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THE HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE NEXUS: FROM PARADIGM TO PRACTICE

PARTNER: UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

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*All views and opinions expressed in the final report reflect those of the research team and do not represent or bind the WFP or the Graduate Institute.

Summary

I - Introduction	3
I.i. Research Objectives	3
I.ii. Research Questions	4
I.iii. Research Hypotheses	4
II. Methodological Considerations	6
II.i. Research Process	6
Phase 1: Preliminary literature review	6
Phase 2: Data collection: Project evaluation databases	6
Phase 3: Data collection: Interviews	7
Phase 4: Data compilation and analysis.	7
Phase 5: Writing the Draft Report.	8
II.ii. Scope of the Research	8
II.iii. Limitations of the Research	9
III. Summary of the Preliminary Literature Review	11
III.i. Nexus Approach and Protracted Crises	12
Humanitarian-Development Nexus through Durable Solution Projects	13
HDP Nexus as 'Resilience Building'	13
HDP Nexus integrating Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.	13
Nexus and Food Security in Protracted Conflict Situations	13
III.ii. Challenges and Criticisms	15
III.iii. Conclusion of the preliminary literature review	15
IV. Conceptualising the Nexus	17

IV.i. HD-P Nexus: Un Approach, Not a Project	19
V. The Peace Element: Big P, Small P	21
VI. Programme-Level Operations Review	23
VI.i. Case Studies of Programmatic Successes	25
VII. Project Level Operation Review	29
VII.i. Improving Food Supply	29
VII.ii. Building Resilience	32
VII.iii. Livelihood Creation	33
VII.iv. Social Security and Welfare	34
VIII. Success Factors and Challenges	37
VIII.i. Shared Understanding of the Nexus Approach	37
VIII.ii. Joint Planning and Coordination Mechanisms	38
VIII.iii. Financing The Nexus	39
VIII.iv. Attitudes from the Field	42
IX. Conclusion	44
IX.i. Suggested future research	46
Longitudinal Studies	46
Comparative Analysis	46
Attitudinal Surveys	46
X. References	48

Annex I – Preliminary Literature Review

I - INTRODUCTION

This study results from Applied Research Project Number 56, which was realised in the context of the Masters in International and Development Affairs of the Graduate Institute 2023/2024 in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP). The work was carried out by a team of four student researchers per the Terms of Reference (ToR) approved by WFP and the Graduate Institute¹.

The operationalisation of the so-called double humanitarian and development or triple humanitarian, development and peace nexus approach to international aid and assistance related to food insecurity is a cross-cutting priority for the Partner, as expressed in their 2022-2025 strategic plan. In recent years, the WFP has undertaken significant efforts to clarify its role in implementing such an integrative approach in different—and often complex and fragile—contexts. It has also expanded its sources for evidence-based decision-making and practice.

The Partner strives to clarify the scope of implementation of the Nexus, assess the convenience and viability of mainstreaming this approach, and scale it up into more comprehensive programming processes. In this context, the Partner expressed its interest in identifying instances of concrete implementation of the nexus approach with the particular intent of measuring the *results* in fieldwork. They were curious about what kind of *outputs* had been generated as a direct result of the financial, human and time resources invested in the idea and whether they were different from – or better than – non-nexus approach initiatives in a significant way.

I.I. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives were defined in dialogue with WFP and stand as follows:

1. To examine the *results* obtained by *implementing* the Nexus approach for food security responses in protracted humanitarian crises.

¹ The views and opinions expressed in this report reflect those of the research team and do not represent the official position of WFP or other associated parties.

2. To create an *inventory of tangible, successful, at-scale Nexus* examples in countries affected by food insecurity and protracted humanitarian crises.
3. Where possible, identify *success factors* for replication by the World Food Programme in their response to food insecurity in protracted humanitarian crises.
4. To identify the *bottlenecks* and *potential solutions* for optimising the Nexus approach in food security responses in protracted humanitarian crises.

I.II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research question, as defined in dialogue with the Partner, stands as follows:

- Has the Nexus approach concept been translated into *actual operational changes* in the way international actors design and implement international aid and assistance responses to situations of food insecurity?

The following questions guided the data collection through database search, interviews with selected actors, and analysis.

- What, if any, are the *results* of using the Nexus approach in international aid and assistance initiatives implemented between 2017 and 2022, especially in improving food security in protracted humanitarian crises?
- What are the key factors to successfully implementing the Nexus approach in the abovementioned context?
- How can the Nexus approach be implemented sustainably and at scale to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of resource allocation and improve the results for the concerned populations?

I.III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The research team inquired whether there was sufficient evidence to sustain the following statements:

- The Nexus approach improves the *efficiency* -better use of resources- of international aid and assistance in protracted food insecurity.
- The Nexus approach improves the *effectiveness* of responding to the needs of the assisted population in situations of protracted food insecurity.

II. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section outlines (i) the research process, (ii) the limitations of the research and (iii) the scope.

II.I. RESEARCH PROCESS

All data gathering, interviews and research procedures were conducted in line with the Applied Research Project (ARP) Student Charter of Commitments and the ARP Directive (OECD, 2023)² and the Graduate Institute's Research Ethics Checklist.

Phase 1: Preliminary literature review

October 2023 until December 2023

The preparation of a preliminary literature review (Annex 1) based on secondary sources established a clear theoretical, conceptual, and methodological framework for the data collection and analysis.

Phase 2: Data collection: Project evaluation databases

January until mid-April 2024

At this stage, we relied on exploring reliable project evaluation databases as the primary source of data collection. The databases used are listed below:

1. DEReC - Development Resource Centre of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).³

² It entered into force on September 18, 2023.

³https://www.oecd.org/derec/?hf=20&b=0&r=%2Bf%2Ft4_doccategory_en%2Ffood+aid+and+food+security&s=score

2. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Mapping good practices in the implementation of Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approaches, Country Briefs and Synthesis Report, 2021.⁴
3. World Bank Evaluation Group Report.⁵

Phase 3: Data collection: Interviews

Late March until mid-May 2024

Given that many projects are ongoing, most of the evaluation reports⁶ analysed were not complete. Therefore, we agreed to incorporate interviews with practitioners implementing the Nexus approach. We adopted a format of semi-structured interviews, in which there was a balance between specific questions while maintaining a degree of flexibility for interviewees to offer pertinent points. A list of predetermined questions (Annex II) was prepared for all six interviewees, which included five practitioners from WFP and one policy officer from ECDPM specialising in the Nexus approach. For the purpose of anonymity, each interviewee will be referred to by a unique identifier (e.g., Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, etc.). Interviewee 6 is the policy officer, while the remaining identifiers refer to the practitioners.

Two members of the research team conducted all interviews over video call. The semi-structured format facilitated an exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of field professionals towards the nexus approach in their work, providing crucial insights that literature alone could not offer.

Phase 4: Data compilation and analysis.

Mid-April until Mid-May 2024

⁴<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/humanitarian-development-collaboration/mapping-good-practices-implementation-humanitarian-development-peace-Nexus-approaches-country-briefs>

⁵ World Bank. 2021. World Bank Engagement in Situations of Conflict: An Evaluation of FY10–20 Experience. Independent Evaluation Group. Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁶ The lack of results in these reports could be attributed to reasons different from simply the Nexus approach not working. Most examples we found using the Nexus are ongoing or extended beyond the predetermined timeline.

In this phase, the team looked at data emerging primarily from project and evaluation reports of projects applying the Nexus approach, including reports from DERE-C-DAC, assessments by major donor countries, including Denmark, Canada, Finland, Switzerland, and more, IASC evaluation reports, and evaluation reports from independent consultancies. The team also transcribed, coded, and analysed information from the interviews conducted in the previous phase.

Phase 5: Writing the Draft Report.

May until June 2024

II.II. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

In Latin, the word 'nexus' means to link or to bind. A nexus is a point of convergence, whether naturally or intentionally. The idea of the 'nexus approach' to emergency response is not entirely new, with preceding approaches such as 'linking relief, rehabilitation, and development' (LRRD), 'disaster risk reduction' (DRR), and the 'resilience agenda' sharing similarities (Oxfam Policy & Practice, 2019, p. 3). Interviews with experts, highlighted later in this document, reflect the general conviction that global humanitarian policy should link strategic goals and require cooperation between different practice fields. This principle arose with the understanding that global challenges, including poverty, food insecurity, and conflict, are interlinked and causally related. These challenges can determine one another and thus should be addressed together rather than in silos.

The Nexus policy comes from the belief that humanitarian action can bring about development, and development causes peace. In a state of conflict, people are simultaneously in dire need of all three: peace, protection, and development. (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2017) From an ethical standpoint, a Nexus approach delivers sustainable and lasting assistance by focusing on sustainable livelihoods and resilience. The WFP's strategy is to operationalise the Nexus by prioritising "prevention always, development wherever possible and humanitarian action when necessary". (WFP, 2021)

In the present study, the Nexus approach was considered a purposeful coordination of efforts by humanitarian, development, and peace international actors to improve the process

and results. It implies a conscious change in how those actors, funders, and other authorities conceive their work and implement it. Therefore, in practice, a Nexus approach may not occur incidentally but is necessarily the result of a deliberate choice.

