HDP Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities for its Implementation

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HDP Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities for its Implementation

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Abstract

This study on the challenges and opportunities of implementing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (or Triple Nexus) was commissioned by the European Commission, EEAS and ECHO. The study builds on the findings of nine country cases, comprising six pilot countries (Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan, Myanmar, Iraq, Chad) and three non-pilot countries (Burkina Faso, DRC and CAR). Enquiries were guided by core questions on Triple Nexus understanding, mobilisation, and implementation.

On Understanding - The report finds a high level of understanding of the Triple Nexus, and recognition of its added-value in addressing contexts of protracted crisis and conflict. However, stakeholders identify various challenges and bottlenecks that impede operationalisation. The report recommends further attention to the EUs policy and operational guidance, more attention to learning and knowledge sharing and more advocacy at international and country levels.

On Mobilisation - The report notes the "hands-off, eyes-on" approach used to mobilise stakeholders, which is considered appropriate, leaving space for country level adaptation. Key Triple Nexus elements, especially joint conflict analysis, joint planning and strong coordination are recognised as essential. However, the human and financial resources to mobilise and sustain engagement were under-estimated. The report recommends continuing the "hands-off, eyes-on" approach, while putting in place a Help Desk to support the country level. More attention should also be paid to strengthening coordination and consultation arrangements within and between the EU and other concerned stakeholders.

On Implementation – The country studies confirm the efforts made to promote coordinated political engagement, align the respective actions of each service around common objectives and address social cohesion. But challenges remain. These include how best to accommodate the peace element, how to ensure respect for humanitarian principles, how best to mobilise financial resources among others. The study also identifies factors related to institutional arrangements, leadership and capacity that impact on progress. Recommendations focus on; fine-tuning how joint conflict analysis is conducted, strengthening the funding architecture for the Nexus, clarifying how best to work with the peace element, making more explicit how the Nexus can guide humanitarian exit and the localisation agenda, furthering efforts to engage EU Member States, and designing a Triple Nexus monitoring framework.

Résumé

Cette étude sur les défis et opportunités de la mise en œuvre du Nexus humanitaire-développement-paix (ou Triple Nexus) a été commissionnée par la Commission européenne, le SEAE et ECHO. L'étude s'appuie sur les résultats provenant d'enquêtes menées dans neuf pays, comprenant six pays pilotes (Nigeria, Ouganda, Soudan, Myanmar, Irak, Tchad) et trois pays non-pilotes (Burkina Faso, RDC et RCA). Les études ont été menées à partir de questions centrales sur la compréhension, la mobilisation et la mise en œuvre du Triple Nexus.

Sur la Compréhension - Le rapport constate un niveau élevé de compréhension du Triple Nexus et la reconnaissance de sa valeur ajoutée dans les contextes de crise et de conflit prolongés. Cependant, les parties prenantes identifient plusieurs défis et obstacles qui entravent l'opérationnalisation. Le rapport recommande de prêter davantage attention aux orientations politiques et opérationnelles de l'UE, à l'apprentissage et au partage des connaissances, ainsi qu'au plaidoyer aux niveaux international et national.

Sur la mobilisation - Le rapport note l'approche "observation sans intervention" utilisée pour mobiliser les parties prenantes, qui est considérée comme appropriée, laissant un espace pour l'adaptation au niveau national. Les éléments clés du Triple Nexus, notamment l'analyse conjointe des conflits, la planification conjointe et une forte coordination, sont reconnus comme essentiels. Cependant, les ressources humaines et financières nécessaires à la mobilisation et au maintien de l'engagement ont été sous-estimées. Le rapport recommande de poursuivre l'approche "observation sans intervention", tout en mettant en place un support technique pour soutenir le niveau national. Une plus grande attention devrait également être accordée au renforcement des dispositifs de coordination et de consultation au sein de l'UE et entre celle-ci et les autres parties prenantes concernées.

Concernant la mise en œuvre - Les études par pays confirment les efforts déployés pour promouvoir un engagement politique coordonné, aligner les actions respectives de chaque service autour d'objectifs communs et aborder la cohésion sociale. Mais des défis subsistent tels que : comment intégrer au mieux l'élément de paix, comment assurer le respect des principes humanitaires, comment mobiliser au mieux les ressources financières, etc. L'étude identifie également les facteurs liés aux dispositions institutionnelles, au leadership et aux capacités qui ont un impact sur les progrès. Les recommandations portent sur les points suivants : affiner la manière dont l'analyse conjointe des conflits est menée, renforcer l'architecture de financement du Nexus, clarifier quelle serait la meilleure manière de travailler avec l'élément de paix, rendre plus explicite la manière dont le Nexus peut guider la sortie humanitaire et l'agenda de localisation, poursuivre les efforts pour impliquer les États membres de l'UE et enfin concevoir un cadre de suivi du Triple Nexus.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
CAR	Central African Republic
CAS	Conflict Assessment Analysis Screening
CBO	Community based organisation
COHAFA	Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
Concord	European confederation of NGOs working on sustainable development and international cooperation
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DIZA	Programme de développement inclusif dans les zones d'accueil
DP	Development Partners
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAMR	External Assistance Management Report
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EPF	European Peace Facility
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (European peacebuilding NGO network)
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUMS	European Union Member States
EUTF	European Union Trust Funds
EUTM	European Union Military Training mission
FPI	Service for Foreign Policy Instruments
FWC	Framework contract
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
HIP	Humanitarian implementation plan
HoC	Head of Cooperation
HoD	Head of Delegation
HoO	Head of Operations
IcSP	Stability and Peace Instrument Committee
ICP	International Cooperation Partner
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
INTPA	Department for International Partnerships
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ISP	Integrated Approach for Security and Peace
KE	Key Expert
LNGO	Local non-governmental organisation

LQS	Learning and Quality Support
LRRD	Linking relief, rehabilitation and development
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFF	Multi-annual Financial Framework
MIP	Multi-annual Indicative Programme
MONUSCO	United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDICI-GE	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe
NEAR	Neighbourhood and enlargement policies
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIP	National Indicative Programme
NNGO	National non-governmental organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRM	Nexus Response Mechanism
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PBBA	Prevention and peacebuilding
PCFA	Political Framework for Crisis Approach
PCNA	Post-Conflict Needs Assessments
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessments
PFCA	Political Framework for Crisis Approach
PfR	Partners for Resilience
QA	Quality Assurance
QMS	Quality Management System
RCPCA	Plan national de relèvement et de consolidation de la paix
RG	Reference Group
ROM	Results oriented monitoring
RPBA	Recovery and Peace Building Assessments
RRP	Rapid Response Pillar
SAIO	Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SMME	Small, medium and micro enterprises
SNV	Dutch Development Organisation
SOAS	School of Oriental & African Studies
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SPaN	Social Protection across the Nexus
TE	Team Europe Approach
TEI	Team Europe Initiative
TL	Team leader
TOC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USA	United States of America
VOICE	Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (European humanitarian NGO network)
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WPS	Women, Peace & Security

Glossary of Terms

EU Services	The term EU services is used to refer in general to the EEAS and the Commission Directorate-Generals (INTPA, ECHO, NEAR and to FPI), unless indicated otherwise.
Triple Nexus	The term Triple Nexus is used to refer to the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus unless otherwise stated.
Integrated Approach	The Integrated Approach is a framework for a more coherent and holistic engagement by the EU to prevent and respond to external conflicts and crises bringing together EU institutions and EU Member States with other partners. It draws on all relevant EU policies and instruments - spanning the diplomatic, security, defence, financial, trade, development cooperation fields - in view of ensuring a joint EU response throughout the full conflict spectrum to achieve joint political and security objectives. EU humanitarian aid is guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It is provided on the basis of needs of the affected populations and beyond any strategic, military, political, economic or other EU objective. The Integrated Approach was referred to in the EU 2016 Global Strategy[2] and EUMS then committed to this approach in the Council Conclusions of 22 January 2018.[3]
Comprehensive Approach	The Comprehensive Approach refers not only to the joined-up deployment of EU resources and to making optimal use of all relevant policy instruments (be they external or internal), but also to the shared responsibility of EU-level actors and EU Member States. It relies on the assumption that the EU is stronger, more coherent, more visible and more effective in its external relations when all EU institutions and the Member States work together on the basis of a common strategic analysis and vision. This understanding covers all stages of the cycle of conflict or other external crises; through early warning and preparedness, conflict prevention, crisis response and management to early recovery, stabilisation and peacebuilding in order to help countries getting back on track towards sustainable long-term development. With this approach, the understanding is also that humanitarian aid shall be provided in accordance with its specific modus operandi, respectful of the humanitarian principles, solely on the basis of the needs of affected populations (in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid4). The HR/VP and the European Commission committed to the joint application of this approach in the EU's external policy and action through a Joint Communication in December 2013.5 As of 2016, with the launching of the Global Strategy, the term Comprehensive Approach gave way to the term Integrated Approach in EU documents.
"Big P" - "small p"	With respect to the peace element of the Triple Nexus, the study team distinguishes between so-called "small p" and "big P" actions with the latter associated with actions aimed at restoring peace through military or diplomatic means but also stabilisation efforts to address national and sub-national (regional) insecurity issues, whilst the former associated with actions such as maintaining or promoting peacebuilding, social cohesion, early warning or mediation often focused on the community level.
INGO/ NNGO and LNGO/CBO	For purposes of clarity a distinction is made between international NGOs (INGO), national NGOs (NNGOs), local NGOs (LNGO) and Community Based Organisations (CBO). The LNGO refers to national NGOs that are locally based

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[2] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf

[3] https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5413-2018-INIT/en/pdf

[4] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42008X0130(01)&from=EN

[5] https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/file/22981/download?token=N5ojV2Yi

	and which do not necessarily have national presence, but which are not community based.
Contiguum vs. Continuum	The continuum approach represents the traditional sequence of emergency aid operations, followed by separate processes of rehabilitation and development, the contiguum approach applies a parallel and simultaneous array of interventions falling across all three sectors, often funded by different aid instruments[6].
Stabilisation	The concept of stabilisation is understood as the requirement to meet basic humanitarian and development needs of communities in order to hold onto territories gained through military action (Dennys, 2013). Stabilisation seeks to support national and local partners in conflict affected countries to reduce violence, ensure basic security and facilitate peaceful political deal-making, all of which provide a foundation for building long term stability. Stabilisation includes both civilian and military aspects. UNDP, for instance, through its stabilisation activities aims to provide an enabling environment for the restoration of services and rebuilding social infrastructure in high-risk environments.

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[6] https://www.acted.org/en/while-debates-around-the-nexus-continue-acted-moves-ahead/

Executive Summary

This report documents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of a study commissioned by the European Commission on the challenges and opportunities of implementing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (henceforth the Triple Nexus) covering the period 2017 to present.

Study Aims, Approach and Methodology

The overall aim of the study is to contribute to the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus and thereby to help increase the impact of the EU's engagement by strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace actors and by capitalising on their comparative advantages. This includes proposing specific recommendations to various EU actors (EU as a whole; different EU actors/institutions; EU in its relations with member states and non-EU actors such as like-minded partners, international organisations and civil society.

The study is based on nine country studies, five of which involved visits to the country in question and four which were conducted as desk studies. Six of the nine country studies represent the Triple Nexus pilot countries (Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan, Myanmar, Iraq, Chad) identified in 2017 whilst three are non-pilot countries (Burkina Faso, DRC and CAR), which have nevertheless gained experience working with the Triple Nexus.

In-country Studies	Desk Studies
Uganda (Pilot)	Iraq (Pilot)
Nigeria (Pilot)	Myanmar (Pilot)
Chad (Pilot)	Central African Republic (CAR)
Sudan (Pilot)	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
Burkina Faso	

Interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders from different EU services in Brussels and regional offices – EEAS, FPI, INTPA, NEAR and ECHO, the three European NGO platforms (VOICE, EPLO and Concord), and from several other non-EU stakeholders. A comprehensive scan and review of relevant EU and international documentation on the Triple Nexus was conducted in preparation for the launch of the country studies and headquarters interviews.

Enquiries were guided by a research question matrix comprising four core questions (see below) and a set of sub-questions (Annex 1).

1. How do actors understand the HDP Nexus, what do they consider to be its relevance at country level and what is their ambition for working with the Nexus?
2. What steps have been taken to mobilise actors and "tool up" for working with the Triple Nexus?
3. What have been the practical experiences in implementing/ rolling out with the Triple Nexus to date?
4. What difference has the Triple Nexus made on the ground – What kinds of results if any can be reported?

Context and Rationale for the Study

Worldwide, and particularly in certain parts of the African continent, already complex and protracted crises are deepening, resulting in an increase of violent conflicts, humanitarian suffering, political instability and destruction of social and economic infrastructure. These crises take place in very different contexts, with varying levels of fragility, insecurity and poverty. Existing approaches to addressing such multi-faceted crises have proven ineffective and have brought about a recognition for the need of multi-sector and multi-agency approaches that tackle short-term needs while aiming at providing long-term solutions and, in situations of conflict, contribute to building lasting peace.

Since the introduction of the Linking-Relief-Rehabilitation-Development (LRRD) approach some 25 years ago, the EU has advocated for a more integrated approach to shape more complementarity between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and political engagement and has developed an extensive policy framework for doing so. Following the adoption in 2017 of 'Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-

Development Nexus', six pilot countries were selected by the Commission in consultation with EU Member States (EUMS), to further operationalise the Nexus by systematising cooperation, enhancing the use of best practices and the generation of evidence.

In 2018, the Council extended the Humanitarian-Development Nexus by adding the peace dimension to become the 'Triple Nexus'. Thereafter the EU began a process aimed at enhancing the capacity of EU staff to address the Triple Nexus across the 6 pilot countries. In 2020, the principal EU services involved agreed on a non-paper on the peace element of the Triple Nexus as well as a practical guidance note.

Implementation of the Triple Nexus by the EU is still in its early days and there remains a significant need for more analysis, learning and guidance on how to concretely operationalise it in different country contexts. Against this evolving policy background, this study aims to obtain greater understanding of how precisely EU services at country level have operationalised the Triple Nexus and what challenges and opportunities have been encountered.

Findings

Study findings are clustered around three main headings;

- Understanding
- Mobilisation
- Implementation

On Understanding

Extent of shared understanding among EU services
Broad conceptual understanding of the Triple Nexus is largely uncontested by EU services, however, there is need for more in-depth conceptual clarity vis-a-vis other concepts, in particular the Integrated Approach. Each EU service has its distinct mandate and therefore the operational implications of working with the Triple Nexus will vary from service to service.

Value-addition of the Triple Nexus
The value-addition of the Nexus is both in terms of the "lens" it offers to obtain a more complete and shared understanding of context across services, as well as in terms of the "modus operandi" it promotes towards setting common objectives, working in a coordinated manner, and in promoting dialogue and information sharing across services. Country context, including the situation on the ground and the roles played by the host government and other international actors, ultimately influence its perceived relevance and validity.

Challenges and bottlenecks
These include policy and strategic concerns such as keeping in check the ambition levels and expectations placed on the Triple Nexus, risks of compromising institutional mandates and principles of engagement, uncertainties over the implications of working with the peace element and concerns of weak or absent partner government participation. There are also operational concerns such as transaction costs, risks of bureaucratisation, capacity constraints, uncertainties regarding the suitability of available funding instruments, and having to contend with uncoordinated Triple Nexus initiatives of different development partners

What others are thinking
The OECD/DAC recommendation and principles on the Triple Nexus have helped galvanise common understanding across international cooperation partners on the Triple Nexus, including the EU. A number of international NGOs (INGO) have also developed policy and operational guidance on the Triple Nexus which builds on substantial implementation experience. The Triple Nexus discourse remains by and large a concern of international cooperation partners and has generally not become a policy concern of partner governments.

On Mobilisation

Steps taken to mobilise and prepare

The six pilot countries launched the Triple Nexus in similar ways. This included holding workshops with or without EUMS participation and non-EU partners, conducting joint contextual analysis, drafting action plans and setting up arrangements for coordination, standard operating procedures and reporting. The experiences of the non-pilot countries are more varied and built on pre-existing processes and emerging opportunities. The mobilisation process was more emergent and did not follow a fully lined-out step-by-step process.

