



## Learning Lab **Resilience Thinking**

A virtual series to explore and shape resilience together



**ODI Global**

*Mainstreaming resilience thinking in development and humanitarian practice: A four-part learning journey*

# Welcome to Session 3

Tracking what matters - Resilience assessment in practice

***21 January 2026***

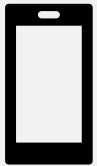
# Housekeeping rules



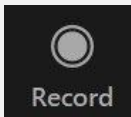
Please keep your microphone mute.



Use the chat box to share reflections, resources and ask questions.



Keep your mobile phone at hand to join the interactive menti sessions.



The plenary will be recorded.



Working Group discussions will not be recorded.



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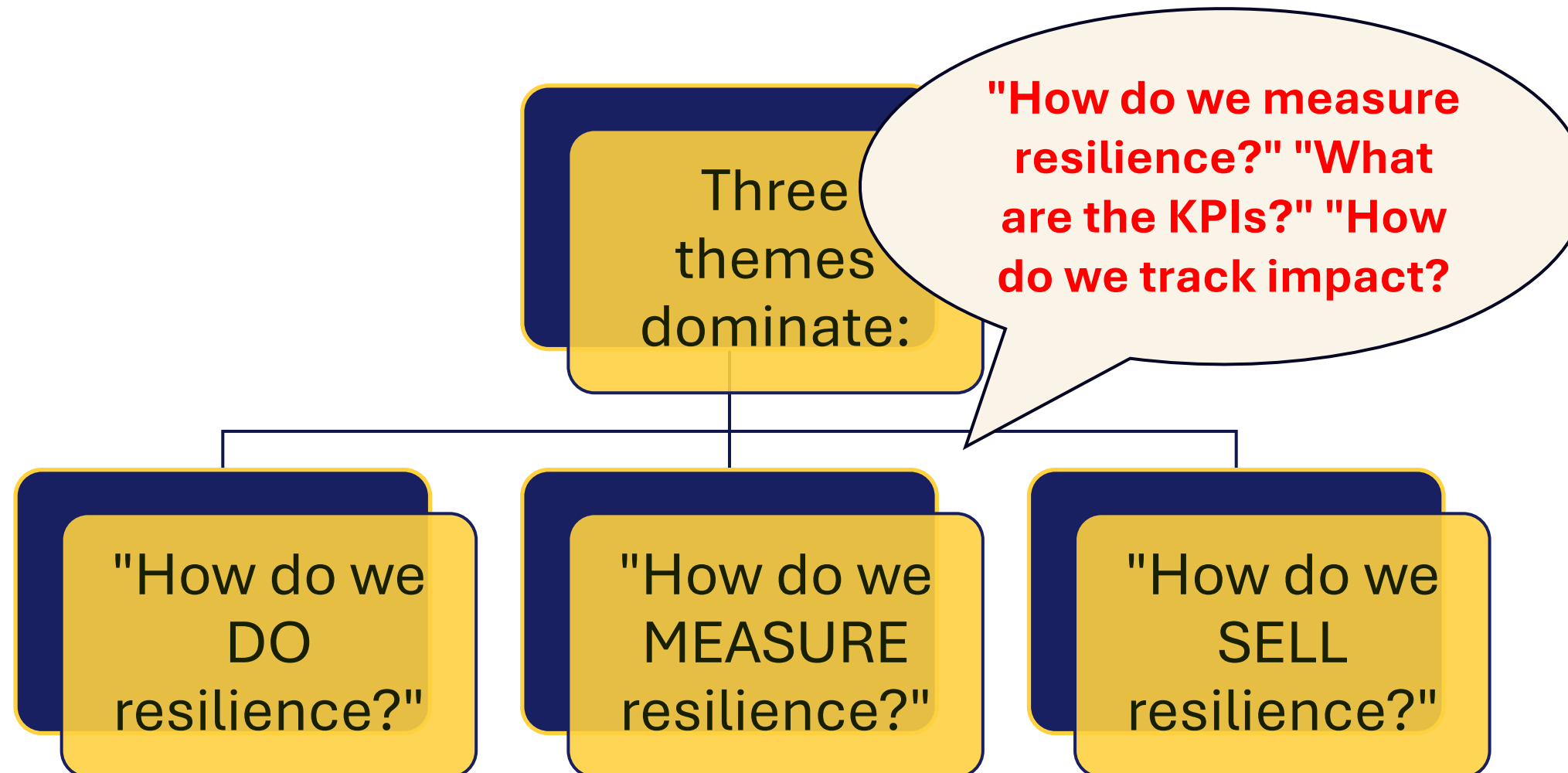