II.III. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In executing this study, the research team faced two recurring challenges that impacted the overall scope and depth of the findings. The first limitation was the *difficulty in establishing clear criteria* for initiatives in line with the Nexus approach, and the second was the *need for more independent evaluations* of projects, initiatives, or programs that had expressed the intention of adopting a Nexus approach in their implementation.

About the first challenge, it is worth noting that establishing clear criteria for selecting the "Nexus approach" projects was essential to guarantee a focused framework for the study and thus ensure that the research questions were specific and manageable and that appropriate methodological choices would be made, allowing for a credible and in-depth exploration of the topic. The criteria suggested by the Partner were *deliberate and expressed intention* to implement a project or initiative based on the HD or the HDP Nexus approach. Finding initiatives or projects with an explicit and deliberate intention to utilise the nexus approach proved difficult, especially given that the approach was only relatively recently introduced. Therefore, the research team adopted the widely accepted criteria used by IASC, which focuses on the *planning process of collective outcomes*, as well as the measures put in place to achieve them in a multi-year framework of three to five years.⁷

The second challenge limiting the research was that independent evaluations of projects, initiatives, or programs adopting an HD or an HDP Nexus approach in their implementation still need to be made available. First, it is challenging to determine the practical and actual influence of the "Nexus approach" on the way international actors worked on the ground, confirming the scepticism that motivated the research in the first place. Further research is needed to refine measurement frameworks to accurately assess this impact. Nevertheless, another explanation suggested that those evaluations were unavailable

⁷ IASC, 2021, page 2.

because they had not yet been produced for valid reasons, including the fact that the projects are still ongoing. As discussed later, there is evidence that the latter explanation is more fitting than the former.

Overcoming those limitations was an essential part of the study. It led to relevant methodological adjustments, including the realisation of interviews and the analysis of the IASC's implementation processes.⁸

⁸ IASC, 2021.

III. SUMMARY OF THE PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This section summarises the findings and reflections enshrined in the Preliminary Literature Review (Annex I) presented in December 2023. It aims to contextualise the Nexus's practical application in protracted food insecurity situations.

The Nexus approach aims to change how international actors address complex and prolonged humanitarian crises by integrating humanitarian aid, development, and peace efforts. It gained momentum during the first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), held in 2016, and marked a significant step toward reforming the humanitarian sector. Attended by around 9,000 delegates from 173 countries, the summit proposed a "new way of working," endorsed by then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. Traditionally, humanitarian aid was designed and implemented separately from long-term development and resilience-building initiatives. According to the summit participants, the siloed approach proved inadequate for addressing protracted crises, which required a more integrated approach.

The WHS set clear parameters for the implementation of the Nexus approach:

- Cooperation among actors: Humanitarian, development, and peace actors must work together meaningfully in field operations.
- Collective outcomes: Decision-making must involve coordination to establish shared objectives, not just individual ones.
- Multi-year time frames: Budgeting, planning, and programming should be sustainable, addressing protracted crises over several years.
- Comparative advantage: Actors should work based on their strengths, reducing competition and enhancing efficiency.

The WHS laid the foundation for and garnered support for the Double Nexus, which would be expanded by the new Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to include peace and security, forming the Triple Nexus. The Double Nexus (humanitarian and development) and the Triple Nexus (humanitarian, development, and peace) are often conflated but are, in fact, distinct and have different practical implications.

While conflicts are undoubtedly a significant drive for humanitarian crises – even more so in terms of food security (OXFAM International, 2018) –relevant principled and

practical concerns remain when considering the adequate response to them. The principles of neutrality and victim-centred approach in the case of a triple Nexus, for instance, seem not to have been sufficiently addressed in the preparatory process for the WHS (Nguya & Niddiqui, 2020). Therefore, many humanitarian actors remain concerned that partnering with peace may negatively impact aid workers' perceived neutrality and impartiality.

Considering the above, the following table differentiates the context in which the decision-making process of the double and triple Nexus may occur.

Double Nexus	Triple Nexus
Humanitarian and Development	Humanitarian, Development and Peace
Commitment endorsed during the 2016 WHS, after a four years-long consultation process	Invitation by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres
Part of the New Way of Working deal	Not mentioned in the original documents of the <i>New Way of Working</i>
Almost consensual in the humanitarian and development communities	Susceptible to debate in the humanitarian, development and peace communities
Dialogue and partnership with ruling national and/or local authorities	Possible implementation without dialogue or even against the will of ruling national and/or local authorities
The humanitarian principle of neutrality is assumed to be possible	Concerns about siding – or being perceived as siding – with one party to the conflict
Commitment by major donors already established in principle	Commitment by major donors remains wavering and highly uncertain

III.I. NEXUS APPROACH AND PROTRACTED CRISES

A preliminary evaluation of operational Nexus initiatives demonstrated how a Nexus approach is conceptualised critically determines its aims and outcomes. In our preliminary study, the three main conceptualisations included:

Humanitarian-Development Nexus through Durable Solution Projects

Durable solutions in protracted displacement scenarios often involve double Nexus approaches focused on humanitarian and development efforts. Traditionally, humanitarian organisations have led in displacement contexts, but development actors are becoming increasingly significant. For example, in the Kakuma/Kalobeyei Refugee Settlement in Northern Kenya, international actors align their efforts with local development plans, fostering peaceful coexistence and local economic development. The Durable Solutions Initiative in Somalia exemplifies this approach by strengthening governance structures and implementing scalable solutions for service delivery and employment, coupled with mechanisms like early warning systems for food insecurity.

HDP Nexus as 'Resilience Building'

HDP Nexus approaches focus on resilience building in specific contexts. Somalia's resilience program, for instance, integrates development and peacebuilding to enhance community and institutional resilience against natural disasters and conflicts. The Somalia Resilience Consortium (SomRep) exemplifies this by supporting economic opportunities, social cohesion, and crisis response mechanisms. Similarly, the Kenya-Rapid initiative aims to reduce humanitarian needs and resource conflicts by building the resilience of pastoral communities through food and water security programs.

HDP Nexus integrating Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.

Women's participation in humanitarian projects is crucial for food security and broader peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected societies. For instance, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders in the Democratic Republic of Congo empowers young women through leadership programs, economic initiatives, and literacy training. Oxfam's Project Direct in Iraq combines emergency food and livelihood support with women's economic empowerment and market inclusion.

Nexus and Food Security in Protracted Conflict Situations

Crises often disrupt livelihoods, leading to prolonged food insecurity. Even when immediate causes are addressed, recovery can take time, making almost all emergency crises

potentially protracted regarding food access. When applying a Nexus approach or trying to do so, practitioners remain attentive to context-specific circumstances and needs.

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus integrates humanitarianism, development, and peace, highlighting their interconnectedness. Acute food insecurity, driven by conflict, economic challenges, and climate-related disasters, underscores the necessity of this integrated approach. In 2021, conflict was the primary cause of food insecurity for 139 million people in 24 countries, with nine out of the ten most food-insecure countries experiencing conflict or civil war as the main driver. Conflicts destroy infrastructure, displace populations, and drive inflation, further exacerbating food insecurity and unrest.

Protracted crises force countries to rely on humanitarian aid, creating enduring socio-economic challenges, as seen in Niger. USAID's development support in Niger aims to break the cycle of fragility caused by climate shocks, conflict, and food insecurity. Their objectives include empowering communities for resilience, supporting inclusive economic opportunities, and strengthening government institutions. For instance, USAID promotes climate-smart agriculture (CSA) to adapt to environmental challenges and connect farmers to markets, ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

Similarly, the Somalia Resilience programme(SomReP) exemplifies the HDP Nexus in action. Established in response to the 2011 famine, SomReP created Early Warning Committees to monitor risks and develop contingency plans. By linking local and regional warning systems, the programme improved the efficiency and speed of response to crises. This demonstrates the potential of the HDP Nexus in addressing food security by connecting humanitarian assistance with long-term development and peace strategies.

Despite the increased funding for humanitarian aid, which rose from \$9 billion in 2012 to \$52 billion in 2022, needs still outpace resources, with a \$25 billion funding gap. Among the three Nexus pillars, peace receives the least funding, often relying on short-term and inconsistent financing. This disparity reinforces the separation between humanitarian aid, development, and peace initiatives, limiting the potential for a cohesive Nexus approach.

Calls for aid reform advocate for multi-year, flexible financing to enhance effectiveness and cost-efficiency, especially in protracted crises. For instance, long-term funding in Somalia's cash transfer programs proved more cost-efficient than short-term

funding. Pooled resources and flexible financing are particularly beneficial for localised programs, allowing for targeted and adaptive responses to evolving needs.

III.II. CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS

The HDP Nexus faces several challenges, including conceptual ambiguity, which hinders cross-institutional coordination. Although broad in scope, a more refined focus is needed for effective implementation. Recommendations from the OECD/DAC emphasise the need for internal system adjustments to foster cooperation across institutional borders. This includes strengthening coordination, adapting organisational structures, and fostering a culture of adaptive management.

III.III. CONCLUSION OF THE PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nexus approach aims to enhance coordination between short-term relief and long-term development by addressing the root causes of crises and promoting resilience. Despite its potential, implementation faces challenges such as a need for cross-sector expertise, the need for system adaptation, and bureaucratisation. Real-world applications show promise but reveal a need for a nuanced, context-specific approach. Effective implementation requires overcoming practical challenges like inadequate long-term financing and addressing diverse conflict contexts. Ongoing discourse and evaluations are crucial for refining the Nexus approach to achieve resilient and impactful humanitarian, development, and peace interventions.

