DECEMBER 2021

Making the Nexus Real:
Moving from theory to practice

A FEINSTEIN INTERNATIONAL CENTER PUBLICATION

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USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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Cover Photo: Khristopher Carlson

Citation: Merry Fitzpatrick, Kinsey Spears, Julia Ryan, Samuel Polzin, Greg Gottlieb, and Daniel Maxwell. *Making the Nexus Real: Moving from theory to practice.* Boston, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2021.

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Acronyms

ALNAP Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance

BHA Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance

CDCS Country Development Cooperation Strategy

DART Disaster Assistance Response Team

DO Development Objective

DRC Democratic Republic of the Congo

DRM Disaster Risk Management

DRR Disaster Risk Reduction

EU European Union

EWS Early Warning System

HDP Nexus Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

(I)NGO (International) Nongovernmental Organization

IR Intermediate Result

LRRD Linking Relief Resilience and Development

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

OECD-DAC Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee

PfRR Partnership for Recovery and Resilience

PSNP Productive Safety Net Program

SAGE Strategic Advisory Group for Emergencies

UN OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN United Nations

USAID United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

Throughout the modern history of humanitarian and development assistance, there has been tension between efforts to address immediate needs and the root causes giving rise to those needs. Different funding streams, principles, programming tool kits, and specializations have evolved, leading to often competing communities of action. The space where these two types of assistance link or overlap has been called the nexus. We define this concept of the nexus as:

> A way of working with populations affected by or at risk of crisis, to ensure the immediate needs of that population are met, while simultaneously promoting enduring solutions and addressing root causes that create continuing risk to lives, livelihoods, and security, and which builds in protection against all risks (natural, economic and political) as an integral goal.

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus approach proposed by the UN in 2016 and further elaborated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC) is the latest attempt to reconcile this tension within the formal international assistance community (Guterres 2016; OECD 2020). It is one approach to promoting the nexus. Most actors now use the OEDC's description of this approach to the nexus – the HDP Nexus:

> "The aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar—to the extent of their relevance in the specific context—in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict" (OECD 2020, 6).

This report explores both the nexus (small n), as a way of programming, and the HDP Nexus approach (capital N) also called the Triple Nexus, as the approach promoted by the UN and OECD/DAC, to include necessary ways organizations must work together to be able to offer programming that achieves our desired impacts.

The HDP Nexus community of practice arose out of multiple other movements over the past 40 years, taking its current formal shape through several reports and summits in 2015/2016. It has been driven by major donor governments, the EU, and the UN. Although the US government is a signatory to the commitments that launched the nexus approach as a community of practice, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (including Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)) has not been a major driver of this movement.

The HDP Nexus is built on previous learning. Each of a long list of agendas preceding the current HDP Nexus approach has added incremental learning that has accumulated. Resilience is the community of practice contributing the most to the nexus of humanitarian and development approaches with significant overlap in concepts of addressing long-term needs and root causes while also meeting immediate needs.

The HDP Nexus adds or increases stress on two components. Most obvious is the addition of the peace pillar. The other, more important component is significant stress on the coordination element. This paper therefore divides the discussion into programming and coordination.

Programming best practices using a nexus lens are not different from best practices already established. Those best practices emphasized by nexus thinking involve how a program interacts with a changing, fluid context, other actors, and other activities in that context, to include government service providers and other local actors. Contexts themselves shift between crises with opportunities for recovery, and stability with risks and vulnerabilities. A good nexus program requires a deep understanding of the context, recognizing and responding to changes in that context, and the drivers of those changes. Therefore, program teams need systems and skills to monitor and analyze the context on a rolling basis, not just at baseline.

A lack of skills in conflict analysis is very often cited as a major barrier to programming in the

HDP Nexus, as without a good understanding of the conflict dynamics the peace pillar becomes something of a black box (Veron and Hauck 2021). As a context shifts from stability to crisis or back, **programs need both programmatic and financial mechanisms that permit flexibility** to adjust the program accordingly. **Responsiveness to changing contexts and needs requires skilled individuals who understand both humanitarian and development programming,** even if only through an advisor within the country team. Lack of individuals present in-country with these skills are currently noted as a barrier, though this cadre is growing. Best practice in the nexus also means being aware of and adjusting programming to dovetail with other local programming or local government services, even those anchored in other pillars.

Well before the emergence of the HDP Nexus community of practice, the Do No Harm community of practice started the conversation of international aid's complex relationship with conflict (Anderson 1999). "Do No Harm" is essentially providing assistance in a way that is conflict sensitive and does not exacerbate conflict. Where the opportunity arises, it aims to mitigate the conflict. In recent years, **both the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Resilience communities of practice have begun to treat conflict as a major risk or driver of vulnerability** that should be considered and addressed like any other risk or driver.

In a recent workshop hosted by Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) on evaluation of the application of the HDP Nexus in different organizations, multiple speakers stated that **nexus programming itself is primarily following Resilience and DRR best practices already well established and accepted.** Instead of focusing on how programs are designed, nexus evaluations described in the workshop focused almost exclusively on the organizational components of the nexus—how an organization had adjusted its own structure to facilitate programs that addressed root causes of vulnerability while meeting immediate needs, but even more, how organizations worked together to cover the multiple needs across the nexus. There was apparent consensus that no single program could, or was expected to, address all pillars simultaneously within a single crisis or context. Instead, **the key to the HDP Nexus is orchestrating the efforts of multiple organizations working in various parts of the nexus—each flexing to the strengths and weaknesses of the other actors – to cover the full range of needs within a single context while simultaneously respecting their independence and varied motivations.**

The major concepts inherent in the OECD's interpretation of the HDP Nexus are coherence, collective outcomes, comparative advantage, collaboration, and complementarity—all concepts meant to orchestrate the multiple actors within a context to achieve the greatest overall impact through a unified vision. While these concepts alone do not define the nexus, they provide guidance on how multiple actors should work together in a specific context to maximize the positive impact on a population or situation.

Coordination does not happen spontaneously and needs to happen at multiple levels. In the humanitarian realm, the cluster system coordinates daily activities, but coordination in this sense goes deeper to planning and prioritizing objectives. **Currently there is no recognized platform or structure for coordinating actors' priorities across the pillars, and actors report little incentive or requirement for actors across the pillars to operate on the platforms that currently do exist.** Experience with humanitarian sectors and then the cluster system tells us coordination is a learning process requiring experimentation. Multiple sources suggest the country level is the easiest and potentially most appropriate level to learn to organize Nexus actors' objectives, to include donors as well as international and local implementors, and local government line ministries where appropriate. There is a real cost to working within such a coordinated framework rather than independently; therefore, there must be an incentive to actors to participate. Donors are uniquely positioned to provide this incentive, whether through increasing capacity, reach, or impact. One potential approach for USAID to continue organizational learning about coordinating across the nexus might be an adapted version of the Strategic Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) used in Ethiopia. This platform is internal to USAID but involves BHA and each of BHA's sister bureaus at a context-specific scale. Such a platform would allow BHA to respond faster, more effectively, and more efficiently by providing access to real-time context monitoring

during non-crisis times. It would give BHA the opportunity to influence development program designs to facilitate shifts to humanitarian responses and provide access to significant contextual information and networks of local actors to ramp up humanitarian responses.

Not all actors are happy to use the HDP Nexus approach as they understand it, citing several risks. There are concerns that encouraging actors to work outside of their specialty will reduce their effectiveness. In the current funding structure, funds are pillar-specific, which limits competition for that funding to actors in that pillar. Some see the nexus as more actors competing for limited funds, as actors outside a pillar can claim funding for work within multiple pillars. Over time, with the professionalization of humanitarian and development work, more and more demands are being made of implementing staff in-country. Some see the nexus as adding yet more onto their shoulders—that it isn't enough to be an expert within their own pillar, now they need to be experts in all pillars.

The most serious concerns regarding the HDP Nexus approach are related to the overt inclusion of the peace pillar. Single-mandate humanitarian actors fear coherence across all pillars will subsume their work into a political agenda. They worry that humanitarian work will be inappropriately called upon to solve political problems, causing a loss of access to vulnerable populations when humanitarian principles are violated. Each of these concerns is valid, and each actor will need to determine where to place themselves within the nexus.

Most concerns are based on a misunderstanding of that flexibility or of the coordinating elements of the Nexus. There is a range of options, from the minimum of being sensitive to the needs and activities associated with other pillars, to active collaboration with actors in other pillars, to simultaneously and actively addressing issues in multiple pillars.

The influence of or stress on each of the three pillars varies by context. In many situations, the peace pillar may be a minor concern, and programming in the humanitarian and development pillars may simply need to be sensitive to do no harm. In other cases, for example South Sudan, peace needs to be a major consideration in all activities, both to prevent exacerbating conflict and to allow immediate needs to be met equitably. Different actors within the same context also find each of their roles will place them differently within the nexus. Perhaps one program is anchored in one pillar but addresses issues in other pillars. Another program may be focused almost entirely on one pillar while being sensitive to dynamics in other pillars. With the nexus, the approach moves from viewing programs individually to taking a whole-of-context approach. As such, coordination of the nexus needs to be at the context level, which is usually the country level but may be a sub-country regional level. Coordination then includes building consensus and a unified vision among the actors.

The HDP Nexus approach is not simply about programming; it is even more about the structure of assistance, how different actors and their contributions interact—to include funding structures. Barriers posed by pillar-specific funding is regularly cited as the most significant barrier to applying the nexus approach. Above all, implementors call for flexible, multiyear funding that allows them to adjust to changes in the context, for example to pivot from development to humanitarian assistance early in a crisis to prevent it from escalating. While previous communities of practice leading up to the HDP Nexus touched on the need for new funding structures, the nexus approach calls for (and donors have committed to) providing support that encourages rather than discourages addressing simultaneously both immediate needs and root causes, providing enduring solutions. Government donors will need to work creatively and collaboratively to live up to this commitment.

Several investments need to be made for the Nexus approach to be widely applied. These include: 1) a high-level platform to systematically collect and promote learning related to the nexus; 2) context-specific platforms in-country, with associated funding, to bring the relevant actors together into a single whole-of-context approach; and 3) access for implementers to new types of information and new skill sets, potentially provided through advisors with multi-pillar experience and advisors with strong conflict analysis skills.

This report identifies four major take-away points:

I. The HDP Nexus approach has two major components: programming and coordination.

a. **On the programming side, the HDP Nexus increases stress on the "peace" element** and its relationship to humanitarian and development efforts. **Otherwise, most programming elements are already well developed within the DRR and Resilience communities of practice.**

b. **The HDP Nexus requires orchestrating the various actors and their capacities (coherence, complementarity, and collaboration)**, including the donors and their funding streams, to enable, encourage, and facilitate implementing agencies to either individually address both immediate needs and drivers of need or to complement each other in such a way as to address both in a coherent manner.

   1. This element is the most original concept that the HDP Nexus brings to the conversation and where it has the potential to have the most impact. It is an element that most government donors struggle with because funding most often comes to them already either earmarked to specific issues, or at the very least siloed into a single pillar, creating a major barrier for implementing agencies trying to work in the nexus.

   2. If coherence becomes a responsibility of the donors or local governments, the fear of some implementers is that donor priorities will eventually subsume humanitarian needs to meet a political agenda. Nevertheless, each context needs a central unifying vision (collective outcomes) driving the actors toward coherence and complementarity.

II. The HDP Nexus approach is a top-down movement, initiated and driven by OECD/DAC and UN. Resilience and DRR bodies of practice started more organically in the field and are working their way upward.

a. Due to a lack of experience and evidence applying the HDP Nexus concepts, there is very little guidance provided on what nexus programming best practices look like on the ground.

b. There is a strong body of evidence in resilience and DRR with practical experience that directly support the basic tenets of the programmatic parts of the HDP Nexus.

c. USAID has been a leader in Resilience programming. Any approach to the HDP Nexus should capitalize on that reputation, experience, and network to strengthen the multi-pillar nexus programming components.

III. Not all programs or actors need to address all pillars equally at all times.

a. Most of the confusion and push-back on the HDP Nexus involves confusion about how the different pillars interact, especially the peace pillar, and how actors are placed within the nexus in relation to the various pillars.

b. The appropriate emphasis of each pillar is context dependent.

c. In some contexts, the peace pillar may not be a major concern, but even in these instances, they must remain sensitive to their impact on peace.

d. A whole-of-context approach is necessary for coherent programming within that context.

IV. Two types of platforms are needed to facilitate further development and implementation of HDP Nexus thinking.

a. A high-level platform is general to the nexus community of practice to systematize development of nexus thinking. Smaller platforms

are specific to each context to promote a whole-of-context approach.

b. The fragmented discussion on how to apply the nexus approach is severely limiting its development and usefulness. The UN is promoting the approach before it has been fully explored even among its own agencies, causing confusion and uneven application. A system-wide platform is needed, with space for open discussion of risks associated with a nexus approach, constructive debate of best practices, and the systematic collection of evidence related to application of the nexus.

c. Context-specific platforms that engage all pillars are necessary for a coherent strategy. The difficulty is finding a balance of donor/UN/implementor voice in the platform to ensure maximum buy-in.

