



The Triple Nexus

Questions and Answers on Integrating Humanitarian,
Development and Peace Actions in Protracted Crises

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What is the Humanitarian – Development – Peace Nexus?

The humanitarian, development and, when appropriate, peace Nexus refers to the **interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions**. The Nexus is an operational framework that entails complementarity and coherence between emergency relief, development and peacebuilding as well as coordination between actors (for instance in developing joint context analyses, needs assessments, and common outcomes)¹. The Nexus also involves changes in financing (such as moving towards multi-year funding, less-earmarked assistance, flexible funding, and simplification of financing mechanisms)².

Is it a New Agenda?

The Nexus is a continuation of long-running efforts to link humanitarian and development actions for the building of long-term resilience, especially in protracted crises, complex emergencies or situations of chronic vulnerability. This way of thinking began to take form in the Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) approach, which emerged in the 1990s and then taken up in resilience discussions as of the early 2000s. LRRD is an approach to programming that focuses on a better transition between humanitarian, rehabilitation and development activities. However, it has been criticized for being too linear in nature. With global displacement and humanitarian needs soaring as of 2012, emergencies have become protracted and assistance is needed to address both short-term and long-term vulnerabilities. The focus of the international community thus has shifted towards resilience and conflict prevention in order to bring to an end the cycle of aid dependency or reduce the possibility of fragility and conflict in the first place. To achieve such goals, the international community has recognized that **humanitarian and development actors need to coordinate better and work more efficiently, new funding mechanisms need to be created, and the approach to providing aid needs to change**. UN-led initiatives for the new ways of working include collective outcomes, comparative advantages and multi-year frameworks. Moreover, peace was added as a third pillar inherently tied to the success of the long-term sustainability and impact humanitarian and development assistance. Hence, the humanitarian-development-peace Nexus is a framework that goes beyond a single program and encompasses all these changes: better collaboration between actors, complementary and coherent responses, prevention, and changes in financing mechanisms³.

¹ See OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019, 2019. See also the 'New Way of Working' set up by the United Nations and the World Bank to deliver the nexus approach: World Humanitarian Summit, Commitment to Action, May 2016; OCHA, Collective Outcomes: Operationalizing the New Way of Working, April 2018. See also the work of the European Union on the nexus: Council of the European Union, Operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, Council conclusions, 19 May 2017; Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, Council Conclusions, 22 January 2018.

² See the Grand Bargain agreement between some of the largest donors and aid providers to get more means into hands of people in need: www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain. Its origins lay in the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the United Nations Secretary-General, Too Important to Fail: addressing the humanitarian financing gap, January 2016.

³ OECD, UN OCHA, Council of the European Union

Why do We Need a Nexus Approach?

The need for comprehensive solutions to protracted crises comes in response to crises that are becoming increasingly complex and difficult to bring to an end. The average humanitarian crisis lasts more than nine years, with many having lasted for decades.¹ To address the recurrent cycle of shocks, development responses must complement humanitarian action, particularly through capacity building and empowerment initiatives at the local level.² Responding to protracted crises solely through emergency relief can contribute to normalizing a dependency on aid deliverance from international actors. **Instead, addressing immediate needs, contribute to building resilience to future shocks, providing communities with the necessary coping mechanisms, and improve access to basic services combines durable solutions to short- and long-term needs.** The peace component is included in the Nexus because the resurgence of violent conflict in low and middle income countries (the highest in nearly 30 years in 2016)³ has challenged the assumption that economic growth alone leads to greater peace and stability.⁴ Moreover, studies have found that a lack of sensitivity to the specificities of fragile contexts by aid agencies, can fuel tensions and in some cases, further perpetuate conflicts.⁵ However, peacebuilding remains a controversial pillar of the Nexus and most collective outcomes established by the UN in setting Nexus targets does not provide clear guidance on how peace is to be achieved. **Actors should always carefully consider whether a Nexus approach is suitable for any given context.**

The Nexus, at times, implies aligning some actions with priorities of states, large international institutions, donors and other key stakeholders, who do not always consider the wellbeing of communities to be a central priority. This can risk politicizing aid and thus compromise commitments to humanitarian principles.⁶ Nevertheless, there are ways of implementing a Nexus approach that reinforces protection, building complementarities between the various actors involved.

