



UTILIZING A POSITIVE DEVIANCE APPROACH TO A RESILIENCE CONTEXT:

What Four Case Studies Reveal



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Table of Contents

- 1. **Introduction** 1
- 2. **Overview of Positive Deviance**..... 1
- 3. **Positive Deviance and Application in the Resilience Space** 4
 - A. Pre-Resilience Framework Positive Deviance Approach 7
 - B. Program-Driven Positive Deviance Approach 8
 - C. Research-Driven Positive Deviance Approach 9
 - D. Resilience-Driven Positive Deviance Approach..... 12
- 4. **Summary** 13
- 5. **References** 15

1. Introduction

The goal of this paper is to examine the positive deviance (PD) approach and its application in programs aimed at strengthening household and community resilience. We begin with a brief overview of positive deviance, including a definition, its general purpose and philosophy, and methodology. In the following section, we present four case studies in which the PD approach has been applied to uncover “demonstrably successful” behaviors and strategies that would appear to contribute to household resilience. Although the studies vary somewhat in their approach to PD analysis, they all seek to understand why some people do better than others in the same situation, with the same set of conditions and resources. For example, are some people more willing than others to participate in meetings, join community groups, or adopt new practices? What are the specific behaviors practiced by adopters that are lacking in others and can they be widely promoted? What can we learn from these and other studies that can improve the success of future development and resilience programming, especially when some degree of behavioral change is required? In the last section, we provide conclusions, potential applications, and areas for further study involving positive deviance in the context of resilience programming.

2. Overview of Positive Deviance

Pioneered in the early 1990s as a means of improving child nutrition, positive deviance is defined as:

“...an assets-based approach to social and behavior change that identifies solutions to community problems within the community. Its premise is that in every community there are individuals or families whose practices and behaviors enable them to find better solutions to problems than their neighbors who have access to the same resources.”¹

That is, it identifies what is going well in a community—and why—and attempts to amplify that rather than attempting to fix what is not going well, which is the more typical approach of development initiatives. What assets or capacities promote behaviors that result in better outcomes than are typical in the wake of specific shocks and stresses? Examining how positive deviant households (HHs) behave differently can provide a better understanding of how similarly vulnerable household and communities can most effectively employ their assets and capacities in response to shocks and stresses.²

In a programming context, traditional design approaches begin with “outside” expert-driven analyses of the problem(s). For example, resilience initiatives may conduct a Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (CVCA)³ or Strategic Resilience Assessment (STRESS)⁴ to determine community vulnerability to local shocks and stressors, and what capacities exist within the community to deal with those shocks/stressors. From here, however, the PD approach diverges from the traditional process by focusing instead on the “community capacity side” of the

¹ Singhal and Dura (2009)

² Assets can be physical (e.g., roads, health services), social/cultural (e.g., attitudes about women), economic, social, human (e.g., education, skills), natural (e.g., water, forests), etc.

³ <https://careclimatechange.org/cvca/>

⁴ <https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/resilience/strategic-resilience-assessment>

assessment, and in particular, what positive deviance behaviors confer uncommon outcomes (i.e., highly successful) for certain individuals and the assets underlying those behaviors.

Table I compares traditionally designed program approaches to those informed by a PD approach.

Table I. Key differences between traditional and PD-informed approaches to design.

Topics	Traditional Designs	PD-Informed Designs
Focus	Focuses on deficits: What is not working well and why?	Focuses on assets (i.e., resources): What is working well, especially when it seems inexplicable?
Communication	Unilateral: experts define risks, design mobilization strategies, sometimes in collaboration with stakeholders	Dialogic: experts and stakeholders co-define risks and mobilization strategies with communities
Mobilization	Outside-in: external solutions and consultants	Inside-out: leveraging existing local resources, local ownership
Solutions	Technical: expert-driven technical solutions, evidence-based	Complex adaptive: locally-viable, relevant solutions, including social and behavioral issues

Source: Singhal and Dura (2017)