Introduction

Most international assistance has historically taken three forms: 1) long-term development through unilateral support to governments and through agencies specializing in development programming; 2) emergency support to address immediate urgent humanitarian needs through agencies specializing in humanitarian programming; and 3) direct conflict interventions. Over time the families of donors, academics, and practitioners for each of these types of assistance have developed their own culture, principles, and best practices based on experiences unique to the agencies and individuals working within them. They have also developed their own funding streams and timelines for achieving objectives.

From the point of view of the populations served by all types of assistance, these distinctions are not always clear or logical. Although some separation is necessary, their separation creates inefficiencies when the activities of one do not complement the activities of the other, either leaving gaps in unmet needs or overlapping and creating duplication, resulting in wasted resources and reduced impact. Occasionally, the different types of assistance may even appear to be promoting opposing agendas.

Humanitarian support to address crises has targeted immediate needs but has not typically addressed the underlying causes of these crises, leaving the population vulnerable to recurrences of these or other crises. Progress on long-term development to address root causes of poverty has often neglected vulnerability to risk, and gains are lost to recurrent crises. In general, neither humanitarian nor development programming have been particularly attentive to addressing people's vulnerabilities to these crises. Increasingly, conflict—especially protracted conflict—is a major driver of emergencies and vulnerability. While development and humanitarian assistance best practice is now meant to be at least "conflict sensitive," there is increasing pressure to influence the course of a conflict through addressing drivers of conflict—an aspect of programming into which many in the humanitarian and development families of assistance are not keen to enter. Specific actors, such as UN Peacekeepers or advocacy groups, focus on conflicts and drivers of conflicts, many of which are due to or exacerbated by the population's unmet basic needs or poor governance, pushing these "peace" actors into both humanitarian and development waters.

Multiple initiatives emerged from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit to address these disconnects (United Nations 2016; OCHA 2016; High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing 2016). The UN, supported by the EU, promoted a "New Way of Working" (NWOW) (World Humanitarian Summit 2016). NWOW proposes "collective outcomes" as common objectives to encourage better collaboration and longer visions to achieve these larger outcomes (OCHA 2017). At the same time, through the Grand Bargain, donors and humanitarian agencies committed to "enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors." (Grand Bargain 2016, 14). This workstream was closed two years later as the co-conveners decided this work was already covered under NWOW and other mechanisms. Nevertheless, out of this summit, the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus as it is now understood emerged and took its original form through these efforts.

Though the HDP Nexus community of practice is building on various concepts evolving over the past few decades largely from field experience, the roll-out of the HDP Nexus concepts has been a top-down movement, somewhat the mirror image of the more bottom-up Resilience and DRR movements. The nexus discussion to date has been predominantly theoretical, depending largely on logic and the experience of policymakers and donors, with some input from the field. There are anecdotes of individual programs that have successfully implemented individual aspects of the HDP Nexus and myriad reviews of the literature published, each promoting a specific view of the HDP Nexus approach, but there has been no coordinated, on-going systematic collection of evidence and good practice examples, much less systematic implementation of the approach.

This report is not meant to try to convince anyone that the HDP Nexus approach will solve the structural ills of the humanitarian and development industries, or even that this approach should form the basis for any organization's strategy planning. This report does aim to capture the key elements of the nexus theory as it now stands, describe the deeper concepts of the nexus, and discuss potential steps toward advancing the nexus as BHA sees it to support their larger strategy and mandates. The first barrier the authors encountered when beginning interviews was a misunderstanding of what the HDP Nexus entailed. To ensure the readers of this report have a common understanding of the nexus as the authors of this report, this report starts with a very brief review of the theory and core concepts of the nexus as the authors understand and apply them in the report. The report then provides a brief history of the development of the HDP Nexus community of practice and how different related concepts in the past have contributed. This section delves a bit deeper into the concepts and their implications. There have been numerous reviews that canvas the same literature, each with a slightly different emphasis. Instead of once more recounting the same literature in detail, this report will provide enough of a summary to enable an understanding of the concepts and then refer the reader to individual reviews that have explored specific aspects of the HDP Nexus particularly well. This approach leaves more opportunity in the remainder of the report to explore common difficulties posed by nexus thinking and programming, and potential strategies for moving forward. After reviewing the basic concepts of the HDP Nexus, the report will discuss the implications for implementing through a nexus lens.

Common terms used in uncommon ways creates confusion that fosters resistance.

A somewhat unique lexicon has built up around the HDP Nexus, one that uses many common words in very specific ways. Those not immersed in the HDP Nexus dialogue may only be exposed to summaries of policies or mandates relating to the HDP Nexus, and these may be misinterpreted when different meanings are given to these common terms. Misunderstandings often manifest as resistance. The HDP Nexus discussion begins with some brief explanations of some of these terms or phrases.

Many documents, especially those associated with the UN or EU, now simply state they will use the OECD definitions from the DAC Recommendation on the OECD Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (OECD 2020). These definitions draw on definitions used in an earlier United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report that appear to capture elements missing in the OECD definitions. In other cases, definitions are more informative and less burdened with jargon. This report does not propose to provide a comprehensive listing of all definitions. Instead, it provides some of the definitions more commonly used and which will be used for this report. In some cases, the authors have created working definitions where the literature does not provide an adequate definition.

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus itself is simply the interlinkages between or overlaps among humanitarian, development, and peace actors or activities.

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach—OECD defines the approach as "the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar—to the extent of their relevance in the specific context—in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict" (OECD 2020). The US Department of State equates "Relief and Development Coherence" with the HDP Nexus and defines it very simply as "an approach used in crisis response that seeks to coordinate and ensure complementarity between humanitarian and development assistance efforts" (USAID/PRM 2020).

Nearly all definitions found for the HDP Nexus (or Triple Nexus) are replete with jargon. They are almost a list of the concepts and terms associated with the HDP Nexus, and describe the relationships and interactions necessary to achieve the type of programming or results of the nexus. If you are not already very familiar with the jargon, then most

current definitions mean little. The definition created for this report describes the nexus itself while the OECD definition actually describes the approach to implementing the HDP Nexus. This paper will use the following, reduced-jargon definition as the working definition of the concept of the nexus itself:

> A way of working with populations affected by or at risk of crisis, to ensure the immediate needs of that population are met, while simultaneously promoting enduring solutions and addressing root causes that create continuing risk to lives, livelihoods, and security; and which builds in protection against all risks (natural, economic and political) as an integral goal.

This is achieved only with integrated and well-coordinated policies and programs, maximizing the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors working toward achieving collective outcomes that:

- Meet basic human needs;
- Reduce risk and vulnerability;
- Address the root causes of crisis and poverty;
- Build resilience; and
- Prevent, mitigate, or resolve conflict.

This includes both long-term, enduring solutions and root causes as they are—at least to some degree—in tension with addressing immediate needs. In other cases, *failing to address underlying causes* simply ensures that addressing immediate needs will become a semi-permanent engagement. This definition considers conflict and drivers of conflict to be among the root causes of vulnerability to crisis.

Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding (both included in the peace pillar of the HDP Nexus)—Wielders's *Guidance for PDNA*[1] *in Conflict Situations* talks at length about the difference between conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding. Wielders states: "Conflict sensitivity is about the unintended and indirect potential impacts of interventions upon conflict dynamics (Wielders 2019, 6)," which is very similar to the widely accepted "Do No Harm" approach (Anderson 1999). Wielders goes on to distinguish conflict sensitivity from peacebuilding: "A conflict-sensitive approach results in the identification of risk and opportunities to ensure intervention strategies do not worsen existing (latent) tensions, but rather help strengthen social cohesion if possible. Peacebuilding interventions go one step further by aiming to address drivers of conflict" (Wielders 2019, 6).

Conflict analysis—Conflict analysis helps "establish an accurate understanding of the root causes, proximate causes, triggers, dynamics, and trends of conflict as well as stakeholders involved, impacts on the people, the operational environment and the UN" (UNSDG 2020, 5) and other actors.

Capacity—Rarely defined in humanitarian and development work, international actors tend to see capacity in terms of organizational capacity, administrative and operational processes, and the scale of work that can be accomplished in a particular sector (Barbelet 2019). But local actors tend to see capacity as the ability to do. For example, "the capacity to: analyse and understand contexts, community dynamics, local conflicts and politics; engage with affected people to understand their needs; and negotiate, manage and maintain access" (Barbelet 2019, 5).

Coordination—This apparently simple concept is rarely defined in terms of what it means to the Nexus but is generally recognized to be much more developed and formalized in humanitarian than development communities, largely due to the nature and intensity of humanitarian responses. An early definition of humanitarian coordination that is now commonly cited by the UN is "the systematic utilization of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner" (Minear et al. 1992, 6). Minear et al. go on to list various instruments, among them strategic planning, orchestrating a functional division of labor in the field, and managing information. This definition could be applied to the actors and activities of all three Nexus pillars—among and within the pillars.

[1] Post-disaster needs assessments (PDNA).

Coherence—Like coordination, coherence as applied to the nexus is rarely defined, but is often used and applied to different entities. The authors define coherence as the combining of differing entities, actions, or plans into a single, integrated whole with each entity moving in the same direction toward the same ultimate aims without inhibiting the other entities, but while each retains independent identities and agency.

Collaboration—Multiple actors actively working together to improve their outcomes. Each may be doing different activities, or all may be doing the same activity. In terms of the HDP Nexus, "collaboration" often includes actors from different pillars working together. Collaboration implies a closer relationship than coordination but is less intense than coherence.

Collective outcome—"A commonly agreed measurable result or impact enhanced by the combined effort of different actors, within their respective mandates, to address and reduce people's unmet needs, risks and vulnerabilities, increasing their resilience and addressing the root causes of conflict" (OECD 2020, 6–7). This definition is based on an earlier definition proposed by OCHA in 2017 in its New Way of Working booklet (OCHA 2017). The UN often equates the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with collective outcomes, but actors should not restrict their thinking to the SDGs.

Comparative advantage—OECD defines this as "the demonstrated capacity and expertise (not limited solely to a mandate) of one individual, group or institution to meet needs" (OECD 2020, 3). In most cases though, there is a component of comparing and superiority not captured in this definition. OCHA's earlier definition is more complete: "The capacity and expertise of one individual, group or institution to meet needs and contribute to risk and vulnerability reduction, over the capacity of another actor" (OCHA 2017, 7).

Complementarity—Complementarity is a word that has become common in nexus parlance in reference to any number of facets but is seldom directly defined or discussed. It is similar to collaboration, but in complementarity, each entity has a different role depending on what each entity can do better than the others in a particular situation. Barbelet provides one of the very few working definitions: "An outcome where all capacities at all levels—local, national, regional, international—are harnessed and combined in such a way to support the best humanitarian outcomes for affected communities" (Barbelet 2019, 5). For this report, our working definition will be: bringing together the different strengths and comparative advantages of all actors or activities, often from multiple pillars, in a way that the outcomes of each supports the outcomes of the others to be more effective in achieving a collective outcome.

Previous concepts leading up to the HDP Nexus contribute to the concept of the nexus but are not exactly the same

In multiple interviews contributing to this report, interviewees showed exasperation at "yet another" iteration of the same concepts. Each would quickly cite the list below. It is true that all the concepts described below are addressing the same very basic riddle of working out the relationship between addressing urgent critical needs of a population and addressing the root causes and long-term needs of that same population.

Like the interviewees, most readers of this report will be very familiar with each of the concepts leading up to the current HDP Nexus community of practice, so this report will not go deeply into the history and description of each. Instead, after a short explanation, the contribution each has made along this path will be described to show that, while there is overlap, each iteration had something to contribute to the understanding of this fractious humanitarian-development sibling rivalry.

Relief-to-Development Continuum—Gaining momentum in the 1980s as humanitarianism began to professionalize, the Relief-to-Development Continuum proposed a linear, sequential shift between relief and development. The continuum starts with development during a stable time. A shock happens. Development work stops and relief steps in to meet urgent needs through a stage

of recovery until the population returns to their pre-shock level of well-being (Anderson 1985). Relief programming then steps out and development programming resumes. The Relief-to-Development Continuum was the first formal conceptualization that recognized there was a need for humanitarian (relief) and development implementors to coordinate hand-offs.

Linking Relief Resilience and Development (LRRD)—By the mid-1990s, there was increasing recognition that the relationship should be more than a hand-off and that these different phases should be better linked. Relief could be done in a way to facilitate the shift to development, and development could be done in a way to mitigate the need for relief. "Recovery" was seen as a bridge between the two. Nevertheless, LRRD continued to think in terms of a somewhat linear process (Mosel and Levine 2014). Even now, funding streams embody this separate, phased linear thinking. Donors often shy away from simultaneously funding both humanitarian and development programs within the same population, sometimes designating one branch or the other of the donor organization to be responsible for an area.

