**Backgrounder**

**The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and the DAC**

**What is the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus?**

In the past 10 years, the number of conflicts and conflict-related deaths around the world have risen sharply[[1]](#endnote-1). Conflict has become more protracted and displacement more common. The total number of people displaced rose from 43.7 million in 2010 to 68.5 million by the end of 2017[[2]](#endnote-2). Some 95% of displaced people live in the global South[[3]](#endnote-3). In 2018, 2 billion people were living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, by 2035 it is predicted that this will be the case for 85% of the world’s extremely poor people[[4]](#endnote-4). Conflict is currently driving 80% of humanitarian need[[5]](#endnote-5). At the same time, climate-related shocks are becoming more intense and more frequent; for example, drought in the Sahel is now more regular than in the past. Economic losses due to natural catastrophes in 2017 were 93% higher than the 2000–16 average, underlining that both the immediate severity of crises and the risk to development are escalating. The increased risk of extreme weather events is being driven by irreversible climate change trends following 41 consecutive years of above-average global land and sea surface temperatures[[6]](#endnote-6).

Humanitarian funding has increased steadily over the years, 50 but has not grown fast enough to meet rising needs[[7]](#endnote-7). Meanwhile, countries affected by crisis often receive far less development funding than they would without the crisis: in 2016, people living in the 20 largest recipient countries of international humanitarian assistance received less non-humanitarian official development assistance (ODA) than those living in other developing countries[[8]](#endnote-8). In other words, just when countries most need long-term assistance, they are getting less. Funding modalities remain siloed into humanitarian and development blocks, which do not correspond to people’s lived experiences.

Sustainable development and durable solutions to displacement are not possible without peace. Humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding are not serial processes: they are all needed at the same time. To reflect this understanding, the concept of a ‘humanitarian-development nexus’, or a ‘humanitarian-development-peace nexus’ has developed. It focuses on the work needed to coherently address people’s vulnerability before, during and after crises. It challenges the status quo of the aid system, which is overstretched and operates with little coordination between project-based development and humanitarian interventions, resulting in it not effectively meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people. The idea is not new. The nexus is a continuation of long-running efforts in the humanitarian and development fields, such as ‘disaster risk reduction’ (DRR); ‘linking relief rehabilitation and development’ (LRRD); the ‘resilience agenda’; and the embedding of conflict sensitivity across responses. This is also reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals’ commitments to ‘leave no one behind’. It has gained renewed focus as a policy agenda since the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, with the Agenda for Humanity calling for humanitarian and development actors to adopt a ‘New Way of Working’ - collaborative, multi-year approaches drawing on the comparative strengths of multiple actors - to achieve ‘Collective Outcomes’ for people[[9]](#endnote-9). All UN agencies and many donors and multi-mandated NGOs are supportive of the approach.

Since the 2016 WHS, there has been an increased emphasis on peace as the third component of the nexus. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has placed sustainable peace at the top of his agenda, 30 and is rolling out his vision for a UN capable of preventing conflict and integrating development, human rights, and peace and security approaches[[10]](#endnote-10). Building on this, in February 2019, DAC members endorsed a Recommendation on the ‘Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus’[[11]](#endnote-11) – adding peace to the previously dual nexus to create the so-called ‘triple nexus’ (see more information below).

Unlike previous efforts, however, the nexus dialogue goes beyond a programmatic or conceptual approach. It relates to ongoing structural shifts across the aid system that are changing how aid is planned and financed. These will likely have profound implications on how aid is coordinated, funded and delivered. All donors and agencies are currently on a ‘nexus’ learning curve as to how this will impact their overarching policy and operational strategy, programming and allocation cycle, operational structure, leadership and staffing. There is no single model for putting the nexus commitments into practice, but that this needs to be developed according the particularities of each country and donor.

