

EVIDENCE BRIEF



STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ON GENDER AND RESILIENCE

Resource-poor people face multiple risks and disturbances across social, economic, health, political, and environmental spheres. Included among these are conflict, public health threats, corruption, climate change, and natural resource degradation. The concept of resilience provides a useful framework for considering potential solutions to these intersecting challenges. This is particularly the case in situations where structural problems and inequalities—such as chronic poverty and gender gaps—underlie persistent and recurring shocks. Growing evidence shows that men and women have different exposure to shocks and stressors, and different preferences and capacities in terms of their responses. This stems from gendered social, cultural, and institutional contexts that shape such factors as their livelihood activities, roles, and bargaining power. Importantly, these factors are intrinsically linked with women’s empowerment levels, including their ability to access resources and make strategic life choices to improve their overall wellbeing.

Because shocks and stressors occur in local contexts with different power structures, institutions, and sociocultural norms, it is difficult to generalize the different ways men and women are affected and choose to respond. Men’s and women’s experiences and reactions largely depend on the types of overlapping shocks and stressors they are exposed to. This brief highlights some of the key gendered dimensions of resilience, drawing on evidence from the literature, including systematic reviews and global indicators, where available, as well as case-study examples that highlight important linkages. The evidence summarized is intended to guide the development and implementation of gender-sensitive resilience interventions focusing on key programming areas of interest to Feed the Future’s Center for Resilience.

The concept of resilience has allowed researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to think more broadly about potential solutions to the confluence of challenges facing vulnerable communities, particularly in developing countries, where structural problems and inequalities, such as chronic poverty and gender gaps, underlie persistent and recurring shocks and stressors (USAID 2012; Béné 2014; Smyth and Sweetman 2015). Development and humanitarian efforts tend to converge around a working definition of resilience as “. . .the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth” (USAID 2012, p. 5). This approach (a) prioritizes investments that build adaptive capacities, such as expanding economic opportunities, education, environmental sustainability, diverse livelihoods, and nutrition and health services, while (b) also reducing risk through investments in assessment tools, early warning systems, disaster risk reduction, preventing conflicts, and safety nets. Evidence is emerging suggesting that women’s empowerment and good governance underpin these efforts to build capacities and reduce risk, leading to more resilient systems, reduced vulnerability, and inclusive growth (USAID 2012).

Growing evidence shows that men and women are differently exposed and have different preferences and capacities to respond to shocks and stressors. Examples of these include some of the biggest threats facing the global community—such as climate change, Covid-19, and conflict—given the different social, cultural, and institutional contexts that shape gendered livelihood activities, roles, and bargaining power (Smyth and Sweetman 2015; Jordan 2019; Theis, Bryan, and Ringler 2019). Contextual factors and varying levels of exposure to shocks and stressors intersect with all aspects of women’s empowerment, including access to resources and the ability to make strategic life choices, leading to improvements in wellbeing. Thus, resilience approaches require studying and understanding the local context to ensure (a) that interventions build on existing capacities and risk-management institutions, and (b) that they support people and institutions in pursuing their preferred strategies (Tschakert 2007; Agrawal et al. 2010; Vaughan and Henly-Shepard 2018).

Research can highlight the extent to which interventions that support women’s empowerment, reduce risk, and increase the resilience capacities of men and women are compatible and mutually reinforcing. To what extent and in what ways does women’s empowerment lead to more resilient systems? To what extent might investments intended to increase resilience capacities also provide a pathway for women’s empowerment? By answering these questions policies and interventions can be designed in ways that take advantage of the synergies between increasing women’s empowerment and building resilience while addressing the gendered risks, constraints, and local opportunities.

