

# EXPLAIN: ESSENTIAL BRIEFINGS FOR HUMANITARIAN DECISION-MAKERS

## THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS: CURRENT STATUS DISCOURSE

Linking short-term support with efforts addressing the root causes of crisis is far from new, but **framing this as a 'triple nexus' across humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) actors** is a recent development, prompted by the World Humanitarian Summit and the 'Leave No One Behind' theme of the 2030 Agenda.

**This has brought a cultural shift in the humanitarian sector, sparking structural reforms** and prompting more traditional agencies, like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Bank, to form **partnerships unthinkable a decade ago**.

## EVIDENCE ON PROGRESS TO DATE

### PROMISING SHIFTS IN POLICY AND COUNTRY-LEVEL COORDINATION

- There are **promising shifts in policy and structure** that connect humanitarians with approaches to longer-term risk and vulnerability.
- **Donors are making major changes to remove silos**. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) had a major restructure in 2022, merging its humanitarian aid and development cooperation departments.
- **Joined-up planning and analysis** is happening in **25 countries** – collective outcomes defined in 24 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2022).
- But there are **challenges with**

**humanitarians connecting with less tightly coordinated development and peace actors** (ALNAP 2023).

- And a **notable absence of strong government participation** in country-level coordination and planning (OECD 2022; ALNAP 2023; SOHS 2022).

### MOST TRACTION AROUND FORCED DISPLACEMENT

- The strongest examples of coordination between humanitarian and development actors come in refugee and forced displacement settings (ALNAP 2023).
- OECD and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, are **creating guidance on operationalising the nexus in forced displacement contexts**.
- Nexus themes should be a major focus in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Independent Review of the Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement 2023-24.

### SLOW PROGRESS DUE TO LACK OF SUCCESS CRITERIA AND LEADERSHIP BUY-IN

- Nearly **75% of the State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) 2022 practitioner survey respondents felt their organisation was doing a 'poor' or 'fair' job on the nexus**. In the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) interim review, **48% said their organisation lacked a way to measure success**.
- There is a consistent call for better guidance, addressing how the nexus relates practically to an organisational mandate

or specific focus areas (ALNAP 2023).

## NEXUS CONFUSION REIGNS

- Despite isolated pilots, the nexus has not brought the wholesale transformation needed to better support those affected by conflict and fragility
- There is **ongoing confusion over what the nexus looks like in practice and how best to operationalise it.**
- **Two competing interpretations** of the nexus as a change process are emerging:
  - **transformative change:** significant restructuring and wholesale changes to how humanitarian- development-peace endeavours are conceived.
  - **incremental modifications to existing ways of working or reframing existing practices** (ALNAP 2023; OECD 2021).

## KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### RESKILLING: A KEY GAP IDENTIFIED IN EARLY NEXUS EVALUATIONS BEING ADDRESSED

- **The need to upskill for nexus success has seen investment in advisors and training initiatives.** [The United Nations Development Programme's \(UNDP\) Nexus Academy](#) is broadening connections with peace actors, developing knowledge management and an evidence agenda to support training.
- **UN-trained 'timeframe travellers' are working flexibly** across short- and long-term objectives and programmes (ALNAP 2023).
- **Donors have invested significantly in nexus skillsets,** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) creating specialist advisor posts

### SILOED FUNDING IS A PERSISTENT BARRIER

- **Big donors still work in structures where humanitarian, development and peace aid are funded separately.** 55% of DAC mid-term review respondents felt their organisation was unable to avoid siloed, short-term funding (OECD 2022).

## CHALLENGES WITH THE 'P'

- An emerging distinction between 'small p' (peacebuilding) or 'big P' (peacekeeping) in IASC nexus discussions.
- The most accelerated area for integrating peace concerns into humanitarian action is **conflict sensitivity analysis and conflict dynamics** in programmes – several agencies have developed their own tools.
- **Widespread concerns in understanding tensions between humanitarian principles where the nexus brings actors closer to state-based parties to conflict.** In Mali, humanitarian action has been in direct tension with nexus approaches (SOHS 2022).
- **Initiatives to address a lack of skills and knowledge around peace and conflict** include [this inventory](#). The Peace Responsive Facility provides [training and exchange](#) for humanitarians.

## LINKING LOCAL AND NATIONAL IS AN ONGOING MISSED OPPORTUNITY

- An Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) describes **local actors as 'nexus glue', yet the focus remains on the practices and relationships of international actors.** Significant **gaps remain in shifting financing, decision-making and ownership to local actors,** civil society and government. The agenda is not on the radar of 'partner governments'. (OECD 2022)
- For local actors who have always worked fluidly, the nexus looks like the international system *'trying to get over the walls it's constructed for itself'* (SOHS 2022).

## CLIMATE: A POTENTIAL FOURTH DIMENSION TO THE NEXUS

- Scale and frequency of climate crises means **links between climate finance and policy sectors and humanitarians are increasingly critical**.
- Sector needs to hasten its development of frameworks which *'recognise, connect, and articulate interrelated risks'* (Peters et al, 2023).

## LOOKING AHEAD: NEW BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE, REVIEWS AND

## EVALUATIONS

- The IASC Task Force, with ALNAP and UNICEF, will be producing a **review of tools, good practices and guidance on the nexus in 2023**.
- **DAC-United Nations dialogue remains active**. The OECD will produce a review of the implementation of the DAC recommendation on the nexus in 2024.
- The HDP nexus is expected to form a **main part of the Grand Bargain 3.0 workplan** beginning in 2023.

[CLICK TO READ A MORE EXTENSIVE VERSION OF THIS BRIEFING.](#)

### ABOUT EXplain

The greatest learning challenge for our sector is less about capturing lessons and experiences, but creating spaces for humanitarians to absorb and act on what is already known.

Operational decision makers – at all levels – are often the people with the least time to engage with vital new learning and evidence.

That's why ALNAP is piloting new approaches to communicating knowledge tailored to the needs, expectations and preferences of the busiest humanitarians.

EXplain is ALNAP's new learning experience for 2023.

- Straightforward communications to help humanitarian decision-makers make sense of, and exchange on, current evidence and discourse. Key learning and links all in one place: sourced, checked and curated by ALNAP's highly-respected global research team.
- Rich and accessible content, provided in a time efficient way, in an open peercomfortable environment.
- Bringing senior humanitarians more up to date on the latest developments, increasing awareness on the implications for their work, creating confidence as part of continuous professional development.

EXplain is an optimal mix of focused presentations, discussion and sharing of perspectives, with a range of high-quality supporting materials. It gives senior operational leaders a better understanding of what's out there and what they really need to know.

**EXplain: simple communication, sense-making, exchange of experience.**