



# Technical Note

## Evaluating Resilience in WFP centralised and decentralised evaluations

### 1. Introduction

1. The WFP Resilience Policy update (2024) (hereafter referred to as resilience policy)<sup>1</sup> calls for multi-level, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and context-specific approaches to strengthen resilience to enhance people capacities in managing shocks and stressors while improving their food security and nutrition, ultimately reducing humanitarian food assistance needs.
2. Resilience plays a significant part in WFP programming at country level. Understanding WFP's performance towards resilience outcomes needs well-defined evaluation approaches informed by recent and relevant experience and evidence.
3. **Audience and Purpose of this technical note:** This technical note is intended to help WFP evaluation managers and evaluation teams plan for and design their evaluations, with the aim of better assessing resilience outcomes. Evaluations covering resilience interventions in WFP have encountered challenges and achieved mixed success in understanding and assessing resilience. The note is expected to be of relevance to teams conducting a variety of evaluations including policy and strategic evaluations, country strategic plan evaluations (CSPEs)<sup>2</sup> and decentralized evaluations (DEs)<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, this note aims to:
  - Clarify key **resilience concepts and definitions** that should guide WFP evaluation work in the context of resilience programmes.
  - Unpack **what to evaluate in resilience programmes** in line with the WFP resilience policy, so that results/outcomes can meaningfully be assessed.
  - List possible **approaches on how to evaluate resilience programmes** and methods to enhance rigour and utility of evaluation findings.
4. **Scope and limitations:** This note unpacks the concept of resilience as it applies to WFP evaluations and outlines related approaches and challenges. It does not prescribe or describe specific evaluation methods, since these may vary across evaluation contexts and types and there is already an existing large body of methods-focused material available. Some links are provided for methodological approaches to assess how resilience interventions have contributed to wider WFP results in the country

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<sup>1</sup> [Resilience policy update](#)

<sup>2</sup> For CSPEs, evaluators are not expected to evaluate individual resilience projects, but rather to assess how and the extent to which resilience interventions have contributed to CSP results.

<sup>3</sup> Impact evaluations are not covered by this guidance note. For more information on impact evaluations please refer the impact evaluation brief and the South Sudan Impact Evaluation.

## 2. Understanding Resilience - Key concepts and definitions

5. Building on existing United Nations definitions, “resilience” in WFP<sup>4</sup> is defined as “the capacity of individuals, households, communities, institutions and systems<sup>5</sup> to prepare, anticipate, absorb, recover, adapt and transform in the face of shocks and stressors in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner.”<sup>6</sup> The key features of resilience programmes are that they:
- are tailored to specific shocks and stressors that they aim to mitigate.
  - have more complex and interlinked results chains compared to crises responses.
  - aim to have multiple, layered and sequenced interventions, following a programming logic according to which certain activities are implemented once others have been finalized.
  - strengthen capacities to address shocks and stressors at multiple levels from individual to system levels.
  - require longer time scales, sustained support and multi-year investments for certain outcomes to be realized.
  - are implemented at a meaningful scale to address challenges and create outcomes
  - are done in partnerships that leverage the complementary strengths of various actors.

### Box 1: Key Definitions<sup>7</sup>

**Resilience capacities:** Systems, institutions and people are considered resilient when they have at their disposal a set of distinct capacities and resources that are crucial to cope with, withstand or bounce back from adverse events and shocks.<sup>8</sup>

**Anticipatory capacity:** is the ability to take early action in anticipation of a potential threat to reduce its potential negative impacts; including through early warning, early action and forecast-based financing.<sup>9</sup>

**Absorptive capacity:** is the ability to take protective action and ‘bounce back’ after a shock using predetermined responses to preserve and restore essential basic structures and functions. It involves anticipating, planning, coping and recovering from shocks and stressors.<sup>10</sup>

**Adaptive capacity:** is the ability to respond to change by making proactive and informed choices, leading to incremental improvements in managing risks. It can also be thought of as the ability of social systems to adapt to multiple climate-change risks and learn and adjust after a disaster.<sup>11</sup>