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# The pattern in your questions

*Tools for operationalizing resilience, trade-offs, measurement, who decides, accountability, making it attractive to donors...*



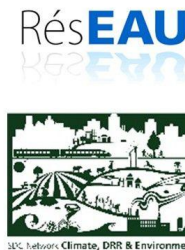
# What's being offered today?

- 10' Welcome and opening
- 20' Measuring vs. monitoring vs. assessing resilience (Mini lecture)
- 5' Interactive Session – measurement pitfalls (Mentimeter)
- 30' Thematic working groups discussion – Navigating real measurement dilemmas (Break-out rooms)
- 15' Plenary discussion: Pattern recognition
- 5' Conclusion and sessions 4 overview
- 5' Final poll (Mentimeter)



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# Today's speakers



**Maryam Rezaei**  
*Lead food systems, ODI  
Global*



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



**Bruce Campbell**  
*Water Programme  
Manager*



**Shahzoda Alikhanova**  
*Senior research officer,  
ODI Global*



**Simon Levine**  
*Senior research  
fellow, ODI Global*



**Malte Reshoeft**  
*Thematic advisor  
Sustainable Food  
and IM Systems*

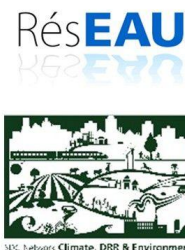


**Owen Frazer**  
*Senior Advisor  
Conflict  
Transformation*



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Mini lecture:

# Measuring vs. Monitoring vs. Assessing Resilience

*Maryam Rezaei,  
Lead Food System,  
Climate and Sustainability Team*



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# Three ways to track resilience

## **MEASURING**

- Assigning numbers to resilience
- Example: Resilience index 0-100

## **MONITORING**

- Tracking indicators over time
- Example: Recovery time trends

## **ASSESSING**

- Understanding change through inquiry
- Example: Community-led reflection







# Measuring: The quantification dream

**What it means:** Assigning numerical values to resilience levels or changes.

## Examples:

- Resilience indices (0-100 scale)
- Household resilience scores
- Percentage of population "resilient"
- National resilience rankings

## Why it's appealing:

- ✓ Comparable across contexts and time
- ✓ Satisfies donor reporting demands
- ✓ Shows clear "before/after"
- ✓ Easy to communicate to boards and politicians
- ✓ Feels scientific and rigorous







# What are we actually measuring?

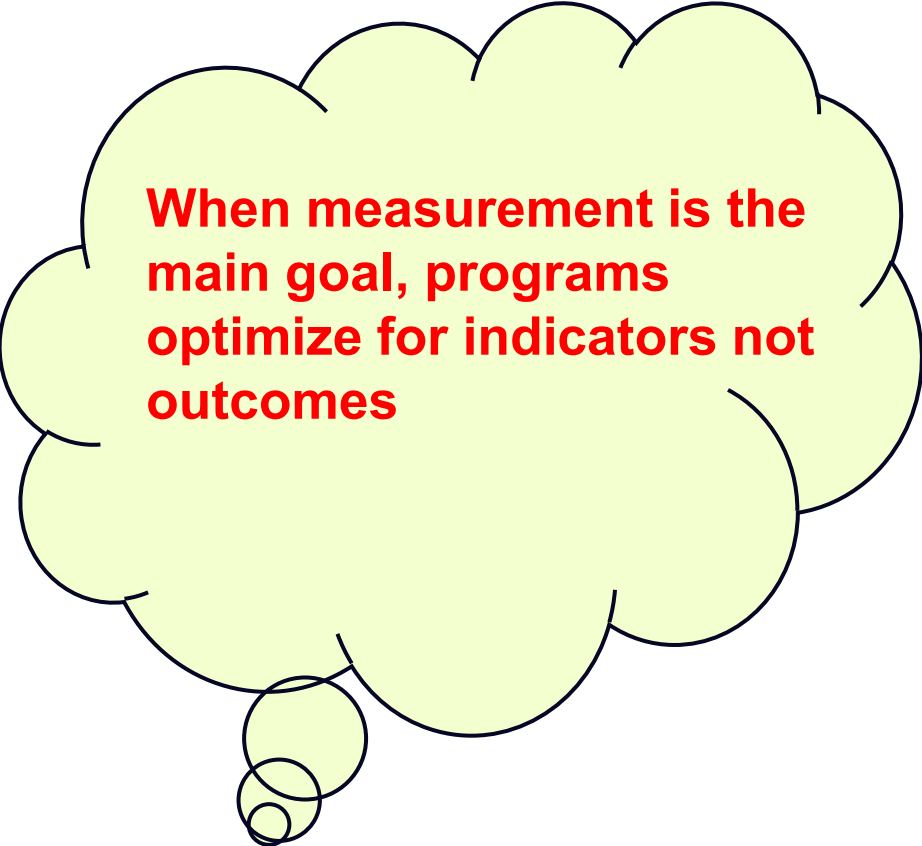
**The problem:** Resilience is an emergent property of complex systems.

