Large numbers of people are displaced by drought in the Horn, East and Central Africa every year. Here, a woman in an IDP camp collects water. Somaliland, August 2018. Photo: Dustin Barter/Oxfam.

# THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS

## What does it mean for multi-mandated organizations?

**Oxfam Discussion Papers**

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# CONTENTS

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conflicts are increasingly protracted; climate-related shocks are more intense and frequent. Both contribute to a cycle of vulnerability. Sustainable development and durable solutions to displacement are not possible without peace. Humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding are not serial processes: they are all needed at the same time.

To reflect this understanding, the concept of a 'humanitarian-development nexus', or a 'humanitarian-development-peace nexus' has developed. It focuses on the work needed to coherently address people's vulnerability before, during and after crises. It challenges the status quo of the aid system, which is overstretched and operates with little coordination between project-based development and humanitarian interventions, resulting in it not effectively meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people.[1]

The idea is not new. The nexus is a continuation of long-running efforts in the humanitarian and development fields, such as 'disaster risk reduction' (DRR); 'linking relief rehabilitation and development' (LRRD); the 'resilience agenda'; and the embedding of conflict sensitivity across responses.

Unlike previous efforts, however, the nexus dialogue goes beyond a programmatic or conceptual approach. It relates to ongoing structural shifts across the aid system that are changing how aid is planned and financed. These will have profound implications for what we do, how we do it and with whom we do it. For example, the UN and the World Bank set up the New Way of Working (NWoW) to deliver the nexus approach.[2] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has made the nexus a priority and members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) are showing some signs of changing how they fund programmes. It also has strong relevance to the Grand Bargain[3] and the UN Development System Reform (UNDS Reform). All UN agencies and many donors and multi-mandated NGOs are supportive of the approach.[4] The broader changes to the system, and to some extent the way in which donors deliver funding, indicate that the nexus framework is more likely than previous initiatives to impact how aid is coordinated, funded and delivered.

The emphasis on a more coherent approach offers many opportunities. Meeting immediate needs at the same time as ensuring longer-term investment addressing the systemic causes of conflict and vulnerability – such as poverty, inequality and the lack of functioning accountability systems – has a better chance of reducing the impact of cyclical or recurrent shocks and stresses, and supporting the peace that is essential for development to be sustainable. The implementation of a nexus approach could provide a substantial opportunity to enhance gender justice, including through long-term support to women's rights organizations and ensuring that women's rights are integral to both immediate responses and longer-term outcomes. Similarly, the potential emphasis on local leadership and the development of national and local systems to accountably provide essential social services offers the opportunity for more sustainable, appropriate and transformative responses. The current dialogue includes a welcome emphasis on early warning, early action and prevention.

*Gender is the single biggest determinant of a person's agency in and out of crisis. However, in 2016–17, only 4% of OECD DAC members' funding was for dedicated programmes with principle objectives related to gender equality or women's empowerment. Some 62% of all aid was gender-blind.[5]*

However, along with such opportunities, aid agencies need to be aware of potential challenges. Where long-term development goals are prioritized across the whole system, there is a risk that immediate humanitarian needs do not receive adequate responses. While humanitarian action always takes place within a political context and may often be flawed,[6] where the state is party to a conflict and/or unable or unwilling to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people, an increased emphasis on the role of state-led institutions, (which may come about because development programming often works more intentionally with national and local authorities), risks squeezing out the acceptance and delivery of independent and impartial assistance. There is also potentially greater space for donor agendas to politicize humanitarian interventions.

On the other hand, prioritizing humanitarian assistance across the response (as happens in many protracted and cyclical crises) risks failing to strengthen local systems to accountably provide essential social services, and prevent and prepare for future crises. It can also lead to ignoring the systemic causes of conflict and vulnerability, including poverty, inequality and the lack of functioning democratic systems. It can potentially even weaken existing systems by bypassing them. Similarly, wherever conflict sensitivity is not prioritized, there is a risk of exacerbating social tensions and doing harm. There is currently little consensus on what the integration of peace in programmes is, nor how it should be achieved. Oxfam believes peace should be framed as a bottom-up, community-based approach that addresses root causes ('positive peace'), rather than being framed in terms of security ('negative peace').

Achieving the right mix of humanitarian, development and peace approaches, and how they are integrated, is critical. A nexus approach should never be a reason not to deliver timely humanitarian assistance where needed, nor a reason to scale back development assistance.

Recognizing and responding to these changing contexts has become the new norm for many multi-mandated organizations, which are transforming themselves alongside the wider aid system. For Oxfam, the nexus approach has similarities to, but goes beyond, its long-standing One Programme Approach, which aims to combine humanitarian and development programmes with campaigning for structural change. It also has much in common with Oxfam's *Framework for Resilient Development*,[7] which is designed to enhance people's absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities to manage, navigate and sustain change in complex systems. However, truly delivering a humanitarian-development-peace ('triple') nexus approach goes beyond these frameworks as they currently stand. It will involve rethinking finance mechanisms, ways of working, the expertise needed and reflection on how we set standards and define success. Notably, more deliberate and consistent integration of conflict sensitivity and enhancing local capacities for peace is needed.

Some specific lessons identified through the experience of Oxfam's ongoing programmes include:

- the need for holistic, integrated contextual analyses that still ensure there is space for stand-alone, needs-based humanitarian assessments;

- long-term strategies that support systemic transformation across long-term cycles, particularly in fragile contexts; and

- investment in adaptive management.

These should allow programmes to remain agile and responsive to changes in context and enable capacity-sharing and collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors that helps implementers to step out of their comfort zones. Furthermore, using holistic analysis to inform cross-disciplinary indicators of success would incentivize work between humanitarian and development staff. Therefore, it is important to note that the 'how' is as important as the 'what' – when it comes to successfully implementing nexus approaches.

In order to develop a nexus approach, colleagues must be brought together, and new behaviours learned. This will require consensus-building, brokering and building new partnerships; navigating and communicating complex ideas; using systems thinking; facilitating open dialogues; and co-creating ideas. Investment is needed to develop joint tools, analysis and language, and to ensure that the views of people affected by crises are integrated at every step, and local leadership comes to the fore. All of this will require flexible funding instruments and changes in programme management structures. The approach also requires humility, mutual respect and compromise. A consistent, high-level, cross-departmental conversation and space for co-creation is needed to ensure that the value of each sector is recognized and learning can happen. While leadership is critical, the nexus cannot 'belong' to any one discipline – an ongoing conversation on the basis of complementarity and equality is essential.

This cannot be a top-down instrumental shift that does not reflect and respond to the contexts in which it is being applied. Therefore, as new systems are developed and embedded and learning is explored, it is critical that policy and practice are informed by country-level dialogues. Multi-mandated organizations will need to honestly assess the likely tensions between a focus on joined-up transformational approaches and their appetite for responding quickly at scale and taking risks. This will include determining the right balance between good relationships with governments and the obligation to address vulnerable people's rights in the face of inequality, discrimination and human rights abuses.

The nexus has the potential to make aid more effective and efficient. It also provides a good opportunity to work with all stakeholders towards a common goal. Efforts to put people's experience at the centre, build local capacities and ensure a holistic response to current needs and root causes are welcome. However, careful attention to learning lessons, adapting and ensuring that vulnerable people's rights are front and centre will be needed if the nexus is to truly deliver.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The increasingly protracted and recurrent nature of crises means that there is a greater range of overlapping and compounding needs and rising uncertainty within contexts. There is a greater urgency to respond quickly, and also to address the inequalities that put certain groups at particular and long-term risk, e.g. marginalized communities, women and youth. A more joined-up approach would offer opportunities to respond more effectively and holistically to people's needs. To reflect this understanding, the concept of a 'humanitarian-development nexus', or a 'humanitarian-development-peace nexus' has developed. The nexus approach stems in part from a recognition that emergency needs (and the identities of those most affected) are often symptoms of underlying issues that reflect broader inequalities and injustices. The nexus represents an opportunity to engage with these root causes and recognize that humanitarian crises can be caused and/or heightened by poor development policies and a lack of inclusive and appropriate development investment. Thus, meeting life-saving needs at the same time as ensuring longer-term investment addressing the systemic causes of conflict and vulnerability has a better chance of reducing the impact of cyclical or recurrent shocks and stresses, and supporting the peace that is essential for development to be sustainable.

*'The… focus should be on… working collaboratively and in complementarity across institutional boundaries on the basis of comparative advantages of each community of actors while fully respecting humanitarian principles, and seizing synergies to achieve the SDGs.'*
EU Council Conclusions, '*Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus*'[8]

The idea is not new. The nexus is a continuation of long-running efforts in the humanitarian and development fields, such as 'disaster risk reduction' (DRR); 'linking relief rehabilitation and development' (LRRD); the 'resilience agenda'; and the embedding of conflict sensitivity across responses. Unlike previous efforts, however, the nexus dialogue goes beyond a programmatic or conceptual approach. It relates to ongoing structural shifts across the aid system that are changing how aid is planned and financed. These will have profound implications for what we do, how we do it and with whom we do it. Along with the opportunities, Oxfam and other aid agencies need to be aware of the potential challenges with a nexus approach. Determining the right mix between humanitarian, development and peace pillars, and the way in which they are integrated, is critical.

However, it is clear that the move towards a humanitarian-development-peace nexus has profound implications not just for what organizations do, but how and with whom they do it.

This paper outlines some issues related to the nexus for organizations with multiple mandates, e.g. working on both development and humanitarian work. Its primary purpose is to bring together ideas from within Oxfam, starting to learn from practice and contribute to debate in the sector. Many of the conflicting perspectives around the nexus are mirrored within Oxfam. These need to be acknowledged and considered before substantive progress can be made. As such, this paper is a first step towards setting out these different perspectives and building common ground.

The paper is structured as follows:

- Section 2 reviews what is new in nexus approaches, including its emphasis on peace.

- Section 3 maps the associated shifts in aid financing, how aid architecture will be reshaped, and related strategies for key stakeholders.

- Section 4 draws on emerging thinking about how programmes work, shares examples of Oxfam's current work and highlights several overarching lessons learned.

- Section 5 suggests how organizations like Oxfam need to adapt, embrace change and be cautious to remain fit for purpose, and examines some of the resulting opportunities and challenges associated with the nexus approach.

- Finally, section 6 identifies some of the outstanding questions and issues that need to be considered.