Because shocks and stressors occur in local contexts with different power structures, institutions, and sociocultural norms, it is difficult to generalize the different ways men and women are affected and choose to respond. Moreover, men’s and women’s experience and reactions largely depend on the types of overlapping shocks and stressors they are exposed to. This brief highlights some of the key gendered dimensions of resilience, drawing on evidence from the literature, including systematic reviews and global indicators, where available, as well as case-study examples that highlight important linkages. The evidence summarized here is intended to guide the development and implementation of gender-sensitive resilience interventions focusing on key programming areas of interest to Feed the Future’s Center for Resilience.

Men and women face different risks and have different levels of exposure and sensitivity to shocks and stressors.

Resilience-informed policy and programming requires active investigation of how risks, and exposure and sensitivity to shocks and stressors, differ within a local population. Evidence suggests that men's and women's exposure to and experiences of the same shocks and stressors differ, primarily due to unequal social structures and gendered livelihood roles.




➔ **Women tend to be more exposed and sensitive (though not always) to natural disasters, such as droughts, storms, and earthquakes. Outcomes depend on contextual factors, such as gendered participation in high-risk occupations.**

Several global reviews of the natural disaster literature show that, following disasters such as droughts, storms, earthquakes, and fires, women tend to have higher morbidity and reduced life expectancy compared with men ([Neumayer and Plümer 2007](#); [Doocy et al. 2013](#); [Erman et al. 2021](#)). Women are often more exposed and sensitive to natural disasters given their lower socioeconomic status, reduced access to information, and limited agency to make adaptive choices. For example, [Frankenberg et al. \(2011\)](#) found that women were twice as likely to die in Indonesia as a result of the 2004 Tsunami. Yet other studies found that, because men are overrepresented in high-risk occupations (such as construction), their risk of death was higher than women's based on a higher exposure to natural hazards ([Delaney and Shrader 2000](#); [Zagheni, Muttarak, and Striessnig 2015](#); [Erman et al. 2021](#)). Following Hurricane Mitch in 1998 in Honduras and Nicaragua, for example, more men died than women ([Delaney and Shrader 2000](#)).


➔ **Given their different livelihood roles, men and women experience climate shocks and stressors differently and, hence, may be affected differently by climate change.**

As previously noted, gendered roles and livelihood activities can cause men and women to experience shocks and stressors differently. An example is the different ways men and women perceive the impacts of climate change. While the results are not easily generalizable across contexts, in some cases, women tend to be less likely than men to perceive different changes, such as long-term climate changes ([Oloukoi et al. 2014](#); [Twyman et al. 2014](#)). In Nigeria, for example, men and women perceived different climate change impacts related to their gender-specific livelihood activities. Whereas men were concerned with impacts on the yields of tuber and legume crops, women perceived a reduction in the availability of fruits, seeds, and herbs from community woodlots ([Oloukoi et al. 2014](#)).

 **Men and women are exposed to different types of risks, shocks, and stressors, and their exposure to the same types of disturbances differs. For example, women are more likely to experience gender-based violence.**

The level of exposure to other types of shocks and stressors, such as violent conflict, is often different for men and women. [Buvinic et al. \(2013\)](#) outline the direct and indirect impacts of violent conflict, differentiated by gender. While much of the literature focuses on women's experience with sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings, other important gender-differentiated impacts include higher mortality rates among men and widowhood among women; greater displacement among women and children; and negative impacts on health, such as rates of HIV/AIDS ([Buvinic et al. 2013](#)). Shocks and stressors are often compounding. For example, evidence suggests that weather shocks, such as droughts, storms, and floods, exacerbate conflict and contribute to displacement and migration ([Abel et al. 2019](#); [IDMC 2020](#)).

Covid-19 has also exposed gender disparities in how men and women experience the combined health and economic shocks of the pandemic, with considerable variation across countries. While men are at a higher risk of severe illness due to both biological and lifestyle factors (that is, smoking and alcohol consumption) ([Koo et al. 2021](#)), women are more likely to shoulder a larger care burden ([Alvi et al. 2022](#)). IFPRI data from several rounds of phone surveys in selected countries in Africa south of the Sahara and South Asia suggest that both men and women in rural areas are hit hard by income losses, savings and asset depletion, indebtedness, and food insecurity because of the pandemic. The extent to which families rely on men's or women's savings and assets to cope with the pandemic will have lasting implications for the gender asset gap and the resilience capacities of men and women to address future shocks and stressors. The [World Economic Forum \(2021\)](#) estimates that the time needed to close the global gender gap increased from 99.5 years to 135.6 years as a result of Covid-19.