## Questions that you should ask:

- Can you measure trust?
- Can you measure power dynamics?
- Can you measure quality of social relationships?
- Can you measure whether people will use capacities when crisis hits?

## Example:

Program achieves "livelihood diversification" target (people working 3+ income sources) → Metric says: SUCCESS → Reality: People exhausted, stressed, working survival jobs not strategic choices → Community says: We're more vulnerable, not less



**When measurement is the main goal, programs optimize for indicators not outcomes**



# MONITORING: Tracking proxies over time

## What it means:

Regularly observing selected indicators that relate to resilience dimensions

## Examples:

- 🌾🔧 Livelihood diversity trends ↗
- 🕒🔄 Recovery time after shocks ↘
- 🚫⚠️ Use of negative coping strategies ↘
- 🍴🌾 Food security ↗
- ⚡📢 Early action on warnings ↗
- 🤝👥 Social network strength ↗

## Why it's useful:

- ✓ Tracks change over time
- ✓ Identifies trends (positive or negative)
- ✓ Manageable data collection
- ✓ Can inform adaptive management
- ✓ Shows WHAT is changing

**If you used capacity-based assessment to understand WHAT capacities exist, monitoring can track CHANGES in those capacities over time.**



# What monitoring can and cannot tell us

**The key limitation:** Indicators are PROXIES, not resilience itself

**What monitoring shows:**

- ✓ Correlation (things changing together)
- ✓ Trends (direction of change) ✓ WHAT is changing

**What monitoring doesn't show:**

- ✗ Causation (why changes are happening)
- ✗ Whether your program contributed to the change
- ✗ Whether existing capacities will work when crisis hits
- ✗ Power dynamics behind the numbers
- ✗ WHO is benefiting and who isn't

**Example:**

Monitoring shows: "Livelihood diversity increasing"

Doesn't tell you: Is this strategic choice or survival mechanism? Are women or vulnerable groups bearing the burden? Will this trend last?



**Monitoring is valuable for tracking trends but insufficient for understanding resilience.**












# ASSESSING: Understanding change through multiple lenses

**What it means:** Systematic inquiry into whether people are better able to anticipate, withstand, and recover from shocks.

## Examples:

-  Community-led monitoring
-  Most significant change stories
-  Participatory reflection sessions
-  Contribution analysis (not attribution)
-  Stress testing (how do people respond to smaller shocks?)
-  Mobile-based subjective resilience tracking
-  Narrative assessment of system changes

**"If you used scenario-based inquiry to explore system dynamics, assessment can track whether those dynamics are shifting - Are power imbalances changing? Are trade-offs being navigated better?"**

**Why it's powerful:** ✓ Captures complexity and nuance      ✓ Enables learning and adaptation      ✓ Involves affected people      ✓ Reveals WHY things work or don't      ✓ Tracks power dynamics and relationships      ✓ Shows WHO benefits and who doesn't



# The Trade-offs of assessment approaches

Assessment prioritizes **UNDERSTANDING** and **LEARNING** over **PROVING** predetermined outcomes.

