

Ripping off the band-aid

Putting people at the centre of the humanitarian system

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Contents

Contents	3
List of Acronyms	4
Executive summary	5
The impacts of food crisis in East Africa: low resilience revealed in high numbers facing hunger	7
Resilience lessons from the past, for today and for the future	11
Conclusions and recommendations	18
End notes	20

Cover: Joseph Mutinda Ndiku, 66, at his farm in Iviani, Kathekani area, Mtito Andei ward, Makueni County, Kenya. April 2022.
Photograph: Christian Aid/Felixie Kipngetich

List of Acronyms

CIFA Community Initiative Facilitation and Assistance

CCCF County Climate Change Funds

ENSO El Niño-Southern Oscillation

FEWS NET Famine Early Warning Systems Network

G7 Group of Seven

INGO International non-governmental organization

IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

L2GP Local to Global Initiative

NNGO National non-governmental organization

PVCA Participatory Vulnerability and Capability Assessment

Sclr Survivor and Community-Led Response

WMO World Meteorological Organization

Executive summary

Millions of people in East Africa are on the brink of famine. Hundreds of millions more around the world continue to starve. In a world where there is enough food for everyone it is an outrage that people die of hunger, that governments and markets cannot make sure there is enough food available and affordable for everyone. While governments, companies and civil society should respond to those currently facing life-threatening hunger, there is an equally important challenge to think longer term – to ensure that governments and international donors and institutions have the correct systems and policies in place to save lives and prevent crises becoming catastrophes in the future.

Governments, donors and the public have reacted swiftly and generously to the war in Ukraine. The war, however, has had unforeseen knock-on effects on global food and energy security and has distracted from the early warning signs of the current crisis. There has been a much smaller and slower response from the international community to this multi-country food crisis, which is most acute in East Africa.

Moreover, the aid system is not designed to respond to the ever-increasing scale of newly emerging and protracted crises. The old model of reacting too late to one crisis after another, launching big appeals and delivering costly emergency assistance too late is becoming discredited. It is a humanitarian sticking plaster, an attempt to cover deep structural problems which, unless addressed, will simply perpetuate the cycle of crisis and dependency. The United Nations report a record funding gap this year for humanitarian work, with only a third of the requested \$48.7bn received, in a year of huge humanitarian need.¹ This reflects a growing trend.

There is a stark lack of policy and funding coherence in the nexus between climate adaptation, development, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian funding. Despite global commitments to scale up capacity to anticipate crises, and act early as the default, the rhetoric has not translated into true change at the necessary scale. This means opportunities to reduce risks are missed. Despite sophisticated and prescient warning systems at global and national level, these systems are not well connected or cascaded down to local and community level. The cost of not acting early is even more stark as food prices rise yet governments have increasing deficits due partly to poor economic recoveries from Covid, leaving them little room to support poor consumers and farmers.

Recommendations to national governments

- Support responses that centre community resilience in all phases, from relief to recovery and rebuilding. Use processes that are conflict-sensitive, and consider the specific needs of various groups, such as IDPs and host communities, and farmers and pastoralists.
- Provide appropriate budgetary support to agricultural and livestock development, recognising their role in the economies of East Africa and therefore in the resilience of communities. Favour, through subsidies if needed, agroecological approaches that work with nature and the current market realities regarding access to agricultural inputs.
- Mainstream adaptation into local and national development plans, with a focus on resilience, such as by improving access to water and rangeland, providing budgetary support. Ensure local communities can influence decision making.
- Provide adequate social protection funding and support to address the impacts of crises, particularly to those who are vulnerable, and for households who lose their livelihoods and assets. Prioritise working with donor governments to create sustainability plans so social protection systems are supported through domestic budgets.

This is why a new approach is needed: it's time to rip off the band-aid and invest more in communities during and between crises. Resilient communities build on their indigenous knowledge and ensure that they are stronger and more likely to withstand future crises. Governments and donors can make positive policy choices to complement early warning systems and anticipatory action. But pre-arranged finance is needed for better investment in coherent resilience policies and systems to respond to the danger signs. Communities need to be able to rely on government for predictable support both in crisis and before the situation becomes extreme. These can span climate-friendly agriculture to overseeing markets and investing in public services.

