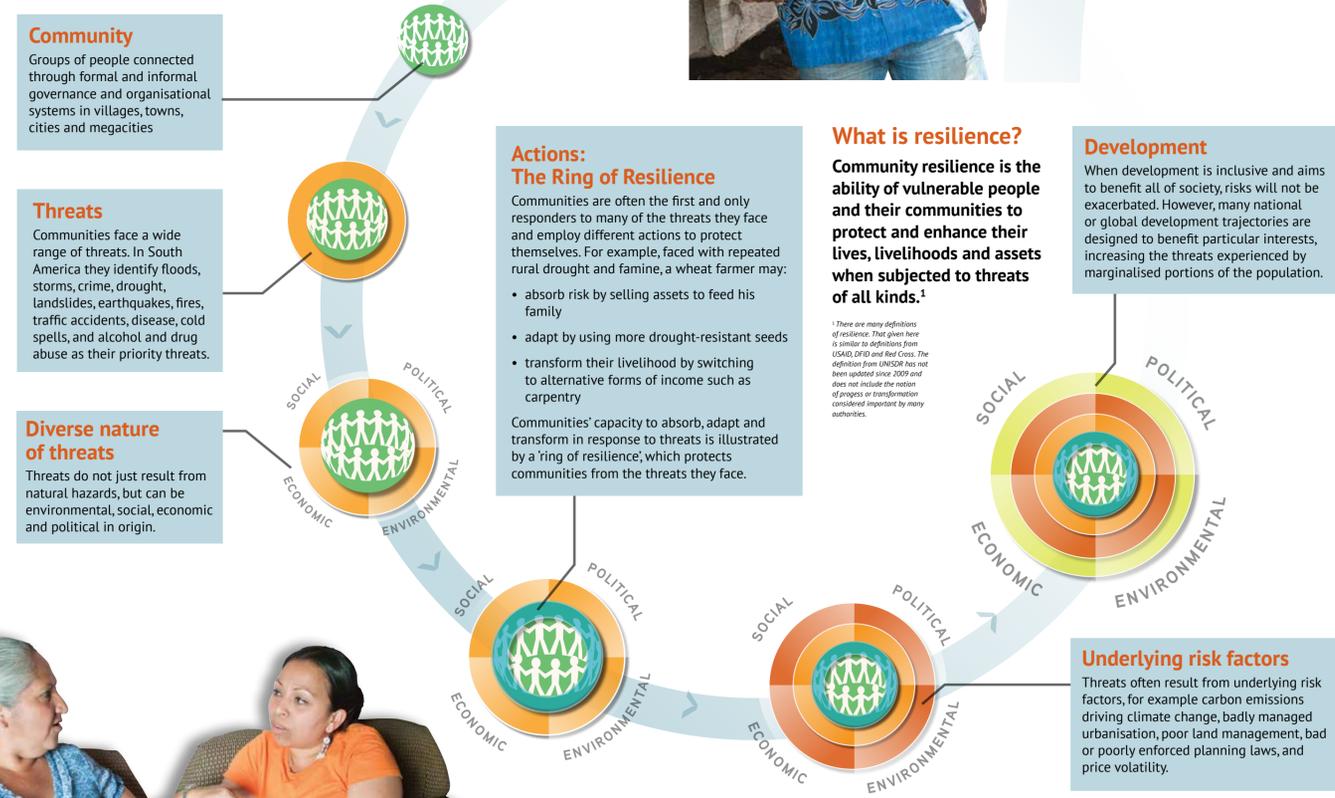# Measuring and enhancing effective adaptation. Learning about resilience from local people

Billions of people at the frontline face multiple threats, both extraordinary and everyday, that impact their lives and livelihoods. Many are poorly understood and undocumented. Local communities are often left to build resilience through self-organisation and self-reliance. They develop detailed knowledge of the threats they face, the consequences of these threats, communities' capacities to address threats, and the underlying factors that create

barriers to this. This knowledge enables communities and individuals to absorb, adapt and transform: protecting and enhance their lives, livelihoods and assets. This local knowledge must be the starting point for action at all levels; whether it at the local, national or global. *Frontline* is a programme for gathering and sharing this knowledge to be used at different levels for monitoring and enhancing adaptation.

Adaptation and resilience

The resilience circle diagram, right. highlights the interrelationships between the threats communities face, the actions that communities employ to build their own resilience, the underlying risk factors that create barriers to action, and the development pathways that impact how threats are experienced by communities.

