor harvest occurs by providing a safety net, for example with cash transfers during the period of the year when their reserves of money and food are lowest.

Another example of resilience-building are prevention and preparedness projects such as early warning systems or disaster insurance, which help local communities face the threats caused by hurricanes and violent storms during the rainy season, or unpredictable events such as earthquakes.

Resilience also encompasses assistance to countries so that they integrate risk management into their development programmes, and to target these at building the capacities of the most vulnerable people.



## The EU approach to resilience

The increasing frequency and intensity of disasters and other humanitarian crises, with the resulting suffering and losses, represent a major threat to long-term development, growth and poverty reduction, in particular for the poorest and most vulnerable people in developing countries. Such misfortunes worsen already fragile livelihoods and reduce opportunities to escape from poverty.

The costs of humanitarian crises are rising and become increasingly unaffordable, as climate change generates more severe weather-related events and as the world faces new pressures such as population growth, urbanisation, land and eco-systems' degradation, scarcity of natural resources, fragility of states and complex conflicts.

There is an urgent need to help people and communities to withstand and recover from increasing shocks and stresses. In other words, help them build their resilience.

In October 2012, the Commission presented its Communication ['The EU Approach to Resilience - Learning from Food Security Crises'](#) to confirm its strong commitment to



building resilience in crisis-prone countries. The document underlines that increasing resilience is a central aim of European Union's external assistance.

[The 'Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020'](#) operationalizes the Communication and sets the ways forward for a more effective EU collaborative action on building resilience, bringing together humanitarian action, long-term development cooperation and on-going political engagement.

This EU approach adds value to the already existing EU commitments to risk management and resilience, including initiatives on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, social protection, nutrition and food security. It will ensure that different sectors complement and work better together towards the shared goals of reducing poverty and humanitarian needs. Resilience will be factored into all EU development and humanitarian assistance.

## The EU Action Plan for Resilience

Building resilience is a priority for external assistance in countries facing recurrent crises and lays the foundations for larger investments in prevention, preparedness and mitigation. The European Union's Action Plan for Resilience outlines the steps to be undertaken for delivering early results and supports collecting best practice on effective support to help populations in need. Priority will be given to vulnerable countries that face recurrent crises and that are risk-prone.

The successful implementation of the Action Plan requires strong collaboration among EU Member States, other partner countries, the affected communities themselves as well as NGOs, international organisations, the private sector and the research community.

### STRATEGIC COMPONENTS:

The EU aims to place resilience building as a central development and humanitarian priority in countries facing recurrent crises. The priority is to deal with the vulnerabilities and root causes of crises rather than only with their consequences. The resilience approach aims to reduce humanitarian needs and underpins more equitable and sustainable development gains.

Planners and policy makers must do more to assess risk scenarios, reduce vulnerability and enhance the ability of individuals, communities and countries to absorb and recover from shocks – be it economic, political, ecological, climate related, or triggered by natural hazards. New ways of working, and more effective humanitarian-development collaboration in political dialogue, are now needed.

### PRIORITIES:

#### **Supporting the development and implementation of national resilience capacities**

Early priority in the action plan is given to vulnerable countries and regions where both EU humanitarian and development assistance are present. The aim is to develop shared assessments, strategies and implementation plans to build resilience. The EU is already incorporating resilience into many programmes beyond those in the Sahel and Horn of Africa: in the Philippines, for instance, successful resilience initiatives bring together local governments and civil society.



## Promoting innovation, learning and advocacy

A common understanding of what works and what does not and why it is required. The European Union and partners are working on new approaches and systems of monitoring and research to establish better practice and to scale up or to further advocate for resilience. In Haiti and the Caribbean, for example, the EU has been at the forefront of developing catastrophe insurance for prompt pay-outs when a disaster strikes, both at national and local level.

## Improving methodologies and tools

Effective mechanisms and guidance are being developed to support the EU (the European Commission, the European External Action Service or EEAS and the EU Delegations) as well as all relevant stakeholders in implementing their resilience commitments. In partnership with the United Nations and other partners the European Union is currently developing InfoRM, the first global tool to measure the risk of humanitarian crises and help better prevent, mitigate and prepare for them.

### FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES:

- [Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience](#) (SHARE - 2012)
- [L'Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience](#) - Sahel et Afrique de l'Ouest (AGIR - 2012)
- Disaster Risk Reduction programmes in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and Global Climate Change Alliance programmes.

A performance management framework, as well as related monitoring and evaluation tools, tracks progress on Action Plan implementation.

## Examples of projects contributing to resilience



**In West Africa**, the European Union is collaborating through AGIR with regional and national authorities who are setting up a food security reserve system in case of food crisis. The programme involves farmers, local authorities, national governments and regional institutions. Effective coordination allows the mobilisation of the most appropriate response to specific food crises reducing the negative side effects often produced by traditional emergency food distributions. © EC/ECHO

**In Mali**, the European Commission helped 3 500 families rebuild their livelihoods in the Kayes region through project run by Oxfam. They received cash grants through local banks and a local microfinance organisation, and were trained on household budget management, nutrition and hygiene. As a result, most of them have not only been able to feed their families through the leanest months of the year, but also to invest in building livelihoods that will make them more resilient. © Oxfam



**In Somalia**, the EU is improving food security, nutrition and livelihoods for 100 000 people affected by drought. Activities include seed production, the distribution of fertilizers and increasing income-generating opportunities. In terms of livestock, communities' most valuable asset, activities focus on animal health, fodder production and



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the prevention of starvation. This not only helps to safeguard livelihoods of vulnerable herders but also gives them an alternative to make a living. © EC/ECHO



In **Ethiopia**, resilience is being built in selected areas that in the past have regularly been stricken by drought and where humanitarian assistance has been provided on and off. EU assistance there includes support to productive activities, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition and health. A longer-term presence in these areas is foreseen, whereby a quick change from a predominantly humanitarian to a development mode and vice versa will be possible if the situation so requires. © EC/ECHO

**Vietnam** is frequently hit by tropical storms causing floods and landslides. School-based disaster preparedness sessions funded by the European Union have taught approximately 500 000 school children and over 15 000 primary school teachers how to prepare for and cope with disasters involving all concerned people in drafting child-friendly safe-school plans. This program uses innovative and child-friendly methods, such as the simulation exercises and drills. © EC/ECHO



**Tajikistan's** Pamir mountain ranges, with peaks reaching over 7 000 metres, are particularly prone to disasters. It is here that disaster preparedness is crucial to increasing the resilience of the population, as it has been done since 1996 by the EU disaster risk reduction programme, DIPECHO. People live in the narrow valleys surrounded by steep mountains prone to avalanches, mudslides or debris slides, and building terraces along the slopes help to reduce their speed and force. © EC/ECHO

In **Nepal**, early warning systems proved their worth in August 2010. When flood levels on the Rapt river breached the warning level, communities downstream were notified through a radio and telephone network. They had time to shift their essential and movable assets to higher and safer places. When the flood reached the villages, all potentially affected people in those locations had already reached safety. The early warning systems thus minimised losses of life and property. © EC/ECHO



In **Haiti**, an initiative supported by the EU has provided low-income microentrepreneurs with affordable insurances against weather-related risks. Thousands are now better protected against losses derived from natural calamities, preventing them from default on debts and/or problems to get loans when they need funding to recover from a crisis. Despite being a highly disaster-prone country Haiti has one of the world's lowest insurance rates, so efforts are being made to scale up these endeavours. © EC/ECHO