Support and guidance from Brussels

The approach adopted by headquarters towards guiding the pilot process may be described as "hands off, eyes on". Pilot countries have been encouraged to translate the Triple Nexus vision into practice according to what makes sense at country level. This approach has been considered appropriate by country level staff. However, some would have welcomed more support and feel that a helpdesk type function would be appropriate. Non-pilot countries did not receive dedicated support but since the end of 2021, have had access to the same guidance materials and learning opportunities as the initial pilot countries.

Conflict analysis and other forms of joint analysis

The conduct of some form of joint conflict analysis is regarded by most stakeholders as a cornerstone of working with the Triple Nexus and as one of the aspects where progress has been made to get services to work together and form a common understanding. Nevertheless, differences remain on how best to respond, reflective of each service's mandate and interests. The introduction of the Conflict Analysis Screening (CAS) as a mandatory tool to use in the formulation of MIPs in fragile contexts has helped to systematise joint conflict analysis and provided an entry point for both pilot and non-pilot countries to think more strategically about the Triple Nexus.

Action plans and other planning frameworks

Nexus Action Plans defining collective outcomes and possible implementation mechanisms, indicative schedules and role divisions were produced in one form or another in five of the six pilot countries. However, they have not been fully operationalised for reasons to do with certain preconditions not being in place such as availability of dedicated staffing, weak linkages to other country processes and limited availability of funds to implement identified actions. Non-pilot countries have not produced standalone Nexus Action Plans although in one country a Nexus country road map was drafted. In another, Triple Nexus ambitions are reflected in the MIP. It is noted that the Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) includes specific provisions for addressing the Triple Nexus.

Coordination, collaboration and reporting

Robust coordination and reporting arrangements between EU services and with EUMS, partner governments and other concerned actors, are essential for institutionalising the Triple Nexus. Evidence, however, suggests limited progress in putting in place functioning arrangements. INGOs are critical of the limited opportunity to engage with EU services through more structured coordination arrangements. Experiences from the non-pilot countries point to the value of more ad hoc arrangements that have evolved organically based on need and circumstance. Cases also highlight the critical role of informal arrangements to share information, conduct monitoring missions and peer review one another's proposals and plans. In some countries, such arrangements are being codified into Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Beyond the EU, country-led Triple Nexus coordination frameworks are either absent or weak. As a result, various coordination frameworks operate side by side, which fall short of offering a common framework.

On Implementation

Facilitating dialogue among Triple Nexus stakeholders

EU services have taken initiatives to engage more routinely among themselves. Exchanges between EU delegations (EUD) and ECHO have intensified whilst exchanges with FPI and political sections/ EEAS have increased. Such interactions contribute to a better appreciation of how each service works, the constraints within which each must operate, and the opportunities for coordination and joint action.

Dialogue between EU services and EUMS on the Triple Nexus has generally been less intense and more variable. In some instances, EUMS have engaged with EU services to formulate dedicated "Nexus Action Plans" and to collaborate on specific actions. In others, there have been discussions on ways to use the Team Europe approach and Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) to promote the Triple Nexus. EU implementing partners, including INGOs, expressed frustration that opportunities to engage with EU services on the Triple Nexus have been limited and believe more structured consultative mechanisms would help further operationalise the Triple Nexus. Several cases point to a growing awareness of the value of political dialogue as an intrinsic part of the Triple Nexus, with examples of EU services and EUMS formulating common messages for inclusion in political and diplomatic exchanges with partner governments and other ICPs.

Funding and resource mobilisation for the Triple Nexus

Operationalisation of the Triple Nexus has depended on EU services harnessing existing funding instruments and finding ways to work around any limitations imposed by rules/ funding mandates associated with these instruments. This has included (i) coordinating and aligning actions funded from different instruments of different services but which collectively aim to achieve a Triple Nexus goal; (ii) designing specific actions that combine humanitarian, development and peace elements but that are funded from a single funding source; (iii) establishing a pooled fund specifically to finance the Triple Nexus such as the "Nexus Response Mechanism" in Myanmar; (iv) exploring opportunities for ad hoc pooling or co-financing of actions across services and/ or with EUMS that have a Triple Nexus ambition. Views on the potential of NDICI to facilitate Triple Nexus operationalisation vary, with some concern that it will not prove sufficiently flexible and responsive. Others note however that a number of MIPs recognise the opportunities afforded by working with the Triple Nexus, and also point to the TEIs as offering ways to leverage EUMS funding in support of the Triple Nexus. Since 2021, HIPs are required to indicate how the Triple Nexus will be supported, for which guidance on addressing the Triple Nexus has been developed by ECHO.

Incorporation of cross-cutting issues

These have been generally well incorporated into the Triple Nexus. As the Nexus is operationalised through funding obtained from different instruments, the rules and guidance governing these largely determine how cross-cutting issues are to be addressed. Because much of the focus of the Triple Nexus has been on refugees, IDPs and other communities directly affected by crisis and conflict, actions are invariably sensitive to cross-cutting issues of gender, disability, vulnerability and rights, as well as to issues of environmental degradation, climate change and natural resources management. Difficulties can arise where actions financed from different sources need to take account of different sets of guidance. Overall, however, implementing partners who have considerable experience working with different sources of funding have found ways to accommodate different sets of the EU's guidance in consultation with the relevant EU services.

Integration of the peace element

The introduction of the peace element has been welcomed by EU services with clear recognition of its relevance and potential added value. It has, however, introduced some confusion and concerns as to what the peace element embraces, who the peace actors are and the potential risks it might bring to otherwise more politically impartial actions. A distinction can be made between so-called "small p" and "big P actions" with the former associated with actions aimed primarily at maintaining or promoting social cohesion, conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the community level, and the latter associated with actions aimed at restoring peace mainly through stabilisation efforts, including military/ hard security support. Both are ideally combined with diplomatic means that address national

and sub-national insecurity issues. "Small p" actions have been a common feature of many actions aimed at operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, and pre-date the incorporation of the peace element into the Nexus. Such actions are often considered an intrinsic part of community-based work and attract comparatively little controversy. By contrast, the "big P" actions attract more concern and contestation. Here, there is less practice to draw upon. The multitude of international actors and efforts in the peace and security domain moreover complicates a clear and coherent shared understanding and approach.

Respect of humanitarian principles

The respect of humanitarian principles has arisen as an on-going topic of debate in connection with the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus. Concerns have increased since the incorporation of the peace element and are associated primarily with "Big P" actions, and to a lesser extent with "small p" actions. Concerns relate mainly to assuring the safety and access of humanitarian actors and in particular the imperative of upholding principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence that are at the core of humanitarian action.

Local empowerment and leadership capacity

There is an expectation that the Triple Nexus will contribute to community empowerment and to strengthening the capacity of local leadership. This expectation is prompted by both the "localisation" agenda driven by the humanitarian community as well as by the aid and development effectiveness agendas (including the New Deal), that emphasise local/ national leadership and ownership, state-building and country systems strengthening.

Opportunities for empowerment and capacity strengthening is contextually defined, with an inverse relationship between degree of conflict and state instability/ presence and the opportunities to pursue these objectives. At the community level, actions have promoted economic empowerment, and have helped community-based institutions play a leadership role in local conflict resolution and mediation. At the local government level, actions have strengthened the capacity of local governments to manage refugee and displaced persons affairs, lead on disaster risk management and take over delivery of services, sometimes established through humanitarian actions. Where contexts permit, actions have also strengthened national level policies, coordination frameworks and delivery capacities. The localisation agenda is also concerned to empower national NGOs and local CBOs to play a more central role in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Here, the country studies have less evidence of this taking place on a concerted level.

Perspectives on humanitarian exit strategies

One of the longstanding questions of humanitarian action, surfacing in the context of the Triple Nexus, is how to design and plan for exit strategies. The cases confirm that the pertinence and timeliness of considering such strategies varies from context to context. The extent to which the Triple Nexus can facilitate a humanitarian exit is therefore contextually informed. Nevertheless, most actions operationalised under a Triple Nexus approach aim in some way to reduce the need for humanitarian support either by helping to build individual and community resilience, addressing the underlying causes of conflict, or by strengthening the capacity of state institutions to provide security, disaster response and access to basic needs/ services.

Enablers and constraints

The study explored enablers and constraints from five perspectives:

1. In terms of mandates, structures, rules and procedures, four sets of concerns were revealed: (i) differences of programming cycles that can impact on the sequencing, alignment and intentionality of actions across different services; (ii) differences in organisational structures, field presence and decision-making authorities that impact on the ease of communication and speed of decision making across the different services; (iii) different mandates and operating rules and principles that impact on the way issues are viewed and understood, the principles that guide engagement, the tools and methods used and the criteria applied in the design, monitoring and evaluation of interventions; (iv) the extent of readiness across services to embrace a common position towards promoting a wider integrated approach to the EU's external action,

noting that there remain differences in mandate across the different services that need to be treated with sensitivity.

2. In terms of leadership readiness, cases confirmed that leadership exercised by the heads of services at country level, was critical for advancing the Triple Nexus. The role of the Head of Delegation (HoD) in galvanising support was emphasised. Experience from across the cases however shows that the Triple Nexus has been promoted with different levels of intensity and leadership attention. This also impacts on the ability and credibility of the EU to exercise leadership in relation to other stakeholders in country, particularly in terms of mobilising a joint EU response in tandem with EUMS. The study equally underscores the importance of leadership exercised at the headquarters level.

3. In terms of organisational capacity, the cases found this to be a key concern often limiting ambitions to operationalise the Triple Nexus at both headquarters and country levels. Capacity issues include an absolute shortage of staff to take on the additional tasks associated with coordination, planning, follow-up and reporting on operationalisation of the Triple Nexus. It also includes gaps in substantive expertise to guide effective operationalisation and to participate in policy dialogue with other international cooperation actors and the partner government. Several cases noted the relatively poor institutional memory at country level relating to the Triple Nexus, attributed in part to high staff turnover.

4. In terms of partner government expectations - the study found the Triple Nexus is at best loosely reflected in government policies and plans, and the general level of engagement of governments in Triple Nexus discussions is limited. As a result, the Triple Nexus remains very much "international partner-driven". The nature and extent of government engagement with international partners on the Triple Nexus depends in large part on the extent of state presence, its legitimacy and its capacity, including the level of internal government unity and common sense of purpose.

5. In terms of complexity and timing – the study confirms that the appropriate configuration of humanitarian, development and peace inputs is context and time specific and cannot be pre-determined. The Triple Nexus can be operationalised in quite different ways (different entry points) depending on the overall context (level of complexity) and depending on windows of opportunity (timing) that can open and close. In some situations, it is realistic to engage across services in more concerted joint action at field level, whereas in others Triple Nexus operationalisation may be limited to a more strategic inter-service consultation and information-sharing function.

Operationalisation of the Triple Nexus

The study reveals the many different ways the Triple Nexus has been operationalised at macro, meso and micro levels. The study confirms the "flexible" nature of the Triple Nexus and how it can be used to promote cross-service engagement in a variety of ways to tackle both the manifestations and underlying causes of protracted crisis and conflict. This includes building community resilience, strengthening local governance and service delivery, and promoting social cohesion. It can also involve diplomatic actions and political dialogue with partner governments and the wider international community, as well as supporting broader initiatives to re-establish stability through civil and military interventions. Overall, experiences of operationalising the peace element of the Triple Nexus, particularly with respect to the "big P", are fewer and reflect the fact that country stakeholders are still familiarising themselves on how best to work with the peace element.

Conclusion and recommendations

Question	Conclusions	Recommendations
On Understanding	C1: A shared understanding of the Triple Nexus across EU services and recognition of its value-added	R1: Further develop the policy and operational framework of the Triple Nexus
	C2: Challenges and constraints remain with respect to what the Nexus offers and what it can deliver	R2: Devise an internal learning and knowledge sharing strategy
	C3: The Triple Nexus enjoys support among the international cooperation community, facilitated by the OECD/DAC Nexus principles	R3: Play a stronger "thought leadership" role in promoting the Nexus.
On Mobilisation	C4: Piloting provided opportunity to understand what it takes to implement the Triple Nexus and confirmed the validity of its "eyes on, hands off" approach	R4: Continue to apply the "hands-off, eyes-on" approach in promoting the Triple Nexus beyond the initial pilot countries.
	C5: The human and financial resources required for the Triple Nexus were under-estimated as was the need to invest in knowledge sharing and awareness raising	
On Implementation & Results on the Ground	C6: Experiences from non-pilot countries highlight the value of emergent processes that build on locally identified needs and opportunity	R5: Further promote the CAS and other joint country context analyses to inform the Nexus at country level.
	C7: Progress in implementing the Triple Nexus depends on strong EU leadership at country and respect for each service's respective mandate	R6: Carry out a stock taking of lessons of good practice on funding the Triple Nexus and on this basis disseminate guidance on options and possibilities
	C8: Various EU-internal structural and procedural bottlenecks as well as capacity constraints, can impede operationalising the Triple Nexus	
	C9: Joint analytical work can broaden understanding across services, but consensus building between different institutional perspectives and interests remains key	R7: Review current guidance on cross-cutting issues and provide guidance to ensure their smooth incorporation in the Triple Nexus
	C10: To finance the Triple Nexus, EU services need to find creative ways to mobilise funding from available EU funding instruments as well as to leverage funding from external sources	R8: Communicate an updated position on the integration of the peace element in the Triple Nexus and clarify the implications for the respect of humanitarian principles
	C11: Cross-cutting issues have been generally well catered for in the Nexus however, there can be challenges in working with the different rules and guidance	
	C12: The Peace element is considered a relevant addition to the Triple Nexus; however, it is not always well understood and there are concerns it can undermine humanitarian principles	R9: Give further impetus to the role the Triple Nexus can play in supporting the localisation agenda
	C13: The Triple Nexus has helped transition from emergency interventions towards more normalised and sustainable forms of service delivery through partner country institutions.	R10: Develop a technical note on humanitarian exit strategies and make explicit that exit strategies should be considered and designed as an integral part of a Triple Nexus approach
	C14: The intensity of EUMS engagement in the Nexus remains overall modest. Going forward, TEIs may offer an opportunity for greater EUMS engagement	R11: Proactively engage EUMS to support the Triple Nexus, building on progress made to date with the TEI formulations
	C15: The country cases have demonstrated the multi-faceted ways the Nexus can be operationalised, including across different sector and thematic areas and across the macro, meso and micro levels.	R12: Develop an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework to track Triple Nexus implementation

1 Introduction and background

This report documents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of a study commissioned by the European Commission on the challenges and opportunities of implementing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (henceforth the Triple Nexus) covering the period 2017 to present. It responds to the TOR, which asked to shed light on the variables that contribute or hamper the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus on the ground (including different understandings among actors of key Triple Nexus elements), as well as on the way in which these factors can be reinforced or mitigated through specific actions. The study was managed by the Resilience, Peace and Security Unit, DG INTPA (G5) and overseen by an inter-service reference group. The study was conducted by a team of 6 experts from ECDPM/ Particip over a 10-month period between February and September 2022. The report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 provides an introduction to the study including study objectives, study methodology and research questions as well as an overview of the policy background
- Section 2 presents the study findings against each of the core study questions
- Section 3 presents conclusions and recommendations.

The nine country studies carried out as part of this study are supporting papers and are an integral part of the study.

1.1 Study aim and objectives

According to the study TOR, the overall aim of the study is to contribute to the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus and thereby to help increase the impact of the EU's engagement by strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace actors and capitalising on their comparative advantages. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Analyse the drivers and obstacles in the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus on the ground,
- Consider how these can be strengthened or mitigated through solid evidence-based and analytical inputs, and
- Propose specific recommendations to various EU actors (EU as a whole; different EU actors/institutions; EU in its relations with member states and non-EU actors such as like-minded partners, international organisations and civil society).

The study's recommendations should be based on a review of the state of Triple Nexus implementation across a range of country contexts.

1.2 Approach and methodology

The study is based on nine country studies, five of which involved visits to the country in question and four which were conducted as desk studies. Six of the nine country studies represent the Triple Nexus pilot countries identified in 2017 whilst three are non-pilot countries which have nevertheless gained experience working with the Triple Nexus.