Christian Aid's experience of working with local partner organisations in Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan shows that people's ability to withstand failed harvests and rising food prices can be significantly improved with supportive preventive action. Our experience in the region has taught us what works to build that resilience. Approaches that could improve crisis preparedness for the future and reduce the need for humanitarian assistance are Survivor and Community-Led Response (sclr) and Participatory Vulnerability and Capability Assessments (PVCA). Christian Aid and partners' experience of agroecology also demonstrates its value in enhancing resilience for those using it and for the wider community and ecosystem.

Overview of this brief

The brief will set out how the failure to build resilience is resulting in a food crisis in East Africa, particularly in Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan. These countries have slightly different contexts, however they share a number of structural drivers. These include climate change, weak governance, lack of investment in rural development, multidimensional conflict, population displacements and migration, Covid, escalating global food prices and food insecurity due to fragile, 'just-in-time' global supply chains. The response to the growing crisis has been hugely inadequate – both in responding to the early warning signs and the scale and effectiveness of belated action to support those now contending with famine. Christian Aid recommends governments and others are galvanised to invest in structural changes to improve the resilience of people, governments, policies and systems. With a longer perspective and investment, those on the front line of climate change and other shocks should be able to thrive in a changing context.

Recommendations to donors and international institutions

- Support the humanitarian response at the needed speed and scale. All available funding in humanitarian and development pipelines should be released to the front line immediately.
- Ensure transformative practice in line with Grand Bargain 2.0. Funding must be flexible, multi-year and predictable, with pre-financing available to respond to early warnings with anticipatory action. It must be delivered through equitable local partnerships, with support to the leadership and delivery capacity of local responders, and the participation of affected communities.
- Support the scale-up of locally driven approaches to humanitarian response, such as through sclr, complementing traditional approaches and communities' natural strengths and cohesion, to allow them to respond rapidly to meet their needs using existing capacity, knowledge and opportunities.
- Support and incentivise a joined-up approach between humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction and adaptation, positioning early warning and early action as a resilience approach. Carefully consider timelines to ensure different funding mechanisms are coherent and layered to best respond to crisis, recovery and resilience-building stages.

The impacts of food crisis in East Africa: low resilience revealed in high numbers facing hunger

Below: Amel Jong Akech, 28, lives in Nyamlel Aweil West in Northern Bahr El Ghazel State, with her children. Christian Aid supported her with seeds and farming training. As a result, she was able to cultivate plenty of produce. Christian Aid/Silvano Yokwe.



Communities in East Africa are experiencing catastrophic impacts of four – soon to be five² – lost rainy seasons in the past two years. This is the third major drought this decade. Communities' ability to cope with a series of failed rains and droughts is successively reduced. People struggle to fully recover between disasters. Women and girls are particularly affected as they tend to make up a larger proportion of the workforce of smallholder farms,³ and when food is scarce, they eat last and least. In Kenya, women report having to walk three times further for water. In Ethiopia and Kenya, child marriage has skyrocketed, increasing by 199% and 98%, respectively.⁴ At the same time, these communities have been experiencing other shocks that have affected their food security and livelihoods, including conflict, flooding, desert locust infestations, and the lingering effects of Covid on prices.

The war in Ukraine has exacerbated these challenges by disrupting supply chains and reducing supplies of essential crops such as wheat and sunflower oil to the global market, increasing prices. Governments, which are still dealing with the economic impacts of Covid, are now more dependent on pricey imports at a time when they lack fiscal firepower to cushion poor consumers. The tragedy of the food crisis we are now witnessing is that its causes could have been addressed, that even without preventive action it was predicted and even in the midst of it responses are inadequate.

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Escalating Hunger in East Africa

The speed with which the situation has escalated is shown by the fact that hunger has more than doubled in one year. On World Humanitarian Day 2021, there were 1.4 million people in Kenya in crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)3+).⁵ In Ethiopia, there were 16.8m people in IPC3+ in 2021, including 400,000 already in IPC5.⁶ The Government of Ethiopia released US\$2.1m in anticipatory funding to blunt the effects of drought in 93 woredas in July 2021.