# TERMINOLOGY

A 'nexus approach', 'nexus programming' or 'the nexus' is understood in this paper as an approach or framework that takes into account both the immediate and long-term needs of affected populations, and enhances opportunities for peace. Other understandings of the nexus go further still, to include a full range of diplomatic and security measures.

As explored above, the concept builds on and expands experience working on DRR, resilience and fragility. It has synergies with early warning and early-action interventions, and builds on programmes that link humanitarian intervention with recovery and long-term sustainable development agendas. It has many complementarities with current resilience thinking, which seeks to take a systems approach to understanding the risks people face, and the adaptive and transformative capacities that they need to cope today and in the future. It also builds on work embedding conflict-sensitive approaches and addressing the drivers of fragility and conflict.

The distinct technical and structural changes required by a true nexus approach – including a greater emphasis on local leadership, linking policy and practice, and embedding a transformative approach to gender justice before, during and after crises – go beyond current measures.

Ultimately, a nexus approach and the associated NWoW should transform financing mechanisms, planning processes, technical thinking, implementation models and campaigning practices. Making this happen will require technical, business support, policy, funding and management teams to unite around a joint vision and pool expertise as equals. It will also need strong leadership.

In its focus on putting affected people at the centre, prioritizing local knowledge and capacities, and – where possible and appropriate – working with local and national authorities, the nexus aligns with the localization agenda. However, the nexus is a way of approaching aid, while the localization agenda is about how it should be delivered.

For Oxfam, the central role of development aid is to support the citizen-state compact, which sits at the centre of the relationships and institutions in a country

and is necessary to drive development progress. The role of civil society is integral to this, and civic and civil society space is a prerequisite for a positive and productive citizen-state relationship. Accountability for the achievement of the SDGs lies with governments, which have the primary responsibility for making the investments necessary for all their citizens to achieve the SDGs and leave no one behind.[9] Furthermore, Oxfam considers that all development actors (including donors, partner countries, civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector and affected people) must comply with development effectiveness commitments, including on democratic country ownership, transparency, accountability and inclusivity, and focus on results, as per the Busan Partnership Agreement.[10] This includes ensuring that unexpected shocks do not undermine gains made by long-term programmes. At the same time, Oxfam holds that humanitarian aid should minimize and relieve the suffering of people affected by crises, save lives, maintain human dignity and increase community resilience for future disasters, wherever it is needed. It should be based on humanitarian principles.[11]

# 2 WHAT IS NEW WITH THE NEXUS?

## CHANGING THE SYSTEM TO FIT PEOPLE'S REALITIES

In the past 10 years, the number of conflicts and conflict-related deaths around the world have risen sharply.[12] Conflict has become more protracted[13] and displacement more common. The total number of people displaced rose from 43.7 million in 2010[14] to 68.5 million by the end of 2017.[15] Some 95% of displaced people live in the global South.[16] In 2018, 2 billion people were living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.[17] By 2035 it is predicted that this will be the case for 85% of the world's extremely poor people.[18] Conflict is currently driving 80% of humanitarian need.[19]

At the same time, climate-related shocks are becoming more intense and more frequent; for example, drought in the Sahel is now more regular than in the past. Economic losses due to natural catastrophes in 2017 were 93% higher than the 2000–16 average, underlining that both the immediate severity of crises and the risk to development are escalating. The increased risk of extreme weather events is being driven by irreversible climate change trends following 41 consecutive years of above-average global land and sea surface temperatures.[20]

On top of extreme weather and conflict-related shocks and stresses, people also experience human-induced injustices that restrict their rights, freedoms and development opportunities. Issues such as gender inequality, discrimination, economic inequality, political and economic instabilities, elite capture of resources, forced migration and rapid unplanned urbanization also shape vulnerabilities before, during and after specific acute events.

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**Box 1: Oxfam's working definition of 'fragility'**

Oxfam uses the term 'fragile and conflict-affected contexts' recognizing that fragility and conflict go beyond borders and can apply to a specific geographic area within a state.

The term 'fragility' goes beyond situations of violence and conflict. Fragility represents the many characteristics a context needs to progress, withstand shocks and not relapse into violence. These dimensions include respect for human rights and gender equality, social inclusion, active civil society and free media, inclusive politics and institutions, justice and rule of law, geo-political dynamics, inclusive economics, environmental changes and factors related to conflict and security.

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Climate- and conflict-related risks often overlap or exacerbate each other, resulting in complex needs. For example, in areas of the Sahel, climate-related shocks have pushed pastoralists, who often have little power within state structures, to migrate earlier and for longer periods. This, combined with the lack of conflict resolution mechanisms, is fuelling local-level conflicts over key natural resources that increasingly result in violence.

These trends have (re-)exposed the link between people's immediate needs and pre-existing inequalities. A particularly stark example is the search for gender justice. Gender inequality tends to be replicated and reinforced by crisis, and the humanitarian and peace initiatives currently implemented in response to crises too often do not sufficiently prioritize an analysis of gender relationships or women's participation, which risks doing more harm.[21]

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**Box 2: The need for humanitarian-development-peace coherence in Afghanistan**

Issues of conflict, gender inequality, climate change and displacement are intertwined across Afghanistan. Around 80% of conflicts in the country are related to shortages of resources such as land and water, and to food insecurity. These factors are often directly linked to climate change.[22]

Afghanistan is the second-least peaceful country in the world and has the highest number of civilian deaths in conflict (over 10,000 in 2017).[23] Around 55% of the population live below the poverty line, gender relations are extremely unequal and one in four people are displaced. In 2018, 47% of the rural population was estimated to not have enough to eat, largely due to drought. The ongoing presence of armed actors in many areas means that agencies' ability to identify and understand the needs of communities, let alone secure long-term development gains, is severely restricted.

At the same time, there is a risk that the large number of people who have recently returned to Afghanistan (including those forcibly pushed back from Pakistan and Europe) and are living in concentrated urban areas could exacerbate instability and conflict. At the least, they may place high levels of stress on markets and basic services, thereby worsening the humanitarian situation.[24]

In September 2018, an Oxfam Emergency Livelihoods Assessment in the drought-affected north-east of the country highlighted how little humanitarian aid can do where long-term development needs are not addressed.[25] People who received humanitarian assistance consistently said that they needed steady and secure employment; essential infrastructure such as irrigation, electrification and basic education; and, most importantly, security to be able to accumulate capital, access markets and invest in their livelihoods.

A fundamentally different way of supporting humanitarian and development interventions is needed in Afghanistan – one that works with local actors, challenges social and cultural norms (especially around gender justice), builds local capacities for peace, and is inclusive by putting people, not the state, at the centre.

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There has been progress on the implementation of DRR, resilience and conflict-sensitive programming. Nonetheless, approaches that systematically include considerations around fragility, and the planning and funding frameworks that would

support this, are not well established. Too often humanitarian actors are trapped in short-term repetitive action, and there are not enough timely and appropriate development interventions (for example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC),[26] the Sahel[27] and Syria[28]). In these contexts, aid actors are failing to tackle the longer-term transformational changes needed to address increasingly compounded and interdependent vulnerabilities.

# RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF PEACE

Since the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, there has been an increased emphasis on peace as the third component of the nexus. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has placed sustainable peace at the top of his agenda,[30] and is rolling out his vision for a UN capable of preventing conflict and integrating development, human rights, and peace and security approaches.[31]

Including peace in the nexus acknowledges the importance of conflict resolution and prevention in ending humanitarian need, reducing poverty and ensuring sustainable development – and that human-made barriers to such goals need to be addressed. However, with less history of integration into sector-wide humanitarian and development activities, there is far less agreement around what 'peace' means and its implications. There are also concerns that engaging with peace processes could compromise humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality by appearing to support or align with a particular group or solution.

'Peace' interventions can be understood along a spectrum:

- conflict sensitivity;[32]
- enhancing local capacities for peace;
- peacebuilding;[33]
- peace processes and high-level political diplomacy; and
- preserving peace through peacekeeping missions.

'Peace' itself can be understood as 'negative peace', in which there is simply an absence of direct violence – for example, because a ceasefire has been enacted. Alternatively, it can refer to 'positive peace', in which there has been a constructive resolution to the conflict, positive relationships have been restored and a social system that serves the needs of the whole population has been (re-)established.[36]

However, the line between 'peace' and 'conflict' is often blurred. For example, incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (which affect an estimated 35% of the world's women),[37] far outweigh the impacts of violence related to conflict, terrorism and counter-terrorism.

The 2016 UN resolutions on sustaining peace recognize that conflict and fragility also exist on a spectrum.[38] Pockets of violence co-exist with areas in which people go about their daily lives seemingly unaffected by violent conflict. The absence of violence does not equate to peace, and sustaining peace requires ongoing efforts led by national actors that must be underpinned by inclusion.

*'We spend far more time and resources responding to crises rather than preventing them. People are paying too high a price … We need a whole new approach.'*
António Guterres, UN Secretary General[29]

*In 2017, an estimated 87,0000 women were killed globally in incidents related to sexual and gender-based violence.[34] In the same year, nearly 69,000 people were killed as a direct consequence of state-based armed conflict.[35]*

Thus, when discussing the nexus, different actors interpret 'peace' differently, seemingly often according to their respective interests and agendas. For INGOs, it usually means integrating better conflict sensitivity, supporting social cohesion or peacebuilding – although there is an understanding that these need to be linked to official processes.[39] On the other hand, the EU for example, interprets 'peace' as covering activities from conflict prevention and early warning, through mediation and conflict response, to security and stabilization.[40]

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**Box 3: Oxfam, conflict sensitivity and enhancing local capacities for peace**

Oxfam's programmes should always be conflict-sensitive. This means that Oxfam's staff and partners must understand the context in which they are operating; the interaction between the intervention and that context, including on conflict dynamics; and act upon that understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on the conflict.

In a number of conflict-affected and fragile contexts, Oxfam goes further, by delivering programmes that aim to address the underlying drivers of conflict and support capacities for peace, in some cases alongside or within a humanitarian response. These may have peace as a central objective or enhance capacities for peace through outcomes such as economic justice, gender justice, addressing inequality and/or supporting the social contract through governance work.