Relief-to-Development Contiguum—Emerging almost simultaneously with LRRD, the Contiguum questioned this linear, serial model (Anderson 1985). A linear model leads to gaps and uncertainty during hand-offs from relief to development or the reverse. During this time of emerging protracted conflicts and recurring natural disasters, there was a growing recognition that there were opportunities for all phases to be applied at the same time in the same place. That is, immediate lifesaving needs could be met by humanitarians while development programs continued to address root causes—or one agency could to it all (Mosel and Levine 2014). Although this model, like the previous models, included development, most of the discussion centered around crises, and the development community was slow to enter in.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)—USAID describes DRR as "anything we do to prevent or reduce the damage caused by natural hazards" (USAID 2012b). USAID include early warning systems, hazard analysis, and supporting building codes as examples of DRR activities.

Many development theories and interventions focus on increasing production and wealth but may end up increasing vulnerability and inequality in the process. DRR shifted the focus partly from wealth to vulnerability and risk. As early as 1984, Anderson proposed that "disasters are indicators of the failure of development. Development is the process of reducing vulnerability" (Anderson 1985). More recently, a consortium of Catholic organizations also made explicit the connection between DRR and development: "Disaster risk reduction and resilience programming not only contributes to reduced suffering in the event of disasters, but also helps to preserve development gains and reduces the cost of humanitarian action. Both humanitarian and development agencies understand the need to prioritize DRR/resilience programming" (CRS, CAFOD, and Caritas Australia 2017).

Several interviewees from multi-mandate organizations indicated that during most of the previous movements listed above, as well as early HD Nexus discussions, most of the initiative has been from the humanitarian side. They explained that the development-focused sections of their organizations only became truly interested the HD Nexus through DRR. Most DRR activities are conducted during stable times in preparation for shocks, primarily recurrent natural disasters to which an area is prone, leaving discussions of conflict aside. DRR also tends to target specific threats and hazards rather than the general capacities of communities and households.

Activities and projects continue to be labeled "DRR," especially within the development community, and tend to run parallel to resilience programming. The five-NGO Taadoud consortium in Darfur, Sudan is typical of a "multi-sector" program (Sida, Gray, and Abdelsalam 2018). They promote resilience in part through DRR activities that directly address individual natural hazards. Much of the DRR discussion now overlaps heavily with or is converging with resilience discussions and working groups.

Resilience—USAID's resilience definition is similar to most other definitions of the term and appears to be an exercise to use all terms associated with resilience in a single sentence: "The ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulner-

ability and facilitates inclusive growth" (USAID 2012a, 5). Although USAID may generally apply this concept more often to development programming, the practitioner population applies it more often to humanitarian programming (Kindra 2013).

As explained by one interviewee, resilience grew out of observations among practitioners and donors working in contexts where protracted crises or recurring shocks were not improving; humanitarian efforts were not addressing the root causes of the shocks and people's vulnerability to them. Resilience was initially seen as a way to bridge humanitarian and development programming, allowing humanitarians to conduct interventions that previously would not have been funded by humanitarian funding streams, as well as to encourage development programs to integrate reduction of vulnerabilities (USAID 2012a; Wagner and Anholt 2016). A strong motivating factor for donors to support resilience was the hope that more investment to address root causes would eventually reduce the need for and especially the cost of humanitarian assistance in chronically troubled areas (Collins 2021; 2015). USAID's 2012 policy and program guidance sought to "decrease the need for repeated infusions of humanitarian assistance" (USAID 2012a). In reality, **resilience's contribution to the evolution of humanitarian and development thinking was to take a deeper look at how populations themselves deal with shocks of all types, their vulnerabilities, and strategies rather than focusing on a specific shock itself.** Resilience started with a bottom-up approach, looking initially at vulnerabilities and then at systems that create those vulnerabilities (Keating and Hanger-Kopp 2020).

Resilience gained momentum as a means to promote the HD nexus, "bridging" humanitarian and development responses (Wagner and Anholt 2016). An OCHA Position Paper on resilience, harkening back to LRRD, states "a linear, phased approach to relief, recovery and development has not been successful in preventing recurrent emergencies in regions of chronic vulnerability or in making sustained improvements in protracted emergencies. A more integrated approach is needed that simultaneously and coherently addresses short, medium and long term needs" (OCHA 2013, 1).

Like DRR, the concept of resilience was initially applied to natural disasters, but increasingly resilience programming has included conflict as a driver of vulnerability to either be sensitive to or to address directly, bringing the Resilience community of practice into even closer alignment with the HDP Nexus (Hilhorst 2018). There is, therefore, a very large overlap in what the Resilience movement and the HDP Nexus are ultimately trying to achieve.

DRR and resilience both focus on risk as a common element to bring humanitarian and development programming into alignment. The HDP Nexus takes this one more step, stressing collective crisis management.

The HD nexus concept and the addition of peace

Underlying all stages of this evolution there has been a general, unstructured conversation about the relationship of humanitarian and development approaches—the HD nexus (small n). The concept of the HD nexus was an underlying theme of these different evolutionary stages rather than a distinct movement as seen in the more formal UN/OECD HDP Nexus (capital N). The HDP Nexus became a more formalized approach with the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit Grand Bargain, when the Secretary General added "peace" into the mix (World Humanitarian Summit 2016). The call to put it into practice was taken up as a New Way of Working by the UN and the OECD, especially among the European donors (United Nations 2016; OECD 2020; OCHA 2017). Donors in the EU began to also include conflict, forced displacement, and fragility of states in the nexus (European Union 2017). The nexus literature and discussion made a shift around this time from the HD (double) nexus concept to the HDP (triple) Nexus community of practice (Kittaneh, Sr. and Stolk 2018; Alcayna 2019; Center on International Cooperation 2019; Dalrymple 2019). A simple reference to "the Nexus" came to be shorthand for the HDP Nexus approach and community of practice rather than the double nexus concept, unless otherwise specified. Following this pattern, in this report, unless it is clear from the context that we are speaking about the HD nexus, the standalone capitalized term "Nexus" will refer to the HDP Nexus approach.

What is the HDP Nexus approach?

During interviews with practitioners, academics, and donors to inform this report, our first observation was that all had heard of the nexus. Even when interviewers used other words to frame the purpose for the interviews, the interviewees themselves used the term "nexus," often distinguishing between the Double (HD) and Triple (HDP) nexuses. Most had a strong grasp of the HD nexus concept and the issues related to the interaction of humanitarian and development approaches. Few had a firm grasp of the HDP Nexus approach and what it proposes to do. Those with a negative impression gave several basic reasons: 1) this is one more transformative agenda, a reframing of past agendas, being pressed onto them, requiring yet more effort or expertise that would have little to show for it in the end; 2) this is a way for the other side of the nexus to expand their mandate to access our funding; and 3) principled arguments against the addition of peace into the mix, by which they interpreted the HDP Nexus to require humanitarians to directly address conflict or to partner with armed actors.

Is the HDP Nexus just the Continuum/Contiguum/LRRD/DRR/Resilience reframed? Are these fears well-founded?

The first few minutes of many interviews for this report started with the refrain, "The nexus is nothing new." In many ways, they are correct, the HDP Nexus is not a completely new concept. As shown in the previous section, there has been a long evolution in thinking leading up to the current HDP Nexus thinking.

Exploration of what the HDP Nexus really is and what it means for practitioners and donors means delving into the issues, implications, and opportunities of the HDP Nexus approach. In doing so, we hope to provide a better understanding of the HDP Nexus approach to allow the individual members of the humanitarian and development communities to make more informed decisions about what parts of the nexus to participate in.

What is different about the HDP Nexus?

As seen in the previous section, each community of practice has overlapped with and built on previous stages of HD approaches and thinking, but each has also added an extra element or two. The HDP Nexus approach appears to add two new elements. First and most obvious, it presents a much stronger focus on conflict, stability, and peace (framed as "peace"). The HDP Nexus places this new pillar on equal par with the humanitarian and development pillars as something to be directly targeted rather than just incorporating peace into those pillars as something to be sensitive to. Resilience work had already incorporated security concerns as a risk or vulnerability, though the UN appears to be willing to take the peace pillar of the HDP Nexus as far as peacekeeping (IASC 2020; UK Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). Second, the HDP Nexus approach offers hope of providing high-level structure to facilitate programs or collaborations that simultaneously address two or three pillars. Practitioners supporting the HDP Nexus hope this means that donors will go further to work collaboratively to provide a coherent funding approach that supports programming in the HDP Nexus. Funding mechanisms to support nexus programming will require a serious effort on the part of the donors to find creative solutions to the limitations posed by each donor's government's funding allocations.

A comparison of nexus and resilience concepts and approaches

Both the concepts and struggles of the HD nexus and resilience have been around for decades. Resilience became a topic of primary topic of concern in the late 2000s and the HDP Nexus approach was pronounced by the UN about a decade later. Some see the HDP nexus as simply a reframing of resilience, led by different champions. Others see them as entirely different concepts. This section will explore the similarities and differences of the two concepts.

According to both concepts, humanitarians must think beyond solely meeting immediate needs and development actors must incorporate risk of shocks (USAID 2012a; European Commission 2015). In the HD nexus, the humanitarian, instead of thinking solely of the immediate needs post-shock, must also think ahead to the next time this shock happens, or the trajectory to a stable state when external support will not be needed. Humanitarians in the nexus must consider if their activities are reducing or exacerbating drivers of need or vulnerability. Development actors must think about how the next shock will affect a population and any gains they have made, and even perhaps how to prevent that shock through addressing drivers of shocks and crises. In Resilience, actors must also think along these lines, but the focus is less on the category of actor, and more on how to design appropriate activities or programs to address these concerns.

Regardless of their similarities, the HDP Nexus is not simply a reincarnation of resilience. Resilience (to shocks) is a capacity of a population (or perhaps a government), often broken down into the now familiar absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities. Resilience programming is programming that strives to build this capacity within the population. The capacity for resilience can be promoted by one actor, within one program, though agencies like USAID emphasize that resilience capacities are multi-faceted and better addressed through sequencing, layering and integrating multiple programs across multiple actors (USAID 2012a). The HDP Nexus as proposed by the UN focuses primarily on coordination among the various categories of actors and improving the impact of assistance rather than building the capacity of a target population. A single organization can implement a program that covers more than one pillar and therefore be classified as a nexus program, but the point of the HDP Nexus is maximizing impact by focusing the efforts of multiple actors.

Although the two concepts are not iterations of each other, the HD nexus and resilience have nevertheless long been closely associated issues. As resilience became a focus in the international aid community, bridging the humanitarian-development gap was seen as necessary for ensuring a resilient population. For example, a report commissioned by the European Commission in 2015 stated, "Bridging the gap between humanitarian and development actors… is seen as a very important factor to building resilience" (European Commission 2015, 43). At the same time in the aftermath of the Somalia famine, resilience was seen as providing a bridge between humanitarian and development programming (WHO 2021; United Nations 2013). Frankenberger et al. proposed "promote resilience as a common perspective and a common objective," going on to explain, "This will require establishment and maintenance of close working relationships between agencies traditionally focused on either humanitarian or development assistance" (Frankenberger et al. 2012, 19).

With the formalization and expansion of the HD nexus into the UN's conception of the HDP Nexus approach and their focus on the SDGs as a common objective, the relationship between the nexus and resilience has weakened.

The initial core UN guidance on the HDP Nexus has hindered the breadth of its buy-in. The very title of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus emphasizes distinct camps of actors and activities that must somehow be brought together into a

single unit rather depicting independent actors with independent identities and priorities, working together toward those objectives which overlap. HDP frameworks like Howe's or the framework proposed by this study incorporate a full spectrum of actors and activities with a very large grey area in which it is difficult to label actors and activities as clearly one category or another (Howe 2019). Most implementing agencies now consider themselves "multi-mandate," open to addressing needs across the spectrum and open to collaborating across the spectrum. They require no such labels as "humanitarian" or "development" for their own work, but welcome efforts to break down these divisions among funding streams. In the resilience approach, the classification of actors or activities as "humanitarian" or "development" is much less prominent. Resilience's focus is on the needs and activities more than the actors. This avoids much of the artificial classifications.

There are, of course, actors who consider themselves completely humanitarian, guided strongly by the humanitarian principles, committed to meeting immediate needs during crises. These actors interpret the UN's version of the nexus as requiring them to lose their independent identity and objectives, to associate themselves or even to mingle identities, with actors or activities in ways that violate their principles or mandates. And yet, these same actors are willing to adjust their ways of working to promote resilience. MSF promotes the fact that they work with local health systems to meet health needs during an epidemic in a way that builds local capacity to respond to the next, or to remove the drivers of that disease (MSF 2020b; 2020a). And yet MSF categorically refuse to work in the HDP Nexus as framed by the UN because that may associate them with actors in another class that does not aspire to the humanitarian principles, and would divert attention away from urgent needs to address less urgent needs (Belliveau 2021). In the words of Joe Belliveau, Executive Director of MSF Canada, "Conflating these two approaches dilutes the principles that underlie humanitarian action, and de-prioritizes immediate life-saving response to catastrophic events. And the assumption that responding to humanitarian emergencies can simply be an extension of broader Sustainable Development Goals will leave many responsible agencies under-prepared when crises hit, creating delays that will put additional lives at risk" (Belliveau 2021).

Seen in this way, resilience's historic emphasis on programming over organizational coherence may encourage wider acceptance. This is a lesson the still nascent HDP Nexus approach should take to heart. Focusing on what needs to be done and how to do it first may lay the groundwork for a more organic approach to a measure consensus, and a focus to unify disparate actors.