 **Sensitivity to particular shocks and stressors is also gendered and can change throughout the life cycle, with implications for gender equality over the long run.**

For example, boys are biologically more vulnerable to shocks and stressors in utero, whereas young girls are more affected in early childhood due to greater social vulnerability based, for example, on lower levels of nutrition and schooling ([Erman et al. 2021](#)). Sensitivity to shocks and stressors changes for men and women as they age. For example, the social and economic consequences of separation from or the death of a partner are almost always more serious for women than they are for men because women risk losing access to land and other assets ([Deere and Doss 2006](#)). As for climate change, sensitivity to adverse climate shocks is generally higher for rainfed farmers than for irrigators.

Gender disparities in the impacts of shocks and stressors can exacerbate gender inequality over the medium to long term. Studies of the gendered impacts of the food-price crisis found that both the short- and long-term effects were greater for female smallholder farmers, including short-term food insecurity and hunger, and a long-term widening of the gender gap in agriculture; this was deemed to be due to the lack of a gender-sensitive response to the crisis to address underlying structural inequalities in the food system ([Quisumbing et al. 2011](#); [Kumar and Quisumbing 2013](#); [Botreau and Cohen 2020](#)). Female-headed households appear to be particularly vulnerable to food-price shocks, as is demonstrated by a case study from Ethiopia that found female-headed households were more likely to reduce meals and eat less preferred foods ([Kumar and Quisumbing 2013](#)). Long term, in the absence of well-targeted social safety nets, these negative impacts may decrease the productive and human capital of these households ([Kumar and Quisumbing 2013](#)).

Men and women have different resilience capacities. Measures of women's empowerment are also important indicators of women's resilience capacities.



Investing in resilience capacities can enable people to expand and improve their range of options for dealing with disturbances. In Malawi, investments in basic services, infrastructure, asset building, human capital development, and livelihood diversification were found to increase food consumption and dietary diversity during drought and input-cost shocks ([Murendo, Kairezi, and Mazvimavi 2020](#)). People with weak and limited resilience capacities may be forced to choose coping mechanisms that negatively influence their wellbeing or future adaptive capacity, such as reducing food consumption, taking children out of school, or drawing down assets ([Theis, Bryan, and Ringler 2019](#)). Individuals with greater resilience capacities have more options to protect and improve their livelihoods and wellbeing over the long term. Men and women have different capacities with which to cope with shocks and stressors in the short to medium term (coping capacity), and adjust their livelihood activities and strategies over the medium to long term in order to address risks, seize opportunities, and reduce the negative impacts of shocks and stressors (adaptive capacity) ([Béné et al. 2016](#); [Theis, Bryan, and Ringler 2019](#)). Resilience capacities also depend on other intersectional identities, such as age, class, caste, ethnicity, marital status, and sexual identity, among others ([Carr and Thompson 2014](#); [Djoudi et al. 2016](#); [Ravera et al. 2016](#); [Tabaj and Spangler 2017](#); [Anderson 2018](#)).

Many of the same factors that determine resilience capacities are also important indicators of women's empowerment. These include access to and control over natural resources, physical assets, human capital, technology, financial capital like savings and credit, and so on. Other overlapping factors include dimensions of women's agency, such as control over income, employment and livelihood choices, social capital, mobility, and work burden.



Addressing gender disparities in access to and control over resources and assets, like land, would facilitate women's empowerment and increase women's resilience capacities.