The PD approach is most effectively used when addressing intractable problems that require behavior change as part of the solution and where there is evidence that some individuals or HHs have effectively responded to a common problem, even when they are not appreciably different from their neighbors in terms of socioeconomic status, educational attainment, or other characteristics. The PD approach has been employed in a wide range of contexts, including emergency response in Indonesia, resilience and recovery programming among farmers in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, prevention of child trafficking in Uganda and Indonesia, and improving governance as part of the Ebola response. The Positive Deviance Collaborative, hosted by Tufts University, provides more examples of the range of PD applications.⁵ More recently, researchers have used the PD approach to identify resilience behaviors, though it is still potentially underutilized in resilience initiatives.

Both quantitative and qualitative data can be used to identify the positive deviants in a community and the positive deviant behavior(s). For example, in a search for well-nourished poor children, mapping information and anthropometric data can be used to identify individual poor children from among a population of equally poor children, who are indeed well-nourished. In this case, a well-nourished child is the deviation from the norm; most poor children are not well-nourished. Families of poor but well-nourished children (i.e., positive deviants) are interviewed and/or observed in order to identify behaviors used by the families that appear to be contributing to the nutritional “success” of their children. Thus, a PD approach allows for discovering the “difference that makes

⁵ <https://positivedeviance.org>

the difference” for individuals or groups who would otherwise appear to be equally vulnerable and disadvantaged as their neighbors.

The PD approach is not a magic bullet. Not all positive deviance behaviors may be broadly applicable as solutions to a problem or set of problems; some may not be easily replicated or scaled up. Community validation is crucial to discerning which behavioral solutions have the potential for wider dissemination. Relevant PD behaviors should make sense to both community members and development practitioners and should be linked to evidence. For example, mothers of well-nourished but poor children use tomatoes in their home-cooked stews, unlike mothers of malnourished poor children. However, there is no evidence—or even common sense—to suggest that this behavior would be solely responsible for improved nutrition among poor children. That is, there is nothing to suggest that this practice is “the difference that makes a difference” between these positive deviant children and poor but malnourished children in the community. Thus, additional PD inquiry is needed in order to identify the unique strategy or strategies used by these PD HHs that can be logically linked to better nutrition outcomes in their children.

PD inquiry is the stage in which community-led self-discovery occurs, involving observations of and interviews with PD families to help identify PD behaviors. What do the PD families—or mothers, in the case of infant and young child feeding practices—do that is different from what other mothers do that could be contributing to better outcomes? Positive deviants can be identified quantitatively, for example, from population-based surveys, which would show who appears to have unusually positive outcomes (e.g., well-nourished children, better recovery after a natural disaster). PDs can also be identified qualitatively, for example, by community members themselves who determine what constitutes a positive deviant in their community. Regardless of how they are identified, qualitative methods can then be used to explore behaviors that are different between PDs and the rest of the population. Mixed-methods approaches (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) can be used throughout the PD process, including the PD inquiry phase. PD inquiry can be used as a standalone activity, often facilitated by an outside entity, e.g., a non-governmental organization (NGO), to identify behavioral solutions to common challenges that can be incorporated into a behavior change strategy. PD inquiry can also be used as part of a community mobilization approach.

There are five basic steps in the PD methodology, all of which may involve the community, thus contributing to local ownership and peer-to-peer learning.⁶

1. **Define** the problem, current perceived causes, challenges and constraints, common practices, and desired outcomes.
2. **Determine** the presence of PD individuals or groups.
3. **Discover** uncommon but successful behaviors and strategies through inquiry and observation.
4. **Design** activities to allow community members to practice the discovered behaviors.
5. **Monitor** and evaluate the resulting project or initiative which further fuels change by documenting and sharing improvements as they occur, and help the community discern the effectiveness of the initiative.

⁶ Tufts University (2010)

PD focuses on behaviors that contribute to solving intractable problems rather than on individual characteristics of those who practice the behaviors. Wherever possible, it is important to gather broad quantitative data as part of the process in order to help define the problem and identify positive deviants achieving preferred outcomes. This then facilitates the process of inquiry into what uncommon strategies or behaviors (PD behaviors) are being used by statistical outliers, or positive deviants.