Nexus thinking—looking at the bigger picture

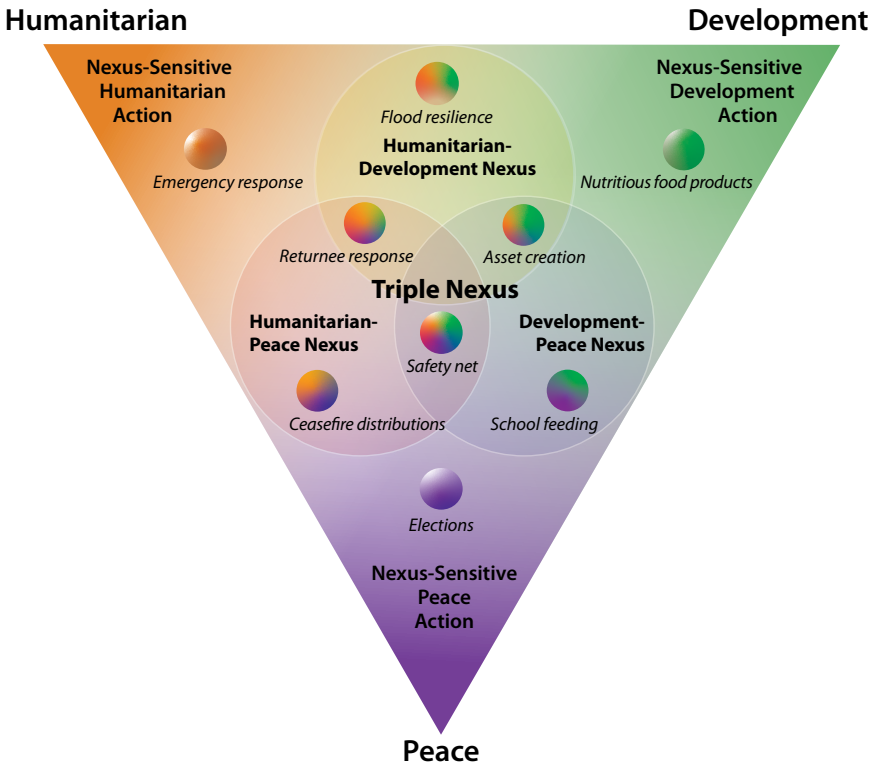
Communities of theory and practice for humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding have tended to be siloed—each with its own set of principles, best practices, language, ethos, and even bad habits (Mosel and Levine 2014). The HDP Nexus approach aims to do more than simply get these silos to coordinate their separate activities or to "bridge" the silos. Instead, the HDP Nexus approach aims to get the different communities to understand how their own approaches affect the outcomes of others, to share some of their values and goals, and ultimately, the success of shared objectives (DuBois 2020). In programs designed with a nexus lens, each community of practice retains its unique expertise, employing it in a way that achieves their individual objectives while also supporting the other communities in order to increase the ultimate benefit to the populations they serve.

> "Nexus-thinking refers to a future culture and ideology where the mindset within the three sectors is sufficiently cross-pollinated that the differences become technical, not normative and not hierarchical."
>
> (DuBois 2020, 10)

Howe has proposed a framework to describe the concept of the nexus concept in practice, and to make some specific points about the Nexus that are not always clear in narrative descriptions (Howe 2019). One of his points is that nexus programming is not about one single three-way relationship, rather it is three two-way relationships, plus one three-way relationship.

Howe's framework uses a triangle to depict the full range of possible interventions (Figure 1) (Howe 2019, 5). Each point of the triangle represents one of the three pillars. Within that triangle are three circles, each positioned half-way between two points of the triangle, each circle overlapping the others. Each circle indicates one of the double nexus relationships. Overlaps of the circles indicate opportunities for programming that addresses all three pillars. Activities that more clearly address a particular pillar are positioned closer to that point of the triangle, but even those nearest the points must remain sensitive to the other pillars. Those within the circles directly address at least two of the pillars. Where the circles overlap, all three pillars are directly addressed. There are different sections within the triple nexus areas. Three of these areas point towards a particular pillar, reflecting the reality that even a program that actively addresses all three pillars will usually be anchored in one of the pillars as a primary focus. Only the small area at the very center is pillar neutral. There is significant flexibility for how directly individual activities or programs address various pillars, positioning themselves at various points within the triangle. In the HDP Nexus approach the choice of where to position oneself in the nexus is made with a view to the common objectives and the positions of others within the nexus space.

Figure 1. One example of a Triple Nexus conceptual framework, proposed by Howe (Howe 2019, 5)



During interviews for this report, much of the push-back against the HDP Nexus was based on a misunderstanding that the concept requires full overlap in the pillars, or that all actors must be equally engaged in all three pillars at all times. Nexus programming, as depicted by Howe's framework (Figure 1) demonstrates that not all programming must necessarily directly address all three pillars at once (Howe 2019). There are multiple double nexus relationships or spaces within the triple nexus framework. At times it is enough for a program design to simply be sensitive to its impact on the other pillars and structured at a minimum to limit working at cross-purposes, but hopefully in a way that might facilitate or multiply the impact of others' work in other pillars, complementing other actors work to ensure gaps are covered. Other times, depending on the context and the expertise of an actor, the actor may have opportunity or reason to simultaneously directly address vulnerabilities or needs associated with two or even all three pillars. Within the framework's triple nexus areas, we see that sometimes certain double nexus relationships are more important than others. In other words, even when working within the triple nexus areas, not all pillars may be equally involved. Seen as depicted by this framework, **there is more latitude and freedom in how actors may engage than is often portrayed in literature promoting or critiquing the HDP Nexus approach.**

Every concept can be depicted in multiple ways, and each framework stresses different points. Below is a series of images using a highly modified version of Howe's framework to bring out differences in the way the triple nexus applies in different contexts (at the cost of some of the nuances in Howe's framework). In this proposed framework, the authors use three circles to depict the opportunities or needs associated with each of the three pillars of the triple nexus. The larger the circle, the greater the opportunities or needs. Where two circles overlap, there is an opportunity or need to simultaneous address two pillars. Where all three circles overlap, there is a triple nexus opportunity or need.

Throughout the HDP Nexus literature a very common refrain is that programming in the nexus is context specific (OCHA 2017; Alcayna 2019; Center on International Cooperation 2019; Dalrymple 2019; Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019; Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2021). Figures 2 to 5 show how seeing differences in contexts through a nexus lens and focusing on shared goals affects the interpretation of the context to appropriately tailor not only the mix of activities, but also the way activities are conducted and promoted. In this framework, each circle represents the opportunities to address a particular pillar. Where the circles overlap, there are opportunities to address each of the overlapping circles. The larger the circle, the larger the relative need or emphasis for that pillar in that context.

Figure 2. A stereotypical concept of the HDP Nexus

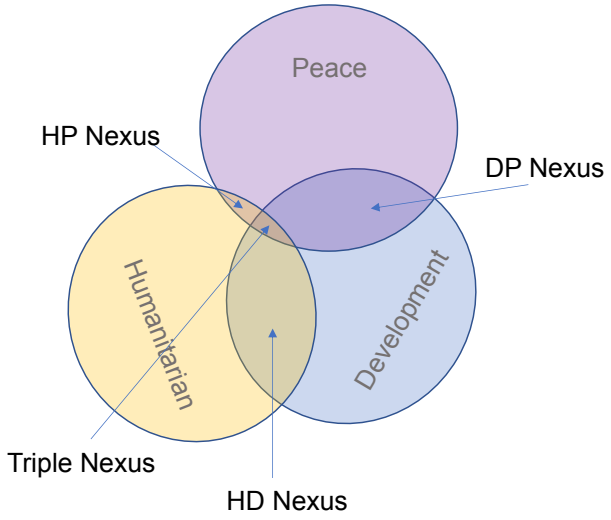


Figure 2 reflects how nexus programming in a stereotypical context is often described by interviewees. The three pillars have equal need and opportunity (equal size circles). There is a fair overlap of development with each of the other two pillars depicting significant opportunity for the HD and DP nexuses. But there is much less overlap for the HP nexus, and very little opportunity or need for simultaneously addressing all three.

Figure 3. The HDP Nexus in stable, but non-conflict crisis prone, underdeveloped contexts

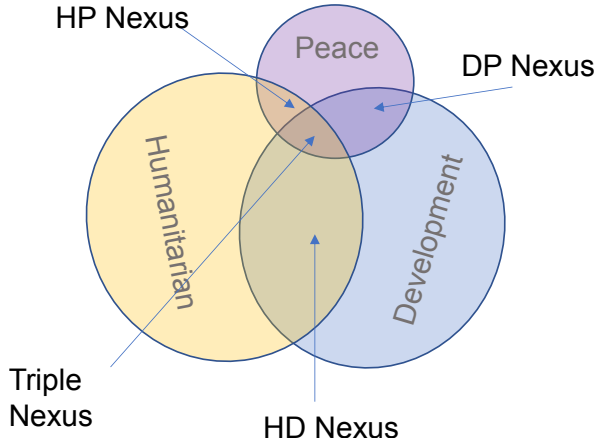


Figure 3 shows a different context, perhaps that of the Kenya Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs).[2] These areas are remote, prone to drought, and have very little infrastructure. They are generally stable, with some localized security risks but not overt conflict. Both humanitarian and development needs are large, with significant overlap. It may be that a conflict-sensitive approach with active monitoring through regular conflict analysis is sufficient, rather than large-scale activities directly addressing conflict or supporting peacebuilding.

2 Arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Typically, livelihoods in ASALs are heavily dependent on livestock and are supported by limited cultivation, with few other livelihood opportunities. These areas are prone to drought.

Figure 4. The HDP Nexus in contexts where underdevelopment is driving insecurity and instability, but with few humanitarian needs

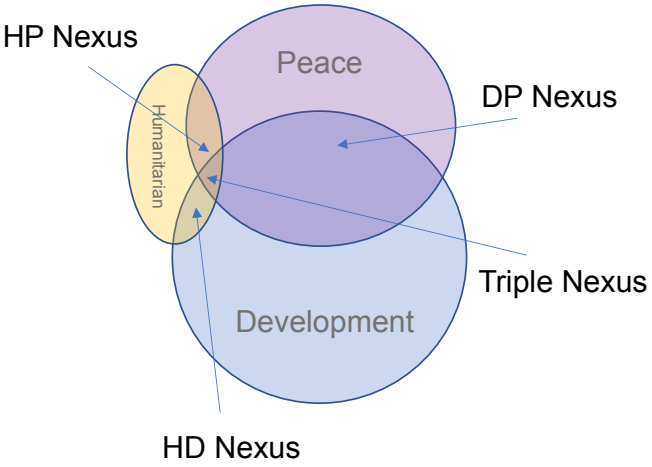
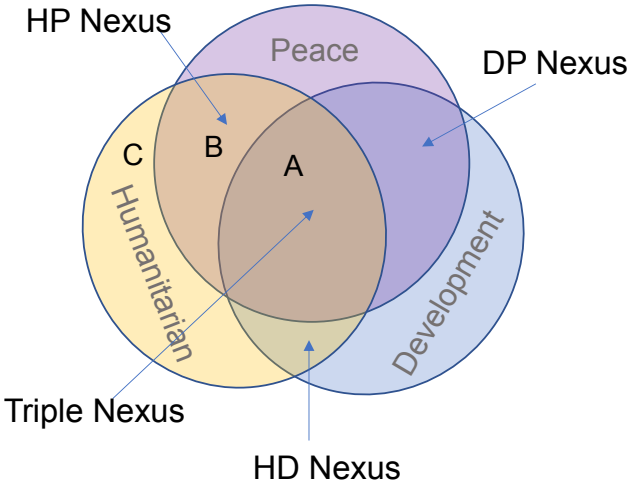


Figure 4 depicts a context such as northern Sri Lanka, Kashmir, or Honduras where insecurity has a large impact on the population, but there are few immediate humanitarian needs. Nevertheless, the population is made more vulnerable to shocks due to weak/unequal development that may be driving conflict, such that development or peace initiatives must also be sensitive to or attempt to mitigate risks.

Figure 5. The HDP Nexus in complex, protracted crises in under-developed contexts



Finally, Figure 5 shows a truly complex, protracted emergency, like South Sudan, Darfur, or eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where all three pillars have so much overlap it is often difficult to assign a specific need or opportunity to a single pillar. If the majority of the interventions are not addressing at least two pillars directly, then there may be an issue requiring more strategic collaboration. As one interviewee explained it, if you are not considering peace in your program in South Sudan, then you won't have a positive impact on the situation, wasting resources and an opportunity.

By first evaluating the full context jointly, actors can come to a consensus on collective objectives, negotiating or organizing themselves in ways that complement each other—and in doing so, develop a unifying vision. There is considerable flexibility to individual actors within the nexus framework to find a place where they have a comparative advantage and which is in accordance with their principles.