## But:

- ✓ More time-intensive than simple measurement
- ✓ Harder to aggregate across contexts
- ✓ Doesn't produce simple metrics for donor dashboards
- ✓ Requires skilled facilitation
- ✓ Can be subjective (though that's not always a problem)

## Key consideration:

resilience requires:

- "Continuous experimentation, learning, and innovation"
- "Addressing power imbalances"
- "Nurturing relationships"



# Three different purposes require three different approaches

## MEASURING

Purpose: PROVING impact for accountability Serves: Donor boards, politicians, public Outputs: Indices, scores, percentages Risk: Distorting programming to hit targets

## MONITORING

Purpose: TRACKING changes to spot trends Serves: Programme managers, adaptive management Outputs: Indicator trends, pattern analysis Risk: Confusing proxies with actual resilience

**ASSESSING** Purpose: UNDERSTANDING and LEARNING to improve Serves: Program teams, communities, learning Outputs: Stories, insights, contribution narratives Risk: Time-intensive, hard to aggregate





# Approach 1 - Leading vs. Lagging Indicators:

Track what enables resilience, not just when it fails



**LAGGING INDICATORS** (Tell you that resilience is decreasing)

- ✗ Humanitarian appeals increasing
- ✗ Crisis declarations
- ✗ Asset depletion accelerating
- ✗ School dropout during stress
- ✗ Migration to urban slums
- ✗ Negative coping strategies better

**LEADING INDICATORS** (Suggest resilience building/increasing)

- ✓ Livelihood diversity increasing
- ✓ Savings accumulation patterns
- ✓ Early action on warnings
- ✓ Recovery time decreasing over successive shocks
- ✓ Social network strength
- ✓ Communities resolving conflicts without external help
- ✓ Reduced anxiety about future shocks

**Most M&E systems heavily weight lagging indicators because they're easier to measure. The key is to intentionally shift balance toward leading indicators.**

## Approach 2 - Community-defined success

Ask communities: what does resilience look like to you?



### Donor metrics typically focus on:

- Income levels
- Asset ownership
- Food security scores
- Infrastructure access

### Communities often define resilience as:

- Dignity ("not having to beg")
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Children staying in school during hard times
- Not having to sell productive assets
- Ability to help others, not just receive help
- Not being afraid
- Having choices, not just surviving

**Community-defined metrics can be tracked through participatory methods and mobile technology - creating "quicker, cheaper and more bottom-up" assessment. The key is to create locally meaningful tracking alongside formal requirements.**

# Approach 3 - Tiered assessment

Don't try to make one system serve all purposes



**TIER 1: Donor accountability** (Keep it simple)

**Purpose:** Satisfy reporting requirements  
Approach: 3-5 straightforward indicators donor understands

**Examples:**

- % households with diversified income
- Average recovery time after shocks
- Food security score trends Reality: Necessary compromise with measurement demands

**Resources:** Minimal - existing data systems

**TIER 2: Program learning** (Make it rich)

**Purpose:** Understand what's working, for whom, why.

**Approach:** Mixed methods tracking key change processes.

**Examples:**

- Capacity change narratives
- Stress response monitoring
- Who's being left behind analysis
- Contribution stories Reality: Where real program improvement value lives

**Resources:** Moderate - integrated into programming

**TIER 3: Community voice** (Make it meaningful)

**Purpose:** Track progress in community-defined terms.

**Approach:** Community-led monitoring and reflection

**Examples:**

- Community resilience definitions
- Self-assessment against own indicators
- Participatory evaluation
- Community scorecards

**Resources:** Built into community engagement

**Why this works: Each tier serves different stakeholders with different evidence needs.**



## Approach 4 - Contribution not attribution

What we can and cannot prove.



### Build contribution story with plausible linkages:

- *What did we do?* (activities)
- *What changed?* (observed outcomes)
- *What's the credible link?* (theory of contribution)
- *What evidence supports this?* (multiple sources)
- *What alternative explanations exist?* (honest acknowledgment)

### Example:

"We strengthened early warning systems and supported evacuation planning. Communities now evacuate earlier when warnings are issued. Casualties in our areas were lower than neighboring areas. We believe our program contributed to this, though other factors like improved roads and government response also played a role."