For example:

- In DRC, Burundi and Rwanda, Oxfam's Peace Beyond Borders programme has promoted a common understanding of the causes and consequences of conflict among stakeholders, and supported them to develop plans to address these.
- Oxfam's protection approach in DRC has evolved into a governance programme, opening space for duty bearers and rights holders to develop solutions to security and governance issues together.
- In Afghanistan, Oxfam has worked with local religious leaders to encourage them to support women's roles in conflict mediation.
- In South Sudan, Oxfam works with CSOs on a more inclusive and accountable security sector, and supports civil society engagement in and around the peace process.
- In Yemen, Oxfam works with local peacebuilding actors on Women, Peace and Security-related issues, supporting local voices in grassroots peacebuilding processes as well as in high-level national and international peace efforts.

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# SHIFTS WITHIN THE AID SYSTEM

In recognition that the system is not responding to needs, improving collaboration between humanitarian and development actors and putting the most vulnerable people at the centre of the system was a key principle of the 2016 WHS. At this event, humanitarian and development actors pledged to work more closely together to deliver the SDGs, which themselves pledge to '*reach the furthest behind first*' and '*leave no-one behind*'.[41] This approach became known as the 'humanitarian-development nexus', before the peace pillar was added.

The 'New Way of Working' (NWoW) also emerged from the WHS, to support the implementation of nexus approaches. This is designed to operationalize the nexus

approach and facilitate a range of humanitarian, development and peace actors to work more closely together towards collective outcomes (COs) over several years, based on their respective specialisms. Wherever possible, these efforts should reinforce and strengthen existing local capacities.[42] The NWoW aims to ensure more appropriate and joined-up multi-year funding, more closely involving international financial institutions such as the World Bank. It proceeds, feeds into and is institutionalized by UNDS Reform, which aims to ensure that the UN system is fit to deliver the SDGs.[43]

The goal is for humanitarian, development and peace actors to work together towards COs. This means recognizing the value of immediate life-saving humanitarian operations, while wherever possible avoiding fragmented projects and output-based programming. It also puts more emphasis on promoting local leadership, governance and institution-building. Interventions may be layered or phased so that humanitarian, development and peace interventions are joined up and take place at the same time or consecutively. While humanitarian and development action will continue to take place outside the scope of COs, donors will increasingly be called on to support them and develop appropriate funding tools for fragile, conflict-affected and protracted contexts.[44]

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**Box 4: Collective outcomes**

There is no definitive UN definition of COs to date, but according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) they should consist of:[45]

- An objective that envisions a sustained positive change, in particular avoiding future need for humanitarian intervention, for example through the reduction of vulnerability and risk.
- Humanitarian action that continues to be identifiable as such, but is implemented in a way that spearheads sustained positive change.

Current guidance underlines the need for context-specificity and suggests that COs may be adopted to greater or lesser degrees in different scenarios.[46] Examples include:

- In Somalia, working to reduce the risk and vulnerability, and increase the resilience of internally displaced people (IDPs), refugee returnees and host communities in order to reach durable solutions for 100,000 households by 2020.
- In Sudan, ensuring that, by 2022, communities and households benefit from increased production and productivity that lead to sustainable livelihoods, sustainable access to food systems and improved nutrition status, with an emphasis on the agriculture sector as a driver.
- Affected people have access to adequate protection and means of livelihoods (Ukraine).

Source: IASC Task Team on the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: Collective Outcomes, Principled and constructive humanitarian engagement. November 2018.

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COs will be established through the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), or the UN development plan where there is no UNDAF. While Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) will continue to be used in many contexts, some humanitarian work will also be incorporated into UNDAFs. There is no current

guidance as to which framework is most appropriate in each context, and major humanitarian crises such as those in South Sudan and Yemen continue to use the HRP as their primary planning tool.

The NWoW and UNDS Reform need to include the full range of stakeholders. There are some efforts to ensure this engagement,[47] but more is necessary. For example, in Chad, while NGOs were asked to input into the CO process through a questionnaire, the December 2018 workshop that defined them involved Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) members and donors only. While there are two INGOs on the HCT, national and local civil society were not included, and initiatives for a follow-up discussion with the broader humanitarian community and state actors have yet to be realised as of March 2019.

This experience reflects 2018 research by Save the Children in Ethiopia and Somalia, which found that governments and national NGOs had no knowledge of the NWoW.[48] On the other hand, UN staff had the highest levels of knowledge of and support for it (54% and 67% respectively), while only 21% of INGO respondents had a higher level of knowledge, and only 16% were positive about them. It is therefore important that INGOs and civil society are actively engaged in the debate at country level to ensure that COs are inclusive, gender-sensitive and appropriate to contexts. Indeed, national and local civil society and the people most affected by crises need to be involved in agreeing and delivering them. Humanitarian and development principles need to be respected. Further research and learning is needed to ensure that the system is consistently as inclusive as possible, and avoids being focused on UN preferences and capabilities.

However, nexus (if not NWoW) approaches are more common than appears at first glance. Many response plans share their vision, if not their language. The approach also cuts across the nine workstreams of the Grand Bargain, to which many NGOs, including Oxfam, are signed up.[49] As part of the aid system, NGOs will feel the impact of shifts by the UN and donors. It is important for all humanitarian organizations to engage with the NWoW and particularly to ensure that they are fit for purpose – putting people at the centre, and with space for local and international civil society voices to influence strategic processes.

# 3  WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR AID FUNDING?

Changes to aid financing are necessary for a nexus approach to be properly adopted. It remains to be seen whether this will happen, and whether donors will combine, dovetail or adapt their funding.

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**Box 5: Trends in humanitarian and development funding**

Humanitarian funding has increased steadily over the years,[50] but has not grown fast enough to meet rising needs.[51] Meanwhile, countries affected by crisis often receive far less development funding than they would without the crisis: in 2016, people living in the 20 largest recipient countries of international humanitarian assistance received less non-humanitarian official development assistance (ODA) than those living in other developing countries.[52] In other words, just when countries most need long-term assistance, they are getting less. Funding modalities remain siloed into humanitarian and development blocks, which do not correspond to people's lived experiences.[53]

National and local NGOs directly received only 0.4% of all international humanitarian assistance in 2017.[54] While harder to track, peacebuilding initiatives are receiving far less funding than other interventions.[55] Funding for women's specific needs is also very low: in 2015, just 1% of all humanitarian funding went to women's groups or women's ministries; and in 2014, less than 1% of all aid to fragile states targeted gender equality significantly.[56]

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The nexus is a priority for the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).[58] In February 2019 it adopted a related recommendation calling for DAC members to coordinate better across the nexus, including through:

- resourcing leadership appropriately (including local and national authorities and legitimate non-state actors), and using political engagement as needed;
- prioritizing prevention, investing in development and ensuring immediate humanitarian needs are met;
- putting people at the centre;
- strengthening national and local capacities; and
- providing better financing through predictable, flexible, multi-year financing.[59]

Oxfam and other NGOs broadly view the recommendation as a step in the right direction. However, since 2016, the DAC has also reviewed the rules governing the definition of ODA, expanding it to include more security spending, which many NGOs, including Oxfam, are concerned will allow for the further securitization of aid.[61]

In practice, donors such as Australia, Belgium, Denmark, the EU, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK are already taking steps

*'To reach…those left farthest behind we need to work in different ways in conflicts and crises. A more coherent approach between humanitarian, development and peace actors is badly needed, and this recommendation will help DAC Members move from rhetoric to action.'*
Chair's Summary, OECD DAC[57]

*80% of humanitarian aid is delivered through multilateral organizations. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, 77% is bilateral, and 23% multilateral.[60]*

to adapt funding mechanisms.[62] For example, the UK has merged some funding streams; Denmark has developed a joint strategy for coordinating humanitarian and development assistance; and Austria has set up a new structure between the ministries for defence, foreign affairs and bilateral cooperation. It is not clear if or how these developments will impact non-OECD donors and/or philanthropic private sector trusts and foundations.

However, on the ground in many cases, little has yet changed. In Afghanistan, for example, the HRP covers three years – but most donor funding is still for one year at most. Ethiopia's 2018 humanitarian and disaster resilience plan, which brings government, humanitarian and development actors together, was no better funded than most HRPs.[63] Where donor funding to UN agencies is increasingly longer-term and unearmarked, it is often not passed on as such to local, national or international NGOs, which limits achieving Grand Bargain goals and prevents a truly contextualized and locally-led approach.[64]

Although the primary goal of humanitarian funding must always be to meet humanitarian needs, it can still be distributed with consideration for longer-term issues. Pooled funds are one potential avenue for better financing for nexus-style programmes.[66] Country-based pool funds (CBPFs) in particular have the potential to contribute to nexus programming, not least because they are increasingly used by donors to deliver Grand Bargain commitments on unearmarked funding and to channel more funding to national and local actors. While more funding is going to national and local NGOs (25% of CBPF allocations in 2018 compared to 13% in 2014),[67] to date only the DRC pooled fund has projects lasting more than one year. While there are currently discussions about an early action window for the UN Central Emergency Response Fund and potentially CBPFs, to date, both funds remain focused on humanitarian responses.

*'At the 2016 WHS, funding targets were proposed of 15% for gender equality and women and girls' empowerment programmes in humanitarian contexts. In addition an increase in total humanitarian funding in fragile contexts awarded to women's rights organizations from 1% (2014 figure) to 4%. However, in 2018, only 0.3% of reported humanitarian funding went to gender-based violence programmes.'*

*Agenda for Humanity: Women and Girls*[65]

Humanitarian aid has always taken place within a political context, but it is becoming more politicized. This is not only because counter-terrorism regulations and sanctions make it hard to negotiate with proscribed groups, get equipment and people to certain areas and promote the localization of assistance, but also because some OECD donors are fusing political and humanitarian objectives. For example, some donors are funding some countries (or areas of countries, e.g. in Iraq and Syria) over others.[68] Some are pooling humanitarian and development aid funding to achieve security and migration objectives through 'Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism' (P/CVE)[69] frameworks, or through instruments such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa that includes humanitarian funding and has controlling irregular migration as an objective.[70] Oxfam's position is that aid can only help achieve peaceful and safe societies when it is impartial, needs-based, poverty-focused, owned by and responsive to the people we work with and for, and independent of donors' military and security objectives.[71]

# THE WORLD BANK

The NWoW was in part set up to better facilitate access to World Bank financing in protracted crises. The World Bank has recognized that it will not achieve its goals of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity unless it works directly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Its joint report with the UN, *Pathways for Peace*, lays out its view of the importance of increased investment in peace,[72] and both organizations are piloting the approach in the Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon, Guinea Bissau, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan and Yemen.[73]

Key elements of the World Bank's new framework around the triple nexus[74] include:

- more money available to national governments and the private sector in fragile and conflict-affected states;[75]

- a $2bn fund dedicated to countries hosting refugees, for host and refugee populations;

- increased funding for rapid response to natural hazards, economic crises and health emergencies;

- a new Global Risk Financing Facility to support governments to plan better for disasters;

- a Global Concessional Financing Facility,[76] which fills a funding gap for middle-income countries currently hosting large numbers of refugees, such as Lebanon and Jordan;[77] and

- the Famine Early Action Mechanism, which will seek to provide funding to prevent countries descending into famine.