The country studies included interviews with the EU delegation (EUD), ECHO country office, member state (EUMS) embassies and technical agencies, international Non-governmental organisations (INGO) implementing partners, multilateral development agencies and partner government and civil society institutions. The studies were carried out between April and July 2022.

In-country Studies	Desk Studies
Uganda (Pilot)	Iraq (Pilot)
Nigeria (Pilot)	Myanmar (Pilot)
Chad (Pilot)	Central African Republic (CAR)
Sudan (Pilot)	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
Burkina Faso	

Figure 1: Case study countries
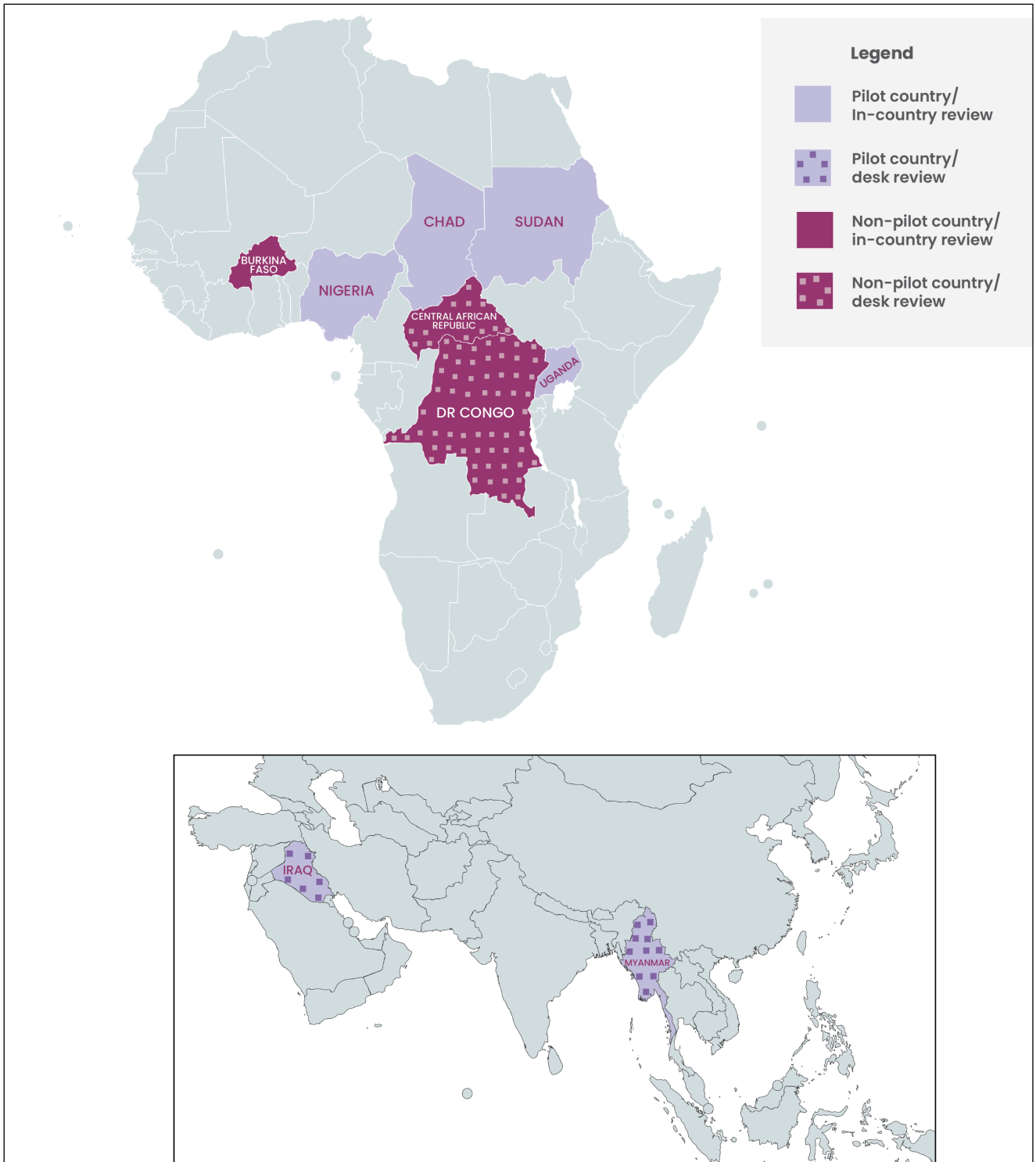
In addition to the country studies, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders from different EU services in Brussels – EEAS, FPI, INTPA, NEAR and ECHO, the three European NGO platforms (VOICE, EPLO and Concord), and from several other key stakeholders.

A comprehensive scan and review of relevant documentation was also conducted in preparation for the launch of the country studies and headquarters interviews.

Enquiries were guided by a research question matrix comprising four core questions and a set of sub-questions. The four core questions are reproduced below whilst the full research question matrix is listed in annex 1.

1. *How do actors understand the HDP Nexus, what do they consider to be its relevance at country level and what is their ambition for working with the Nexus?*
2. *What steps have been taken to mobilise actors and "tool up" for working with the Triple Nexus?*
3. *What have been the practical experiences in implementing/ rolling out with the Triple Nexus to date?*
4. *What difference has the Triple Nexus made on the ground – What kinds of results if any can be reported?*

Evidence collected from each country study and from headquarters interviews has been recorded on a data collection grid that corresponds to the research question matrix.

1.3 Context and rationale for the study

Worldwide, and particularly in certain parts of the African continent, already complex and protracted crises are deepening, resulting in an increase of violent conflicts, humanitarian suffering, political instability[7] and destruction of social and economic infrastructure. These crises take place in very different contexts, with varying levels of fragility, insecurity and poverty. Existing approaches to addressing such multi-faceted crises have proven ineffective in generating lasting solutions and have brought about a recognition for the need of multi-sector and multi-agency approaches that tackle short-term needs while providing long-term solutions and, in situations of conflict, contribute to building lasting peace.

Over the past 20 years, the EU has advocated for a more integrated approach to better link humanitarian aid, development cooperation and political engagement (the attention to peacebuilding and human security has primarily been part of this dimension) and has developed an extensive policy framework for doing so[8]. Most recently, the March 2021 European Commission Communication on the EU's humanitarian action[9] called for more integrated approaches and reinforced its commitment to implementing the Triple Nexus. This communication took place in the context of wider international efforts to promote the Nexus. For example, in 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit launched the "New Way of Working", which originally focused on removing the "unnecessary barriers" hindering collaboration between humanitarian and development actors. However, in his statement upon taking office in December 2016, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for "sustaining peace" to be considered "the third leg of the triangle"[10]. In 2019, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) adopted a set of recommendations on the Triple Nexus,[11] which provides a common language and comprehensive framework to incentivise the international community to implement more collaborative and complementary humanitarian, development and peace actions, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations. These recommendations have been adhered to by the EU. In March 2022, the first European Humanitarian Forum took place to provide a platform for strategic exchanges on key humanitarian challenges and maximising the EU's impact in helping to respond, and it addressed the Triple Nexus extensively among other topics. However, despite this extensive policy framework, conceptual, political, institutional as well as operational challenges remain.

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[7] A case in point being the military coup d'états having taken place in several West-African countries in the recent past and the on-going crises in Ethiopia and the horn of Africa.

[8] 1996 Communication Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD), the 2012 Communication on the EU approach to resilience, the 2016 Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, the 2017 New Consensus on Development, the 2017 Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action and the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises of the same year.

[9] https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/hacommunication2021.pdf

[10] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ICVA_Nexus_briefing_paper%20%28Low%20Res%29.pdf

[11] https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5019

Following the adoption in 2017 of 'Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus',[12] six pilot countries were selected by the Commission in consultation with Member States, to further its operationalisation by systematising cooperation, enhancing the use of best practices and through the generation of evidence. The six pilot countries were: Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Uganda, Myanmar and Iraq. In 2018, the Council extended the Humanitarian-Development Nexus by adding the peace dimension to become the 'Triple Nexus'. Thereafter the EU began a process aimed at enhancing the capacity of EU staff to address the Triple Nexus across the 6 pilot countries. In 2020, the principal EU services involved (EEAS, DG INTPA, FPI, and DG ECHO) also agreed on a non-paper on the peace element of the Triple Nexus as well as a practical guidance note, which was shared internally at Brussels level as well as at the country level.

In the EU context, there are a number of opportunities to further operationalise the Triple Nexus through the key steps around which the EU has structured it (joint analysis, joint planning/programming, integrating the peace component, coordination mechanisms, financing mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation).

In terms of financing, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe (NDICI-GE), is the new and principal funding instrument for external action, and is meant to bring more integrated approaches over the period 2021-2027. The NDICI-GE is designed to offer the flexibility required to finance rapid response, civil security and development activities. Moreover, where relevant and feasible, the NDICI-GE provides a framework to test and implement the Triple Nexus beyond the six pilot countries. The Triple Nexus is streamlined in all pillars of the instrument: the geographical (main pillar), the thematic pillar, in particular in relation to the Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention Programme, and the non-programmable rapid response pillar for crisis management, conflict prevention and resilience building. As part of strengthening resilience, rapid response actions are aimed at increasing coordination, coherence and complementarity between humanitarian aid, development actions and peacebuilding. Separate from the NDICI-GE, a budget for humanitarian assistance was included in the EU's 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (MFF). Outside the NDICI-GE, as part of the integrated approach and for the same MFF period, the European Peace Facility (EPF) was established. Decisions on its use lies in the hands of the EU Council[13].

There is also an effort within the EU to promote more conflict-sensitive approaches/actions, as the NDICI-GE regulation requires that a conflict analysis (Conflict Assessment Analysis Screening or CAS) is to be conducted for countries and regions in crisis or post-crisis and for fragile and vulnerable situations. The analyses aim to ensure the conflict sensitivity of EU programming and identify opportunities for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Moreover, key components of the EU Integrated Approach toolbox, such as the Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA), can play a potentially relevant role in informing the implementation of the Triple Nexus through joint analysis and planning.

The NDICI-GE programming for 2021-2027 thus represents a key opportunity to facilitate synergies between different EU services and deliver on the Triple Nexus, including by integrating it in relevant programming documents and strengthening the cooperation among services in Headquarters and at country level. Team Europe Approach (TE) including Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs)[14] also represent an opportunity for integrating a Triple Nexus approach and for EU and EU member states (EUMS) to work better together in implementing it.

In the context of its yearly 'Worldwide Decision' (that covers all humanitarian aid actions which DG ECHO anticipates to fund), DG ECHO prepares and publishes 'Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs)', which provide more detailed information on the operational priorities identified within each country/ region of operation. The HIP is composed of 5 sections, one of which focuses on the Triple Nexus, describing how development operations may complement each other and find synergies. The HIP is accompanied by a Technical Policies Annex, which is the same for all the HIPs and outlines the general principles, policy framework, assistance modalities, cross-cutting issues as well as thematic guidelines that need to be taken into account by partners in the design of humanitarian operations supported by DG ECHO. This Annex also

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[12] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24010/Nexus-st09383en17.pdf

[13] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/

[14] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/team-europe-initiatives_en

contains a section on the Triple Nexus. The HIP is not a static document, as it can be revised and updated, in case additional needs and/or funding appear during the year[15].

The implementation of the Triple Nexus by the EU is still in its early days and there remains a significant need for more analysis, learning and guidance on how to concretely operationalise it in different contexts. Against this background, the study is timely for the following reasons.

▪ First, the EU is currently in the process of closing the pilot phase and transitioning to general implementation of the Triple Nexus. This follows circulation of the letter jointly signed by the HR/VP, the Commissioner for Crisis Management and the Commissioner for International Partnerships, in December 2021, encouraging EU services working in contexts of protracted crisis and conflict to embrace the Triple Nexus in country programming. Gaining operational experience at this stage will offer considerable learning that can be shared with other countries as they embark on operationalising the Triple Nexus.

▪ Second, the OECD/DAC has recently published the findings of an interim review of the implementation of the DAC Recommendation on the Triple Nexus16. The OECD/DAC review offers important findings that are relevant to this study, but equally the results of this study can complement those of the DAC study, enriching overall global knowledge on the Triple Nexus.

1.4 Conceptual Underpinnings

Before presenting the study's findings, it is helpful to provide insight on the conceptual underpinnings of the Triple Nexus.

As mentioned above, the underpinnings of the Triple Nexus' theory of change (ToC), which was presented by the Study Team in the Inception report, can be traced to the 2017 EU Council conclusions on the Humanitarian-Development Nexus[17] and more recently to the 2019 OECD/DAC recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus[18]. Crucially, as the name suggests, the Triple Nexus introduces the peace dimension to the pre-existing and more familiar Humanitarian-Development Nexus. It builds on the concept of linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD), which has been on the European agenda for a number of decades. The basic idea of LRRD was to link short-term relief measures with longer-term development programmes in order to create synergies and provide a more sustainable response to crisis situations. Initially, LRRD was conceived as a linear continuum sequence. However, experience from the 1990s demonstrated that treating relief, rehabilitation and development as separate processes and assuming they would take place along a continuum failed to respond to the complexity of a number of crisis situations. As a result, the continuum approach was abandoned in favour of a contiguum approach, which is based on a scenario of simultaneous and complementary use of different aid instruments. While the LRRD concept has evolved over time, its implementation on the ground has remained difficult [19].

In adding this third dimension, the Triple Nexus communicates the principle of 'prevention always, development wherever possible, humanitarian action when necessary'[20]. The Triple Nexus can be applied in different contexts but its relevance and pertinence is in addressing conditions of fragility where protracted crisis and instability is manifest, and where solutions lie in a combination of humanitarian action to save lives, developmental interventions to build resilience and lay the foundations for socio-economic stability, and

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[15] Further information on the HIP can be obtained from: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/funding-humanitarian-aid/financing-decisions-hips-2021_en#global-decisions

[16] The HDP Nexus Interim Progress Review analyses, in advance of the monitoring report due in 2024, adherents' efforts to align their work with the principles of the Recommendation. It documents the progress of DAC and United Nations adherents in taking forward the triple nexus approach, while pointing to remaining gaps between the Recommendation's aspirations and these adherents' practice across co-ordination, programming, and financing. The report identifies nine areas where to accelerate the move from policy to action. See https://www.oecd.org/dac/the-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-interim-progress-review-2f620ca5-en.htm

[17] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24010/Nexus-st09383en17.pdf

[18] https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf

[19] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2012/491435/EXPO-DEVE_SP(2012)491435_EN.pdf

[20] https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf

political engagement/ peacebuilding to address the structural and root causes of conflicts and crises, whether they be local, national or regional.

Figure 1 below borrowed and adapted from Medinilla et al[21], offers a conceptual overview of the different potential roles the three sets of dimensions (or sectors) can play.