Access to and control over assets is a key resilience capacity and a measure of women's empowerment ([Feed the Future 2017](#)). Assets function as a store of value and can be used to generate food and income or facilitate investment in better livelihood strategies; assets also influence social status and bargaining power at home and in the community ([Meinzen-Dick et al. 2011](#); [Johnson et al. 2016](#)). Yet gender disparities in access to and control over assets, like land and other productive assets, mean that different approaches are required to effectively support women in building and safeguarding productive assets ([Ortiz-Ospina and Roser 2018](#)). In some cases, women's assets, such as jewelry, may be drawn down in response to shocks (a) if these assets are less important for generating household income, (b) the owner has weaker bargaining power within the household, or (c) the asset is easier to sell ([Quisumbing, Kumar, and Behrman 2018](#)). Increasing women's land rights and knowledge of their rights, may, in some contexts, lead to adoption of practices that increase resilience, such as soil and water conservation practices and agroforestry on agricultural lands ([Quisumbing and Kumar 2014](#); [Meinzen-Dick et al. 2019](#)).


Human capital is an important resilience capacity. People with better education, knowledge, and skills have more options to tap into government assistance programs (absorptive capacity), adopt new technologies (adaptive capacity), or diversify their livelihoods (transformative capacity). Moreover, women's education is associated with a range of positive outcomes, including reduced risk of child malnutrition and mortality ([Sandiford et al. 1995](#)). Despite considerable gains over the past 50 years, the gender gap in education persists, especially in countries that also have low levels of male educational attainment ([Evans, Akmal, and Jakiela 2020](#)). There is some evidence that the gender gap in education is associated with vulnerability to shocks and stressors. For example, early evidence from frontline organizations suggests that girls are more likely to be negatively affected by Covid-19 school closures than boys, including greater risks of experiencing gender-based violence, early marriage, and pregnancy, which will have lasting negative consequences ([Akmal, Hares, and O'Donnell 2020](#)). Interventions that protect gains in girls' educational attainment following shocks and stressors may also preserve and build resilience capacities and improve outcomes. Countries where girls have higher levels of schooling also have lower climate change vulnerability scores ([Kwauk and Braga 2017](#)). Moreover, case-study evidence from several contexts shows that the risk of early marriage, which is often exacerbated by shocks, declines as years of girls' schooling increases ([Kwauk and Braga 2017](#)).



Increasing women's access to services, like extension, information, and financial services, is also essential for building women's resilience capacities.

Building financial capital and having access to financial services, such as insurance, credit, and savings, are essential for people to manage risk and mitigate the negative impacts of shocks and stressors ([Moore et al. 2019](#)). However, studies suggest that women are more likely to be excluded from the formal financial sector—including having a bank account—due to harmful social norms, limited legal rights, lower financial literacy, the gender gap in education, and lack of access to information, among other factors ([Fletschner and Kenney 2014](#); [Hasler and Lusardi 2017](#); [Morsy 2020](#)). Building financial capital is also more difficult for women because they have fewer economic opportunities and bear a larger burden of unpaid labor at home. Compared with men, women are less likely to participate in the formal labor force and more likely to work in informal employment and in vulnerable, low-paid, or undervalued jobs ([ILO 2021](#)).

Access to information and extension services also increases resilience capacity, especially in terms of addressing climate shocks and stressors, because information is needed to make appropriate response choices. Resilience programs that provide information services need to consider gender differences (a) in needs and preferences for information content ([Tall et al. 2014](#); [McOmber, Audia, and Crowley 2019](#)), (b) in channels of delivery ([Tall et al. 2014](#); [Twyman et al. 2014](#); [Jost et al. 2016](#); [Partey et al. 2018](#)), and (c) in the ability of all recipients to understand and use the information ([Ragasa, Aberman, and Alvarez Mingote 2017](#)). Moreover, gender differences in access to, use of, and benefits received from climate information vary across contexts due to women's more limited access to information and communications technology (ICT), groups, and resources, as well as patriarchal social norms ([Gumucio et al. 2020](#)). While most studies of ICT focus on accessing formal information services (such as extension or market information), ICT is also important for maintaining familial and social ties, which can be important sources of resilience. Examples include reducing the risk of violent conflict, motivating cash remittances to rural family from urban workers, or facilitating urban workers receiving food from rural family in times of crisis ([Frankenberger et al. 2013](#); [Bernier and Meinzen-Dick 2014](#); [Endris et al. 2017](#); [Mukoya, 2020](#)).