The World Bank is also looking beyond its traditional governmental partners in the specific contexts in which it does not have an appropriate government partner to work with or through. For example, it is working with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on famine response in Somalia, and with UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) on basic services in Yemen.

While the potential for scaling up funding is welcome,[78] the World Bank's decision to take a significant role in humanitarian and fragile contexts also poses a number of challenges. Its approach to governments as key clients – alongside its historically limited prioritization of stakeholder engagement – could have implications for its engagement with civil society, both international and national.[79] Its emphasis on macroeconomics and preferred model of large-scale programmes may be at odds with a bottom-up, people-driven approach. Its current conceptualization of fragility and focus on government systems and priorities could result in its resources being concentrated or trapped on one side of a conflict, at odds with humanitarian principles.

# THE EUROPEAN UNION

Recent years have seen unprecedented changes in the EU funding landscape, with new funding instruments such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa[81] and the EU Turkey Facility.[82] Despite the statement in the EU's Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crisis[83] that EU humanitarian aid '*is not a crisis management instrument as such and therefore should not be used for accomplishing any other objectives beyond humanitarian ones*',[84] the increasing emphasis on security and domestic politics within EU development assistance means that humanitarian aid needs to be rigorously firewalled.

The EU has long had a resilience framework and championed LRRD (although implementation of the latter has been uneven globally). Its initial discussions and policies around a nexus approach focused on humanitarianism and development. However, during 2018, the understanding of the nexus expanded to include security and peacebuilding elements. In January 2018, the EU adopted the Integrated Approach (the IA)[85] and made this a foreign policy priority. The policy outlines the importance of shared analysis, conflict sensitivity, mediation support, security sector reform, conflict early warning, prevention and early action, response to crises, stabilization and transitional justice.[86] In September 2018, all EU member states recognized the need for and importance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus but did not initiate a formal process of agreeing on a policy or plan of action for implementation.[87] In practice, efforts to better link humanitarian and development needs are being operationalized in parallel to those aimed at more closely linking security and development, with only some countries advancing in a more holistic manner.[88]

Initially, the EU selected six pilot countries for the implementation of the humanitarian-development nexus: Chad, Nigeria, Sudan, Iraq, Myanmar and Uganda.[89] While this investment continues, the influence of the IA and the informal agreement on the triple nexus is articulating a much closer link between humanitarian, development and peace/security perspectives. Mali, Somalia, Lebanon and Georgia have also been named as pilot countries for some elements of this latter approach.[90]

There is a significant risk that all EU ODA will become more closely linked with EU foreign policy in the upcoming 2021 long-term budget (the Multiannual Financial Framework, MFF). Similarly serious is the risk that domestic political objectives, international cooperation and development aid will be brought closer together – not least through the development of a single financial instrument to support foreign policy, respond to development needs, finance the humanitarian-development nexus, and respond to security and stability challenges.

*'This is a new, integrated approach that covers all phases, all security actors and all types of intervention in our partner countries – from planning to implementation, and from crisis response to diplomatic solutions.'*

Neven Mimica, Commissioner, International Cooperation and Development, European Commission International Conference 'Future of Peace', Zagreb, 7 December 2017.[80]

**Box 6: The EU, the Sahel Alliance and the securitization of aid**

The Sahel Alliance is made up of the EU, France, Germany, the UK, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, UNDP, and, most recently, Denmark. It aims to coordinate donor interventions in the Sahel. In practice, it is operationalizing the link between security and development.

In many areas of the Sahel region, central government neglect, abuse and, in some cases, counter-terrorism strategies,[91] have fuelled grievances among communities and led individuals to join ideologically motivated violent groups. The emphasis on donor security priorities – including stopping irregular migration, preventing 'violent extremism' and emphasizing stability (a negative vision of peace) – means that state perspectives are increasingly prioritized over an in-depth understanding of, and efforts to address, drivers of fragility and local grievances (a positive vision of peace). This risks undermining the independence of aid and its effectiveness.[92]

In some places (such as the Lake Chad Basin and Mali), national security forces secure areas to enable the implementation of development interventions. Often, security agents themselves are responsible for human rights abuses. Inequalities and grievances are further exacerbated by counter-terrorism laws that restrict movement and livelihood opportunities, undermining communities' survival strategies. Development actors are then perceived as being linked to the state, and their ability to contribute to more equitable governance is undermined.

The focus on security and stopping irregular migration means that in some cases assistance is not going to the poorest people, but is focused on areas where people are more likely to join violent groups or attempt to migrate to Europe. There is currently little evidence about how effective these approaches are, while there is a growing body of research that points to the negative impacts of securitized responses.[93]

# 4 WHAT DOES A NEXUS APPROACH LOOK LIKE?

The 'new normal' in which crises tend to be protracted means that recognizing and responding to the links between immediate and long-term needs is increasingly important. Oxfam and other multi-mandated NGOs are not new to the complexity of balancing opportunities and tensions around humanitarian, development and campaigning approaches (known as the One Programme Approach within Oxfam), and, increasingly, support to local capacities for peace.

This section looks at lessons learned thus far from nexus approaches and the NWoW, and some of the contexts and programmes where Oxfam and our partners are grappling with the dilemmas of operating in this nexus space and intentionally delivering programmes that link humanitarian, development and peace.

## WHAT DO HOLISTIC EMERGENCY RESPONSE STRATEGIES TELL US?

Research by the Center on International Cooperation and UN University across 13 countries[94] indicates that, while more countries are aligning humanitarian and development work, progress is slow. They suggest it is too early to expect major changes, not least because most of the barriers to delivering better assistance are structural and systemic, thus taking time to address.

Some findings are emerging: more emphasis on policy is needed to change the environment in which people live – programming alone is not enough. Some events, such as Sahelian drought, are foreseeable, so better forward-looking and flexible planning is needed. Contingency planning and adaptive management are equally needed, in recognition that progress is not linear. For example, in 2017, Bangladesh, DRC, Mauritania and Cameroon all experienced unexpected crises that could not have been planned for. Alongside critical early action, the thresholds that trigger humanitarian action need to be monitored – these are often set high and can normalize catastrophes where chronic problems are not seen as unacceptable. Meanwhile, coordination between humanitarian and development initiatives remains challenging, because development actors have no set institutional mechanism or 'centre of gravity' for coordination between themselves, let alone for ensuring links between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors.

In some contexts, such as Burkina Faso, Oxfam teams report that they are included in meetings around COs. However, in other contexts, such as Chad, COs have been very UN-centred.[95]

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)[96] is perhaps where nexus programming is most advanced, although the approach is not specifically coordinated with other initiatives around the nexus and runs in parallel to the NWoW. Evidence thus far suggests that conditions for refugees can be improved when all actors work together.[97]

> **Box 7: The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework**
>
> The CRRF has a 'whole of society' approach. It aims to:
> - ease pressure on countries that welcome and host refugees;
> - build refugees' self-reliance; and
> - contribute to more durable solutions.
>
> It recognizes that refugees are often hosted in the poorest areas of countries, and that in half of host countries, refugees are not permitted to work.[98] The framework offers a mix of loan and grant funding to host nations; promotes the economic development of hosting areas; includes a wide range of national and sub-national authorities, including those responsible for service delivery; and puts a greater emphasis on the importance of refugee and host community participation in decision making.
>
> In Chad, for example, the government has started promoting 'integrated sites' close to villages rather than camps, and has specifically pledged to improve policies on access to land and education for refugees, as well as to adopt more progressive laws on refugees. Oxfam is working with partners to contribute to displaced people's self-reliance, reinforce shared access to basic services at the community level, and build social cohesion.
>
> In Uganda, Oxfam implements programmes in areas that host refugees, including:
> - a €5.5m education programme, working with a wide coalition of local actors;
> - an IKEA-funded programme building the capacity of local and national humanitarian actors, including NGOs and government; and
> - water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programming.
>
> Oxfam staff in Uganda engage closely with the government-led CRRF steering group and secretariat, where there is INGO representation. Oxfam also advocates for the importance of efforts to build peace and improve social cohesion among refugees and between refugees and host communities. This complements Oxfam's policy work with programming to support peaceful coexistence. The organization has supported the participation of refugees in peace negotiations.
>
> In Jordan, which has a compact for refugees but is not covered by the CRRF, Oxfam has worked with others to successfully influence the government to change its policies on refugees' working rights, enabling refugees to take a more active role in the workplace. This type of policy change is key to the real change the framework is trying to bring about.

In refugee-hosting contexts in which the state is not an actor in the conflict, Oxfam is experiencing the benefits of working with local municipalities. Oxfam has worked with municipalities in decentralized Lebanon for many years, and has partnered with them to provide WASH support that boosts social cohesion between Syrian refugees and the host population, as well as improving the quality and relevance of services.[99]

Even where the state is an actor in the conflict, there are opportunities to work at an operational level with local authorities. For example, in DRC Oxfam works with local health structures to promote public health, and in Yemen it has worked with local authorities to repair water networks.

On the other hand, working with governments in complex contexts can be extremely difficult. This is particularly true where civic and humanitarian space has largely been closed, as in Syria,[100] or where those in need are associated with armed actors who have fought against the state. In Iraq, for example, some local aid workers have been forced to stop providing services to families the authorities accuse of having links to ISIS.[101]

More systematic learning is needed on how and when humanitarian organizations can work with which local and national authorities in protracted crises.

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**Box 8: Shrinking space for responding to community concerns in DRC in the government-led Ebola response**

The Ebola outbreak in North Kivu, DRC, highlights some of the consequences that may be seen when crisis response works closely with a state that is party to a conflict.

