

# EVALUATION OF THE SMC/SIDA-SUPPORTED RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

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# BACKGROUND: ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

SMC's adopted, in April 2016, its environment and climate policy including resilience and disaster risk reduction as important components. It developed plans accordingly. In the Sida CivSam Framework agreement for 2017-2021, Sida granted funding for resilience focused operations including DRR operations based on the specific guidelines developed by SMC. The Resilience initiative was launched with the aim to improve the own organisation and its member and partner organisations' commitment and strategy for promotion of resilience in its programmes and advocacy work. SMC's resilience effort during 2017-2021 also includes capacity building related to DRR and Resilience. SMC actually supports eight ongoing projects.



## WHERE TO FIND MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE?

The evaluation blog - <https://smcresilienceeval.wordpress.com/> - contains information about the initiative. These include:

- General information about the initiative and frameworks.
- Information about the projects: a project repository, a project timeline, key stakeholders
- Links to key events and learning initiative

## THE GOAL FRAMEWORK OF SMC'S RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

The [Strategic goal framework](#) of the initiative is developed according to the Outcome Mapping methodology and includes goals in relation to the SMC itself, to member organisations, partner organisations, the Resilience Network, Sida and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Specific activities were then described in SMC's annual work plans. The implementation is mainly the responsibility of SMC's unit for Development cooperation but shared with SMC's unit for Learning and Advocacy.

1. SMC	SMC's resilience effort improves the organisation's commitment and strategy for promotion of resilience in its programmes and advocacy work.
2. MEMBER ORGANISATIONS	SMC's resilience effort improves member organisations commitments and their strategies to promote resilience in their programmes and in their advocacy work.
3. PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	SMC's resilience effort improves partner organisations commitments and their strategies to promote resilience in their programmes and in their advocacy work.
4. THE RESILIENCE NETWORK	SMC improves the structure of the work of the Resilience network so that it uses its full potential, based on its mandate in its ToR.
5. SIDA	SMC's resilience effort improves Sida's commitments and their strategies to promote DRR/resilience in their policies, strategies and programmes.
6. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS	SMC's resilience effort improves the Ministry of Foreign affairs' understanding of the role of the civil society in implementation of the Sendai Framework and strengthen its efforts in general.

# ABOUT THE EVALUATION

As per TORs, the purpose of this evaluation is to assess the results of SMC's Resilience initiative so far, with the aim to learn, as well as to provide reporting back to the member organisations and to Sida as the donor. The purpose is also to assess the relevance of the method and form of the Resilience initiative itself, as an example of a special SMC initiative for the promotion of a thematic area.

The report should include recommendations on how SMC could strengthen the goal fulfilment of the initiative and on how SMC could promote further integration of DRR and Resilience into its cooperation and support to member and partner organisations and their interventions, but also in advocacy. The report should also include recommendations on to what extent the Resilience initiative is a good method and form for promotion of other thematic areas.

The recommendations will provide input to SMC's process for development of the new strategy of the organisation for 2022-2026.

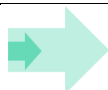
## EVALUATION QUESTIONS



### KEY OUTCOMES

What are the *outcomes* (understood as behavioural change in relevant actors) of the Resilience initiative so far, in relation to the goals?

→ see the key outcomes chapter.



### SHORT AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

How can SMC develop the Resilience initiative in the short term (until the end of this strategic period in December 2021). How could SMC develop the work to strengthen resilience and promote DRR during the next strategic period 2022-2026.

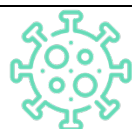
→ the chapter "strategic implications" gathered strategic ideas under the emerging headings of networking, learning, advocacy, adaptive management. Beside broad-perspective and long-term strategic ideas each chapter also highlights "ideas for action" who could be immediately considered, within the existing strategy or in preparation for the next one



### THEMATIC WORK

To what extent and how can the Resilience initiative (including assigned monetary resources) be a model for strategic initiatives in other thematic areas of SMC, for example Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB), Environment and Gender? (To what extent and how has the model served SMC's ambition to create synergies between different thematic areas, i.e., hum-dev, resilience-religions literacy, resilience-FORB?)

→ see the final two chapters (thematic engagement / resilience and the nexus)



### A "BONUS QUESTION": RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID

The evaluation also looked at a question not highlighted in the original TORs, but which quickly emerged as a very relevant theme across interviews: the impact of COVID. The question looked at the adjustments on the programmes already set. But it also checked, more broadly: is COVID changing the appreciation of resilience? What are the strategic implications for the way in which aid is delivered?

## THE EVALUATION PROCESS

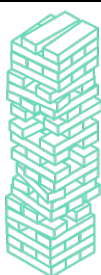
This evaluation was conducted home-based with remote engagement (mainly with project management of member and partner organizations), in October / November 2020 (as activities were also experiencing COVID-related challenges). The sharing of findings and ideas (emerging from conversations with key stakeholders) happened real time, on the evaluation blog.

### ACTIVITIES

#### BUILDING ON PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES

This evaluation could build on previous exposure and reviews of SMC. In particular

- **The evaluations in Uganda and in Ethiopia.** Most of the projects reviewed in these evaluations were not part of the resilience initiative but had a strong resilience perspective (which proves how resilience is already a concept owned by SMC! This exposure allowed to: look at resilience within humanitarian interventions; to gain first-hand experience of the work of member organizations involved in the initiative; to develop, adapt, test frameworks and concepts for exploring resilience which had been used since, along the reviews.



- **The learning review of the initiative (focused on Africa).** The learning review included remote engagement with partners, a rapid visit to a project and a learning workshop bringing together member and partners organizations- as well as external stakeholders - from Kenya (the initial intent was to have a regional workshop, redesigned last minute because of COVID).
- 
- ⇒ Evaluation of SMC resilience projects in Uganda
- ⇒ Evaluation of SMC resilience projects in Ethiopia
- ⇒ Learning initiative



#### A DESK REVIEW OF PROJECT DOCUMENTS

The evaluation consulted project proposals, reports, and additional tools and frameworks on resilience, as collected and shared by SMC.

⇒ The key documentation is available on the evaluation blog (section: about the initiative)



#### REMOTE CONVERSATIONS

Key informants – from organizations involved in the initiative in Sweden, in East Africa – were interviewed remotely, on Skype. They shared their view on resilience, the achievements and challenges encountered by their programmes. An interim report took stock of their perceptions and informed the design of the workshop.

⇒ The interview notes and insights are collected in the evaluation blog



#### CONSOLIDATION OF FINDINGS

The consolidation of findings happened real time and building on previous engagement. The evaluation blog act as a portal to all the output produced. It is a very rich resource and contain much more material and insights than this report. This report summarizes the main findings, and it is designed to provide ideas and options for a way forward.



#### WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES








It was expected that the evaluation could be connected to workshop activities, to take stock and further discuss the findings. This is however not possible, due to the COVID (and will be limited to a remote presentation of the key findings)

# BUILDING ON PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

As already pointed out, there have been previous opportunities to reflect on resilience and on the initiative. The evaluation of the resilience initiative in Africa (who took place in early 2010) engaged with key stakeholders to gauge progress and culminated in a workshop in Nairobi 9-13 March 2020. The workshop was organized in cooperation with Kenya4Resilience, the Kenya based Community of Practice formed by member organisations and partner organisation, as a result of the resilience workshop in 2018. Getting to recommendations was a process of “sharing consolidated challenges, ideas, opportunities” for appropriation. Initial findings and ideas were presented to stimulated dialogue, discussion in the workshop. Final lessons were distilled as they emerged from the process. The whole process was set to build ownership and to consolidate lessons, findings that resonated with participants, and that had potential for a way forward.

So, the first step for this evaluation is to be recognize to the work done so far, and to check if and how initial findings and recommendation of the learning initiative in Africa seem to also hold true for the initiative as a whole.

The following are the interim findings of the previous evaluation, and the final recommendations They are presented here to: 1) check if and to what extent such findings proved to be relevant also within the current evaluation (●) or if differences emerged (○).

INTERIM FINDINGS OF THE PREVIOUS EVALUATION	ARE THEY CONFIRMED OR DIFFERENT?
<p><b>The big achievements</b></p> <p>There are clear achievements re: the work so far, within the resilience initiative!</p> <div>  <p><b>The resilience workshop made a difference!</b> Having a space where to learn, interact about resilience was a turning point for many people. The concept of resilience proved to be relevant for the work they did, and to reshape it positively.</p> </div> <div>  <p><b>A community of practices at the grassroots level is a unique opportunity.</b> The Kenya for Resilience Community of Practice is filling it a gap. There is a lot of emphasis in networking, but it appears that networking 1) either tend to include the big players or 2) it happens around consolidated thematic areas of focus (e.g. food, education, children). Kenya for resilience is unique as it 1. Connected grassroots organizations and 2. Brings together organizations from diverse sectors.</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The feeling that the resilience initiative made a difference is confirmed. All the stakeholders consulted emphasized its importance and could point to <b>meaningful outcomes</b> of the initiative.</li> <li>○ Whilst in Africa (and specifically in Kenya) a <b>community of practice</b> was formed, the same did not happen in Asia. There is still an untapped need for connection (even if alternative options for networking exist).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Frameworks help to structure ideas</b></p> <div>  <p><b>When set and available, frameworks are useful</b> Respondents who used / set frameworks highlighted the advantage of having tools that helped to structure ideas and thinking</p> </div> <div>  <p><b>Clarity of principles also helps</b> Some respondents also indicated that principles truly owned by an organization (e.g. a strong focus sustainability) really help to orient towards resilience work, even when a framework is not available.</p> </div> <div>  <p><b>Resilience? It is still hazy (and evolving)</b> There is more clarity the importance of resilience, and some definitions are put in place. But what the core of resilience is, often remains unclear. Sometimes is because of the lack of exposure to the concept (-&gt; requiring more efforts in dissemination). But sometimes is because the concept is still evolving (-&gt; requiring learning and systematization of novel understanding).</p> </div> <div>  <p><b>Tools and framework often perceived as too complicated.</b> Some of the framework in use have been defined as “too complex”. But there is a thin line amongst further simplifying the ideas and the risk of making resilience too simplistic!</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Since the previous evaluation, SMC has made efforts to <b>circulate a framework for resilience</b> (and the workshop in Nairobi actually contributed to it). This seems to have contributed – amongst member organization – to better alignment on a common understanding of resilience.</li> <li>● The framework is still not yet known by all, and, especially across partner organizations, there is still <b>lack of awareness of common frameworks</b> and/or a demand of practical options to operationalize it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resilience +</b></p> <p>The connection of resilience with important cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender, protection) is evident to everyone!</p> <div>  <p><b>Importance of gender, protection was already a given</b> The integration of gender, protection consideration within resilience initiatives was recognized by all as important, but it was not surprising: all the organization already recognized the centrality of these issues in their work.</p> </div> <div>  <p><b>Conflict is not only the “big one”: discovering the importance of working with it.</b> Conflict means many things. It can refer to the dynamics and tensions existing in communities... but, unfortunately, it is often understood as “working in war zones”. So, several organization had perceived that working in conflict did not apply to them. Resilience helped them to appreciate that they are indeed working with conflict (sometimes not talking it as such).</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Many partners in the Indian subcontinent were already familiar with DRR (which is the prevalent flavour of resilience encountered) – more than in the African context</li> <li>● Partners emphasized that the real learning from them was not so much on the resilience front, but rather on the importance and on the potential of linking resilience to other cross cutting issues (e.g., involving women in decision making, working with children).</li> <li>○ Conflict did not emerge strongly as an issue in the projects in Asia. Partners have been focusing – at the best – on power imbalances (e.g., re: people living with leprosy).</li> </ul>

## Sharing knowledge



### Focal points: opportunities and challenges

Having focal points might help to coordinate the work on resilience, but only if, from the start, they work as hubs for dissemination (ensuring that systems incorporate resilience, and that the concept is owned and known by all). It is key that focal point do not become specialists or bottlenecks to ensure 1) that resilience is really owned by all and 2) the organization do not suffer if focal points are not retained.



### As chains are really long, in what voices learning should expressed? The

"donor/beneficiary chains" within the initiatives are really long ones, sometimes stepping through 4+ organizations. By the time information reach Sweden, voices from the grassroots are lost. This has obvious implications for learning, as it risk creating a "Chinese whispers". What options are best to create stronger connections and to give voice to people? What is the best way to gather perspectives "from below?"



**Can learning happen more real-time?** Kenya for resilience is filling a communication gap that would otherwise existed in the initiative: sharing information real time. Could more be done to ensure debate on evidence as it unfolds? (e.g. sharing drafts, collaborative editing, sharing of preliminary ideas)



**Real time sharing? Setting systems to encourage faster sharing.** Linked to the above, in the SMC templates, learning is only condensed in final reports. This despite the fact that learning is most useful "during" the lifetime of an initiative. Can the format be revised and linked to effective ways to share ideas, amongst partners?

- The weakness of modalities for sharing learning – and for sharing voices, experiences from the grassroots – also emerged in the Asian context.
- Many projects were oriented to grounded advocacy with local and national actors. More than in the African contexts there has been an emphasis on linking communities with local governments and beyond, in grounded advocacy initiatives.
- Options for exchanges amongst partners have been more limited. Some participants from Asia have been exposed to the initial learning workshop. But there was no further effort to create networks. And, because of COVID, options for interaction in a workshop were not achievable.
- Participation to the GNDR network was supported, and it proved to be valuable for local partners and for member organizations.

## Managing change: adaptation

Resilience does not only requires fresh thinking... but also fresh managing!



### What is the room for adaptation? Guidelines for change.

Adaptation emerged as key in supporting resilience. But, being used to prescriptive requirements, small organizations shy out of using spaces for adaptation even when they exist! Clarity of what adaptation is possible (and even encouraged!) can go a long way taking full advantage of such spaces, when they exist.