On World Humanitarian Day this year, in Kenya 4.1m people are now severely food insecure with 3m in 'crisis' level food insecurity (IPC3+).⁷ In Ethiopia, there are 8.1m drought-affected people, 13m in need of food aid in northern Ethiopia alone, and 20m food insecure across the country. FEWS NET predicts 14-15m will still be in IPC3+ for 2022. In South Sudan, there were 7.2m people in IPC3+ on WHD last year and 7.74m⁸ this year. In Ethiopia and South Sudan, the UN reports gaps in funding so severe that they have had to cut rations, deliver incomplete food baskets and reduce the overall number of people served.⁹

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, there are currently 16.99m drought-affected people (up from 8.1 million in the first half of the year),¹⁰ with 9.88m requiring food assistance and 4m needing water.¹¹ In southern Ethiopia, there are 334,000 people internally displaced over the past year. Humanitarian access in northern Ethiopia remains fraught, hampering the delivery of aid and fuel. In Tigray and Afar, food insecurity and malnutrition are driven by conflict, subsequent displacement, difficulties accessing markets and high food prices. In southern Ethiopia, unprecedented multi-season drought as well as flooding are affecting pastoralist communities. An estimated 3.5 million livestock have died of starvation, with another 25 million at risk.¹² Men and boys in pastoralist communities must trek further afield for water and pastureland, which has exacerbated conflict and inter-communal tensions with competition over these scarce resources. At the same time, women, girls, the disabled and elderly people are left behind for longer periods, lack regular income to access basic items and food, and are exposed to protection risks. Ethiopia's economy is highly dependent on agriculture, with some 75% of the country making it their livelihood.¹³ Food price inflation in Ethiopia is up 42.9% year on year as of June 2022,¹⁴ among the highest in Africa and even more significant since Ethiopians typically spend nearly half of their income on food and drink.¹⁵

In Ethiopia, Christian Aid's programming is supporting resilience and basic needs during the drought. Local partner organisations working with Christian Aid are building the resilience of farmers, herders and vulnerable people with food and veterinary support for animals; access to clean water; and seeds, tools and cash.

Kenya

In Kenya, 4.1 million people are severely food insecure due to the drought. The failure of the spring 'long rains' and predicted failure of the October-December short rains, puts Kenya in an unprecedented catastrophe affecting crops, livestock and rangeland in the north and central counties. Some 40% of Kenyans (70% of rural Kenyans) make their living from agriculture.¹⁶ Crop production of key commodities like maize was 50% below the five-year average in some areas this spring, with others experiencing full crop failures.¹⁷ Agriculture production was also influenced by high prices of inputs like seed and fertiliser, due to the lingering effects of Covid and the knock-on effects of the war in Ukraine. As of the end of July 2022, 25-85% of Kenya's grassland was affected by severe drought, forcing pastoralists to trek 30-120% longer than average to find water and grass for their animals. As in Ethiopia, pastoralist families are facing greater protection risks due to long periods apart as men and boys move with their animals. Livestock herds have faced a significant decline due to the starvation of more than 2.4 million animals.¹⁸ Below average milk production and poor sales prices for sickly animals further contribute to food insecurity of pastoralists. Overall food price inflation is 12.4% year on year.¹⁹

In northern Kenya, Christian Aid works through partners to ensure people and animals have access to water; delivering cash for families to meet basic needs; and supporting animal health to build resilience to the drought conditions.

South Sudan

In addition to drought in Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan has been plagued by a different set of compound shocks, including widespread conflict and insecurity, and four seasons of large-scale flooding related to climate change and related displacement. This has led to loss of crops and animals²⁰ in a country where 95% of people are dependent on agriculture, livestock rearing or fishing for their livelihoods.²¹ An estimated 835,000 people were displaced in 2021 due to South Sudan's worst-ever flooding.²² Some 7.7m people, or 63% of the population, are facing crisis-level food insecurity during the summer lean season. Funding cuts leading to the suspension of WFP rations to 1.7m people in July²³ have pitched the country closer to catastrophe, as aid agencies have been forced to move aid from bad to worse areas. South Sudan is currently experiencing extreme food price inflation for key items and is highly dependent on imports for food and fuel. Prices of key food commodities have increased 70-100% in some areas.²⁴

Key Terms

Resilience: Resilient people live with dignity, and are able to respond successfully to disasters, risks and opportunities. Resilience is both a process (steps taken to achieve an end) and an outcome (an end result) that enhances the ability of individuals and communities to 'anticipate, organise for and adapt to change'.

