



Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale



AGENZIA ITALIANA
PER LA COOPERAZIONE
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OPERATIONAL TOOLS FOR THE HUMANITARIAN - DEVELOPMENT - PEACE NEXUS:

FAQ - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE NEXUS

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Editorial Team:

This publication was prepared by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, Deputy Technical Directorate.

Editorial Coordination:

Marta Collu

Contributors:

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1. WHAT IS THE NEXUS?

The term Nexus may go by multiple names.

The **Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus** (HDPN) refers to the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions (OECD/DAC Recommendation, 2019).

Double Nexus is used interchangeably with humanitarian-development nexus, although a double nexus may also be a development-peace nexus. In the latter cases the nexus relation is specifically mentioned.

Triple Nexus is used interchangeably with humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Cross-pillar coordination is sometimes used to simplify the term.

2. DOES THE NEXUS AIM TO MEET THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS AREAS?

No! The Nexus **aims to end the needs** of communities in crisis areas. It is important to remember that actors from all three pillars must operate effectively **in the same space and at the same time**.

3. IS THE NEXUS A STRATEGY, A PROGRAM, OR A PROJECT?

No! The **Nexus is an approach**; it refers to a way of working. The terms “strategy,” “program,” and “project” are too limited to capture what the Nexus entails.

4. WHAT IS A NEXUS APPROACH?

A nexus approach is a way of working in a specific fragile or crisis context that prioritizes **prevention always**, development **wherever possible** and **humanitarian actions when necessary**.

To achieve this, it is necessary to strengthen collaboration, coherence, and complementarity among the different actors, based on their comparative advantage. It is also essential to have a shared understanding of how to reduce risks and address vulnerabilities by working simultaneously in the same locations. In doing so, the aim is to reduce the frequency and number of crises in order to end needs.

It is defined in the OECD-DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus through 11 principles across coordination, programming and financing.

5. WHAT ARE THE 11 PRINCIPLES OF THE DAC RECOMMENDATION ON THE HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS?

Table 1. Principles of the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian – Development – Peace Nexus		
Coordination	Programming	Financing
- joint risk – informed, gender – sensitive analysis of the root causes and structural drivers of conflict - empowered leadership - political engagement	- prioritize prevention, mediation and peacebuilding - putting people at the centre <i>do no harm</i> - joined-up programming aligned with risks - local and national capacity building - invest in learning and statistical evidence	- development of humanitarian, development, and peace financing strategies based on statistical evidence - flexible, multi-year financing mechanisms

Coordination

- 1. Conduct joint, risk-informed, and gender-sensitive analyses of the root causes and structural drivers of conflict**, as well as of positive resilience factors and the identification of collective outcomes that integrate humanitarian, development, and peace actions. These analyses should be used to jointly define beneficiaries before the programming phase or to adapt existing programming.
- 2. Provide adequate resources to strengthen leadership** to ensure effective and efficient coordination across the entire humanitarian, development, and peace architecture, supporting: the central role of the United Nations (in particular the Resident Coordinator), local and national authorities, coordination mechanisms at the global, regional, national, and local levels, partnerships with multilateral development banks, and joined-up approaches.
- 3. Promote political engagement and other tools and approaches**, at all levels for crisis prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding, leveraging diplomatic mediation and dialogue mechanisms to a greater extent.

Programming

4. **Prioritize prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding**, investing in development whenever possible and—when possible—ensuring that immediate humanitarian needs continue to be met.
5. **Put people at the center** by combating exclusion and promoting gender equality. In this regard, it is essential to create accountability mechanisms for people and involve communities in all stages of the program cycle.
6. **Do no harm!** Ensure that actions align with the principle of do no harm, are conflict-sensitive to avoid negative impacts, and maximize positive effects. This implies conducting context analyses that assess the program's impact on conflict and are gender sensitive.
7. **Ensure that joined-up programming processes among the three pillars take risks into account**, remain flexible, and avoid fragmentation by adopting an approach suited to the specific context. Development and peacebuilding actions should adopt a more risk-tolerant approach to encourage key actors to stay in active crisis situations.
8. **Strengthen local and national response capacities**. Invest in partners' ability to achieve results, better analyze the context, and manage risks by prioritizing funding for local organizations already on the ground and encouraging international actors to invest in local capacities and ensure that, whenever possible, local actors are an integral part of the project—promoting self-sufficiency and resilience.
9. **Invest in learning and statistical evidence**, adapting programming based on learning processes and promoting good practices and innovative approaches to collecting, sharing, and managing disaggregated data, and adapting programs accordingly — including data disaggregation.