Incentive structures are essential to promote collaboration among stakeholders who often operate in silos. Establishing clear incentives and a shared framework for success can encourage integrated efforts. Additionally, gaps in substantive expertise and understanding across the Nexus impede collaboration. Joint analysis and planning are crucial for a coherent response, but stakeholders often conduct analyses in isolation, failing to address root causes collectively.

Bureaucratisation and loss of flexibility present further challenges. While codification ensures standardisation, it can stifle flexibility and innovation. Balancing top-down guidance

with field-level discretion is vital. The inclusion of diverse goals, such as climate initiatives, can divert focus from core objectives. Consensus on a refined definition and alignment of goals is essential to enhance the efficacy of the HDP Nexus in addressing complex global challenges.

IV. CONCEPTUALISING THE NEXUS

Undertaking this study, we noted the need for a shared or universal vernacular when discussing the Nexus approach. There is neither a pre-set common understanding of the challenges related to the Nexus at hand nor the common strategic objectives and cooperation mechanisms needed to achieve them. As will be explored further in the report, the different interpretations and assumptions made about the Nexus approach have sometimes resulted in misunderstandings and lack of alignment between the relevant actors and thus have hindered its potential impact. The need for more clarity regarding the Nexus' definition, collective outcomes, and mechanisms has resulted in ad-hoc efforts that differ from one context or country to another.

As indicated in the preliminary literature review summarised above, the World Humanitarian Summit held in 2016 was the foundational moment for the *new way of working*. Even though the outcome documents of the gathering do not enshrine a definitive concept of the so-called "Nexus approach", it indicated the parameters to which it would abide. In this regard, it is worth considering the words of the report of the former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to the General Assembly (A/71/353, 2016, p. 11):

40. (...) the United Nations pledged to strengthen its contribution to meeting needs, reducing vulnerabilities and improving risk management by working together with entities of the United Nations system and other entities towards collective outcomes over multi-year time frames based on comparative advantage in each context.

The first parameter is that the Nexus approach refers to the way humanitarian, development, and, when suitable, peace actors **work together**. It is about their willingness and ability to cooperate meaningfully in operationalising fieldwork.

The second parameter is that they work to develop and achieve **collective outcomes**. Therefore, The decision-making process must involve sufficient coordination to establish common objectives instead of individual ones to guide their cooperation.

The third parameter refers to working over **multi-year time frames**. A programming and planning process coherent with the Nexus approach is focused on long-term responses

rather than emergency responses following the surge of a crisis. A Nexus approach is more suitable for operating in protracted situations in which the need for aid and assistance persists for several years (3-5 years).

The fourth parameter is that relevant actors and agencies must work together based on their **comparative advantage and expertise**. This requires drastically reducing competitive behaviour between agencies and a shared understanding of who is better equipped to perform each task and who should step back for not being so comparatively efficient or effective in a particular context.

Moreover, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) defines the Nexus as a “whole-of-system approach, a policy and an operational imperative in which humanitarian, development and peace actors take account of each other’s actions and collaborate to be efficient and effective, because their activities have an impact on each other, and each actor is affected by the broader context in which peace, development and humanitarian action interacts.” (IASC, 2023).

Building on this operational understanding, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has played an instrumental role in shaping the implementation of the HDP Nexus approach. Their 2024 recommendation on the Nexus outlines principles for effective coordination and collaboration among various actors. The DAC defines the Nexus as “the interlinkages among humanitarian, development, and peace actions”.

This approach aims to enhance collaboration, coherence and complementarity among these areas to address vulnerability, unmet needs, and the root causes of conflict. Key elements of the Nexus include:

1. **Collective outcomes:** These are shared, measurable outcomes resulting from the combined efforts of various actors working within their respective mandates. The goal is to reduce people's unmet needs, risks, and vulnerabilities while enhancing resilience and addressing the root causes of conflict.
2. **Comparative advantages:** This refers to the demonstrated ability and expertise of an individual, group or institution to meet needs, extending beyond their formal mandates.

3. Joined-up action: This indicates the integrated and complementary coordination, programming, and financing of humanitarian, development, and peace actions. It is based on shared risk-informed and gender-sensitive analysis, ensuring humanitarian efforts remain needs-based and principled (OECD, 2024).

Considering the above, in the context of the present research, the criteria to determine that an independent evaluation considered a project, programme or initiative whose implementation integrated the Nexus approach were threefold:

- i. Did the international actors' planning, designing, and implementation *manifestly intend* to adopt a Nexus approach?
- ii. Did the involved international actors establish objective and measurable *collective outcomes* (common objectives)?
- iii. Did the *time frame* for the implementation span at least three years?

It is worth highlighting that such criteria exclude the *results achieved* as a parameter for asserting that a project, program, or initiative aligns with the Nexus approach. It focuses on enhancing collaborative, context-sensitive, and inclusive planning and implementation that may lead to sustainable and holistic outcomes. This process orientation seeks to ensure that efforts are aligned, efficient, responsive, and resilient, leading to more enduring and meaningful impacts.

IV.I. HD-P NEXUS: UN APPROACH, NOT A PROJECT

A practitioner of the Nexus approach, Interviewee 1, highlighted that the Nexus is not a project, programme, or strategy. The Nexus is not something to be "achieved" but rather an **approach** to programming aimed at improving specific types of interventions. It is a set of principles to apply to programming rather than being a project or initiative.

The DAC recommendation (OECD, 2024) has become the normative framework outlining these principles. The programming aspect of the Nexus focuses on uniting different actors to create a shared understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities they are addressing. According to Interviewee 1, this is a crucial first step, as humanitarian, development, and peace actors often define the risks and vulnerabilities differently based on their respective

mandates. He cited an example involving the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and OCHA in the Greater Horn of Africa, using the Index for Risk Management (INFORM) tool for risk assessment in humanitarian crises (European Commission, 2015). This initiative highlighted the differing understandings of risks and vulnerabilities among actors. Interviewee 1 observed that humanitarian programming targeted the most vulnerable areas, while development programming focused on less vulnerable areas. This discrepancy indicated that programming was not synchronised due to a lack of shared understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities. Achieving such a common understanding should lead to synchronising different types of programming, considering each other's dependencies.

Interviewee 1 illustrated collective outcomes with an example from a workshop he conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). UNICEF implemented a \$15 million programme with the collective outcome of improving education in community-based schools. However, the program's effectiveness was limited due to unmet needs that required the involvement of other actors. There was no collaboration with the government on inclusive education policy or the national curriculum, insufficient investment by the government in local teacher training, and absence of the WFP in school-feeding initiatives. Consequently, the outcomes were hindered as girls were excluded from education, educational quality suffered without a standardised curriculum, unqualified teachers were prevalent, and attendance was low due to inadequate school-feeding programmes. This example underscores the importance of addressing a comprehensive range of risks and vulnerabilities through coordinated efforts⁹ among the various actors such as international organisations (like UNICEF), local stakeholders, and the governments.

Joint planning processes are essential to create a shared understanding of risks and vulnerabilities. Interviewees highlighted that community involvement in project design and an area-based approach to problem-solving are essential strategies for ensuring that Nexus initiatives are rooted in the realities of local contexts.

⁹ As noted earlier, a vital element of the Nexus approach is achieving collective outcomes arising from a shared understanding of risks and vulnerabilities. DAC defines a collective outcome as a measurable impact that results from the coordinated efforts of various actors working within their respective mandates to address people's unmet needs, risks, and vulnerabilities (OECD, 2024).

V. THE PEACE ELEMENT: BIG P, SMALL P

Our interviews highlighted varying perspectives on the effectiveness of the Triple Nexus's peace element. The differing views largely hinge on the interpretation of the Peace component: Is the Triple Nexus approach considered successful through 'little p' actions, which focus on building the capacity for peace within societies, or must it also include 'Big P' actions that support and sustain political solutions and securitised responses to violent conflict? These distinctions will be examined further in the following section.

IASC, as a body of coordinators between humanitarian actors, makes the distinction between 'little p' actions that focus on "building the capacity for peace within societies, and 'big-P' actions that support and sustain political solutions and securitised responses to violent conflict" (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2020, p. 1). 'little p' actions focus on preventing and managing conflict through addressing root causes and long-term capacity-building, while 'Big P' interventions may include political solutions or securitised responses to conflict through peacekeeping missions for example. 'Big P' interventions have declined in importance as the nature of violent conflicts has become more complex and are more likely to be caused by social inequities. However, this shift also raises the question of whether conflicts have become more complex or if international actors now possess less capability, power, or willingness to engage in "Big P" intervention. Therefore, albeit longer-term investments, 'little p' approaches can create more opportunities across the HDPN as they operate locally, allow for inclusive peacebuilding, and offer direct support to vulnerable populations (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2020, p. 8).