 **Expanding women’s employment and income-earning opportunities can diversify livelihood sources and increase resilience outcomes both for women and their families.**

Men’s and women’s ability to earn and control income through farming or other income-earning opportunities also determines their capacities to respond to shocks and stressors. In farm households, women tend to control crops that generate lower revenue relative to men’s crops ([Njuki et al. 2011](#)). Women also have fewer economic opportunities along agricultural value chains given disparities in assets, time burden, and patriarchal norms ([Dolan 2001](#); [Coles and Mitchell 2011](#)). Women are also less likely than men to participate in the formal labor force and more likely to work in informal employment and in vulnerable, low-paid or undervalued jobs than men ([ILO 2021](#)). These constraints have implications for women’s ability to earn and allocate income in ways that they prefer, generally toward purchases that increase household and children’s wellbeing, such as spending on food, education, and medical expenses ([Hoddinott and Haddad 1995](#); [Quisumbing 2003](#); [Duflo and Udry 2004](#); [Malapit et al. 2015](#)). Women’s more limited ability to generate and control income has negative implications for resilience because it reduces the household’s ability to cover unexpected shocks, such as medical expenses or consumption needs during the lean season ([Kiewisch 2015](#)).

 **Increasing women’s bargaining power and agency in their households and communities can lead to choices that reflect women’s needs and preferences and increase women’s contribution to addressing shocks and stressors.**