Financing

10. **Develop** humanitarian, development, and peace **financing strategies based on statistical evidence**, which include a range of appropriate financing instruments.
11. Use **predictable, flexible, and multi-year funding** whenever possible.

6. DOES THE TRIPLE NEXUS IMPLY THE MERGING OF PROGRAMS/STRATEGIES/ACTORS OF THE THREE PILLARS?

No! The Triple Nexus is an approach that does not imply the merging of programs or the integration of actors and actions of the three pillars. Rather, the Triple Nexus calls for greater **coordination, coherence, and complementarity** among them.

A nexus approach promotes **common-sense programming** that addresses the immediate impact of catastrophic events, as well as the long-term crisis and fragility factors and peace aspects, to reduce the needs, risks, and vulnerabilities of people.

7. TO DEFINE COLLECTIVE OUTCOMES, IS IT NECESSARY TO MERGE HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS INTO PROJECTS AIMED AT REDUCING THE NEEDS, RISKS, AND VULNERABILITIES OF COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY CRISES AND FRAGILITY?

No! Defining collective outcomes does not require the merging of actions from the three pillars. A collective outcome is a quantifiable and measurable result or impact, **agreed upon by the actors** of the three pillars, **which requires the joint effort of multiple actors**. These outcomes aim to reduce the needs, risks, and vulnerabilities of people and increase their resilience.

Typically, the timeframe for a collective outcome spans 3 to 5 years, and the goal should be ambitious yet realistic.

8. DO NEXUS APPROACHES INVOLVE THE REALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR HUMANITARIAN AID?

No! **Nexus approaches do NOT involve redirecting humanitarian funds away** from life-saving activities carried out in crisis situations. Rather, they focus on reducing needs before humanitarian actions become necessary and preventing needs from escalating.

It is essential to work differently to ensure greater impact at the national level through closer coordination, better understanding of risks and vulnerabilities, more agile programming, and improved use of funding.

9. DO NEXUS APPROACHES IMPLY SHIFTING FUNDING FROM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO HUMANITARIAN ONES?

No! Nexus approaches **do not imply shifting funding between humanitarian and development programs or vice versa**. Instead, they aim to make better use of existing financial resources and to build a more diversified funding portfolio suitable for achieving collective outcomes.

Nexus approaches seek to prevent the growth of needs that make humanitarian assistance necessary and to promote improved coordination, cooperation, and coherence.

10. CAN THE NEXUS BE IMPLEMENTED BY A SINGLE ORGANIZATION?

No. No single organization, no matter how large, can implement the Nexus alone. The Nexus is not an exclusively UN approach. **Making Nexus approaches work requires leveraging the complex combination of mandates, roles, responsibilities, and functions at global, regional, national, and sub-national levels.**

A clearer understanding of the roles, responsibilities, mandates, and limitations of stakeholders within each of the three pillars is essential for better engagement, identifying opportunities to build coherence and complementarity, and ensuring accountability.

11. IS THERE A STANDARD STAKEHOLDER COMPOSITION THAT A NEXUS APPROACH MUST INCLUDE?

There is no one-size-fits-all stakeholder composition for the Nexus that works in every context. **Nexus approaches are highly context specific.** However, there are several categories of stakeholders to consider in each context.

12. IS THE NEXUS APPROACH A UNITED NATIONS APPROACH?

The United Nations did not create the Nexus, nor can it implement the Nexus between humanitarian aid, development, and peace on its own. **For the Nexus approach to work, collective commitment from all actors—not just the UN—is essential.** At a minimum, a Nexus approach should include bilateral and multilateral actors, as well as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and CSOs (Civil Society Organizations).

Traditional coordination, programming, and funding mechanisms often overlook opportunities to engage important stakeholders.

Everything depends on the context and perception, and it becomes even more challenging when actors are actively involved in a conflict or are perceived as such.

