



Learning Lab
Resilience Thinking

A virtual series to explore and shape resilience together



RésEAU



SPC Network Climate, DRR & Environment



ODI Global

Welcome to Session 4

Partnership for resilience in practice - Navigating contexts and constraints

11 March 2026

Today's speakers



Maryam Rezaei
*Lead food systems,
ODI Global*



Simon Levine
*Senior research
fellow, ODI Global*



Bruce Campbell
*Senior Policy Advisor
Agriculture and Food
Systems (A+FS)*

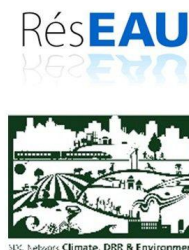


**Stephanie Piers de
Raveschoot**
*Senior Policy Advisor
Agriculture and Food
Systems (A+FS) / Focal
Point A+FS Network*







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Housekeeping rules

-  Please keep your microphone mute at all time.
-  Use the chat box as much as you can to share reflections, resources and ask questions.
-  One session is dedicated to open discussion where we will give the floor to some of you who raise their hands for a short intervention.
-  The plenary will be recorded and only the Mini Lectures will be shared.



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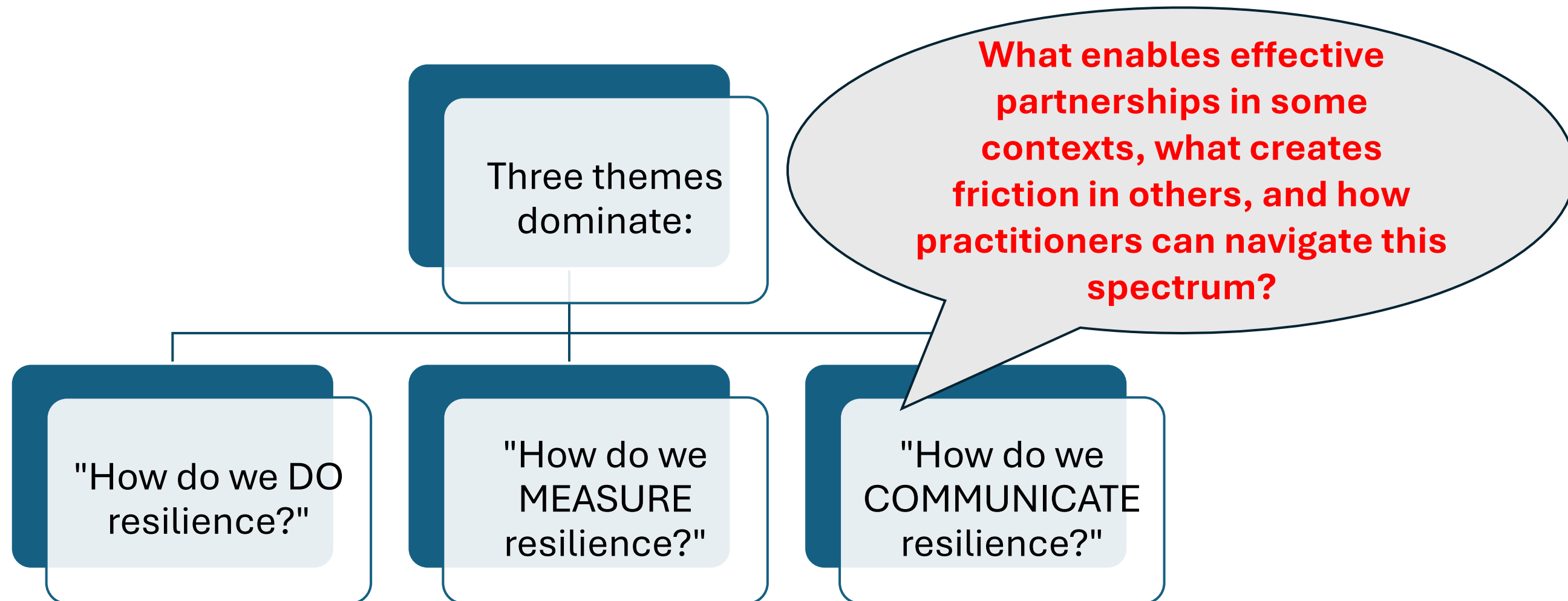


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The questions that guided the journey



Tools for operationalizing resilience, trade-offs, measurement, who decides, accountability, navigating partnership realities



Mini lecture 1:

Working with national partners and private sector actors; The partnership paradox

Maryam Rezaei,
Lead Food Systems, ODI Global

Email: m.rezaei@odi.org



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Challenging the partnership narratives in aid sector

- ✓ "Country ownership"
- ✓ "Work through national systems"
- ✓ "Align with national priorities"

The diagnostic question:

What happens if "national priorities" exclude the most vulnerable?

The solution:

Develop diagnostic capacity to distinguish partnerships that serve community resilience from partnerships that serve other interests.





The partnership paradox

Every partnership either:

- Shifts power toward communities and marginalized groups

OR

- Reinforces existing power dynamics

How do you assess which type you're dealing with? What's your strategy for each?





Three navigating strategies

- **Strategy 1: Partner extensively**

When national structures enable and empower community voices

→ Build on these conditions

- **Strategy 2: Partner tactically**

When space exists but constraints are real

→ Find champions, design for legitimacy, build coalitions

- **Strategy 3: Build alternatives**

When structures actively undermine community agency

→ Work directly with communities, be transparent about tensions



Accurate diagnosis + honest strategy selection

National institutions – diagnostic signals

How to tell enablers from constraints:

- Follow the money/public fund → Reveals actual priorities.
- Who is around the decision-making tables where the policies are decided? → Elites only or community representation?
- What happens to progressive bureaucrats? → Supported or marginalized?
- How do they respond to community dissent? → Openness or repression?

