# Resilient Businesses, Resilient Workforces: Strengthening Business Continuity in an Era of Polycrisis

## Resilience Is Built Before the Crisis: Insights from the FHI 360 and AWR Lloyd Roundtable

Crises no longer arrive one at a time. Geopolitical instability, weather shocks, economic volatility, and fast-shifting supply chains are testing traditional risk management. Continuity now means more than managing disruption. It means anticipating risk, adapting to uncertainty, and investing in the resilience of the businesses and people who sustain them. The time for action is now. But how?

On October 16, 2026, FHI 360 and AWR Lloyd convened a roundtable alongside the IMF–World Bank Group Annual Meetings in Bangkok. Business leaders, development partners, and institutional stakeholders considered how organizations can better anticipate disruption, protect their operations and workforces, and strengthen their capacity to adapt and thrive amid uncertainty. We are grateful to all participants for their engagement.

This summary captures the central themes, insights, and opportunities from the discussion, and makes the case for moving from reactive crisis response to strategic preparedness.

## Shifting from Crisis Response to Preparedness

The discussion opened with the commitments from the IMF–World Bank Group Annual Meetings to advance sustainable growth and mobilize private capital. FHI 360 Environment and Health Technical Advisor Nujpanit (Jom) Narkpitaks framed the shift: *Uncertainty is no longer an occasional disruption. It is a shared reality across geographies, sectors, and economies.*

Environmental change, health emergencies, geopolitical tensions, technological disruption, demographic shifts, and economic volatility are converging, and each one amplifies the others. No company, sector, or country is insulated. Resilience therefore has to mean more than protecting assets or keeping operations running. It means anticipating disruption, investing in people and organizational capacity, strengthening the systems businesses rely on, and helping communities and economies recover. That takes closer collaboration across the private sector, governments, and development partners, because the resilience of businesses and of workers and communities is closely linked.

In Jom's words: *Resilience is not just about surviving disruption; it's about creating the conditions for people, businesses, and economies to adapt, recover, and continue to thrive.*

## Recognizing Grey Rhinos and the Case for Preparedness

Businesses are now operating in an era of polycrisis, and Ashreya Shrestha, Deputy CEO and Head of Sustainability and Resilience at AWR Lloyd, challenged participants to rethink how they understand and prepare for risk. Trade restrictions, shifting economic relationships, extreme weather, health emergencies, energy insecurity, infrastructure vulnerabilities, AI, demographic shifts, labor shortages, and evolving workforce requirements are all adding to the complexity.

Ashreya put it plainly: *The greatest risk is no longer any single shock. It's the way they interact, cascade and amplify one another. A flood becomes a supply chain problem. A war becomes an energy bill. A cyberattack becomes an operational outage. And in the end, they all land in the same place: the business, and the people who work in it.*

The numbers bear this out. According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's Global Assessment Report on Risk Reduction 2025 (UNDRR), more than 90% of the cost of disasters lies beyond the initial damage, in lost livelihoods, disrupted supply chains, and adverse impacts to health and education systems.

> **Key number:** USD 2.3 trillion. That is the true annual cost of disasters once cascading and ecosystem costs are counted, versus roughly USD 200 billion in direct physical damage (UNDRR).

Central to the discussion was the idea of Grey Rhinos: threats that are highly probable, high-impact, and plainly visible, yet too often overlooked or left unaddressed. Black Swan events are largely unforeseen. Grey Rhinos aren't. So why are organizations still so often unprepared? Part of the answer is short-term performance pressure and efficiency-first operating models. The costs of preparedness show up today, while the benefits stay invisible until a shock arrives.

The business case is getting harder to ignore. Organizations that anticipate disruption, reduce critical dependencies, strengthen supply chain and workforce resilience, and respond decisively are better placed to withstand shocks, protect their competitiveness, and seize new opportunities. That means looking beyond efficiency and short-term optimization toward a better balance of resilience, flexibility, diversification, and foresight. Preparedness is an investment in continuity, competitive advantage, and long-term growth.