In her experience with the Nexus, Interviewee 3 stated that, in her perspective, the Peace element entails social cohesion. This form of the Peace element can be and has been successfully operationalised alongside the other two elements of the Nexus in the field by WFP. Interviewee 6, a policy officer, observed in her case studies that the Peace element is under-prioritised compared to the other two elements because it is difficult to operationalise in the field. If it does exist, it is in the 'little p' form and usually comes in as an add-on to the humanitarian and development elements. Our team also confirmed this in our research, particularly in a case study on FAO's Cash For Work Programme in Somalia (Oxford Policy Management, 2014). The Peace element was an "unintentional" result of the implementation

of the double Nexus. As stated in their 2016–2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy:

[The strategy] embraces a commitment to conflict-sensitive programming, acknowledging the potential of food assistance, like other resource flows, to aggravate social grievances or contribute to other unintended impacts on social cohesion. This commitment also acknowledges that how food assistance is delivered can positively impact social cohesion and improve capacities for peace—critical given that a significant proportion of FFP resources are programmed in contexts of fragility and conflict.

Contradicting this perspective of the Peace element, Interviewee 1 commented that conflict-sensitive programming does not satisfy the criteria of the Triple Nexus, but rather, it is simply "good programming". Though the perception of the Peace element has had a positive impact on the systematic use of conflict-sensitive tools in programming, Interviewee 1 stated that the Triple Nexus will only work if the 'harder' elements of peace are better used, i.e. Track II diplomacy, which includes features such as informal diplomacy and meditation. In his view, the Triple Nexus is not working, but the Double Nexus is. He clarifies that the Peace element is challenging to fulfil because it deviates from the projected nature of the Humanitarian and Development elements.

VI. PROGRAMME-LEVEL OPERATIONS REVIEW

A programme-level review of projects applying the Nexus approach involved looking at the programmatic design and reviewing effects and lasting results beyond the project level. The critical questions of this level relate to how the programmes using the Nexus operate as a whole to ensure that the individual projects combined produce something more than the sum of their parts. At the same time, while outcomes of projects applying the HDP Nexus approach in protracted conflicts were demonstrated through the available evaluation reports, analysing nexus dynamics at the programme level was challenging. Despite the challenge of finding programme-level evaluations (unlike readily available project-level evaluations), a programme-level review gives valuable insights into project performance and outcomes of those projects. This section summarises critical programme-level lessons shared by organisations implementing projects within a Nexus approach.

A comprehensive evaluation of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) contribution to the HDP Nexus revealed several critical programmatic reflections. Firstly, the evaluation highlighted the challenge of integrating HDP dimensions into project design (FAO, 2021). Despite the growing recognition of the importance of the Nexus approach, projects often fail to address HDP objectives explicitly. This implies that often, projects with a nexus approach, objectives and processes do not explicitly operate as a 'Nexus approach' initiative. This leads to an underestimation of the current impact being delivered by the approach and hinders the systematic assessment of the results of projects through an HDP lens (FAO, 2021). The evaluation also identified weaknesses in ongoing conflict analysis within FAO's programming. In the context of projects applying the Nexus approach, conflict analysis aims to inform the choice of project activities, access, targeting and adaptive planning through the use of scenario planning. However, the problem is that while conflict analysis is essential for informing programming decisions, it tends to be done as a one-off rather than a dynamic, ongoing process (FAO, 2021). The lack of conflict analysis hampered the ability of those projects to address conflict dynamics and adapt programming accordingly and effectively. If integrated into Nexus programming, a comprehensive conflict analysis can be crucial in determining the results of the Nexus approach and enhancing coordination efforts.

An example of this is the FAO's project in the Sahel to strengthen the resilience of cross-border agro-pastoral populations to food crises, wherein conflict analysis contributed to developing a shared understanding of the context across the three FAO country offices involved in the project (FAO, 2021). Furthermore, the evaluation also pointed out weak linkages between data collection and analysis efforts, particularly regarding food security analysis (FAO, 2021). The absence of comprehensive context and conflict analysis undermined the project's efforts to address the underlying structural causes of food insecurity adequately. Often, in planning nexus efforts, analysis of acute food insecurity does not provide solid data or analysis on food security drivers, especially conflict as a driver (FAO, 2021). This leads to a mere acknowledgement of conflict as a cause of acute food insecurity without any in-depth or granular analysis (FAO, 2021).

The evaluation of projects adopting the Nexus approach by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) also sheds light on a few other programmatic findings on the current practice of the Nexus. Firstly, the evaluations stress the importance of adapting the scope of needs assessment to a broader range of needs and responses when a nexus perspective is applied, particularly for multi-year planning (UNEG, 2018). While immediate Humanitarian Response Plans involve addressing immediate needs, Nexus-based plans often involve multi-year planning, which requires a collective analysis of immediate needs and the root causes (UNEG, 2018). This collective needs assessment process, being a relatively new process, often poses a challenge in planning projects with a Nexus approach (UNEG, 2018). Secondly, UNEG's evaluations at a process level also shed light on the difficulties of identifying and achieving development objectives and goals within projects amid chronic risks (UNEG, 2018). Especially in protracted conflicts, there are limitations linked to donor-driven funding and programme time frames. While the UNEG evaluations do not elucidate these limitations, the expert interviews undertaken as a part of this research shed light on how government funding and the protracted nature of the conflict can change people's attitudes on the ground regarding projects applying the Nexus approach. To quote Interviewee 1:

Areas where the government is a party to the conflict are susceptible to teaming up. Especially when this part of the conflict also means human rights abuses, like in Burkina Faso, Mali and other places. There are also

sensitivities around how the government decides where to do certain interventions. The fact that they are party to the conflict also puts them in a certain mindset that might lead to exclusion left and right. That is something that we should be very, very mindful of...I think that is a very big red flag that we are constantly dancing around as WFP, because obviously we want to support the government in supporting their populations. I mean, we are a UN organisation, so it is not in the same situation as many NGOs. But we need to have a constant reflection of where the line is...(that is why) WFP wants to focus on buffer zones very often.

VI.I. CASE STUDIES OF PROGRAMMATIC SUCCESSES

Programmatically, involving the private sector while designing projects with the Nexus approach is essential, as Bolling and Vrancken (2020) highlighted in their evaluation of the Nexus approach. Recognising the pivotal role of local markets and private sector actors in enhancing resilience and promoting development, Bolling & Vrancken emphasise the need to engage the private sector early in the project lifecycle. Programmatically, the need to incorporate a market-based approach was recognised by the SomRep Nexus programme in its second phase of programming. The first phase of the SomRep project had multiple objectives, which it successfully delivered, including enhancing agricultural practices, food security, development of social safety nets and promoting natural resource governance (for details, see the section on Process Level Evaluation) (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). The Phase II of the SomRep project is focussed more on market integration. It links recovery interventions to inclusive market-led interventions that not only focus on productivity but invest in income diversification beyond crops and animal value chains and further develops innovative service provision enterprises along diversified value chains identified through deep value chain analysis while linking production to fair market economies that promote inclusion of women, minority populations and people with disability (CARE, 2023). At the core of this shift is the idea that if producers and entrepreneurs have business skills and are informed of market opportunities (end market assessments, trade fairs, and market days) and challenges (Fair Trade Assessment and Women's Access to Finance Study), there will be inclusive and sustainable market and inclusive economic growth, understanding of resilience evidence will be mainstreamed and informed decision making processes adopted at all levels

of governance (CARE, 2023). Concretely, the new phase of SomRep aims to improve access to markets (physical/regulatory systems/pricing information, etc.) for smallholders and other producers and strengthen resilience to climate extremes and disasters (CARE, 2023). SomRep's inclusive economic growth approach aims to employ "Push/Pull" strategies to develop inclusive market systems which can support trade in raw agricultural products while simultaneously promoting the development of enterprises linked to income generated from processes beyond production (CARE, 2023). The success of the "Push" approach to agriculturally-led economic development relies heavily on equipping the population with skills and knowledge to allow them entry to a market system, from which without these attributes, they would have otherwise been excluded (CARE, 2023). Concurrent with the "Push" strategy, SomRep will work with the government, the private sector and other enabling enterprises to create a policy and business environment to encourage and incentivise agriculturally-led economic development (CARE, 2023). This enabling environment will facilitate the development of factors that "Pull" other market actors into relationships with those benefiting from activities that catalyse a "Push" towards that same market (CARE, 2023).

In Colombia, anticipatory action interventions by the FAO aimed at mitigating the effects of drought and migration on food security demonstrated programmatically promising outcomes in taking anticipatory action to achieve food security in the face of droughts in the La Guajira region of Colombia as well as in promoting integration of refugees from Venezuela with local communities (for details, see section on process level operations) (FAO, 2020). The interventions were sustainable and proved effective in safeguarding and rebuilding the productive assets of the most vulnerable, at-risk people. The use of data at the right time was critical in designing the interventions at the programme level. Integration of rural migration data collection into a La Guajira food security and nutrition needs assessment in 2018 in rural communities in Colombian border regions allowed FAO to predict the arrival of large numbers of long-stay migrants in the following 12 months, which would have increased the burden on the already stretched resources of host/migrant households and communities. This and the food security and nutrition data collected provided the evidence needed to enact an anticipatory action intervention. Including ongoing rural migration data collection into monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans of country offices (including in baselines, needs assessments, end lines, etc.) ensured that FAO has the evidence base to

respond quickly to rapidly emerging or changing crisis contexts. Flexible funding was also crucial in the quick implementation of the program. The intervention was implemented on time, ahead of the disaster forecast. The FAO acted in two stages. First, its Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) quickly released USD 400,000 for anticipatory action to support 600 households in the municipalities of Manaure, Albania, Maicao, Uribia and Riohacha in La Guajira. The Fund was crucial for releasing this initial money quickly. The number of households was later increased to 1003, some 7000 people, because of extra funds from the United Nations Central Emergency and Rehabilitation Fund (CERF) and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency. Furthermore, the strong emphasis put on training and knowledge transfer to beneficiaries on agronomic practices, livestock management and nutritional education, alongside the provision of inputs and technical support among actors involved, was a crucial enabler of change, supporting the sustainability of this intervention over time (FAO, 2020).

