

# OPERATIONALISATION OF THE TRIPLE NEXUS: THE ITALIAN INITIATIVE TO ENGAGE WITH INGOS' PERSPECTIVES

## THE ISSUE

### THE EU MEMBER STATES' IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS



Distribution of triage PPE kits at Al Jadeed HCF, Libya - © Anchor Colors - Ali Maouhob

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The discussions following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit brought to the development of a comprehensive and evolving policy framework of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus, in alignment with the Grand Bargain commitments. Since 2016, the current understanding of the HDP Nexus draws upon international policy dialogues, frameworks recommendations and commitments. Among others: the *OECD DAC recommendation on the HDP Nexus*, the *UNHCR Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*, the *UN New Way of Working*, the *EU Council conclusions on the integrated approach to external conflicts and crises and on the operationalisation of the humanitarian-development nexus*.

Governments subscribing to these recommendations and commitments are therefore facing a demanding endeavour of aligning with the principles of the HDP Nexus, and improving their analysis, programming, and financing modalities, in order to better address both the urgent/rising humanitarian needs and the root causes of conflicts and fragility.

In early 2019, Italy established a dedicated Working Group (WG) to elaborate the *Strategic Guidelines on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus* (HDP Guidelines), composed of representatives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the University system and different networks of Italian INGOs, namely LINK 2007, CINI and AOI.

The finalisation of the HDP *Guidelines* by the WG is due for December 2021. The *HDP Guidelines* will help strengthen the coherence and complementarity of the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities undertaken by the Italian Cooperation. They will contribute to improve the existing programming and financing modalities, in order to better reflect the Nexus approach in a couple of pilot countries. The WG is also discussing the elaboration of potential follow-up *Operational Guidelines*, building on the pilots and aiming to set forth a blueprint for the implementation of Italian development cooperation's initiatives in accordance with the *HDP Guidelines*.

## CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATIVE EXCHANGE TO OPERATIONALISE THE HDP NEXUS.

The Nexus is an open-ended process, with many international actors seeking ways to push the agenda forward, both from an operational and a global policy perspective. There is no agreed blueprint for transforming the way international assistance operates in response to complex and protracted crises; rather it is up to each actor to improve the existing modalities, share best practices and advocate for much-needed change, whether locally or at global level.

We World, representing LINK 2007 in the WG, welcomed the group's work, since the HDP Nexus requires a plurality of different approaches to progress. From We World's perspective, active exchanges among members of the WG have helped in providing proper consideration to a bottom-up approach, grounded in joint and thorough evidence-based analysis, and looking at the calls for change made at the World Humanitarian Summit.

That said, We World, in resonance with other INGOs, has committed to pursuing practical ways forward on the HDP Nexus, agreeing on the need to close the gap between the three pillars, to go beyond sector-specific programs and foster greater collaboration and coherence between different actors. Operationally, this requires best-placed

actors to intervene in a specific context, in light of their comparative advantages. Consistent with the OECD DAC Recommendation, donors also are called on to promote and support programmes that address the HDP Nexus approach and the need for a greater localisation of responses.

Since there is not yet a blueprint of the HDP Nexus agreed at global level, the WG has first worked to understand the role a national development cooperation system should have (i.e. should the Italian cooperation focus on the internal coherence and complementarity of the three pillars, or consider whether to frame the *HDP Guidelines* in multi-stakeholders' strategies or programmes in a particular context?). This consideration alone has been a long-lasting challenge for the WG and has been addressed thanks to the variety of its members' perspectives.

This challenge faced by the WG is actually widespread and potentially hindering the HDP Nexus to bring real change towards more effective coherence and complementarity of actions, abiding by humanitarian principles. In this regard, having the presence of INGO representatives, the University system, AICS and the Italian MoFA at the same table has helped narrow the debate around specific components and concepts necessary to adhere to HDP Nexus principles.

The operational understanding of INGOs, the research and innovation expertise of universities, together with the perspective of the Italian MoFA and AICS, helped focus the HDP Nexus component of *Joint Analysis*.

The same considerations have been made with HDP Nexus concepts, like *joined-up programming and peace*, for which there are not yet common approaches generally accepted. As a result, both components are being tackled in the *HDP Guidelines* in a way to address the root causes and drivers of fragility, while providing a certain level of mutual accountability between the actors of the Italian Cooperation.

The WG recognised that the Nexus discipline continues to evolve, and thus the *HDP Guidelines* will require future revisions, together with a general commitment to learn from solutions and best practices identified at global and regional level, starting from the EU.

This commitment reflects the identified need for more and better-defined initiatives to be taken to ensure the complementarity of actions and to push the Grand Bargain agenda forward with clear examples of an effective and concrete operationalisation of the Nexus.

## ➤ Enhancing new ways to operationalise collective outcomes by engaging multiple perspectives.

The collaboration with the Italian Working Group has been helping We World better understand our role as an INGO in providing meaningful inputs to operationalise the HDP Nexus. For example, as a member of the Nexus Working Group in Libya led by the World Food Programme (WFP), we identified our potential position to test some of the modalities under discussion within the Italian Working Group to elaborate the *HDP Guidelines*.

Together with the Social Change School (SCS), and in coordination with donors and other actors, we put a Context Analysis and Mapping Matrix into practice, drawing upon elements of analysis discussed in the framework of the *HDP Guidelines*. The Matrix is benchmarked to existing working standards and includes specific dimensions of analysis, meant to provide a thorough profile of the context to guide HDP Nexus operational strategies.

The application of the Matrix helped We World advance the thinking - together with AICS and other members - of the Nexus Working Group in Libya, as well as gather inputs to enrich the discussion on the Italian *HDP Guidelines*. It helped consider what it means to apply *Collective Outcomes* and how to move from outcomes to operational programming. In the specific case of Libya, We World has been working on intermediate outcomes through a clustering analysis of problems in Southern Libya, in the attempt to bridge the operational gap between ongoing actions in the region with the *Collective Outcomes* identified.

This case displays once again the benefit of our joint dialogue with the members of the Italian Working Group, and how the coherence with the HDP Nexus starts from accepting the need to incorporate other actors' perspectives in our learning and experience.

In this regard, what We World considers fundamental is the centrality of those directly affected by protracted crises, in the decision-making processes. The affected communities have often the means to best address the threats and risks they face, and they could play the role of agents for change in their own environments. Localised responses continue to operate externally to the humanitarian-development sectors and remain underfunded, even in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw local actors immediately mobilised to address exacerbated needs. This is what the localisation of action implies.

With a greater support provided to local infrastructures that address the long-standing risks communities face, involving those ultimately responsible for upholding their rights to a safe and dignified life, the cycle of never-ending conflicts and crises can be reversed with people having greater autonomy in making informed decisions directly impacting their lives.

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