



Webinar Questions & Answers

How do you engage communities in resilience? Are there any bottom-up approaches you or your organizations have pursued that have been successful?

In the U.S. and internationally, Abt engages diverse groups of stakeholders to lead participatory processes that identify and prioritize vulnerabilities to diverse impacts, and develop and implement resilience-building measures. Abt has led this process at the national level with governments that are developing National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) for submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Abt has also partnered with the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) to lead a sector-level, stakeholder-driven resilience planning process in the power sector in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Abt has also worked at the local level to facilitate climate resilience planning for the Pueblo de San Ildefonso, a Tribe in New Mexico, and for a coastal municipality in Puerto Rico.

Abt's stakeholder-driven resilience planning approach helps ensure that a broad range of perspectives and expertise informs resilience-building strategies. It also creates ownership and buy-in among stakeholders and communities. When the people who are responsible for implementing resilience solutions are also involved in developing, evaluating, and promoting these solutions, they are more likely to lead to successful outcomes. – *Lorine Giangola, Abt Resilience Initiative Lead, Associate, Division of Health and Environment*

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It seems we're at a very unique time in history to rethink how we've been doing things. What are your thoughts on how we might shift our current charity-based systems to ones that are equity-based, so that we might emerge from this and get "back to better" rather than business as usual?

In terms of health security and health system resiliency, the best and first line of defense against a shock or stressor event is a well-functioning and adaptable health system. One way in which we can reduce our reliance on charity/philanthropic or any other form of more reactive forms of financial or technical responses is to link the shared priorities of health system resiliency and strong, equitable, and adequately resourced health systems. Although health systems and “first responder” organizations often speak different technical languages, the priorities are often the same. For example, stronger diagnostic handling and processing chains benefits health systems in times of emergency and stability alike. There will always be a need for “first responder” or emergency interventions, but these need to involve actors from across all sectors. In times of stability, we need to “get back to better” by focusing on the foundations of health systems as part of our vision of “health security.” By doing this, the need for—and degree of—charity or external-based assistance will ideally be reduced. – *James White, Abt Resilience Initiative team member, Senior Associate, International Development Division*

In our work to support climate resilience planning in developing countries, Abt also emphasizes the importance of “mainstreaming” resilience plans and measures into existing policies and programs. Abt works with national and subnational governments to identify opportunities to revise policies to provide necessary authorities, guidance, or mandates to consider climate impacts on economic activities or investment strategies. Abt also helps countries identify strategies for mainstreaming resilience measures into national budgets and/or seeking innovative funding mechanisms to sustain resilience measures in the long term. – *Kait Siegel, Abt Resilience Initiative Coordinator, Senior Analyst, Division of Health and Environment*

Another issue or need for rural areas is access to bandwidth; yes, it's secondary to energy and other infrastructure, but important as well. How does that fall in line with resiliency planning?

Lack of available technology platforms, bandwidth, connectivity, electricity, and many other potential challenges are, of course, amplified in rural areas. One area in which Abt's technology partners are seeking to address this is through better and more user-friendly off-line access technologies for risk assessments, reporting, and community-based surveillance.

The ability to rapidly detect and surveil threats at the community-level is a pillar of effectively preventing, detecting, responding, and recovering from threats. Given the slow and patchy nature of national-level data during many emergencies, expanding technology options that are usable and practical in rural/off-line settings can be a critical tool in getting faster and more accurate data from the community level. – *James White, Abt Resilience Initiative team member, Senior Associate, International Development Division*

Thank you for taking the time to put on this very relevant webinar. I appreciate the need for long-term funding issues but, in the coming days, we assume there will be a lot of money rolling down to help communities (at least in the U.S.). What role can economic development approaches play in building resilience in the current pandemic, especially at the community level? Also, are there specific approaches in economic development that are more relevant now—given the current situation—so funds are used wisely?

For preparedness at least, there has been a lot of discussion around pooled-funds that can be used for health systems, infrastructure, or economic resiliency during times of shock or crisis. Many international actors have been calling for this, but key questions such as who would contribute, who would receive funds, under what terms and conditions, how would the fund be managed etc., have yet to be answered. – *James White, Abt Resilience Initiative team member, Senior Associate, International Development Division*

Hi from El Salvador, I fully agree with Amb. Lange to work on resilience during peaceful times. This pandemic provides a good opportunity to put together public and private funds to be ready for the long term. I believe this crisis may be tied to climate change conditions, although this may not be well documented as of today. How about accessing funding from the Green Climate Fund (that has not been very effective) to initiate projects where urgently needed, and this may be a way to get them going?

Although scientists have not identified a link between COVID-19 and climate change, the risk of outbreaks of some other infectious diseases is projected to increase as average temperatures increase and as climate impacts become more frequent and intense. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) provides grants to developing countries that are working to prepare for—and adapt to—climate change impacts. Countries are seeking GCF support to build natural and human system resilience to climate impacts, and some countries have received support for efforts to manage the public health risks of climate change. For example, GCF has funded projects that focus on improving water, sanitation, and health infrastructure that helps reduce the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks during and after a flood.

Although international, multilateral, and bilateral funders have provided a substantial amount of funding for climate change adaptation and resilience, the private sector is the largest funder of initiatives that build climate resilience at the global scale. Abt works closely with decision makers in developing countries to assess and strengthen their institutional readiness to access diverse funding sources, with a focus on building relationships with private sector groups that will also benefit from climate resilience initiatives. – *Lorine Giangola, Abt Resilience Initiative Lead, Associate, Division of Health and Environment*