**Can adaptation be "zero budget"?** Whilst most people discourage ad hoc resilience funds (as they risk to create a new sector rather than mainstream it), they also realize that resilience might require extra efforts (pilots, supportive activities). What funding mechanisms can best responds to these needs?



### Resilience is not a sector... it is a way of thinking (and acting?).

All respondents are clear about this. But the adaptive / complexity oriented management that this way of thinking requires is still not mastered by organizations and is not apparent in the formats used along the chain. There is a continuous attempt to fit square pegs in round holes by adapting resilience to tools and methods (logframes, for example) which are embodiment of a different way of thinking!

- The importance of adaptive management was also clearly stressed. As well as the willingness of SMC to be flexible.
- The world become a different place in the period between the evaluation, as the COVID pandemic hit. The evaluation explored therefore also the consequent adaptations of programmes and, more in general, of the approach of partners.

## How does resilience relate to other ideas?

The development jargon includes many diverse concepts, which might become overlapping and confusing. This is particularly true for resilience!



### Beware the link DRR/resilience!

It is of course an important one, but it also risk to make resilience seen as a DRR concept, rather than a cross cutting way of thinking, across diverse sectors. If DRR is hazard-focused, resilience should be "power focused" – and connected to capacities to thrive within a change ecosystem (not related to a specific hazard)



### Resilience / sustainability. The link, they do not overlap.

Resilience is often linked to sustainability. However: sustainability tend to focus with a project (will it last?) and the connected resources. It 1) does not always push to question the value of the action to be sustained. 2) it can become "inertia" rather than questioning what should be sustained, for how long. In this, it tends to be linear. Resilience is more environment-focused and helps navigating non-linear change (it calls for applying system thinking: be aware of boundaries, tipping points...).



### Jargon gets in the way

Communication amongst partners and SMC goes through formal reports. Their language does not vividly capture achievements. And there is often lack of other products for communication. Jargon words (resilience, gender, conflict) then risk to be broad brushes, "one fits it all" words to describe very diverse processes.

- The risk of overlapping resilience with DRR was even more evident in Asia, because DRR programmes have been much more established, even before the start of the initiative.

The key recommendations emerged from the previous learning review are illustrated below. They resonated with the people consulted; they were confirmed by this evaluation. And, in some cases, they had already started to be enacted (☺). It is really positive to see how swift action in response to the findings was!

## FINAL FINDINGS OF THE PREVIOUS EVALUATION



### AN ACTIVE NETWORK

*Creating connections matters. The Kenya4Resilience network is definitely a key asset generated by of the initiative.*

## ARE THEY CONFIRMED OR DIFFERENT?

- Whilst one of the most significant achievements in Africa was the creation of a network (K4R) there was no such achievement in Asia. And, given the different local context, it is not even clear if such network would be viable and useful
- Linkages to existing networks (e.g., GNDR) continued to prove important. SMC promoted localized membership in relevant networks also in Asia.
- As compared with the previous evaluation, the importance of "networks of networks" become even more evident (as there seem to be stronger existing networks in Asia)





## A COMMON FRAMEWORK

*The evaluation highlighted the need for shared frameworks: many organizations are challenged by an unclear understanding of resilience and by the lack of operational tools.*

- ☺ In the months passed since the previous evaluation, member organizations could gain a stronger understanding of the resilience wheel framework. It is not yet known to all, but there are investments in this direction. Some organization started to use it as a guidance of planning.
- The need to operationalize the framework (i.e., providing practical tools and guidance to its implementation) remain strong.
- Some local partners have their own framework for interventions and approaches. But there has been little possibility to cross fertilize frameworks and approaches, as partners, locally, had been little exposed to the resilience wheel (and their frameworks had not been circulated)



## UNLEARNING

*Many participants, in the final feedback, suggested that resilience was not so much about learning new things, but about unlearning habits, management options that limit actions. This also involved options for management, oriented to control rather than adaptation.*

- Most informants confirmed this challenge: current modalities of management are a barrier for adaptiveness and stronger programmes.
- It became evident that “unlearning” at the individual level is not enough. People seem to be prisoners of their organization’s systems, everywhere: from the local organizations to Sida. Even when there is interest, willingness to try out new approaches, organizational systems appear very hard to dismantle.
- Some local partners embarked in outcome mapping since the start of their programme. It was a rewarding experience, but also revealing that it is hard to work in different ways. Attempts to shift towards outcome mapping also indicated that the existing systems (administrative, reporting, IT) are very rigid, and it is hard to change management for one project whilst the others still are managed the old way.
- ☺ SMC had taken seriously this challenge and it started to invest in capacity building for its staff e.g., on outcome mapping (which requires changing perspectives on management). Attempts to shift towards outcome mapping also indicated that the existing systems (administrative, reporting, IT) are very rigid, and create challenges in adapting. SMC is aware of the need to adapting them, and it is keen to do so, in parallel with the capacity building efforts.



## RETHINKING MONITORING / REPORTING ON RESILIENCE

*Monitoring and documenting resilience is still a big challenge. Existing weaknesses in doing so have consequences for effective communication with donors, for shared learning, for evidence-based advocacy.*  
*The evaluation also called for different modalities of planning / monitoring / reporting: more adaptive in nature, oriented to understand the nuances of the processes, focused on outcomes. A strong demand for adaptive / outcome-oriented approaches to*

- Challenges in documenting and monitoring resilience were also evident amongst the partners in Asia. The reporting failed to convey the richness of the programmes.
- Several projects were designed to pilot new approaches and models of interventions (e.g., the climate change plans, the CIDRR). Yet the approaches and the learning around them were not captured and shared. If SMC intends to continue fostering innovation and pilots, it should improve its capacity to capture and share them.
- For the local partner engaged in outcome mapping, monitoring had proven very challenging, to the point of discouraging further use of the approach. As SMC supports different options for programme planning and management, it should ensure accompaniment along the project cycle.



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management raised (for example, outcome harvesting).

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## THINKING ALIGNMENT ALONG THE AID CHAIN.

*The importance of alignment - of purpose and vision - along the donor chain was stressed. “Many felt that the value of the practice on the ground is not fully appreciated because of the mindset upward. This call for work in rethinking requirements, formats, options for communication and sharing amongst the ground and the offices upward – to truly promote more progressive approaches, fostering resilience.*

- ☺ There has been already investment in strengthening alignment along the aid chain. SMC started training specifically for desk officers in outcome mapping.
  - The evaluation confirmed that the aid chain supported by SMC is nurtured with dialogue and mutual respect. The quality of relations amongst SMC/members/local partners was valued.
  - Effective communication for sharing learning on resilience remain a challenge: support and engagement exist, but it is not captured anywhere else other than in reporting.
-

# KEY OUTCOMES

This section lists the key outcomes – understood as changes in behaviour or practice – of the key stakeholders, as identified in the framework for the resilience initiative.

<p><b>1. SMC</b> SMC's resilience effort improves the organisation's commitment and strategy for promotion of resilience in its programmes and advocacy work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The initiative contributed to more strongly embedding</b> resilience within in SMC. It started as a loose concept, and it evolved to a much clearer framework, with linked workplans and frameworks. <b>Some</b> members emphasized, however, the need that plans, strategies should speak a stronger resilience language.</li> <li>• Resilience work has been pushed by the passion of some <b>committed staff in SMC. But the uptake is not yet even</b>, and not everyone has fully taken on board the concept and the implications of working with it.</li> <li>• The initiative has been always strongly accompanied by the <b>learning function</b> within SMC. The organization is increasingly recognizing the importance of learning and capacity building of its staff, to strengthen organizational ownership of resilience and related ideas (e.g., adaptive management), and it is investing in this direction. Learning and training initiatives are currently underway, and it will be important to check their uptake. It is hoped they can reduce the gap re: resilience understanding that local partners had highlighted in the previous evaluation.</li> <li>• SMC had engaged actively in networks. This has not been a “change”, since engagement in this direction was always evident. But it is worth highlighting that the role of SMC in <b>networking on resilience</b> has been strongly appreciated by other organizations in Sweden.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. MEMBER ORGANISATIONS</b> SMC's resilience effort improves member organisations commitments and their strategies to promote resilience in their programmes and in their advocacy work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>value of resilience is recognized</b> by all member organizations. The resilience concept was instrumental to give visibility to challenges, achievements that member's local partners were already encountering. As such, resilience <b>was never felt as a topic imposes from above</b>. Resilience opened new spaces to address relevant issues with partners.</li> <li>• Largely thanks to the initiative, several member organizations are developing their own <b>frameworks on resilience</b> (aligned or complementary to the SMC ones). They feel they are a valuable asset for the organization. In the case of the Salvation Army, the work on resilience initiated in Sweden is impacting also on their international network.</li> <li>• <b>Resilience thinking is starting to be integrated in programming</b>. It is still early stages, and there is a need for more practical tools and options to do so, streamlined in management. But definitely there is a strong desire to wear resilience lenses when working on projects. As an informant put it “We now want resilience to be a part of all we do!”.</li> <li>• The importance of resilience and the need to have specific support for it were also felt by member organizations which are not part of the initiative but <b>set their own fund</b> (i.e., PMU).</li> <li>• Members are increasingly appreciating the value of resilience in addressing the <b>nexus</b>: e.g., that work in challenging contexts does not simply require transitioning from relief to development, but to dynamical work at a more complex juncture of humanitarian, developmental, peacebuilding challenges.</li> <li>• Member organizations valued the efforts of SMC to build <b>shared understanding of resilience</b> (both in Sweden and abroad) and they are keen to align forces on this.</li> <li>• Member organizations are now also active participants in the <b>Swedish resilience network and on GNDR</b>. Such networks are mobilizing increasing participation and interest.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. PARTNER ORGANISATIONS</b> SMC's resilience effort improves partner organisations commitments and their strategies to promote resilience in their programmes and in their advocacy work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience created a <b>space for local partners to work on existing concerns</b> (adapt to climate change, mitigate risks) which were felt but not articulated. The main change was not so much in their buy-into the issues, but in the space at their disposal to tackle them. More attention should be given to the positive impact already produced by partners.</li> <li>• Many of the partners (e.g., of Eriks) <b>had already competencies</b> to some</li> </ul>

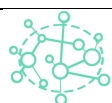
	<p>aspects of resilience work (DRR), and resilience was already an operational concept for them. In these cases, added value of the initiative was mainly to help integration of other cross cutting themes (e.g., women and children engagement).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience was <b>integrated also in long term initiatives</b> (e.g., by ADRA): resilience proved useful in designing programmes in areas who transitioned from relief to development.</li> <li>• Partners had the opportunity to test or refine <b>new methods / approaches for intervention</b> which they conceived themselves (e.g., Friendship, EFICOR). However, the sharing of such approaches was then limited.</li> <li>• The opportunity to <b>share understanding of resilience</b> and to get exposed and react to the SMC one was very limited within the initiative for the Asian stakeholders (it happened at the inception, but did not really filter through the programmes, and was curtailed at the end because of COVID): this had limited the possibility of a shared understanding.</li> <li>• Partners appreciated the importance of <b>international networking</b> (with participation to networking events) and to link up with GNDR – which is felt as a useful and relevant platform for action.</li> <li>• <b>Networking across SMC partners</b> happened only marginally, and practices were little shared: cross fertilization was limited. Partners are keen to be exposed and share practices, but there are still limited channels to do so supported by the initiative (with the exception of the initiative in Kenya).</li> <li>• A potential area for engagement – which is now emerging in the resilience work – is the creation of <b>consortia of local partners</b> for joint projects supported by the embassies in country. It is premature to gauge achievements, but it is a very promising area of engagement, and SMC is providing – in Kenya – a sandbox to practice engagement and to build capacities. This is so far applicable only to the Kenyan setup.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. THE RESILIENCE NETWORK</b> SMC improves the structure of the work of the Resilience network so that it uses its full potential, based on its mandate in its ToR.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>resilience network</b> is now a consolidated structure, which is now bringing together many organizations concerned with resilience. The network is established and continues to operate, as leadership passed from SMC to Diakonia. It now counts 22 organizations out of which 10 are SMC members.</li> <li>• The resilience network is now effectively linking to other initiatives, in particular the GNDR network. Together they are capable to mobilize in involve stakeholders beyond their membership.</li> <li>• The network is engaging with advocacy to national stakeholders. It seems to be a better outlet to reach decision makers than isolated initiatives by individual organizations. Awareness that advocacy can happen through stronger networking is a strong asset of the network.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5/6. SIDA AND MOFA</b> SMC's resilience effort improves (5) Sida's commitments and their strategies to promote DRR/resilience in their policies, strategies and programmes and (6) MOFA understanding of the role of the civil society in implementation of the Sendai Framework and strengthen its efforts in general.</p>	<p>The evaluation did not have direct engagement with staff in Sida or in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It emerged however that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>humanitarian framework</b> was not renewed by SIDA, which is of course a challenge re: future funding for resilience initiatives.</li> <li>• Both SIDA and MOFA are <b>already committed to the resilience agenda</b> and to advance the Sendai Framework. They are regularly approached and lobbied by the Resilience Network and <b>positively responded to engagement with GNDR</b> network (which SMC is now chairing). Staff in SMC reported positive outcomes because of this engagement (but which of course should have been double checked to feature in the evaluation).</li> <li>• All informants reported that SIDA is responding positively to work on resilience. The challenges in achieving a stronger resilience orientation (e.g., adaptiveness, support of projects around the nexus) seems to lie in the <b>existing organizational systems</b>, rather than in the individual buy in.</li> <li>• It is early stage now, but it will be key to monitor the <b>support of embassies</b> in countries to local partners and consortia.</li> </ul>

# STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

This section presents findings useful to structure action around key areas of engagement for SMC: networking, advocacy, learning, management (adaptive and outcome-oriented). They have been written considering the nature of the institution, which is a very loose network, keen to be responsive to its partners and to stand by its principles and values.