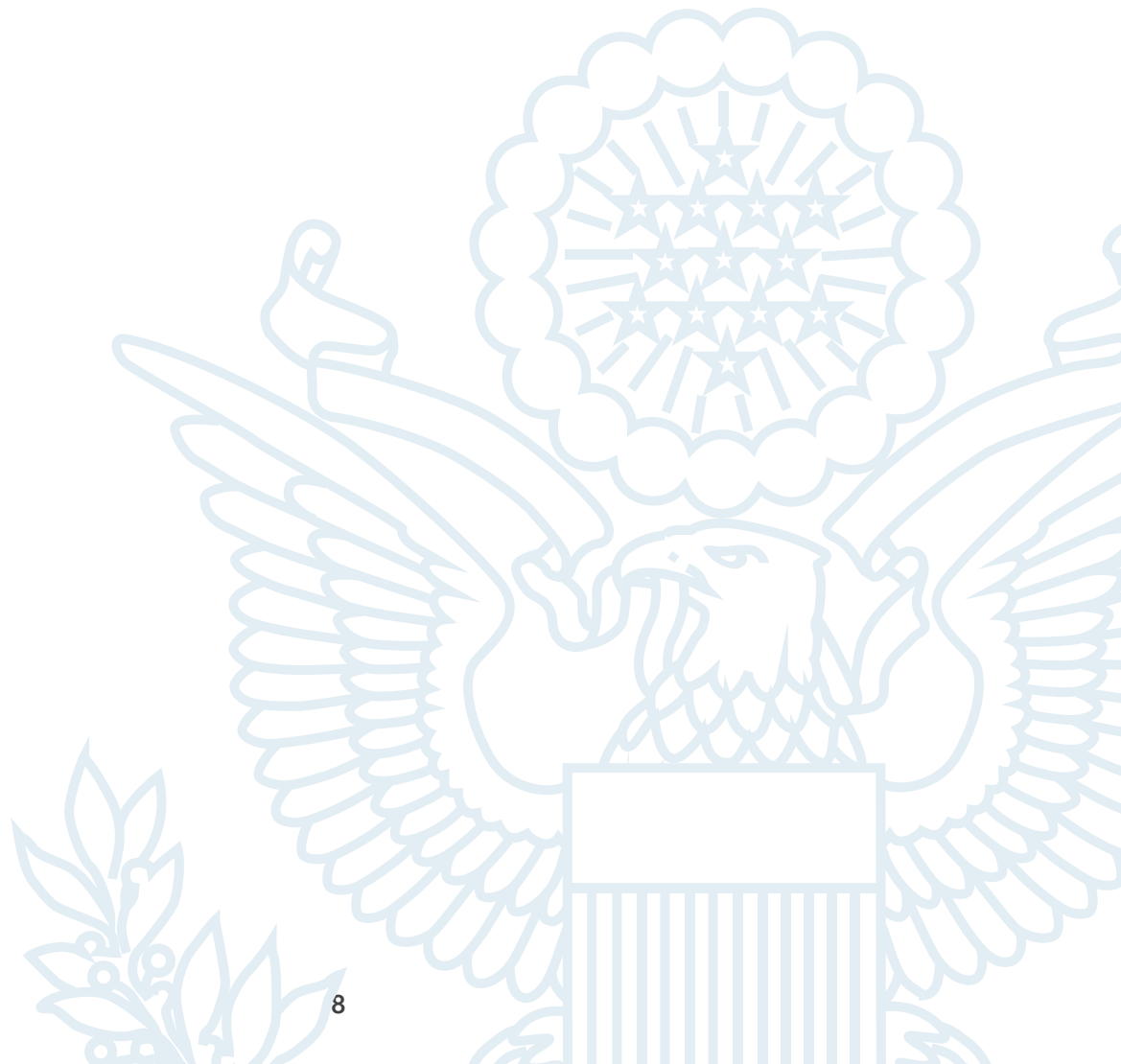
Power dynamics also shape responses to shocks and stressors. Individuals within households, institutions, and communities have different preferences over the use of resources, what risks to take, and how to respond to specific shocks and stressors. These preferences are often tied to the different roles men and women play in securing livelihoods ([Demetriades and Esplen 2010](#); [Ravera et al. 2016](#)). In Bangladesh, women were more likely to adopt practices related to improved livestock feeding and grain storage because they have responsibility for these livelihood activities ([Bryan, Kato, and Bernier 2021](#)). Thus, women’s agency—including their intrinsic motivations and ability to make strategic life choices and influence decisions—is essential to ensure that their needs and preferences are reflected in observed responses to shocks and stressors ([Béné et al. 2019](#)). Yet women tend to have less bargaining power and limited influence over important household decisions, including how their personal earned income is spent ([Ortiz-Ospina and Roser 2018](#)). Decisions, such as a woman’s choice to pursue an income-generating activity or wage employment, sell assets, or participate in a group or program activity, can be subject to their husband’s or other family members’ consent ([Pradhan, Meinzen-Dick, and Theis 2019](#)).

Joint decisionmaking within households can assist families in planning and preparing for, and then responding to shocks and stressors in ways that benefit all household members by accounting for their different needs and drawing on women’s knowledge and abilities. Studies have found that women’s increased bargaining power is associated with increasing households’ expenditures on child health and education, which can increase resilience in the long run ([Quisumbing and Maluccio 2003](#)). In Somalia, Mercy Corps (2014) found that women’s involvement in household decisionmaking was strongly linked with household dietary diversity and a reduction in negative coping mechanisms. In Bangladesh, women’s roles in production decisions increased the diversity of crops grown on the farm, away from rice to other more nutritious crops ([De Pinto et al. 2020](#)). Evidence suggests that such diversified cropping systems provide multiple benefits, including reducing climate risks to production and livelihoods, and improving environmental sustainability ([Makate et al. 2016](#); [Asfaw et al. 2019](#); [Birthal and Hazrana 2019](#)).