No regrets action: A 'no regrets' approach covers actions taken by individuals, communities and governments that increase resilience and have value or benefit from an economic or social perspective whether an event – such as drought or other hazards – takes place or not.

Anticipatory action: Anticipatory approaches aim to respond when risks – not needs – increase, in order to head off the worst impact of a shock or crisis by quickly releasing funding that is arranged in advance. This approach allows communities to preserve their resilience capacity and avoid heavy losses to livelihoods and assets.

Triple Nexus: The nexus is a policy concept within the aid sector that is largely understood as stronger collaboration, coordination and interlinkages among actors from the fields of development cooperation, humanitarian action and peacebuilding and the cohesiveness of the agencies involved.

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In South Sudan, Christian Aid is responding to the conflict-driven displacement and the effects of this season's rains with unconditional cash to prepare communities for the upcoming planting season, and to support the basic needs of displaced people.



Above: Pastoralist herdsman Mekonnen Sofar, 38, takes his cattle to a dry river bed where he will excavate to find water to supply to his livestock in Mukecha Kebele, Ethiopia. Christian Aid worked with local communities and government to identify and act to mitigate the risks posed by climate extremes and disasters. Mr. Sofar was part of a group of government and community stakeholders that worked to generate reliable climate information which will be used to interpret and respond to climate extremes. Christian Aid / Elizabeth Dalziel.

Resilience lessons from the past, for today and for the future

It is vital that the Governments of Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan learn from this latest crisis to put in place longer-term solutions to the food crisis and implement policies that will break the cycle of food insecurity. They can do this by investing in the resilience of those communities particularly vulnerable to shocks so that the next crisis does not have such acute consequences. There are also many ways that donors and international institutions can support increased resilience, through anticipatory action and a coherent Triple Nexus approach. The nexus is a policy concept within the aid sector that is largely understood as stronger collaboration, coordination and interlinkages among actors from the fields of development cooperation, humanitarian action and peacebuilding and the cohesiveness of the agencies involved. While this is a useful framing for thinking about how to address complex crises, in practice operational actors often struggle to implement this full range of activities.²⁸ Christian Aid's experience with community-based approaches shows that communities often naturally manage their basic needs, long-term risks and potential for conflict as they move through sclr and PVCA approaches. The current crisis also highlights that the resilience of governments and international processes need to be increased alongside those at the sharp end of climate and food shocks.

Learning from past crises

In 2011, 250,000 people in the Horn of Africa died from hunger; however, by 2017 the humanitarian community, including local organisations, showed they had learned from that catastrophe, acting on early warnings and averting major loss of life. Between 2017 and 2021-2022, early warning systems for shocks, capacity for early action, and social protection systems to prevent extreme hunger were further institutionalised. But these systems only work if duty bearers act quickly and effectively on early warnings. In the past two years, warnings of climate conditions impairing likely crop yields have been sounded without sufficient corresponding action.

As early as September 2020, the Global El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Analysis Cell, which monitors El Niño/La Niña weather patterns, raised the alarm by releasing a list of high-risk countries and calling for planning to mitigate a drought crisis. They released an updated warning in November 2021.²⁹ These warnings were presented to the UN system, NGOs and

Hangatu Mazingira Women's Group, Kenya

During the challenging times brought on by Covid and the start of the current drought, Community Initiative Facilitation and Assistance (CIFA) worked with a community group to expand their existing meat supply business by adding a butcher shop and setting up a savings and loan scheme for group members, initially supported in 2021 with a business grant. This project was selected in a participatory process (sclr) to rapidly identify and respond to needs during the crisis.