Overall, the general philosophy behind the PD approach is that there is a lot to be learned from communities, who often have the best solutions to challenging problems; the best solutions may be “hiding in plain sight.” PD approaches can help uncover appropriate solutions (both formal and informal) that already exist within a community, even though they may not be widely practiced. Such local solutions are usually culturally appropriate, helping reduce barriers to adoption by other community members. As noted in the PD field guide, “*The PD approach brings about sustainable behavioral and social change by identifying solutions already existing in the system.*”⁷

The PD approach may have promising applications for resilience programming. As previously noted, PD has not been extensively utilized as part of resilience measurement and analysis. The Resilience Evaluation, Analysis and Learning (REAL) consortium is interested in exploring this approach as a way of shifting from the typical top-down, problem-based approach commonly applied in development and humanitarian programming contexts to a community-focused, strengths-based approach to promote resilience-enhancing practices in vulnerable communities.

3. Positive Deviance and Application in the Resilience Space

Resilience programming activities are designed to address complex problems in challenging environments at risk of natural hazards, economic disruptions, conflicts, etc. Resilience is defined as a set of capacities that ensure adverse stressors and shocks do not have long-lasting negative consequences.⁸ More plainly, resilience is the capacity—or set of capacities—that allows individuals, households, or communities to respond to and mitigate the impact of shocks or stressors.⁹ Resilience capacity is conceptualized as three individual but not mutually exclusive components: absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and transformative capacity. However, it is not enough to simply have the capacity to deal with shocks and stressors. People must employ those capacities in ways that result in positive effects on household or community well-being in the face of a shock or stressor and do not diminish the ability of households or communities to deal with shocks effectively in the future. Thus, in the face of a shock or stress, the combined outcome of resilience capacity and response is the ability of households to recover from hazards and shocks without deterioration of their basic well-being; i.e., they can “bounce back” or “bounce back better” from a disturbance.¹⁰ Although composed of both capacity and response, resilience is usually measured as stability in, or improvement of, well-being in the face of a shock.

Figure 1 shows resilience as a process, or pathway, which links various capacities and decision-making (i.e., response) with recovery (i.e., resilience outcome) and longer-term well-being (i.e.,

⁷ Tufts University (2010)