## NETWORKING

The networking component has been an effective one. The initiative invested a lot in networking at different scales: within Sweden – with investment in the resilience network; globally – with investment in GNDR, with participation in other global networking events (e.g., GNDRR in Geneva), with support to local networks (i.e., K4R). Worth remembering that SMC is itself a network: thinking “networking” really fits to its nature!



### EXTROVERTED NETWORKING IN SWEDEN (COORDINATION, NOT IN ISOLATION).

The intuition of SMC was not to limit itself to networking amongst its members – which might have been an option! The strategy was, from the start, to work more broadly, including other organizations. The resilience network in Sweden - started by 5 organizations, now includes 22 organizations out of which 10 are SMC members. It helps to build bridges and cooperation and is a more powerful tool for advocacy. Yet, the network can also help as a coordination mechanism for SMC: resilience is the only thematic area where SMC meets the members regularly – piggy backed on the broader meeting.

*This networking architecture proved very effective in ensuring internal coordination - but not in isolation! - and should be continued.*



### NETWORKING NETWORKS

The initiative invested in “networking networks”: it creates synergies amongst its own network and other existing ones. And forward. GNDR (which SMC is now leading in Sweden) proved to be a particularly relevant one – with its global focus on civil society and grassroots organizations. Applications to GNDR were promoted both in Sweden (where 12 members of the resilience network are also part of GNDR) as well as abroad, (where local partners are invited to be active in their national chapter, on individual basis but also as networks within the network, as in the case of K4R). Being part of GNDR had, for example, helped some local partners to forge new connections than taken forward in joint projects (e.g., by ADRA in Bangladesh).

*SMC should continue to scan and link up also with other existing networks (e.g., on climate change). This capacity to scan networks and to promote them across partners has been an efficient strategy, in generating connections without duplicating efforts. Partners do appreciate that these networks are also channels for local advocacy and the best way to engage with the government, as a part of a broader coalition.*



### PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES / INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING EVENTS (E.G., GNDRR, GNDR).

A delegation of SMC and partners participated in the GNDRR conference in Geneva. For some local partners this was a first and an eye opener (as discussed in the next chapter, re: advocacy and voice). SMC also organized effective side meetings during the event: they helped to better to connect the participants from Swedish organizations.

Another network the initiative invested a lot into is GNDR, as an opportunity for liaising and exposure locally and globally. And respondents confirmed that GNDR is indeed a very valuable platform, worth engaging with.

*Participation in international events was valued. Some suggestions were offered to further increase potential: 1) coach partners better about their potential for input; 2) help them to filter information from the network (a partner, for example, highlighted that it is hard to catch up with the network mails, and it might be difficult to identify the issues worth focusing on).*



### BUILDING HIGHER IMPACT LOCALIZED NETWORKS (BUT ASSESS THE NEED FOR THEM).

One of the strong successes of the initiative was the creation of the Kenya4Resilience platform (born out of the initiative of its members – following the first learning meeting in Nairobi). It is a very active forum, creating new spaces for local collaboration of SMC members, and for engagement with other local actors. It indicates that small organizations can have a broad impact, much broader than they could reach individually. Should the model be expanded to other setups? E.g., as a regional workshop? Or linking partners in Asia? Notwithstanding the value of such platform, members emphasized the importance for SMC and member organizations not to jump into “setting local networks” but assess existing networks and capacities first, to avoid the risk of duplication. (also, because, in Asia, local partners seem to be already very connected to resilience networks, especially these working on DRR). A possible role for SMC should be to better promote

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/ broadcast actions and activities through its members. For example, by broadcasting events, webinars that partners or networks are organizing (and ensuring that SMC staff participates in them).

*SMC should continue to offer support for localized networks – if a chance arises. But it should not aim at building them, as a priority. The priority is to support partners in scanning options for networking and advocacy. And to help the networks formed to broaden their audience. So that they can share learning, build connections, and – possibly – encourage replication, leading by example.*

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### CONSORTIUM BUILDING

Being part of a consortium increases options to access resources: “No one will give you money for a little project somewhere!”. The Kenya for Resilience network, for example, is also aiming to generate projects as a consortium and -with support of the resilience fund, is acquiring expertise to this extent.

*SMC should continue to foster possibilities for its partners to link up also in consortia.*

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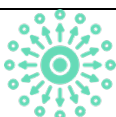
### SHARED LEARNING WORKSHOPS

The resilience initiative generated opportunities for shared learning (two learning workshops in Nairobi). They were regarded as great opportunities to share practices. Their potential to then create lasting connections (to share ideas, practices, collaboration) was not fully exploited: beside the formation of the K4R network – other interaction remained occasional.

*Whenever SMC set events, it should ensure that they are linked to channels to maintain contact (e.g., community of practice, linkages to networks... or even simple tools like a regular update). Otherwise, the potential of an investment in such initiatives is reduced. It would also be useful to check, within regular programme monitoring if and how connections helped or are needed.*

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When looking at networking, the following points arose:



### FROM CHAMPIONS TO DIFFUSION

The networks were animated by passionate people: the successes in outreach are a reminder of the power of motivated champions. The network established or supported by the initiatives are strong enough to survive the turnover (and the initiators proved to be able to step back and pass the baton, or to set collaborative engagement). Many informants, however, shared the concern that SMC, as an institution, had not yet fully institutionalized resilience. So, the external networking and positioning might not be anchored into an equally sound internal buy in. Some informants highlighted how in the past some issues and progress have been affected by turnover. There is a need, within the organization, to shift from reliance on championing toward diffusion and organizational buy in. But the next strategy will be key to ensure this.

*SMC was strong in championing resilience and can continue driving a topic that is very coherent with its work. But it needs to ensure that the organization as a whole buy into resilience, to diffuse the risk that networking rely only on champions. The current investment in bringing the internal network around resilience is key and should continue for the next strategic period.*

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### ECO NOT EGO IN NETWORKING.

SMC is a loose network, and networking is part of its nature. The resilience initiative – and the networking action – always managed to project a sense of “togetherness”: i.e., that the work on resilience was not born or driven to affirm an individual organization. It was about generating a stronger eco/social system around the idea of resilience. It was not ego – i.e., SMC promoting itself into large meetings. SMC networking action served to bring diverse actors to work together, emphasizing the grassroots. This approach was acknowledged and valued by the informants consulted, and helped to create ownership and commitment

*Continue to network to build a social ecosystem (i.e., maximizing options for interactions and collective actions) rather using them to affirm the individual organizations.*

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### IDEAS ON NETWORKING

- **Can local networks be helped to become more influential in the “North”?** The choice of supporting GNDR (and to lead on its work in Sweden) indicates SMC’s desire to support networks valuing the voices of the grassroots. At a time when a lot of initiatives overlap and compete for attention (because of the pandemic, the global offer of events reachable on internet platform is increasing), could SMC help to advertise further the initiatives of actors from the “global South” within the institution and within its networks? This might include, for example, promotion of K4R webinars, scoping opportunities to bring local partners as “guest speakers” in organizational events. etc
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(synchronicity: as I wrote this point, I received an invitation to look at the new Kenya for Resilience site... a great example of how a simple message can generate attention!]

- **Help to make networking more manageable.** Local partners have pointed out that sometimes information received from networks are overwhelming, and they do not simply have capacity to filter and identify what is most significant. Can SMC (whose staff is also more conversant with online networking) help to scan content and highlight opportunities for engagement and debate?
- **Prodding:** as much as organizations are keen to networking and exposure, time might be hard to find, and networking gets side-lined. Can SMC help to convey the idea that networking time is part of programming and partnership, and do some “prodding? This might happen through rebalancing time demands. On what topics should SMC best invest its power to ask for time and commitment from partners? In reporting or in networking and connecting? Some informants mentioned that using this power to convey meetings / interactions might strengthen local partnerships, mutual accountability, engagement in networking: “If we are required to have meetings within the support from SMC, we would give time... otherwise there is a risk to pull out!”

## ADVOCACY

Advocacy work took place in **Sweden** – through the resilience network and the engagement with GNDR. These activities involve SMC and most of its members. Members of the network reported on ongoing advocacy action, with diverse departments in national institutions. Advocacy on resilience was also achieved alongside programmes. For example, the Ethiopia evaluation of SMC resilience programmes was a rare opportunity to have all actors of the aid chain (from local partners to national donors) in the same room in Stockholm: donorship relations might also transform into mutual advocacy relations! Unfortunately, the opportunities to work along the donorship chain, for advocacy purposes, will now be reduced – with the humanitarian department – given the discontinuation of the humanitarian fund.

Outside Sweden, advocacy work involving local partners had included:



### EXPOSURE TO INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

Member and local partner representatives were supported in participating in international meetings. This was highlighted and valued by them. For some, this exposure was a first, and was a unique insight on how advocacy happened at the higher levels. And, most importantly, they also understood that they have a lot to contribute. In the words of an informant: “I realized that my organization had a lot to share, and that my experience that was sometimes even more interesting than what was presented by others”. Also, they saw how contributions could eventually influence plans, strategies. It has been suggested that, if this awareness was better built before, in the preparation phase, local partners could be in an even better position to contribute. As one local partner representative said, “If I had known that early, I would have made a stall!”. Preparation could include not only sharing preparation notes (which were valued) but also more practical coaching, one to one. A powerful reminder that systemic racism and colonialism (whose impact is finally increasingly recognized in the aid system) still have a toll: organizations at the grassroots might not be aware of knowledge and expertise they have, and one of the most powerful way to “build” capacities is actually to remind people of what capacities they have! Continue to generate options for exposure and active participation to international events by partners. In doing this, provide coaching on how to best contribute. And, in the light of COVID, consider how exposure to international meeting should shape up as many opportunities are moved online.



### LINKING ADVOCACY TO NETWORKING (E.G., GNDR)

The network section already highlighted how SMC promoted membership and engagement with active networks - in particular GNDR. Respondents reported that being members of such network is a powerful way to engage with their own government, because, for small organizations “advocacy is not something that can happen on individual basis, but as a part of a broader network”. This way of working – linking advocacy to networking – resonate very well with local partners, which are already aware that advocacy work needs to be collaborative.

*Continue to link advocacy to networking, to generate stronger constituencies for change. And assess better what networks are local actors already engaging with, to check options for collaboration.*



### GENERATION OF LOCAL PLATFORMS FOR ADVOCACY

Most projects supported by the initiative in Asia included local advocacy: linking communities to their local government representatives (e.g., in generating plans, in responding to issues).



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Several SMC partners are strengthening approaches for working in this middle ground: in creating synergies amongst communities and government. Some of the people consulted highlighted that this could be a meaningful area for shared learning and expertise harvesting.

*Advocacy / generation of synergies with local government (and, in particular, amongst local communities and their administrators) has been a recurring feature of projects. It has been highlighted as an area worth attention for consolidation of experiences and shared learning.*

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#### IDEAS ON ADVOCACY

- **Coach local partners on how to best participate in international events.**

This should also be considered in the light of COVID, as many events are moving online: which ones are worth participating into? What is the best way to approach engagement in an online meeting? Seizing advocacy options in networked events could be an interesting joint endeavour.

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## LEARNING

SMC has made a strong investment in learning on resilience. It has already an overall learning framework that promotes learning from the experience of change, and towards adaptive development. And it is, indeed, a learning framework very suited to support resilience work. The learning framework was already applied within the initiative.



#### ADHERENCE TO THE PRINCIPLES CONTAINED IN THE LEARNING POLICY

The resilience initiative incorporated learning as a main concern. It included **learning events**, which were valued by respondents. Not of the events planned could materialize, given the COVID pandemic: Asia missed out, and stakeholders emphasized the desire for exchanges.

Events were a strong opportunity to create a common understanding of resilience amongst SMC members, and to boost joint actions (such as the strengthening of K4R).

The learning investment had already ripple effects within some members organizations, who are invested in uptake and sharing, internally, concept of resilience – also with their own learning initiatives. Within grassroots organizations, **dissemination from participants** to the events remained a mixed bag (and generally it seemed weaker amongst the partner in Asia, whilst organizations in Africa also had the support and motivation of. The K4R outlet).

Finally, in line with the framework, **evaluations** were designed to have a strong learning orientation, and to capture and share practices rather than being “judgemental from the top”.

*Continue to ensure that resilience – and similar initiatives – embodies the approach of the SMC learning policy.*

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#### CAPACITY CAPTURE AND COMMUNICATE CHANGE TO SHARE EXPERIENCES

So, from Sweden (or from a desk review!) it is next to impossible to have any sense of what resilience looks in practice. Despite the strong learning orientation, the capacity to capture tangible illustrations of what is happening on the ground is still limited. Information travels mainly through reporting, which largely fail to convey the richness of experiences. Also – as it seems from the files received for the desk review - there is little interest from what happens beyond the projects (e.g., by collecting materials and documentations of the approach in use, beyond the reporting). Facebook pages set by partners could much more vividly capture change and ongoing process than the project reports.

Field visit allowed so far SMC staff to have hands on experience, but overreliance on these need to be reconsidered (also in consideration of the combination of COVID limitations and the need to curb carbon). Also, field visits were shared through travel report, which ended by being more of a bureaucratic report than a dissemination product proper.

Some local partners showed interest for more innovative approaches for documentation and sharing of experience, but so far there has been little incentive into really investing in them, whilst conventional reporting is still the demand made.

