

THE DANISH APPROACH TO NEXUS – DOES THE ‘DANISH MODEL’ TO OPERATIONALISING NEXUS OFFER A UNIQUE APPROACH?

THE ISSUE

THE EU MEMBER STATES’ IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS

A recent evaluation was commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Danish support to strengthening civil society in the global south and working across the humanitarian, development, peace (HDP) nexus¹. The document highlights that flexible funding modalities, focus on quality partnerships with local actors, and working in the ‘peace’ component of the nexus are key factors for Danish NGOs effectively operationalising the HDP nexus approach.

As nexus is becoming the new norm, many humanitarian agencies and donors are still grappling with translating the concept into practice. Covid-19 has highlighted the important role of local leadership, support to front-line workers and quality funding as key enablers of the HDP-nexus. In a fast-changing environment increasingly marked by *multicausal* drivers of crisis, it is paramount to integrate long-term and holistic solutions from the onset of crisis, and to strengthen collaboration and complementarity between diverse actors.

Danish civil society organisations (CSOs) bring considerable knowledge and expertise to the operationalisation of nexus approaches. According to the evaluation commissioned by the Danish MFA, around a third of Danish CSOs’ total (including humanitarian and development) project portfolio includes triple nexus programming. Most of the Danish organisations have long-term presence in project locations and demonstrate a deep understanding of local context and capacities. As NGOs spanning the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding spectrum, DanChurchAid and Danish Refugee Council are well positioned to address complex crisis and development challenges in fragile contexts with comprehensive and coherent solutions. However, doing so requires flexible and long-term funding, support to local leadership and quality partnerships, people-centred and conflict-sensitive approaches, and investment in joint capacity strengthening of both local and international actors.

FUNDING MODALITIES FOR NEXUS

The OECD DAC peer review of the Danish government highlights that Denmark has been a pioneer in incorporating a nexus approach across its development cooperation and humanitarian assistance long before the

nexus guidelines were developed by OECD DAC. By linking development and humanitarian streams into a single joint strategy and opening for flexible funding modalities across the HDP-nexus, Danish NGOs have clear incentives to integrate innovative and sustainable solutions into their humanitarian programming. This modality has become even more flexible with the new 2022-2025 Danish MFA strategic partnership framework which merges humanitarian and development funding streams into one instrument.²

MAINSTREAM CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AND INVEST IN BOTTOM-UP PEACEBUILDING

The new Danish cooperation policy *The World We Share* emphasises peacebuilding and conflict prevention in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. This opens for stronger support to NGOs and local actors, notably faith actors, youth and women that are operating in the peace component of the nexus. However, as the OECD-DAC peer review highlights, the Danish government’s nexus approach needs to better implement the peace component of the HDP nexus. Danish policy so far has been nearly exclusively on stabilisation, top-down and securitised approaches with the risk of blurring of lines between humanitarian aid and security policy. In its ambition to span the HDP nexus, the Danish government will have to carefully manage the blurring of lines and move away from a narrow ‘stabilisation’ concept to a broader ‘peace’ vision with emphasis on locally driven, bottom-up peacebuilding efforts, and mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity into humanitarian and development pillars.³

“In its ambition to span the HDP nexus, the Danish government will have to carefully manage the blurring of lines and move away from a narrow ‘stabilisation’ concept to a broader ‘peace’ vision with emphasis on locally driven, bottom-up peacebuilding efforts, and mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity into humanitarian and development pillars.”

1. The thematic evaluations on strengthening civil society in the global south and on the HDP nexus commissioned by the Danish MFA and conducted by Intrac and Nordic Consulting Group are not yet published
2. The Danish government’s flexible funding is also reflected in its commitment to the Grand Bargain where 91% of the Danish government’s humanitarian funding is reported as flexible (The Grand Bargain at five years, HPG commissioned, June 2021)
3. Triple nexus and the role of local actors in South Sudan, DanChurchAid/ACT Alliance, 2019