Proving "our program led to consistent increase in resilience is usually impossible, because:

- Too many factors
- Complex causation
- Long timeframes
- Multiple actors
- Systems dynamics

# Three legitimate needs that won't disappear



**DONORS** Will continue demanding:

- Metrics for accountability
- Comparable data across programmes
- "Evidence of impact"
- Numbers for boards and politicians



**COMMUNITIES** Need to see progress in terms that matter to them:

- Definitions of success they recognize
- Voice in what gets tracked
- Evidence of dignity and agency
- Progress on what they value



**PROGRAMMES** Need learning systems:

- What's working and why
- Who's being left behind
- Early warning of problems
- Basis for adaptation



# The Power dynamics in measurement

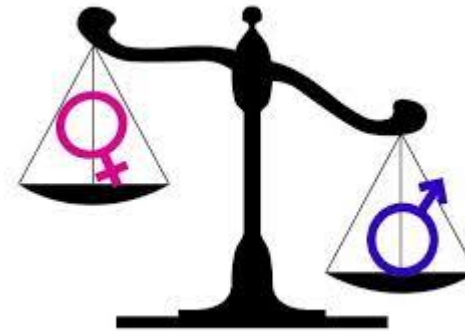
Resilience requires "addressing power imbalances"

## To counter this, consider:

- Who decides what counts as success?
- Whose definition of resilience dominates?
- Who controls the data?
- Who interprets the results?
- Whose knowledge is valued?

## The risk of standard measurement frameworks:

- Mask inequalities
- Reinforce existing power structures
- Silence community voice
- Miss what matters to marginalized groups
- Make invisible what can't be easily quantified



**If your measurement system doesn't include women's voices, you'll miss gender-based vulnerability. If it doesn't track power dynamics, you'll miss why some interventions fail.**





# Key takeaways:

## What we need to remember

- **Measuring  $\neq$  Monitoring  $\neq$  Assessing** They serve different purposes.
- **Track leading indicators, not just lagging**  
Know when resilience is building, not just when it fails.
- **Different stakeholders, different evidence**  
Tiered assessment serves multiple needs.
- **Contribution not attribution** Be honest about complex causation.
- **Final thought:** Perfect measurement is impossible. "Good enough" assessment that enables learning is better.







# Measurement pitfalls

Interactive session through real scenarios (Menti code: 4188 7815)





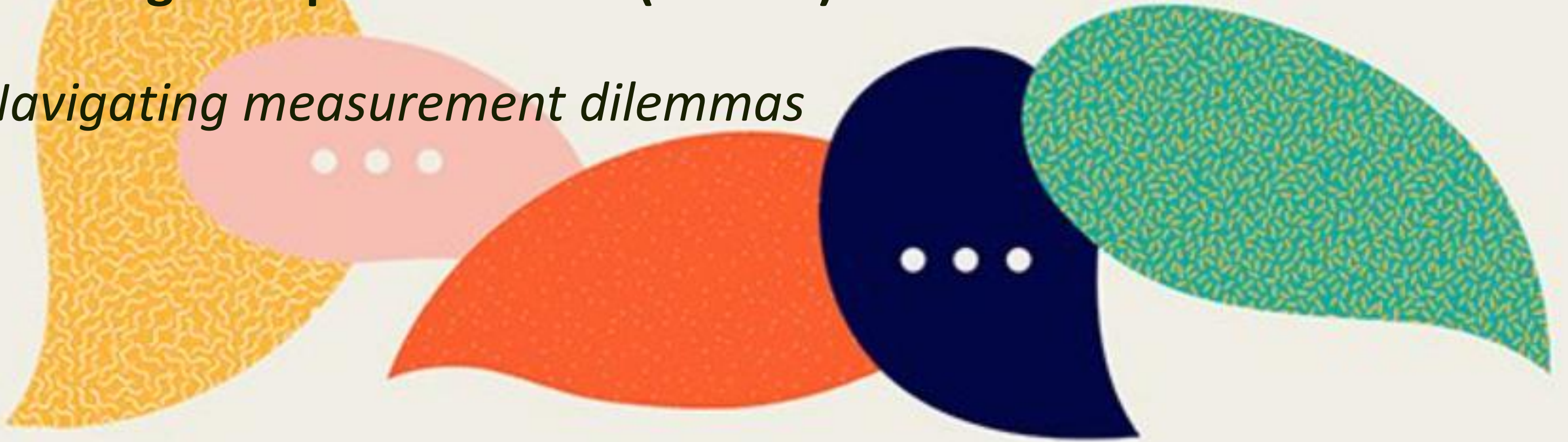
# Thank You



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# Working Groups Discussion (30 min)