Your strategy depends on accurate analysis of these signals.



Private sector – Not all actors are equal

Local private sector:

- Smallholder farmers, SMEs, local traders
- Success tied to community well-being
- Partnerships often genuinely align

Large-scale private sector:

- Multinationals in extractives, energy, infrastructure
- Profit calculations, shareholder returns
- Most vulnerable ≠ most attractive markets

The distinction determines your strategy



Navigating partnership with large private sector

The question isn't whether they prioritize community resilience? (Profit logic says they won't)

The question is can national institutions shape partnerships for co-benefits?

- ✓ Regulations
 - ✓ Benefit-sharing agreements
 - ✓ Community consent requirements
 - ✓ Revenue transparency
- **When national institutions can't or won't** → Advocate for frameworks, build community negotiating capacity, document harm.





The questions that aid workers avoid – and the alternatives

Should this partnership exist at all?

When existing partnership structures require excluding marginalized groups:

- ✓ Renegotiate terms? (Find champions, design for political needs + community voice)
- ✓ Build parallel systems? (Community-controlled capacities)
- ✓ Walk away? (Integrity vs. sustainability trade-off)

When private sector increases vulnerability:

- ✓ Demand regulatory frameworks
- ✓ Support community organizing
- ✓ Partner with local private sector instead
- ✓ Document and report harm

Sometimes partnerships can undermine resilience.



Applying the resilience lens to partnerships

From Session 2: Who thrives and who struggles?

- Who benefits from this partnership?
- Whose vulnerability is reduced?
- Whose power increases?

IF the answer \neq "marginalized communities have more agency and less vulnerability"

THEN ask the question:

Can we shift this partnership? Do we need alternatives? Should this partnership exist in this form?



Summary - Diagnosis determines strategy



Alignment doesn't exist:

- X National priorities serve narrow interests
- X Private sector profit \neq vulnerability reduction
- X Power structures systematically exclude \rightarrow Have alternative strategies ready

Alignment exists:

- ✓ National institutions champion inclusion
- ✓ Private sector interests depend on community well-being
- ✓ Local governance protects marginalized voices \rightarrow Partner extensively

Context determines possibilities

Diagnosis determines strategy



Reflecting together

- Are national structures enabling or constraining community resilience?
- What signals show whether this reduces vulnerability or creates dependencies?
- **The hardest question:** When partnerships require compromising on inclusion or community agency, what are the realistic alternatives?

Renegotiation? Parallel approaches?
Coalition-building? Walking away?

**We have no choice" is rarely true
– we have difficult choices.**





Interactive poll (Menti code: 1946 0743)



Mini lecture 2: Working with communities - Trust, power, and the relief- resilience gap

Simon Levine

Senior research fellow
Global risk and resilience



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The challenges

- *Alignment*: Does what you offer match their needs, opportunities and constraints?
- *Trust*: why would they trust you ? Why would they trust what you are suggesting? Why would they have trust that they will get the benefits?
- *Risk* – personal, social, financial.
- *The unknown*: they can't be sure what the future holds. How can you? And yet resilience demands means being able to cope with whatever life throws their way.

Multiple challenges – but the same solutions



Don't try and build resilience

Keep it real. What are their specific concerns and priorities?

Start from where they are, not from where you want them to be. If you don't understand why they do what they are doing, then don't try and change it.

- This helps build trust
- This helps dissolve the false dichotomy of short-term vs long-term.
- It gives your projects a chance of being sustainable

Keep everything in their terms, not yours.



Don't introduce the best changes

Don't try and transform lives – help people take easier steps.

- It builds confidence;
- it is more likely to work;
- it encourages diversity and adaptation;
- it builds on what already exists (technical, social, economic).

What makes a change easier?

Reduce barriers to making changes



Don't give people a solution for the future

- You can't predict future. (Nor can they.) Everyone needs to be able to continually find new adaptations.
- Grafting perfect solutions onto existing lives rarely works. Help people to adapt their current ways of working.
- Different people – different solutions. One solution means refusing to understand their lives. A range of options supports their own choices. (And shows respect for what you don't pretend to understand.)

Take agency seriously !



Don't set up the best project committees

- Work with *their* social organisation, not *yours*. Stay away from anything formal (unless it's necessary).
- Offer multiple entry points, so people can engage however (and with whoever) they want.
- If people are not engaging with your project, respect this and understand why not.

Make it easy to participate – on their terms



Don't try and build community resilience

- Resilience can't be built entirely within a community. No one is self-sufficient. Where will people get inputs, money, markets, information, services, communications? What about the systems that guarantee them their rights (to property, safety, etc)? Are they able to make these work for themselves? What are resilience efforts doing about that?

Think beyond the community:



Interactive poll II (Menti code: 4877 9344)



Thank You



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Plenary Discussions Hearing from you



Individual

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Presentations soon available on our website : <https://www.sdc-foodsystems.ch/en/learning-lab-resilience-thinking>
- Register to our AFS network : <https://www.sdc-foodsystems.ch/en>
- Upcoming events :



MAR
26
GESTION HOLISTIQUE
ACF

AFS network
Gestion holistique : l'expérience d'ACF

Thu, Mar 26, 10:00 AM
Zoom



A+FS Network
Thoughts for Food
MAY
6
Thoughts for Food - n°3 / 2026

AFS network
Thoughts for Food - n°3 / 2026

Wed, May 6, 9:00 AM
Zoom

Don't hesitate to share news, topics and ideas with us!

Final survey of the full journey



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