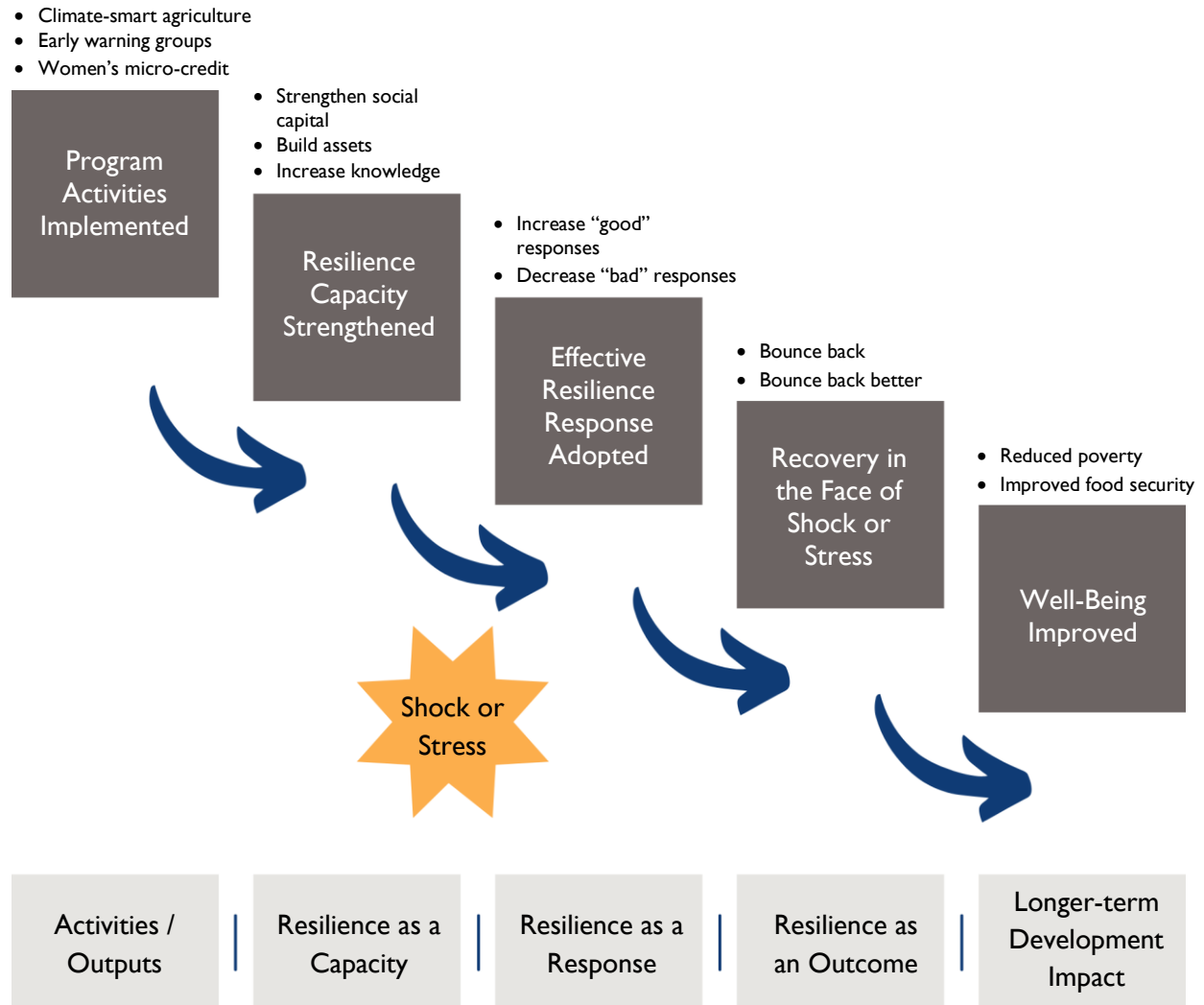
⁸ Conostas et al. (2014)

⁹ Bene et al. (2015)

¹⁰ Frankenberger et al. (2014)

development outcome). From Figure 2 it is easy to see that PD behavior is reflected in “good” resilience response (highlighted).

Figure 1. Resilience Pathway



Source: Adapted from Béné et al. 2015.

A number of resilience studies have examined the relationship between recovery from specific shocks with various resilience capacity elements.¹¹ In addition to well-established factors, such as assets, livelihood strategies, and financial or social capital, some studies also stress the importance of less tangible and more subjective factors, such as individuals’ and households’ aspirations, expectations, and motivations.¹² Risk perception, for example, which is determined and influenced by cultural and other psychosocial factors, is recognized to play an important role in people’s response to threats.¹³

¹¹ TANGO (2019a); TANGO (2016); Smith et al. (2015); Alinovi et al. (2010)

¹² Béné et al. (2016); Jones and Tanner (2015); Bernard and Taffesse (2014)

¹³ Swim et al. (2009)

Applying a PD lens is a potentially “natural fit” for complex problems such as resilience, where different sets of capacities are required to effectively deal with different types of shocks or stressors. One-size-fits-all solutions are not realistic. People at risk of shocks and stressors provide the best insights into effective responses; their direct experiences with adverse events and circumstances make them “experts” at how best to deal with such challenges.

There are different ways of implementing the PD approach, all involving community engagement at some level. Regardless of how it is implemented, however, PD analysis should be respectful to communities and culturally appropriate. Below we describe four case studies that vary in how they approach PD analysis.