*SMC should consider how its current modalities of reporting fail to capture the richness of change. There is room for supporting side initiatives (e.g., use of social media for ongoing sharing – where a project #hashtag would already go a long way to consolidate experiences; promotion of tools for real time monitoring and data collection; investment in multimedia; production of dissemination products by partners), but until the main demand remains for conventional reporting, this might divert focus an investment on alternative approaches.*

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## MOVE FROM PROJECT MANAGEMENT TO INCUBATION OF APPROACHES

A very valuable contribution by the resilience initiative was, for some local partners, the possibility to pilot new approaches (which could then be funded through other donors or be more strongly embedded in their practices). This has been, for the example the case for the CIDRR framework of Friendship or for the Climate Change plans of EFICOR. In both cases, resources to then replicate and disseminate further the approach were found by the local partners, which is of course fine. Partners had also generated interesting synergies, for example, in the case of Friendship, with academic institutions. SMC could probably invest a little more to support dissemination of practices and embed incubation of approaches more strongly as an expected outcome. This would allow to better capture and stimulate products, initiatives and have also a better sense of how the approach are disseminated.

*SMC should better follow projects with potential for learning; for example, these piloting new approaches. Project monitoring should also allow to follow up on the incubation process, and on the dissemination of the approach. And, of course, structural resources to this end might be provided.*

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## SETUP OF FRAMEWORKS: BUILDING SHARED UNDERSTANDING

The resilience initiative also promoted the adoption of a framework on resilience. The (wise!) choice was to **build on existing good work** and adopt an existing one (the LWF resilience wheel), rather than starting from scratch. Some members also created their own ones (i.e., Salvation Army). The value of all these processes was not just “creating a framework”, but first and foremost, sharing knowledge, ideas, get alignment. In this respect, having diverse frameworks is not a challenge, providing that they help to cross fertilize ideas and practices. And if they ensure that, whatever the framework, they see resilience as a different way of thinking, and acknowledge its implications (e.g., focus on process, participation, adaptiveness, complexity, risk-awareness...).

The learning workshop in Nairobi greatly contributed to familiarize people with it, and, during it, options to use it to create informed storytelling around projects emerged. The framework then shifted, from being theory to become a platform for richer narrations of change. Some aspects of the frameworks (for example concepts such as “robustness” are still little explored. Some informants expressed interest in learning more about these specific points, and on how to achieve them in practice. **It will be important to track all this this emerging knowledge and pinpoint areas of the framework that might be** slightly adapted (for example: the addition of spiritual capital).

SMC members showed an increased familiarity with the frameworks (it increased, as compared to previous evaluation). They are starting to use it in to formulate projects (e.g., ADRA). Yet, they still wish to have more accompaniment, especially on the practicalities of using it to inform programmes.

Last, not least, external Swedish stakeholders showed interest for the framework and about its potential to capture storytelling on resilience. This interest is still little tapped into and SMC might consider a more active promotion of the tool and of the narratives it can generate.

*The adoption of framework was instrumental in building a shared understanding of resilience. For its work on resilience SMC and partners should continue to use frameworks, ensuring that: 1) the framework continues to be used as an entry point for analysis of resilience (or that frameworks with similar key principles are used); 2) adaptations of the frameworks are captured 3) a toolbox of approaches, resources that might help to sue it in practice is consolidated around it; 4) concepts in the framework are continuously used as “books” to collect practices, contributing to more systemic shared learning; 5) the framework, its adaptations, the narrations emerging are shared with networks in Sweden. Later in this report the potential for the framework to be articulated as a “theory of change” on resilience will also be explored.*

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## KNOWLEDGE, TRAINING, LEARNING EXCHANGES ARE IN HIGH DEMAND

Most informants stressed the importance of acquiring fresh knowledge. Diverse channels in use by the initiative were highlighted. The **learning workshops** were highly valued by these participating, as a great opportunity to acquire and share ideas, rooted in practice and also with other organizations. Most emphasized also that they put ideas acquired in use. (but less emphasis was put on further dissemination, an aspect that needs to be further strengthened in the future. And availability of new tools, such as the learning platform, might be of help)

Other options for knowledge sharing were also valued. For example, Eriks local partners, for example, recalled **receiving documents, and insights on resilience** and other cross cutting issues ““Eriks/SMC want to boost ideas, spirit and create a platform to create more knowledge, to go beyond my own box”. All information that was useful to acquire new ideas and embed them in programmes. There was a strong demand for **learning exchanges**, in presence, where to get direct exposure to activities on the ground. As the evaluation happened during the COVID pandemic, the need for exposure was re-emphasized even more strongly, given that such opportunities had been cancelled worldwide! Participation in **international workshops** was also seen as an opportunity for learning, and for acquiring contacts with whom to share ideas. Some

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respondents also indicated the need for more **training**, and capacity building on resilience. Training proper did not take place so far, but SMC is now working on a new learning platform with the intention of covering this need.

*The initiative used several strategies to share learning. They were valued by participants: across the board, all respondents are really eager to learn! SMC members also contributed to share learning: the orientation to learning is an important aspect of the SMC network. All the initiatives lead to practical – not theoretical - learning, which was applied within programmes. Initiatives tended to be a bit fragmented, and not oriented to a broader outreach (i.e., beyond these immediately participating in it). This was particularly felt amongst organizations in Asia, also because the second learning workshop could not take place. More investment might be needed to ensure that the key aspects of resilience promoted by SMC are really extensively disseminated (especially in context where resilience is equated to DRR, and hence in a restrictive way). The investment on a learning platform might create the “glue” and a stronger basis to better connect diverse learning options in the future.*

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## INVESTMENT IN A LEARNING PLATFORM

SMC is currently investing in a learning platform where to pilot new trainings and other options for shared learning. As the evaluation was underway, it started a very relevant training on the topic of adaptive management / outcome management for SMC desk officer. A very useful topic that will help to fill a gap already highlighted in the previous evaluation. It is early days for the SMC learning platform, but the learning department had embarked in working on this with enthusiasm. The evaluation suggested diverse options which might be tested as the platform is being designed (and they are all rooted in needs and aspirations emerging from the assessment):

- **Training (but not “from the top”).** Several informants appeared keen to access training resources. Having training options will be useful, provided, however, that training continue to remain oriented to practice, to sharing (rather than “theory from the top”). SMC seems to have already a strong orientation in this direction, but it is a point always worth reminding!
- **Networked dissemination.** One of the challenges of training and shared learning so far has been the reduced dissemination. The new platform seems to have very useful features to this regard, including the capacity to disseminate and replicate training packages easily. This might be a very relevant resource for broadening up the scope.
- **Alliances:** the learning platform, of course should also act in synergy with other initiatives, such as the K4R network, partnering / re-launching initiatives
- **A repository to capture innovation and learning:** SMC partners are piloting new approaches which are currently not effectively captured and shared. The learning platform could also be an opportunity to feature and disseminate them (consider: a resource library, opportunities for recording and storing webinars on local approaches...). This could also provide a relevant channel to partner to further disseminate their approaches and achievements.
- **Creating a community.** All participants to shared learning events appreciated a lot the networking aspects, being together and sharing ideas. However, in many cases, only a few links and friendships stood the test of time. Initiatives run from the platform should be linked, as much as possible, to the creation (and ongoing facilitation) of communities of practice.
- **Create a “real time” space for sharing.** SMC and partners are still “slow” in capturing and sharing lessons. There has not been, for example, any opportunity to share learning around adaptations on resilience at the time of COVID. A learning platform might also help to facilitate real time connection and sharing, as need arises.
- **Generation of synergies along the chain:** often “training” in presence bring together people with similar expertise. The learning platform might also experiment with bringing together diverse actors – for example: all actors around a project chain. Experimenting with facilitated learning events, with diverse participants, might also contribute to rethink programme management.



## LINKAGES WITH OTHER ACTORS (E.G., ACADEMIA)

The learning events conveyed diverse participants, beyond SMC organizations (e.g., GNDR, private sector representatives. And local partners demonstrated capacity to liaise effectively with the academia (e.g., the partnership with Dhaka University by Friendship in Bangladesh).

*Learning efforts should continue to be an option to encourage diversity and to engage with diverse stakeholders*

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## IDEAS ON LEARNING ON RESILIENCE

Many ideas on learning have been shared above, particularly in relation to the learning platform. The following are a few additional ones!

- **Link training/ capacity building to the setup of communities of practices.** Ensure that the connections that are created within capacity building initiatives can be sustained in the long term. Consider, for example, setup of communities of practices, where

participants have tools for sharing ideas, practices and are facilitated to maintain interaction (e.g., mailing list or similar groups, opportunities to attend webinars, access to a platform...)

- **Think sharing and replication when designing learning initiatives.** Generate learning options designed to be shared with external audiences (e.g., modules open source that can be shared and adapted). This might become an opportunity to overcome the challenges in dissemination so far.
- **Rethink evaluation: less, but deeper.** Some respondents highlighted that there should be less investment in routine forms of evaluation and more focus on in-depth learning-oriented evaluations, in creative formats. For example: thematic ones, ex-post to understand long term effects, evaluations designed as learning exchanges... SMC would be in quite a unique position to trial new options. One way forward would be to avoid requiring a standard evaluation for all projects, but rather pull resources for specifically designed ones.
- **Invest in real-time events for sharing:** could SMC strengthen its capacity to share learning at a time of need? If it is keen to invest in resilience, then capacities to share learning real time- as need materializes (e.g., re: COVID response) could be a very valuable asset.

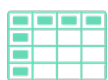
## ADAPTIVE AND OUTCOME-ORIENTED MANAGEMENT

One of the strong merits of the initiative was the realization that thinking “resilience” also requires to rethink the way in which projects are managed. Resilience is about acting recognizing “complexity”: i.e., that different forces are at play, and it is not simply possible to predefine a linear casual path for action. And resilience is also about recognizing that our anticipated pathway to change can be disrupted at any time, by diverse threats. So, embracing resilience cannot really happen unless adaptive management is also embraced. SMC realized it, and consequently allowed for adaptiveness within its projects.



### SMC ENSURED NEEDED FLEXIBILITY, FOR CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES.

All local partners were satisfied with the flexibility allowed within projects. For example, ADRA project in Bangladesh, could reallocate the budget earmarked for pond excavation when it emerged that they were not feasible. All partners agreed that SMC is flexible as long as there is timely and clear communication.



### SMC RECOGNIZED THAT RESILIENCE THINKING CANNOT EASILY COEXIST WITH LOGFRAME THINKING.

Logframe thinking hides complexity: logframes are fit to articulate a linear, casual path to action, and to largely pre-determine outcomes. Logframe thinking also tends to hide dynamics at play, and the complexity of creating change in setups where different actors are operating and where diverse needs and aspirations coexist. SMC is increasingly aware of this, and, for example in the Nairobi workshop, started to discuss if and how project management could be transformed (more adaptive, more oriented to outcomes). It is now engaging into an internal learning project to bring on board staff still hesitant to overcome logframe management and embrace needed transformation. As already highlighted in the previous evaluation, ensuring that SMC staff in Sweden is in line with staff on the ground is key. As one participant to learning events said: “If you get back with enthusiasm and you feel resistance [from staff in Stockholm], then you are afraid, you think ‘maybe I was wrong’ and you step back”.



### SMC SUPPORTED MORE ADAPTIVE OPTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT (E.G., OUTCOME MAPPING), ON THE GROUND

Some projects within the resilience initiative were conceived using outcome mapping. The uptake of outcome mapping, however, was diverse. Some organizations were already conversant with it. In other cases (e.g., Leprosy Mission), an initial training was not sufficient to build all the needed capacities and confidence to use the approach.

*Overall, it is very positive to see how SMC's determination to innovate on management and to ensure flexibility and adaptiveness. It is also encouraging to see the organization's commitment, in bringing along its staff.*






*The following points might help to explore further the instances where alternative approaches to management and reporting were tried (in particular: outcome mapping / harvesting).*

The following points highlight key findings re: application of adaptive and outcome-oriented options for management so far.






### THESE APPROACHES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

All the partners organizations who used outcome mapping (within the resilience initiative or in other related projects) were happy of the results. The approach made a lot of difference, in the empowerment of people: conventional approaches are more prescriptive. People had more freedom to explore, in context and to choose activities and plan how to evolve in the long term. This

	included a better assessment of sustainability and of options for environmentally friendly interventions.
	<b>THERE ARE CHAMPIONS</b> There are some champions within SMC and partner organizations (e.g., Salvation Army) of outcome mapping. This is a powerful asset to create a critical mass in supporting the approach
	<b>NEW APPROACHES MIGHT REQUIRE ACCOMPANIMENT.</b> The Leprosy Mission management shared really useful insights about outcome mapping. They tested the approach for the first time in the resilience project and received support and training for it at the inception. They really appreciated and valued it. But they also discovered that an initial training is not enough: there is a need for continuous accompaniment and co-design, when project management becomes different. How to best monitor? How to best report? How to assess progress – when there are not pre-set milestones? If SMC is interested in supporting outcome mapping and adapt project management accordingly, then it should be involved more actively, as a sounding board, and in thinking through the implication for communication, reporting. The organization lacked guidance and feedback (e.g., “OK, you are going to the right way...” or “you should change this”) as they embarked in a project on a relatively new topic (resilience) and with a different way to manage it! (“We needed to be reassured that we are on the road towards resilience. What do resilient community looks like?”).
	<b>ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT REQUIRES SYSTEM BUILDING</b> Another challenge encountered by the Leprosy Missions was the lack of a suitable management system. Other projects were still managed in conventional ways.... And the internal systems were not fit for the resilience project! They realize that adaptive management does require some investment in system building – and it is then hard to make different systems co-exist. The prevalent push, by donors, towards conventional management systems, might then discourage the use of alternatives.
	<b>ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT REQUIRES ALIGNMENT ALONG THE CHAIN...</b> Adaptive planning challenges the usual way to manage change (and its “bureaucracy” or reporting). It is like trying to fit round pegs in square holes! Alternative options for management can only be built together, linking communities, implementing organizations, donors along the chain. Otherwise, projects conceived and managed in an adaptive way, will get constrained to report their achievements in formats that simply do not fit them at some point on the chain (when stumble over requirements more oriented to “check compliance” rather than “discovering outcomes”)
	<b>... AND RE-THINKING THE PROJECT CYCLE:</b> All the above shows how outcome mapping / adaptive management is not only about writing projects differently but requires a different conception of the project cycle. Monitoring, in particular, becomes key and need to be integrated in decision making.

