

## 2 Progress and bottlenecks in implementing the Nexus Recommendation

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The DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus provides a common set of principles “to address risks and vulnerabilities, strengthen prevention efforts and reduce need in order to ensure that we reach the furthest behind”. This chapter reviews efforts that adherents have undertaken in alignment with the DAC Recommendation specifically and, more broadly, to implement related policy agendas and commitments since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. In the spirit of collective learning, it identifies key outstanding challenges, bottlenecks and opportunities for joint learning. The discussion largely follows the structure of the Recommendation and is organised around its 11 principles across the dimensions of better co-ordination, programming and financing.

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As noted in Chapter 1, the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 provided impetus to the triple nexus approach, with the adoption of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Nexus Recommendation" by "Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in 2019 marking another milestone. This is why, in the spirit of collective learning, this chapter looks at progress and stumbling blocks in complying with the principles of the DAC Recommendation not only in the three years since its adoption, but also over the five years. In the same vein, the chapter focuses on the overall efforts of adherents that align with these principles, whether such efforts are explicitly intended to implement the DAC Recommendation, or they are aligned to other, related policy agendas and commitments such as those under the Grand Bargain.

The chapter is organised in three sections that largely correspond to the 11 principles across three dimensions elaborated in the DAC Recommendation: better co-ordination (principles III.1-III.3); programming (principles IV.1-IV.6); and financing (principles V.1 and V.2). In section 2.4.2 on programming, three principles (IV.2, IV.4 and IV.5) are grouped and discussed under the heading "Linking the nexus with other relevant policy agendas".

## 2.1. Strengthening co-ordination

Significant progress has been made in recent years in developing new approaches to a shared understanding of how to reduce risks and improve resilience. However, challenges remain, both to make co-ordination work and to ensure that joint analysis and joined-up planning translate into programming.

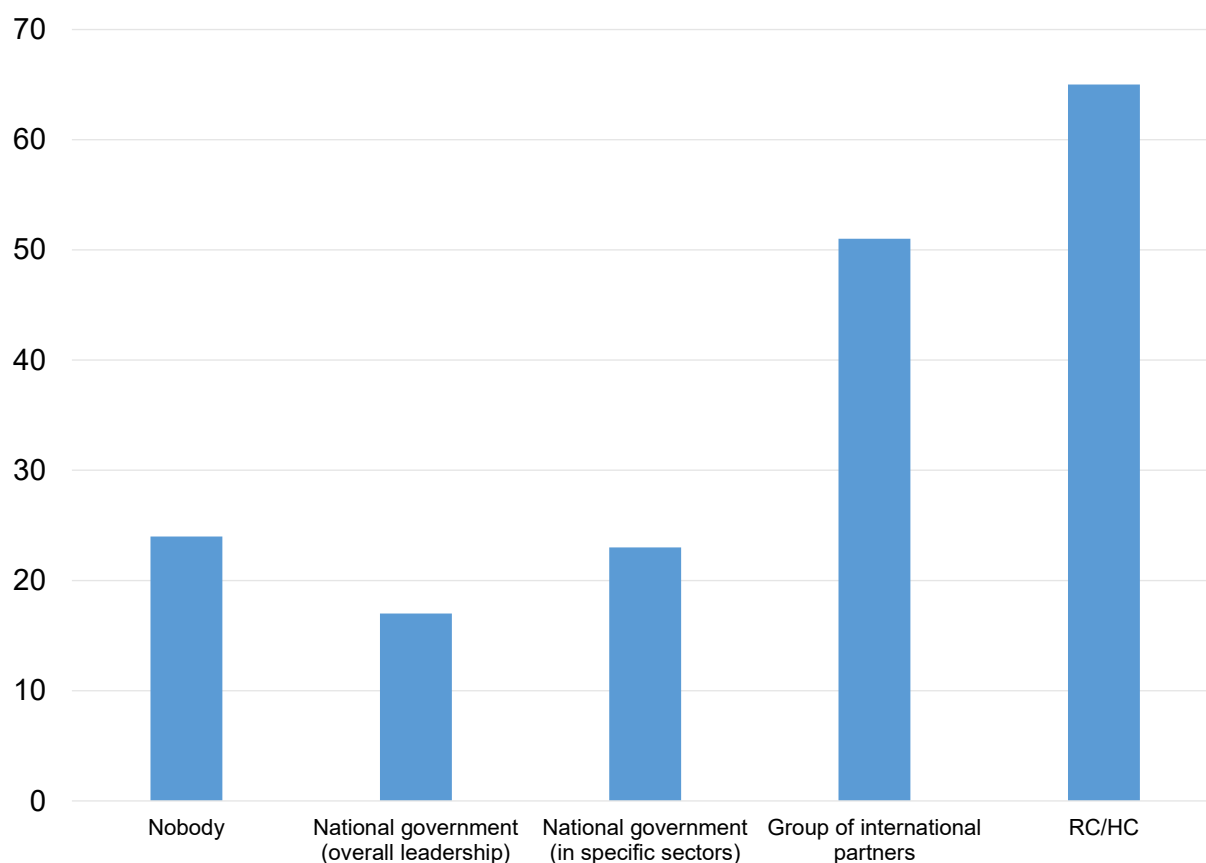
### ***Making joint context analysis and joined-up planning work***