*Navigating measurement dilemmas*



Individual



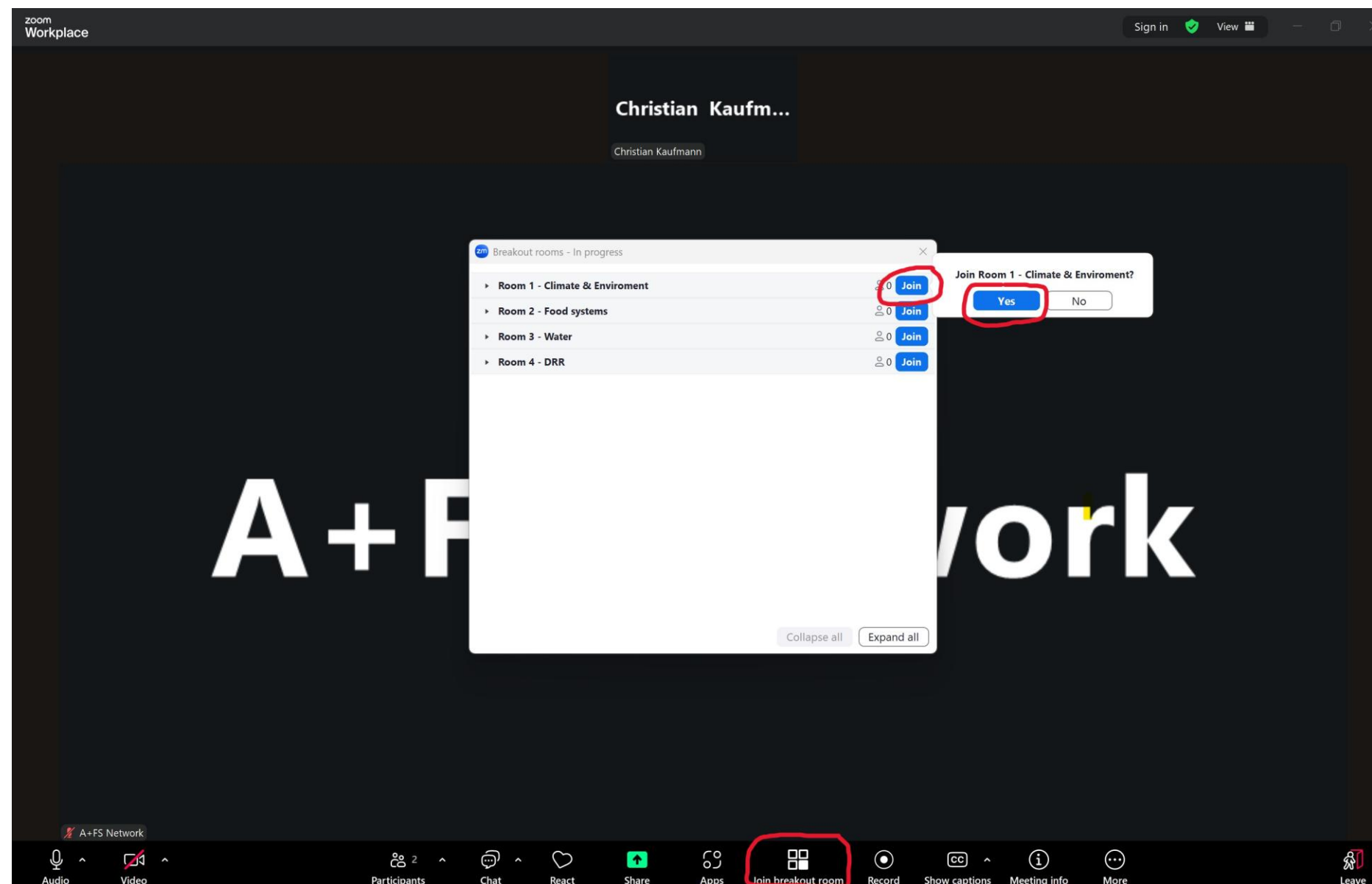


Working Group theme	Session structure
Climate & Environment	<p><b>The challenge:</b> Your group faces a common measurement dilemma in your sector. Discuss and prepare to share:</p> <p><b>Part 1 (8 min): Name the problem</b> What's unrealistic about this measurement demand? Why would it distort programming or miss what matters?</p> <p><b>Part 2 (12 min): Design the compromise</b> Tier 1: What simple metric could you offer for accountability? Tier 2: What would you track for actual learning? Tier 3: How would community voice be included?</p> <p><b>Part 3 (7 min): Prepare your pitch</b> What would you say to the donor/partner? (Practice the actual conversation)</p>
Food systems	
DRR	
Conflict and social cohesion	
Water	



# Working Groups instructions

- Choose the group you wish to join – see below
- Once inside the group, the moderator will guide you through the different questions



# Climate Group

**Scenario - Mali Drought:** Donor requires 'drought resilience index' (0-100 scale) with 20-point improvement target. You know drought resilience isn't a single number - it's about power, markets, governance, social systems. Donor says: 'We need comparable metric across all our resilience programmes globally.' What's your response?  
Design tiered alternative.

Part	Answer
<b>1 (8 min) - Name the problem</b>	
What's unrealistic about this measurement demand?	One absolute measurement doesn't capture the entire the starting point or the context.
Why would it distort programming or miss what matters?	Would distort because it isn't context specific. One number doesn't account for geographical differences and contexts.
<b>2 (12 min): Design the compromise</b>	
Tier 1: What simple metric could you offer for accountability?	KPI's, changes that positively impact life MEL reporting and learning system needs to be designed
Tier 2: What would you track for actual learning?	Satisfaction surveys
Tier 3: How would community voice be included?	Involve communities in assessment process - storytelling