**Why is the Nexus important to Africa?**

**Illustrative focus on the Sahel region**: the Sahel is suffering from multiple and interconnected security, development, displacement, governance and humanitarian crises. The international community (including France, UK, the EU, the US, Saudi Arabia and the UN) is responding by increasingly supporting Sahel countries, but their support is focused predominately on the security dimensions, including fighting insurgency and increasing security forces’ presence in border regions. Meanwhile, other dimensions of the crisis in the Sahel, such as weak governance, accountability and increasing inequality, are not addressed. There is a growing sense among aid agencies and civil society that a contributing factor to some donors’ focus on security is fuelled by their political interest in addressing insurgency and stopping irregular migration towards the Europe. On this matter, donors’ interests often correspond with the priorities of the G5 Sahel governments themselves (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) to expand their control over border regions and other so-called “ungoverned” areas. The intervention logic as articulated, for example, in the G5 Sahel priority investment programme, often assumes – based on the position of central governments – that security presence is a precondition for stability and sustainable development. But some have criticised this approach for failing to identify more nuanced connections and causal links between community resilience, insecurity, and governance issues.

**What are some key issues with the Nexus?**

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

However, along with such opportunities come potential **challenges**.

* **Where long-term development goals are prioritized across the whole system, there is a risk that immediate humanitarian needs do not receive adequate responses**. While humanitarian action always takes place within a political context and may often be flawed, where the state is party to a conflict and/or unable or unwilling to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people, an increased emphasis on the role of state-led institutions, (which may come about because development programming often works more intentionally with national and local authorities), risks squeezing out the acceptance and delivery of independent and impartial assistance.
* **On the other hand, prioritizing humanitarian assistance across the response (as happens in many protracted and cyclical crises) risks failing to strengthen national and local systems** to accountably provide essential social services, and prevent and prepare for future crises. It can also lead to ignoring the systemic causes of conflict and vulnerability, including poverty, inequality and the lack of functioning democratic systems. It can potentially even weaken existing systems by bypassing them. How can donors expand their repertoire for working with local and national State authorities wherever possible, supporting them to effect transformative change as well as being technical partners, whilst being conscious of potential tensions with humanitarian and peace objectives?
* While there is a longer history of connecting humanitarian and development approaches through resilience, there is currently **little consensus on what the integration of peace in programmes is**, nor how it should be achieved. In order to protect need-based assistance from political imperatives, donors need to define parameters for relevant and appropriate peace and security approaches, and equally the limits of the nexus concerning humanitarian responses. Different actors have different interpretations: some frame peace as a bottom-up, community-based approach that addresses root causes (‘positive peace’), while others frame it more in terms of security (‘negative peace’). There are also concerns that engaging with peace processes could compromise humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality by appearing to support or align with a particular group or solution. There is a need for more thought about which of peacebuilding or security activities are relevant and appropriate to the nexus, and which are not.
* There is also **potentially greater space for donor agendas to politicize humanitarian and development interventions**. Aid has always taken place within a political context, but it is becoming more politicized. This is not only because counter-terrorism regulations and sanctions make it hard to negotiate with proscribed groups, get equipment and people to certain areas and promote the localization of assistance, but also because some OECD donors are fusing political and humanitarian objectives. For example, some donors are funding some countries (or areas of countries, e.g. in Iraq and Syria) over others[[12]](#endnote-12). Some are pooling humanitarian and development aid funding to achieve security and migration objectives through ‘Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism’ (P/CVE) frameworks, or through instruments such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa that includes humanitarian funding and has controlling irregular migration as an objective.
* The nexus also raises **challenges in terms of data;** the New Way of Working recognises that “predictable and joint analysis are needed to [...] identify priorities based on the vast amount of reliable data that is being collected”. This does not just mean conducting new joint assessments, it means ensuring that existing datasets - from national censuses to World Bank surveys and humanitarian assessments - can be linked.