**Transformative capacity:** is the ability to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic or social structures make the existing system untenable.<sup>12</sup>

**Shocks:** are external short-term deviations from long-term trends that have substantial negative effects on people’s current state of well-being, level of assets, livelihoods, or safety, or their ability to withstand future shocks.<sup>13</sup>

**Stressors:** are long-term trends or pressures that undermine the stability of a system and increase vulnerability within it.<sup>14</sup>

**Layering:** is a combination of multisectoral activities that are implemented in the same targeted geographic areas and/or communities to contribute to strengthening resilience. For example, when nutrition and school feeding packages, food assistance for assets (FFA), Smallholder Agricultural Market Support (SAMS) and lean season support are implemented in the same (cluster of) communities.

**Sequencing:** is the timing of activities that follow a logical order in line with seasonality, shocks and stressors, livelihood and programme requirements. For example, when the programme shifts from a primary focus on environmental rehabilitation to food value chain strengthening and income generation, along with a progressive reduction of the lean season support.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> This guidance refers to systems only in the definitions as WFP’s interventions to a large extent target households,

<sup>6</sup> This technical note defines four of these capacities, namely anticipatory, absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities based on the 2020 United Nations Common Guidance on helping Build Resilient Societies

<sup>7</sup> The capacities are context specific (i.e. what may be transformative in one context may not be transformative in another context). Also the characterization of different types of capacities often overlap, therefore a granular categorization of capacities may not be possible or desirable. What is important is to understand that the capacities exist on a continuum. For example, WFP’s actions in emergency settings, addresses people’s de facto lack of resilience pathways through to adaptation and transformative change.

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from United Nations (2020), United Nations Common Guidance on helping Build Resilient Societies, New York (UN).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

### 3. What to evaluate? WFP's engagement in resilience

6. The overall vision for WFP's resilience strengthening efforts is laid out in the 2024 [resilience policy](#) and its accompanying theory of change (See Annex 4).<sup>15</sup> WFP aims to enable people to better manage shocks and stressors while improving food security and nutrition, ultimately reducing humanitarian food assistance needs. This vision will be achieved through three complementary and interlinked outcome areas, with outcomes 2 and 3 bridging humanitarian assistance and longer-term support using a nexus approach while outcome 1 is cross-cutting. WFP's engagement and activities are context-specific and may not systematically cover all outcomes. The three outcomes of the Policy are described below, with examples of typical WFP activities to contribute to these outcomes.

#### Box 2: Resilience Outcomes per WFP Resilience Policy

Outcome	Intervention Level	Examples of WFP Activities
<b>1</b> <i>Women, girls and marginalized people are empowered with capacity, agency and opportunities to manage shocks and stressors</i>	Individual, household, community, institutional and/or systems level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting equitable control over resources, including provision of food &amp; cash assistance or assets.</li> <li>Supporting women's participation in social protection groups, savings and loan groups, and facilitate their access to microinsurance.</li> <li>Supporting access to new knowledge, skills and techniques (e.g. through trainings on agricultural practices).</li> <li>Creation of assets that reduce work burden and time pressures during shocks (such as from water and fuel collection).</li> <li>Ensure women's equitable inclusion in safety nets and social protection schemes</li> <li>Supporting community dialogue and institutional change to advance empowerment and gender equality.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> <i>People and Communities have enhanced and diversified livelihoods that enable them to better manage shocks and stressors</i>	Individual, household, community, institutional and/or systems level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community-led land and ecosystem restoration, regenerative practices and agroecology.</li> <li>Creation and rehabilitation of additional assets that support households and communities to withstand shocks and stressors (e.g. flood protection walls to prevent flooding and water storage or small-scale irrigation structures to reduce impact of low and erratic rainfall)</li> <li>Supporting smallholder farmers and value chain actors to equip them with knowledge, information and techniques (climate information services, risk financing, financial inclusion, post-harvest management, access to markets, etc.)</li> <li>Supporting local food systems (e.g. home-grown school meal programmes)</li> <li>Nutrition programmes (e.g. SBCC, nutrition-oriented cash assistance)</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> <i>Local and national actors are better able to support people and communities in preparing for, being protected during and recovering from shocks</i>	Build upon and strengthen the capacity of local and national actors to prepare for shocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting social protection systems</li> <li>Supporting the government in emergency preparedness, anticipatory action, and disaster risk financing</li> </ul>