There has been meaningful progress in fostering joined-up context analysis and planning, with widespread piloting of new, promising approaches. These include the adoption of collective outcomes in 24 of the 25 nexus pilot countries (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2021<sup>[11]</sup>); experimentation with new tools and platforms for joint country analysis; knowledge sharing and joint learning through the DAC-United Nations (UN) Dialogue. Still, several outstanding bottlenecks require attention. For example, evidence that international actors are ready and able to meaningfully commit to delivering under one strategy remains patchy. In addition, and despite existing guidance, a common understanding of the concept of collective outcomes is lacking. Finally, how stakeholders assess a particular context and design their planning is not always conducive to joined-up approaches. An area for further policy research is how local actors can be included more meaningfully in joined-up planning processes.

### ***Empowering leadership for cost-effective co-ordination***

Leadership and co-ordination models vary greatly across contexts, with contrasting levels of perceived success. Experience in several countries shows there is potential for better nexus co-ordination adapted to the type of context, as discussed in section 3.7 in Chapter 3 on investing in national and local capacities and systems. In general, however, there remains a deficit in leadership and co-ordination. The survey conducted for this report found that, overall, UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) are perceived to be the main providers of nexus leadership and co-ordination across different contexts, ahead of national governments and major donors (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Who leads and co-ordinates efforts across the nexus?



Note: The question in the survey reads: "In your geographic area of responsibility, who leads and co-ordinates the design and implementation of a collective response integrating a nexus approach? (Several answers possible.)"

Source: Nexus Interim Report Survey

Three bottlenecks can be noted. First, improving the ability of national governments to play their role in the nexus approach appears to depend on the degree to which sustainable development challenges are a national priority; the level of trust between government and aid providers; and the resources (capacity, technical expertise and funding) available to support nationally-led co-ordination (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[2]</sup>; Perret, 2019<sup>[3]</sup>). Second, while there is much room to support and empower appropriate leadership and co-ordination by UN RCs, in particular those who also serve as Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) (MOPAN, 2021<sup>[4]</sup>), this requires clarifying expectations for their role beyond co-ordinating UN and Humanitarian Country Teams and ensuring matching capacity to support the RC/HC functions. Third, in many contexts, donor co-ordination remains a weak point of the nexus co-ordination architecture (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[2]</sup>). Contexts where a country champion has emerged among bilateral partners to coalesce those partners' efforts offer a useful model that could usefully be replicated more systematically. Two issues require further policy research: first, best practices in the safeguarding of humanitarian principles in complex environments and second, effective incentives for promoting partnerships with multilateral development banks.