WeWorld GVC's Nexus Principles state the obligations we have to uphold when integrating a Nexus approach into the conduct of our work, highlighting the importance of community protection as central to collective outcomes formed from collaborative Nexus programming.⁷

¹Sida, Humanitarian Outlook and Sida's Humanitarian Response 2019, February 2019. See also: UNOCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2019, 4 December 2018.

²UNOCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, 4 December 2019.

³World Bank. Pathways for Peace, 2018.

⁴World Bank, Pathways for Peace, 2017. See Fearon, J.D. 2010. "Governance and Civil War Onset." Background Paper for World Development Report 2011, World Bank, Washington, DC. See also Humphreys, Macartan, and Ashutosh Varshney. 2003. "Violent Conflict and the Millennium Development Goals: Diagnosis and Recommendations." Prepared for the meeting of the Millennium Development Goals Poverty Task Force Workshop, Bangkok, June 2004.

⁵ Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, Promoting Conflict Sensitivity Among Donors Agencies – Policy Brief, April 2012. https://assets.worldvision.org.uk/files/3613/6854/5968/Donor_Conflict_Sensitivity_Policy_Brief.pdf

⁶The New Humanitarian, Searching for the nexus: Priorities, principles and politics, 10 October 2019.

⁷WeWorld-GVC, WeWorld-GVC Principles on the Humanitarian, Development & Peace Nexus, May 2020

What is WeWorld-GVC's Position on the Nexus?

“**Community Protection**” is the WeWorld-GVC standpoint. As a central focus, it allows us to gravitate the various elements that the Nexus encompasses; **localization, coordination, complementarity and flexibility**, around a key outcome we wish to achieve.

Localization entails seeking the active engagement of communities, national, regional and local authorities, civil society, and/or the private sector in order to ensure that interventions strengthen and support existing initiatives and ways of working, in view of achieving independence from aid.



Fig. 1. Definitions of WeWorld-GVC Nexus Principles

The principle of localisation also encompasses the need for engagement between communities and local authorities, to clearly define the former as duty-bearers and coordinate on strengthening local mechanisms.

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“Moreover, joint context analyses and integrated plans constitute the basis for **coordination** between actors, as well as **complementarity** and coherence between humanitarian and development actions. Combining resources to develop joint multi-annual, multi-sectoral plans together with communities allows for the access of various funding streams. Organizations should understand where their respective advantages lie, and ensure that there is not unnecessary overlap in the activities conducted, leading to an inefficient application of resources and community exhaustion.

Flexibility and longer timeframes in programming, when attached to existing funding mechanisms, can be fostered, starting from localized context analyses and operational plans. This allows the embedding of projects and programs, either humanitarian or developmental by nature, to be conducted by different actors within a programmatic approach that is unique and community-driven.

This approach, in WeWorld-GVC experience is possible through operationalizing the **ICRC Protection Egg Framework**,¹² which divides the sequencing of activities along a spectrum that determines their urgency and purpose, in full alignment with the duties assigned by international law instruments and covenants. Activities can be programmed together in a sequence; emergency humanitarian assistance provided in the short term, projects ensuring adequate living conditions and restoring dignity, and activities that have transformative outcomes that consolidate the various environmental, socio-economic, political, legal and cultural factors affecting the safety and dignity of a population. The model forms linkages between the sequencing of humanitarian and development work, allowing for seamless transitioning between projects in the short and long term.

“Organizations should understand where their respective advantages lie, and ensure that there is not unnecessary overlap in the activities conducted...”

¹² Caverzasio, S. G. (Ed.). Strengthening Protection in War: A Search for Professional Standards: Summary of Discussions Among Human Rights and Humanitarian Organizations. (2001). International Committee of the Red Cross, Central Tracing Agency and Protection Division..

What Should the Nexus Not Be for WeWorld-GVC?

The Nexus approach should not allow for compromise on humanitarian principles in favor of development or peace targets. In conflict-affected areas where Nexus approaches are employed, people's urgent needs have to be addressed independently from political and military interests. Therefore, humanitarian action should remain neutral, independent and impartial to ensure that the most vulnerable people are reached. The centrality of the Do No Harm principle is compelling in any intervention or programme implemented by the organization. Placing humanitarian principles at the core of a Nexus approach ensures that people in need of aid and protection are not deprived of it because of political dynamics.