<sup>15</sup> [Resilience policy update](#)

7. 'What to evaluate' is heavily determined by what type of evaluation is being conducted. A decentralised evaluation may for example be assessing the full WFP resilience portfolio in the country; specific aspects of the resilience portfolio; and/or resilience activities in a given geographical area or even across countries. A Country Strategic Plan evaluation covers the full range of WFP engagement in a country context, and resilience activities are therefore likely to comprise only a proportion of the areas of engagement being assessed.
8. The terms of reference for the specific evaluation and the inception report will determine the exact scope of the evaluation based on the purpose, evaluability assessment and other considerations. Depending on this scope, the evaluation should assess one or more outcomes and connected sub-results of resilience interventions at household, community and institutional level. Examples of such results by outcome are listed in Annex 5.
9. During the inception phase, and according to the evaluation scope, evaluation teams should thoughtfully select indicators that reflect resilience outcomes at household, community and institution level. Examples of corporate WFP indicators to measure change across the resilience results chain are presented in Annex 3. Evaluation teams are also encouraged to explore and develop non-WFP indicators to assess WFP's contributions to resilience outcomes.

## 4. How to evaluate resilience? Approaches and methods

10. As part of **theory-based approaches** commonly used in WFP evaluations, a **theory of change (ToC)** for resilience programming can explain how and why a programme is expected to support households, communities or institutions to better manage shocks and stressors to improve longer-term food security and nutrition. A well-defined ToC helps evaluators to understand and explain what changes have occurred, where and why.
11. While for a CSPE, developing individual theories of change for resilience programmes may not be feasible, the main elements of the ToC (intended results at different levels, how these will be achieved, and underlying assumptions, see below) for resilience programming should be built into the overall (reconstructed) ToC for the CSP. For programme-specific (usually decentralised) evaluations, the ToC may have been put together by the country office or may need to be reconstructed by the evaluation team during the inception phase.
12. To accurately assess effectiveness, **evaluators should collect and use data on results and processes at all levels of the ToC pathway** – from activities to outputs and outcomes. During inception, evaluators determine what results can realistically be assessed, and what data gaps should be filled by the evaluation. The data will support the assessment of contributions across different results levels. It will also help with the evaluability assessment.
13. As part of the data collection and analysis, **evaluators should test the validity of assumptions of the ToC** to understand factors that influence resilience capacity outcomes of households, communities and institutions. Assumptions (see examples in Box 3) are essentially the conditions that are necessary for the results chain to be realized. This may include assumptions on the context (e.g. availability of funding, roles and capacities of other actors, functioning structures and systems in place, and community willingness and ability to engage) that could affect the realization of outcomes and timeframes of change.

### *Box 3: Examples of assumptions of a resilience programme TOC*

If the ToC states that the programme helps farmers to diversify crops leading to increased and more stable income during shocks, some assumptions could be that:

- Farmers harvest crops of sufficient quantity and quality to sell at the market.
- Farmers have access to a market for their new crops.
- The market is able to withstand all but the most 'major' of shocks and stressors as defined by the local population.

If an assumption is unlikely to hold true (e.g. if farmers are unlikely to harvest crops of sufficient quantity and quality), the evaluators should assess its effect on the outcomes.