The Beni area of Kivu in eastern DRC, where Ebola broke out in August 2018, has suffered years of armed conflict. It is surrounded by armed groups who are often violent. Much of the population is traumatized by the impacts of conflict and violence, and there are high levels of resentment about the government's perceived lack of response. Highly contested elections took place in December 2018, with people from Ebola-affected areas not allowed to vote.[102] There is an ongoing OCHA-led response to broad humanitarian needs in the area.

The Ebola response, on the other hand, is being led by the government and WHO, working through the national health system. This is critical for reaching much of the population and delivering a systematic response. There is an understandable bias towards working in a top-down manner with and through state authorities in their different forms, some of whom (such as doctors) are highly trusted by the population, while others (such as security services) are responsible for the majority of the human rights abuses that the population face every day.[103] However, the state-led top-down way of working means that the all-important trust needed for communities to own the response and prevent the further spread of the virus has not been prioritized.

Within the response, it is extremely challenging to discuss the social, political and conflict context. In a response largely run by men (in a country where women struggle to realize their rights), there has been very little space to ensure that it meets women's needs. There has also been little space for any other actors, from community-based organizations to INGOs, to input into the response at a strategic level, contributing to the lack of a strong strategy for working with communities.[104] UN leadership – part of an integrated mission – has not consistently supported calls for broader civil society inputs until late in the response, when it became clear the existing strategy was not working.

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# OBSERVATIONS FROM PROGRAMMES

The following case studies address some of the different issues associated with nexus approaches in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, including working with partners, building gender justice, dealing with operational constraints and developing country strategies.

# Women's leadership in Iraq

The cumulative effects of national and regional conflicts have led to widespread displacement, instability and fragility in Iraq. Despite being an upper-middle-income country, political, economic and security disruptions are estimated to have led to a significant rise in poverty across the country, and have had a severe impact on livelihoods and infrastructure. Women's rights have been adversely affected by insecurity, with female literacy in rural areas plummeting in recent years and the meaningful participation of women in the country's economic and political life in steady decline – including due to increased stigma around, and mobility restrictions on, women in public life.

Oxfam is seeking to address the underlying drivers of conflict and vulnerability, and the root causes of the risks people face. Its rehabilitation, recovery and resilience efforts aim to break the cycle of violence and fragility, support the building of an inclusive state, and reduce the need for future emergency responses. Its Emergency Food Security and Vulnerable Livelihoods (EFSVL) theory of change responds to immediate needs through cash transfers and temporary employment, and seeks to build economic resilience at the same time.

Through Project Direct's two-year initiative, 'Leadership & Economic Empowerment for Survivors of GBV/SGBV in Iraq', Oxfam has delivered emergency food and livelihood support. It has also invested in resilient and sustainable livelihood options, including business grants, market linkages and networking, value chain development, and vocational and skills training. The programme makes an intentional effort to shift communities from dependence on emergency assistance to self-sufficiency. Activities seeking to build women's economic empowerment have supported women's inclusion in the market system and strengthened their participation in assessments and programme design. This has directly supported them to identify business opportunities and build professional networks. Importantly, it has also opened up opportunities for other women and begun the process of reshaping gender norms in a socially conservative context.

Reflections from the country programme on the nexus approach include the following:

- To make humanitarian, recovery and development efforts more efficient and sustainable, national and local civil society must remain at the forefront of programmes. This requires dedicated effort, more multi-year investment in CSOs, and support to the wider local humanitarian leadership agenda. Women's rights organizations in particular need both political and financial space to address protection issues while also confronting underlying discriminatory norms.

- The scale of need in countries with protracted crises, as well as the underinvestment in services and economic growth, means that aid actors and the state need to collaborate with the private sector to leverage the latter's capacities and resources for recovery and economic development at scale. Long-term advocacy work on economic policy reforms, focusing on the most economically vulnerable and women's participation, is essential to ensure a fair distribution of opportunities and investments that reduce inequality.

- Shifting from a resource-driven approach to systems thinking encourages the realignment of interventions to include critical work on market linkages,

policies and business practices. This goes beyond siloed activities like cash injections or trainings, which some communities cannot leverage sufficiently because the wider economy is not fair, accessible or operating effectively.

# A locally-led response in Kachin and Shan States, Myanmar

Meeting people's humanitarian needs, implementing development programmes and building peace are all critical yet incredibly challenging in Myanmar. While the country continues its democratic transition after nearly 50 years of military rule, many communities continue to be impacted by underdevelopment, conflict and human rights abuses. As described by the UN Fact-Finding Mission in Myanmar, consistent patterns of gross human rights violations extend across the country. The Mission also found evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States, and evidence of genocide in Rakhine.[105]

The EU-funded Durable Peace Programme (DPP) is implemented by a consortium of international, national and local NGOs. It aims to meet humanitarian and development needs, while trying to ensure community issues are better addressed in the peace process. The idea for this programme was initially developed by a group of local and national organizations (the 'Joint Strategy Team'), which then approached Oxfam to manage this multi-sectoral initiative and provide cross-cutting technical expertise. It has been implemented in conflict-affected communities in Kachin State since 2015, and northern Shan State since 2018.[106] The design and implementation of the programme is driven by 27 local organizations, ranging from small-scale community development associations to those with influence in the national peace process. They bring their diverse expertise together to enable the delivery of a range of activities across the 'triple nexus' of humanitarian, development and peace spheres.

The first phase of the DPP (2015–18) worked with conflict-affected communities – including IDPs living in camps as well as host communities – to support greater community participation and influence in local peace processes. A key objective was to better link relief, rehabilitation and development by supporting improved education and livelihoods outcomes, and supporting local authorities (government and ethnic) and community structures to be more receptive to the development needs of communities. The programme has been successful in securing financing for a second phase, which will focus on supporting income generation, contribute to improved social cohesion and more effective peacebuilding, and take action to empower women and reduce the impacts of increasingly reported gender-based violence.

Lessons from this programme thus far include:

- Working at a local level, being led by partners who understand the context and have strong links with the community, is essential to bring change in a nexus context. Protracted displacement and ongoing conflict adds to the complexity of operating in an area with contested governance and a fledgling peace process. Local leadership as part of DPP strengthens downwards accountability and trust with communities, and enables impactful programming in a very difficult and politicized context. Navigating this complexity and ensuring appropriate programming means ambitions need to

be balanced with pragmatism, thus being realistic about what the programme can achieve and influence.

- Currently the DPP is scheduled to run for seven years, with a possible extension after the current phase ends. Funding over multiple years has proven to be beneficial for all consortium partners to learn from previous activities, increase joint programming, and enhance trust-building between themselves. Indeed, building trust, consensus and mutual accountability has been key to effective implementation and to help the DPP navigate the political sensitivities and risks involved in working across humanitarian, development and peace efforts. For example, Oxfam had supported one of the Joint Strategy Team partners for many years prior to the DPP project, building a sustained sense of confidence and solidarity that has been an essential ingredient in the success of the project. The DPP is now also known within important line ministries, which helps interaction with government authorities. It is also recognized by authorities in areas outside of government control.

- Consortium-based programming can be an effective mechanism for bringing together individual agencies to deliver a nexus approach. Individually, most organizations did not work across the nexus, but collectively, the consortium achieved what could be considered nexus programming by benefitting from exposure to each other's ways of working and collating their respective expertise. It also enabled key competencies like conflict sensitivity to be strengthened across all programming. There was not and should not be an expectation that individual organizations work across the entire nexus. However, the DPP structure effectively brought together 27 organizations working across a multitude of thematic areas, with different expertise and experience, from small-scale community development to influential roles in the national peace process and development agenda in ways that more holistically supported communities' needs.

- In a context like Myanmar, advocating on key human rights issues, challenging harmful policies and reaching the most vulnerable people must be prioritized. Robust debate and principled decision making is needed to balance tensions between engaging with the highly politicized national peace processes, upholding humanitarian principles and supporting sustainable development interventions. The risks of contributing to other's political objectives or inadvertently legitimizing certain actors in the conflict is ever-present. Attempts to mitigate these risks included proceeding slowly and carefully in our engagement with state and non-state authorities. Once again, relationships with local organizations, which were better equipped to navigate the complexities of parallel administrations and contested local governance arrangements, were critical to the programme's credibility, access and success. Another important aspect is accountability to affected populations, e.g. by setting up feedback mechanisms that help ensure the programme's design and implementation prioritizes displaced people's preferences.

# Combining short-term assistance with long-term change in South Sudan

South Sudan has been gripped by five years of civil conflict that have displaced four million people, killed thousands and created one of the worst food crises in the

world. This is on top of the near absence of basic services, high levels of gender inequality and weak governance. Climate change is also impacting agricultural and pastoral livelihoods. Thus, people's vulnerabilities are entrenched, and communities continue to need repeat assistance in the face of ongoing conflict.

Humanitarians have been exploring ways of better using the hundreds of millions of dollars of emergency assistance to South Sudan to more sustainably meet people's needs. Oxfam provides life-saving support, but recognizes that only longer-term solutions can break the cycles of vulnerability and support inclusive peace. Thus, Oxfam has promoted a multi-thematic approach to support the resilience of communities wherever possible.

Oxfam has found that combining and layering approaches can help ensure that we meet our humanitarian mandate, respond to contextual shifts and protect development gains. For example, in Wau North and South, our $7m Canadian-funded programme focused on sustainable livelihood interventions was interrupted when conflict caused many of those involved in the project to flee in July 2017. Additional funding from other donors allowed Oxfam to support humanitarian needs – such as preventing water-borne disease outbreaks – and address the underlying security-related causes of displacement through advocacy with state authorities. The latter led to the establishment of police posts and increased patrols to decrease threats and crime levels. This protected some of the gains of the original programme.

Oxfam and partners have implemented EU- and DFID-funded programmes that have sought to help people survive by:

- meeting their immediate basic needs, through cash transfers, food vouchers serviced by programme producer groups, borehole rehabilitation, inbuilt water contingency stock and goat distribution;

- equipping them with the skills, knowledge and assets to earn money and produce for themselves, building stronger, more resilient futures (through income-generating activities, strengthening market systems and agricultural production support (including solar-powered irrigation schemes); and

- addressing attitudes and practices that perpetuate inequalities and conflict, through local governance committees, use of Oxfam's Gender Action Learning System[107] methodology and by mainstreaming protection.