### ***Ensuring adequate political engagement***

Institutionally, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach demands new types of linkages among a diverse set of actors. The role of diplomatic actors deserves to be singled out as their unique mobility across the nexus allows them to draw on their networks and expertise to support sustainable peace and development outcomes in fragile contexts. (Forsberg and Marley, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>) It is important that governance, diplomatic, stabilisation and civilian security interventions are joined up and coherent with development and peace outcomes and ensure that humanitarian access is protected and that humanitarian principles are respected.

A few noteworthy initiatives have emerged that aim to enhance how diplomatic, stabilisation and civilian security interventions are joined up and coherent with humanitarian, development and peace outcomes (Box 2.1). There is also anecdotal evidence of diplomats and/or political actors mediating solutions and using their political influence to support conflict prevention, humanitarian access and outcomes, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. Broadly speaking, however, the integration of the peace pillar into the nexus approach remains at a very early stage. This is illustrated by the low response rate to the Nexus Interim Report Survey by peace actors, with only 3% of valid questionnaires attributable to respondents from the peace pillar. Limited nexus literacy and awareness among actors of the peace pillar therefore appears as a key bottleneck.

### Box 2.1. Nexus in practice: Country examples of an engaged peace pillar

Concrete examples of good practice demonstrate the strategic benefits of a true triple nexus approach, with meaningful engagement of actors from the peace pillar. Three context-specific examples can serve as models to inspire other nexus approaches:

- In Chad, the HDP Nexus Task Force, created in 2017, brings together bilateral development co-operation providers, development banks and humanitarian donors, allowing enhanced dialogue between humanitarian, development, and peace and security actors. While the co-existence of humanitarian, development and security approaches in unstable areas around Lake Chad requires carefully calibrated operational interactions that help preserve humanitarian space, the enhanced institutional space for strategic dialogue among key partners is a significant development.
- In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the EU and like-minded donors are enhancing programmatic synergies by expanding the European Joint Strategy to include broader HDP nexus actors such as the UN. The shift was in recognition of the unchanging drivers of vulnerability and humanitarian needs, linked to the broader peace and security context. Nexus-minded programming includes a project focused on community protection and institutional capacity building that targets communities with among the greatest vulnerabilities and risks of displacement and the lowest access to basic services. In 2021, a rapid damage and needs assessment was conducted in the Gaza Strip to promote the building back better approach.
- In Yemen, a World Bank and UN partnership provides an interesting pilot case study in financing nexus priorities. The deployment of a World Bank advisor to support the UN Special Envoy for Yemen between 2014 and 2017 allowed the UN and World Bank to co-ordinate efforts during critical rounds of peace negotiations and in response to the humanitarian crisis. As the crisis deepened, the partnership served as a financing conduit linking the political process to field operations, channelling more than USD 1 billion in World Bank emergency funding through various UN entities to provide community support and help preserve critical institutional capacity. In addition to the availability of financing, the collaboration and support the World Bank provided to existing processes across the nexus in Yemen was an important contribution.

Note: These examples illustrate effective practices in particular contexts and may not necessarily be replicable in other contexts. For Chad and West Bank and Gaza Strip information originates from interviews and unofficial documents consulted by the authors.

Source: Bosire (2018<sup>[6]</sup>), *The UN-World Bank Partnership in Yemen: Lessons Learned from the Deployment of a UN-World Bank Adviser in the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General*.

## 2.2. Strengthening programming

New operational practices reflecting the programming principles of the DAC Recommendation are surfacing across operational contexts. Identifying and scaling up such good practices would require sustained collective investment in joint learning and evidence. There is little visible progress in strengthening transparency and the voice and participation of people affected by crises and fragility.