In addition, the dignity and safety of individuals and communities must always be upheld in any Nexus approach, ensuring not only that immediate protection needs are met, but that members of a community can experience prolonged periods of stable and appropriate dignity and safety that they themselves can strive for under their own conditions.

“Placing humanitarian principles at the core of a Nexus approach ensures that people in need of aid and protection are not deprived of it because of political dynamics...”

How Does WeWorld-GVC Work Within a Nexus Approach so Far?

We World-GVC has always primed strategic actions directly addressing the root causes and driving factors of complex crises affecting communities in a variety of different contexts. The “Nexus” mentality has always been embedded in the actions of the organization, and specifically in designing humanitarian interventions with solid components of recovery and resilience-building, and development activities with defined mechanisms to address urgent needs or sudden emergencies, all geared towards the transfer of capacities to local stakeholders (Civil Society Organizations and local and national authorities).

Since 2014, WeWorld-GVC has been investing in studying new modalities and instruments to capitalize this natural modality of action into a global strategic approach.

The most recent and successful Nexus programmatic approach is applied in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) where WeWorld-GVC governs **an approach to consolidate an Integrated Protection Programming** in Consortia with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Action Against Hunger (AAH), Première Urgence Internationale (PUI) and ACTED. The programmatic approach (2014-Ongoing) contributed to fostering the employment of longer timeframes in programming (3 to 5 years) starting from localized context analyses and operational protection response plans. The comprehensive programmatic approach is meant to attract a multiplicity of projects, carried out by multiple actors, with diverse timeframes, drawing on different financial streams, both humanitarian and development-oriented. Moreover, the programmatic framework is characterised by a strong focus on the **localization** of actions, **community ownership** of the response, and **coordination** with relevant stakeholders including donors, UN agencies, INGOs, local civil society, local, regional and national authorities and communities. These aspects are achieved through the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the consolidation of evidence for policy and advocacy, the development of protection response plans, and yearly monitoring.

What is the WeWorld-GVC Policy Work on the Nexus?

The policy work of WeWorld-GVC on the Nexus is based on our programming in the field that brings together humanitarian and development activities within a framework that puts communities at the center of analyses and responses, ensures collaboration between multiple actors and allows for access to various funding mechanisms. We started developing guidelines and case studies based on an approach to Nexus programming to contribute to the international discussions on the topic.

In our policy work on the Nexus we focus on localization and coordination, intersectionality and people's agency. In our approach, the localization of responses includes placing right-holders at the center of strategic processes by meaningfully and actively involving them in the identification of needs, risks and causes for vulnerability, in decision-making and in the development of responses. Localization also involves connecting responses to territorial planning, strengthening the resilience of communities and authorities, and including risk mitigation strategies that are tailored to the context. Moreover, coordination entails involving relevant local, regional, national and international duty-bearers and aid organizations working in a given setting. Coordination also includes allowing the use of different financial mechanisms for facilitating the link between humanitarian action and development assistance.