Similarly, the DIZA programme in Eastern Chad (DIZA-Est) funded by the European Union was programmatically efficient. The programme aimed to improve the living conditions and resilience of Indigenous, refugee and returnee populations in host areas through support for inclusive local development in order to minimise the factors contributing to inter-community tensions, instability and the risk of increased forced displacement and conflict. Partnership was an integral aspect of this programme, given the Consortium model and the structure of having an international partner working closely with a local organisation in every province (Magee, 2021). Despite initial difficulties in establishing the consortium, aligning different organisational ways of working and building provincial partnerships between local and international organisations, the Consortium partners gradually started working well together (Magee, 2021). Elements of sustainability were also well considered and planned for. The premise of DIZA was to support both immediate needs through cash and build the financial capacity and livelihoods of beneficiaries to ensure the initial injection of cash is sustained well beyond the programme's lifetime (Magee, 2021). However, given the complex nature of the programme, doubts persist about its implementation in time (Magee, 2021).

Programme-level reviews offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of projects applying the HDP Nexus approach, highlighting successes, challenges, and areas for

improvement. However, it is difficult to ascertain a comprehensive program-level review of the variety of the projects that have been and are currently being implemented mainly because of the lack of availability of evaluations of nexus projects at a project level. The lack of programmatic evaluations indicates the need for actors to adopt the Nexus approach to analyse and document programmatic achievements and challenges systematically. Such documentation can be a step towards resolving coordination gaps and programmatic challenges that actors face in the field, which might not be visible from the onset of planning of projects with a Nexus approach.

VII. PROJECT LEVEL OPERATION REVIEW

Through a project-level operation review, we aim to measure the impact created by implementing the HDP Nexus approach against measures like relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. The aim of a project-level operations review is also to test the application of the Nexus approach and evaluate the kind of impacts created and results achieved in the contexts of food security and protracted conflict.

To conduct this review, evaluations of projects implementing the Nexus were examined across different countries. These evaluations were systematically studied to identify significant and tangible outcomes that emerged from these projects. The diversity of outcomes that emerged as a result of this review hints that not only is the Nexus approach being actively employed within the context of food security, but in most cases, it is also able to improve food security by addressing some of its root causes. To understand the impact of past and ongoing nexus projects, the elements have been divided by outcomes and thematically classified into four overarching outcomes: improving food supply, building resilience, livelihood creation and social security and welfare. Since our aim was to highlight the impact, different Nexus approached project goals involving mostly the Humanitarian and Development elements have been dissected and classified thematically based on the outcomes they are delivering. Most projects, as disclosed in the upcoming sections, deliver/ are delivering on more than one of these classified outcomes as a part of their humanitarian and development priorities.

VII.I. IMPROVING FOOD SUPPLY

The evaluated projects emphasised improving the food supply, mainly when food-related shocks were frequent. In Afghanistan, the World Food programme led the 'Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation', which, as its humanitarian objective, delivered in-kind food assistance and value vouchers (paper and electronic) (WFP & The Konterra Group, 2016). Additionally, in areas with a lack of access to food, WFP trucks were the only transport available to carry food supplies (WFP & The Konterra Group, 2016). The programme was also modelled to meet the food needs of particular regions. In regions where

sufficient food was available in local markets, vouchers were delivered instead (WFP & The Konterra Group, 2016). As its development objective, the programme also focussed on asset creation to support recovery from repeated shocks (WFP & The Konterra Group, 2016). This was achieved through infrastructure interventions, including canals and flood prevention structures.

Similarly, the WFP-led Ethiopia Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation, designed to deliver aid to Eritrean, South Sudanese, Sudanese, and Somali refugees, provided as its humanitarian objective, direct access to food to refugees falling behind on nutritional needs (WFP, 2016). In many cases, food rations provided by WFP under this programme were the sole resource entering the household for many refugee families (WFP, 2016). As its development objective, the programme also attempted to provide improved access to assets and/or essential services, including community and market infrastructure. To this end, the programme supported primary schools in the camps with a daily hot meal (porridge) of 100 grams of Super Cereal and 20 grams of vegetable oil plus sugar (WFP, 2016).

In Colombia, where food shocks frequently affected people's food consumption and access, FAO's aforementioned anticipatory action program undertook as its development priority, the establishment of community production centres for rapid crop production and distribution of drought-tolerant seeds and agricultural tools to individual households in order to foster resilience against frequent food shocks (FAO, 2020). Building on its development goals, the programme also undertook animal health campaigns and distribution of animal feed and supplements, rehabilitation of water infrastructure, and training on agronomic practices, livestock management and nutritional education among the Wayu communities in Colombia (FAO, 2020). As its humanitarian objective, the programme undertook the distribution of drought-tolerant seeds and agricultural tools to individual households to ensure that the humanitarian crisis caused by draughts in the areas where the programme was implemented did not worsen.

In Somalia, the FAO-led Cash for Work programme improved people's access to food through market-based intervention. The programme was developed against the backdrop of the 2011 droughts in Somalia, which led to dramatic reductions in crop production and increased livestock mortality, thus reducing both local food availability and a key source of income (Farhat, Kardan & Gure, 2014). Embedded in the FAO's attempt towards resilience

programming, the programme moved from increasing short-term food access and reducing displacement to rehabilitating infrastructure to improve the resilience of vulnerable households in rural areas to future shocks, albeit in a stressed environment. The humanitarian element of the intervention consisted of providing labour opportunities to poor and vulnerable households for 54 days to rehabilitate selected community infrastructure (Farhat, Kardan & Gure, 2014). The daily rate of US\$ 4– US\$ 6 was provided to beneficiaries depending on the location and role of the worker. As a development component, all beneficiaries also received allowances for transport, and some received vouchers for the purchase of tools or actual tools procured by FAO. The programme was implemented through NGOs, which were responsible for the selection and identification of infrastructure sites and beneficiaries, as well as for ensuring the rehabilitation of the infrastructure. As a result, households' food security increased, and beneficiaries became more creditworthy, given their ability to service debts more regularly than the usual periodic debt repayments (Farhat, Kardan & Gure, 2014). The programme also positively affected the local economy of the communities, resulting in increased trading activities on payment days.

Furthermore, the Somalia Resilience programme (SomReP), a consortium of seven international NGOs, emerged as a strong example of implementing the Nexus. Beneficiaries of the programme received direct food aid, increasing people's food consumption while impacting communities' coping strategies against food insecurity (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). As its humanitarian objective and since the most common activity of livelihood for beneficiaries was agriculture, beneficiaries of the programme received aid and training; through food aid, the programme was also able to increase people's food consumption while also impacting communities' coping strategies against food insecurity (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). As its development component, programme beneficiaries were assisted with economic shocks and hazards through cash and agriculture inputs. Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) witnessed active participation of beneficiaries (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). Besides, beneficiaries also reported that their access to and knowledge of contingency resources available to them had improved (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). Furthering its development objectives, the programme increased the knowledge of Community-based early warning systems among its beneficiaries (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). It led to an increase in community

initiatives facilitated to access support from sub-national and national institutions and authorities; with an increased participation of Women in these community-led initiatives.

Interestingly, the programme also added a peace element (albeit a small 'p' objective). At the community level, Natural Resource Management (NRM) committees were formed. These committees helped communities in accessing natural resources sustainably. For instance, they managed water sources, informed people about using water wisely, and prevented people from engaging in conflict over water. People used to have conflict over water sources, farming, and grazing land, but owing to the program, communities had a committee that addressed those issues (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019).

VII.II. BUILDING RESILIENCE

Among the projects evaluated, several were operational in the context of food insecurity, intending to build resilience against food shocks related to climate or economy. In Afghanistan, the WFP's programme also focussed on asset creation to support recovery from repeated shocks (WFP & The Konterra Group, 2016). This was achieved through infrastructure interventions, including canals and flood prevention structures.

In Yemen, through the 'Twin-track approach of saving lives and livelihoods' used by the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster, provisions of immediate food aid are delivered together with emergency livelihood (IAHE, 2022). The focus of the plans was to increase household incomes and rehabilitate food security assets to stimulate economic recovery in areas with high levels of food insecurity. As a result, livelihoods increased in prominence as part of the objectives of the Humanitarian Response Plan 2021: Preventing Famine, Malnutrition and Restoring Livelihoods (IAHE, 2022). Various forms of livelihood support were provided to a total of 2.4 million beneficiaries, contributing to improved agricultural productivity and enhanced food availability. Cash for work and food assistance for assets programs also supported the rehabilitation of damaged critical community infrastructure and assets, leading to improved household food production, increased household incomes and the creation of seasonal employment opportunities (OCHA, 2021).