As the drought escalated in 2022, the group felt the impact on their business. Their former customer base struggled to afford what they once could because their incomes had dropped, and as the quality of animals available was poor, the group could not demand high prices. Despite these challenges, the group is still working together. The shop still manages to turn a profit. Nearly 80% of group members have taken a loan to cover basic needs, such as food, providing a safety net for families in the depths of the drought. Trainings provided by CIFA in financial management, conflict resolution and group dynamics have helped them navigate and plan in the challenging drought conditions and manage difficult decisions like how to prioritise loans in a time of great need. With more group members in need, the group prioritises the loans based on transparent vulnerability criteria.

governments. However, national governments and the international community failed to respond at the scale needed to avert crisis. The region is again on the brink of starvation and a colossal appeal for more than US\$5bn has been launched, with only around one third committed so far. The USA recently announced US\$1.2bn to combat hunger in the Horn of Africa and condemned other countries for not doing more to alleviate the effects of the crisis brought on by Covid and the war in Ukraine.³⁰ This money is welcome, but emblematic of the too-late 'sticking plaster on a gaping wound' approach that arrives only once the possibilities for community resilience are already exhausted.

Communities where Christian Aid's partners have been working over the past 10 years have shown that investing in resilience strengthening programmes makes a difference in the long term. After 10 years of constant climate shocks within the region, our programming evidence shows that with the correct investments in communities, which are supported to manage their multiple interconnected risks and opportunities, they are empowered to live with dignity, make choices for themselves and are much better able to withstand and respond to shocks.

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What needs to be done?

- *Government agencies:* The primary responsibility for responding to crises such as droughts lies with national governments. Governments in East Africa need to prioritise enhancing local resilience in different ways. The relatively more prosperous economy in Kenya, compared to Ethiopia and South Sudan, corresponds to higher expectation that the government should provide more support to communities affected by the food crisis. Yet given the scale of the current crises, with around 18 million affected, it is incumbent on donors and international organisations to use the tools that are available as a result of learning from earlier crises to enhance government responses in East Africa.
- *Donors:* There are financial and other actions which governments, donors and international institutions can undertake to respond effectively to the causes and symptoms of the food crisis in East Africa. Many donors have invested in supporting the development of early warning systems. But when early warnings are triggered, governments and donors that have invested in such systems need to be genuine in responding to an emerging crisis. As well as delivering aid at scale and quickly, donors

need to make sure they are incentivised to invest early to stave off fully developed crises.

- *Communities:* Christian Aid knows that it is crisis-affected communities themselves that are always the first responders, meet the rising needs. In many crises, they are often the only responders, sometimes not receiving any external help. Christian Aid almost always works through such local partners, avoiding direct implementation. They can only rely on their networks and resources. Communities do not distinguish relief by sector as professionals tend to do. Their experience is naturally holistic; risks and well-being are interconnected. The solutions they identify are holistic and long term. Nevertheless, communities tend to lack resources. Power is not equally distributed which can lead to minority or vulnerable groups being left behind. Communities can do a lot but can also benefit from helpful external policies and sometimes direct support, and from national plans more supportive of local action.

Acting early to prevent crisis

Responding to formal early warning systems and less formal indications of emerging crisis (such as changing crop yields or surges in the price for certain commodities) can save lives and ultimately more money in the long term, preparing communities to support themselves. In March 2022, the UN Secretary General António Guterres asked the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to create an action plan to cover everyone on earth with early warning systems for extreme weather and climate change.³¹ Currently, about a third of people are still not covered by any early warning systems. The WMO cautions that early warnings and forecasting alone are not enough; there must be a coordinated response across weather services, and development and humanitarian actors.³² There is a set of recognised tools termed ‘anticipatory action’ designed to proactively respond before a situation becomes a crisis. Anticipatory approaches aim to respond when risks – not needs – increase, in order to head off the worst impact of a shock or crisis by quickly releasing funding that is arranged in advance. This approach allows communities to preserve their resilience capacity and avoid heavy losses to livelihoods and assets.

Country-level anticipatory action frameworks have three elements: a trigger for action if the risk of a shock is high; pre-identified activities; and pre-arranged funding to ensure the funds are there to carry out the activities in good time.³³ A High-

Rangeland reserve reseeded in Ethiopia

Christian Aid’s partner Action for Development worked with communities and the Government of Ethiopia’s Department of Livestock to holistically support pastoralist communities to manage drought conditions by reseeded of a rangeland reserve and strengthening community capacity to support animal health.