In complex, protracted emergencies humanitarians generally try to distance themselves from the government and all other warring parties in order to maintain the humanitarian principles. The intention of these principles is to protect and address the needs of the population during conflict. Figure 5 proposes that most humanitarian action within certain contexts, like complex emergencies, can best meet the needs of the population (the intention of the principles) by including consideration of the conflict dynamics in most of their interventions. It does not mean that all humanitarians need engage directly with politicians and warring parties, but that they should design their interventions with an informed awareness of these dynamics, and where possible, design them in a way to mitigate the drivers of the conflict or support mechanisms that will protect lives and livelihoods. For example, in the conflict-affected regions of South Sudan all activities should be informed by the drivers of that conflict, right down to the geographic placement of a clinic. If a clinic is placed without local consultation, populations from other clans may not have access to it, increasing tensions, generating further conflict and endangering the very services they are seeking to provide. On the other hand, through joint consultations with all parties, they may be able to get agreement on the placement of the clinic with open access to all. Such consultations, though specific to the provision of healthcare to meet an immediate lifesaving need can also lay the groundwork for positive, constructive interactions between the clans, reducing tensions.

A single-mandate humanitarian program designer at Point C in Figure 5 might ask: Where can we place a clinic so all can safely access it? Are there barriers that may exclude certain groups? Will the placement be seen as favoring one group over another and further the grievances of inequality used to justify the conflict?

A single-mandate humanitarian program designer at Point B might also ask: Is there a way to safely serve the health needs of both parties to the conflict from the same clinic? Is there a way to do this that would allow the two parties attending the clinic to begin to see each other as humans rather than faceless enemies (i.e., begin to address root causes of conflict)?

A multi-mandate program designer at Point A might ask: How can we hire staff to meet immediate health needs, who represent both sides of the conflict to ensure the clinic and its services can endure within context of the conflict? How can we structure the clinic and its protocols so the government will integrate it into its services after the conflict?

These nexus frameworks are meant, above all, to stress a whole-of-context approach to needs and opportunities as classified by the three pillars. Though any one activity or actor can place themselves in any area of the diagram, much as in Howe's diagram, the bigger idea is that by focusing on the whole of the context first, and engaging all actors together, one can see more strategically the most effective approaches to emphasize as a community of actors and where each is best placed to maximize complementarity and comparative advantage.

Example: The HDP Nexus and Darfur pastoralist mobility

The HDP Nexus is about working together to see the bigger picture and striving toward that bigger picture, not just working simultaneously in the same place on the part of the problem that fits our sector. Actors from each of the three pillars, each working within their own pillars are not likely to have as much impact as actors working across the pillars, taking a whole-of-context approach through the HDP Nexus, integrating and layering their activities to ensure the widest range of needs possible are met.

Pastoralist herding livelihoods in Darfur depend on mobility to sustain their livelihoods. Pastoralists usually migrate out of heavily cultivated regions during the rainy season. When a region they normally migrate through lacks water due to a localized drought (something that happens every few years), the migration is impeded, and the herds may not be able to migrate away from the cultivated regions during the agricultural season. The lingering herds raise demands on local water sources and local pasture and increase chances of conflict when livestock wander into cultivated fields. In Darfur, where relationships are strained, this local conflict can easily escalate into a regional flare-up.

A pure humanitarian response in this situation might provide water and fodder for the trapped herds until they can continue their migration. A pure development response might teach the farmers how to build stronger fences to protect their crops. A pure peace response might be to help the farmers and pastoralists negotiate how to handle incidences of crop damage peacefully. Each might be successful in its own way, but ultimately, they are less effective than using an HDP Nexus approach. The collective goal is to ensure healthy, prosperous livelihoods that are resilient to localized droughts and reduced risk of conflict. In this context, interventions must simultaneously consider all three of the pillars—and this is sometimes a simple solution. HDP Nexus solutions require more focus on the problem, whereas individual organizations tend to look for a solution that is specific to its own pillar or specialties.

In a similar situation, local actors proposed the revival of traditional, strategically positioned herd support stations with watering points through drought affected/drought-prone areas to allow the herds to quickly migrate through areas typically cultivated or with a shortage of water points. Because of the highly polarized relationships between these populations, every activity would need a component that directly addressed how to deal with control, use, maintenance, and conflict over any resource. At first, the support stations could be rapid, temporary points to move the herds during the current drought, with an eye to building more permanent stations to address risks associated with recurrent droughts. The establishment of support stations would need to be done in a way that considers the local sustainable management of these new resources and the impact on the natural resources and livelihoods of those residing near the new stations to ensure that one solution does not create another problem (Young 2007). Encouraging the production of fodder among the farmers (not on grazing land) to sell to the pastoralists on migration could be promoted as a strategy to protect their own crops while also earning extra income. Such an approach could increase constructive interactions between the populations and further reduce risk of conflict.

Nexus thinking

As early as 2013, discussions in ecology were using the term "nexus thinking" applied to balancing the interlinked needs of food, water, and energy as the three pillars. In this thinking, when trying to address an issue in one pillar of the nexus, one "must equally consider the other two in the nexus." (Smedley 2013) Taylor-Wood and Fuller defined their version of the nexus approach applied to this ecological system using "nexus thinking" as "a way of thinking and approaching decisions rather than a fixed solution or response" (Taylor-Wood and Fuller 2017). They promoted understanding the dynamics within each pillar and their interrelationships rather than focusing on any one pillar individually.

To the HDP Nexus, "nexus thinking" is focusing on the needs of the population and being aware of the interactions of the pillars but not being limited by them. This is in contrast to the tendency to try to include activities that can be labeled as belonging to each of the pillars. In the proposed HDP Nexus framework, one cannot say a particular intervention belongs in a particular part of the framework without understanding how it is being implemented and within what context. For example, on the surface, constructing an irrigation system to increase productivity might be considered a pure development intervention. In a drought-prone area, it might be considered Disaster Risk Reduction and fall into the HD nexus. If conducted in a drought-prone area with potential conflict, based on informed analysis about the drivers of the conflict, an irrigation system that required the cooperation of the two parties in order for anyone to benefit might be considered an HDP Nexus intervention. Nexus thinking, therefore, is not about assigning specific activities to each pillar—it is about the way we evaluate a context and the needs of that context as a whole.

These examples are all from the very bottom, or ground, level. DuBois contrasts some of the innovations generated by the current top-down HDP Nexus approach—multi-year funding, funding frameworks, etc. with those generated by nexus thinking (DuBois 2020). He implies that top-down innovations are good and necessary for supporting programs in general, but they focus on the inter-agency dynamics rather than "people-centric objectives" that should be the driving and unifying force in a given context. To a certain extent this is true, but these top-down interventions are very necessary to provide the structure to enable the people-centric, context-specific strategies.

Under the current situation, a donor offers pillar-specific funding, usually for a pre-identified or ear-marked issue. Actors within that pillar who feel they have a competitive advantage or specialty in a sector individually (or in small consortiums) investigate the needs and context, and their ability or desire to propose a way to address the donor's identified issue, competing against others within that pillar. With the exception of grants for small consortiums, there is little-to-no incentive to jointly plan for common objectives, and the fact that the funding system sets actors to compete for funding within the same sector and context actually inhibits this approach.

Using a nexus lens, (or "nexus thinking") in an ideal world would mean the first step would be for all potential actors to jointly develop a common understanding of the entire context without regard to pillars, focusing on the needs of the population, the drivers of those needs, the dynamics within the population, and the barriers they face (Center on International Cooperation 2019). With this deeper understanding in mind, the entire HDP community sets ultimate goals and objectives (collective outcomes). From there, they create a strategy and an action plan to meet that goal in a way that is sensitive to other complicating factors, thereby remaining people-centric and avoiding doing harm. Only then do the actors and donors examine the comparative advantages of each actor to fulfill the parts of the action plan. These steps are how actors apply the central concepts that are touted so frequently in the nexus literature that they have become a sort of meaningless mantra—coherence, collaboration, complementarity, comparative advantage, and collective outcomes.

This sort of thinking and planning cannot be done by one actor alone, or by individual actors in competition with one another. And yet the current humanitarian and development system is structured for competition rather than collaboration (Carpenter and Bennett 2015; Center on International Cooper-

ation 2019; Metcalfe-Hough et al. 2021). Poole and Culbert explain, "Competition for resources, profile and protecting mandates run counter to nexus aspirations to work collaboratively and according to comparative advantage" (Poole and Culbert 2019, 20).

This is where the higher-level commitment present in the HDP Nexus approach but absent from the DRR and Resilience communities of practice becomes necessary for success. The major donors and signatories of the Grand Bargain's true contribution to the nexus is both simpler and more complex than that of the implementing agencies—it is to encourage and facilitate the actors within a context to address the population's needs through a nexus lens by providing funding and structure that is flexible enough to support innovative actions and combinations of actions that are not clearly aligned to a specific pillar. This requires creative structural changes to the donor system, broadening the array of approaches and mechanisms for funding.

The structure of the HDP industry reflects the structure and requirements of the funding streams on which it depends. Though funding pools reduce this impact, the majority of funding available to implementing actors is currently obtained piecemeal through calls for proposals or pledges, already funneled into a particular pillar with very specific objectives usually predetermined by the donor, and rarely connected to other grants or actors in a larger strategy. In most cases, the implementor will use the label of "nexus" for multi-sector development programs with a small DRR activity embedded within it (often poorly integrated with other activities in the program). Multiple key informants described a process in which a single implementer, or even a small consortium of implementers, trying to work in the nexus must either try to find enough of the right combination of the right types of grants to assemble a program to address needs across pillars, or try to convince a donor with funding in one pillar to be flexible enough to fund activities that are not traditionally associated with that pillar. In rare instances, it may mean collaboration among a small group of implementers who happen to have secured funding for complementary programs.

Bottom-up resistance to the HDP Nexus

Unlike the Resilience and DRR communities of practice, the HDP Nexus has been a top-down approach. In many organizations a small group broadly defines the concepts of the HDP Nexus approach, relates them generally to organizational concepts, and transmits them out to the organization through a guidance document without further dialogue on how they truly apply. Not only do many people then misunderstand or misapply the concepts, but they also do not feel they can openly express their concerns or objections because the directions are mandated by donor and agency top management. More than any other study undertaken by the authors in recent history, key informants on this study (especially those in donor organizations) noted the researchers' promise of confidentiality when describing concerns about the nexus in their organizations indicating they did not feel they could speak freely and openly about their concerns. This fear of speaking openly was greater than studies of topics (sexual abuse, conflict dynamics, aid diversion and corruption) that at face value would seem much more sensitive than the nexus.

Some concerns are legitimate and discussed elsewhere in this report. But some of the more common concerns are based either the person's or their organization's misunderstanding of the basic concepts. Some of the most common misconceptions were:

1. All actors/programs must fully engage all pillars at all times;
2. The peace pillar equates to peace-building;
3. All pillars are equally important (i.e. a humanitarian organization would have to give the peace pillar equal attention), and the HDP Nexus is applied in the same way regardless of context;
4. Addressing root causes will come at the expense of meeting immediate needs;
5. In the HDP Nexus, humanitarians will need to become experts in development and vice versa.

1) In response to the first concern: there is much more flexibility working in the HDP Nexus than is often assumed. Actors can place themselves or their programs as they are comfortable within the nexus framework. A single-mandate humanitarian agency can place itself on the far edge of the humanitarian pillar, not directly engaging with either the development or peace pillars. Nevertheless, that agency would still need to be aware of the drivers of conflict to avoid exacerbating it unintentionally and would need to work in such a way as to not undermine local systems. For at least twenty years, this has been considered best practice even for single-mandate humanitarian agencies. One of the major points of the HDP Nexus, though, is that where an organization places itself depends in part on consideration of where other actors are placing themselves and their own comparative advantage among the actors within a context. This is a step where the donors can contribute significantly—providing or supporting a platform for the different actors to first come to a consensus on the needs of the population and their common objectives, and then to work out each agency's role (thereby placing themselves somewhere within the nexus). Donors can facilitate this whole-of-context approach through providing a platform, and encouraging participation in that platform by providing funding that will support activities across the nexus. This could be through a single donor with flexible funding, or through a mix of donors who, together, can cover the nexus as prescribed by the needs of the context.

2) The peace pillar is much broader than just peacebuilding and encompasses opportunities for humanitarians to engage with this pillar in ways that do not violate the humanitarian principles. Generally speaking, "peacebuilding" is actively addressing the root causes of conflict either during or immediately after the cessation of open conflict, and this is only the most extreme example within the peace pillar. To many in the humanitarian community though, the peace pillar is mistakenly equated with peacekeeping and the armed protection of civilians. To others it is a political process. While these may be included within the wide sphere of the peace pillar, the peace pillar is much broader than that and humanitarians have a duty to the populations they serve to keep this pillar under consideration when designing and implementing programming. For example, the "do no harm" best practice is about conflict sensitivity, implementing programs from any sector in such a way as to avoid exacerbating conflict at a minimum, and mitigating conflict or contributing to the peaceful resolution of conflict, where possible (Anderson 1999).