14. **Methods** Evaluations need to draw on multiple qualitative and quantitative evidence sources to collect, analyse and triangulate all evidence in a **mixed methods framework**. It is important that the methods used enable the evaluation to capture contexts and people's experience, to adequately assess resilience outcomes.
15. Evaluators can draw from a number of complementary quantitative and qualitative methods for assessing resilience outcomes at household, community and institution level depending on the ToC, the evaluation type, and the role of resilience within it (see box 4 with examples of such methods).



**Contribution analysis**, used to identify the contribution an intervention has made to a change or set of changes, helping to understand the "how" and "why" beyond an outcome.

**Most Significant Change (MSC)** involves the collection and selection of stories of change, collected from project stakeholders, particularly suitable for programmes where desired changes and related indicators are hard to set at the start, which is often the case in resilience programmes.

**Outcome mapping** focuses on changes in the behaviour of the people, groups and organizations influenced by a programme. It can be used to assess resilience interventions which have non-linear models of change or lack TOCs. Evaluators could use a complete outcome mapping methodology or only apply some of its elements and principles to assess outcomes of resilience interventions.

**Process tracing** is a case-based and theory-driven method for causal inference that applies specific types of tests to assess the strength of evidence for concluding that an intervention has contributed to observed changes. Evaluators should examine the sequence of events or processes in a project leading to the observed resilience outcomes.

**Trend analysis** examines changes over time (including in the short, medium and long-term), while considering conditions (i.e., shocks, stressors and structural factors) that either enable or interfere with the ability to achieve and maintain food security during and after shocks and stressors. This requires data collected from the same beneficiary groups during multiple rounds. In cases where impact evaluations have taken place, the evaluation can build on results from these evaluations.

## 5. Common challenges and mitigation measures

16. Evaluators should be aware of common challenges experienced in assessing resilience outcomes due to the complex dynamics and contexts of resilience programming.

### A) Scope (boundaries) of the resilience portfolio

17. Defining the **scope and boundaries of a WFP's resilience portfolio** can be challenging. Often, evaluations, particularly CSPs, must rely on the CSP focus area labeled 'resilience' to identify relevant activities. However, in practice, activities designated under the 'resilience' focus area during the CSP design phase may not be consistently designed, implemented or labelled with a clear or intentional resilience-strengthening approach. During the inception phase, evaluation teams should critically assess whether a resilience strengthening approach for relevant activities is intended, using the above mentioned three outcomes as a guide.

### B) Timeframes for assessing contributions to results

18. Strengthening resilience is a **medium to long-term objective**, and expectations of rapid results can undermine the validity of evaluative analysis and judgement. Changes may have occurred but not yet been observed in practice or may not be explicitly linked to ongoing interventions. For example, assets constructed during the CSP timeframe may not be fully functional at the time of the evaluation, or assets created before the CSP may have benefitted communities during the current CSP. Evaluators should use the ToC and methods such as process tracing to establish and measure **changes that can realistically be expected** to have happened at different points in time, and identify where/why these changes have occurred, and their links (or otherwise) to WFP interventions.
19. Resilience will also need to keep pace with intensifying climate hazards and their differing degrees of intensity. For example, WFP interventions may support people being resilient to near term hazards but be insufficient to make them resilient to future hazards, and/or those of greater severity. Assessing the sustainability of outcomes in the medium to longer term is a key challenge for evaluators. All findings need to be interpreted against the background of types of shocks and their severity. People's perceptions about their ability to withstand shocks and stressors should be considered, as these affect decisions on short-term and longer-term livelihood coping mechanisms.
20. Timelines for measuring resilience are rarely aligned with the occurrence of shocks, which are not necessarily regular, and can vary in their intensity and frequency. Seasonal changes are also important to consider in measuring resilience outcomes, as these may vary throughout the year. If a shock does not occur during the evaluation's time frame, it may be difficult to determine if the programme has accomplished its expected resilience outcomes. In the absence of shocks during the implementation period, the evaluation should focus on the programme's **contribution to building the capacities** that are deemed to be important for resilience through e.g. subjective assessments of people's perceptions about their ability to handle future shocks and stressors.