This approach is consistent with the Government of Ethiopia’s development policy. With the largest livestock population in Africa (65 million cattle, 40 million sheep, 51 million goats, 8 million camels, and 49 million chickens), livestock are important for economic development, food and nutrition security, and poverty reduction in Ethiopia.

Support to pasture and forage for animals, including hay making and storage, as well as tree planting with drought-tolerant species, are critical to strengthening communities’ resilience to climate change. A community leader commented, ‘Growing grass is a new activity - before we did not fence our rangeland and we did not sow it with grass. We harvested the grass seed and will keep it in reserve for next year. We used to store grass at home, but wind and rain destroy it and goats can easily steal it; now we have storage.’

Level Event on Anticipatory Action took place in September 2021, resulting in the commitment of a two-year, US\$140m pilot for anticipatory action that includes Ethiopia and South Sudan.³⁴ While this model augers well, there is a danger that the sound intention to back anticipatory action is undermined by the lack of resources to implement pre-identified activities. This is an area where donors can play a direct and facilitating role to ensure that governments on the front line of crises are not penalised for taking effective anticipatory action, for example, through recognising that speeding up debt restructuring can help provide fiscal space to governments dealing with an emerging crisis.

Pre-arranged finance for anticipatory action

Evidence generated by Start Network suggests that around 55% of humanitarian funding goes to crises that are somewhat predictable, and yet only 1% of funding is organised in advance.³⁵

Over the past year when governments and international institutions were shown data that the deteriorating food security situation was becoming critical, they could have acted fast and partially averted it, but the finance to undertake such actions was missing. National governments raised the alarm, but this was not acted on at the necessary scale despite the G7 famine compact which committed US\$8.5bn for famine prevention. There has been no transparent accounting of what has actually been spent. The pledges included committing the multilateral systems to be more responsive to crisis and take more early action. Now we are in a phase of crisis, the immediate emphasis needs to be on emergency funding. In the longer term, the system needs to be more resilient not least by freeing up funding to invest in anticipatory action and pre-empting crisis. Even in the crisis phase, investing quickly to stem the numbers of people severely affected saves lives and livelihoods. There must be easily accessed pre-arranged finance to respond at scale when the thresholds are reached.

In the face of escalating climate emergencies, it is both possible and necessary to prepare systems and funding in advance, to ensure more timely, effective and efficient action to assist communities at risk. The new normal of slow onset climate impacts and intensified extreme weather patterns such as El Niño makes droughts more likely. Yet donor funds are diminishing, so the humanitarian/aid community and national governments affected by extreme weather need to raise their ambition and do things differently. Extreme weather-related

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shocks and slow onset crises are not going to stop but they can be managed and adapted to.

Social protection systems

Social protection schemes in East Africa generally aim to provide regular assistance to vulnerable populations against risks and shocks, such as hunger. Social protection schemes are designed to top up vulnerable families' incomes during normal conditions to avoid forcing them to slip into crisis or negative coping mechanisms. They are not meant to cover the full population of a given area, provide the full cost of living, or to support a rebound if a family has been wiped out in crisis. In the current extreme conditions experienced by many people in East Africa, social protection tools are not sufficient to preserve resilience but can provide vital bridging support to some households dealing with particular aspects of a shock.

The African Union's Social Policy framework committed member states to minimum standards in social protection in 2009.³⁶ Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan's social protection systems cover only a small proportion of households and the amount of funding provided is not sufficient to support a family in extreme need. In all three countries, there is significant architecture in place, but the systems are not yet fully funded by governments and remain at least partially donor dependent. Governments could discuss with donors long-term plans to fully fund more comprehensive social protection systems from domestic revenue, while exploring whether donors could 'backstop' additional costs necessitated by a crisis in the absence of sufficiently funding anticipatory action.

Strengthening community resilience approaches

People are more likely to be resilient to shocks if they have more assets, can adapt their livelihood to changing circumstances, have free access to quality public services and can prepare in advance for a crisis. Quality development programming generally enhances resilience, but there are also specific things that governments and civil society organisations can do. Christian Aid's localised resilience approach sees convergence with the principles of locally led adaptation and is endorsed by many research institutes and governments.³⁷ 'No-regrets' approaches based on these principles build the foundation for community resilience strengthening. A 'no regrets' approach covers actions taken by individuals, communities and governments that increase resilience and

Christian Aid frontloads emergency response to food crisis

Christian Aid launched an appeal for East Africa in July 2022. In order to meet needs immediately, the board took the unprecedented step of approving the release of £1m from our reserves and some reprogrammed funds. This financing strategy allows Christian Aid to move quickly without having to rely on public attention and fundraising at a time when the world's attention is on Ukraine and other crises.