3) and 4) While all pillars of the nexus are important, Figures 2-5 demonstrate how certain pillars take on greater significance depending on the context. In most parts of Yemen, Syria, or South Sudan, the peace pillar will need to play a much greater role in the program design and implementation to prevent inadvertently stoking tensions, risking the safety of staff and beneficiaries, and thereby failing to meet the needs of the population—but even in contexts where active conflict is not a major concern, the pillar remains important to think about. To work in development while ignoring the drivers of conflict—inequality, marginalization, etc.—risks reinforcing those negative forces and increasing the risk of conflict. Referring to the Rwandan genocide, Peter Uvin declared, "Development aid basically lived in a well-intentioned but separate sphere, following its internal dynamics, almost totally unrelated to the political and social trends tearing apart the country" (Uvin 2001, 280). While working in the nexus, humanitarian programs and teams should always be alert for opportunities to address root causes of all shocks, including conflict, and there will be more opportunity or need to do this in some contexts than others.

5) As humanitarian and development work has become professionalized, more and more is being expected of field teams, requiring more and more skills, adding more and more cross-cutting themes to integrate. Some fear that the HDP Nexus adds one more burden onto these teams. Applying nexus thinking requires humanitarian teams to be aware of root causes in order to avoid exacerbating them. Where possible, humanitarians should try to creatively meet immediate needs such that they also at least begin to address root causes and drivers of vulnerability. Again, these are already recognized best practices. Programming using a nexus lens is first and foremost following current best practices.

There are occasions when one program can simultaneously actively address needs in all three pillars, but these are rare occasions and miss the main thrust of the HDP Nexus. Humanitarians are skilled in one sphere and development professionals in another. Few are expert in both. The HDP Nexus is not about one entity being able to do everything, though often they will cover needs in multiple pillars. Rather it is about orchestrating the various actors so that each can work in their own expertise (comparative advantage), but in such a way that it supports those with other expertise (complementarity). This requires actors in different spheres to build constructive relationships and to interact more frequently.

Organizational adjustments to accommodate nexus programming

It is understandably difficult for multiple agencies to agree to work in the same direction toward the same collective outcomes, but many interviewees reported there were disconnects within their organizations—both horizontally between departments and vertically between headquarters/technical units and the in-country teams.

Reflecting trends seen among donors, larger multi-mandate organizations tend to have more distinct humanitarian and development departments than smaller organizations. Each department may have a separate line of management and often even different financial and human resource officers, with very little direct interaction between them. Even when working in the same country, the two departments from the same NGO might operate as unrelated or only distantly related organizations with different physical offices and lines of reporting. This separation is in part due to practical reasons, like different timelines, funding sources, acceptable levels of accountability, procedures, spend rates, and human resource needs. Unfortunately, this separation often creates a disconnect in programming. The synergy hoped for in the Nexus is replaced by competition.

Smaller multi-mandate NGOs tended to have more continuity and appeared to be forced (or facilitated) by their smaller size and more limited resources to have made more progress coming to terms with HD nexus programming. Smaller organizations were also more likely to be actively engaged with government and local NGO counterparts, neither of whom were particularly concerned with the somewhat arbitrary divisions between humanitarian and development programming. Although the smaller size of these NGOs simplifies communications and cross-pollination, the inability to fund completely different humanitarian and development teams has also pushed them to pragmatically develop a more unified, flexible operational system and approach to programming. This is achieved by providing more autonomy to the field offices and expecting individuals to wear more hats. The field offices may not be clearly designated "humanitarian" or "development." Programs are supported by a combination of humanitarian and development technical experts, or by technical experts with experience in both communities of practice. These structures are therefore much more flexible, naturally incorporating Nexus thinking with fewer organizational or procedural hurdles.

The differences between these two types of organizations were reflected in the language used during the interviews. Staff in larger organizations, especially donors, talked about "handing over" a program or "passing the baton" from humanitarian to development or the reverse. The smaller, less visible organizations may provide lessons in reconciling the organizational and theoretical tensions between humanitarian and development (and possibly peace) pillars.

In-country advisors to address skills gaps

In addition to structural changes within organizations, two skills gaps have been identified both in the literature and during interviews: integrating humanitarian and development programming, and conflict analysis (Center on International Cooperation 2019; FAO 2021; SIDA 2020; Medinilla, Tadesse Shiferaw, and Veron 2019).

Organizations with a strong focus on either the humanitarian or development pillar often lack personnel who understand the other pillar and

how the pillars interact. In many multi-mandate organizations, especially the larger organizations, the organization will have individuals with skills in humanitarian practice and others with skills in development practice, but seldom individuals with skills in both. This division continues down to the country-level teams. Multiple sources cited the need for individuals who have skills in both pillars to provide a bridge between the two pillars within the same country team, both to foster communication between the two parts of the organization and to ensure the programs are designed and managed to incorporate the context-specific aspects of integrating the pillars (Medinilla, Tadesse Shiferaw, and Veron 2019). The general suggestion was to include an in-country advisor for larger programs, or to designate an individual within the country team with these skills to work with the other team members.

> "Context/conflict analysis tends to be done as a one-off rather than as a dynamic ongoing process. It is not yet adequately informing programming. Ongoing conflict and contextual analysis, as well as risk analysis, is essential to equipping and informing senior FAO leadership in-country. While countries in conflict tend to be prioritized, there is evidence that this is useful to inform programming in a variety of contexts" (FAO 2021, 42).

Conflict analysis was the most cited barrier to incorporating the peace pillar. In an evaluation of their progress toward working in the HDP Nexus, FAO echoed a repeated emphasis on the necessity of conflict analysis, noting their work in resilience had helped them to have "a deeper understanding of these conflict drivers, especially where supported by a dedicated context/conflict analysis" (FAO 2021, 30).

Conflict analysis is often treated as something needing to be done only once, or rarely. Dalrymple and Hanssen explain,

> "Development actors typically undertake assessments during programme design and often update their analysis of the context and country strategies only every four years. Furthermore, their capacity for ongoing political and conflict analysis varies and their investment in this expertise in seemingly stable contexts is particularly limited. In Cameroon this has meant that some development partners have been slow to recognize and adapt their response to the deteriorating political situation" (Dalrymple and Hanssen 2020, 64).

Risk and conflict are dynamic, changing over time and are very context specific. To be responsive to changing needs and risks, the analysis needs to be on-going, done by those with expertise both in conflict analysis and in the context itself, and intimately familiar with not just the program goals, but the manner in which the program team is pursuing those goals. How are local staff recruited? What does community participation look like? How is access negotiated? How do program activities and implementation methods interact with some of the more subtle risks? Hiring analysts as consultants periodically will not give the necessary continuity and level of context and program specific understanding.

Interviewees explained that regional and headquarters-based analysts and advisors cannot maintain an adequate understanding of the changing dynamics within multiple contexts, the local dialogues related to programming decisions in that context, nor the risks a given program design will face or may exacerbate. While the cost of a resident conflict analyst for every program or even organization may not be feasible, in-country analysts shared by several organizations may be able to cover this need while also providing a unified vision of conflict risks, though the fear is that this may be taken too far, spreading the analyst too thin to be useful. Veron and Hauck suggest capitalizing on the expertise and knowledge of local context inherent in local organizations (Veron and Hauck 2021). While local organizations may understand the local context, they may need support in formalizing their understanding into critical analysis that supports programming.

Discussion

Reflecting on the information covered in the previous sections, we note again that the HDP Nexus is built on previous learning. There is much that is not new, but much that is new. Each of a long list of movements or agendas preceding the current nexus approach has added incremental learning, which has accumulated. The HDP Nexus takes much of what was learned in these previous movements and adds something of its own.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Resilience have evolved somewhat simultaneously. Both started from very different points in very different communities of actors. Over time, each has come to recognize conflict as a driver of vulnerability and risk. While both have historically focused on technical expertise ("how" to do effective programs), both have also increasingly found that addressing the full scope of needs and underlying causes within a single context requires the coordinated efforts of different types of actors positioned differently within the nexus, almost naturally assuming collective outcomes. Both have also run into structural barriers, mostly related to funding streams and inflexible funding. Nevertheless, they come by different paths to arrive at similar positions recognizing conflict as a driver of risk that must be addressed, though they express this position using different lexicons, retaining somewhat different priorities, and practiced by different communities of actors.

The HDP Nexus has incorporated programming aspects from Resilience and DRR but has approached these and the organizational components from yet another direction. The HD nexus discussion assumed the peace pillar was implied within the HD nexus, but the Secretary General in his speech at the World Humanitarian Summit made it more explicit (Ki Moon 2016). Unfortunately, the addition of the peace pillar has become more of a distraction than a real addition to the conversation, alienating the more principle-oriented agencies. The HDP Nexus's most significant contribution is the elaboration of the organizational components necessary for truly achieving coverage across the nexus. The HDP Nexus as described by recent literature is less about how to do programming and more about who does what in relation to other actors.

As the HDP Nexus has rolled out, implementing organizations and UN agency "guidance" has for the most part explained the theory to their field programs but has left each country program and area of technical expertise to work out how to implement that theory. Donors have followed a similar path as the UN agencies, producing policy documents and theory about implementing the nexus, but they have not set about systematically learning how to make the nexus real across the organization. There have been multiple attempts covering small geographic areas or groups of agencies, but their methods have not been systematically applied and lessons have not been systematically collected (ALNAP 2021; FAO 2021; UNICEF 2021). This lack of a systematic approach to guidance and systematic learning has resulted in a wide range of interpretations of the theory and some confusion about expectations in expertise and programming. Ironically, these donors—the signatories of the Grand Bargain Commitments leading to the HDP Nexus—have not adapted their ways of working to fully facilitate the nexus and are often the greatest barrier to programming that incorporates nexus thinking.

In some ways, best practices for the design of individual programs within the nexus are already being captured by the DRR and Resilience best practices and learning (Petryniak, Proctor, and Kurtz 2020). The new and more difficult part of the HDP Nexus is the organizational part—how to orchestrate the funding and the activities of multiple communities of actors with different priorities and ways of working to support each other and to move toward common goals.

Orchestrating efforts: taking a whole-of-context approach

"Nexus" has become the term de jour in humanitarian and development reporting, labelling many individual programs as nexus programs simply

because they contain activities in more than one of the three pillars or multiple actors covering multiple sectors in the same geographic space (Frankenberger, Constas et al. 2014). These often miss the point of achieving something larger than one program, of directing all efforts in a context toward common goals, with each actor and each pillar's programs supporting the others. To do this, the full body of actors must together to consider the context as a whole, building a consensus about the priority outcomes to create collective outcomes. The selection of collective outcomes should shift from negotiating among individual agency objectives for pre-eminence among objectives to something based on the needs of the context.

> At its core, the HDP Nexus is about the relationships among the actors and how they work together to achieve more impact.

During interviews, key informants repeatedly pointed out that to truly implement the nexus, we must figure out the organizational component of how actors work together to achieve more impact. At its core, the HDP Nexus is about these relationships among actors and how they work together. More experienced actors in both resilience and the HDP Nexus said this can only be done when there is a centralizing platform or body bringing the varied actors together.

The creation and management of the platforms is very sensitive and key to their success. Implementing agencies each have their own mandates and priorities and are jealous of their independence. Very often donor or UN agencies approach the creation of platforms as an instructor assembling a class or a father assembling his children. International NGOs, on the other hand, approach these platforms as working among siblings with minimal hierarchy. The participation of local agencies who likely best understand, even in current coordination platforms, is generally undervalued by all types of international agencies and inconsistently included. Understanding these dynamics and views are important to maximize buy-in and impact.

When collective outcomes are really UN or donor selected outcomes rather than those arrived at by the members of a platform, or when the platform becomes a means of governing the activities of the participants, it becomes less attractive to implementing agencies. The cost of participating and the risk of losing independence becomes greater than any of the benefits they might receive through collaboration. On the other hand, when left to find commonly valued outcomes through consensus-building, the tendency may be to aim low, seeking the easy answer instead of grappling with the difficult issues for meaningful outcomes. The management of the platforms and the orchestration of the actors should not be seen as a way to herd the various agencies into the platform manager's plans and priorities, a major complaint among participants of the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience who were interviewed. Rather, the management of the platforms should aim to orchestrate the actors by facilitating true consensus-building to find appropriate objectives according to the needs of that context.

This orchestration of actors is so incredibly complex, multiple interviewees explained, that to learn how to do it we should start at the lowest, simplest, feasible level. Then when that is mastered, the platform could be either replicated or extended. The level of organization to start with should be sufficiently high to address an entire crisis or context, but not so high as to include multiple different contexts and therefore multiple sets of needs and an even larger array of actors, priorities, and collective outcomes.

Many collaborations and platforms have been tried to address some of the aspects of nexus thinking and label themselves as nexus platforms but do not take it to the point of deliberate whole-of-context planning and organizing. Still, there are a handful that do. Two very different platforms were named by multiple key informants as examples. USAID was a key actor in both, though has stepped back from the PfRR. The boxes below provide descriptions of these case studies.