## C) Resilience measurement

21. WFP CRF indicators face limits when interventions are short-term, or target groups change. Additional challenges include indicator validity, data reliability, and the use of single measures, such as the food consumption score, which falls short of capturing beneficiary resilience comprehensively.
22. Because no single source provides credible insights and depending on the evaluation type (CSPE or decentralised evaluation), **evaluations should apply mixed methods (see Box 4) and triangulate** across diverse data. CRF indicators should not be considered the sole. Ultimately, evaluators need to remain realistic about the level of rigor possible, given the limitations of WFP CRF indicators.

## D) Time and resource requirements

23. Time and resources allocated for data collection in evaluations are limited, particularly for CSPEs, where a team has to collect data on WFP's entire in-country portfolio. Accordingly, and adjusting for evaluation type, evaluators should undertake an evaluability assessment to inform the evaluation's scope (temporal, programmatic, geographic), questions, and dimensions of analysis related to resilience. For CSPs with an extensive resilience portfolio, this may be more in-depth, and/or as part of evaluation cycle planning, a decentralised evaluation with a focus on resilience may be built in, on whose results the subsequent CSPE can build.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Select Bibliography

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## Annex 2: Resilience Resources, Guidance and Tools

### WFP guidance and tools

**Resilience Evidence Toolkit** has been designed to be used to generate evidence on an integrated resilience programme where – aligned with the 2024 resilience policy – the same people, communities and geographic areas are targeted over multiple years with integrated programming on a scale sufficient to address challenges.

Note on **WFP's Resilience Monitoring and Measurement (RMM) approach in the Sahel:**

<https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfps-resilience-monitoring-and-measurement-rmm-approach-sahel>

### WFP's Progress on Resilience Evidence Generation:

[https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document\\_download/WFP-0000154532](https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000154532)

### External guidance and tools

UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies.

Available here: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-common-guidance-helping-build-resilient-societies>

International Climate Fund, UK Government (2024) Key Performance Indicator 4: Number of people whose resilience has been improved as a result of ICF. Methodological note.

*ICF KPI 4 is an outcome indicator that measures the success of UK climate change adaptation programming. This guidance note specifically concerns changes in the climate resilience of individuals. Available here:*

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e0b94f3f6945001d03602e/KPI-4-number-people-resilience-improved1.pdf>

World Bank (2017) Evaluation of resilience-building operations for Task Team Leaders.

*This document presents a five-step process to support World Bank Task Team Leaders (TTLs) in the design of evaluations for resilience-building projects/programs. Steps are organized around key factors that evaluations should consider when planning, designing, implementing, and managing evaluations. This document seeks to inform design and delivery of relevant, robust, and useful evaluations. Available here:*

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/669941506093754016/pdf/119937-WP-PUBLIC-P155632-68P-ReMEEvaluationGuidanceFinal.pdf>

Jones, L (2019) A how-to guide for subjective evaluations of resilience. Resilience Intel.

*This guide outlines what subjective evaluations of resilience are and how self-evaluations of resilience can be collected in a robust way, going through important steps needed in delivering a subjective survey, using the Subjectively Evaluated Resilience Score (SERS) approach as an illustrative guide. Available here:*

<https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/how-guide-subjective-evaluations-resilience> USAID Resilience Measurement

Practical Guidance Note Series

*This series synthesizes existing technical documents into pragmatic guidance to assist practitioners in integrating core aspects of resilience measurement into their program assessments, design, monitoring, evaluation, and learning. In five parts, the series introduces key concepts and guides practitioners through the process of resilience measurement, from assessment to analysis. Available here:*

<https://express.adobe.com/page/rSG16sulleW7d/>

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## Annex 3: Examples of corporate WFP indicators to measure change across the resilience results chain