Given that **monitoring and learning** are key for adaptive management, here are some practical insights – emerging from the initiative – to address them.

	<b>MOVE FROM EXTRACTIVE TO LOCALIZED MONITORING CAPACITIES.</b> Especially in the aftermath of COVID, there has been a surge of interest for “remote monitoring”. However, the tendency has always been to stress the extractive aspects (“how to ensure that needed indicators to HQ can be collected) over a needed conversation on “local capacities for monitoring” (“are local partners confident in getting the information they need? And, out of them, what could also be useful to inform stakeholders “upward”?). Current modalities of monitoring are still weak to ensure monitoring for adaptation and accountability along the chain.
	<b>FOSTER DIFFERENT OPTIONS FOR REPORTING (OR, BETTER, FOR SHARING INSIGHTS)</b> Insights on change are still predominantly shared through conventional reporting. Previous learning review already suggested options to transform reporting. For example, co-authoring rather than supervision, investment in storytelling...
	<b>LINK MONITORING TO COMMUNICATION</b> SMC’s capacity to share evidence from programmes is still limited. There should be more investment in outcome / story harvesting, possibly in connection with social media work. Several partners are already proficiently using their media channels: the information is fresher, more vivid. If posts had an #hashtag, it would, for example, become easy to consolidate them! This is of course, one of many examples of how to seamlessly link monitoring and communication, with new technologies.





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#### SUPPORT INNOVATION IN MONITORING

Some partners are already discussing how to ensure monitoring when it is hard to reach a location (because of COVID). What is now a necessity, might become an opportunity in the future! It can lead to real-time. Communication-oriented options owned by the communities. For example, virtual visits with mobile and cameras are going to be tested. Also, the potential to remotely interact with people in the communities will be tested. Notwithstanding the importance of contact in person, these options for monitoring could actually generate new channels for participation and mutual accountability.



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#### LOOKING AT THE PROJECTS AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE, NOT AS A REPORTING CHAIN CAN REFRAME COMMUNICATION AND LEARNING.

We are so used to think on projects along a reporting chain, that this has become the norm. But could we make communication across a project more similar, in spirit and in design, to a “community of practice”? Reframing it as such would be a game changer in the way communication flows. It would ensure deeper accountability as well as learning. And some of the tools now used for learning, could actually become integral to the adaptive management practice. SMC could experiment with this as because relations are built on dialogue, information sharing, mutual support. And power seems to be more balanced than in the usual “donor /management chain”.



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#### THINK HOW ALL THIS MIGHT CHANGE IN THE “POST-COVID WORLD”

Many informants shared how the way of working and interacting is changing, during the pandemic. Could SMC support managers in finding the best ways to collaborate remotely? SMC and its partners could learn together what formats/approaches work better for remote adaptive management (and could effectively substitute other options for reporting yet retaining accountability).



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#### IDEAS ON LEARNING ON ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT FOR RESILIENCE

- **Piloting of management options.** Innovation is not only about piloting approaches in communities. It might also involve “learning to manage differently”. SMC is engaging in this, as it is shifting towards outcome / adaptation oriented modalities of management. Or as it helps partners to establish localized consortia. It is worth specifically earmarking these projects as pilots. And to accompany them with the needed developmental evaluation: learning can be about management and leadership, not only about implementation.
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# RESILIENCE AT THE TIME OF COVID

The evaluation took place during the COVID pandemic. Some of the projects within the initiative had to confront the effects of the pandemic / the lockdown. But the evaluation took a higher ground in looking at the impact felt by people involved in the initiative.



## COVID IS A GLOBAL DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUE.

COVID is, at the essence, an issue of disaster risk management at the global scale. And, as such, an imperative and a powerful reminder to put resilience and disaster management on the agenda. Many informants had noticed, for example, how the importance of adaptiveness is now more evident, or how a multi-hazard perspective is gaining traction.



## COVID IS LIKELY TO MARK A TURNING POINT IN THE WAY ASSISTANCE IS MANAGED.

Some informants highlighted how COVID is a turning point, and that there will be definitely a “before” and “after it”. Changes in the way programmes are managed are very likely (for example because of increased use of digital platforms rather than travelling), which will have an impact on the interaction amongst stakeholders.



## THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EFFECTS OF COVID MIGHT LEAD TO GENERATE A “NEW NORMAL”.

The COVID pandemic is having profound effects which might generate a “new normal”. Who will drive the process of building such new normal? Will COVID be an opportunity to acknowledge the fragility of our ecosystems and societies? Will it be an opportunity to reinstate the importance of rights and of access to primary services? Will it be an opportunity to creatively build resilience, from the local to the global scale? Or will the process of building a new normal be guided by forces which will eventually curtail rights, spaces for participation, and further damage our ecosystems? As SMC is entering a new strategic period, it needs to confront the “new normal” that COVID generated. And embrace resilience as the entry point for leveraging new opportunities and challenges for change.

So, the pandemic is a very relevant event in relation to resilience. COVID is **a symptom of much broader, deeper resilience challenges** – and an opportunity to highlight them. The advantage is that there is a high attention level to the issue. So, COVID might be an entry point to highlight issues that go much beyond of it: systemic challenges to resilience and to adaptive management. As an informant put it *“Resilience is now easier to communicate! But we need to communicate this in the right way: it is not about the virus, but about the trends it shows”*.

## MULTI-LAYERED INSIGHTS ON THE IMPACT OF COVID

The evaluation looked into the impact of the COVID pandemic to gain insights resilience and on strategic issues for the initiative, as per the question below. Insights appeared to feed under three main questions.



### EFFECTS ON THE PROGRAMMES

*Did the pandemic have any effect on the ongoing activities – worth registering by the evaluation?*

- **Standby time was short:** most programmes demonstrated a surprising capacity to adapt and restart, which had also impressed donors (for example, money was not massively underspent, neither were activities very much delayed: very quickly they could resume and adapt).
- **New options for delivering activities were rapidly put in place:** for example, training and meeting options were redesigned to delivered with minimal risk (e.g. “courtyard meetings” rather than larger ones; capacity building directly in the fields, rather than with trainings, etc.). Despite this, some challenges remained in reaching the most marginalized communities, and these weary of engagement.
- **Digitalization:** the lockdown moved many interactions from the “real” world to the cyberspace. Literally from one day to the next, opened up “new” options for engagement: amongst stakeholders in country, across offices. What are the implications for digitalization in the way resilience initiatives are managed? Who is gaining more access? Who is risking being side-lined? The evaluation showed a mixed bag: for example: challenges in reaching out the community groups to get their feedback and views... but also increased capacities of access to governmental offices in zoom calls. (see the subsequent chapter for more details)



Investments in resilience pay off, beyond specific threats: assets accrued through the resilience project / initiatives were useful to confront challenges posed by the pandemic. The following points show the diversity of the capitals generated (but are not an exhaustive list!). They seem to confirm that resilience stems from diverse, interacting ones.

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## LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR RESILIENCE

*Did the response to the pandemic – by organizations / communities – revealed any interesting insights re: local capacities for resilience (and on the impact of the initiative in strengthening them?)*

- **[Financial] Safety nets:** Community groups which had started saving initiatives to protect their livelihoods from future threats had more economic capital to face the lockdown (e.g., Leprosy Mission).
- **[Social] Local volunteers.** Projects that had supported local volunteers could quickly bounce back. Through them, they could reach out communities even during lockdown, to deliver some emergency support / to continue ongoing programmes. (social capital)
- **[Institutional] Localization, adaptiveness:** partners were fast in taking decisions, informed by the context and to adapt their work. Flexibility and dialogue with SMC were valued as enabling factors.
- **[Institutional] Linkages with local government.** Some organizations (e.g., Friendships) could quickly leverage contact with local government and generate interactions on resilience on digital platform: this demonstrated not only institutional capital, but also capacity to use it innovatively.



## RESILIENCE IN THE POST-COVID WORLD

*Did the COVID – as a turning point even – generated opportunities or challenges that need to be acknowledged by organizations working on resilience?*

- **A global threat generates more awareness of the importance of resilience.** Several informants shared how the pandemic generated an increased awareness of the importance of resilience capacities. Organizations which have experience in resilience (and frameworks to operationalize it) are best placed to leverage this new awareness: so that resilience does not remain just a generic concern but can be readily mainstreamed in projects and global strategies.
- **One of many threats:** when looking from partners perspective, COVID is simply one of many threats. They are aware that the focus on the primary effects of COVID hides its secondary ones (e.g., on the economy, on the access of people to their basic rights) and the other local threats (e.g., recurring disasters, climate change). Several informants reminded of the importance of setting the agenda: COVID should also be seen sandbox to prepare for possibly more devastating challenges. Not as the main challenge.
- **Shift the discourse: from response to transformation.** The COVID pandemic has been mainly “responded” to and with a quite limited array of “absorptive” capacities. Organizations working on resilience know that there could be much more to it, and can demonstrate the value of resilience capacities: can they advocate for a more articulated and more empowering resilience strategies in facing COVID and future global threats? (rather than options which might have adverse impact on the rights and the empowerment of people?)
- **The importance of adaptive management.** COVID had impacted on every programme. As such is a powerful wake-up call on the need to shift towards adaptive management (and it has already demonstrated that capacities for adaptation exist, but they are curtailed by existing management systems)

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## DIGITALIZATION

Previous evaluations had already highlighted the need to use better technology and online communication and tools, in particular re: issues of monitoring, accountability, learning.

The COVID pandemic had generated a quantum leap in the use connectivity tools and had accelerated the digitalization and the use of online options for interactions. A change which is there to stay. And which will probably have a major impact on the way programmes are managed, and on the relations amongst stakeholders. The following highlights the **changes emerged so in the interviews**, which have, of course, strategic implication for programme management and for work on resilience.



### INCREASED AND MORE EFFECTIVE ONGOING CONTACT (FOR MANAGEMENT).

Many informants reported that there is now more ongoing contact amongst actors in Sweden and in other countries. “Even more than when we were travelling!” The contacts are more regular and are satisfactory on both sides. This includes one2one engagements (e.g., with desk officers) and also meetings with a broader attendance (e.g., routine management calls). Also, some local partners reported shifting from in person meetings to online ones, including for their periodic meetings. They reported that this had increased attendance, mutual accountability (and decreased costs and time invested)



### NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR LOCAL ENGAGEMENT, INCLUDING IN ADVOCACY.

Local partners had managed to effectively use digital platforms for engagement in countries. Friendship, for example, organized a round table discussion bringing together ministries and local community representatives. It would simply not have been possible to bring so many diverse people in the same room.

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### SHARED LEARNING STILL LIMITED, ONLINE.

Most engagement happened re: management. Opportunities for sharing learning were so far limited, and there have been not yet initiatives to this end (despite a demand and desire for sharing amongst colleagues). A few initiatives were held by the K4R network, but they had not reached out to the partners in Asia. SMC, however, has now identified a platform for shared learning, and is working to establish trainings and exchanges on it.



### THE RISK OF OVERLOAD.

There is a growing number of initiatives now accessible on the internet, which might become overwhelming. Can partners be helped to navigate learning and engagement opportunities? For example, some sessions of the most recent GNDR network had quite a limited attendance: how to create incentive for partners to be virtually present at the most valuable engagements?



### THE PREVALENCE OF WORDS. CAN MULTIMEDIA HELP TO BETTER SEE AND FEEL THINGS?

Whilst there is a lot of evidence of dialogue and interaction, there is, however, very little evidence of use of multimedia. It seems that the communication happens mainly in words, and with little other clues that can “show the context”. As first-hand engagement is eroded, the emphasis on “words” risk to reduce a very needed experience and immersion in the context. What tools, what capacities should be put in place to fill this gap? Some local partners – which also experience challenges of remote monitoring – reported having started to use cameras and videos (and it would be interesting to follow up on these experiences).



### SO, WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF PRESENCE?

Shifting online activities and engagement that can be held on the internet seems to be the way forward to increase engagement, build quality relations, test new modalities for interaction. Some reflected: “Maybe we do not need to travel as much as we did”. However, care should be taken to identify what is then left out as engagement in presence is reduced. What CANNOT be done online? And what is the added value of engagements in person? Appreciating this will help to redefine the best options for interaction when managing and implementing programmes, bringing together the best of both worlds.



### WHO IS LEFT OUT? BUILD CAPACITIES FOR INCLUSION IN AN INCREASINGLY DIGITALIZED WORLD.

Some local actors are still not reached by the internet, and connection might be a big investment. Capacity to connect and to engage online is rapidly becoming an essential capacity for local actors. The partners I engaged with demonstrated such capacity, and innovation. But the lower tier might already be at risk to be side-lined. At a time when connection will matter, more and more, SMC, members, partners, should assess who is at risk to be left out. This is not just about having physical access to the internet. But about remembering that that connection (or lack of) has an increasing impact on local dynamics, on inclusion, on voice.

## FROM COVID TO RESILIENCE: STRATEGIC ISSUES WORTH CONSIDERING.

Strategic issues emerging are:



### THE AWARENESS THAT WE ARE ENTERING NEW SCENARIOS.

There is an increase awareness that we are entering, globally, into new scenarios. The world is likely to face threats and instability (e.g., climate change related). SMC, its partners and like-minded actors already have tools and competencies needed to navigate it (e.g., Sendai framework, resilience approach, DRR, nexus orientation). The leadership should embrace them as a core component of all work.



### THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCALIZATION

Localization is already high in the agenda. COVID confirmed its importance and showed that local capacities are possibly stronger than described in the mainstream aid narrative! The response to the challenges posed by COVID seem to indicate that SMC / members / partners are sincerely keen to have local partners in the driving seat. It also displayed commendable capacities by the partners to adapt and innovate. COVID is therefore an opportunity, for an organization keen on localization and on building resilience, to 1) further advocate for it, based on its now evident value and 2) to further decentralizing decision making (and invest in capacities to this end) learning from what had happened in the recent months



### CAPTURE AND SHARE CAPACITIES TO COPE, ADAPT, TRANSFORM

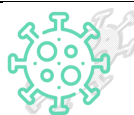
It was evident that local organizations are used to have to adapt to threats and challenges. Their capacities to bounce back, as a Swedish observer put it “are possibly stronger than ours”. The rapidity in adapting to COVID comes as no surprise when considering that local organizations had often to adapt their programmes to challenging environments. But, often, this capacity remains unnoticed. Learning how to make visible the rapidity and the quality of adaptations re

COVID (at a time when the international community is more attentive to adaptation and threats) – might be the first step to then highlight other challenges and capacities. And to give them the deserved visibility. The risk is that local threats and capacities remained hidden and we often fail to appreciate how resilient and adaptive are local partners (but also, what shocks and stressors they continuously face). Conveying this is crucial to design more resilient initiatives.



### A DOUBLE LOOP OF RESILIENCE.

Discussion around COVID and the global changes highlighted the need of a double loop of resilience, as illustrated below:



### IN THE SHADOW OF COVID: SECONDARY EFFECTS AND OTHER RISKS

The COVID emergency, all over the world, generated an impact well beyond its primary effects. The “secondary” effects of COVID are likely to hit the people who were already more fragile (e.g., marginalized, lacking capitals and resources to face the effects of lockdown or the impact of a slowing economy / reduced mobility and options). Also, the many threats affecting them have been de-prioritized (think, for example, at the impact of COVID on: other preventive measure of public health; on domestic violence; on daily labour) ... In the months to come, organizations close to communities will have a key role in giving their voice to highlight these challenges and to build resilience.



Thinking of a “double resilience loop” means to:

- **Ensure that projects strengthen resilience:** the projects put in place are designed to strengthen their resilience.
- **Ensure that the overall aid system is catered for resilience:** the overall aid system should be fit to support resilience (and be, itself, resilient in the face of a changing world). Is it sufficiently adaptive? Is it sufficiently aware of global threats? Is it embracing complexity?



### IDEAS ON LEARNING FROM COVID RESPONSE / ADAPTATIONS

- **Use COVID as an opportunity to advocate for resilience.**
- **A rapid learning review on adaptation at the time of COVID.** Many reviews on COVID response already exist, but they mostly focus on its primary effects and on options for response to this specific threat. But there is much more worth discovering! How did local organization adapt their existing programmes? What resilience capitals proved to be useful in confronting a new threat? SMC and its partners, looking at the projects within the resilience initiative (but, more broadly also at the other projects who exhibited adaptation) could derive useful learning to demonstrate: 1) the value of localization; 2) adapted practices and innovations – to might support work on the secondary effects of COVID, or to be applied in reframing management and implementation of projects in the post-COVID world (e.g. for remote management, for creative use of digital platforms, for engagement of unusual actors...); 3) emerging challenges for which shared learning is needed. COVID should be the pretext, the opportunity to look into adaptiveness, the not the main focus!
- **Sharing practical ideas for action, amongst grassroots workers:** local partners expressed interest in knowing how others adjusted to COVID. There is a lot of discussion at HQ level (when COVID is monopolizing discourse), but really little reaches the grassroots. Could this be tackled within SMC learning initiatives?
- **Rethink options for engagement amongst SMC/programmes (balancing footprint and presence).** The limitation of travelling forced people to engage remotely. In some cases, it worked really well, and suggest that visit and travel could be limited (which might have a positive impact in the ecological footprint of the organization). SMC should bring key stakeholders together in re-imagining relations along the chain. This include 1) identify instances where remote engagement works; 2) understand where remote engagement might work – provided some more investment in structures or capacities is made; 3) pinpoint the circumstances when work in presence / in location has an added value.
- **Design the future strategy / plan to be COVID proof.** COVID will remain, globally, a contextual challenge. When setting plans and strategies, SMC should make them COVID-risk proof (to its primary and secondary effects). What does it involve? 1) to focus on all resilience

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capacities: for example, not only to “absorb”, but also to “transform; 2) to consider all the disaster risk management cycle: threats are not only an issue to “respond to” but also to prevent and mitigate. In the case of COVID, this thinking can create very relevant links amongst the work on resilience, climate change, environment.

- **A resilience analysis of SMC, in a changing world.** In preparation for the new strategy, SMC could conduct a rapid resilience analysis of all actors along the chain (local partners / members / SMC / SIDA). Do they exhibit the needed resilience capacities to be effective donors/implementors in a changing world? This analysis could be made by using the resilience wheel and would be a worthwhile exploration of the “double loop”: to deliver on resilience, you need to be, yourself, resilient. The risk is otherwise, to generate cognitive and management dissonance.
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# THEMATIC ENGAGEMENT

## CAN RESILIENCE BE A MODEL FOR OTHER THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS?

SMC is very keen to serve its members. So, suggesting a new theme for engagement is a delicate balance game: amongst letting partners always free to define their preferred areas of work vs suggesting and streamlining common topics. The key is to ensure that a topic is not an imposition. The resilience initiative was a very successful first: for the first time a new theme was pushed with a package of resources. And it had a very successful uptake. What was the key to the success? That the support was not taken away from other initiatives: resilience was fitting very well in the ongoing practice. The theme was only apparently new and alien. The word resilience might have been new to some, but the issue was already very much real. As many people explained, resilience was a very useful concept to make explicit challenges and issues that people on the ground were encountering. Challenges that could not easily fit into the usual way of work. So, it was not a theme imposed top down. It was rather a useful opportunity to recognize challenges on the ground which had little other outlets to surface. As summarized below:



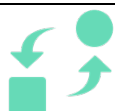
### RESILIENCE ALLOWED ISSUES TO EMERGE

The concept of resilience helped to capture and describe issues and worries that people at the grassroots were already confronted to – but that could not be easily pinpointed. As some informants put it “It came at time when they were wondering: ‘how can we phrase; how can we share our concerns?’”. Resilience proved to be a powerful concept to make explicit challenges that were hard to pin down and share



### THE FOCUS ON RESILIENCE WAS A CATALYST FOR ACTION

SMC can be a catalyst! There is a thin line in between “not forcing ideas on partners” – which SMC is keen to avoid – and yet be able to prod them for new initiatives. To this respect the resilience work was a good balance. Resilience was a new, but not an alien concept: it fit concerns already emerging. And the push by SMC to make things happen on resilience went a long way to make initiatives such as the Kenya for Resilience happening. Without this support (“remember, if you take initiative we support!”), without this continuous encouragement, K4R might have just remained just an action point on a list.



### CREATED OPTIONS FOR CROSS FERTILIZATION OF “BIG IDEAS”

Within the initiative, resilience worked very well with other existing themes and concerns. In the projects where resilience was already an established starting point (i.e., the DRR project) the initiative helped to broaden the scope, from a narrow conception of resilience (as “managing a threat”) to a more inclusive ones (linking resilience to women’s and children’s rights). Resilience is also paving the way for more investment into environmental / climate change issues – which it is also helping to unveil. One responder highlighted, for example that sustainability was increasingly seen as a financial issue, and resilience helped to broaden again its meaning, to be more ecosystemic. Resilience, as conceived by the initiative, proved to be a theme encouraging cross fertilization (and this will be more discussed later → [resilience+])



### FROM THE START, THERE WAS AN INVESTMENT IN PARTICIPATION, IN LOCALIZATION

The resilience initiative paid a lot of attention to the grassroots. It actively created many options to build a grassroots-informed understanding of the theme. For example: all the evaluation of the initiative (including this one, did not happen as a blueprint, but with a strong focus on understanding what was emerging). The learning events had also a similar focus, encouraging exchange and sharing of practices towards a shared understanding. The framework proposed was not a prescriptive one, but an adaptable tool. Member organizations also devised their own frameworks and tools from a similar perspective, with the support of SMC. The engagements were rich, and there was a lot of buy-in and ownership by local actors (and the Kenya4Resilience network is a strong case in point. It was evident that people do value benefits of new ideas - provided that they can contribute to their choice (i.e., checking that they are potentially relevant for them) and have a space to adapt them. The resilience initiative ticked both boxes

**Can this experience be applied to other themes?** Yes, if the themes are a way to consolidate emerging issues, not “yet another fad word”. The initiative shows that:



### THIS APPROACH MIGHT BE APPLICABLE TO OTHER THEMES.

Future initiatives such as the resilience one might be viable, providing that they are also driven by emergent, relevant issues. This means, for SMC, to strategically strengthen the learning component of its work, as an opportunity to pinpoint emerging themes and act as a catalyser



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of common engagement. The niche of SMC is then to be a “thematic middleperson”: an organization aware of the international discourse but also connected to the ground.

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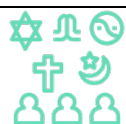
#### THE INITIATIVE ITSELF MIGHT HELP TO SUPPORT OTHER THEMES.

The potential of the initiative is still quite strong. The resilience initiative itself could be worth continuing, also because it has the potential to piggyback other themes that are emerging as key for the future: environment, climate justice.

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In this regard, here are some highlights of how the “resilience” theme – through the initiative - related with other themes strategic for SMC.

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#### RESILIENCE AND FAITH.

When asked about the topic, organization always emphasized issue of neutrality: being faith-based organizations did not make any differences in outreach: they had an equal commitment to serve all people. But it was also possible to gain some interesting angles of action, relating to this theme:

- **Strengthening capacity of local churches for resilience.** EFICOR in particular stressed the work done with local churches with their training department: local churches are key for social development, hence the importance of sharing the idea of resilience with them (this had happened beyond the initiative, but it helps to understand the existing ownership and drive for this theme).
  - **Resilience echoes meaningful values for faith-based organizations:** several funding members of the Resilience network in Sweden were faith-based organizations. Representatives stressed that the commonality of views was definitely a driver for their connection. Resilience resonates with hope, with the prospect of a better future, with the desire to be part of change.
  - **Spiritual capital as a driver for resilience.** During the learning workshop in Africa, a capital was added to the resilience framework in use: the spiritual one. There was a strong consensus amongst participants that featuring it was important to capture all needed dimension of resilience. SMC shall continue to emphasize the value of this capital and that -through its learning activities - make explicit what it had meant in practice.
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#### RESILIENCE AND RIGHTS (IN PARTICULAR OF WOMEN, CHILDREN, EXCLUDED PEOPLE)

All the member organizations promote rights-based approaches. The work on resilience was built always from this understanding. During the evaluation it emerged that:

- **From DRR to resilience:** Within DRR projects (a field of intervention already established – before the initiative – for some local partners), the focus on resilience helped to strengthen the participation of women and children, through a constant dialogue amongst member organizations and local partners. The DRR projects could then innovate, by becoming more inclusive.
- **From empowerment to resilience:** for projects designed to strengthen the rights of marginalized groups as the starting point (e.g., the leprosy mission projects), resilience added a “future outlook” and the capacity to question if gains could be sustained. The process of integrating resilience within empowerment projects was, however, more challenging than in other streams [→ the chapter on the nexus will look into this]

It appears that there is an interesting space for work on resilience at the intersection with marginalization. This can be explored in future projects, emphasizing strongly that the resilience framework is not only “risk-centred” but, first and foremost “actor-cantered”.

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#### RESILIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE

These themes are interwoven in the current strategy of SMC. Some of the projects within the initiative had a clear focus on climate change (e.g., the climate change plans in India). And most other projects confronted issues that could be directly related to climate change and acknowledged this.

But, when looking at most projects through the resilience framework lenses, it also emerged that the “natural/environmental capital” – was not in as sharp focus as other ones. And that climate change is a contextual factor, not yet a proper area of work.



The evaluation suggests that these themes should continue to work in together. And resilience - as an already recognized entry point - could very effectively help to also strengthen work on environment and climate change (which do need to be more emphasized and supported).

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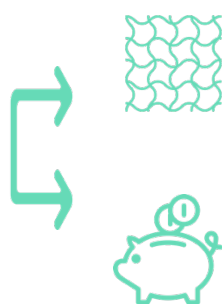
## IS RESILIENCE A “STAND-ALONE THEME”? (OR SHOULD IT RATHER BE MAINSTREAMED?)

The resilience initiative supported several projects, with grants: resilience also become a “stand-alone issue”, with its own stream of funding. It is clear, however, that resilience has a **dual nature**: it can help to describe certain **types of interventions** in response to shocks and stressors and a commitment to sustainability (e.g., DRR, sustainable livelihoods). But it is also a **cross-cutting issue**, which need to apply to all programmes: it is about having a future orientation, and to build capacities and power to ensure that achievements will not be affected by the local and global threats. Resilience is empowerment in the face of challenges. And, as such, a very relevant concern, especially for an organization, like SMC, more and more oriented to work on global challenges such as climate change.

Many informants are still uncertain about what is now the best way forward: continue to support “resilience projects”? Or to “mainstream them”? This question is aggravated by the less available fund, now that the humanitarian framework with Sida has been discontinued: money used for resilience is then more likely to affect other key topics. In this context, can resilience simply be mainstreamed?