Case study #1: South Sudan Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR)

According to the website for this platform, "The South Sudan Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) is a collective of donors, UN agencies, and NGOs working together to increase resilience and reduce vulnerability of the South Sudanese people and the institutions who represent them" (https://www.southsudanpfrr.org/). A central tenet of this effort is to provide a cohesive, comprehensive effort to cover a single geographic region, seeking to address the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding needs of that region, including addressing vulnerabilities and poverty reduction. The platform has attempted to proactively push this agenda through the coordination of multiple actors. The effort, led by the Steering Committee, is dominated by the donors and UN agencies (PfRR 2018b). In essence, the PfRR is a platform for donors and UN agencies to create a common understanding of how they, through partners, will approach humanitarian, peacebuilding, recovery, resilience, and development needs within a geographic area. One of the reports explains, "PFRR is not a project or programme with funding windows, but a platform for realignment of our joint efforts in providing collective and complimentary support to resilience building in Partnership areas" (PfRR 2018a). Nevertheless, the intention was that donors would align their funding within these areas to the PfRR-linked Joint Work Plans.

As planned, the PfRR fits many of the criteria of a true example of the nexus approach. It is looking at the whole of the context (a geographic region), promoting collective outcomes, and coordinating actors and efforts across all three pillars. The PfRR is a good example of one of the first steps in learning exactly how to implement the nexus approach. The plan itself appears to be quite sound. As with most first steps though, there have been serious struggles with effective implementation. Extensive efforts were invested up-front to establish this platform and explain the process to more than 90 actors, including the local government. A group of 25 organizations from the UN, donors, and NGOs met and identified six "commitments" that approximate collective outcomes.

To develop this platform concept, the platform promoters selected a geographic area with few agencies already present, encouraging them to begin programming as part of the PfRR strategy. It is unclear how the initial target geographic areas were selected, but the selection appears to have been the first misstep. Key informants from some of the implementing agencies who had planned to join the platform expressed frustration during interviews that the target areas selected were not the higher-need areas prioritized by the implementing partners. Instead, interviewees felt the selection was made by the donors sponsoring the platform, based on donor expediency and priorities, who chose areas that were least conflict affected and most stable, "easy" areas to showcase project outputs rather than choosing areas based on a sincere effort to have impact. Conflict was the primary driver of need in the country, but it could not be addressed directly in the initial areas selected, limiting the value of the platform for some actors. Eventually, at the behest of implementing partners, Wau County (a conflict-affected area) was added to the areas covered, but cohesive funding has remained elusive. Some participants interviewed question the real value of remaining a part of the platform.

USAID has since taken elements of the PfRR and focused on other geographic areas within South Sudan, incorporating the partners already in place, using the platforms as a place to encourage a unified vision and sharing, but shifting governance to other channels.

Case study #2: Strategic Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) in the Ethiopia USAID Mission

While the PfRR was a platform intentionally created as an approach to embody the New Ways of Working with all actors, SAGE is a much smaller platform internal to USAID. Currently, SAGE includes a group of advisors with representation from all parts of the Mission, procedures for reviewing and advising new development programs on their shock-responsive aspects, and a database for monitoring the context and USAID partner activities throughout Ethiopia. SAGE emerged organically over time, as in-country USAID needs and understanding changed; it has grown into a more formal platform that now influences programming in line with the nexus.

SAGE evolved organically over time from a weekly informational meeting during the 2015/2016 El Niño droughts with representation from throughout the Ethiopia USAID Mission, including sector offices, Feed the Future, Food for Peace, and the Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance. In the initial meetings, each representative gave updates on funding, activities, and needs. The humanitarian representatives explained how they were responding to the drought. The Mission Director would then ask the development actors how the ongoing development programs were "pivoting" their resources in response to the drought. Pivoting was not easy, as flexibility to adjust activities in the case of shocks was seldom included into the original development project plans and budgets.

At first, development programs simply paused during a crisis while they waited for humanitarian agencies to respond, funded directly from Washington DC. These humanitarian responses were not always coordinated with ongoing development programming. Without this coordination, the humanitarian responses were not able to capitalize on the local networks the development programs had worked years to build or the programs' intimate understanding of the context. This process was not optimal for either side of the nexus, reduced the potential positive impact on the ground, and increased risk of negative impacts. Through the El Niño droughts, the weekly meetings, with all USAID offices represented, generated a better understanding among development representatives of the need to incorporate mechanisms like crisis modifiers or other elements into their contracts to facilitate such responses.

Since the mission and key members found the meetings helpful, they continued long after the droughts and were formalized as SAGE. In addition to sharing information for coordination, SAGE reviews proposals to ensure they are shock responsive and advises on how best to respond in the early stages of a crisis. Through SAGE, humanitarian representatives have been able to influence development programming to become more shock responsive and more effective at addressing risks associated with shocks. The SAGE meetings also created an awareness among the humanitarian representatives of the vast array of development programs throughout the country, especially those in crisis-prone areas, and the valuable local networks and contextual understanding the humanitarians could tap into when shocks hit. By understanding the local development capacities, the humanitarians can better plan their own responses and exit strategies. Gradually, internal processes developed such that any new proposal is now reviewed by SAGE to advise on its fit with other programs (coherence). This last point has been crucial to ensuring programs (both activities and funding) are able to flex to respond to emerging crises. According to Peters and Pichon, "Crisis modifiers should be deployed alongside adaptive programming

approaches, to ensure there is sufficient flexibility to deal with transitions into recovery and back" (Peters and Pichon 2017, 4).

The Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) is technically a "development" strategy for the Mission. In such a crisis-prone country as Ethiopia, this CDCS also needed to stress disaster risk management (DRM) throughout. During the 2019–2024 CDCS development, SAGE was instrumental in bringing together expertise from Feed the Future, Food for Peace, OFDA, the local government, and the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP).

The very first Development Objective is "Disaster risk management is strengthened" (USAID 2019, 12). The CDCS report elaborates: "Enhanced disaster risk management (DRM) and conflict prevention capacities will mean Ethiopia will not rely on humanitarian assistance, except in the most extreme circumstances." Intermediate Result I.3 is entitled "Emergency response provided more effectively" (USAID 2019, 15). This sections states that "USAID and GOE [Government of Ethiopia] development programming will become more shock-responsive and adaptive." It also states that SAGE will "ensure rapid programmatic pivots of development programs when shocks occur" and USAID will "ensure humanitarian response is conducted in a manner that contributes to future development."

Incorporation of DRM as an explicit Development Objective within the CDCS made all parts of the Mission accountable for incorporating DRM into their programming. This could be interpreted as pulling BHA under the umbrella of the Mission or expanding outside of their mandate. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted as the Mission's commitment to support BHA's programming by allowing BHA to influence development programs in a way that facilitates BHA's entry during crisis and reduces demands on BHA humanitarian resources.

SAGE normally handles small, localized emergencies, striving to address shocks before they create large-scale emergencies. Since the El Niño/La Niña droughts of 2016-17, there have been two national emergencies: the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Tigray. As the pandemic erupted, a separate working group was established almost as an automatic response. After some push from the SAGE coordinator, this working group was absorbed into SAGE. With the eruption of violence in Tigray, SAGE immediately moved into action, providing real-time information from development partners in the affected area, and supporting them as they figured out what activities could continue and how to operate in this new environment. As the scale of the crisis and displacement became apparent, development partners did not immediately react or call for crisis modifiers to be enacted. SAGE actively encouraged partners with capacity on the ground to submit crisis modifiers or other funding requests to meet emerging needs. Because SAGE had a complete picture of USAID partners and capacity in the region, they began to link up partners to support each other in practical ways. The USAID desk officer in Nairobi used the SAGE database to answer inquiries from Washington DC. The wealth of current information available about the context and background to the crisis was provided to the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) when it was activated four months into the crisis, linking them directly to partners in the affected area. DART members rotate every three months, but SAGE's close relationship with the DART, allowed the platform to provide some continuity and bridge gaps between DART teams. SAGE is now facilitating discussions between the DART and the Mission on strategies for responding to the ongoing crisis. The Ethiopia Mission may be in a unique situation, with significant continuous humanitarian assistance and simultaneous development assistance on a large scale, but the concepts proven here may be applicable elsewhere.

Coordination does not happen spontaneously and needs to be built at multiple levels. Currently there is no recognized platform or structure for coordinating actors across the pillars. Experience with humanitarian sectors and then clusters indicates that coordination which facilitates rather than dominates requires a learning process through experimentation. Both the South Sudan PfRR and SAGE in the Ethiopia USAID Mission have evolved significantly since their inceptions as they have learned how to work with their respective participants. Other organizations are also experimenting with ways to implement the nexus within their organizations and within partnerships.

Multiple sources interviewed suggest the country level may be the easiest and potentially most appropriate level to organize nexus actors (donors as well as implementors—local, national and international-and government line ministries where appropriate). There is a real cost to working within a coordinated framework rather than independently; therefore, there must be an effort to minimize these costs and to increase incentives for actors to participate (Veron and Hauck 2021). Donors are uniquely positioned to provide this incentive. One potential approach for USAID to learn more about facilitating across the nexus might be an adapted version of the Strategic Advisory Group for Emergencies used in Ethiopia. This platform is internal to USAID, so it is a simple place for USAID to start, but it involves BHA and each of BHA's sister bureaus as well as the Mission. Such a platform would allow BHA to respond faster, more effectively, and more efficiently by providing access to real-time context monitoring during non-crisis times, the opportunity to influence development program designs to facilitate shifts to humanitarian responses, and access to significant contextual information and networks of local actors to ramp up humanitarian responses.

Once USAID has been able to experiment internally, adjusting the structure and procedures with experience in multiple contexts across multiple crises, additional actors (other donors, local government where appropriate, implementors, etc.) could be invited to join, gradually extending the scope of the platform. Gradually increasing the scope of partners in each platform would allow each additional tranche of actors to participate in the learning and feel some ownership. This could result in a learning curve that is not as disruptive as launching a broad platform from the start and perhaps could garner more support along the way. It would however require a long-term vision.

The value to BHA of a whole-of-context standing platform

Global needs for humanitarian resources exceed the available funding. The humanitarian community must therefore triage where it dedicates its resources, generally requiring a threshold of need to prevent expending too much on myriad smaller crises.

We know that early action is key to reducing the scale of a crisis and therefore the global requirements for emergency response. In the earliest stages of an emerging crisis, only development actors are present. They generally lack the expertise to respond and are often reluctant to shift their attention away from their ongoing programming goals, even when their target population is affected by a crisis. At times, SAGE provided the encouragement and even pressure for development programs in Ethiopia to consider addressing an emerging crisis. Through the SAGE platform, early action to respond to emerging crises is now incorporated into each program's Development Objectives and proposals. If development programs can pivot resources as they see crises approaching in areas where they are working, under the guidance of experienced humanitarians, they might prevent some crises from rising to the point of triggering a need for humanitarians to expend limited resources. Additionally, some localized crises do not reach the threshold at which humanitarian resources will be made available, but the impact of the crisis, when left unaddressed, erodes gains made in development, leaving the population more vulnerable, setting the stage for larger future crises. Development organizations lack the specialized understanding and skills necessary to plan and flex to catch emerging crises (comparative advantage). They need the support of humanitarian advisors who also understand development. The Ethiopia USAID Mission developed SAGE to address just such a situation.

Ideally, a nexus platform would include representation from all actors in a context—donors, implementors, and local government. For learning purposes, it may be more strategic to start with a smaller objective with fewer actors—for example, the participation of different USAID agencies and implementing partners within a single country or context. A nexus platform would need to be operational in a crisis-prone context even when there is no crisis, yet would need to include humanitarian expertise.

A whole-of-context SAGE-like platform internal to USAID is beneficial to BHA in multiple ways:

1. All USAID agencies present within a Mission, including BHA, are represented to lend their expertise.
2. During non-crisis times, the platform tracks and maps indicators and trends across the country. Such tracking can provide BHA early insight on emerging crises and data for early warning/early action and targeting.
3. The platform maintains detailed maps of implementing partners and activities. Emergency teams funded by BHA can immediately tap into this detailed network of activities and local partners with capacity when crises emerge.
4. The platform provides BHA the opportunity to influence development programming in a way that will facilitate the entry of BHA programming if a crisis arises and an exit strategy once urgent needs are met.
5. When development programs address risk and crises as they emerge, fewer will grow to the size requiring BHA to fund a response, reducing gaps from excessive demands on BHA funding and personnel.

In addition to platforms, the CDCS provides a way for USAID Missions to ensure nexus thinking is incorporated into the country's strategy. CDCSs often include elements of resilience, but these are often stand-alone elements rather than incorporating resilience thinking into all elements or the overall strategy. A collaborative, inclusive approach to developing components of the CDCS would provide a strong basis for incorporating nexus thinking.

The Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) as a tool to incorporate nexus thinking

The CDCS is USAID's country-level planning tool, detailing each USAID Mission's five-year strategy for each of their countries. While there are 80 USAID Missions, 56 CDCS are published and publicly available (USAID 2021a; 2021b). We reviewed four CDCSs recommended by BHA, plus eleven more randomly selected CDCSs to try to understand how these country teams incorporate the humanitarian and development nexus into their programming strategies[3].