### Resilience capacities:

- Resilience capacity score (RCS) or climate resilience capacity score (CRCS)
- Percentage of the population in targeted communities reporting benefits from an enhanced livelihood asset base (ABI)
- Percentage of FFA supported assets that demonstrate improved vegetation and soil conditions
- Proportion of people engaged in income generating activities (IGAs) as a result of skills development training
- Climate adaptation benefit score (CABS)
- Proportion of targeted households where there is evidence of improved capacity to manage climatic shocks and risks
- Number of national policies, strategies, programmes, and other system components contributing to Zero Hunger and other SDGs enhanced with WFP capacity strengthening support
- Proportion of Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index (EPCI) capacity parameters with improved rating
- Number of people covered (WFP indirect beneficiaries) by national social protection systems or programmes to which WFP provided support

### Drivers of vulnerabilities:

- Proportion of households where women, men, or both women and men make decisions on the use of food/cash/vouchers
- Proportion of women and men reporting economic empowerment

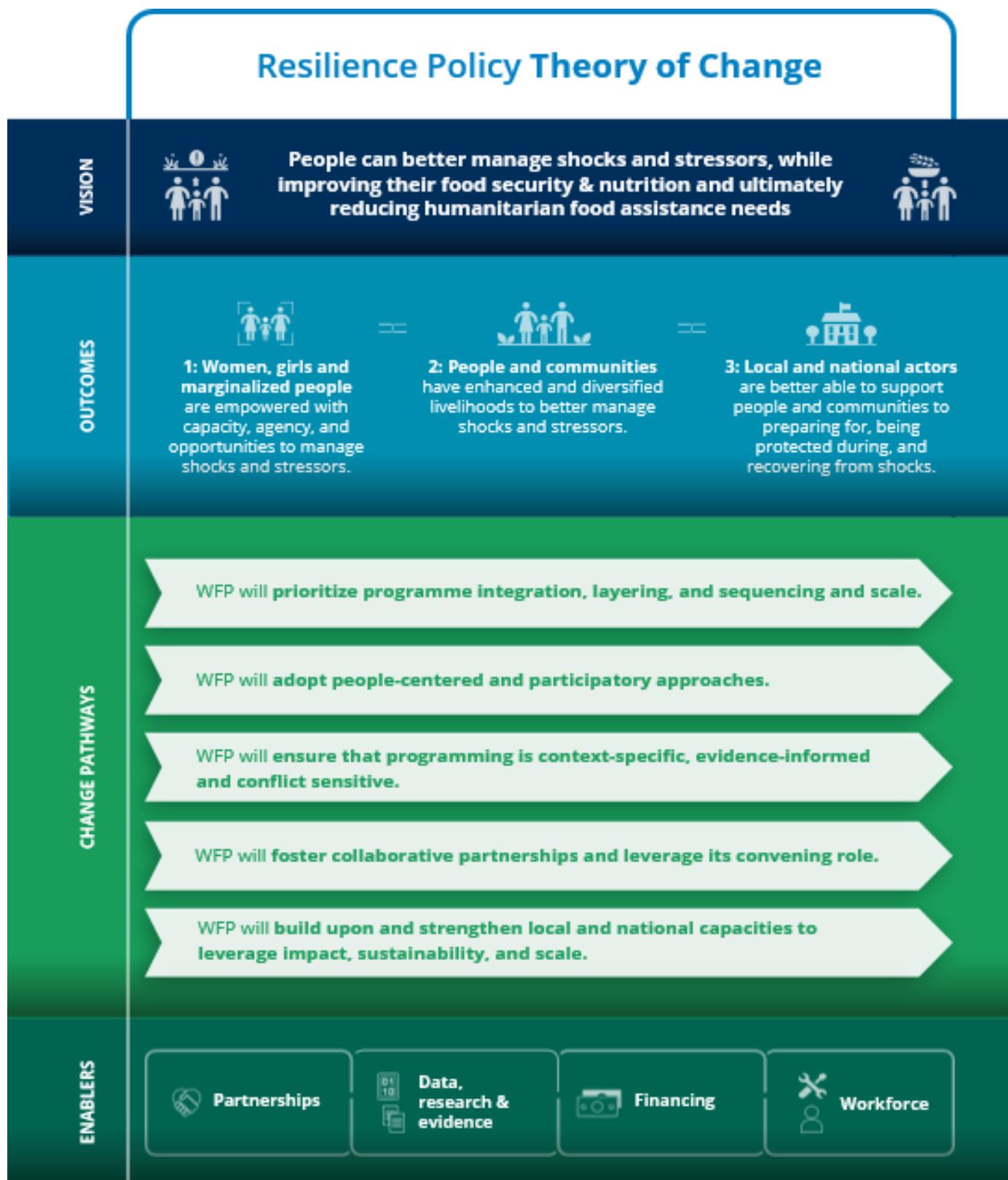
### Actions to manage shocks and stressors:

- Consumption-based coping strategy index (rCSI)
- Livelihood coping strategies (LCS)

### Food security and nutrition:

- Food consumption score (FCS)
- Minimum diet diversity for women and girls of reproductive age (MDD-W)
- Economic capacity to meet essential needs (ECMEN)
- Proportion of children 6-23 months of age who receive a minimum acceptable diet (MAD)

## Annex 4: Resilience Policy Theory of Change



Source: WFP Resilience Policy Update (2024)

## Annex 5: Results per outcome

Outcome	Household Level	Community Level	Institutional Level
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced skills (e.g. entrepreneurial, financial, literacy, agricultural techniques) to manage shocks</li> <li>Enhanced access to financial services during crises</li> <li>Enhanced access to safety nets by women, girls and marginalized people during shocks</li> <li>Enhanced access to and control over resources (cash, food, inputs)</li> <li>Women able to make informed decisions on diet, diversification and use of resources in the household</li> <li>Enhanced production of local nutrient-dense indigenous crops</li> <li>Enhanced asset creation (e.g. rainwater cisterns, fuel efficient stoves)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced access to nutrition, health, water and sanitation during crises</li> <li>Enhanced leadership of women and marginalized people</li> <li>Enhanced structures to manage natural resources</li> <li>Enhanced trust and social cohesion within communities</li> <li>Enhanced food aggregation, storage and processing capacities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the extent to which WFP programmes have contributed to development of policies and systems benefiting women, girls and marginalized people.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved and sustainable farming practices (post-harvest practices, managing risks, food production)</li> <li>Smallholder farmers integrated into agricultural value chains (buyers, aggregators, processors)</li> <li>Enhanced ability to produce local nutrient-dense indigenous crops</li> <li>Enhanced access to social protection mechanisms, to help manage shocks and stressors</li> <li>Enhanced access to and use of climate information and services to mitigate any shocks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent of land and environmental rehabilitation.</li> <li>Enhanced diversification and sustainability of the natural resource base (land, forests, water)</li> <li>Enhanced access to markets, market information, risk financing and/or improved financial inclusion</li> <li>Enhanced inclusion of women, youth and other groups by farmer groups, processors, retailers, traders</li> <li>Enhanced community-based early warning systems</li> </ul>	
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced access to shock-responsive safety nets and social protection mechanisms, to help manage shocks and stressors</li> <li>Enhanced access to and use of climate information and services to mitigate any shocks</li> <li>Enhanced community access to early warning and assessment services to warn of imminent climate shocks and trigger local preparedness actions</li> <li>Enhanced access to inclusive anticipatory action mechanisms before shocks hit to protect and minimize the loss of lives, assets and livelihoods</li> <li>Enhanced community-led disaster mitigation and risk reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved targeting and registration processes that allow for faster response when crises hit</li> <li>Existence and use of national emergency disaster preparedness and contingency planning protocols</li> <li>Existence and use of anticipatory action frameworks and mechanisms</li> <li>Enhanced ability to embed anticipatory action in national social protection systems</li> <li>Existence and use of national disaster risk financing frameworks</li> <li>Enhanced capacity of institutions that deliver services to protect populations during crises</li> </ul>