## Putting Resilience into Practice: Lessons from Banpu's Energy Transition

The energy sector shows how businesses can turn uncertainty and disruption into transformation. Maximillian Wood, Senior Advisor at AWR Lloyd, led an interview with Khun Somruedee Chaimongkol, former CEO of Banpu. She shared how strategic foresight, decisive leadership, diversification, technology investment, and workforce transformation can strengthen resilience and long-term competitiveness.

Her experience leading Banpu through the COVID-19 pandemic and its *'Greener, Smarter'* Transition underscored one thing: anticipate industry transformation rather than wait for disruption to force change. That takes leaders who can make informed decisions in fast-moving, uncertain environments. They empower teams across decentralized operations. They prepare their workforces for shifts in technologies, business models, and market demands. Investment in workforce capabilities, cross-training, leadership development, and a strong organizational culture was central to helping Banpu navigate change while sustaining performance.

Diversification was another source of Banpu's resilience. By broadening its investments, markets, technologies, and supply relationships, the company reduced its exposure to critical dependencies. It also became better able to respond as markets shifted. Its approach recognized that long-term performance is tied to the resilience of communities, markets, and the wider ecosystems across its supply chains.

> **Key takeaway:** Resilience is not simply an enterprise-level investment; it is an economic and development priority. Aligning public policy, private sector investment, and development finance can help shift the economics of preparedness.

## Shared Responsibility: Businesses, Governments, and Development Finance

Building resilience in an era of polycrisis takes more than individual companies tightening their own risk management. Businesses, governments, financial institutions, and development partners all need to rethink how they anticipate, finance, and respond to disruption. That was the focus of a conversation with Arturo Herrera, Global Director, Governance, World Bank Group, and Rajesh Mehra, Regional Practice Group Lead for Trade & Supply Chain Finance, Asia & the Pacific, International Finance Corporation (IFC). Shahera Youssef Younes, Senior Director Economic Opportunity, FHI 360, moderated.

One message came through clearly: **preparedness is a shared responsibility, and resilience requires a functioning ecosystem of institutions, policies, infrastructure, and financing that enables businesses and**

**economies to anticipate and navigate disruption.** Getting past fragmented, crisis-driven responses means aligning policies, risk frameworks, investment decisions, and incentives behind a more proactive approach.

Businesses can start by identifying critical dependencies, diversifying sourcing, and strengthening supply networks. This matters most for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which support many workers but often have fewer resources to absorb shocks. Advance supply chain financing and creative combinations of financing and de-risking tools can help them keep operating through disruption. AI and digital tools can sharpen early warning and workforce planning, but they are also changing jobs and skills, so workforce readiness matters too.

**What we heard:** Enterprises can identify critical dependencies, diversify sourcing, and strengthen supply networks, especially for SMEs. Technology can improve early warning and workforce planning. Governments and development finance institutions can build resilient infrastructure, align policy, and de-risk investment.

Governments strengthen the foundations businesses depend on: energy, transport, digital connectivity, health, and essential services. Effective policies, regulations, incentives, and public investment free businesses to invest in preparedness. Development finance institutions play a catalytic role by de-risking investments, mobilizing private capital, financing resilient infrastructure, and strengthening supply chains where risks and financing gaps are greatest.

## Conclusions

Resilience is not built in the middle of a crisis. It is forged through the decisions, investments, partnerships, and people that prepare businesses and economies for whatever comes next.

The roundtable made the case that resilience belongs at the center of business strategy, economic policy, and investment decisions, not at the margins of risk management.

**Key messages:**

- Uncertainty is now a shared reality.
- Grey Rhinos are foreseeable, so preparedness is an investment, not a cost.
- Resilience depends on leadership, workforce capability, diversification, and a functioning ecosystem of governments, businesses, and financiers.

For FHI 360, this conversation is part of a broader commitment to economic resilience, connecting the strength of businesses and markets with the livelihoods and opportunities of the people and communities who sustain them. We look forward to continuing the dialogue with AWR Lloyd and our partners, and to turning these insights into practical approaches, partnerships, and investments.

**Three questions to take back to your own organization:**

- Which Grey Rhinos are we seeing but not acting on?
- If a flood, a war, or a cyberattack hit tomorrow, where would it land first, in our business and among the people who work in it?
- Who do we need alongside us before the next shock: suppliers, SMEs, governments, financiers?

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