

# Transforming Resilience from a Buzzword into a Functional Framework



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In the early 2010s, "resilience" was a buzzword, symbolizing strength and adaptability when facing shocks. Its popularity surged across various fields, from psychology to business, capturing the essence of bouncing back after setbacks. Today, with the intensifying impacts of climate change, resilience is still a buzzword in international development, and depending on the context, it has taken on a more specific connotation: climate resilience. As a concept, resilience underscores the importance of a nation's ability to withstand and recover from adverse events, including frequent natural disasters, economic crises, and social upheavals. Policy-makers, environmentalists, and development practitioners are increasingly using the term to describe the capacity of communities and ecosystems to withstand and recover from climate-related shocks. However, resilience must transcend its buzzword status and transform into actionable strategies to make tangible differences globally.

For developing countries, resilience is not just a fancy concept but a critical necessity. These nations are often on the frontline of climate change, facing frequent severe weather conditions threatening their development

gains. As these threats are expected to intensify and recur more frequently, the nations need long-term strategies for adaptation and preparedness as well as immediate response plans. The process must include anticipatory measures to mitigate risks, responsive mechanisms to handle crises, recovery plans to rebuild, and adaptive policies to learn and improve future responses.

Before the prominence of resilience, concepts like the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus and sustainability sought to address similar challenges in development cooperation. The HDP Nexus aims to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid, development efforts, and peacebuilding and advocates for a coordinated approach to long-term stability. On the other hand, sustainability focuses on meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. While these concepts laid important groundwork, the rise of resilience as a guiding principle indicates a recognition that previous approaches were insufficiently comprehensive or adaptable to the multi-faceted nature of current global challenges.

Resilience, in contrast, inherently involves continuous adaptation and learning, and promotes robust, flexible, and responsive systems. It explicitly acknowledges the complexity and interdependence of multiple sectors and stakeholders, pushing for integrated solutions rather than siloed interventions. It demands a paradigm shift in how development cooperation operates, and a commitment to address all stages of the resilience process—preparation, adaptation, recovery, and future planning. Only by embedding these elements into development policies and practices can we hope to support developing countries in not just surviving but thriving in the face of climate change.

In short, the recent rise of resilience as a buzzword is not out of thin air. It reflects a growing recognition of the need for a more comprehensive approach in the age of climate change and poly- and perma-crisis: a holistic solution that includes a systemic integration across different sectors and stakeholders focusing on long-term adaptability and learning rather than immediate outcomes. Development cooperation must transform resilience from a buzzword into a functional framework to support countries facing challenges and make fundamental changes. The first, small but necessary, step would be to critically reflect on whether the current practice and programs are just "resilience-washing" or not. Resilience should be more than a term we frequently use; it should be a practical part of our efforts to foster a sustainable and equitable global future. **KIEP**