Thus, the programmes attempt to build absorptive and adaptive capacity, and lay the groundwork for more transformational change over the longer term.

Programming linking humanitarian, development and peace work requires innovation and learning as staff navigate new partnerships and ways of working. Among the crucial principles and practices for programming, experiences from South Sudan have highlighted:

- The importance of promoting and encouraging ambition, while also ensuring that the push for innovation is balanced by realities on the ground, and that non-viable activities or indicators are avoided or closed out in a conflict-sensitive and accountable way. Resilient development, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, takes longer than a three- to five-year programme cycle can allow.

- The importance of factoring in the likelihood of new or escalating shocks. A regularly updated gender-sensitive conflict analysis, scenario planning and built-in humanitarian finance mechanisms such as crisis modifiers[108] help meet the diverse needs of communities and protect development gains.

- The potential tension between essential strong programme oversight and local-level autonomy and agility needs to be acknowledged and openly dealt with. Local knowledge and contextual understanding must be balanced with overarching long-term programme goals. The technical complexity of nexus approaches, especially in challenging contexts, requires investment in programme management resources such as knowledge management, capacity development and governance guidelines. A long inception phase should be included to allow time for building relationships and partnerships, sharing skills, and developing a common vision. This can also bring together practitioners from different disciplines who are not used to working together.

- Risk and experimentation must be shared by all involved. Engaging with donors and working closely with partners builds shared ownership of theories of change, the risks and challenges of the approach, and the need to adapt as the context changes. It encourages transparency and ensures that all stakeholders are partners in the learning process.

# Designing a resilient development programme strategy in Chad

A combination of conflict, instability, natural resource degradation and climate change have led to a protracted crisis and high levels of fragility in the Guéra region of Chad, within the Sahelian strip. Tensions over ever-scarcer natural resources have been heightened by internal and regional displacement. These are partly related to seasonal migration movements – a long-term livelihood strategy which has increased in scale and frequency, with people becoming semi-permanently displaced in search of survival. This has left many people unable to meet their basic needs and highly dependent on external assistance. In some cases this is leading to inter-community conflict, which can turn violent. Women and girls often experience the additional burden of maintaining agricultural production and domestic tasks in extremely unequal and laborious conditions while male household members migrate in search of work, income or water for livestock. These overlapping hazards trap people in cycles of poverty, in which they struggle to meet their daily needs, let alone to plan for their future or invest in capacities that could build their resilience against future shocks and stresses.

In 2010, Oxfam in Chad took a strategic decision to go beyond ad hoc short-term humanitarian interventions and invest over the longer term in areas affected by recurrent crises. It adopted a resilient development approach to achieve change by addressing the causes that amplify risks. Oxfam's Guéra-Chad Strategic Framework 2012–2019 for Livelihood Programmes aims to combat the root causes of food insecurity by:

- protecting livelihoods (early warning and preparedness actions);

- humanitarian response (investing in local-level response capacities and meeting emergency needs);

- diversifying livelihoods (combining income-generating activities with productive resource inputs, providing safety nets through developing new infrastructure such as grain banks, and investing in access to and better management of natural resources); and

- advocacy (strengthening the state-citizen contract, supporting civil society, strengthening local governance mechanisms and increasing social cohesion).

Gender considerations were integrated across these four programme pillars to rebalance inequalities in power, access to opportunities and responsibilities.

Key lessons from the work in Chad include:

- In the context of protracted crises, robust plans are needed to ensure that large-scale humanitarian operations do not completely push aside longer-term initiatives. These include funding strategies that are flexible over the long term, adjustable operating mechanisms that can switch gear quickly in case of escalating needs, and context-monitoring that can enhance the ability to anticipate and respond to a changing situation.

- Both what we do and how we do it must support resilient capacities. The power dynamics, gender and other inequalities that structurally affect the ability of a person or community to hear, understand and act on information – or meaningfully benefit from interventions – must be taken into account.

- Iterative and continuous learning is vital. Staff must have time to step back, assess their activities and consider their intended goal. This sense-making process ensures that activities stay on track; opportunities to change, scale-up and/or shift are not missed; and a better understanding of how humanitarian and development interventions interlink is built. Communities should also be brought into this process to ensure transparency, accountability, information-sharing and better learning.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Across the case studies presented above, a number of common themes emerged. The discussion points below are not exhaustive, but include some of the over-arching changes to programme design and delivery that are needed for them to be effective in these contexts.

## Holistic and integrated contextual analysis

To properly understand needs and the root causes of vulnerability, fragility and inequality, a comprehensive and unified multi-sectoral assessment methodology is needed at an organizational level. Beyond the immediate programme location, analysis should take into account the broader political implications of intervening – for example, the impact of prioritizing needs in easy-to-access government-held and/or urban areas upon impartial, principled humanitarian action and long-term social cohesion.

In areas prone to recurrent conflict and climate-related crises, there needs to be a mechanism to share, track and enhance knowledge across interventions that support the same population groups. This means a move away from siloed

specialist tools at an organizational level, in favour of joint data collection and a 'living' analysis of the context that includes cross-cutting gender, protection and conflict-sensitivity issues. This requires information-sharing, cross-fertilization of findings and the co-habitation of interventions, geographically, by organizations (or departments within organizations) delivering across the triple nexus, to build a holistic programme strategy based on high-quality analysis. Those affected by crises should participate in such approaches to ensure locally-led contextualized knowledge is used to inform programme design. This helps ensure effectiveness and strengthen the sustainability of interventions.

While joint assessments, tools and data collection are important at an organizational level for multi-mandated organizations bringing together different teams, at a response level, it may sometimes be necessary to maintain independent humanitarian assessment to ensure that the needs of the most marginalized groups are tackled.

It is also important to find ways of sharing analyses with donors and other stakeholders to build a shared vision, a more integrated and complementary approach, and strong accountability and feedback mechanisms.

# Long-term country strategies vs project plans

Systemic transformation takes longer than one programme cycle. This is especially true in fragile contexts, where sustainable development is non-linear and slow. Oxfam, in collaboration with and through lobbying to donors, needs to shift first from short-term projects of 6–12 months' duration to 3–5-year programme cycles, and ultimately 10- to 15-year goals that deliver across the humanitarian-development-peace spectrum. Linked to this is a shift from output-oriented thinking to outcome-based planning. The latter can bring greater opportunities to build partnerships and local capacity as goals in themselves, beyond project-related outputs. In the immediate term, consideration is needed on the kind of funding that is sought and what types of programmes are planned so that they can be layered and sequenced in ways that facilitate this overarching strategic approach. Likewise, engagement on the nexus should not be linked to specific projects, but should draw on complementary, coordinated and sequenced initiatives across a country programme.

# Investment in adaptive management

To be efficient and effective, programmes need to be agile and responsive to changes in context. Flexibility in activities, budget lines, implementation schedules, indicator measurements and objectives will boost programme quality and ensure that multi-mandated organizations continue to target the most vulnerable people with appropriate interventions. This requires bringing in new skills and leveraging existing knowledge and expertise for innovation; building unified monitoring systems; and applying learning in real time. Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning frameworks that assess programmes' impact on drivers of fragility and vulnerability over time will need to operate beyond project timeframes. This requires consistent and transparent engagement with donors and national stakeholders, who will need to be active partners in learning.

# Collaborating and capacity-sharing

Staff should not be expected to be experts across all three (or even two) pillars of the nexus, especially in contexts that are already challenging to recruit for. However, a nexus approach does require implementers to step out of their comfort zone and work across different disciplines. Multi-mandated organizations need to support capacity-sharing, cross-learning and upskilling to ensure that staff and partners are able to deliver. The principles, language and interests of technical teams need to be brought together for collaborative co-production, while not subsuming the distinct standalone benefits of each technical area.

This also means adapting operational practice: the need to deliver development outcomes in humanitarian contexts means that business support functions need to work even more closely with programmes, so that critical patterns in seasons and access constraints are not missed, and accurate financial reporting is delivered on time. Management and operational practices need to be reviewed to support collaboration between teams. This will require a shift in culture and mindsets, adapting business support processes for travel and cost recovery, joint workplans and changing who is included in strategy development meetings.

This integrated approach has required a change in operational behaviour and technical thinking. While these are not in themselves radical, they have involved significant shifts. Staff from the two teams have established practical ways to bridge skillsets and perspectives, such as joint context assessments, regular meetings, and collective theories of change. Their programme strategy explicitly acknowledges and seeks to address both life-saving needs and root causes, and EFSVL and EJ approaches dovetail and overlap.

## The 'how' is as important as the 'what'

Working across disciplines and finding common ground in order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people will require expanding technical knowledge and an increased emphasis on softer skills. It is as much about how we do our work as what we do. Behaviours that need to be encouraged and developed include:

- Consensus-building, brokering and the formation of (unusual) partnerships;
- navigating and communicating complex ideas;
- systems thinking; and
- facilitating co-creation spaces and dialogue that brings colleagues together

We will also need to get better at coordinating with other organizations and working in diverse coalitions.

# 5 WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES OF A NEXUS APPROACH?

The nexus approach and related changes in the aid architecture bring many opportunities to more holistically and effectively address people's vulnerability before, during and after crises. However, there are also several potential challenges and questions that remain around the approach (see **Chapter 6**).