Figure 2: Linkages between development cooperation, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding
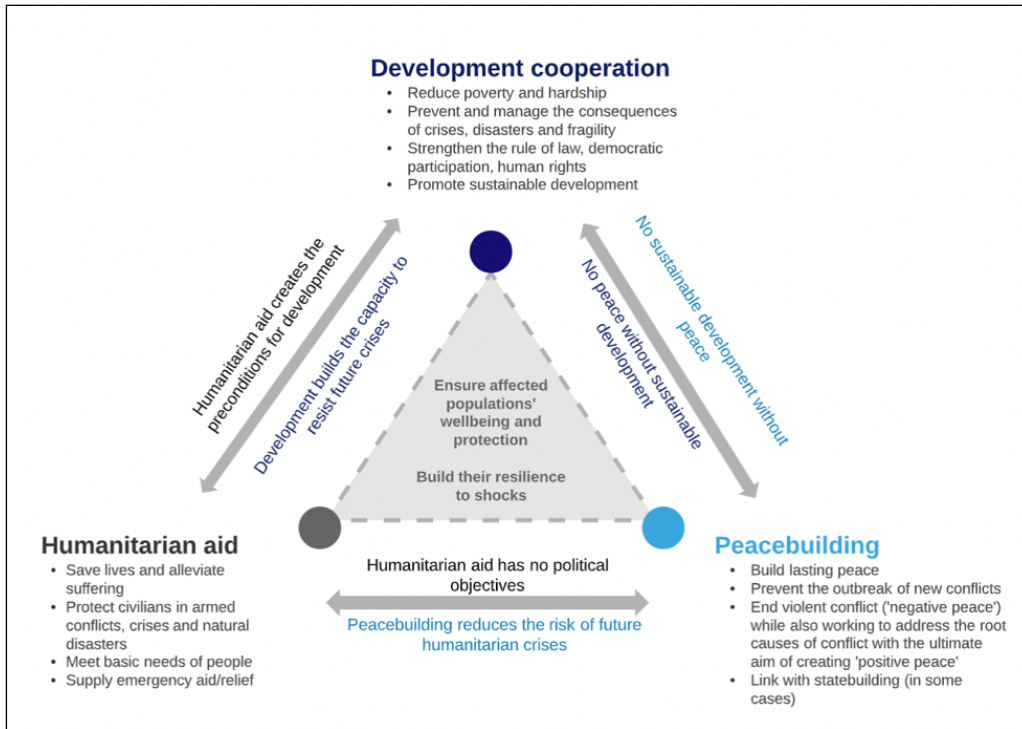
The Triple Nexus provides a framework for bringing together humanitarian, development and peace actors around a common objective to tackle the underlying causes of fragility, mitigate the effects of fragility and contribute to sustainable development outcomes to ensure human security. It, moreover, suggests how by engaging both independently and collectively (both internally among EU actors but also externally with other actors) Triple Nexus stakeholders can have a major impact on results.

Thus, structural and transformative conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes and development efforts are seen as being often possible and necessary to achieve lasting peace and to avoid the occurrence of humanitarian needs[22]. Prevention is thus at the heart of the Triple Nexus, and it binds the three pillars. Further, humanitarian, development, and peace and security actors are more effective and have a more lasting positive impact, particularly in protracted crises, when they coordinate their efforts instead of operating in silos[23]. Fragmentation based on the way donors organise resources undermines their capacity to fulfil the interconnected needs of vulnerable people and foster human security[24]. Thus, capitalising on the comparative advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – has the potential to reduce vulnerability and the number of unmet needs as well as address the root causes of conflict[25].

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[21] Medinilla, A.L., L.T. Shiferaw and P. Veron. Think local. Governance, humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding in Somalia. Discussion Paper 246. Maastricht: European Centre for Development Policy Management

[22] https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf

[23] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/NewWayOf%20Working_Explained.pdf

[24] https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/786-humanitarian-reform-must-be-a-collective-endeavour

[25] https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5019

With respect to the above, it becomes clear that the interplay and inter-relationship between the three dimensions of the Triple Nexus cannot be fixed or pre-determined. In fact, a core understanding is that context and timing (as well as resources) is everything[26] and will determine the extent to which each of the three elements has a role to play, and the relationship that should exist between the three elements. It should also take account of the presence, capacities and interventions of other actors on the ground including other EU services, EUMS, non-EU funded actors, partner governments, host communities as well as other international agencies, NGOs, local actors, or knowledge organisations funded from non-EU sources.

In some instances, all three elements might be needed in equal measure whereas in others it might only be two elements but where one element is more significant than the other. And over time, that mix will change. Figure 2 is from Oxfam[27] illustrates how in different contexts, the interplay of the three dimensions can vary.

Figure 3: Interplay of the Three Pillars in Different Contexts[28]
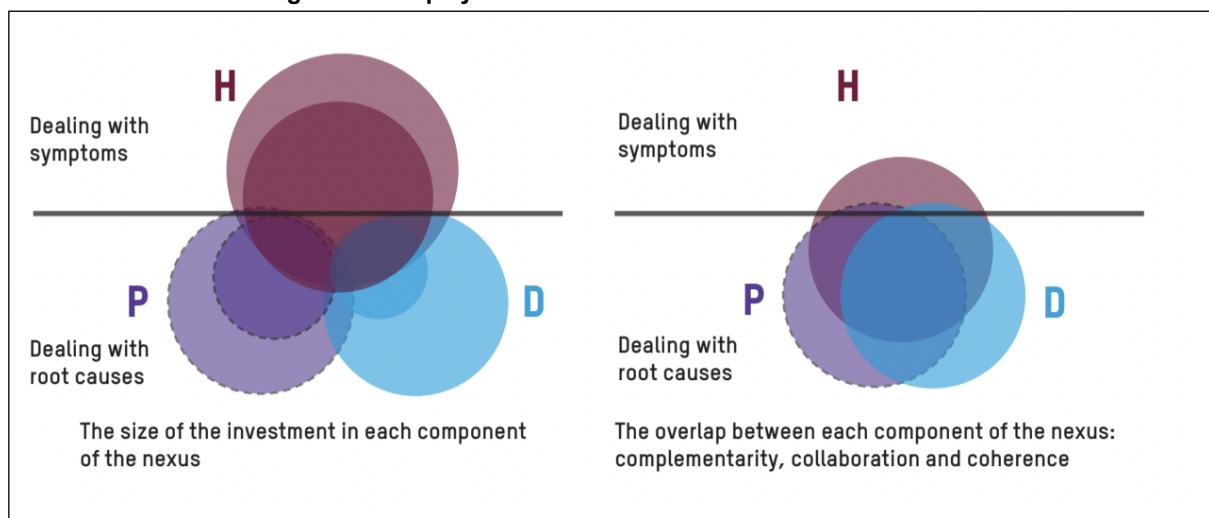
In summary the Triple Nexus "Theory of Change" (as illustrated in figure 3 below and as developed as input to this study) considers existing practices - working in more compartmentalised and siloed approaches - as ill-adapted to addressing the multiple challenges that characterise contexts of protracted crisis and conflict and that a shift towards more coordinated and joined up approaches is required. Working together more closely and more effectively across the EU services, EU member states and non-EU partners is expected to reduce vulnerability and risks (via humanitarian aid), address development needs (via development cooperation) and lead to better prevention (via conflict prevention) or resolution (via peacebuilding). Ultimately, the Triple Nexus aims to improve the (living and security) situation of communities in need of assistance as well as to enhance the partner countries' ability to address those needs, in contexts of combined humanitarian crisis, violent conflict processes and development deficiencies.

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[26] Including consideration of risks, opportunities and trade-offs which may change over time.

[27] Source: Oxfam, Transforming the systems that contribute to fragility and humanitarian crises: Programming across the triple Nexus (July 2021)

[28] This diagram illustrates two decision points for country teams about how to approach the three elements of the triple nexus. The dotted circle represents peacebuilding interventions where possible and necessary, as defined in the peace element. Responding and adapting to contexts and being aware of risks and opportunities means that field staff should decide: 1) on the size of the three circles (representing the size of the investment in each pillar). 2) on the overlap of the three circles (representing the continuum of complementarity to collaboration to coherence). See https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621203/bp-fragility-humanitarian-crises-triple-nexus-150721-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Figure 4: Simplified Theory of Change
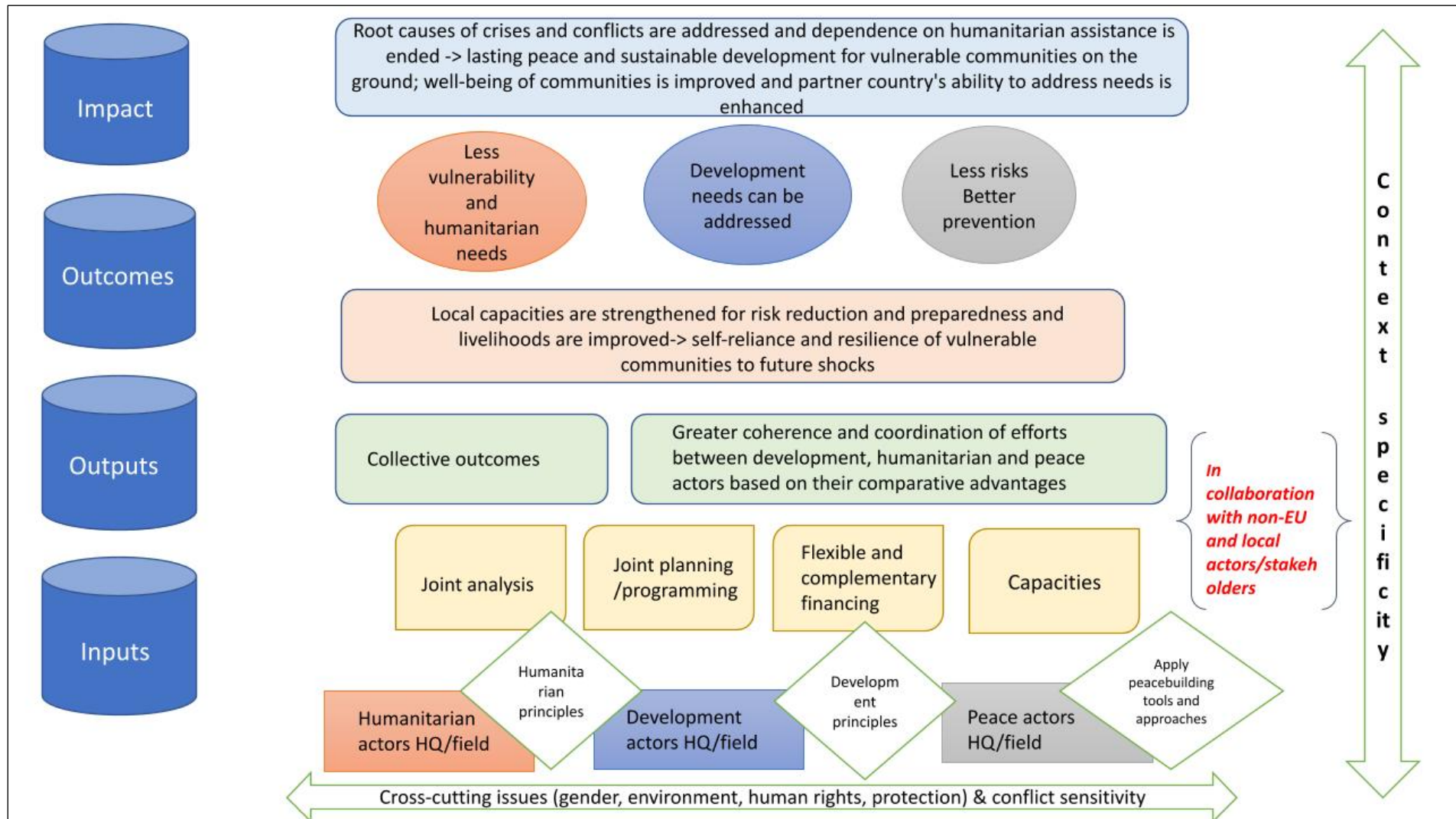
2 Study Findings

2.1 Understanding the Triple Nexus
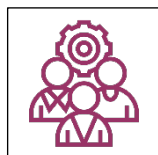
Question 1:

How do actors understand the HDP Nexus, what do they consider to be its relevance at country level and what is their ambition for working with the Triple Nexus?

This first question aims at understanding how the concept of the Triple Nexus is understood by different stakeholders from across EU services and from beyond. The question is explored from four dimensions:

- Extent of shared understanding
- The perceived value-addition of the Triple Nexus
- Identified Challenges and Constraints
- What others are thinking.

The focus is primarily on the perspectives and opinions of EU services, specifically, EEAS, FPI, INTPA, ECHO and NEAR. The last sub-section, however, reflects on the thinking of other actors with whom the EU interacts, namely EU member states, the UN system and other multilaterals, bilateral non-EU partners, international NGOs and partner governments.

2.1.1 Extent of shared understanding among EU services

Summary – Broad conceptual understanding of the Triple Nexus as a relevant approach for working in situations of protracted crisis and conflict is largely uncontested by EU services. While there is no particular interest to debate definitions, stakeholders at both headquarters and field levels expressed the need for more in-depth conceptual clarity vis-a-vis other concepts, in particular the integrated approach, and policy frameworks (as further highlighted in Section 2.1.3.) combined with a fuller exploration of what Triple Nexus operationalisation means for EU services individually and collectively.

In this respect, there is an agreement that each EU service has its distinct mandate and therefore the operational implications of working with the Triple Nexus will vary from service to service and from country context to country context. The "hands-off, eyes on" to adopting the Triple Nexus from the headquarters level is, therefore, appreciated. That said, there remain areas of disagreement or of contestation regarding how best to operationalise the Triple Nexus, something that has become more apparent since the inclusion of the peace element.

There is an overall high level of shared understanding among EU services at headquarters and country level on what the Triple Nexus is and what it seeks to achieve. This understanding is by and large consistent with the presentation of the Triple Nexus in the introductory section of this report.

At headquarters level, the study found a generally high level of convergence of thinking on the Triple Nexus across EU services, but with differing levels of interest and engagement in the topic. Although individual views across ECHO do vary, there is, overall, a high level of agreement of what the Triple Nexus means for the organisation and a clear position has been taken in its communications with other services and in its dissemination of guidance to the country level. Within the much larger INTPA, there is an overall high level of understanding and support among senior management in promoting the Triple Nexus approach internally and a clear position in its external communications. However limited financial and human resources have constrained its ability to operationalise the Triple Nexus to the desired extent. The EEAS recognises its key coordination role with respect to promotion of the Triple Nexus, but the number of persons actively engaged at headquarters remains comparatively limited. Besides the December 2021 letter co-signed by the HRVP and the March 2022 Guidance elements (signed by the EEAS SG), the EEAS has not produced specific guidance on Triple Nexus operationalisation for its own regional and country-based staff. It is noted that the Integrated Approach for Security and Peace (ISP) Directorate has accompanied the discussions on the Triple Nexus and

has been asked to make substantive inputs along the way but does not necessarily regard the Triple Nexus as core business. In a similar vein, FPI has followed the discussion from a certain distance, but its headquarters desks have not been actively involved in Triple Nexus promotion and promulgation. Whilst DG NEAR is identified as one of the core DGs with an interest in the Triple Nexus, the study notes the low level of engagement of the Directorate-General in Triple Nexus discussions. This is attributed in large part to a reported shortage of relevant expertise to enable it to engage substantively.

At country level, the study did not find any significant difference of understanding on the basic Triple Nexus principles across the nine cases, although it was clear that EU services in most pilot countries were able to explain in more concrete terms its meaning and relevance to the country context based on actual practice. For non-pilot countries, familiarity with the Triple Nexus language and associated ideas has emerged through different channels and country experiences. It became clearer with the joint letter sent by the HR/VP, the Commissioner for Crisis Management and the Commissioner for International Partnerships, in December 2021 and in the context of the preparation of the 2021-2027 Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs).

There remains, however, less clarity at the country level on how the Triple Nexus is supposed to be operationalised. This is where country context becomes significant in shaping understanding of ambition, role and opportunity for the Triple Nexus (see further 2.1.3. on identified challenges and constraints). Beyond country context, the institutional mandates and perspectives of different role players shapes thinking on how to operationalise the Triple Nexus. This is apparent between the EU services as well as between the EU, EUMS and other international organisations and informs in particular, views on the value-addition of working with the Triple Nexus (see further under 2.1.2.). However, there is evidence that the OECD/DAC Recommendation on the Triple Nexus and associated principles (referred to already in the introduction) has helped provide a common reference for all stakeholders, and this has encouraged closer alignment of thinking both on Triple Nexus purpose and its translation into actions (see further 2.1.4 below).

The introduction of the peace element to the Triple Nexus in 2018, has to some extent muddied the waters. Whilst most stakeholders acknowledge and welcome its addition, recognising its indispensability in helping to address both root causes and symptoms of conflict, the extent of common understanding of what the peace element comprises and what it means in practice remains limited and therefore a source of concern. The peace element remains open to broad interpretation and a considerable degree of contestation, which is much less the case with respect to the Humanitarian and Development elements with which most stakeholders have greater familiarity and operational experience (see section 2.1.3. below for further discussion).