Photo: Seifu Asseged / Save the Children

A. Pre-Resilience Framework Positive Deviance Approach

Prior to the development of resilience frameworks for assessing and measuring resilience, a study was conducted in Ethiopia to provide insights for promoting self-resiliency at the household and community level of the chronically food insecure.¹⁴ The study employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses to assess vulnerability within distinct livelihood systems, with vulnerability determined largely by access—or lack thereof—to assets and resources, constraints within specific livelihood systems, and the role of social capital in livelihood security.

For the purposes of this study, resilience referred to the ability of a household or community to bounce back or recover from adversity or hard times and be capable of building positively on these adversities.¹⁵ The study found the following factors to contribute to household resilience in all livelihood systems studied:

- diversified sources of income;
- willingness to invest in productive household assets;
- commitment to establishing savings and/or contingency funds; and
- shared decision-making between spouses.

Factors that the study found to influence community resilience include:

- positive attitudes toward collaboration;
- cooperation and openness to change;
- strong relationships between internal (local) and external institutions;
- collective decision-making; and
- management of internal and external resources.

Additionally, the study identified several “enablers” of community resilience, including strong rural-urban linkages, community social assets, collective appreciation for and commitment to investments in human capital, and the presence of resilient households to serve as role models.

Communities were asked to identify resilient households, which were defined as those who were able to meet their food needs over the course of a year and who could effectively deal with shocks experienced by others in the community. The study then used PD inquiry using qualitative methods with these resilient positive deviance households to determine what made them unique among their peers. Most of the resilient PD households exhibited proactive behavior and an entrepreneurial spirit that helped them reduce vulnerability.

PD households (i.e., identified by the community) tended to engage in much of the same behavior as resilient households (i.e., identified by researchers through analysis of qualitative and quantitative data). Both types of households had more diverse sources of income, were early adopters of new technologies, and often invested in improved practices (e.g., soil conservation, water management),

¹⁴ Frankenberger et al. (2007)

¹⁵ Mission Australia (2005)

tended to save money for future investments and other types of contingency savings (e.g., seed stocks), and had a good work ethic (e.g., believed in hard work rather than destiny). They also tended to make joint decisions with their spouses, valued education for their children, and sought opportunities to share ideas and resources with other community members (i.e., acted as change agents). Many of the PD heads of household had visited or worked outside of their communities, which potentially exposed them to “alternative aspirations” opportunities. Aspirations has been found to be linked with resilience in that individuals who possess positive aspirations for the future are much more likely to invest in household well-being that helps them transition out of poverty in the long term.¹⁶

Though this study was conducted prior to the development of common resilience measurement frameworks used today,¹⁷ it nonetheless provides much insight and evidence that remains relevant in current resilience-strengthening initiatives. It also serves as an example of how positive deviance inquiry can be applied within the resilience space, in this case, using predominantly qualitative data.

B. Program-Driven Positive Deviance Approach

In Afghanistan, a robust PD inquiry based on community input was used to identify resilience behaviors used by PD communities that could potentially be amplified and adopted by other communities.¹⁸ In this case, the PD communities successfully managed to mitigate conflict through non-violent means even in the midst of ongoing fighting between Afghan and American forces on the one hand and Taliban and other actors on the other. In the face of conflict, as a specific shock, the PD communities strengthened their transformative capacity by maintaining social cohesion and representative governance structures. The PD approach was used as part of a study on the role of engaged citizens and communities in security, development, and peacebuilding, which involved answering two questions:

- How have communities that successfully managed to mitigate the impact of the conflict done so?
- What are the attitudes, behaviors, and practices of security management, governance, and development that have served these peaceful communities so well?

Quantitative research was used to explore the first objective and involved developing composite variables for security, development, and peacemaking that were then used to establish a definition of positive deviance. In other words, it focused on understanding “what worked” to build or support resilience in terms of security management, governance, and community development in both secure and insecure communities within Khogyani district.