Achieving the right mix of humanitarian, development and peace approaches, and how they are integrated, is critical. A nexus approach should never be a reason not to deliver timely humanitarian assistance where needed, nor a reason to scale back development assistance. Further clarification is required as to whether the ambitions of the nexus are to work on technical issues within humanitarian and development programming of limited scale and impact or to address more fundamental challenges in terms of engaging with the political economy.

**What are the main priorities for the DAC CSO Reference Group on the Nexus?**

The OECD and the DAC play a significant role in guiding and support donors on issues related to the nexus. In particular, the OECD hosts the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), and produces key data and analysis on fragility through its regular [States of fragility reports](http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/listofstateoffragilityreports.htm).

**DAC Recommendation on the Nexus**: In February 2019, the DAC endorsed a ‘Recommendation’ on the triple nexus, which calls for DAC members to coordinate better across the nexus, including through: resourcing leadership appropriately (including local and national authorities and legitimate non-state actors), and using political engagement as needed; prioritizing prevention, investing in development and ensuring immediate humanitarian needs are met; putting people at the centre; strengthening national and local capacities; and providing better financing through predictable, flexible, multi-year financing. This Recommendation is not legally binding, but to adhere and implement it represents the highest-level commitments of the DAC.

**DAC rules governing the use of ODA for peace and security activities**: In addition, as part of its ‘ODA modernisation’ process, the DAC undertook an important reform to update the rules for what counts (or not) as ODA in the field of peace and security in 2016. The new rules expanded ODA eligibility to include more security spending, in particular on preventing violent extremism and training for partner country military personnel, which many CSOs are concerned will allow for the further securitization of aid.

**The DAC-CSO Reference Group, through its Peace & Security Working Group, has identified the following priorities** around:

1. Monitoring donor reporting of ODA-eligible peace and security-related activities. Related to this, the Group will closely stand ready to react if the DAC decides to reopen these rules (as a follow-up to the 2016 reform)
2. Monitor the implementation of the DAC Nexus Recommendation, joined-up programming and the performance of implementing partners of the Nexus Recommendation. Specifically, the working group intends to:
   * Identify the key issues and challenges for monitoring the effectiveness of development aid in fragile and conflict affected situations
   * Use the Nexus Recommendation for protecting and preserving civil society space
   * Build evidence-based research and studies on how development aid can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal 16
   * Release timely and relevant policy briefs on emerging issues that concern the use of development aid in peace, security, or militarism
   * Monitor on-ground militarization activities that may affect delivery of development aid and humanitarian assistance in fragile and conflict-affected countries
3. Monitor TOSSD developments related to peace and security activities (e.g. upcoming pilot study).

1. The number of conflicts increased from 99 in 1996 to 136 in 2016. The total number of deaths related to conflict increased from 71,940 to 103,180 in the same period. Uppsala Data Conflict Programme. <http://ucdp.uu.se> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. 6 The World Bank. Fragility, Conflict & Violence. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. OECD. (2016a). States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-2016-9789264267213-en.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The World Bank. Fragility, Conflict & Violence. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. 0 Aon Benfield. (2018). Weather, Climate & Catastrophe Insight: 2017 annual report. <https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/56767> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. 1 In 2017, only 50.6% of humanitarian needs were funded: $11.9bn was raised to respond to the UN-coordinated humanitarian appeal, which still left a gap of $11.6bn. The UN predicted that more than 128 million people would need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2018 – and more funding than ever before would be required to help them. See Global Humanitarian Overview 2017 <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO_2017.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. 2 Development Initiatives. (2018). Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018. <http://devinit.org/post/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2018/> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Agenda for Humanity <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/5358> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. See, for example, the UN Secretary-General’s 2017 report on the ‘Restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar’: <http://undocs.org/en/A/72/525> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. OECD (2019) DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, Paris: OECD <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. The majority of humanitarian funding in 2017, for example, went to crises in the Middle East, while HRPs in places such as DRC and CAR were chronically underfunded. Development Initiatives. (2018). Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)