2.1.2 Value-addition of the Triple Nexus from the perspective of the different EU services

Summary - EU services recognise the value-addition of the Triple Nexus in addressing situations of protracted crisis and conflict. The value-addition is both in terms of the "lens" it offers to enable a more complete and shared understanding of context across services, as well as in terms of the modus operandi it promotes towards setting common objectives, working in a coordinated or more joined-up manner, in promoting dialogue and information sharing across services. In doing so it also facilitates a better appreciation of how each service operates including the policy and institutional frameworks each has to work within. Beyond these shared value-additions, it is clear that each service has different institutional motivations for advocating for the Triple Nexus, which need to be understood, and which can impact on the way the Triple Nexus is operationalised. Further, country context, including the situation on the ground but also the roles played by a host government and other international actors, ultimately influence the perceived relevance and validity of the Triple Nexus as a way of working and why a more joined up approach would make sense. Despite an overall high level of consensus across services, there are sceptics who question whether this is no more than a fad, or an attempt to repackage what is already known to be good practice.

Overall, the Triple Nexus approach is regarded as a relevant and appropriate way for EU services to address contexts of protracted crisis and conflict, and to agree on a common set of objectives and outcomes. The inclusion of the peace element is seen as significant in this regard. Most stakeholders agree that the Triple Nexus provides a "lens" enabling the different services to reach a common understanding of complex environments and opportunities for more strategic and programmed engagement drawing on the comparative strengths and mandates of the different services involved.

A generally shared recognition of the value-addition of the Triple Nexus is that it encourages EU services to work differently, to interact more regularly and to better understand the way each other works, including the constraints they face but also the possibilities for joint action. In this sense, it is more than a lens, because it encourages a "way of working" across services premised on shared objectives, a high level of coordinated action, dialogue and information sharing. Such engagement helps bring to the fore different policy positions and opportunities for more open discussion on how to work collectively, seek common ground and resolve differences, while respecting the mandates and principles of each service.

However, while there are strong Nexus advocates, there are others who remain more sceptical, regarding it as conceptually vague, possibly faddish, or simply attempting to codify what is already common sense and good development practice. Others raise concern about the overlap and possible conflation with related concepts such as the Integrated Approach and the Comprehensive Approach (see further 2.1.3.).

Beyond its intrinsic benefits, the emphasis placed on the value-addition of the Triple Nexus differs from service to service:

▪ For *ECHO*, the Triple Nexus is close to its core mandate and action arenas. The Triple Nexus offers potential solutions for addressing a number of underlying concerns and existential threats related to diminishing funding, rising case load and the increasingly protracted nature of emergency responses particular with respect to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and refugee support. The Triple Nexus also provides an opportunity to clarify mandates, roles and responsibilities, for exploring ways to transition from humanitarian relief to longer term development and therefore defining exit strategies, and to confirm the rules of the game including humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality.

▪ For *INTPA*, the Triple Nexus underscores the value of partnerships and collective action to create the conditions for realising international commitments including the sustainable development goals. Development actors are not equipped to create these conditions on their own and depend on coordinated actions together with humanitarian and peace actors, each of whom have comparative advantages. INTPA also has an interest to ensure the sustainability of investments made by ECHO in an emergency context and to incorporate these into longer term structural approaches, including economic, service delivery, disaster preparedness and governance reforms. It is also interested to ensure its own actions are done in the perspective of conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm, where peacebuilding and political perspectives become key.

▪ For the *EEAS*, the Triple Nexus provides the opportunity to accompany technical interventions carried out by development and humanitarian actors with a peace perspective understood in the broadest sense, ranging from conflict prevention to crisis response and stabilization. The Triple Nexus moreover opens up possibilities for more strategic and potentially political engagement across services under the guidance of the Head of Delegation (HoD), as well as between services and partner country stakeholders drawing on appropriate political, diplomatic, and analytical tools. From this perspective, the Triple Nexus can support more coordinated country level political and policy dialogue helping to set the frame for more downstream technical work. The Triple Nexus also encourages individual services to look beyond their own mandates to see how they can support those of the other services in order to come up with a common and consistent approach.

▪ For *FPI*, with a mandate to work fast and in the spirit of rapid response, and with a tradition of maintaining some independence of action, the Triple Nexus may at first sight appear to place bureaucratic constraints on its ability to react in a flexible manner. However, experience has confirmed the validity and utility of investing in coordinated action and of systematic information sharing. Working through the Triple Nexus has also created opportunities for ensuring sustainability of actions and for upscaling of innovative practices, while reducing risks of overlap and working at cross-purpose. FPI also welcomes the Triple Nexus as a way to draw attention to the peace dimension and to the centrality of conflict sensitivity and in so doing to make peace a shared objective of all services.

From these institutional vantage points[29], the Triple Nexus allows the different services to analyse and strategise collectively and to propose a practical course of action that takes account of humanitarian, development and peace elements of the Triple Nexus, consistent with the conceptual model of the Triple Nexus presented in the introduction (see section 1.4. figures 1, 2 and 3).

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[29] DG NEAR was not part of the RG group for this study and the team was informed that generally, the participation of DG NEAR in Nexus discussions at headquarters and country level has been limited. The Team notes that it was able to interview DG NEAR staff working on MADAD (EU Trust Fund) for Iraq case study.

The perceived value-addition of the Triple Nexus is moreover contextually informed. In Uganda for example, the refugee crisis and the government's adoption of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which is driven by principles of transition and burden-sharing, provided a natural anchor point for working with the Triple Nexus from a mainly humanitarian and development perspective. In CAR, the Bêkou Trust Fund, initially modelled in LRRD thinking, progressively adopted a more Triple Nexus way of working to find ways to balance attention to immediate emergency needs while investing in country system strengthening at the local level against a background of weak governance, volatility and recurring crises. And in Burkina Faso, the introduction of the peace element is considered relevant in light of the current national crisis as well as broader regional instability, fostering a new dynamic that now needs to be translated from concept to practice. Similarly in Chad, in the context of structural development challenges, cyclical humanitarian crises and protracted forced displacement, the Triple Nexus approach helps in strengthening the resilience of populations through stronger coordination and joint work among stakeholders in the identified "bassins de crises". Meanwhile, in DRC, the Triple Nexus is recognised as offering a way to work in a more strategic and coordinated manner among services to address the crisis in the Eastern part of the country and in light of significant financial commitments being made by the international community. In Iraq, the ambition level is perhaps still higher with a shared expectation that the Triple Nexus is the only viable option to help restore the legitimacy of the state to deliver services and security to the population and reduce dependence on humanitarian assistance. In Myanmar, the Triple Nexus has been seen as an opportunity to design innovative and more impactful interventions in response to a situation of protracted displacement and fragility, however, the recent military coup has brought into question the ambition level of Triple Nexus, when state institutions can no longer be engaged, a situation also experienced more recently in Sudan. Already prior to the coup in Sudan, the EU has opted to work primarily with civil society organisations in the country. Nigeria presents a somewhat different perspective with views differing across services on the merit of working with the Triple Nexus in different local contexts with it being considered more feasible in some states compared to others, in large part due to different levels of insecurity and state readiness to engage.

2.1.3   Identified challenges and bottlenecks

Summary - EU services at both headquarter and country level identify a number of challenges and bottlenecks with respect to operationalising the Triple Nexus. These are based on actual practice and need to be taken seriously. Some are motivated by policy and strategic concerns such as keeping in check the ambition levels and expectations placed on the approach, the risks of compromising institutional mandates and undermining principles of engagement, uncertainties over the implications of working with the peace element of the Triple Nexus and concerns of weak or absent partner government participation. Others are motivated by more operational concerns to do with the transaction costs of working in a more joined up way, the possibility of contending with uncoordinated Triple Nexus initiatives of different development partners, risks of further bureaucratisation that undermine flexibility, a lack of substantive capacity at both headquarters and country level to support effective delivery of the Triple Nexus, as well as uncertainties regarding the suitability of available funding instruments to support Triple Nexus operationalisation. Many of these reservations and concerns are explored in more detail throughout this report.

Despite the reportedly high level of support for the Triple Nexus, at least conceptually, as well as from a strategic perspective, EU services and their implementing partners have identified various challenges and bottleneck that relate primarily to its operationalisation. These are summarised below and are further addressed throughout this report:

Transaction Costs: A concern mentioned by most services and across most countries studied, relates to the potential transaction costs of working through the Triple Nexus, including the need to assign dedicated staff to maintain attention and momentum, and the associated operational costs and time required to coordinate, plan and report (see further section 2.3.8.3 where this is discussed further). There is a general sense that the bureaucratic burden placed upon under-staffed services is already significant and any additional burden cannot be easily accommodated.

A similar sentiment is expressed by INGOs who as EU implementing partners have expressed concern that requirements to work across the Triple Nexus and to form consortia with unfamiliar partners from across humanitarian, development and peace communities can result in more complex project designs and results frameworks. This can generate higher transaction costs especially in relation to coordination and reporting.

Substantive expertise: A related concern is that EU services at both headquarters, regional and country level sometimes lack the required substantive expertise to tackle the various sector and thematic issues that come into play when working with the Triple Nexus. A particular concern is that the expertise that is available is unevenly distributed across services meaning that it is often difficult to work on substantive issues when the required expertise is missing. ECHO for instance noted that there is only one person working part time as the Triple Nexus focal person at its headquarters, although at the field level there are thematic networks and a number of geographical colleagues who work on the Triple Nexus. INTPA and EEAS also noted that there is only one person working part time as the Triple Nexus focal person at headquarters.

Bureaucratisation and loss of flexibility: Views differ on the extent to which the Triple Nexus way of working should be codified and structured around a set of core bureaucratic rules and procedures such as establishment of coordination structures, putting in place of standard operating procedures (SOPs), drafting of action plans etc. Whilst for some, such codification helps set a standard for working differently and helps ensure that rhetoric is followed by action and system-wide adoption, for others, there is a concern that more entrepreneurial practice will be stifled by any additional rules and procedures. This tension is typical of any institutional change process and brings to the fore the need to balance any top-down guidance with sufficient space for actors on the ground to use their discretion and to interpret the Triple Nexus as they see fit. A related concern is that any Triple Nexus-specific tools and procedures will not align easily to existing coordination, planning, programming and reporting procedures and requirements and may result in duplication of effort.

Blurring of mandates and principles of engagement: A specific concern for ECHO in the EU context and the humanitarian community more widely, is the risk that the Triple Nexus can compromise principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence that are fundamental to ensuring access and safety of humanitarian actors on the ground. These humanitarian principles are at risk of being undermined through association with peace and development actions that may be perceived as politically motivated and biased, and by what is regarded to be an increasingly political mandate guiding the actions of the EUD at country level overall. These concerns are more extensively discussed in section 2.3.5 below.

Uncertainty over what the peace element of the Triple Nexus embraces: Somewhat related to the previous concern, many stakeholders are unclear as to what the peace element of the Triple Nexus embraces. Despite the EEAS and the Commission having produced a non-paper[30] to help clarify understanding, concerns remain among those having to deal with the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus at field level. This is partially a contextually informed concern most obvious in contexts were military actions and stabilisation-related interventions are taking place, sometimes as part of broader regional actions that have a geo-political agenda. In other contexts, the peace element is more commonly associated with social cohesion actions at the community level, including mediation and reconciliation efforts, often delivered through local and international NGOs. Such actions are generally not considered controversial, though concerns can arise where engagement is perceived as highly political creating a possible impact on the ability to safeguard humanitarian principles. In this sense, the boundaries of the peace element of the Triple Nexus are less easy to define, and can potentially include social cohesion, Do No Harm, conflict sensitivity, conflict prevention (preventing electoral violence, atrocity prevention and R2P, etc.), mediation and dialogue, de-radicalisation and preventing violent extremism, transitional justice, DDR, political dialogue, civilian and military stabilisation, etc. Part of the challenge is that there can be a multitude of actors engaged in the peacebuilding, peacekeeping and peacemaking domains each with a different mandate and with a different view and understanding of the peace element, as highlighted for example in the Iraq and Burkina Faso cases (see section 2.3.4. for further discussion).

Level of ambition and feasibility: Whereas most stakeholders agree on the fundamental validity of the Triple Nexus, views diverge on the level of ambition that should be sought and the suitability of working with the Triple Nexus in certain contexts. Several stakeholders, for example in Myanmar and Sudan, but also CAR, DRC, and Nigeria remarked that Triple Nexus operationalisation is simply not realistic in contexts of on-going crisis characterised by high fragility, instability and volatility, where the state is absent or where the state lacks capacity and legitimacy. Under such circumstances, ambition levels, it is argued, need to be reviewed with a focus on addressing the basics, typically meaning the prioritising of immediate life-saving humanitarian interventions, over more ambitious goals. Context and timing therefore become a critical consideration. This

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[30] EEAS-Commission services note on the peace element of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (Internal non-paper – 2020).

view might appear as being at odds with the very logic of the Triple Nexus, which is to jointly understand the nature of the challenge on an on-going basis, no matter how challenging the context, and on this basis to make judgements regarding the appropriateness of mobilising different types of intervention across the Triple Nexus at different times.

Several interviewees noted that there can be situations of on-going conflict where humanitarian assistance is considered the only viable option for engagement, and where development and peace actions should be kept on hold. There are also those who caution over the expectations of what the Triple Nexus can achieve, particularly in complex environments, such as Eastern DRC, where the scale of the challenge is beyond what external actors can be expected to influence. This also raises the question as to how far the Triple Nexus is regarded as an approach that should inform overall country engagement or whether it should be used to guide engagement in specific geographical or sector/ thematic areas.

Proliferation of international Triple Nexus-related frameworks: Concern was raised in some countries, for instance in Iraq and Nigeria, over a proliferation of international frameworks and initiatives conducted by different development partners in the name of or similar to the Triple Nexus that can cause confusion. Stakeholders in Burkina Faso, for example, observed that despite an increasingly shared understanding, it is proving difficult to agree a common modus operandi for the international cooperation partner community to engage on the Triple Nexus. These concerns are greatest where the national government is absent or not actively engaged and where different development partners fill the void by proposing their own frameworks. This is a familiar aid effectiveness issue highlighting the need for coordinated action not only among EU services, but also between the EU and other actors.

Budgets: Although not necessarily expressed overtly, concerns are raised as to how the Triple Nexus can best be funded now that the various EU Trust Funds (EUTF), which were drawn upon to fund a first generation of actions that helped to operationalise the Triple Nexus, are drawing to a close. Questions remain about the professed and actual opportunities offered by NDICI, notwithstanding the increased flexibility and coherence that it is expected to bring (see further section 2.3.2). There is concern also expressed by INTPA officials that in an environment of overall tight budgetary ceilings, the Triple Nexus is not seen as a way to re-assign budgetary allocations and financial responsibility from one set of Triple Nexus actors to another.

2.1.4 What Others are Thinking

Summary - The OECD/DAC recommendation on the Triple Nexus has helped to galvanise common understanding across multilateral and bilateral development partners on the Triple Nexus - although, the country studies found that for a number of international actors, even big funders, knowledge about these recommendations and associated principles are rather limited. The OECD/DAC recommendation has also helped set an agenda and framework for monitoring its adoption and roll-out. Some international development agencies have moreover drafted their own policy frameworks and technical guidance that speak to their respective policy and institutional realities. As a result, at one level, one can detect a shared understanding on the principal tenets of the Triple Nexus, however, similar to what is observed among the different EU services, at another there are different emphases placed on the policy implications and different ideas on how best to operationalise the Triple Nexus. The United Nations, and in particular, the UNDP is a front runner in Triple Nexus advocacy whilst a number of EUMS have developed their own institutional positions on the Triple Nexus, that are broadly aligned with EU Commission thinking. Noteworthy is that a number of international NGOs have also developed policy and operational guidance on the Triple Nexus which is applied at country level and which builds on substantial implementation experience. The reflection and guidance have been developed mainly by NGOs which engage, at times simultaneously, in the different domains of the Triple Nexus. Also noteworthy is that the Triple Nexus discourse remains by and large a concern of international cooperation and with just a few exceptions, has not become a policy concern of partner governments.

The OECD/DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus has provided a common reference for understanding the Triple Nexus across different institutional stakeholders. In fact, the country studies confirm a common understanding of the overall intention of the Triple Nexus across EUMS, INGOs and other international organisations, although there are some exceptions where the Triple Nexus has not become part of the policy and operational language, and some where knowledge of the Triple Nexus remains quite limited.