Plans for those countries with protracted crises (e.g., DRC, Mali, and Afghanistan) or frequent repetitive cycles of crises (e.g., Ethiopia) had greater emphasis on resilience, acknowledged risk of shocks, and at least mentioned humanitarian work. Where most CDCSs mentioned humanitarian response or shocks, it was nearly always in terms of addressing poverty to reduce the odds that a humanitarian crisis will emerge, or stated simply that BHA would handle humanitarian crises as they arose rather than how the development programs would shift to address immediate needs as well as root causes. The Ethiopia and DRC CDCSs are the only plans found to specifically address building in mechanisms to pivot resources to address emerging crises, or the incorporation of true crisis modifiers. Only the Ethiopia CDCS included objectives to actively manage disaster risk.

Most CDCS objectives are clearly development oriented with the occasional inclusion of resilience, but rarely reference potential shocks, a true evaluation of shocks or of how disaster risk was incorporated into development plans. To be fair, the structure of the CDCS creates a focus specifically on development, using an outline of Development Objectives (DOs), with few cues to incorporate consideration of potential shocks. Some plans dedicate one DO or a couple of Intermediate Results (IRs) to resilience. These resilience-focused IRs describe, for the most part, separate activities related to resilience, (usually through poverty reduction) or to safety nets. They are replete with resilience jargon, but rarely demonstrate the application of the basic concepts of resilience.

A common theme under resilience DOs/IRs is the reduction of human trafficking (generally referring to economic migrants). Resilience is also often applied to natural resources and renewable energy, without reference to human welfare. In governments emerging from revolutions (political transitions), the thrust is the stabilization (resilience) of the government with perhaps a nod to human welfare or disasters. They include very little acknowledgement of threats other than institutional survival.

The Ethiopian CDCS is unique because it directly acknowledges the risk of specific shocks and requires actors with development programming to incorporate mechanisms to adjust those programs in the face of shocks—both to protect gains in development and to address emerging immediate needs. It makes use of existing networks of implementing partners with active

[3] BHA recommended Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Mali. Additional countries included were Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Ghana, Honduras, India, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Malawi, Sri Lanka.

programming, re-allocating resources or funding to respond to a shock. They also have provisions for an early warning system (EWS), incorporating monitoring of drivers of shocks and triggers for crisis modifiers into their usual development program monitoring systems. The EWS uses data gathered by the development actors as part of their routine M&E to supplement secondary data sources—and triggers to automatically spur early action.

All countries with USAID Missions have the potential to incorporate similar planning to require risk analysis, and to create and incorporate early response mechanisms into development programs to address shocks before they become crises large enough to warrant a full humanitarian response. As with the guidance this report suggests for implementing agencies, the incorporation of the humanitarian pillar into development programming will require specialized analysis of shock risks—their likelihood, but also their potential impact on both the population and the development strategy. Once created, the development strategy needs to include a way to monitor the risks and trigger responses. The need for this type of strategy is most obvious in countries more prone to humanitarian crises, but as we saw with Syria, no country is immune.

Capturing the rapid growth of nexus efforts

The programming side of the HDP Nexus is well founded in the experience of the DRR and Resilience communities of practice who by their nature require both humanitarian and development actors to consider needs beyond their traditional focus. But the organizational component of the HDP Nexus is based on theory and a small amount of experience. There is a groundswell of experimentation in many contexts by various consortia trying to figure out the best structure for implementing across the nexus. The two case studies exemplify two very different, unrelated efforts in which USAID is or has been involved. ALNAP recently hosted a webinar entitled "Measuring progress on the HDP Nexus: Evaluating Peer Learning Exchange," attracting over 90 participants from across the HDP community. The first half of the webinar was devoted to experiences with organizational evaluations on the HDP Nexus and the second half on discussing the peace pillar of the Nexus. Such a large turnout on this topic is an indicator of how widely organizations are experimenting and trying to learn, but also of the hunger to hear what other organizations are doing.

Currently, all these efforts are unconnected, and there is little learning systematically shared among platforms. Organizational or platform-specific publications of efforts to implement the nexus are more about marketing than critical learning. With such disparate efforts, organizations are likely to develop conflicting understanding and application of the nexus, making it even more difficult to come to a consensus on terms, much less the way forward.

Capturing critical accounts of learning from these experimental programs and platforms is crucial if the HDP Nexus is to advance the effectiveness of the humanitarian and development communities. Equally crucial is a space where participants can freely and without attribution openly discuss concerns with the nexus approach.

Conclusion

This report reviews the nature and evolution of the HDP Nexus approach up to its current state and suggests potential paths toward its realization. The HDP Nexus approach contains two major elements: 1) the implementation of programming in relation to the three pillars and 2) the interaction of the actors that will conduct this programming.

Previous movements and bodies of practice upon which the programming element of the HDP Nexus approach is built arose from practitioners and donors to address gaps identified during implementation, to improve impact on populations they served. These developments evolved (and continue to evolve) gradually through experimentation, supported by occasional academic theorizing and validation. Through a growing body of experience and evidence, they have slowly gained a measure of consensus and uptake through large sections of the community. Most of the concepts within the programmatic element of the HDP Nexus are based on these movements, especially Resilience and DRR. While programming in the nexus might address any technical sector (e.g. health, nutrition, wash, infrastructure, gender, etc.) the specific cross-pillar nature of resilience and DRR is particularly salient and can provide insights into designing programming in the nexus.

Unlike the programmatic element, the coordination element of the HDP Nexus, was launched as an initiative from the very highest levels, based on some experience, but based primarily on management theory and discussion among a limited group of decision-makers. In a reversal of the usual evolutionary trajectory, a mandate was issued to all UN agencies to implement the HDP Nexus, with evidence of efficacy in the approach, guidance, and even the development of theoretical foundations being developed now, after the fact. Though many agencies are adopting this approach, it is poorly understood and its top-down, reversed trajectory has resulted in significant hesitancy outside of the UN, and even among many individuals within the UN and USAID. Because of the mandate to implement the HDP Nexus without experiential underpinnings, there is continued debate on how it relates to the humanitarian principles, what is included in the peace pillar, and how various actors are expected to interact within it. There is considerable on-going experimentation on what the HDP Nexus looks like in practice and how best to achieve it. The lack of a central platform to systematically collect this on-going learning limits the learning trajectory.

Practically moving forward to adopt and implement the HDP Nexus within BHA would require experimentation, the systematic collection of learning, and space for open attribution-free discussions, including the freedom to question potential negative implications. The mandated nature of its implementation within the UN and those it funds has hindered free debate about how (and whether) to implement the HDP Nexus approach, reducing buy-in even from staff within agencies whose leadership have stated they will take this approach. Open, non-attribution platforms, both community-wide platforms and platforms internal to agencies considering taking this approach, are necessary to ensure it develops in a way that provides the maximum benefit to the populations whom it is our duty to serve.

Both the programmatic and coordination elements of the HDP Nexus approach require bringing together actors from disparate communities of practice. Context-specific platforms were repeatedly suggested by a variety of interviewees as central to implementation of the HDP Nexus approach. Because most funding streams are still very siloed (generally even more siloed than implementing agencies), these platforms can be avenues for donors from multiple pillars to come together to complement each other in order to provide funding across the pillars in a coherent fashion within a context.

Strategies to manage these platforms are key to their success. Platforms that are dominated by donors or UN agencies tend to become tools to promote their agendas rather than the common objectives of the members of the platform. Participation in a platform requires investment of time and human resources, and participants risk losing a part of their indepen-

dence. Platforms that do not provide real benefits to the participants, whether through improved impact, access to funding, or even visibility, will find participation lacking.

The collective aims and objectives of a platform reflecting a common understanding of the priority needs and pathways to meet those needs must be developed by the members through consensus building. The independent priorities and mandates of the many implementing agencies, and local governments where appropriate, must be respected and the actors permitted to figure out for themselves where they fit within the nexus, both philosophically and where they have a comparative advantage, but in a way that is informed by interaction with other actors to ensure gaps are covered and to minimize duplication. Platform management should therefore promote coherent whole-of-context strategies through encouraging collaborative dialogue and planning without dominating the discussion. The platform may then become a place for developing a unifying vision rather than top-down governance.

Context-specific platforms (or whole-of-context platforms) designing and implementing a coherent strategy must include real, significant participation by local voices whether through inclusion of local NGOs, government bodies, or local advocates. They should have leading roles on the platform where possible. Not only do these individuals and agencies provide key insights to maximize impact, they give the platform strategies credibility and increase the likelihood that the collective objectives reflect the priorities and needs of the population. Local agencies are less likely to be siloed, thinking naturally across the nexus, concerned with both immediate and longer-term needs, and will be present in both times of crisis and stability.

There are multiple, varied examples of platforms, two of which this report described in some detail. The development of HDP Nexus whole-of-context platforms within BHA would not need to start from scratch. Through proactive experimentation with various models, building on the experience, evidence and expertise BHA already has in resilience, BHA could relatively quickly provide significant contributions to more effective responses to crisis, as well as to reducing the overall demand on limited humanitarian resources.

This report identifies four major take-away points:

I. The HDP Nexus approach has two major components: programming and coordination.

a. **On the programming side, the HDP Nexus increases stress on the "peace" element** and its relationship to humanitarian and development efforts. **Otherwise, most programming elements are already well developed within the DRR and Resilience communities of practice.** Even prior to 2015, Resilience and to a lesser extent DRR concepts were increasingly incorporating conflict as drivers of risk and vulnerability, but (for better or worse) the HDP Nexus formalizes this incorporation and stresses peace as its own pillar rather than treating it as an element within humanitarian and development work.

b. **The HDP Nexus requires orchestrating the various actors and their capacities (coherence, complementarity, and collaboration)**, including the donors and their funding streams, to enable, encourage, and facilitate implementing agencies to either individually address both immediate needs and drivers of need or to complement each other in such a way as to address both in a coherent manner.

1. This element is the most original concept that the HDP Nexus brings to the conversation and where it has the potential to have the most impact. Although the Resilience body of practice had already begun to make efforts to create coordination platforms at the national or sub-national level, the HDP Nexus goes even higher. This orchestration of simultaneous efforts in multiple pillars is the element that is frustrating implementors. It is also an element that most government donors too struggle with because funding most often comes to them already either earmarked to specific issues, or at the very least siloed into a single pillar.
2. If coherence becomes a responsibility of the donors or local governments, the fear of some implementers is that donor priorities will eventually subsume humanitarian needs to meet a political agenda. Nevertheless, there needs to be a central unifying platform and vision in each context to leading to coherence and complementarity.
3. Flexible, multiyear funding that can be used across the nexus is necessary to implement effective programming in the nexus. If individual donor funding is tied to specific pillars, this may be achieved through the collaboration of multiple donors.

II. The HDP Nexus approach is a top-down movement, initiated and driven by OECD/DAC and UN. Resilience and DRR bodies of practice started more organically in the field and are working their way upward.

a. Reflecting its origins, the HDP Nexus community of practice seeks to address, in part, the higher-level structures necessary to support nexus programming. But making the nexus real still falls to practitioners on the ground. Unfortunately, due to a lack of experience and evidence, there is very little guidance provided on what nexus programming best practices look like on the ground.

b. There is a strong body of evidence in resilience and DRR with practical experience that directly support the basic tenets of the programmatic parts of the HDP Nexus.

c. There is a very large overlap in how the HDP Nexus wants programming done and how DRR/Resilience have been approaching programming across pillars. The strengths of each match the major gaps of the other.

d. USAID has been a leader in Resilience programming. Any approach to the HDP Nexus should capitalize on that reputation, experience, and network.

III. Not all programs or actors need to address all pillars equally at all times.

a. Most of the confusion and push-back on the HDP Nexus involves confusion about how the different pillars interact, especially the peace pillar, and how actors are placed within the nexus in relation to the various pillars.

b. The appropriate emphasis of each pillar is context dependent. Different actors will find their niche in different parts of the HDP Nexus, some in Double Nexus (HD Nexus) or Triple Nexus (HDP Nexus) areas, others in addressing one specific pillar with unique expertise or qualities.

c. In some contexts, the peace pillar may not be a major concern, and most focus will be on the humanitarian and development pillars—but even in these instances, they must remain sensitive to their impact on peace.

d. A whole-of-context approach is necessary for coherent programming within that context.

IV. Two types of platforms are needed to facilitate further development and implementation of HDP Nexus thinking.

a. A high-level platform is general to the nexus community of practice to systematize development of nexus thinking. Smaller platforms are specific to each context to promote a whole-of-context approach.

b. The fragmented discussion on how to apply the nexus approach is severely limiting its development and usefulness. The UN is promoting the approach before it has been fully explored even among its own agencies, causing confusion and uneven application. A system-wide platform is needed, with space for open discussion of risks associated with a nexus approach, constructive debate of best practices, and the systematic collection of evidence related to application of the nexus. A lack of systematic application of the concepts, or systematic intentional application of the nexus to capture learning, means that six years into the movement, there is still very little evidence on the coordination element that it is an effective approach, much less structured guidance on how to apply it. Even within organizations (including USAID), nexus learning, and experience is fragmented.

c. Context-specific platforms that engage all pillars are necessary for a coherent strategy. Current in-country platforms, such as the South Sudan PfRR, are dominated by the donors and the donors' agendas, confusing visibility and governance with facilitating a unifying vision. This weakens buy-in and the impact of the platform. The difficulty is finding a balance of donor/UN/implementor voice in the platform.

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