Women also tend to be excluded from decisions at the community level in local groups or decisionmaking bodies, which may be the result of discriminatory norms about who can participate, lack of social capital, the

inconvenient timing and location of meetings, and exclusive membership criteria, such as a requirement that members of water-user associations own land or be literate ([Pandolfelli, Meinzen-Dick, and Dohrn 2007](#)). Yet women's greater involvement in community-based organizations, could contribute to community resilience by tapping into their specific knowledge and ability to reach certain networks—for example, in determining where to situate a well, identifying vulnerable households, or sharing information with other women ([Deme-triades and Esplen 2010](#)). In particular, women's collective action through groups builds social capital and provides important resources, such as group savings or shared labor, which increase community resilience ([Cabot Venton, Prillaman, and Kim 2021](#)). In addition, evidence suggests that participation in self-help groups builds individual women's resilience capacities by improving psychosocial outcomes, increasing social capital, and providing economic opportunities ([Cabot Venton, Prillaman, and Kim 2021](#)).

The gendered distribution of unpaid work within households draws heavily on girls' and women's time, and limits their ability to generate income or build and draw on social and human capital when shocks and stressors occur ([Kes and Swaminathan 2006](#)). In addition, women's workloads can be further exacerbated by shocks and stressors, as well as responses to them. For example, conservation agriculture, often touted as a climate-smart practice, has been shown to increase women's agricultural labor requirement ([Nelson and Stathers 2009](#); [Beuchelt and Badstue 2013](#)). Women may be more reluctant to adopt such adaptation options because they entail too heavy a workload ([Jost et al. 2016](#)) and take time away from food preparation and other care practices ([Komatsu, Malapit, and Theis 2018](#)).



More research is needed to demonstrate and measure the linkages between women's empowerment, gender equality, and resilience.

While there is considerable apparent overlap between resilience capacities and indicators of women's empowerment, little evidence exists on the extent to which women's empowerment contributes to more resilient outcomes, such as the ability to avoid coping responses that lead to a deterioration in wellbeing, descent into poverty, and less time to rebound from the initial shock. Considerable heterogeneity exists in resilience measurement, yet few tools capture resilience dynamics and gender-differentiated outcomes.



While advances have been made in “conceptualizing” resilience, consensus is lacking on how it should be measured ([Douxchamps et al. 2017](#)). Given the dynamic nature of resilience, multiple types of indicators are needed to measure the different aspects of resilience, from initial capacities to changes in wellbeing outcomes or capacities following shocks or stressors ([Béné, Frankenberger, and Nelson 2015](#)). New tools and measures for resilience have been developed, but most fail to capture resilience dynamics, including changes in gender-differentiated outcomes and capacities following shocks and stressors ([Douxchamps et al. 2017](#)). In undertaking this literature review, no studies were identified that measure the direct linkages between indicators of women's empowerment and wellbeing outcomes following disturbances.



Gender-sensitive policies, programs, and investments can address structural inequalities while increasing resilience capacities and outcomes (transformative capacity).

Structural inequalities in society influence the resilience capacities of men and women. These include inequalities in men's and women's participation in governance institutions at multiple scales, and access to critical services such as information, extension, and financial services. Gender inequalities are also reflected in and reinforced by the lack of gender sensitivity of policies, investments (for example, infrastructure), and interventions, particularly those aimed at providing social protection, enhancing rural development, and providing humanitarian assistance during times of crisis.

Because the most vulnerable members of society have more limited capacity to respond to disturbances, shocks and stressors, such as those related to climate change, only threaten to exacerbate existing structural inequalities, including the gender gap in agriculture, unless targeted actions are taken to reduce these inequalities ([Huyer and Partey 2020](#)). While policies increasingly integrate gender, some important gaps remain. For example, a policy review of climate-change policies across countries in Latin America found a lack of gender inclusion in climate-change planning, despite a relatively higher level of gender integration in the agriculture and food security sector ([Gumucio and Tufar Rueda 2015](#)). The absence of gender-sensitivity in climate-change policies and interventions may be attributed to a lack of capacity on gender within institutions ([Bryan et al. 2018](#)). Even when gender analyses are conducted at the start of a project, ensuring gender equality in outcomes requires integrating gender into the design, planning, and monitoring of the intervention. A case study from Senegal demonstrates that this is not always the case; despite assessing gendered roles and contributions to urban agricultural production, a project was designed around male-dominated production activities rather than women's roles in transport, processing, and marketing of the products ([Gaye and Ndong Touré 2009](#)).