### ***Prioritising prevention and peacebuilding, investing in development whenever possible***

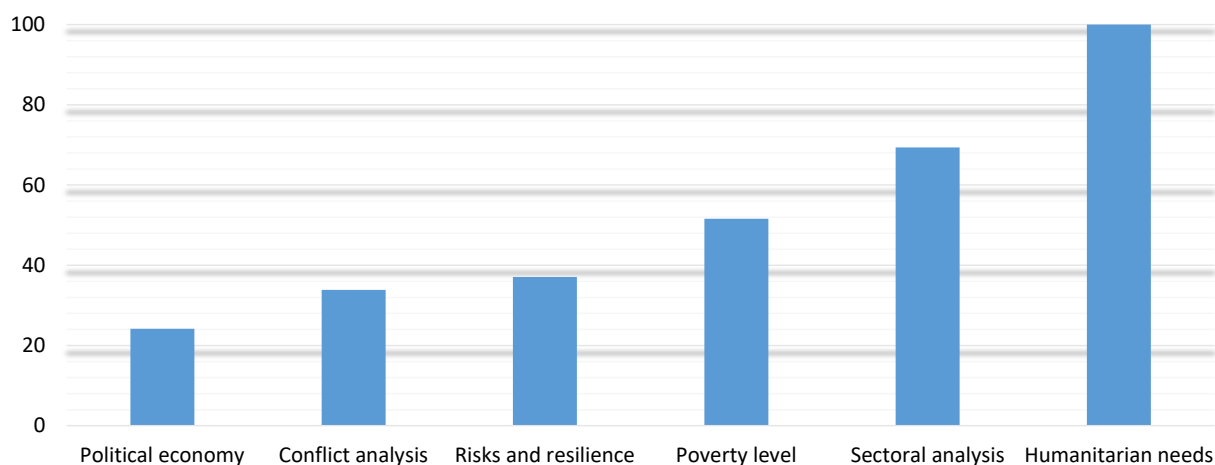
Preliminary evidence suggests that – while the volume of official development assistance (ODA) to peace in fragile contexts has experienced peaks and troughs since 2009 – overall, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of all donors’ ODA to humanitarian needs and a gradual reduction in the proportion going towards development and peace, especially in extremely fragile contexts. This trend varies according to year and recipient country. In extremely fragile contexts, peace ODA is more focused on basic safety and security, while in other fragile contexts, a greater proportion goes to core government functions. Inclusive political processes are a priority across levels of fragility.

Research for this report finds only limited evidence of concrete progress in implementing the DAC Recommendation principle of prioritising prevention and peacebuilding, while investing in development remains most visible in the more stable among fragile contexts. Further attention to this area would be necessary to help inform decision making. Some of the most tangible progress has been made through recent initiatives, within both the DAC and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee frameworks, to identify how to maximise the positive impact of development and humanitarian interventions on peace outcomes.

### ***Enhancing application of conflict sensitivity and do no harm***

Despite some progress on enhancing the systematic use of conflict analysis among some actors, the Nexus Interim Report Survey indicates that conflict and political economy analysis are the least-used input to inform planning and programming (Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.2. What types of analysis are used most often as input for planning processes?**



Note: Scores along the vertical axis represent a composite value based on respondents’ ranking of most-used to least-used type of input.  
Source: Nexus Interim Report Survey.

The situation in Afghanistan has brought into sharper focus the need to understand and measure the impact of ODA on peace outcomes, prompting International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) and

the DAC Network on Development Evaluation to establish a dedicated joint task team. Some work is still needed to design suitable gender analysis methodologies as, to date; gender-sensitive context analysis fails to translate into effective programming. Learning lessons from contexts where collective outcomes have focused on social cohesion and conflict prevention is one area for further policy research.

### ***Investing in learning and evidence***

The survey conducted for this report suggests that widespread questions persist about how to assess progress in implementing the nexus, with 48% of respondents indicating that they do not have a way to measure success. Still, an increasing number of DAC members, UN entities and civil society organisations have engaged in evaluating their performance in implementing a nexus approach, often by combining an assessment of impact and internal fitness for purpose. OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews and those of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) are additional useful sources of relevant information on individual institutions' performance for the purpose of collective monitoring. Adherents' efforts also include the commission of longitudinal meta-analyses of the response in various contexts, ranging from Afghanistan (Zürcher, 2020<sup>[7]</sup>) to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Transition International, 2016<sup>[8]</sup>). Ultimately, any definition of success must be (co-)owned by the people affected by crises or fragility or their legitimate representatives. Furthermore, existing DAC criteria can be used and adapted to the specificities of implementing the nexus in fragile contexts.