➤ Sudan Case Study, DCA

In response to the humanitarian crisis in South Kordofan and Blue Nile ('the two areas'), Sudan from 2011-2021, a unique collaboration between local civil society actors, international NGOs, and donors (including DCA & the Danish MFA) was established giving priority to a locally led but internationally supported humanitarian programme. In 2021, more than 500,000 people were supported with activities spanning humanitarian coordination, logistics, livelihood interventions, basic health and education services, women led-protection, including gender-based violence, COVID-19 awareness, mine risk education and locally led conflict transformation. The activities were implemented by local NGOs, community-based organisations and volunteer community groups with a strong female participation. A deep understanding of the context played an instrumental role. With ongoing support from international humanitarian actors, the local actors were able to effectively align humanitarian, peace and development efforts based on local needs and capacities available. More than 30 peace committees have been supported throughout the two areas reaching across front lines and tribal divisions. Such peace activities have markedly reduced conflict and improved access, protection and saved lives. As a result of the programme, several thousand individuals have been involved in local level peace work such as inter-tribal conferences, cross frontline dialogue over issues relating to livestock raiding, grazing, water and other resources. Access to markets, livelihoods and veterinary support have enabled farmers and livestock herders to uphold a reduced but nevertheless crucial food production throughout the crisis.

Throughout the period and with funding from the Danish MFA, DCA has played the facilitator role, provided expertise, training, equipment, hands-on mentoring and guidance across all relevant aspects of the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus. The flexibility and collaborative efforts by donors have helped DCA to be a constructive, loyal, and flexible intermediary towards the local partners. The response has been extremely cost-effective and has successfully spanned the entire HDP nexus allowing local actors to lead and practice a well-rooted tradition of self-reliance and social cohesion.



Men - peace singers Nuba 2016.



Woman peace singers Nuba 2016
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STRENGTHEN NATIONAL AND LOCAL CAPACITIES

In *the World We Share* the Danish government stresses local leadership and partnerships with local actors as key to prevent conflicts and strengthening resilience. For Danish NGOs this is translated into long-term partnerships and engagement with local actors, mutual capacity strengthening, a strong practice around joint

analysis, and adaptative and flexible ways of working together founded on mutual trust and respect. This helps advancing locally led peacebuilding efforts and mobilise communities, government, local armed actors, and local authorities around joint solutions to tackle root causes of conflict.⁴ This places partnerships and localisation approaches as central pillars of Danish NGO's HDP nexus programming.

4. Triple nexus and the role of local actors in South Sudan, DanChurchAid/ACT Alliance, 2019

In summary, Denmark's approach to nexus supports a broad range of local and global actors to strengthen collective impact. It paves the way for a nexus approach that puts people affected by crisis at the centre and encourages Danish NGOs to maximise their joint efforts across the HDP nexus, including working in the peace component. By committing to empowering local (HD&P) actors in protracted conflict and fragile contexts, investing in bottom-up, local peacebuilding and establishing

funding modalities that are both flexible and multi-year, DanChurchAid and Danish Refugee Council believe that the Danish nexus approach offers an effective model for a better 'grounding' of the HDP nexus and encourages more donors to follow.

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➤ Somalia Case Study, DRC



The Durable Solutions Program in Somalia © Danish Refugee Council

The Durable Solutions Program in Somalia implemented by Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Tetra-Tech and the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) aims to benefit communities in return and displacement affected areas with increased stability, livelihood opportunities, social solidarity, as well as trust in service delivery and protection by the different levels of governance. The program engages both traditional and emerging development and humanitarian actors across different sectors.

The final evaluation found that the programme contributed to durable solutions and sustained (re) integration/return of IDPs and returnee communities. Working across the HDP nexus, the programme reached 257,642 beneficiaries through a multisectoral and multi-agency response.^[1] Results ranged from enhanced *safety and security for displacement affected communities*, by support to dialogue and cooperation forums amongst community members and local police, mine awareness sessions etc. (79% of IDPs felt safe and secure), to improved access to safe water through rehabilitation and construction of water supply points and networks (71% obtained drinking water from safe sources). The programme also focused on *increased Government ownership and involvement in facilitating durable solutions*. The secondment of staff to the Somalia Ministry of Planning^[2] and training of policy makers etc., resulted in a [National Durable Solutions Strategy](#) and the establishment of a durable solutions coordination unit within the Government.

DRC's long-standing presence in the areas and quality of relationships with a wide selection of local and national stakeholders enabled strong multi-stakeholder coordination at national and district levels. Close engagement with the Government was key to guarantee impact and sustainability in the solutions processes. The focus on adopting innovative approaches, including private sector partnerships and use of new and emerging technologies, led to higher efficiency and improved results.

[1] Further information on [Advancing multi-stakeholder engagement to sustain solutions](#) on the ReDSS website

[2] MOPIED - Somalia Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development