# Food Systems Group

**Scenario - Rwanda Markets:** Government wants '% farming households resilient to market shocks' as indicator. You know market resilience depends on value chain power dynamics, not individual household traits. Plus next shock might be climate, not market. Government says: 'Need this for national resilience strategy reporting.' What do you propose?"

Part	Answer
<b>1 (8 min) - Name the problem</b>	
What's unrealistic about this measurement demand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Not fully complete: answers Tier 1 measurement, but not why</li><li>- Would need to be completed with qualitative indicators – to understand the causalities and perceptions</li><li>- Too many different parameters conditioning household resilience – diversity within the households</li></ul>
Why would it distort programming or miss what matters?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Potential risk of different objectives between programming and gov priorities</li><li>- Potential risk of stigmatisation – labelling households ?</li></ul>
<b>2 (12 min): Design the compromise</b>	
Tier 1: What simple metric could you offer for accountability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Possibility to fine-tune through further disaggregation</li></ul>
Tier 2: What would you track for actual learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Dig behind the Tier 1 questions, to understand the power dynamics (trading, gender, ...), financial situation (debt...)</li></ul>
Tier 3: How would community voice be included?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Narrative – qualitative indicator, to understand how they perceive their own resilience.</li></ul>



# Water Group

**Scenario - Afghanistan Infrastructure:** Donor wants to measure 'water system resilience' by counting infrastructure built/rehabilitated. You know infrastructure without governance, maintenance systems, and conflict-sensitive approaches doesn't create resilience. Donor says: 'Infrastructure is tangible, measurable, our board understands it.' How do you navigate?"