Investments in women's economic empowerment may also increase overall resilience to shocks and stressors.

Encouragingly, as it aspires to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the global community increasingly recognizes the importance of tackling structural inequalities in its efforts to end hunger, combat poverty, and achieve inclusive and sustainable food systems. While there is little evidence of direct linkages, the literature summarized here suggests that many synergies exist between efforts to increase women's empowerment and efforts to increase their resilience capacities.

More resources are being directed toward ensuring economic inclusion. A global assessment of economic inclusion programming—including social safety nets, livelihood and job programs, and financial inclusion programs—found that women’s economic empowerment is a key feature of nearly 90 percent of surveyed programs with a gender focus ([Andrews et al. 2021](#)). A review of the impact of these programs found that they strengthened women’s economic opportunities and incomes; increased asset ownership; and led to subtle shifts in gender norms, such as increased mobility ([Andrews et al. 2021](#)). [Tabaj and Spangler \(2017\)](#) point to a set of potential activities to increase the gender-responsiveness of resilience programs, including building women’s social capital and collective action, and increasing women’s access to and control over productive resources and essential services. Other promising interventions seek to build women’s assets and reduce gendered resource gaps ([Johnson et al. 2016](#); [Theis, Bryan, and Ringler 2019](#)), including by increasing women’s land rights ([Meinzen-Dick et al. 2019](#)) and participation in water-management decisions ([Meinzen-Dick and Zwarteveen 1998](#)). Furthermore, programs that facilitate and support women’s groups can strengthen an important source of resilience for women because these groups provide a variety of benefits, such as shared savings and loans, shared labor, and collective agency ([Cabot Venton, Prillaman and Kim 2021](#)). Women who were members of self-help groups in India were more politically engaged, more aware of public entitlements, and more likely to benefit from public entitlement schemes compared with women who were not members ([Kumar et al. 2019](#)). This suggests that women’s groups can help women access resources and services when faced with shocks and stressors.

Yet even when women’s empowerment is a program objective, such an outcome can be difficult to achieve ([Johnson et al. 2016](#)). The impacts of women’s empowerment programs are highly context-specific: impacts are more muted in contexts where social norms are more restrictive of women ([Kabeer et al. 2012](#)), and in some cases programs can have negative unintended consequences, such as an increase in domestic violence ([Holmes and Jones 2013](#); [Buller et al. 2018](#)). Programs should be designed in ways that address areas of women’s disempowerment in a given context; boost program effectiveness; and minimize unintentional consequences, such as exacerbating time poverty, reinforcing traditional gender roles, and exacerbating gender-based violence ([Andrews et al. 2021](#)).



Greater investments are needed to strengthen the capacity of implanting agencies to deliver gender-sensitive programming.

Similarly, with the intensification of investments and interventions to increase vulnerable populations’ resilience to shocks and stressors, it is important to identify and target capacity gaps among different groups within a target population. Identifying differing resilience capacities is critical to determine how programs and policies can strengthen or diversify the resilience capacities of all groups. In addition, understanding existing constraints to building and exercising capacities is important so that policymakers and practitioners can ensure the accessibility and relevance of programs and services for all groups. Building capacity to integrate thinking about gender into resilience policies and programs among institutions operating at larger scales is also essential to ensure that these policies and programs meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

FURTHER READING



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STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ON GENDER AND RESILIENCE

EVIDENCE BRIEF

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