13. WHAT DOES “TRILINGUALISM” MEAN?

Each of the three pillars of the Nexus has its own set of principles, practices, and approaches. Being able to understand not only one’s own pillar but also the others is fundamental to building trust and enhancing collaboration and coherence.

Simply put, **the term “trilingualism” refers to the ability to “speak the languages” of all three pillars.** Trilingualism denotes a heightened awareness of the three Nexus pillars, ensuring that their respective constituencies have a better understanding of the systems, approaches, tools, and contexts that inform and shape humanitarian, development, and peace actions.

Humanitarian Action	Development Action	Peace Action
Purpose: Humanitarian action aims to save lives and alleviate human suffering during and after crises.	Purpose: Development action aims to promote the social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental sustainability of people and countries. Following the 2030 Agenda, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are used as a reference framework to guide development progress.	Purpose: Peace action aims to support countries in building and sustaining peace and preventing the recurrence of conflicts.
Practices and timing: To this end, humanitarian workers must respond quickly to crises and operate in volatile and high-risks contexts (active conflicts, disasters, protracted crisis, etc.). Project durations are typically short term.	Practices and timing: To achieve development goals, stakeholders carry out medium to long-term interventions for mobility. Funding is generally less flexible and involves extensive report obligations.	SOFT "P" actors: SOFT "p" actors are those engaged at the local and grassroots level, through trust-building exercises or community-led dialogue initiatives. Unlike HARD "p" actors, they do not use weapons or engage in high-level political processes.
Partners and Systems: Humanitarian actors often rely on established global-local coordination structures for rapid and effective implementation, in order to reach vulnerable groups in need rather than working with or through, for example, government structures.	Partners and Systems: Development actors often work with or through national governments. Most development cooperation plans must be approved by governments. The large scale and long-term nature of development actions (e.g., infrastructure, education reform, energy, and environmental programs) are best anchored in national and local systems and actors.	HARD "P" Actors: HARD "p" actors refer to those whose engagement is political or high-level. For example, diplomatic missions, high-level mediation, intelligence services, and armed actors such as peacekeeping troops or national military forces.
Humanitarian Principles: The four key principles of humanitarian assistance are: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. These principles are essential to ensure humanitarian actors can gain access and operate more "safely" in crisis-affected areas.		

14. HOW DO DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION USUALLY DIFFER?

- Humanitarian action aims to save lives and alleviate human suffering. This primarily means addressing the **consequences of crises**.
- Development action, on the other hand, focuses on multidimensional challenges, such as strengthening health and education systems or improving infrastructure, which tackle **structural issues**.
- Peace action can contribute, through a conflict-sensitive approach, to minimizing negative effects and maximizing positive ones, to **prevent conflicts from breaking out, escalating, continuing, or recurring**.

Furthermore, the value of **neutrality** (not taking sides in a conflict) is fundamental for **humanitarian** workers. This helps them gain access to people in need, regardless of which party (in conflict) controls the area. **Development** actors, instead, generally work **with and through governments**.

There is no clear answer as to whether Nexus approaches should include “**soft p**” peace and “**hard P**” actions. Some argue that “**hard P**” actors must be part of Nexus approaches if the root causes are to be addressed comprehensively and sustainably. Others contend that this could paralyze the Nexus approach or even exacerbate crises. It **depends on the context**.

15. WHY IS THERE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT INCLUDING PEACE IN THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS?

The uncertainty about including the “P” in the HDP (Humanitarian-Development-Peace) nexus may stem from the fact that cooperation between humanitarian and development actors (H and D) has been ongoing for much longer than cooperation with peace actors.

Additionally, coordinating with “**hard P**” actors remains challenging. Overcoming this challenge is essential to support self-sufficient, resilient, and peaceful societies. However, it is also important that differing perceptions regarding the actors and actions of “**hard P**” do not become an obstacle to all that can be achieved with the actors and actions of “**soft p**” peace in terms of conflict-sensitive programming, trust-building exercises, and community dialogue.

16. CAN HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE?

Every actor within the HDP Nexus can contribute to peace by implementing conflict-sensitive actions, in line with the “do no harm” principle, and by undertaking activities that promote peace. Humanitarian workers can do this without compromising humanitarian principles, through analysis and monitoring activities to strengthen community-level trust and by fostering dialogue among different groups within the civilian population.





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