

WORKING IN THE TRIPLE NEXUS – A REFLECTION FROM SWEDEN

THE ISSUE

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



Team at a Completed Water Yard - ©: Paul Hayes (IAS Niger)

Reflections on the Swedish government position on the Triple Nexus in this article have been based on the Government of Sweden's Strategy for Sustainable Peace 2017 – 2022, Sida's Guidance Note on the Triple Nexus, and an interaction with a key contact person at Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency).

The Sida strategy highlighted some key words like speed, flexibility, and calculated risk-taking as being crucial for the effective contribution by actors in the prevention of armed conflict, strengthening conflict management and peacebuilding. This is quite impressive and, as an encouraging part of the process there have been deliberate steps taken by the implementers of the strategy to see this being developed further. Efforts have been made to increase the internal collaboration between the respective desks focussing on humanitarian, development and peace actions.

In Sida's guidance note there is a reflection on the small "p" and the big "P" when referring to peace⁸. Listening to CSOs, one realises that a lot is already happening around the "p" and it seemed strange to some that it would still cause so much confusion. It was indicated

by Sida that the guidance note is considered as one step to encourage better coordination within Sida, but also a political signal. At the same time there is an acknowledgement that while coordination is big both internally and among implementing actors, it requires resources and active engagement by Sida colleagues in the countries. Giving an example of an effective nexus approach, reference was to the work in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where Sweden is leading the Nexus donor group and has one full-time staff focusing only on this. Sida also indicated that the Swedish Foreign Ministry and political secretaries in the embassies mostly focus on the big "P". This focus is largely through the political engagement with actors involved in peace keeping, including funding of (and participation in) UN peace-keeping missions. Furthermore, Sida states that local organisations are key in the realisation of the triple nexus approaches and emphasises the need of building strong partnerships.

FUNDING SILOS

Several actors, both from the donor side and the CSO side have observed that there is continued categorisation

8. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/humanitarian-development-collaboration/issue-paper-exploring-peace-within-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-hdpcn>

of funding channels as “humanitarian”, “development”, etc. By the nature of the guiding principles for these different funding mechanisms, limitations and restrictions emerge when the nexus question comes up. This is a discussion that has taken place for quite a while now, and it is necessary to get serious about the way forward in resolving the “silos”.

A question related to the funding silos is whether donors are willing to broaden the perspective on the fact that many CSOs are multi-mandate and recognise that there is a possibility of an actor to comprehensively work with triple nexus approach. Another topic that keeps popping up is that of collaboration and how to improve it, as many actors have already collaborated on the ground in programming, sometimes through the cluster coordination mechanism, and in different networking setups.

Discussions in various CSO networks in Sweden have also tried to capture the sentiments and practices of network members when it comes to the triple nexus. Both members of the Swedish Network for Humanitarian Actors (SNHA) and the Swedish Network for Resilience have expressed their engagement in nexus approaches in one form or another. It has been expressed that the peace factor is crucial in implementing any activities, to the effect that even though an organisation might not be termed as being a “peace actor”, the applications of principles like the “Do No Harm”, and deliberate efforts to ensure that social cohesion is considered in project design cannot be ignored. Several CSOs contacted during the writing of this article⁸ have operations in some of the conflict-prone countries of the world, like Yemen, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, etc.

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LÄKARMISSIONEN’S (LM INTERNATIONAL) WAY OF WORKING

LM International is one of those multi-mandate organisations. In both our development and humanitarian programming, our teams constantly operate with a strong conflict sensitivity approach. With operations in some of the most conflict-prone areas, conflict sensitivity is not an option in programming, but a necessity for successful implementation. To strengthen the work around nexus approaches, a new Unit for Humanitarian Affairs and Triple Nexus has recently been established under the International Programme Department.

SHARING GOOD PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The operationalisation of the Triple Nexus approach needs constant learning by both implementing organisations and donors. Some of the key responses on good practices and recommendations captured during the writing of this article are as follows:

- There is a need to search for common ground;
- Complementarity is key in considering collaborations;
- There is a need to ensure good analyses that capture and tackle underlying risks and vulnerabilities;
- CSOs are seeking for clarity on funding mechanisms that would strengthen their work with the “small p” with an understanding from donors that their approach to the Triple Nexus is valid and worth investing in extensively;
- Both donors and major international organisations need to recognise the important role of “smaller” CSOs and put in place systems that will ensure that these are not victimised by the confusion in the terminology and the lack of clarity in funding mechanisms.

Swedish CSOs continue to engage in discussions to clarify their positions and operationalisation of the Triple Nexus.

8. Plan International Sweden, ADRA Sweden, and PMU were directly consulted for this article and the ideas shared by the Swedish Network for Humanitarian Actors and the Swedish Network for Resilience are also reflected in the article

> Real Action with Nexus approaches

1. Uganda

Following the 2013 war in South Sudan, notable among the refugees arriving in Uganda was that they expressed the desire to think long term in the country. Stepping in as a humanitarian responder, we realised we needed to immediately think long term and designed our humanitarian projects with significant “development” considerations, including aspects like VSLAs (**Village Savings and Loans Associations**) in the project planning as we assessed the needs. We also noted that there was a risk of conflict in the settlement among the different ethnic groups.

Projects were designed to ensure that peace building, development and humanitarian activities were implemented concurrently. It was encouraging to have Sida supporting our approach, although it was not “traditionally” humanitarian. This approach, implemented over a period of three years, led to significant transformation and built resilient refugees’ communities. This is one of the examples where an implementing agency can be fully multi-mandated. Collaboration took place to build on specific competencies in a complementary manner. Our approach was not without some challenges in the design stages, as we needed to justify to the donor that this approach should be funded from the humanitarian pot since it had a broader perspective.

2. Niger

The refugee and internal displacement crisis in the Diffa region of Niger saw many responders stepping in to support the affected communities. From our thematic core competence of WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene), using an Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) approach, we became one of the key responders in the crisis. With adherence to the Do No Harm principle, we were able to detect potential trouble when host communities were not benefitting from the ongoing humanitarian response. We therefore factored the host populations in subsequent project planning, thereby ensuring that the humanitarian response would not initiate a conflict. Our approach to the provision of potable water in humanitarian situations has always ensured long-term sustainability, effected by the establishment of solar-powered water systems after drilling successful high-yield boreholes. This, coupled with the training of community water management committees and the engagement of designated government departments and officers, is a long-term development approach within the humanitarian response. We are thankful to donors like Sida and ECHO who trusted our approach in this humanitarian response and enabled us to effectively work in the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, but also actively engage within the peace pillar through our community engagement.

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