FAO's efforts in Colombia through the anticipatory action programme focused on and brought about household resilience through its anticipatory action towards drought and animal health campaigns and distribution of animal feed and supplements (FAO, 2020). This was, as foretold, coupled with emergency drought-resilient seed distribution as the programme's humanitarian component. The SomRep programme in Somalia aimed at reducing recurring economic and food-related shocks by incorporating community-based early warning systems and establishing community initiatives to facilitate support from sub-national and national institutions (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). To this end, Early Warning committees were established locally, and beneficiaries indicated that being a part of a committee encouraged engagement with the community and gave people more places to go for help. These committees also helped participants to feel more resilient to hazards and shocks. Participants stated that they had learned the importance of moving to safety in the case of a flash flood. They also discussed the importance of conserving water and ensuring water is clean in case of drought.

VII.III. LIVELIHOOD CREATION

Projects applying a Nexus approach in the context of food security also intensely focused on livelihood creation, either directly or indirectly. In Colombia, FAO's anticipatory action programme mainly targeted the vulnerable Wayúu communities, which rely heavily on small stocks for their livelihoods (FAO, 2020). The programme undertook the creation of animal health brigades and early feed distribution, which contributed to reduced animal mortality, improved animal body conditions, and enhanced animal productivity and reproductive capacity (FAO, 2020). The value of animals saved was sufficient to purchase 11 goats or sheep. Similarly, the Enhancing Agro-Pastoral Food Security, Livelihoods and Protection (PROWIGA II) Project undertaken by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in South Sudan enhanced livelihoods protection via the provision of animal health services among 150,000 heads of livestock (SDC, 2022). Some projects also concentrated their efforts on livelihood creation through agricultural support. Under the SomRep programme in Somalia, since the most common livelihood activity was agriculture, the programme's beneficiaries received training in agricultural practices to increase their income levels per season. The end-line evaluation of the programme confirmed that this training had been highly beneficial to them. Agricultural training was frequently cited as

critical to the livelihoods of beneficiaries (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). The evaluations also found that nearly all participants felt that the training they had received had been useful and had helped them to prepare for future hazards. At the same time, the programme also encouraged beneficiaries to engage in diversified livelihood strategies. As a result, and as the evaluations suggest, there was an increase in households undertaking newly diversified livelihood strategies. The percentage increase in newly diversified livelihood strategies rose to 16% at the end-line assessment of the program. However, the vast majority of households remained in climate-sensitive livelihoods. Land-based livelihoods, including casual labour on farms, remained the most common source of livelihood among both men and women. However, female-headed households report a wider variety of livelihoods, as they are more likely to engage in construction day labour and trading and business. Other projects, such as the FSC project led by led by FAO and WFP, with Food Security Clusters in Afghanistan, provide emergency livelihood support through livelihood asset creation and cash transfers in order to avert further asset depletion and irreversible coping mechanisms as well as to protect, strengthen and restore livelihoods (FSC, 2022). This was done by protecting livestock as livelihood assets during winter, noting that women are intensely involved in livestock production.

VII.IV. SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE

In projects with the Nexus approach, social security and social welfare outcomes were integrated within project outcomes either directly or as spillover outcomes. The WFP's Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation in Afghanistan, implemented in coordination with the UNHCT, UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, OCHA and FAO, incorporated this through the school feeding (ScF) programme. The ScF component of the programme was designed to contribute to the learning of school children in some 60 of the 78 districts with food insecurity prevalence above 30 per cent, below-average net attendance rates and gender disparity of less than one (WFP & The Konterra Group, 2016). This targeting recognised that people living in more poverty-stricken areas are less likely to send their children to school as they either need their children to work or help to afford schooling. As a result of the ScF component of the program, attendance was directly and positively affected. According to WFP's evaluation, 288,099 children were impacted through the ScF program.

Similarly, the school feeding component of the WFP programme in Ethiopia is designed to increase primary school enrolment and stabilise the attendance of refugee children (WFP, 2016). School meals provided much-needed nutrition to primary school children, a group not usually targeted by other nutrition interventions, and helped to improve concentration, which is necessary for learning; at the same time, they increased enrolment rates.

FAO's aforementioned Anticipatory Action programme in the La Guajira region of Colombia positively contributed to improving the social cohesion between host and migrant households targeted by the project through the inclusive community production centres established by the programme (FAO, 2020). Seventy-four per cent of interviewed beneficiary households claimed that their relationship with other groups in the community had improved compared with the previous year (FAO, 2020). The SomRep programme involved a range of social outcomes, including creating social safety nets where beneficiaries were assisted with economic shocks and hazards through cash and agriculture inputs (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). In the end-line assessment of the program, nearly 85% of households reported receiving assistance from an NGO which was a part of the SomRep network. Furthermore, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) were established at a village level and witnessed active participation of beneficiaries. In addition, focus groups and interview participants in the end-line evaluation of the programme felt that social safety nets had improved in communities due primarily to VSLA (Forcier Consulting & SOMREP, 2019). Besides, beneficiaries reported improved access to and knowledge of contingency resources such as financial savings, fodder banks, seed reserves, food reserves, and financial aid. The programme also increased the knowledge of community-based early warning systems, which could monitor risks, issue warnings, and minimise harm from stressors and shocks from natural disasters like droughts, among its beneficiaries and led to increased community initiatives in the form of local early warning committees, facilitating access to support from sub-national and national institutions and authorities to respond to and cope with the recurrent shocks and stressors that existed in the communities, with increased participation of women in these community-led initiatives.

As the multitude of evaluations for projects applying the Nexus approach suggests, those initiatives are driving substantial impact on the ground. These impacts range from

increasing food supply to building resilience, creating livelihoods, and promoting social security and welfare. However, it is essential to note that most of these projects did not incorporate the 'P'(peace) element of the Nexus and were effectively employed as an H-D Nexus (with humanitarian and development components). While some of these projects incorporated short-term peace goals, these were restricted to what would qualify only as small p activities at a local level. Overall, it can be said that while Nexus is driving impacts on the ground, effectively, it is either the double Nexus in play or when the peace element is employed; it is mostly in local contexts qualifying as 'small p' activities.

VIII. SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

Interviewees repeatedly underscored the effectiveness of initiatives such as unconditional cash transfers and livelihood support in addressing the immediate needs of beneficiaries while laying the groundwork for long-term development. The success of these projects hinges upon their adaptability to local contexts and ability to foster collaboration among project beneficiaries. Flexibility in approach, adequate funding, and positive interpersonal dynamics between organisations involved in the design of projects were highlighted as critical success factors, ensuring that Nexus interventions resonate with the unique needs of each community.

Another recurring narrative among interviewees was the Nexus' transformative impact in promoting community resilience. In some cases, projects involved building community capacities to cultivate and produce food and agricultural products. Interviewees highlighted how such elements address immediate food security concerns and foster long-term self-reliance and resilience.

Additionally, in many cases, the collaborative approach encouraged by Nexus, by bringing together local actors and fostering collaboration, successfully bridged the gap between humanitarian and development efforts. Interviewees highlighted how a holistic approach to the design and execution of projects ensures that root causes of food insecurity are addressed, laying the foundation for long-term and sustainable resilience. Interviewees also emphasised the replicability and scalability of successful interventions as a success factor for projects applying the Nexus approach, pointing to their potential to catalyse transformative change beyond individual communities.

VIII.I. SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEXUS APPROACH

There is an urgent need to strengthen the understanding that the Nexus approach supports the reduction of needs by addressing the underlying drivers of those vulnerabilities through development and prevention. The UN Trust Fund for Human Security stresses a crucial aspect of the human security approach in realising the HDPN: the development of collective outcomes. Collective outcomes require coordinated efforts from different stakeholders, including humanitarian and development actors, over three to five years. For

example, a collective outcome could be reducing acute food insecurity in a specific population by 35% by 2027. The "New Way of Working" (NWOW), as outlined at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, recommends first devising results over a three to five-year period and then working backwards to determine the necessary actions and which actors are best suited to implement them (UN Trust Fund for Human Security, 2022, p. 13) to support these collective outcomes, financing must be flexible and guaranteed for multi-year schemes.

VIII.II. JOINT PLANNING AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

According to Interviewee 6, the nature of the coordination mechanisms varies depending on the country's context. In some situations, coordination mechanisms primarily involve information-sharing; in others, they extend to creating joint planning and programming platforms. In practice, the type of coordination mechanisms chosen often depends on the proactivity of the individuals posted in the country. Interviewee 6 cited the example of a Nexus task force established a few years ago in Chad, driven by EU staff from both the humanitarian and development sectors. This task force was also open to other donors operating in the country.

The formality of the coordination mechanism is adapted to the context. In many informal instances, coordination involves staff communicating about their respective programs or projects. Conversely, there are more institutionalised coordination mechanisms. For example, the EU implemented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in Uganda to formalise the coordination process. Interviewee 6's insights highlight that effective informal or formal coordination is crucial for the success of the Nexus approach. It facilitates shared understanding and joint efforts, leading to more integrated and impactful crisis responses.