As with the experience of EU services, translation of the Triple Nexus concept into operational practice is informed by institutional mandates as well as country contexts. For example, UN agencies have developed a certain narrative regarding the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus that is relevant to their institutional circumstances and mandates. Similarly, EUMS, whilst informed by the Commission communications and guidance on the Triple Nexus (and at country level through interactions with EU services via HoD /HOMS and HoC meetings) as well as the OECD/DAC recommendation, have internalised the implications of the Triple Nexus for their operations in ways that are relevant to their specific mandates and interests. Some EUMS headquarters have gone further than others to develop Triple Nexus guidance to support their country teams, such as Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy and Sweden. But in a number of the cases, EUMS staff at country level consider their own organisation's rules governing in particular development funds to be so rigid as to preclude genuine application of Triple Nexus thinking and wonder therefore how far the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus can be realised. However, for others, dedicated and more flexible Nexus budgets have been created to facilitate implementation, such as Germany. There are moreover Team Europe Initiatives being proposed across a number of the countries studied (including Uganda, DRC, CAR, Chad), that refer to the Triple Nexus and potentially offer opportunity for EUMS to work more systematically with EU services on the Triple Nexus.

Several INGOs have taken upon themselves to develop their own Triple Nexus policy, strategic and operational frameworks that have been disseminated to their country office staff[31]. This includes members of the European NGO community and their respective platforms[32], who have commissioned studies and developed guidance on the Triple Nexus inspired both by their own practice and learnings from the field as well as the guidance issued by bilateral and multilateral institutions, including the Commission. Whilst there is a considerable degree of consensus among INGOs on what the Triple Nexus can achieve and the challenges faced to operationalise it, there are some divergences of views reflecting their respective mandates. In this regard, VOICE has issued a number of statements highlighting their concerns for the respect of humanitarian principles, especially in contexts of on-going conflict and where hard security interventions are present. What is noteworthy is that a number of INGOs are dual mandated, whilst others have increasingly come to work across the different elements of the Triple Nexus and in so doing have accumulated considerable operational experience of working with the different Triple Nexus elements. Overall, the steps taken by the EU to promote the Triple Nexus are therefore welcomed by the NGO community but with some reservations regarding the translation of intentions into practice. Other concerns include the lack of opportunity to engage with EU services on a structured and regular basis at both Headquarters and country level, in order to be kept informed of and given the opportunity to shape Triple Nexus thinking, as well as to be able to address practical challenges encountered in operationalising the Triple Nexus.

For national NGOs and local CBOs, familiarity with the Triple Nexus is generally at a more operational level obtained through their association with INGOs implementing Triple Nexus informed actions or more rarely, through their direct funding. Overall, INGOs are aware of the Triple Nexus drums being beaten. By comparison, national NGOs are only slowly becoming familiarised while local NGOs/ CBOs are basically absent from the discussion and function principally as service providers/ sub-contractors to INGOs and NNGOs, if at all.

The level of awareness of partner governments of the Triple Nexus discourse remains on the whole limited, especially in contexts of weak governance and weak government capacity and where the level of dialogue with international cooperation partners is limited. In this respect, the Triple Nexus discourse is often regarded by domestic stakeholders as a concern for international actors, such as in the case of Iraq and Sudan. However, in a number of other countries, for example, Uganda (CRRF), but also DRC (National Development Plan), and CAR (RCPCA), Triple Nexus language is referred to in various government plans and strategic frameworks. Generally, the reference is to the Humanitarian-Development Nexus and often the documents in question have been drafted with the assistance of development partners. In some instances, language used alludes to a Triple Nexus-type approach without necessarily referring to it explicitly, for example, Burkina Faso's National Development Plan (National Plan for Economic and Social Development), where the government argues the Triple Nexus approach is long established as a way of working.

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[31]   E.g.: Oxfam, Save the Children.

[32]   Concord, EPLO and VOICE.

The country studies found that in general, EU services at country level have not been the main promoter of the Triple Nexus and where reference is made to it in national documents, this is usually through the influence of UN agencies. There are, however, instances where particular EU services have been more pro-active or have participated more directly in supporting the formulation of national documents, as in the case of DRC. Overall, it is noted that the discourse on the Triple Nexus among EU services has tended to be somewhat inward looking and focused on the implications for inter-service collaboration. The result can be that there are several Triple Nexus arrangements being promoted and practiced at country level by different international organisations without strong ownership being exercised by national partners, and with often weak linkages between the different Triple Nexus initiatives. There are some exceptions, such as Chad where the EU established a Triple Nexus Task Force that includes both EU and non-EU actors.

2.2 Nexus Mobilisation

Question 2:

What steps have been taken to mobilise actors and "tool up" for working with the Triple Nexus?

This second question explores how EU actors and other stakeholders in pilot and non-pilot countries have mobilised for working with the Triple Nexus. It does not look at the implementation record of working with the Triple Nexus, which is examined in the next chapter. Nevertheless, there are some issues that transcend mobilisation and implementation, and such issues are addressed both here and in the next chapter. The presentation of the findings below distinguishes those obtained from the pilot countries and those obtained from the non-pilot countries, on the grounds that the pilot countries were part of a deliberate piloting process initiated by headquarters, whereas the non-pilot countries were left to operationalise the Triple Nexus on their own. The chapter explores five issues:

- The steps taken to mobilise and prepare for working with the Triple Nexus,
- The support and guidance provided from Brussels,
- The conduct of joint conflict analysis and related analytical work,
- Preparation of Nexus Action Plans or alternative planning frameworks,
- Provisions for coordination, collaboration and reporting.

2.2.1 Steps taken to mobilise and prepare for working with the Triple Nexus

Summary - The six pilot countries followed a somewhat common pathway for launching the Triple Nexus. This included holding workshops with or without EUMS participation, conducting joint contextual analysis with a focus on conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm, drafting actions plans and setting up arrangements for coordination, standard operating procedures and reporting. The EUDs used their convening powers to bring stakeholders together, and in some cases hired technical assistance to support the process. Overall, the level of engagement of EU services, particularly ECHO Offices and EUD's cooperation sections was high. However, a common pattern was that the level of interest within services varied and relied in particular on the enthusiasm of a few committed individuals at the technical level.

The experiences of the non-pilot countries are more varied and built on pre-existing processes and emerging opportunities and circumstances. The mobilisation process was more emergent and intuitive and did not follow a logical step-by-step process as in the case of the pilot countries. They also started at different times and have evolved at different paces and have reached different stages of progress and concreteness. In some non-pilot countries, EUDs and ECHO offices already engaged in joined up processes prior to the EU's official roll-out of the Triple Nexus in 2021.

With respect to the six pilot countries:

The six pilot countries followed broadly similar steps to launch the Triple Nexus, adapted as required to the local context, in particular linking into on-going processes and building on previous relevant experiences where appropriate. These steps included:

- Hosting a *launch workshop* in 2017/18 with participation across the different services and extended to other invited stakeholders. These took place in Chad and Nigeria, where the process included EUMS, as well as the World Bank and UN Resident Coordinator's office, Uganda, where the process was opened to other EUMS and implementing partners, and in Sudan where EUMS were also involved. In Myanmar, the process rather built on more ad hoc interactions between ECHO country and regional offices and cooperation staff at the EUD, and then extended to EUMS who participated in the development of the eventual Triple Nexus Action Plan. Iraq offers a slightly different experience in so far as the early consultations coincided with a broader engagement process linked to the formulation of the EU's Iraq strategy.

- Undertaking some form of *joint analytical work* to gain insight on the nature and extent of conflict and vulnerability. Such work took place either as part of the workshop process as was the case in Uganda and Sudan, or as part of the follow-up planning process as in the case of Myanmar. For the pilot countries, this work pre-dated the launch of the CAS tool, and therefore drew upon various tools and methods available at the time (see further section 2.2.3).

- Initiating a planning process leading to the formulation of a *Nexus action plan* or similar. Nexus plans were subsequently drafted in Uganda, Myanmar, Chad and Sudan, whilst in Iraq, a so-called Nexus strategy was developed that built on a concept note produced after the earlier consultations. In Nigeria reference was made to an earlier produced Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework document that had been developed in an LRRD perspective, which was followed up by a dedicated Nexus strategy document (see further section 2.2.4).

- Agreeing on *arrangements for coordination, collaboration and reporting*. In Myanmar and Uganda, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were drafted to guide a Triple Nexus way of working. These were adopted in Myanmar in 2019 but remain in draft form in Uganda. In Burkina Faso, consideration was given to adopting the Myanmar SOPs, but it was decided to draft a simpler checklist to guide inter-service interactions. By contrast, in Chad, a Nexus Task Force was established, that included non-EU members, to oversee the identification of opportunities to operationalise the Triple Nexus. No such formal provisions were made in Sudan, or in Iraq, yet informal coordination among EU services at country level has taken place on a regular, on-going basis. In Nigeria, provisions for coordination were piggy-backed on to pre-existing arrangements, notably the North-East Cluster Groups (see further 2.2.5).

In most of the pilot country cases, the EUD exercised its convening power to bring services (and in some countries EUMS) into the process, but in some instances, ECHO played a stronger leadership role especially in the initial phase of engagement. Overall, a high level of readiness to engage was reported particularly between ECHO and the cooperation section of the EUD, given that the primary focus in most of the pilots was on the humanitarian and development elements of the Triple Nexus. By contrast, the level of EEAS involvement was less obvious in the earlier stages of the pilots, though not absent either. Overall, FPI was not part of these launch activities, however, they were brought into the process on a more ad hoc/ as-needs basis.

The degree of interest shown by EUMS to participate in the process also varied from country to country. In Uganda, with a large representation of EUMS in the country and with a shared interest to support the refugee crisis, there was considerable interest to participate. In the other two countries where EUMS participated, Nigeria and Sudan, the level of involvement was more muted, both because there were fewer EUMS present at the country level and because of the more limited scope of their country programmes. In Chad, some EUMS are part of the Nexus Task Force and particularly active in its activities (such as France and Germany).

Most of the pilot country cases however observe that the piloting process at country level was only slowly institutionalised and tended to rely on the commitment and enthusiasm of particular staff members across the different services. This brings into question the depth of ownership of the pilots within and across each service (a point further discussed in section 2.3.8). The cases also note the challenges faced by the pilot countries to assign staff to work in a dedicated way on the Triple Nexus process. In some cases (Chad, Uganda), this meant having to hire in technical assistance to drive the process.

With respect to the three non-pilot countries:

The Triple Nexus has evolved in quite different and contextually informed ways. The processes followed may be generally described as emergent, informed by pre-existing arrangements or implementation experiences (e.g. the experience of the Bêkou Trust Fund in CAR), emerging situations and new unfolding opportunities (the advent of NDICI-GE and the Team Europe approach). Overall, the Triple Nexus has been harnessed in less structured ways, with some degree of uncertainty or unclarity as to what it fully means to work with the Triple Nexus.

That said, the Triple Nexus has taken shape across the three countries and there is nothing to suggest that they were significantly disadvantaged from not having participated in the piloting process. In one way or another, EU services in the three countries have engaged with one another, have sought to establish coordination mechanisms, have carried out joint analytical work and have agreed on some type of plan of action to guide the way forward. Stakeholders from across the services however concede that some level of guidance and support from headquarters would still be welcomed.

▪ In CAR**,** the main focus of attention for EU services has been on the implementation of the Bêkou Trust Fund where first experiences of working with the Triple Nexus were obtained. This experience stimulated increased interest across services to explore opportunities of working with the Triple Nexus, however, to date no formal mobilisation process has been put in place. At the same time, but largely in parallel, the CAR government has drafted the "Plan national de relèvement et de consolidation de la paix" (RCPCA) which extensively refers to the Triple Nexus, building on the Recovery and Peacebuilding Needs Assessment conducted by the EU, the UN and the World Bank.

▪ In Burkina Faso, an initiative led by the ECHO Nairobi regional office, in 2021 helped launch the Triple Nexus in the country. The initiative comprised a workshop that brought together the EUD cooperation section and ECHO staff in order to agree a common language to discuss the Triple Nexus, to discuss achievements made in the past and to identify opportunities for working with the Triple Nexus going forward. This led to the drafting of an inter-service Triple Nexus note and an indicative checklist relating to EU inter-service Triple Nexus working arrangements. The exercise was however limited to the two EU services with no direct involvement of other EU services, EUMS or partner government stakeholders.

▪ In DRC, the process has struggled to kick off in a coherent manner, given the overall complexity and scale of the challenges that need to be addressed in different parts of the country and especially in the East. However, the past couple of years witnessed stronger interest among EU services and other development partners to discuss the Triple Nexus. The country report suggests that this has been prompted on the one hand by the launch of the UN's own Triple Nexus process at country level in 2019 and to the EU's 2022 inter-service mission and PFCA exercise to devise an integrated approach to respond to the crisis in the Eastern part of the country.

2.2.2   Support and Guidance from Brussels

Summary - A distinction can be made between the support provided to the six EU pilot countries and that provided to the non-pilot countries. The approach adopted by headquarters towards guiding the pilot process may be best described as "hands off, eyes on". Pilot countries have been by and largely encouraged to translate the Triple Nexus vision into practice according to what makes sense at country level. While a prescriptive approach was not followed, instruction letters were issued by the DGs of INTPA, ECHO and the Secretary-General of the EEAS, whilst gentle guidance has been issued periodically, including brief highlights on how different EUDs practice the Triple Nexus, limited funding availed to support the kick off process and hosting of several learning/ feedback events. This "hands-off, eyes-on" approach has been overall valued and considered appropriate, however some country stakeholders would have welcomed further financial support to enable them to tool up for rolling out the pilot and some feel that a helpdesk type function would be appropriate given the significant changes and challenges associated with adopting the Triple Nexus. Non-pilot countries did not receive dedicated/ focused Triple Nexus support from headquarters or regional offices but since the end of 2021, have had access to the same guidance materials and learning opportunities as the initial pilot countries. Some degree of informal horizontal learning and information exchange between pilot and non-pilot countries can be expected to have taken place.

With respect to the six pilot countries:

Nexus piloting across the six countries was conducted with what may be described as a "hands off, eyes on" approach, characterised by a limited amount of guidance, steering and financial resources from headquarters and considerable space given to each pilot country to operationalise the Triple Nexus based on country context and opportunity.

Pilot countries confirmed that the level of technical and financial support provided was limited, comprising technical and financial support in some countries for initiating pilot kick-off workshops at country level and thereafter financial resources to mobilise technical assistance to conduct and facilitate analytical work across

services and to support the drafting of Nexus Action Plans and related implementation arrangements[33]. Various technical documents were disseminated by headquarters from time to time including the non-paper on the peace element, relevant EU communications and various pieces of guidance as well as emerging lessons of good practice. Since 2020, annual workshops have been convened by INTPA Unit G5 on behalf of the different services, to share experiences from across the pilot countries and discuss operational challenges arising.

Pilot countries have overall valued the flexibility and discretion given to them to pilot the Nexus but would have appreciated some more support. While pilot countries did not want to be bound by any type of prescriptive model, they felt it would have been useful to have had access to some kind of dedicated "help desk" facility - as is often used when new initiatives are launched - to provide demand-driven, process-related and substantive advice.

With respect to the three non-pilot countries:

The non-pilot countries did not receive the (albeit limited) package of support that was enjoyed by the pilot countries. At the same time, headquarters did respond to ad hoc requests for assistance. In December 2021, all delegations and ECHO offices received the communication of the Director-Generals, of INTPA and ECHO and the Secretary-General of the EEAS, with annexed information including illustrations of Triple Nexus good practice and guidance elements. Since 2022, non-pilot country EUDs and ECHO country offices were also invited to attend the annual Triple Nexus pilot workshops (mentioned above), to learn from the pilot countries and to share their own experiences, and a number have taken up this offer. It is not clear what level of horizontal learning and knowledge diffusion has taken place between pilot and non-pilot countries. However, it is noted that for the past two years, the Triple Nexus is part of the training programme for incoming HoDs. This can be expected to have happened to some extent through the transfer of staff from one duty station to another, and several examples of this happening were mentioned.