The second objective was addressed through PD inquiry and involved qualitative research conducted in partnership with local Community Development Councils (CDCs). Though it took time to build trust so that community members felt comfortable speaking up, the PD inquiry held focus group discussions, informal conversations, and meetings with community leaders and elders,

¹⁶ Kosec, K., Khan, H., Alemayehu, S.T. et al. (2014)

¹⁷ Frankenberger and Nelson (2013)

¹⁸ Future Generations Afghanistan (2013)

religious leaders, youth, and women. Researchers also employed workshops and informal observations.

The PD process was generally managed and “directed” by an NGO, Future Generations Afghanistan; however, the community was fully engaged in all five steps of the PD methodology, particularly the PD inquiry stage. The study used a mixed-methods approach and included quantitative data drawn primarily from central and provincial records, but not the district and village levels, of the National Solidarity Program and from relevant government ministries and other local actors. The study used a clustered sampling method to select PD communities, those exhibiting “success” in accessing development services in the face of conflict, which resulted in three clusters of communities with different security and accessibility characteristics. From these clusters, the inquiry selected 12 communities for further qualitative analysis, including identification of PD behaviors and practices believed to contribute to their successes in conflict resolution and allowing them to continue engagement in development efforts and reject governance from armed non-state actors.

The study posits that key positive deviance motives include maintaining the authority of local governance, rather than armed groups such as the Taliban, and maintaining development and social services within their communities, even in the face of conflict. Simply put, PD communities are committed to resolving conflicts—including enmity within their own communities—peacefully, which allows them to reject the governance authority of armed groups or the Taliban and to continue engaging with development activities. A shared interest in children’s education, health services, and development drives their PD practices and behavior. According to the authors, this shared interest was “deemed more important than the political or social differences.”

This case study represents a PD approach, including use of both quantitative and qualitative data, that is facilitated by an outside actor (e.g., NGO) but remains highly dependent on community engagement and trust at all steps in the process.

C. Research-Driven Positive Deviance Approach

The PD approach described above involved overall facilitation of the process by an NGO, but relied heavily on community engagement and input. In contrast, a PD inquiry was recently undertaken as part of a CGIAR research program in the southern agricultural zone of Tanzania,¹⁹ in which community engagement in the process was minimal. The study explored whether the PD approach could be adapted and used to identify and prioritize programming approaches for diverse smallholder farming households in development initiatives with multiple objectives (e.g., food security, nutrition, productivity, and income).

Researchers collected quantitative data with the standardized Rural Household Multiple Indicator Survey (RHoMIS) and a set of livelihood indicators developed for each household (e.g., food security status, income, land holdings, market systems). The study classified approximately 10 percent of the sample as positive deviant households based on relative performance for five broad development objectives: food security, nutrition, income, environmental sustainability, and social equity. Positive deviant households had “stronger than expected” performance in the five key

¹⁹ Steinke et al. (2019)

development dimensions, but did not necessarily have “strong” performance in any one dimension. That is, PD households did better than other households with similar characteristics in at least one dimension and were not outperformed in any other dimension. According to the authors, this implies that PD HHs effectively deal with potential trade-offs between the objectives of the different dimensions, which could have programming and implementation implications for projects with multiple objectives.

A sub-sample of positive deviant households identified with the quantitative data were selected for in-depth qualitative research in a step-wise procedure that resulted in selection of 18 households with the highest overall diversity in livelihood characteristics. The objective of the qualitative research was to capture “all” PD activities related to food production, storage and processing, consumption, income generation, natural resource management, and access to information. Then, the qualitative research would identify the practices that were uncommon among most rural households in the area and that might help explain the stronger than expected performances. Overall, 14 practices were identified as “positive deviant” practices. However, PD households engaged in an average of two (out of 14) practices and half of PD households practiced only one behavior. Six PDs reported careful scheduling of labor during land preparation and sowing, the most of any single practice, followed by wage labor, which was practiced by four PDs.