Moreover, the paramount importance of conflict sensitivity and joint programme planning in the success of Nexus initiatives also emerged as a critical factor for the success of the Nexus approach. To this end, a shared understanding of risks and vulnerabilities is crucial for effective intervention, facilitating geographic alignment and reducing duplication of efforts. Moreover, despite the challenges associated with measuring Nexus's impact, interviewees remain optimistic about its potential to mitigate risks and reduce humanitarian caseloads. Furthermore, community involvement emerged as a cornerstone of successful

projects applying the Nexus approach, with interviewees highlighting its instrumental role in ensuring project relevance and sustainability. From the outset, engaging communities in the planning and implementation processes is critical for aligning interventions with local needs and building stakeholder trust. Flexible grant funding was also identified as a critical success factor, providing project implementers with the agility to adapt to evolving circumstances and identify real needs on the ground. Additionally, the presence of sub-offices was highlighted as essential for effective implementation and stakeholder engagement in areas where the Nexus approach is being adopted.

VIII.III. FINANCING THE NEXUS

The long-term dimension of the Nexus framework poses a challenge to securing funding, as donors typically allocate funds on a short-term basis, for example, annually. Current practices often maintain separate financing streams for humanitarian, development, and peace projects. Moreover, funds are often tied to projects with specific objectives and mechanisms, thus failing to enforce the Nexus concept. However, multi-year financing increases joint programming, enhances trust and consensus between actors and allows actors to learn from previous years and activities.

The Grand Bargain, signed in 2016 by donor countries and international aid organisations, is committed to improving aid efficiency. The agreement increased un-earmarked funds, multi-year funding, and more significant funds for national and local actors (IASC, 2023). Although donor funding to UN agencies is increasingly un-earmarked and more long-term, this is often not passed on to local and national NGOs, thus limiting the impact of the Grand Bargain and preventing a truly locally-led approach to the Nexus (Oxfam Policy & Practice, 2019, p. 16).

Several countries have initiated changes to their financing mechanisms to explore the integration of humanitarian, development, and peace assistance efforts. For instance, Denmark developed a joint strategy to coordinate humanitarian and development assistance. At the same time, Austria set up an inter-ministerial structure to consolidate assistance involving the ministries for defence and foreign affairs (Oxfam Policy & Practice, 2019). Despite these structural reforms, progress on the ground has been slow. For instance, the

Humanitarian Response Plan for Afghanistan was designed for three years, but most of its funding was limited to one-year cycles (Oxfam Policy & Practice, 2019, p. 16).

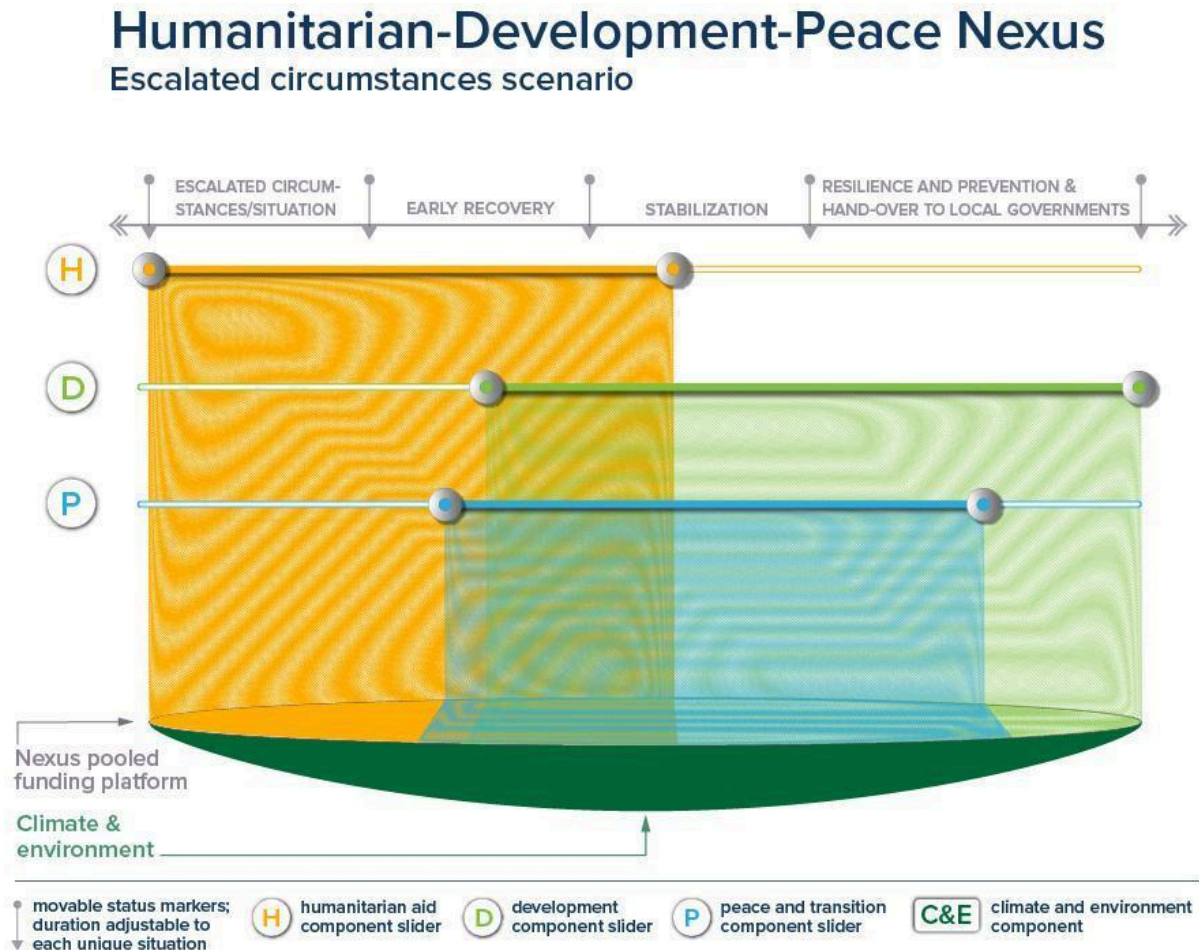
Humanitarian funding has increased, but more is needed to meet escalating needs. The UN humanitarian appeal stands at \$52 billion in 2022, from \$9 billion in 2012, while the funding gap is record high at \$25 billion (OCHA, 2022). Out of the three Nexus pillars, peace is the least funded, and its funding is gradually declining, reaching a five-year low in 2023 (Jancke, 2023). Peace initiatives often rely on short-term, inconsistent, and earmarked funding, restricting the ability to prioritise long-term strategic objectives (Poole & Culbert, 2019). The disparity in funding reinforces the distinction among the three silos and may restrict their ability to bridge their objectives and programs through a Nexus approach.

In defining the Nexus approach, IASC calls for "flexible, multi-year and unearmarked financing aligned or harmonised around these collective outcomes or priorities". (IASC, 2023, p. 2) IASC emphasises the need for financing that goes beyond project-based funding. To advance the HDP Nexus, IASC urges the promotion of funding for joint programming, where feasible, through pooled or trust funds as a basis for resource mobilisation. It also urges actors to engage financing partners, including multilateral development banks and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) like the World Bank and the IMF. Country-based pooled funds (CBFs) are potentially suited for Nexus programming and are often used by donors to deliver their commitments to the Grand Bargain. This has allowed more funding to be channelled to local and national actors, making up 25% of CBPF allocations in 2018, compared to 13% a few years prior. In reality, however, long-term projects are rare as most pooled funds projects last less than one year (Oxfam Policy & Practice, 2019, p. 16).

Pooled funds are designed to integrate, blend and sequence funds from humanitarian, development, and peace funding streams for crisis-affected countries. Given their flexible nature, pooled funds are designed to quickly adapt to changing crisis situations, especially when there are shifts in operational capabilities. As illustrated in Figure 1, pooled funds would support each aspect of the nexus in a sequenced manner: for instance, humanitarian needs would be addressed at the onset and escalation of a crisis and continued to be supported into early recovery until reaching the stabilisation stage. During the early recovery phase, funding for development and peace would be integrated with the humanitarian component.

Funding for longer-term development would extend further into the resilience and prevention phase, where there would be an eventual hand-over to local actors and governments.

Figure 1. Pooled funding for the Nexus.



From "Nexus Crossroads," by United Nations Development Programme Multi-Partner Trust Fund, n.d., UNDP. Retrieved from <https://mptf.undp.org/page/nexus-crossroads>

The model in Figure 1 is intended to be flexible, as it allows for adjustments to suit unique contexts. However, evaluating the real-life applicability and effectiveness of this model is challenging. Progress in establishing pooled funds has been slow, and real-life crises are complex and often do not follow a linear progression as depicted in the model. For instance, crises can move back and forth between the phrases shown, making it difficult to sequence, blend, or integrate funds as intended.

VIII.IV. ATTITUDES FROM THE FIELD

The attitudes towards the HDP Nexus are diverse, with nuanced perspectives emerging from interviews with field practitioners and a policy officer (See Section II.I). A recurring theme was the recognition of the effectiveness of the Double Nexus. There was consensus that the Peace element was not functioning as intended (See Section V). Nevertheless, Interviewee 5 noted sufficient interest and enthusiasm from donors and international organisations in participating in this approach.