## PROGRAMMES

### Delivering better results

There is more scope for supporting the people who respond first to crises – the people affected, national and local administrations, and organizations – on their terms and based on their requirements. Notably, these groups do not differentiate experience into humanitarian and development siloes. Community-led DRR action plans, for example, can contribute to transformational long-term change.[110] A holistic approach can also facilitate more consistent participation across all interventions of women-led and women's rights organizations, which may be less visible in humanitarian situations,[111] and whose hard-won gains may be undermined in crises.[112] However, we also need to be aware of the constraints these organizations have, and that not all organizations will want to divert their activities towards humanitarian responses.[113]

*'You are bringing in a battleship when you need a canoe, it is just crazy.'*
Local humanitarian actor in the Pacific on the issues with internationalized assistance.[109]

### Engaging with local and national structures

The longer-term framework and common goals for the SDGs and national priority plans mean that there is an important emphasis on engaging with national and local capacities, resources and structures, as far as this is possible and appropriate. Where national and local institutions are engaged on their own terms, there is greater potential for ensuring that they are better equipped and prepared to consult with communities and respond to their needs. Alongside facilitating immediate responses to crises, supporting national and local institutions can boost inclusive governance and strengthen an accountable social contract between parts of the state and its citizens. It can also address long-term challenges, such as pre-existing inequalities, by integrating efforts to address these and boost mutual accountability in local and national plans. Working with national and local leadership can reduce duplication and increase coherence among a diverse range of actors, and there is clear evidence that the resulting assistance is likely to be more appropriate for people's needs.[114]

# Gender justice

There is great potential for improving gender justice, although also a risk that progress will be undermined where gender and identity issues rank low on the national agenda. All agencies should examine how to strengthen this and apply feminist principles in their work. In many humanitarian situations, pre-existing gender inequalities are exacerbated and can put women and girls at disproportionate risk. Gender inequalities and discriminatory gender norms can also drive fragility and conflict. A longer-term approach that engages a wide range of stakeholders allows more scope to address these and enhances women and girls' capacities for responding to them, for example through facilitating women's leadership, education, participation and economic opportunities.[115] Once crisis strikes, this more holistic approach encourages response to women and girls' immediate and longer-term needs.[116] As a result, improving gender justice requires women's rights to be a goal in themselves and thus considered fundamental to transformational change, not integrated as an extra. This means that gender justice should be funded and prioritized in the first phase of humanitarian response (including through dedicated financing for women's rights organizations and the strict use of gender markers), and as part of working towards a CO. There are also likely to be better opportunities to mainstream Women, Peace and Security objectives in other strategies and goals.

# Early warning and early action

The nexus approach provides an opportunity to explore how early warning and early action in relation to natural hazards and conflict prevention can be more fully implemented, both in terms of more effectively protecting and supporting communities, and in terms of reducing response costs. USAID estimates that an early humanitarian response saves $2.5bn over 15 years, or an average of $163m per year.[117] The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that for every 1% of a population shielded from the effects of disasters from natural hazards, food assistance costs are reduced by 2%; and where there is a 1% reduction in the number of people displaced, there is a 16% saving in food assistance costs.[118]

# Conflict prevention

It is estimated that every $1 invested in peacebuilding carries a potential $16 reduction in the cost of armed conflict.[119] Modelling undertaken as part of the UN and World Bank's joint report *Pathways for Peace* also indicates that, even in the most pessimistic scenario (i.e. where the cost of conflict prevention is high and its impact low) there would still be annual savings.[120] A thorough understanding of formal and informal governance structures, gender justice and power relations, social cohesion, inclusion and existing capacities for resolving conflicts should inform all interventions, and critical issues should be addressed as early as possible and as far as possible.

# FUNDING

The widely recognized need to adapt funding frameworks to facilitate flexible multi-year programming to tackle protracted and recurrent crises is slowly leading donors to change their funding strategies. Funding needs to become more agile and adaptive in the face of changing contexts, and there should be more room for experimental approaches that allow for innovation and the trial, error and direction change that come with it. The implementation of Grand Bargain commitments to increase funding for local and national responders, DRR and early action, and decrease earmarked funding would encourage these changes. With this, we should eventually see shifts in how success is defined and impacts measured, moving away from rigid, prescribed, output-orientated logframes that do not facilitate adaptive management nor allow the transformative changes a nexus approach could deliver.

# POLICY

COs represent an opportunity to bring a range of stakeholders together in a more holistic approach that includes addressing the policy issues that severely impact people's lives. They also promote more learning and reflection on how to work in a conflict-sensitive manner with national and local authorities when the latter are a party to a conflict.

There is also greater potential for more sustained political engagement to ensure that the most vulnerable people are able to access aid, and that belligerents are brought to the peace table – as Oxfam has called for in South Sudan, for example.[121]

# 6  WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL QUESTIONS?

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO PRINCIPLED HUMANITARIAN ACTION?

Nexus approaches are being rolled out within a global context marked by growing nationalism, emphasis on state sovereignty and national security, and shrinking space for civil society voices. Thus, the potential for principled humanitarian action around the world is decreasing. Donors' aid policies increasingly reflect domestic interests and emphasize stability rather than the causes of grievances.[123] Part of this has been a decrease in adherence to international humanitarian law (e.g. in Syria and Yemen) and international refugee law (as in Europe's response to refugee arrivals in 2015–16), while the scope of counter-terrorism regulations has increased.[124]

There is a risk that nexus approaches will exacerbate this because – along with the NWoW and many aspects of UNDS Reform –  they are likely to increase emphasis on state perspectives.[125] While states are responsible for accountably and inclusively meeting the needs of all their populations, not all states are willing or able to do this. Balancing this reality with encouraging them to fulfil their obligations will be an ongoing tension at the heart of nexus programming. All actors will need to remain critically aware of these tensions, uphold the principles of humanitarian action and be aware of the impact that compromise in one area can lead to in the longer term. Principled, strong and consistent leadership at all levels is needed.

Increased state involvement also risks exacerbating current trends that concentrate humanitarian action in more easily accessible areas, which often results in more vulnerable groups being neglected. Where actors are associated with the state, it can be particularly difficult for them to operate impartially in areas of insecurity linked to the activities of armed groups, contributing to large parts of the population in need not being able to access assistance – Oxfam is experiencing this in Burkina Faso and Mali. Nexus implementation will also need to create and preserve an enabling environment for frontline responders, and not exacerbate the security threats they face by further associating them with contested power holders.

## CAN HUMANITARIAN NEEDS BE EFFECTIVELY MET WHILE WORKING CLOSELY WITH STATES?

Where the state does not consistently prioritize the rights of all its citizens – and where donor governments have their own political and security objectives – there is a risk that humanitarian needs will be downplayed. For example, the Nigerian government has emphasized responding to food insecurity in the north-east of the

*'The WHS "apparent focus" on the "incorporation of humanitarian assistance into a broader development and resilience agenda" … threatens to dissolve humanitarian assistance into wider development, peace-building and political agendas'.*
MSF open letter on pulling out of the World Humanitarian Summit.[122]

*ALNAP's State of the World's Humanitarian System report indicates that, while humanitarians may be getting more effective at saving lives in some contexts, coverage is declining, particularly in areas outside government control.*[126]

country. This meant that there was insufficient attention paid to protection elements of the region's crisis, to which the government, although responding to a critical security risk, was contributing.

Ahead of DRC's 2018 elections, and due to tensions arising from the April 2018 donor conference, a figure of 1.3 million IDPs was agreed in August 2018 between the UN and the government for the country's Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). In the October HNO, this was updated to 2.1 million, which was still too low.[127] The UN acknowledged that this only accounted for new displacements in the first part of 2018 and did not take into account previously reported figures of 4.5 million IDPs, which included historic IDPs. The downplaying of these figures and exclusion of historic IDPs who continue to need humanitarian assistance highlights that the UN integrated mission in DRC has many competing political considerations that mitigate against it consistently prioritizing humanitarian needs. Independent humanitarian assessment and access must be safeguarded and not rolled into joint multi-discipline/multi-actor analysis in cases in which this may compromise the needs of the most vulnerable people.

While humanitarians do not always manage to consistently reach the most vulnerable groups, there is a heightened risk of minority ethnic groups, IDPs and refugees, and stateless/unregistered people not receiving assistance for political reasons. For example, in Myanmar, the government severely restricts the delivery of aid to internally displaced Rohingya in some areas of Rakhine state, and only allows very limited humanitarian access to the northern part of the state. In Somalia, where the state is not a primary party to the conflict, the COs highlight the situation of IDPs; however, COs in Sudan recognize the 900,000 refugees in the country but not the two million IDPs.[129]

*A UN- and OECD-led analysis of risks and vulnerabilities in the Liptako-Gourma region of the Sahel points to socio-economic vulnerability as a key driver of conflict. The poor governance that communities often cite as a key driver is alluded to in the text, but not highlighted or explored.*[128]

# HOW WILL HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE PRIORITIES BE BALANCED?

With little coherence above country level, there is not currently a consistent framework for choosing which humanitarian, development and peace considerations to focus on. Although all UN documents on the NWoW stress that modalities will be context-specific, there is no guidance for this. In contexts of integrated peace operations – where clear guidance[130] on keeping humanitarian assistance separate from political considerations does exist – humanitarians have repeatedly found that politics trump context.

COs to date vary widely – although many are still in draft form. COs in Niger include stabilization and security sector reform.[131] In the CAR, where approximately 30% of the population are displaced (internally or as refugees) and over 70% need humanitarian assistance to survive,[132] the COs prioritize peace, security and reconciliation processes, the social contract between the state and the population, and economic recovery.[133] Implementation will need to carefully balance humanitarian and development needs, and ensure these are prioritized over political considerations. In some settings, development workers cannot operate – for example, in North-Eastern Nigeria, there has been a major emphasis on the need for linking humanitarian aid and development, but insecurity on the ground means that development projects have been slow to start.

A careful balance will need to be struck between speed and scale in humanitarian response, with 'good enough' approaches to conflict sensitivity, gender justice and working with national and local authorities. Adopting a nexus approach should never be a reason for not triggering a rapid humanitarian response in the face of need.

While humanitarian approaches tend to be more clearly focused on supporting those most urgently in need, development approaches are encompassed within a broader objective of promoting '*the economic and development welfare of developing countries*',[134] in which the focus on the poorest and most vulnerable people is at times diluted. There is also a risk that combining humanitarian and development outcomes could lead to adopting the lowest common denominator in standards,[135] e.g. where displaced and host communities needs are addressed together, it could result in the standard of service provision in the existing local environment being deemed an adequate yardstick, as opposed to internationally agreed humanitarian measurements, such as the Sphere Standards.[136] To deliver the SDGs, which promise to '*reach the furthest behind first*', donors must focus their aid on the sole purposes of fighting poverty, reducing inequalities (including gender inequalities) and meeting humanitarian needs,[137] and only use aid to support economic agendas (green growth, innovation hubs, job creation, etc.) where this will have a direct or indirect impact for those most in need.

# HOW IS 'PEACE' UNDERSTOOD?

While peace is essential for ending humanitarian need and achieving sustainable development, how it is conceptualized and delivered matters. NGOs such as Oxfam tend to view peacebuilding as a bottom-up, community-based process; states and the UN Security Council, however, often prioritize state-centric initiatives.