2.2.3 Conflict Analysis and other forms of joint analysis

Summary - The conduct of some form of joint conflict and situational analysis is regarded by most stakeholders as a cornerstone of working with the Triple Nexus and as one of the aspects where progress has been made to get services to work together and to form a common understanding. Pilot countries were encouraged to conduct such analyses as a way to bring stakeholders together and as the basis for formulating Nexus Action Plans. As of 2021, the introduction of the CAS as a mandatory tool to use in the formulation of MIPs in fragile contexts has helped to systematise joint conflict analysis and provided an entry point for both pilot and non-pilot countries to think more strategically about the Triple Nexus. Nevertheless, whilst such exercises can help shape a common understanding, differences remain between services on how best to act on this shared understanding. Ambitions to update such types of analytical work has also not necessarily been realised. Stakeholders also highlighted the important role of informal exchanges to update knowledge on a regular basis in order to complement the findings of formal analytical exercises. Concern was expressed about the proliferation of conflict assessment studies by other international cooperation partners, each using somewhat different methodologies and analytical frameworks that risk undermining efforts to come up with a common understanding and common response among international cooperation partners.

The country studies offer a range of insights into the experiences of conducting joint conflict analyses across EU services as well as with the participation of other international cooperation partners. These experiences provide insight into how far such analytical work helps reinforce a Triple Nexus approach.

As earlier reported, *for several of the pilot countries, some type of conflict analysis exercise was carried out as part of the Triple Nexus kick-off in 2017/18 and as input to the formulation of Nexus Action Plans.* This was the case for Uganda, Sudan and Myanmar (where for example three Nexus profiles for Rakhine State, Kachin and Northern Shan, and Southeast Region were produced). Such joint analytical work did not necessarily follow a prescribed methodology but helped different services reach a shared understanding of context, establish a joint language concerning challenges arising and identified opportunities to work in a more joined up way.

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[33] In the case of Chad, some limited funding was obtained from the EUTF. Headquarters moreover advised that additional technical support can be mobilized through the Cooperation Facilities.

Such exercises also helped to shed light on the need for conflict sensitivity in the design of actions and on respecting the Do No Harm principles.

There was an expectation that such exercises would be routinely updated but this did not happen systematically so far, raising questions about the on-going utility of the analysis in fast changing environments. In Myanmar, however, a Conflict Analysis and Research Facility (CAR Facility) was embedded into the Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM) allowing for a more regular updating of context and rolling conflict analysis.[34]

Several reports however noted that behind such formal exercises, more informal mechanisms of information gathering help ensure that relevant stakeholders across services are kept informed of developments and can adapt actions accordingly. Here, implementing partners of EU services, particularly international and national NGOs play an important role given their presence on the ground. Joint monitoring missions to the field equally help obtain an up to date and shared view on unfolding situations.

The experience of the non-pilot countries is quite mixed and is also more recent. The NDICI requirement for a CAS to be conducted as part of the preparation of the 2021-2027 MIPs in fragile contexts has meant that such exercises have been conducted across the three countries as well as in four of the six pilot countries.

The country cases confirm that the CAS has helped to further build a common understanding (and shared language) of context and has provided an opportunity for the different services and EUMS to start thinking more strategically about how to work with the peace element of the Triple Nexus. The fact that the CAS is mandatory further reinforces conflict analysis as an integral part of any Triple Nexus process and helps ensure its attention within the MIPs and also the Team Europe approach. Nevertheless, whilst such exercises have helped shape a common understanding, differences remain on how best to respond, informed by the respective mandates and interests of each service. The cases also highlight the fact that informal exchanges of information across services and among other ICPs can play a useful role in complementing the findings of formal analytical exercises, especially when there has not been an opportunity to update these.

Besides CAS, several countries have initiated or been part of other conflict analysis type exercises, or informed strategic planning. Some analyses have fed into PFCA exercises carried out by EU services to shape consensus with EUMS on peace-related interventions. These are typically led and drafted by the EEAS, building on cross-service consultations and presented to the European Council for approval. In Burkina Faso, a country-wide assessment was carried out on prevention and peacebuilding (PPBA) under the leadership of the United Nations. Still in DRC, an OECD supported risk and vulnerability analysis was conducted as part of the UN-led Nexus approach. Moreover, separate assessment exercises continue to be conducted by EUMS and other international organisations as might be required by their respective programming and due diligence rules and procedures, resulting in a proliferation of analytical studies that may not necessarily speak the same language.

2.2.4 Action Plan and/ or Alternative Planning Frameworks

Summary - Pilot countries were expected to draft Nexus Action Plans defining collective outcomes and possible implementation mechanisms, indicative schedules and roles. These were produced in one form or another in five of the six pilot countries and in two countries have been updated. Their value is however open to question as in all cases, the plans were not fully operationalised for reasons less to do with their intrinsic value and more to do with certain preconditions not being in place, such as availability of dedicated staffing to follow up, linkages to other country processes and availability of funds to implement identified actions. Plans play a crucial role in concretising Triple Nexus intentions, and in clarifying roles and responsibilities, as well as identifying linkages with internal and external planning processes. However, as with joint analytical work, they need to be flexible and routinely updated to maintain their relevance.

The non-pilot countries have not produced standalone Nexus Action Plans per se although in one country a Nexus country road map was drafted, whilst in another, Triple Nexus ambitions are reflected in the MIP.

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[34] The CAS process started to be implemented in 2020 for the first time. In order to ensure its effectiveness, several revision mechanisms are in place in order to regularly integrate any lessons learned through the process while it continues to be rolled out: holding participatory workshop on lessons learned on Conflict Analysis Screening for EU Delegations; regularly revising on whether the recommendations from the CAS are being integrated in the different programming documents for development cooperation (Multiannual Indicative Programs, Annual Action Plans).

> In this regard, it is noteworthy that the Triple Nexus is referenced in most MIP documents across the case countries to a lesser or greater degree, whilst annual Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) documents including the Single Form include specific provisions to explain how the Triple Nexus will be addressed.

With respect to the six pilot countries:

There was an expectation that the pilot countries would produce some kind of action plan setting out how the various services (and in some cases EUMS) would collectively work on operationalising the Triple Nexus during the piloting phase. As there was no standard template or guidance for preparing such plans, these have taken different forms, reflecting local interpretations and circumstance. Most plans were formulated in 2018 and 2019, sometimes with the support of external technical assistance, and most built on the results of consultative workshops and accompanying analytical work as earlier reported. The following features are noted:

- *Plans varied to the extent they were aligned with pre-existing government led or donor led planning/strategic frameworks and processes* – In Uganda, the CRRF provided the natural anchor point for aligning the EU Nexus Action Plan and it was designed in such a way as to conform with the CRRF's 5 pillar structure. In Iraq, the piloting process coincided with the formulation of the EU's Iraq strategy, adopted in early 2018, and the elaboration of a Nexus strategy in the same year. As such, a separate action plan was not produced. In Nigeria, the initial plan was actually the Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework developed prior to the commencement of the piloting phase, which was followed by a Nexus Strategy document. These documents, although largely treated as internal, laid the foundation for the Borno Package[35], which was designed in collaboration with State authorities. The Nexus Action Plans developed in Sudan or Myanmar, were considered as primarily internal to the EU and prepared independently of any wider planning framework.

- *Plans varied to the extent they were aligned with EU internal planning and programming frameworks and processes* – The timing of the piloting process meant that at the time the Nexus Action Plans were drafted, 11th EDF NIPs were substantially programmed whilst the process for preparing the new MIPs had not yet started. The various EUMS associated with the plans, were also in the process of implementing their respective country programmes and did not necessarily have funds to free up. This presented challenges for ensuring that intentions expressed in the plans could actually be programmed into funded activities. For several pilot countries, and as is discussed in further depth in the next chapter, pre-existing Trust Funds (Uganda, Sudan, Iraq) provided a convenient mechanism for operationalising Triple Nexus intentions, whilst in the case of Myanmar, and quite exceptionally, a dedicated mechanism, the NRM was set up in 2020, drawing on un-used NIP funds. As ECHO's HIP is annually programmed, there was somewhat greater opportunity to shape and influence HIP funded activities through the Nexus Action Plans, notwithstanding tight budgets.

- *The extent to which the plans involved EUMS stakeholders varied from country to country* – In Uganda, most of the EUMS supporting Uganda's refugee response participated in the elaboration of the Nexus Action Plan and were assigned roles and responsibilities across the plan's envisaged actions. Similarly in Sudan, EUMS were involved in the early consultations that led to the formulation of the Nexus Action Plan. In Iraq, the planning process included not only EUMS but also a number of other international cooperation partners who were invited to contribute to the elaboration of a Nexus concept note. By contrast, Myanmar's Nexus Action Plan initially focused on opportunities for better whole-of-EU (services and member states) coordination, joint analysis, planning and programming, but has since seen a diminished engagement by EUMS[36]. Chad presents a somewhat different experience. Although launched at the same time and going

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[35] The "Borno Package" ((€143m through EDF and EUTF) was designed in 2017 on the basis of the EU/UN/World Bank Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (2015). It consists of 14 interventions aimed at building resilience of conflict affected people in a way that allows the transition from humanitarian support to development in the provision of basic services, addressing economic opportunities, and improving the management of public resources.

[36] In Myanmar, there was an engagement by several EUMS active in the county (Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden) with the EU delegation on the nexus, in particular at the time of drafting the nexus action plan. Since February 2021, EUMS (similar to most donors) have been consumed by their work to halt, adapt or terminate ongoing projects, and debating on how to engage with the Myanmar government. For example, Germany has established a transition fund, to pool its money for now and see where to go next. At the moment, their support to the nexus is more tacit. To date, no EUMS have joined the NRM with funds. Discussion have taken place on this in the past two years, but prospects of EUMS joining any time soon are deemed slim.

through the initial consultative processes and establishment of a multi-donor Task Force, an Action Plan was only drafted in 2021 and to date its proposals have not been endorsed by the Task Force.

With respect to the three non-pilot countries:

The three non-pilot countries have not produced specific Nexus Actions Plans in the same way as the pilot countries. However, various kinds of planning frameworks have emerged that serve as a reference for guiding the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus. In CAR, with the focus mainly on the implementation of the pre-existing Bêkou Trust Fund, it was only recently in 2021 that a Nexus country road map was developed. However, this was an ECHO initiative to take stock of progress made and opportunities for working with the Triple Nexus going forward but did not involve the other services in its preparation. Similarly, but in collaboration with the EUD, a joint service HDP Nexus Note was drafted in Burkina Faso by ECHO as was already reported above. In DRC, no formal Triple Nexus planning document has been developed, however, the above mentioned PCFA exercise currently being undertaken is expected to prepare the ground for drafting a cross-service strategy to address the crisis in the East through an integrated approach.

Experiences from across both pilot and non-pilot country experiences beg the question as to how far a separate Nexus Action Plan is warranted. The lesson from across this experience is, that function is more important than form. Being able to align and seize opportunities relevant to the needs of actors involved is more important than necessarily adopting a generic template planning structure. At the same time, good practice lessons and guidance on essential elements can be helpful in ensuring that key considerations are taken up in drafting a framework.

2.2.5 Provisions for Coordination, Collaboration and Reporting

Summary - Robust coordination and reporting arrangements between EU services and between EU services and EUMS, partner governments and other concerned actors, are essential if the new way of working as reflected in the Triple Nexus is to become institutionalised. However, evidence from the country cases suggests limited progress has been made to put in place functioning arrangements.

In terms of coordination across EU services at country level, each pilot country reveals a different experience, including a case where it did not prove possible to establish formal coordination and reporting arrangements, to one where a framework was designed but not operationalised, to another where a more formal task force was established but was not able to function effectively and to another where a structure was established at a more operational level to oversee a specific funding instrument. Experiences from the non-pilot countries are equally varied but in one case point to the value of more ad hoc arrangements that have evolved organically based on need and circumstance, and which has proven effective to date.

A common finding from across the cases is the critical role of informal arrangements to share information, conduct monitoring missions and peer review one another's proposals and plans. The country studies moreover confirm the importance played by committed individuals in the absence of more formalised coordination arrangements or of endorsed SOPs to make things happen.

In terms of broader coordination arrangements (beyond EU services), the cases found country-led Triple Nexus coordination frameworks to be either absent or weak. In some countries, specific international cooperation partners have supported partner governments to exercise leadership, but this has not yet amounted to anything significant in terms of galvanising a common approach. In the absence of government leadership, various coordination frameworks can operate side by side that can address aspects of the Triple Nexus, but which fall short of offering a common framework. In particular it was noted that whereas there can be relatively strong coordination among humanitarian actors, and/ or among development actors, coordination arrangements that bring together both humanitarian and development actors are generally not found.

INGOs are critical of the limited opportunity afforded to them and their national NGO counterparts to engage with EU services at country level through more structured coordination arrangements and point to the absence of any appointed EU Triple Nexus focal point to facilitate engagement across services, both at headquarters and country level.

With respect to the six pilot countries:

The design of Nexus Action Plans was in most pilot countries *accompanied by provisions for coordination, collaboration and reporting.* These varied in detail according to pilot country context and took account of pre-existing coordination and monitoring frameworks (either at an international cooperation partner level or country government level) and the extent to which the Action Plans incorporated EUMS as well as EU services. In line with the "hands-off, eyes-on" approach from headquarters, no specific guidance was issued on how to set up these arrangements with the choice left to each pilot country to decide what was most appropriate. On the basis of the six pilot countries, the following features can be noted:

Coordination and reporting - Different arrangements were put in place across the pilot countries. In Uganda, Triple Nexus focal persons were assigned from EU services and EUMS to follow up and report on each pillar of the Nexus Action Plan under the chairmanship of the EUD. A results framework was also prepared including indicators. The expectation was for regular review of plan implementation by the assigned focal persons and reporting back to the HoC. In turn progress reports would be submitted to the EU/ EUMS heads of mission quarterly meetings. These arrangements were moreover expected to complement the various pre-existing government–development partner coordination structures operating under the CRRF at national, district and settlement level. The experience from Myanmar is somewhat different because of the establishment of the NRM as a dedicated mechanism for the Triple Nexus. It has its own coordination mechanism, with a Steering Committee, led by the Head of Delegation and bringing together INTPA and ECHO, cemented in a detailed working agreement. FPI does not take part in Steering Committee meetings but is nevertheless involved in preparatory meetings. A dedicated M&E framework was also developed to accompany the NRM. In Chad, a Nexus Task Force was created at the end of 2020, with membership from across EU services, EUMS and other development partners including the World Bank. Chad offers the only example of a pilot Triple Nexus process being opened up beyond the EU services and EUMS. However, in the absence of the Nexus Action Plan being approved, the Task Force and associated reporting arrangements have not become fully operational.

By comparison, in Nigeria, Sudan and Iraq neither formal coordination structures, appointed Triple Nexus focal persons or a Task Force were established with coordination reportedly happening on a more ad hoc basis at various levels, and not necessarily Triple Nexus-specific. Similarly, provisions for monitoring and reporting were not established. Iraq provides an example where the launch of the Triple Nexus pilot also coincided with other processes the EU was engaged in together with other international partners. This allowed for a high level of consultation and coordination to take place and gave space for Triple Nexus issues to be addressed at a more strategic level. Nigeria offers an example of where it proved possible to promote Triple Nexus coordination through pre-existing coordination frameworks set up to oversee actions across EU services in the North-East of the country.

Overall, coordination and regular reporting against the Nexus Action Plans have generally struggled to gain momentum even in those cases where more dedicated systems were put in place. This is attributed in part to the fact that the plans have been overtaken by events, making the reporting frameworks no longer relevant, and in part because of shortage of staff to prepare, follow up and update the plans, as reported in Sudan and Uganda. COVID 19 also had an impact with restrictions placed on meetings and movement of staff as well as redeployment of staff to support COVID 19 response measures. The Nigeria case underscores the difficulties of monitoring project activities on the ground due to high levels of insecurity, as well as the EUDs stricter security protocols which restrict movement of staff on the ground.