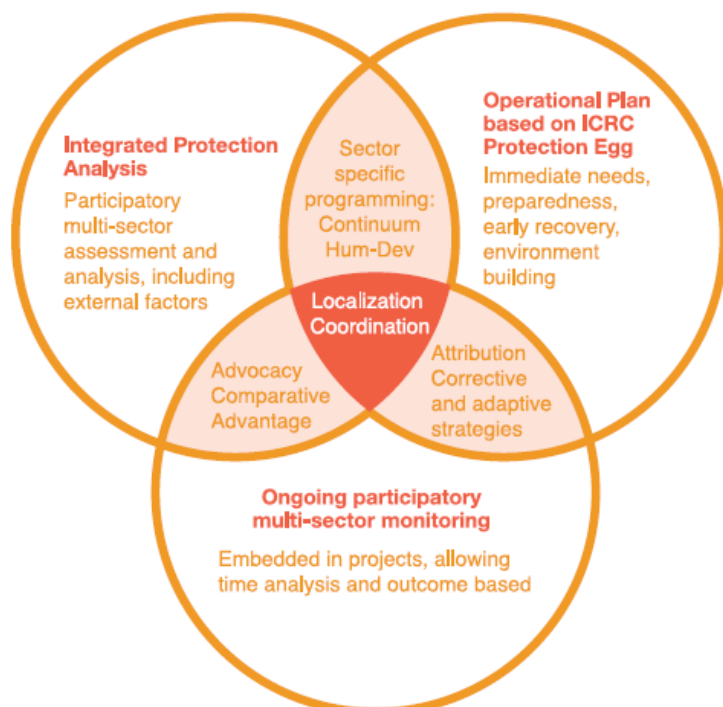


Fig. 2. WeWorld GVC Nexus Programmatic Approach in oPt

How can WeWorld-GVC Commit to the Nexus Going Forward?

As global humanitarian and development sectors respond to a rapidly evolving landscape where climate change, pandemics and mass displacement forces actors to adapt their approaches, the conditions are opportune to implement change within an organization. To ensure that the most vulnerable are having their immediate needs met, at the same time reinforcing local mechanisms to respond to complex crises, **organizations must work towards greater cohesion in their practices, with joint context analysis, programming and monitoring of activities. Localized responses and capacities must be reinforced, and communities empowered to demand that their rights are to be respected, by local and national authorities responsible for their wellbeing.** The Nexus remains a gradual process of change, from incremental progress occurring at high-level political forums, to practical adjustments at an operational level.

WeWorld-GVC will continue to strengthen its commitments to fulfilling the Nexus global strategic definition through an approach that emphasizes actionable operationalization in order to guarantee at all times communities' protection.

“The Nexus remains a gradual process of change, from incremental progress occurring at high-level political forums, to practical adjustments at an operational level...”

Nexus and COVID-19

The onset of the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has brought much of the world to a halt. Emergency crises that were ongoing prior to the outbreak continue to affect millions worldwide, and are further exacerbated by issues ranging from restricted access for international actors, to the 60% reduction of income for 1.3 billion informal workers worldwide during the first month of the pandemic. The impact is being felt strongest in developing countries by the world poorest, where healthcare capacities are overburdened, improvements in livelihoods are being reversed and where the risk looms large of remerging or escalating conflict.¹⁴ The multidimensional nature of the global COVID-19 pandemic requires a Nexus approach, as advocated recently by key institutions such as the FAO and DG DEVCO,¹⁵ in which **international actors need to coordinate effectively on interventions that do not only address acute issues concerning public health, but all facets of the crisis.** Global recovery can only occur if immediate responses are planned together with mid to long term solutions that increase preventive measures and better prepare communities for future crises.

Joint analysis and planning is far more important than before, to identify acute problems specific to an area and devise ways to adapt or scale up existing programmes to better address the negative consequences of the crisis. The pandemic has shown the impact of having flexible and adaptive planning adopted by in-country actors, even though its effectiveness is only as strong as how close the collaboration is with local responders and national governments. Financial mechanisms must adjust to immediate needs created by the crisis, without diverting from strategies addressing the root causes of problems, starting from responding to the most pressing humanitarian needs.

Countries continue to grapple with difficult choices regarding the easing of lockdown measures, the opening of borders and the revitalization of the economy. Aid organizations and donors need to implement the commitments made towards integrating a Nexus approach and respond effectively with joint actions, flexible and rapidly approved funding mechanisms, and properly localized approaches to increase the coping capacities of communities to be able to absorb and respond more effectively.

“Global recovery can only occur if immediate responses are planned together with mid to long term solutions that increase preventive measures and better prepare communities for future crises...”

¹³ ILO, ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Third edition, 29th April 2020.

¹⁴ UNOCHA, Global Humanitarian Response Plan Covid-19, March 2020.

¹⁵ FAO, FAO and European Commission: tackling COVID-19 together, <http://www.fao.org/brussels/news/detail/en/c/1274628/> 6th May, 2020.

¹⁶ ODI Development Initiatives, Looking at the coronavirus crisis through the nexus lens – what needs to be done, <https://devinit.org/blog/looking-at-the-coronavirus-crisis-through-the-nexus-lens-what-needs-to-be-done/> April, 2020.

¹⁷ IASC, Interim Key Messages – Flexible Funding for Humanitarian Response and Covid-19, March, 2020.