Community
Groups of people connected through formal and informal governance and organisational systems in villages, towns, cities and megacities

Threats
Communities face a wide range of threats. In South America they identify floods, storms, crime, drought, landslides, earthquakes, fires, traffic accidents, disease, cold spells, and alcohol and drug abuse as their priority threats.

Diverse nature of threats
Threats do not just result from natural hazards, but can be environmental, social, economic and political in origin.

Actions:
The Ring of Resilience
Communities are often the first and only responders to many of the threats they face and employ different actions to protect themselves. For example, faced with repeated rural drought and famine, a wheat farmer may:

- absorb risk by selling assets to feed his family
- adapt by using more drought-resistant seeds
- transform their livelihood by switching to alternative forms of income such as carpentry

Communities' capacity to absorb, adapt and transform in response to threats is illustrated by a 'ring of resilience', which protects communities from the threats they face.

What is resilience?
Community resilience is the ability of vulnerable people and their communities to protect and enhance their lives, livelihoods and assets when subjected to threats of all kinds.[1]

[1] There are many definitions of resilience. That given here is similar to definitions from USAID, DFID and Red Cross. The definition from UNISDR has not been updated since 2009 and does not include the notion of progress or transformation considered important by many authorities.

Development
When development is inclusive and aims to benefit all of society, risks will not be exacerbated. However, many national or global development trajectories are designed to benefit particular interests, increasing the threats experienced by marginalised portions of the population.

Underlying risk factors
Threats often result from underlying risk factors, for example carbon emissions driving climate change, badly managed urbanisation, poor land management, bad or poorly enforced planning laws, and price volatility.

Frontline: How it works

Frontline is able to capture local knowledge from one-to-one conversations and aggregates this to local, national, regional and global scale. The programme has already gathered data from 13,000 respondents in 15 countries in South America.

It starts with a *conversation*
The *Frontline* method starts with individual conversations with the holders of local knowledge: community members, civil society organisations, and local government officers. Each conversation is based on four basic questions:

Threats: What are the threats you face in your community?

Actions: What capacity do you and your community have to take action against these threats?

Consequences: What impacts do these threats have on the lives and livelihoods of you, your household and your community?

Barriers: What factors beyond your control lead to these threats?

From one conversation to many
Frontline has the ability to gather thousands of individual conversations together into local, national or global databases combining all responses. This information can be analysed by gender, age, location, and socio-economic group, amongst other factors.

At the Local Level: The consultations facilitate community reflection, resulting in wider dialogue and partnerships, and provide valuable evidence to guide local budgeting and action plans.

At the National and Global Levels:
Frontline data can be used to create more appropriate and effective national policies and plans, ensuring that local level realities are both understood and considered. It can also be used as a monitoring tool for measuring progress in the post-2015 frameworks, including those for disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

Frontline Central America Data Dashboard www.gndr.org/tableau/ca

The data can be filtered to view results by gender, age, location, socio-economic group and other factors. They can also be filltered to show a region, country or locality.

The priorities given to threats are shown for the whole dataset, or after any filters have been applied the chart will then show priorities for particular respondent groups or locations. A particular threat can be selected and the charts for 'consequences', 'actions' and 'barriers' will then show those reported for that threat.

The charts showing 'consequences', 'actions' and 'barriers' will show how these are reported for each threat when a particular threat is selected. 'Consequences' provides additional information about the nature of the threat. 'Actions' indicates the perception of local capacities, and 'Barriers' indicates underlying causes which constrain action.

Monitoring
Frontline data → Grounded resilience indicators → LOCAL MONITORING AND BASELINES → Disaster risk reduction / Sustainable development / Climate change adaptation

Data from *Frontline* can provide local perspectives on the extent to which frameworks, policies, and plans are being translated into change at the local level. Local knowledge of the threats that affect communities, and the capacities that they have to deal with them, is a vital component of measuring local level progress in the achievement of all the post 2015 frameworks. This includes those for disaster risk reduction, development, and climate change adaptation. *Frontline's* national and global databases provide local level 'grounded indicators', meaning that they are drawn from real life. These indicators can be used to assess the resilience of respondents at local, national and global level.

Frontline data can also be used to establish accurate risk and resilience baselines for the year 2015-2016, to inform ongoing monitoring of these frameworks.

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