Interviewees have observed the Double Nexus creating a positive impact in the field and at scale. The successful examples Interviewee 6 posed of the Nexus in the context of food security were all initiatives by WFP and FAO, particularly their ongoing collaboration in Chad. She emphasised that these successful initiatives share the critical aspect of going beyond information-sharing and creating platforms for joint planning and programming among the different actors.

Despite recognising the effectiveness of the Double Nexus, most interviewees highlighted that the development element is not being optimised in crisis contexts. Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 3 expressed concern about the burden of longer-term programming on humanitarian actors, suggesting that the structural issues should be tackled by development actors instead. Interviewee 3 identified this as the primary constraint of the Nexus as development actors are "not doing sufficiently enough to kick in". Similarly, Interviewee 1 noted the "surprising lack of longer-term development-type programming [in crisis contexts]". He explained that development actors are "still not active enough" and often withdraw from critical zones due to risk aversion. Therefore, he recommended that more efforts be made to increase the risk tolerance of development programming.

Logistical constraints also contribute to the absence of development actors in these contexts. Interviewee 6 observed that conflict zones like Chad impose more travel restrictions on development actors than humanitarian ones, presenting a challenge to the Nexus. The physical presence of development actors is vital for joint analysis and planning. Moreover, she highlighted that development actors, if permitted to travel, would require military escorts, conflicting with the humanitarian actors' principle of neutrality. The challenge of optimising the Development element of the Nexus must be addressed along with other challenges

mentioned by interviewees, such as scattered approaches, siloed interventions, and short-term programming horizons.

The emphasis on context and flexibility in the Nexus approach was expressed across the interviews. All interviewees agreed that the Nexus approach is not practical everywhere, with the primary aim being to reduce the humanitarian caseload over time. Interviewee 1 referred to the applicable contexts for the Nexus as "highly fragile contexts, where there is high risk and humanitarian caseload". Interviewee 6 stressed the importance of tailoring the Nexus to local needs and contexts, emphasising flexibility in planning which actor comes in and when. Additionally, Interviewee 3 highlighted the inefficiency of involving "too many partners" and the need to engage them only when required. Interviewee 2 discussed the Nexus from a context standpoint, concluding it must better adjust to local contexts.

Focusing the Nexus more on including local partners and communities was a sentiment shared by all interviewees. Interviewee 2 valued the Nexus approach for its development component, which is necessary to facilitate community participation and dialogue in programming. To strengthen longer-term solutions, Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 3 emphasised the need to not only include local partners but also put them in the "driver's seat" of joint programming. Interviewee 1 agreed, suggesting a shift from a "sectoral mindset" to a more "holistic, community needs-type mindset". Interviewee 5 pointed out that community-based buy-in is crucial, noting that communities must be "involved in the planning, implementation, and process from the get-go".

Our literature review and case study analyses mainly focused on the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace actors at the forefront of the Nexus approach. The attitudes from the field imply a need to re-conceptualise the HDP Nexus. Interviewee 1 recommended to refrain from referring to the three individual types of actors in the Nexus and instead referring to them as 'stakeholders' due to the different actors' multifaceted mandates. This would also broaden the scope of the HDP Nexus to involve communities and local partners. Interviewee 4 reflected on the possibility of re-labelling the Nexus to better reflect its essence of linking relief, resilience, and social cohesion. Redefining the Nexus will be crucial to "erase the unhelped silos" often observed in its current implementation.

IX. CONCLUSION

The study examined the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approach in terms of its potential efficiency and effectiveness compared to traditional humanitarian and development frameworks. In conclusion, the research team offers a synthesis of the insights and analyses gleaned from interviews with key practitioners, evaluation analyses performed by credible sources, academic literature, and other data sources, providing an overview of the current state of evidence and the suggested future trajectory required to substantiate our findings.

Our investigation into the HDP nexus approach revealed a landscape of promise and uncertainty. While it may be too early to measure its true impact, the potential it holds is significant. The central tenet of the HDP nexus is the integration of humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding efforts to foster more sustainable and resilient communities. This potentially transformative approach contrasts with the traditional model, which often compartmentalised these efforts, potentially leading to gaps and inefficiencies. Proponents of the HDP nexus argue that this integrated approach can address the root causes of crises rather than merely responding to their symptoms.

The interviews with practitioners have yielded valuable qualitative data on the perceptions and experiences of the HD and HDP nexus, grounded in real-world experiences. One of our key interviews clarified that the Nexus is not a project, program, or strategy; instead, it is an approach to programming designed to improve interventions. Despite this, our research noted the absence of a standard or universal vernacular, leading to a lack of shared understanding regarding the challenges, strategic objectives, and cooperation mechanisms required to implement the nexus approach.

While many interviewees expressed optimism about the potential of the HDP nexus to create more cohesive and sustainable outcomes, they also highlighted significant challenges. These include the complexity of coordinating multiple sectors and actors, the need for increased flexibility and multi-year financing, and the difficulties of measuring the long-term differential impact of context-specific adjustments. For instance, our research found that among the three Nexus pillars, peace receives the least funding and is often reliant on short-term and inconsistent funding. These disparities in financing may reinforce the

separation between the three pillars, posing a significant challenge to achieving a cohesive nexus approach.

Indeed, the paramount importance of context-specific strategies was a recurring theme throughout the study. The HDP nexus is not a one-size-fits-all solution; its implementation and success depend heavily on the local context, including political, social, and economic factors. This variability underscores the need for flexible and adaptive approaches within the HDP approach.

Evaluation analyses provided a more quantitative perspective on the performance of HDP nexus initiatives compared to traditional approaches. The existing evaluations point towards an effective implementation of Nexus prioritising Humanitarian and Development priorities, with the peace element largely absent. The lack of available evaluations of Nexus approach projects at a programme level also points towards the need to approach Nexus programming systematically. Preliminary data indicate that some projects applying the HDP Nexus approach show promising results, particularly in enhanced coordination, stakeholder motivation, and resource utilisation. However, it is still too soon to draw definitive conclusions. This is because HDP nexus initiatives often require a longer timeframe to yield measurable outcomes due to their comprehensive and integrated nature. Traditional approaches, by contrast, may produce quicker, albeit sometimes short-lived, results.

Additionally, the long-term nature of the nexus approach conflicts with the short-term funding cycles donors prefer. However, securing flexible, multi-year and unearmarked funding is crucial as it facilitates increased joint programming, builds trust and consensus among actors, and enables them to learn and improve from previous years and activities. This temporal dimension is crucial in assessing the overall effectiveness of the HDP nexus approach. This necessitates longitudinal studies to follow these initiatives over several years to evaluate their impact accurately.

IX.I. SUGGESTED FUTURE RESEARCH

Longitudinal Studies

Based on our findings, a longitudinal study that includes a comprehensive impact assessment over an extended period could provide a more accurate measure of the broader practical effects of the HDP nexus approach on communities, economies, and peacebuilding efforts.

Such a suggestion recognises that the multi-year nature of the HDP nexus approach is both a strength and a challenge. While the extended timeframe may allow for more profound and systemic changes, it also means that current assessments may only capture part of the picture. Existing initiatives are still in various stages of development, and their outcomes remain to be fully realised and documented. Therefore, short-term successes or failures may not necessarily represent the real impact of the *New Way of Working*.

Comparative Analysis

We also suggest a large-scale comparison between the HDP nexus and the traditional approaches in the future. As the HDP nexus approach is focused on promoting coordination and collaboration among different sectors, this holistic view is expected to reduce duplication of efforts and enhance resource efficiency. However, challenges remain in achieving effective coordination. The time-consuming process of aligning different actors on shared objectives and task distribution can actually reduce efficiency, as reaching a consensus can be difficult. Immediate outcomes of traditional approaches are often more predictable and manageable to measure. The HDP nexus, with its broader and more ambitious goals, introduces a level of outcome uncertainty that can be challenging to manage and assess in the short term. Identifying such patterns and differences in context could lead to better-informed decision-making processes.

Attitudinal Surveys

Interviewee 1 recommended using attitudinal surveys to more realistically assess the HDP nexus approach. He described it as a 'behaviour-change system or process', noting that it should be evaluated in terms of its impact on the traditional perspectives of relevant

stakeholders rather than considered a project or programme. Since this interview was conducted towards the end of the project timeline, the research team could not incorporate this perspective. However, we strongly recommend it for future research.

The study gained valuable insights from the interviews conducted with WFP staff and anticipates that further interviews with a more diverse range of stakeholders, including other UN agencies, international donors, governments, communities, etc., would be critical in understanding what success factors contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Nexus in the field.

In conclusion, while the HDP nexus approach holds significant promise for addressing complex and protracted crises more effectively than traditional methods, the research team states that it is still **too early** to state either its inner superiority or ineffectiveness. The integrated nature of the HDP nexus requires a more extended timeframe to mature and demonstrate its full potential if it happens. Data from interviews, evaluation analyses, and other sources suggest the approach has strengths and challenges. Longitudinal studies and ongoing monitoring are paramount to truly understanding and validating the effectiveness and efficiency of the HDP nexus. Only through sustained and rigorous evaluation can we determine whether the HDP nexus approach can fulfil its promise of turning the work of humanitarian, development and peace actors into more effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the populations they serve.

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