Christian Aid is lucky to have a supporter base that allows us to generate flexible funding, but that is rare for INGOs and even less likely for the small, local agencies that deliver most frontline work with communities. Pre-financing and flexible funding opportunities should be available for all NGOs, not just the biggest.

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have value or benefit from an economic or social perspective whether an event – such as drought or other hazards – takes place or not.³⁸ In the past 10 years Christian Aid and partners around the world have developed, tested and adopted approaches which aim to link preparedness, response and resilience by reinforcing local networks, mutual aid, agency and dignity, and support communities to cope with crisis using their own skills, to bounce back and thrive over time.

Programme approaches to enhance resilience

- Survivor and Community Led Response (sclr) is an emergency response approach developed by Local to Global Initiative (L2GP) to support and resource spontaneous or pre-existing self-help groups affected by sudden or protracted crises to respond in a holistic way. In sclr, cash microgrants paired with a participatory action learning in crisis methodology are used to transfer power and resources to existing and emergent local self-help groups and organisations that mobilise during every crisis. This allows for the rapid, inclusive, bespoke and decentralised provision of additional assistance to scale up interventions and increase survivor's resilience.
- A Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PVCA) is carried out with a community to collect, analyse and systematise information about its vulnerability in a structured way. Its main purpose is to: identify the key vulnerabilities of a particular community; understand how community members perceive risks and threats to their lives and livelihoods; analyse the resources (capacities) and strategies available to them to address or reduce these risks; and help the community develop and implement an action plan as an important output of the PVCA process. If done well, it has an empowering effect by reinforcing people's capacity for collective action, enabling a community to understand the interconnected risks it faces and identifying opportunities to mitigate the risks in order to make informed decisions about its future. In fragile contexts the Integrated Conflict Prevention and resilience approach helps to make the whole PVCA process conflict-sensitive and more proactively link the macro context and the local context in terms of analysis and solutions.
- Agroecology is an integrated approach that encompasses a wide variety of farming systems with an emphasis on diversity, locally led and contextualised approaches to harness much greater resilience in food and agricultural systems. Rather than relying on expensive chemical inputs

which damage soil and water leading to diminishing returns, it focuses on both farmer and scientific knowledge and harnesses natural processes to bring sustainability to the food system. Widespread adoption of agroecology would see huge benefits to soil health, water usage, climate change and increased yields and profit to farmers.

Opportunities for systems change

The Grand Bargain was negotiated in 2016 as part of the World Humanitarian Summit, to reform the humanitarian sector to be more efficient in the face of increasing global needs and address inequalities across the system. Despite the slow progress, there have been notable successes particularly at country level, and it has helped change the narrative of how the humanitarian system works. The new Grand Bargain 2.0 Framework focuses on two priorities: 1) Quality funding: multi-year, flexible, predictable and transparent, in equitable partnerships with local actors, and 2) Greater support for leadership, delivery capacity of local responders and participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs. These are the perfect system changes that can support resilience or locally led adaptation programming to navigate complex crises such as in East Africa. Donors, UN agencies and INGOs have an opportunity to activate these changes and so move from a band-aid approach to a long-term plan premised on prevention, early action and effectiveness.

The new Grand Bargain 2.0 Framework focuses on two enabling priorities: 1) Quality funding in terms of multi-year, flexible, predictable and transparent in equitable partnerships with local actors, and 2) Greater support for leadership, delivery capacity of local responders and participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs. These are the perfect system changes that can support resilience or locally led adaptation programming to navigate complex crises such as in East Africa.