Other PD behaviors identified in the study include:

- Investing in improved crop storage to decrease post-harvest losses;
- Maintaining ruminant livestock for sale in emergency situations, even against short-term utility logic;
- Pooling resources for better efficiencies (e.g., to hire a tractor-tillage service provider, bulk sales of milk);
- Intercropping pigeon pea and maize to reduce competition for resources;
- Off-farm income-generating activities (e.g., cuttings of an improved cassava variety, trees seedlings, including cassava, transportation business, agro-input/building supplies shop);
- Improving poultry production (e.g., solar lights to improve production, better/more secure coops, improved breeds); and
- Commodity trading (e.g., speculative purchase for later resale).

PD households were as diverse as the overall sample, including small and large farms, and PD behaviors were practiced across the spectrum of household characteristics; PD households were found among the least wealthy households as well as the wealthier. This suggests that differences in household performance were due, at least in part, to behavior and decision-making; PDs were making good decisions.

The authors used a resource homolog approach to match households within the sample to specific PD “models” based on their relative similarity in household resources. As a result of this matching, they suggest that the positive deviant behaviors associated with a PD model can then be used to prioritize interventions with resource homolog households (households with similar resources). Certain practices contribute to better outcomes in some types of households than others; for some

households, improved crop storage constitutes PD behavior and in others, “success” may be related to off-farm work. Thus, the authors suggest that the approach provides development programming planners with a tool for identifying household-specific intervention options rather than assigning households to broad clusters.

Overall, this case study represents an NGO-driven, more modified type of PD approach, in which questions around methodological process drive the research, with communities playing a somewhat minor—though important—role, that of research subjects rather than participants. This case provides an example in which a variation of the PD approach was employed as part of an effort to strengthen the adaptive capacity of participating households. However, as in the previous case studies, there is no directly measured quantitative evidence that PD households are able to maintain or improve their food security (or other measures of well-being) in the face of a shock or stress; that is, they are resilient.



Photo: Seifu Asseged / Save the Children

D. Resilience-Driven Positive Deviance Approach

Development and socialization of a series of technical guidelines for resilience measurement and analysis²⁰ has resulted in the growing use of a resilience framework for program design and implementation, as well as to evaluate project impact, by numerous implementing partners and donors (e.g., United States Agency for International Development [USAID], Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office [FCDO]).

The case study described here involves using a PD approach as part of the impact evaluation (IE) of a resilience program: USAID's Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement and Market Expansion (PRIME) Project in Ethiopia. The program's IE used a PD approach to assess why some households are better able to recover from shocks than their peers. The analyses used logistic regressions to provide insights into households' resilience capacities—the characteristics and conditions that enable households to maintain or recover their well-being in the event of a shock—and whether those capacities distinguish a PD household from non-PD HHs. Adjusting for differences in initial food security status and shock exposure, coping strategies employed by PD and non-PD HHs were also compared. Finally, regression analysis was used to determine if individual program interventions (e.g., value chain interventions, food aid) help explain PD household outcomes, or success.

PD HHs were defined as those who fared far better than average over the course of several drought waves and were identified by a change in their food security. To capture real-time coping strategies and responses to shocks, panel data was collected at regular intervals after the onset of drought using Recurrent Monitoring Surveys (RMS). Adjusted and unadjusted differences in resilience capacities and coping strategies between PD and non-PD HHs were analyzed; adjusted differences account for factors over which households and project managers have no control (in the short term), including the degree of shock exposure, pre-shock food security, and household characteristics.

Two cycles of RMS were included in the impact evaluation of the PRIME project in Ethiopia. The first RMS tracked households' responses to a 2014/15 drought²¹ and the second RMS tracked responses to the 2015/16 El Niño drought.²² Both RMSs involved six rounds of panel data collection.

In RMS-I, PD HHs were defined as households whose food security index increased by two or more points over the course of the RMS (six months).²³ Based on this criteria, 24 percent of panel households were identified as positive deviants.