<p><b>Thematic work, with dedicated funds and resources helped to create interest in the idea and overcome existing concerns.</b></p> <p>The focus on resilience was born from very concrete concerns, amongst which, challenges in funding. It has been instrumental to show that there is something in between development and relief.</p>  <p><b>Resilience projects</b> tend to focus more on risk (e.g., to prevent specific disasters) or happen in the grey area within relief and development (e.g., rehabilitation projects, with sustainable livelihood component).</p>	<p><b>Stand-alone resilience, however, risk to silos resilience as a standalone issue, whilst it should be mainstreamed</b></p> <p>Having dedicated funding might risk to silos resilience, whilst it should be incorporated across all projects.</p>  <p>When <b>mainstreamed</b>, resilience is best understood as a way of thinking and managing change: ensuring adaptability and future orientation, when contributing to the empowerment of communities in the face of threats.</p>
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The evaluation seems to indicate the need for a **two-pronged** approach:



### MAINSTREAMING

**Ensure that future strategies feature resilience as a cross-cutting theme** - to be mainstreamed in all programmes. Also, build tools and framework (still lacking) to concretely support mainstreaming and to check that programmes are relevant aspects check that all programmes feature aspects of resilience. (framework / management / dual loop: resilient programmes in a resilient organization)

### SUPPORT FINANCIALLY SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

continue to have a **resilience pot** for strategic interventions, to build capacities or innovation on resilience – and to ensure that resilience is kept visible on the agenda (and does not risk disappearing!)

## A RESILIENCE POT?

Having a resilience fund concretely helped to:

- **make resilience “a thing”** and to put it on the agenda. However, for several organizations in Asia, resilience was already a concept in use, in particular re: DRR (but it tended to be a narrower understanding of resilience)
- **address better issues that are at the intersection of relief and development:** by being able to more promptly release funding (without having to face delays due to funding cycles).
- enabling to **focus on specific concerns that risk to be side-lined in conventional projects** (i.e., longer-term issues - within humanitarian projects; risks and threats -in developmental ones).
- **Pilot new approaches support adaptive innovations:** A dedicated fund for resilience helped to pilot new approaches and to test adaptations which might have not been easy to support with conventional funding.

It might be premature to jump to mainstreaming, and it could still be useful to have still a dedicated resilience pot. The rationale for having a resilience pot, however, should be to focus on projects with a **strong potential for innovation, advocacy**. In all cases projects should have a **strong emphasis on action research, monitoring, learning, dissemination**.



### “RESILIENCE+” PROJECTS

The evaluation suggests focusing on “Resilience+”. Meaning: projects including resilience + other cross cutting themes (for example: gender, environment). Local partners in India and Bangladesh, for example, stressed how the resilience initiative helped them to better integrate women and children’s rights within their DRR approaches in use. A dedicated pot could then help focus on integration and reduce the risk of permanence of stand-alone silos.



### PILOTING AND INNOVATION ON THE GROUND (AND SUPPORT CAPACITIES FOR DISSEMINATION)

The need to have resources for piloting, innovation was strongly felt by some stakeholders: “we keep participating in lot of trainings and workshops. But unless we put them into some type of projects, all these ideas will just continue to be ideas”. A resilience pot might help to support whole projects (or, even better, “resilience components” within of broader projects). For example: new approaches and solutions, with potential for replication or upscale. Some of such projects were included in the resilience initiative, for example, the Climate Plans or the Community Initiated DRR. Partners themselves demonstrated strong capacities to take them forward with their constituencies... but within the initiative they had remained projects, with little dedicated support and components for advocacy, upscaling, learning, dissemination.



### INNOVATION IN MANAGEMENT

Previous chapters [→ adaptive management] pointed to the need to rethink project management, along the chain. This could be, in itself, a meaningful outcome of a project: testing new modalities for project management and collaboratively, adapt systems. (for example: re outcome mapping)



### SANDBOX FOR RESILIENCE FUNDRAISING

Sida is increasing the amount of money that is disbursed to embassies. This money can be earmarked for triple nexus, and can be obtained by local organizations (or, better, local consortia). Hence the need to strengthen the capacity, of local partners, to directly apply to Sida. Within the initiative, SMC is now funding the first phase of the consortium in Kenya also as a sandbox where to learn how to work together and consolidate practices. They will then be able to scale up. If they fail... they fail safe in the SMC project, they can learn from it and be stronger when they scale up. Supporting capacities for fundraising on resilience is also an interesting area for support.



### SUPPORT FOR HARD TO SUPPORT CONTEXTS (E.G., FRAGILE CONTEXTS)

A resilience pot might help to engage in contexts ill served by conventional funding, for example the fragile contexts. In such locations a “triple nexus” approach is badly needed and – as highlighted in the following, resilience is the linchpin for it. The downside is that (as already experienced within the initiative, with the project in Mali) such contexts might require – given the existence of considerable humanitarian needs – quite considerable funding. These might not be sustainable or easy to generate within smaller resilience pots.



### GET ATTENTION FROM THE DONORS. A RESILIENCE PROJECT MIGHT HELP TO KEEP ATTENTION ON THE TOPIC

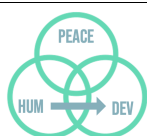
Project having explicit “resilience components” or funded within resilience pots, help to keep attention high on resilience. For example, if donors release funds earmarked for “resilience”, they will also be more committed to check resilience processes and outcomes. Resilience is then clearly on the agenda, there is mutual accountability and commitment around it. Explicitly earmarking resilience components might also be a form of advocacy with donors: they have a co-responsibility on the theme, they are more likely to listen to challenges. Cross-cutting issues might receive less attention and action.



A resilience pot will – of course - be justified only if accompanied by a strong commitment to adaptation, learning, sharing.

## MAINSTREAMING RESILIENCE, AS THE LINCHPIN OF THE NEXUS.

Resilience should be also mainstreamed. But, for this to happen across all programmes, stronger tools and a shared appreciation of the importance of resilience should be set. Work in mainstreaming resilience should go, hand in hand, with engagement on the nexus. Let's start by looking at how the projects initiated by the resilience initiative sit on the nexus.



### FROM RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT

This progression was demonstrated, for example, in the sequence of projects of ADRA in Bangladesh. From initial rapid response to humanitarian crisis the organization moved towards long term developmental approaches – integrating concerns for resilience.

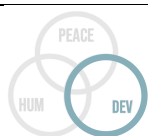
- **The risk of equating resilience with the transitioning.** Despite the fact that the “relief to development continuum” has been acknowledged for long, funding mechanisms are still ill fit to accompany the transition. So “resilience pots” are useful and needed. But this use of the word resilience might lead to equate resilience with “transitioning projects”. This was not the case in the ADRA projects mentioned above. But had happened in other endeavours of SMC and partners, and it is a use of the word resilience which is clearly limiting.
- **The transition is not smooth.** A lot of unlearning is needed along the transition, by aid agencies as well as communities. Mutual roles, accountabilities will change – for example, when transitioning from the dependency that humanitarian setups might have created. Resilience capacities are then key.
- **Is a progression always possible?** It is good news when threats can be overcome! But resilience approaches require to recognize that threats are always lingering and that there is often not a linear path from relief to development. What can look, on paper, as a clean phase out, might actually not be a linear path from relief to development. But a much more intricate verging on the line.
- **Making a virtue of necessity.** Maintaining a focus on the transition from relief to development in line with the type of funds that were available to SMC. Now that SMC lost the humanitarian fund, the importance of integration is emerging even more strongly: “we already speak about how we integrate everything, even more than we have done before!”. This is certainly a promising direction. But the lack of funds will have dire consequences for projects – such as the ones evaluated in the Ethiopian evaluation – which are discontinued.



### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PROJECTS

Several projects within the initiative were about DRR. DRR have, as a primary objective “reducing/managing threats”. Organizations working on DRR projects had been exposed to concept of resilience before the initiative. For them resilience was already an acquired idea, and they had expertise to share (which, however, was not strongly leveraged by the initiative). The challenge is then the tendency to overlap “DRR projects” with “resilience”.

- **The challenge of DRR: risk becomes the main goal.** In DRR projects, “the risk is the goal”. This narrows the view: other outcomes and possibilities for transformation are lost or not effectively captured. The focus on risk overshadows the appreciation of resilience capacities (and in particular of adaptive, transformative capacities) and their application beyond risk management.
- **DRR tend to be a typology of projects of its own.** Linked to the above, as the starting point is the “threat”, DRR projects tend to fall into a category of their own. This limit the potential to cross fertilize other projects, and also risk compartmentalizing resilience as “risk management” (which is an avenue to increase resilience, but it is not resilience as such!)



### DEVELOPMENT, EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS.

This is the case, for example of the Leprosy Mission project in India. The organization had mainly operated in development project, and it was clearly a struggle for them to understand what the added value of resilience could be (confirming how resilience is still a concept quite alien from the development perspective).

- **There is a lot of resilience already, in empowerment projects!** Projects that strengthen the agency of people and work within a right framework are *already* building resilience: they generate capitals (e.g., institutional, social, human) and strengthen resilience capacities

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(mainly transformative) Looking at developmental projects with resilience lenses should, first of all, reveal what they are already doing, without framing it as resilience! So developmental projects can see the pertinence of resilience concepts, and their applicability within development work. Aligning understanding and sharing frameworks can then help to extract learning (e.g., re: transformative capacity) that, once formulated in the language of resilience, can be more easily shared across the nexus.

- **A risk-oriented outlook can help.** Resilience thinking was a stimulus to better vision future challenges, so that community members could devise better risk-aversion strategies. They indeed proved useful, as COVID hit.
  - **Adaptive management is not only an asset for turbulent contexts.** The project also tested outcome mapping and more adaptive approaches. It emerged that adaptiveness is not only an asset when facing crisis. but is also very relevant to empowerment projects: it ensures the needed flexibility in responding to emerging options.
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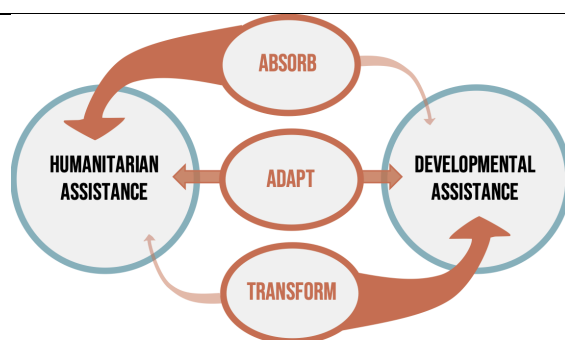


#### PEACE

Only one project started from a peace perspective. It acknowledged the importance of the nexus, recognizing that most peace projects tend to be insular, testing options for more integration with developmental / humanitarian assistance. However, the project is still ongoing, and little has been shared, so far, across the network.

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It is good that the resilience initiative managed to support such a diverse array of project. And it is also clear that the initiative helped to support many projects to better appreciate the “nexus”. The nexus is easier to appreciate when **transitioning (from relief to development), and still an innovation from a developmental and peace perspective. But overall, the initiative is contributing to break the silos** amongst humanitarian, development, peace work. And this helps situating resilience where it should be: as a linchpin for the nexus.



#### A FOCUS ON CAPACITIES MIGHT HELP TO BUILD THE NEXUS

Resilience is not about building a new project silo. Resilience *capacities* are, actually, the linchpin of the nexus.

Humanitarian response had tended to focus on the impact of risk and on absorptive capacities. Could it become more transformational?

Developmental assistance often failed to incorporate shocks, stressors and absorptive, adaptive capacities in the face of risk.

Actor-centred approaches, highlighting all resilience capacities, can and to help breaking the existing silos.

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Overall, the informants who started to confront the nexus are pointing out that **resilience is a natural entry point to the nexus**: it helps to **create integration from the start** (rather than reasoning as “you need to put a humanitarian, a development and a peace component”). Resilience also helps **to work closer to the partners and communities**. The projects promoted by the initiative really put the community perspectives at the centre. And SMC encouraged even more participatory options for action than the ones usually in place [→ adaptive management].

Having a different management outlook is needed to create resilience and work around the nexus: resilience approaches are influenced by the ways in which funds are disbursed. But resilience is not a programme type, as it sometimes risks being seen. It is actually about breaking existing silos. Now interventions are often artificially fragmented across the sectors (with different funding and rules for humanitarian, development, peacebuilding projects, leading to specialized organizations and intervention). They are made to fit with one of the vertexes of the triangle (re: allowed budget lines and activities, expertise available, result focus, timescales...) whilst they are often actually more in the middle (as programme managers know well, as they try to adapt, tweak, negotiate).

But the perspective of a community is not humanitarian or developmental: needs, aspirations, threats... can only be addressed with holistic interventions, requiring mixes of activities blending in the different components of the nexus. This is why resilience also need to be mainstreamed, across all areas of work of SMC and not only amongst “resilience” projects.



## WHAT TOOLS CAN HELP TO MAINSTREAM RESILIENCE?

What can support mainstreaming of resilience?



### HEALTH CHECKS ON RESILIENCE.

A demand for indicators on resilience came strongly. Of course, having pre-set indicators on resilience would defeat the purpose to evolve work locally, and to start from “understanding”. A good compromise could be guidance for “health checks” on resilience management. This might help organization feel that their process goes in the right direction. The health check could address diverse areas of concern:

- the nexus (is the programme considering needed linkages across it?).
- working frameworks/theories of change (is the programme linked to one?)
- the management approach (For example: does the project management and proposal exhibit a focus on adaptive / outcome-oriented modalities?)