Latu Self Help Women Group – Rehabilitation of Range Lands for community resilience in Kenya

CIFA supported a group of women to rehabilitate 25 acres of rangeland for grazing animals. In 2021, the group received a micro-grant via sclr to support their plans to improve the land, and despite the drought's persistence they have been able to keep up the productivity of their land to support livestock and the local market for fodder. For the initial process of transforming the land, the group hired a rotating group of 16 people per week for four weeks to do the work of felling trees and fencing off the rangeland. Despite the drought, the group was able to successfully plant grasses and have sold off three harvests of hay, turning a profit each time above their projections. They also sell firewood from the land in the local market.

The group set up a welfare and loan scheme with their profits, banking half in a group account and providing loans with the rest. Members also contribute 100Ksh per month to a welfare fund for vulnerable community members, so the group's success is shared with the wider community. Since the drought has affected group members' overall family incomes, some members have struggled with basic costs and cannot always make their 100Ksh contribution. Despite these challenges, the group recently paid for the medical bills of a community member who was in a bad motorbike accident and needed treatment at the national hospital.

Conclusions and recommendations

The aid system is failing to work with and through communities to promote resilience, lurching from crisis to crisis using an oversimplified approach to a complex problem. The system needs to address complex risks and drivers, and put communities at the centre of finding solutions to meet basic needs while addressing longer-term root causes to support resilience and peace. This approach starts with community resilience, but needs to be backed up with predictable, timely funding from governments and donors, before a problem becomes a crisis. Anticipatory action is effective and financially efficient. Longer-term investment in social protection systems also helps to ensure otherwise vulnerable people can be supported through crisis in a predictable way without them risking using or losing all their assets.

Christian Aid's experience, which is unpacked in the case studies, shows that communities that have been prepared for crisis by for example ensuring that their land is able to be farmed despite the drought, that the village has a loan facility to buy fodder, or they have been able to diversify their livelihoods, in other words building resilience, have fared better in this latest catastrophe. Approaches like PVCA and sclr work well to smooth the effects of a crisis by facilitating communities to identify and address risks, support them to be more cohesive, and connect them into government systems or private sector opportunities that can support them further. Such community-based approaches complement and reinforce anticipatory action by maximising the options for dealing early with the warning signs of crisis, and supporting communities to take action to reduce the impacts of impending crisis. The system needs to change to have a chance of tackling global challenges such as hunger, climate change and other complex crises. It's time to rip off the band-aid.

Recommendations

To national governments

- Support responses that put community resilience at the centre in all phases, from relief to recovery and rebuilding. Using processes that are conflict-sensitive, and consider the specific needs of various groups, such as IDPs and host communities, and farmers and pastoralists.
- Provide appropriate budgetary support to agricultural and livestock development, to recognise the outsize role of agriculture and livestock in the economies of East Africa and

therefore in the resilience of communities. This support should favour, through subsidies if needed, agroecological approaches that work with nature and the current market realities regarding access to agricultural inputs.³⁹

- Mainstream adaptation into local and national development plans, with a focus on improving resilience, such as improving access to water and rangeland. This requires budgetary support; a promising example is Kenya's County Climate Change Funds (CCCFs) which provide funding and training for adaptation activities and help communities connect with county and national-level government.
- Provide adequate social protection funding and support to address the impacts of crises, particularly to those who are vulnerable, and for households who lose their livelihoods and assets. Prioritise working with donor governments to create sustainability plans so social protection systems are supported through domestic budgets.

To donor governments and international institutions

- Support the humanitarian response at the needed speed and scale. All available funding in humanitarian and development funding pipelines should be released to the front line immediately given the scale of the need.
- Giving funding alone is not enough; donors should ensure transformative practice is followed in line with Grand Bargain 2.0 commitments. Funding must be flexible, multi-year and predictable, with pre-financing available to respond to early warnings with anticipatory action. It must be delivered through equitable local partnerships, with support to the leadership and delivery capacity of local responders, and the participation of affected communities.
- Support the scale-up of locally driven approaches to humanitarian response to complement traditional response approaches, such as sclr, that build on communities' natural strengths and cohesion to allow them to respond rapidly to meet their needs using their existing capacity, knowledge and opportunities.
- Support and incentivise a joined-up approach between humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation, positioning early warning and early action as a resilience approach. Carefully consider the timelines of the needed responses to ensure different funding mechanisms are coherent and layered to best respond to crisis, recovery and resilience-building stages.

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