Results from the analysis identified three capacities that differentiate PD HHs from non-PD HHs: availability of hazard insurance, use of financial resources, and the presence of a civic group. When controlling for other factors, four additional resilience capacities were predictive of PD HHs: asset ownership, access to informal safety nets, the degree of social protection in households' communities, and the number of natural resource management groups in communities.

²⁰ Sagara 2018; Vaughan 2018; Conostas et al. (2014)

²¹ Smith and Frankenberger (2017)

²² Smith et al. (2018)

²³ Smith and Frankenberger (2017)

In the PRIME RMS-2, which collected data about people’s responses to the severe El Niño drought, PD HHs were defined as households whose food security index increased by two or more points between RMS-2 Rounds 1 and 6.²⁴ Thirty-seven percent of households were identified as PD HHs, indicating that they had not only recovered but they also had a greater level of food security at the end of RMS-2, despite having experienced a major drought.

Similar to the first RMS, the PRIME RMS-2 analysis found that PD HHs had lower levels of food security (Rounds 1-4), slightly lower shock exposure, and similar economic status (i.e., asset ownership). In terms of coping strategies, PD HHs were less likely to reduce their food consumption or engage in other “negative” behaviors: e.g. consume seed stocks for future planting, take up new wage labor, borrow money from friends or relatives, and receive money or food from family members. They were, however, more likely to receive money or food from non-relatives. Thus, it is possible that positive deviant households were more resilient—at least in part—because of an ability to rely on assistance from people outside of their families, which helped them to avoid adoption of negative coping strategies.

Regression analysis results provided evidence that PRIME project interventions helped reduce the negative impact of the drought and that humanitarian assistance helps explain how PD HHs were able to recover so much more than non-PD HHs. Analysis suggests that receipt of food aid in Borena (one of two implementation areas), and participation in food-for-cash/food-for-work in Jijiga (the other implementation area), helped PD HHs in these areas recover from drought. The following resilience capacities also contributed to the exceptional recovery of PD HHs: disaster preparedness and mitigation, asset ownership (during RMS-2 Round 1), access to financial resources, availability of formal safety nets, bonding social capital, availability of hazard insurance, and exposure to information.

4. Summary

This paper examines the potential for using a PD approach in resilience contexts. From the case studies presented, it is plausible to consider that the PD approach is useful in the context of resilience measurement; PD inquiry, in particular, can provide important insights into resilience capacity and PD behaviors.

The PD approach can be easily incorporated as part of a mixed methods monitoring and evaluation plan, expanding the set of qualitative tools available to stakeholders, including during the design, implementation, and part of evaluation. In particular, PD inquiry can provide important insights into positive deviant behaviors that contribute to the capacity of households to effectively deal with and respond to shocks and stressors, i.e., that strengthen household resilience. For example, comparisons of positive deviants and their “successful” behaviors over time (e.g., baseline/endline comparisons, RMS rounds) might be extremely insightful in a resilience analysis, as one might expect both to change over time and circumstance.

²⁴ The measure of food security is the inverse of an experiential indicator of food insecurity, HFIAS. For the index, values range from 4 to 27, and higher numbers indicate better food security.

As previously discussed, resilience—the ability of households to effectively deal with shocks and stresses—results when households have access to, *and utilize*, a diverse set of skills, information, and other resources (i.e., assets) to counter the negative impacts of shocks and stresses. However, resilience is shock-specific, i.e., the set of skills, information, and other resources best applied to deal with drought may differ from those that best address shocks related to annual flooding. PD inquiry that engages communities could be useful for gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding of behaviors as well as local solutions to a wide range of resilience challenges.

Overall, there remains great potential for much wider application of the PD approach to inform programs aimed at strengthening resilience. The PD approach adds value to common qualitative techniques (e.g., focus group discussion, in-depth interviews) and may better highlight innovative solutions that are already known within communities. It also continues to be used in efforts to quantitatively measure factors contributing to resilience at multiple levels (individual, household, community). The case studies presented in this paper illustrate how a PD approach can enable context-specific identification of social and behavior change needed to sustainably strengthen resilience among shock-prone populations.

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