State-led processes risk prioritizing state security and state-led security services over human security and a sense of safety for individuals, especially women, children and minority groups. The prioritization of security and stability also risks contributing further to insecurity – the UNDP's research on why people join ideologically driven violent groups in different countries in Africa indicates that 70% of people took the final decision because of action by state security services.[138] A clear, inclusive and common vision of what the peace component should deliver is needed. This should prioritize community-based and transformative approaches that address root causes of fragility and inequality, and promote positive peace and gender justice.

There needs to be a strong emphasis on inclusion in all decisions around peace and security. For example, civil society is usually not in the room when such decisions are being made. Women are rarely included; for example, in the seven peace negotiations ongoing in March 2019, women made up a maximum of a quarter of delegates (on South Sudan and Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory). In negotiations on Afghanistan, they made up only 5% of delegates, and just 4% on Yemen.[140]

*When women participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement is 35% more likely to last at least 15 years.*[139]

# WILL NEXUS APPROACHES DELIVER BETTER THAN THE PREVIOUS SYSTEM?

While these global initiatives hold promise compared to previous attempts to better align aid initiatives, there has not yet been a sufficient shift in the fundamental makeup of the key institutions and structures. For example, while there has been significant progress on the local leadership agenda, national and local organizations still struggle to have their voices heard.[141] There will need to be honest reflection, self-awareness and agility built in to avoid previous mistakes,[142] and a genuine commitment to working with, and handing over power to, local and national actors as far as possible.

The system will also need to remain flexible, not only introducing HRPs when needed, but speeding up certain planning processes and adapting to changing priorities. HRPs usually take a matter of months to agree, while UNDAFs can take a lot longer. Interventions around peace may need to be extremely agile, or have to move much more slowly. Likewise, longer-term resilience-building and efforts to address the root causes of risk and vulnerability must be resourced at scale and over considerable time periods in order to achieve the level of transformation required. The complexities of delivering the above must be openly acknowledged and intentionally engaged with. The system must not become slower and more politicized, and bureaucracy must be reduced as far as possible.

## WHO IS INCLUDED?

While civil society involvement in HRPs may be patchy, the systems for it are clear and HCTs consistently include NGO representation. National and local actors also report that they are better able to take part in the current infrastructure where it is decentralized.[143] However, there is a lot less transparency and decentralization around UN Country Teams.

The focus on COs also means that small grants of $100–400,000 may disappear, because they are seen as too much of an administrative burden, which could lead to a reduction in direct funding to local and national actors. The NWoW and UNDS Reform need to take proactive steps in both their financing and strategic planning processes to ensure that they are truly inclusive of local and national civil society, and ensure that the lack of inclusivity and diversity in the current aid system is not exacerbated.

## WILL WE SEE MORE APPROPRIATE FUNDING?

As discussed above, donors' funding modalities are not yet aligned comprehensively behind the approach. For example, in South Sudan, while donors are focusing increasingly on resilience programming and 'Islands of Stability', which at the time of writing are largely in government-held locations,[144] there has been pressure to shrink the HRP despite humanitarian needs being as great as ever. In Mali, there is increasing investment in security and development, while humanitarian needs are growing exponentially and the modest HRP ($329.6m) was only just over 50% funded in 2018.[145]

Beyond humanitarian funding, as humanitarian and development approaches move more closely together, donors and aid organizations will need to have some robust conversations and resist the temptation to help those that are easiest to reach first in order to boost numbers and apparent value for money; deliberate investment in reaching the most excluded and hardest-to-reach groups is needed.[146]

As all organizations learn how to implement nexus approaches, there is a risk that development outcomes and measures of success are expected to be delivered through humanitarian funding streams on short- to medium-term timelines in highly complex contexts. Most of those involved have not yet fully understood the complex implications of these modalities and what is realistic. Donors and implementing partners will need to maintain an open and honest dialogue to address tensions and adapt programmes.

While unearmarked multi-year funding may be going to the UN, these more flexible modalities do not yet trickle down to NGOs, especially at the national and local levels.

Finally, for many donors, the nexus is an opportunity to further use development aid to attract private sector investment in early recovery, displacement response and high-risk environments. While the private sector is an important actor for securing sustainable development and durable solutions, considerable safeguards and ways of working will need to be developed to ensure that aid's purpose remains focused on poverty and inequality reduction and meeting the needs of those who are most vulnerable/marginalized. Aid must not become a back-door subsidy for firms from donor countries. Instead, it must be sure to effectively attract additional or 'fresh' private investments that would have not been mobilized without a public subsidy, rather than subsidizing private operations that would have taken place anyway. Aid should only benefit companies that respect human rights, social and environmental standards, and pay their fair share of taxes. Increased aid in support of private actors should also comply with core development effectiveness principles of transparency, accountability and country ownership. More broadly, donors' focus on 'leveraging' should not overshadow the importance of supporting effective and accountable public institutions.

# 7 CONCLUSIONS

Tensions remain between different teams and technical areas; in some cases, these are not easy to balance. However, there is substantial common ground and momentum around nexus approaches. Debating contradictions openly and finding a way forward together will be critical to successful implementation. The nexus is a good opportunity to work with all stakeholders towards a common goal, and has the potential to make aid more effective and efficient by putting the experiences of those affected by crisis at the centre. It may well support meeting short-term humanitarian needs (ensuring that the right type of aid gets to the right people regardless of who or where they are) as well as facilitate greater consideration of strategies that address their root causes.

There are strong complementarities with the technical thinking around adaptive, absorptive and transformative capabilities that inform resilient development frameworks. The collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors encouraged by nexus approaches can further help ensure a greater awareness of the wide range of risks people face, as well as facilitate acknowledgment of the overlaps and interlinkages between climate and human-made risks. However, delivering a triple-nexus approach that interacts with and addresses the drivers of fragility goes beyond these frameworks as they currently stand. More deliberate and consistent integration of conflict sensitivity and enhancement of local capacities for peace is needed, along with thought and investment into how to address complexity and the needs of vulnerable groups during both their daily lives and crises.

The nexus goes beyond projects, and will require structural and operational shifts at a programme level, including how programme teams work with business support and policy colleagues. It will also only deliver better assistance if financing mechanisms are adapted. Donors need to explore how to maintain independent, principled and needs-based humanitarian funding while encouraging multi-year flexible financing to become the norm. The fulfilment of commitments on flexible development financing – within an agreed framework that excludes donors' own domestic agendas – must also be considered. A key action that would strengthen these changes is resourcing and rewarding learning and transparency, so that donors and agencies can take managed risks with context-specific and innovative programming. Recognizing and responding to failures in a timely way would thus become normalized.

For multi-mandated organizations, at a strategic level, delivering a nexus approach may mean re-thinking how programme goals are articulated in certain contexts and putting more emphasis on outcomes. A consistent high-level, cross-departmental conversation and space for co-creation is needed to do this. While leadership is critical, the nexus cannot 'belong' to any one discipline – an ongoing conversation that recognizes the complementarities and puts everyone on an equal footing is needed.

These considerations may involve:

- reviewing the composition of teams and job descriptions;
- investing more in organizations' own staff, and the capacity of local and national actors;
- resourcing holistic analysis and adapting programming in response; and
- altering management structures to best support a more integrated approach.

Oxfam may decide to review how it allocates resources – for example, investing more in conflict sensitivity in humanitarian settings and allocating unrestricted funding to plan for longer, context-adapted and flexible responses from the early stages of crises.

In doing this, Oxfam will need to honestly assess the likely tensions between a focus on joined-up transformational approaches and its appetite for responding quickly at scale and taking risks. This will involve balancing the development of good relationships with governments and obligations to raise vulnerable people's rights in the face of inequality, discrimination and abuses. The humanitarian mandate means organizations must not compromise their commitments to the centrality of protection, and condemn violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses wherever they occur. In this regard, working with national authorities may not always be possible, but working across the nexus may enable us to explore the potential for working in a conflict-sensitive way with or alongside local authorities. Oxfam will need to clarify how peace sits in its strategic work, and under what circumstances one part of the nexus should be prioritized over others. It should be realistic about the potential limits of the approach when one specific type of assistance – for example, principled short-term humanitarian assistance – is needed. While it is far from being a 'zero-sum game', where gains in one area are matched by losses in another, we should be explicit about decision making and trade-offs, and ensure that our donors and partners are part of this conversation.

Beyond continuing to experiment and learn from programming, in the next months and years, Oxfam and others across the sector should promote conversations around nexus implementation at national, regional and global levels. They should bring teams together, and use the lessons we already have to engage with and influence policy and implementation at all levels. For Oxfam, a good starting point may be to work across teams to more explicitly reflect issues of conflict and fragility in the *Framework for Resilient Development*.[147] Investment is needed in country-level research on the effectiveness of the system-wide approach on the ground – particularly its impact on principled humanitarian assistance; how it enhances or undermines local capacities for peace; how it delivers for women; and/or where, when, why and how it most successfully engages different local actors.

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31  See, for example, the UN Secretary-General's 2017 report on the 'Restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar': http://undocs.org/en/A/72/525

32  'Conflict sensitivity' refers to the ability of an organization to: a) understand the context in which it is operating; b) understand the interaction between the intervention and that context, including on conflict dynamics; and c) act upon that understanding, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on the conflict. See: Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. *What is Conflict Sensitivity?* http://conflictsensitivity.org/conflict-sensitivity/what-is-conflict-sensitivity

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45  IASC Task Team on the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: Collective Outcomes, Principled and constructive humanitarian engagement. November 2018.

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In 2017, the coefficient determining the share of peacekeeping operations that can be counted as ODA was increased from 7% to 15%. OECD. (2017). *The ODA Coefficient for UN Peacekeeping Operations Explained*. https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/ODA-Coefficient-for-UN-Peacekeeping-Operations.pdf.

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Many of the humanitarian crises that we face today are protracted, with an average period of displacement lasting between 17 and 26 years. 13.4 million refugees, representing around two-thirds of all refugees, were in protracted refugee situations at the end of 2017, an increase on the 11.6 million in 2016. Of this, 3 million were in a situation lasting 38 years or more, dominated especially by the 2.3 million Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, whose displacement situation began in 1979. There were 6.9 million people in protracted situations of shorter duration (between five and nine years), of which 5.4 million were Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The remaining 3.5 million people were in protracted refugee situations of between 10 and 37 years. Source: UNHCR. (2018a). *Global Displacement Trends 2017*. https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/

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