### ***Linking the nexus with other relevant policy agendas***

Meaningful progress has occurred on three additional principles of the DAC Recommendation (IV.2, IV.4 and IV.5), though this is related to the implementation of other policy agendas and global commitments. It is important for adherents to be aware of these linkages to ensure synergies in their efforts.

#### *Adopting more people-centred approaches*

The humanitarian sector has adopted a people-centred approach as a core professional standard for more than a decade. The development co-operation sector's methodology of community-driven development closely aligns with this operating principle. In both sectors, these approaches are the subject of extensive policy research, guidance and training.

#### *Promoting risk-informed programming*

The rich body of policy literature around risk-informed programming in the humanitarian and development sectors has translated into programmatic changes among some DAC and UN adherents. The COVID-19 pandemic — and, more recently, violent political transitions in Afghanistan and several West African countries — have tested international actors' ability to adjust to changes in the operational environment. In addition to anecdotal evidence that actors are responding creatively and with greater agility under extraordinary circumstances, these challenges have prompted many adherents to initiate internal discussions about how to retain their newly won flexibility and further enhance their anticipatory capacity.

#### *Strengthening national and local capacities*

There is an opportunity to integrate the localisation agenda into nexus approaches. Currently using national and subnational delivery systems is rarely the default option. Despite positive examples (e.g. in the West Bank and Gaza Strip), efforts to empower domestic non-governmental organisations, the private sector and local government actors in fragile and conflict-affected settings by ensuring they have meaningful roles and responsibilities in project design, implementation and evaluation are still insufficient (Torres and Dela Cruz, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>). Strengthening national and local capacities is especially important, given their importance for long-term development outcomes (Poole and Culbert, 2019<sup>[10]</sup>). There is also great potential for

international actors to learn from local stakeholders, who often can bridge the nexus pillars in their work and may only demarcate the pillars to fit the international system.

Several recent studies have assessed constraints to shifting a larger share of ODA from intermediaries to local organisations and proposed ways to address the bottlenecks (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[11]</sup>). However, inclusion and efforts to strengthen local capacities still require more attention. In 2021, the DAC buttressed its normative framework with the adoption of the Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance.

### *Integrating a gender focus*

Gender equality is fundamental to preventing conflict and fragility and attaining sustainable peace. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation in societies, the economy, disaster risk reduction and peace processes — at all stages and levels of decision making — leads to more inclusive economies and more sustainable peace; inequalities and exclusion, on the other hand, spur conflict and fragility. The DAC Recommendation explicitly links to the international women, peace and security agenda, promoting women's equal opportunities in the economy and equal political representation. Enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile contexts by protecting the rights of women and girls, and striving for inclusive resilience to natural hazards, are prerequisites for achieving not only the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but also the women, peace and security agenda and the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action of the Generation Equality Forum (OECD, 2021<sup>[12]</sup>)

## **2.3. Financing across the nexus**

One of the motivating factors for the DAC Recommendation was the sense that crises — and humanitarian funding requests — were ballooning, with limited financing and programming strategies in place to resolve the issues driving these crises and humanitarian suffering. Across total ODA to fragile contexts, overall there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of all donors' ODA to humanitarian needs and a gradual reduction in the proportion going towards development and peace, especially in extremely fragile contexts. There is also a sense of untapped opportunities, with growing evidence that building resilience and peace is cost-effective, and with a greater diversity and volume of financial resources in many fragile contexts.

Both the UN system and bilateral donors have made significant efforts to adjust their financing practices to support nexus approaches, according to survey data, interviews and peer reviews. In particular, progress has been made on financing instruments, approaches and individual projects, though these are sometimes relatively siloed. Nexus approaches have not yet been fully mainstreamed and normalised, and financing streams tend to not yet work together coherently. The financing strategies envisaged by the DAC Recommendation are still largely missing and will be an important next step to support programming and co-ordination towards prioritised, common goals (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[11]</sup>).