### CHAMPIONING RESILIENCE (BUT ALSO INSTITUTIONALIZE AND STRENGTHEN NETWORKS).

Focal points and champions had immensely helped to strengthen resilience initiatives, in Sweden and in countries. The risk, however, is over-reliance on individuals, which is still a risk. Whilst continuing to be inspired by the energy and commitment of its champions, resilience actions need to shift more strongly to a networked, institutionalized dimension.



### INVESTMENT IN CORE FUNDING

For resilience to be institutionalized also by partners, more core-funding investment will be needed. In some cases, investment to systemic resilience actions materialized (e.g., Kenya for resilience). But, in general, there has been more investment in stand-alone projects than in their ripple effects. For example, when projects tested new approaches, dissemination and advocacy were mostly pursued by partner’s initiative. It would be worth checking if further structural support (on learning / advocacy type of work – which is usually harder to cover through projects), could help to deepen their methodologies and to share it further. A core aspect which had been supported was learning, deemed useful. However, in the case of Asian partners, the COVID pandemic had limited options for sharing.



### ADVOCACY TO CHANGE SYSTEMS ALONG THE DONORSHIP CHAIN: LEVERAGE CONSENSUS

It seems that everyone appreciates the importance of resilience. Informants shared how also donors are often already convinced that resilience matters: that interventions should be more holistic, adaptive, localized... etc. They are often aware of the limitations of the existing funding and reporting mechanisms, and even interested in diverse approaches to monitoring (e.g., storytelling). The challenge really lies in the existing management systems, in their inertia to change – rather than in the managers.



### MAINTAIN A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON FRAGILE SETUPS.

In fragile contexts, resilience, nexus are “the name of the game”. These are the context where resilience is most needed, yet harder to address in projects. There are several challenges, for example

- Resources: the resilience pot was not always adequate: the sheer vastity of needs would not allow communities to engage in activities beyond their immediate survival and/or with a longer-term perspective (which was the case in Mali).
- Donor requirements: it has been often hard to negotiate interventions in fragile contexts, for example when emergencies (e.g., droughts) actually required long term solutions (e.g., wells), which – however – were not considered appropriate for humanitarian funding (e.g., SMC support in Ethiopia).

Fragile contexts also defeat the assumption around the nexus. For example, that from relief there is a smooth transition to development. Yet they require that all the components are considered. It is quite clear that work in fragile areas is a blind spot for funding agencies. Given the history and the commitment of SMC and its partners, advocating for a stronger focus on fragile areas – and proposing holistic approaches for it – should continue to be a strong component of advocacy work.

## FROM A RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK TO A THEORY OF CHANGE

The previous learning review in Africa was an opportunity to test the applicability and the relevance of a shared resilience framework. Since then, more partners got exposed to the framework and valued the approach. And **the framework was also used in building and setting new programmes** (or also, other actors are increasingly using their own frameworks – such as the Salvation Army). So, frameworks are being operationalized. They are becoming more practical. As such it has become a valuable asset.

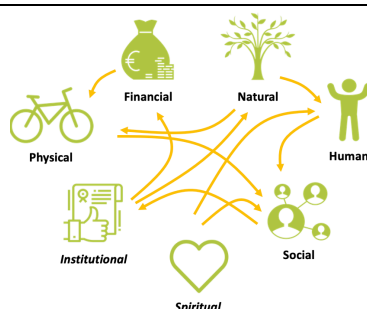
- **Remember that different frameworks can co-exist.** They are simply set of lenses: sharing them can promote dialogue and avoiding building “blind spots.”



- **Make the framework practical!** The concepts of the framework resonate, but it is not always clear how to use the framework in practice, as an actual tool helping to plan, implementation, reporting.
- **Use the framework for sharing learning:** by providing a common language, the framework could then help to share experiences. For example, a respondent indicated that **some concepts still remained quite abstract**. For example, the attributes: what is actually “robustness”: what are its characteristics? how is robustness achieved at different levels (individual, institutional)? Sharing learning and ideas around this would really help.
- **Consider if the framework could evolve into “theory of change”.** The framework has the potential to become a theory of change. It explains that meaningful change happens when communities (and individual within that) are empowered realizing their rights, tackling current and future challenges. And that change happens by leveraging diverse types of capitals. Distinguishing amongst “theory of change” and “theory of action” will help to build consensus on dynamics of change, whilst opening possibilities for different approaches.
- **Connect with external actors.** Adapting the framework to become a theory of change might also help in relating with external actors: in proposals, in advocacy... the assumptions about how change can happen will become more evident. The work so far seemed to prove that the framework could accommodate very diverse projects, so it would not be an imposition. It would be an option to more easily develop joint concepts (and the proposal stage is proving an important one to build common understanding of frameworks / theories of change) as well as reporting. Having clarified the approach, the individual projects could then more clearly reveal their specific approaches and contributions
- **Capacity to make shine what is happening under the radar.** An area of improvement for SMC is to be able to consolidate stronger, common theories of change (how resilience happens) and to show then, through projects, the practice. This is also important in advocacy with donors, which might find hard to follow small projects (and only through conventional reporting) but can appreciate an approach if it is also well exemplified and illustrated across interventions. Individual projects can then fit in a frame not imposed on them... but build to better let emerge and showcase the importance of resilience and illustrate what the concepts in the framework really mean in practice.

### Theory of change (the “gameboard”)

A theory of change captures the most relevant dynamics for change, that an organization is keen to leverage



### Theory of action (the “games” played on it!)

Having understood what dynamics might be leveraged, each actor, in context, can then chose the best set of actions to start a process of change:  
What capitals to leverage?  
What connections to focus on?  
Through what set of actions?



Whatever the framework, it is important that it emphasizes:

- **A dynamic, adaptive process:** emphasizing that the process is as important as the results. It is not only about outputs and achievements, but about the “flow”. How do actions connect?
- **A complex, systemic outlook:** meaningful changes in capacities are derived from action on diverse capitals, including soft ones - often invisible, yet often the most important. Each of these capitals can have many diverse incantations, in context. This calls for a systemic outlook, and to avoid shortcuts of linear approaches.
- **An empowering, actor centred approach.** Resilience is seen as the *power* to avert threats and transform them into possibilities for change. Hence emphasis on participatory, inclusive approaches.



### IDEAS ON RESILIENCE AND THE TRIPLE NEXUS

- **Consider continuing having a resilience pot (but a more strategic one).** Shifting to resilience mainstreaming – and discontinuing earmarked support – might impact on resilience. The evaluation highlighted several realms which might still benefit from dedicated resources.
- **Use learning events to consolidate tools to mainstream resilience.** There will be a need for tools and structures to mainstream resilience (“health check” tools, networks, investment

in core skills). The learning function might be invaluable in supporting management to devise them, to ensure that they are collaboratively set, and rooted into practice.

- **Focus on “fragile contexts” when working towards the nexus.** Advocate for triple nexus approach and resilience work in the context that most need it: fragile ones. The experience of the initiative so far – as well as previous evaluation in such contexts - showed that donors approaches are often ill served for them. SMC is very clear of these limitations and should put fragile contexts strongly on its agenda for advocacy.
- **Continue to use and adapt the resilience framework (as a theory of change).** The resilience framework is increasingly valued as a useful tool, by SMC and partners. It is more used, and, by using it, SMC and partners had also started to fine-tune and modify it (e.g. with the addition of capitals, with an emphasis on the “flow of capitals”). Some member organizations, who had developed their own frameworks, had also gained insights to offer. Notwithstanding the need to acknowledge the LWF resilience wheel as the starting point – and avoiding excessive diversion of it - SMC should also start consolidating the elements it added to the framework. The best way to do so is probably to consolidate it as a “theory of change” for resilience.
- **Pintpoint characteristics that make a proposal resilience oriented.** What does make a proposal “resilience oriented”? If resilience is going to be mainstreamed, rather than supported with a pot, it would be key to ensure that there are some clear criteria that show that a proposal is resilience oriented. But it is important also that they do not yet become yet another standalone paragraph in the proposal. The architecture of the proposal and the management of the project should show resilience. Criteria could include: flexibility in responding to emerging challenges (where the focus of reporting is more on learning and adaptation than compliance); appreciation of different capitals and of their interrelation; capacity to anticipate shocks and stressors – local and global; outcome orientation; appreciation of complexity (for example, made visible by system diagrams rather than lists of results) – also reflected in the theory of change/action.

## BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

This report was designed to be a **consolidated repository of practical and strategical ideas** – to feed into future work. It started by acknowledging and confirming existing findings. It then explored in detail several strategic aspects of the resilience initiatives and the suitability of a thematic approach to resilience. It generated many recommendations in the process, which would be really **hard to summarize here without being repetitive**.

These final considerations, therefore, do not aim to be a summary. They rather point at the value, for SMC, to **continue engaging with resilience**.

Resilience is achieved when **people's power** can translate in capacities for action as they are exposed to threats. And - in the face of a changing world - these capacities are even more essential.

**COVID was a wakeup call**, showing that the knee-jerk response to a global threat is always to overemphasize absorptive capacities and to maintain the status quo (or, as Naomi Klein would argue, to even further strengthening unjust status quo, through “disaster capitalism”). The resilience initiative, the experience and the strategic trajectory of SMC and of its partners indicates that this does not need to be the only approach.

If the focus is on the people – and on the marginalized ones! – then the best response to local and global threats is to **unfold transformative capacities** (whilst protecting progress with **adaptive and absorptive ones**). Alternatives can be built; progress might be achieved. It is possible to innovate and build a better, stronger future even in fragile contexts. **Awareness of threats then does not freeze action. It strengthens it!** The resilience initiative demonstrated that **resilience capacities make a difference**, and that this way of thinking **resonates with partners**.

SMC, with its focus on rights and with its increasing focus on issues of **environment and climate justice**, is in strong place to embrace the transformative values of **resilience in the face of the threats to come**, together with many like-minded actors (including its partners and with the allies and networks). The future SMC strategy is a great opportunity to **continue supporting resilience and to intertwine with other themes dear to SMC**, in the **fragile contexts** where SMC and partners operate.

The evaluation also highlighted the importance of a “**double loop**” in managing resilience: organization supporting resilience should be themselves resilient. This calls SMC to transform itself, to fight **against stifle organizational systems** in the whole aid sector. It requires to shift and advocate for more **adaptive, participatory approaches**, along the **nexus**. It is a big ambition, but SMC demonstrated, through the initiative, the willingness and capacity to embark in this change. And this is, indeed, the way to go.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINAL WORKSHOP

The evaluation key findings were presented in a workshop (16 Dec 2020), with the active participation of many stakeholders (SMC staff, members in Sweden, partners from abroad). The presentation is available on an interactive Miro board. I am sharing here two boards:

- A non-editable board – as it was presented [https://miro.com/app/board/o9J\\_lbfAv9A=](https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_lbfAv9A=/)
- And editable board – which could be used to run participatory exercises, by adding stickers on it: [https://miro.com/app/board/o9J\\_lbjEn3I=](https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_lbjEn3I=/)

Following the final workshop, an invitation came to share key findings of the evaluation, to which SMC can respond. The nature of this evaluation makes it difficult to share recommendation to which management should respond! The evaluation has been designed as a compilation of many diverse ideas, which might resonate differently with different evaluation users. They range from operational tips to substantial insights. And the emphasis has been on ownership, rather than on singling out, from the consultant perspective, what are the most valuable insights. In this final section I nevertheless stress some of the ideas that were expressed in the final presentation, and might be a starting point for action and response:

- 1) Resilience matters: the evaluation gave visibility to a concept that was very valued, especially by these working on the ground. SMC should continue to embrace it.
- 2) At the time of COVID, resilience proved to be an essential lens to look forward. A lot of learning and strategic ideas can be harvested, if SMC engages in activities such as: 1) assessing learning on adaptations to COVID – within programmes and strategies; 2) anticipate challenges and potential of a “new normal”; 3) Investment in digitalization – grasping its benefits (but also understanding the limit of remote engagement); 4) investment in localization.
- 3) SMC should balance mainstreaming with dedicated projects on resilience. The balance achieved so far was actually a good one, which might inspire future thematic work.
- 4) Mainstreaming of resilience – in particular in fragile contexts - can be best achieved through two strategic areas: the nexus – of which resilience is a linchpin – and the strengthening of a theory of change (which can largely overlap with the resilience framework). Strong mainstreaming will also require regular health checks, financial support (to core areas such as learning, capacity building), adaptation of existing management systems.
- 5) Dedicated programmes should always seek to link resilience to other mainstream issues – rather than looking at it in isolation. The focus should be on integration, on innovation / piloting. Dedicated programmes should be designed to be highly participatory and adaptive, and management and monitoring should be devised accordingly.
- 6) SMC should continue to invest in networking – which proved to be a strong feature of the initiative so far. Networking should continue to 1) support existing networks first, rather than creating new ones and 2) invest in the networking capacities of partners and strengthen them (support to their networking / consortium building / shared learning). Networking should continue to be about generating ecosystems rather than seeking individual affirmation.
- 7) SMC should continue to invest in learning and ensure that its own monitoring and management systems can help to capture it. The current investment in a learning platform and in active options for exchange seem very promising. Learning should be seen as a goal for all, not as a stand-alone department.
- 8) Advocacy should continue to be led by partners and members, in coordination with existing networks. The added value of SMC is into coaching for participation and voice.
- 9) Conventional management is one of the main obstacles to resilience building, innovation and participation. SMC is starting to appreciate it and should continue to explore new management styles and options (e.g., outcome oriented). This might also involve rethinking management as a “community of practice”: more horizontal and learning oriented than the usual “management chains”
- 10) Beside supporting resilience, SMC should become itself more resilient (this was called, by the evaluation, the “double loop of resilience”. Attributes of resilience that as featured in the framework (robustness, self-organization, learning, redundancy, diversity and flexibility...) should be cultivated by the organization to ensure that it can be resilient at a turbulent time and better support its partners in being, themselves resilience.