Part	Answer
<b>1 (8 min) - Name the problem</b>	
What's unrealistic about this measurement demand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Missing out on qualitative aspects, longer-term outcomes, how project contributes to results of other projects (conflict management)</li><li>- No disaggregation of data by “community situation”</li></ul>
Why would it distort programming or miss what matters?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- social, institutional, financial, gender aspects</li><li>- Community voice and perception of resilience</li></ul>
<b>2 (12 min): Design the compromise</b>	
Tier 1: What simple metric could you offer for accountability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How responsive is the institution? Is there a feedback mechanism? What is the level of trust? (Tier 1 and 2)</li><li>- List of metrics including e.g. Transparency, accountability,</li></ul>
Tier 2: What would you track for actual learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Accountability aspect: What are the different roles and responsibilities of actors? Can they fulfil their roles? Are there any barriers? (Tier 1 and 2)</li></ul>
Tier 3: How would community voice be included?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Feedback mechanism (see above), ensure all voices are heard</li><li>- Consider good practices, get positive feedback and ideas</li><li>- Steering practices</li><li>- Safe space, trust</li></ul>

# Conflict and Peace

**Scenario - Uganda Conflict and social cohesion:** Government requires all refugee-hosting programmes to report 'social cohesion resilience' using a standardized district scoring tool based on incident frequency (40%), infrastructure access (30%), employment rates (20%), and programme participation (10%). You know this tool misses the gendered dynamics that actually determine resilience—women's safety from GBV, freedom of movement, backlash risks for female leaders, women's early warning networks, and how women define resilience as "quiet but dangerous" rather than just absence of incidents. Ministry says: "We need this standardized indicator for our National Development Plan reporting and to show international partners we're managing refugee integration effectively. The tool has been validated and will be applied to all 12 districts for comparability." How do you navigate?

Part	Answer
<b>1 (8 min) - Name the problem</b>	
What's unrealistic about this measurement demand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Social cohesion does not equate inclusion, try to go out of the cohesion bubble: gendered conflict sensitive analysis as a starting point</li><li>- Hard to measure employment rate (ex. from Moldova), because reporting lowers refugee benefit</li></ul>
Why would it distort programming or miss what matters?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The neglect does undermine the role for women and what resilience means for them, and it does not empower women and we could do harm by focusing on the wrong metrics</li></ul>
<b>2 (12 min): Design the compromise</b>	
Tier 1: What simple metric could you offer for accountability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Gender disaggregated data, but also include additional</li><li>- Accountability turns out to be performative instead of reiterative learning</li></ul>
Tier 2: What would you track for actual learning?	
Tier 3: How would community voice be included?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Incentivising women participation by FGD (with large and subgroups), hard to integrate the project level eLearning into national data</li><li>- Get direct feedback what resilience means to them</li><li>- Include into government more people with understanding the issue on the ground</li></ul>

# DRR Group

**Scenario – Philippines Disaster Preparedness:** Donor wants attribution proof: 'Show your programme caused X% reduction in typhoon casualties.' You know casualties depend on storm intensity, government response, infrastructure - many factors beyond your control. Plus success is people NOT being in danger, which is invisible. How do you respond?"

Part	Answer
<b>1 (8 min) - Name the problem</b>	
What's unrealistic about this measurement demand?	Limited measurement. Depends on storm intensity, not storm frequency. You wouldn't have anyone living in that region, so no casualties- need to be % of total population. Lack of casualties doesn't necessarily illustrate resilience. Doesn't illustrate change as events may be limited and incomparable. Long-term, large-scale indicator, rather than a project metric.
Why would it distort programming or miss what matters?	Misses various aspects of resilience, other consequences (ie. Migration) from the typhoon. Programme should focus on people still living in the region, not casualties. Lacks focus on outcome of typhoon, reverse incentive (evacuating everyone would have good implication for indicator but not necessarily a successful programme)
<b>2 (12 min): Design the compromise</b>	
Tier 1: What simple metric could you offer for accountability?	Time spent to recover/rebuild after event. Average evacuation time, coverage of early warning system (ie. Survey of number of people who received alert). % of households evacuating after warning.
Tier 2: What would you track for actual learning?	Recovery time. Comparison to next event. Population satisfaction. Community trust levels. Who is/isn't supported.
Tier 3: How would community voice be included?	



# Plenary discussion

## Pattern analysis:

What common unreasonable demands emerged?  
What compromises are groups proposing?  
What creative solutions appeared? What shared barriers exist?

## Honest conversation

What resonates with your experience?  
What feels doable vs. aspirational?  
What institutional barriers will you face?



# Final reflection/poll

## Instructions

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**1708 2300**



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