### ***Harnessing collective financing strategies for coherent action***

Reducing the risk of conflict and ending need are not a matter of just spending more, but of spending more strategically. The call for financing strategies across the nexus recognises that prioritisation is both hard and inevitable when needs exceed existing resources and that there is a need to improve how it is done — for instance, by including the international financial institutions (IFIs) as nexus actors alongside bilateral donors, the UN system and humanitarian actors. Steps have been taken, including by the OECD, to develop financing strategy approaches that help bring together analysis and decisions on collective priorities, sources and funds and on strategic programming, building on established methodologies and planning processes.



Yet, the role that financing strategy processes could play in coalescing financing and prioritisation decisions has not yet been realised, and collective outcomes remain driven by multilateral actors rather than being truly inclusive. The majority of survey respondents indicated that they felt their team or organisation had never been involved in developing or aligning to financing strategies that bring coherence across the humanitarian, development and peace pillars. Where respondents said their team or organisation had developed such strategies, the majority of these were developed at the level of the respondent's own organisation or across organisations with a similar mandate. It is rare that the government or actors from other pillars of the nexus are involved. Peace financing constitutes a significant gap: There remains a lack of clarity about the definition and role of peace financing, and none of the (few) respondents who identified with the peace pillar reported having been involved in such a financing strategy.

### ***Making financing more nexus ready***

To achieve the programming and co-ordination goals of the DAC Recommendation also requires having the right type of financial resources to deploy. Progress has been made in developing instruments and mechanisms that are nexus ready — that is, they are flexible and predictable, allow for a timely crisis response, and facilitate greater involvement from a broader set of actors. The majority of respondents to the Nexus Interim Report Survey reported that their organisation was able to align financing with activities across the nexus where appropriate (64%); keep unallocated or contingent funding available in case of changing needs (55%); commit an adequate proportion of its resources as multi-year financing (53%); and adjust its financing in response to changes in the context (69%). However, the majority did not think (or was not sure) their organisation had the ability to avoid fragmented, siloed or inappropriately short-term funding (55%) (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[11]</sup>). Some DAC members deliberately do not have a dedicated humanitarian budget for each country and context and are thus have more flexibility to match funding and programming with needs and risk analysis.

Continued attention is needed to get development and peace financing into the most fragile contexts alongside resources for emergency preparedness and humanitarian response and to ensure that humanitarian assistance is sustained sufficiently to allow development activities to embed (Marley, 2022<sup>[13]</sup>; OECD, forthcoming<sup>[11]</sup>). Many crises require humanitarian support over a multi-year time frame, and humanitarian assistance should be programmed and financed with that horizon in mind. As the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated, not everything urgent is humanitarian and not everything long term is development co-operation: Debt relief, macroeconomic stability or political engagement can be urgent in certain contexts.

Against this backdrop, the expanded role that IFIs are playing across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus should be welcomed. An increased number of IFIs have already started to tailor their work to the needs of fragile contexts, with several development banks and the International Monetary Fund having recently developed or put into effect fragility strategies.<sup>1</sup>

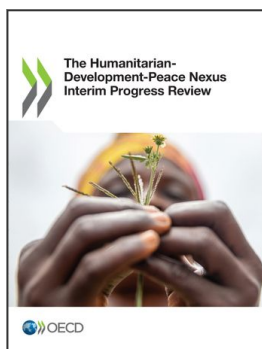
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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On 9 March 2022, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) adopted its Strategy for Fragile and Conflict-Affected States, which identifies enhanced cooperation with development, humanitarian, peace, and security actors a key principle of engagement for the Fund. In this regard, it explicitly refers to the DAC Recommendation. The IMF Strategy can be found here: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2022/03/14/The-IMF-Strategy-for-Fragile-and-Conflict-Affected-States-515129>



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