Opportunities have nevertheless been created to discuss Triple Nexus-related issues in the context of established internal and external EU service consultative processes, for example in the steps leading to the drafting of the MIPs and HIPs. The Sudan case demonstrates that regular and sometimes informal exchanges across services also played an important role in this regard, whilst in some instances, specific services would provide strategic and technical advice to other services, e.g. ECHO providing advice to colleagues in INTPA on social protection in Sudan. In Uganda, an invitation was recently extended to ECHO to attend the EUMS HoC meetings in the context of discussions on TEIs in order to explore opportunities for closer engagement and collaboration.

Collaboration and the role of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) – SOPs were reportedly drafted in two of the six pilot countries, Myanmar and Uganda. SOPs are intended to codify how the different services are expected to work together in support of the Triple Nexus around the different phases of the typical project/ programme cycle, including for example when and how to jointly support each other's programming/ planning, review project design proposals, identifying opportunities for conducting joint monitoring missions etc.

In the absence of formally approved SOPs de facto practices of cooperation and collaboration across services have emerged. The absence of any kind of formal SOP has not stopped committed staff from seeking ways to work differently. For example, joint monitoring missions to the field between ECHO and EUD staff have been a common feature in several countries including in Sudan and Uganda. These have been important in terms of i) communicating a clear message to stakeholders and implementing partners of Triple Nexus intentions; ii) providing opportunities to improve cross-service understanding and strengthen working relationships, iii) offering insights into possibilities for better aligning and co-developing actions. Another practice that has become increasingly common is the routine sharing of information and peer review of each service's project proposals and in the preparation of the HIPs and MIPs. This is reported again across most of the pilot countries, notably Myanmar (where for example efforts are increasingly made to involve FPI), Iraq, and Chad. The Sudan study observes that Triple Nexus operationalisation to a large degree has depended on personalities involved who understood the Triple Nexus and were committed to make it happen. The same can be said of most if not all of the other pilot countries. The Iraq case shows that the Triple Nexus has become an "inherent" way of working across services and even the verb "nexising" has been coined by those involved. EU services (particularly ECHO, EUD and by the project managers of MADAD at NEAR) are in almost daily or weekly contact at country level. Also noted is that the updated Nexus Action Plan for Iraq, prepared in 2021, proposes several steps to enhance Triple Nexus institutionalisation through joint analysis, coordination meetings, joint messaging, etc.

INGOs at both headquarters and country level however have expressed disappointment at not having been afforded formal opportunities to interact with EU services on Triple Nexus-related matters during the piloting phase. The absence of a suitable coordination platform or even of assigned cross-service Triple Nexus focal persons is considered a short-coming that has limited an open exchange of information and experiences on the Triple Nexus. INGOs consulted moreover highlighted the important contribution that their national counterparts could make in such conversations given their proximity to working with affected populations on the ground and their awareness of developments relevant to EU services' understanding of conflict.

With respect to the three non-pilot countries:

The experiences of the three non-pilot countries are more varied having evolved in different and more emergent ways in line with country contextual realities. However, they share a number of common characteristics:

- *Absence of formal EU Triple Nexus coordination and reporting frameworks* – All three cases note the absence of any kind of dedicated coordination and reporting framework for the Triple Nexus. Instead, various ad hoc coordination arrangements have evolved in more pragmatic and organic ways. CAR however provides a somewhat different experience where the Bêkou Trust Fund offers a model for setting up a more structured coordination arrangement between EU services to guide future Triple Nexus actions and to build on the momentum created by Bêkou. However, the extent to which this will be built on remains to be seen. In Burkina Faso, there is no specific previous experience to draw upon and EU services and EUMS stakeholders are still to figure out what kind of coordination arrangements would be most suitable. DRC reports on much earlier experiences (2011-13) of linking actions between the EUD and ECHO in the field of food security, however these efforts are considered to have been limited and have not led to more institutionalised coordination mechanisms.

- *Importance of informal interactions across services* – In place of such formal coordination arrangements, the three cases note the important part played by informal relationships and interactions, as indeed did the pilot country cases. The Burkina Faso report meanwhile refers to a checklist of actions that can be taken either formally or informally to promote coordination across services. This includes conducting joint monitoring missions, organising workshops to discuss specific topics of interest, and holding quarterly jointly meetings to assess progress made.

- *Latching on to EU internal processes and opportunities* – In most cases, a level of coordination has been obtained by latching on to pre-existing coordination and consultative processes and opportunities. In DRC, an inter-service mission (mandated by member states) that took place in June 2022, and which will lead to an EU strategy for the stabilisation of Eastern DRC, is seen as an opportunity to enhance convergence and coordination between the efforts of the different services.

Experience from across both pilot and non-pilot countries:

Weak country-led coordination arrangements leading to a plethora of coordination and reporting arrangements but also an absence of structured humanitarian-development coordination mechanisms – In general, country-

led coordination arrangements are weak and specifically in relation to the Triple Nexus, even in those instances where the Triple Nexus is reflected in national planning documents. In some countries such as DRC, international partners, and in particular, the UN has worked with the government to establish a national coordination framework to try to coordinate actors around a set of collective outcomes related to the Triple Nexus. Yet, the effectiveness of this structure is in question with some ICPs, including the EU, not fully engaged. In the absence of partner government leadership, a number of studies remark on a proliferation of strongly external partner-driven coordination frameworks, some of which tend to operate in parallel to one another. Such coordination that does exist at the national level is invariably weaker at the sub-national level as reported for example in the Uganda cases.

It is also noted that whilst comparatively strong coordination frameworks for humanitarian actors or for development actors can be found at the national and field levels, it is rare to find a framework at these levels that brings these two communities together. However, at headquarter level, opportunities for engagement across the humanitarian, development and peace communities do exist, for example between the Brussels-based INGO platforms, VOICE, EPLO and Concord.

2.3 Implementing the Triple Nexus
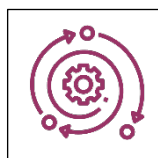
Question 3:

What have been the practical experiences of implementing/ rolling out the Triple Nexus to date?

This chapter presents findings in relation to the third and fourth core questions of the research question matrix and focuses on Triple Nexus implementation experiences including an overview of the ways in which the Triple Nexus has been operationalised on the ground. It is divided into three main sections.

The *first* explores a set of key *substantive issues* identified in the TOR that relate to Triple Nexus implementation and considers how these have been tackled across the cases. These issues cover:

i.   the extent to which the Triple Nexus has facilitated *dialogue* among Triple Nexus stakeholders

ii.   opportunities for Triple Nexus *funding* through various instruments and arrangements

iii.   how *cross-cutting* issues have been incorporated into actions informed by the Triple Nexus

iv.   experiences in incorporating the *peace element* into the Triple Nexus

v.   accommodation and respect for *Humanitarian Principles* across the Triple Nexus

vi.   attention paid to promoting *local empowerment* and *leadership capacity*

vii.   consideration of *Humanitarian Exit Strategies*

The *second* considers a set of *enablers* and *constraints* impacting on Triple Nexus operationalisation across EU services, covering:

i.   *organisational mandates, structures, rules* and *procedures*

ii.   *leadership* readiness to lead on the Triple Nexus

iii.   organisational *capacity* to deliver on the Triple Nexus

iv.   partner *government expectations*

v.   *complexity* and *timing*

The *third* provides a summary of some of the different ways the Triple Nexus has been operationalised on the ground.

2.3.1 Dialogue – To what extent are Triple Nexus stakeholders talking?

Summary – Fostering stronger linkages across EU services, as promoted by the Triple Nexus, includes creating opportunities for regular dialogue, as well as between EU services and other stakeholders including EUMS, implementing partners, other ICPs and partner governments. Dialogue can serve different objectives and take place through different mechanisms, but in essence it serves to advocate for policy alignment, as well as to promote collaborative and coordinated action based on shared understanding and resolution of differences of opinion. A key process indicator of Triple Nexus success is therefore evidence of more regular and impactful dialogue among Triple Nexus stakeholders.

The country cases indicate that this is being achieved but not always through formal arrangements. The call to work collaboratively has encouraged EU services to take initiatives to engage more regularly through sometimes informal mechanisms. The cases suggest that the level of exchange between EUDs and ECHO has intensified and that over time, the level of exchange with FPI and political sections/ EEAS has also increased. This is resulting in a better understanding and appreciation of how each service works, and the constraints within which each must operate, but also in the identification of opportunities for coordinated action. Dialogue allows for consideration of more strategic and policy-oriented issues but also to resolve more operational issues related to approaches, principles and methods. Dialogue has helped create a greater sense of "speaking with one voice", but not in all cases.

Dialogue across EU services did not necessarily have to wait for the Triple Nexus to be formally promulgated, and some cases illustrate how dialogue has built on previous initiatives and momentum generated by existing processes and opportunities. But the Triple Nexus has helped to underscore the importance of dialogue and to give it further impetus.

The level of dialogue in support of coordination and collaboration between EU services and EUMS on the Triple Nexus has been less intense and more variable with the cases revealing quite different experiences. At best, EUMS have engaged with EU services to formulate Nexus Action Plans and to collaborate on specific actions. More recently there has been increased discussion in some case countries around ways to use the Team Europe approach and Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) to promote the Triple Nexus. In other cases, dialogue has been limited to information sharing. EU implementing partners, including INGOs, expressed some frustration that opportunities to engage with EU services to discuss the Triple Nexus at both headquarters and country level have been few and believe more structured consultative mechanisms would help to support the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus at country level.

Generally, less progress has been made in sustaining specific Triple Nexus-related dialogue with other development partners, including the UN system and with partner governments. Here, dialogue relies to a greater degree on opportunities to engage through formal channels of communication and coordination. There are nevertheless some examples of constructive dialogue where there is an engaged government and where stronger coordination mechanisms are in place.

Several cases point to a growing awareness among EU services of the value of political dialogue as an intrinsic part of the Triple Nexus, with examples of EU services and EUMS formulating common messages for inclusion in political and diplomatic exchanges with partner governments and other ICPs.

The Triple Nexus approach implicitly promotes dialogue in so far as it seeks to bring together different actors to find common solutions and to explore ways of working differently within the framework of a joint strategy. Put simply, talking and listening to one another is at the heart of the Triple Nexus. In a context where services have tended to work in institutional silos, this breaking down of boundaries in order to find common ground and in order to work towards shared objectives can be significant especially where collaboration is constrained by differences in mandate, vision, rules and procedures (as discussed further in section 2.3.8.1. below).

The country cases provide evidence of enhanced inter-service dialogue as a result of the Triple Nexus and also of efforts to promote dialogue between EU services and other concerned actors. This may already be considered an important achievement. Yet, the cases also highlight the challenges in doing so and the importance of establishing and sustaining practical mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and shared learning at different levels and among different stakeholders. Capacity (mainly staffing) constraints facing most services as well as different organisational structures including degree of field presence can however impact negatively on the effectiveness of dialogue across services and with other stakeholders (see further section 2.3.8.3)

Among the pilot countries, dialogue was promoted through the initial consultative processes that brought together the different services (and in some cases EUMS) and that led to the formulation of Nexus Actions Plans. This involved primarily the EUDs (EEAS and INTPA) and ECHO staff but progressively more regular interaction with FPI colleagues at regional and headquarters levels has taken place.

In some contexts, particularly the Middle East, where most crises have an underlying political origin (as observed by the ECHO Middle East regional office), it is reported that ECHO has had a longer standing experience of exchanging both formally and informally with FPI as well as with the HoD and EUD political advisers. FPI also points out that the design of its actions requires regular interaction with EU services at both headquarters and country level to ensure alignment and that this is consistent with working with a Triple Nexus approach.

Dialogue has also been promoted through the establishment of various formal and informal mechanisms that promote collaborative work, particularly with respect to the review and co-design of project interventions and through for example joint monitoring missions to the field. As earlier reported, Chad established a Nexus Task Force to oversee the selection of interventions, whilst in Myanmar, the selection of projects to be funded by the NRM is guided by a cross-service steering committee. In fact, all ECHO proposals are screened by the Delegation while INTPA projects with some relevance for ECHO work are also looked at by ECHO colleagues. The experience of Bêkou meanwhile in CAR has laid the foundation for continued dialogue and consultation between in particular ECHO and the EUD with the recognition going forward of the need to have more structured engagement with peace actors. And, as reported above, draft standard operating procedures (SOP) have been developed to codify the expected opportunities for engagement around Triple Nexus issues between the different services with Uganda and Myanmar providing examples.

Evidence of an enhanced level of dialogue between EU services and EUMS on the Triple Nexus is variable. As earlier reported, in some cases, EUMS were invited to participate in the Triple Nexus piloting process, and Triple Nexus-related issues are discussed in HoC and Heads of Mission quarterly meetings. There are also examples where EU services and an individual EUMS have jointly designed a Triple Nexus intervention. Preparation of the CAS as input to the MIP has also offered the opportunity to engage EUMS more systematically although this was not particularly highlighted in the cases. However, the drafting of Team Europe Initiative (TEI) proposals in a number of countries has created opportunities for more intense exchanges between EU services and EUMS that include ways to address the Triple Nexus.

The extent of dialogue between EU services, partner governments and the wider international cooperation community has varied from country to country depending largely on government capacity, interest and legitimacy as well as the actions of other ICPs. Where the state is deemed illegitimate, opportunities for dialogue are all but closed, the current situations in Sudan and Myanmar being cases in point. Nigeria offers an interesting example where the opportunities of dialogue differ from one state to another, in large part due to different levels of trust between development partners and government authorities. In a number of countries, the UN and in one country case, DRC, Sweden has assumed a leadership role in advocating for the Triple Nexus, such as in DRC. In CAR, the government invited the EU, UN and World Bank to carry out a "Needs Assessment for Recovery and Peacebuilding". This led to the RCPCA which serves as the main national level framework for ICPs including the EU to address the Triple Nexus at a more strategic level. In Uganda, the comparatively structured coordination framework built around the CRRF provides a variety of opportunities for EU services to engage with the wider community, however, as was noted by ECHO, with limited staff, and expertise in certain areas only, it is a challenge to sustain dialogue on different fronts.

Similar to the issue of coordination, mentioned above, INGOs, have expressed some frustration that opportunities to engage with EU services to discuss the Triple Nexus at both headquarters and country level have been few, and believe more structured consultative mechanisms at both levels would help to improve operationalisation of the Triple Nexus at country level.

2.3.2 Funding and Resource Mobilisation for the Triple Nexus – How well has it been Funded?

Summary - The Triple Nexus, being an approach or a "way of working" is being operationalised without a dedicated budget or funding instrument attached to it. Implementation therefore depends on services being able to harness existing funding instruments and finding ways to work around any limitations imposed by rules/ funding mandates associated with individual instruments. The cases reveal the varied ways the Triple Nexus has been funded across pilot and non-pilot countries:

First, by focusing on closer coordination and alignment of actions funded from the different instruments of different services but which collectively were expected to achieve a Triple Nexus goal. Reference is made here to actions funded prior to NDICI through the HIP (for ECHO), the 11th EDF's NIP and EUTFs (for INTPA) or the IcSP (for FPI). The same applies today for the programming of the EU's 2021-2027 budget, resulting in the MIP, the programming of the Rapid Response Pillar and annual HIPs.

Second, by designing specific Triple Nexus actions that combine humanitarian, development and peace elements but that are funded from a single funding source. Here the various EUTFs mentioned in the report were valuable in financing actions in the so-called "grey area" that straddles the three Triple Nexus elements. Such trust funds, including the EUTF for Africa, Bêkou and MADAD, were not initially designed for the Triple Nexus but have proven their worth in terms of financing a wide range of actions that have targeted mainly (but not exclusively) community/ sub-national levels. The contribution of these trust funds should not be underestimated as they have been responsible for financing a considerable number of actions implemented in the name of the Triple Nexus to date.

Third, by establishing a pooled fund specifically to finance the Triple Nexus. Here there is a single example from Myanmar with the establishment of the NRM, which brought together resources of INTPA and ECHO. The NRM has its own programme implementation arrangement outsourced to a third-party provider (UNOPS) and reporting to its principals, INTPA and ECHO.

Fourth, by exploring opportunities for ad hoc pooling or co-financing of actions that have a Triple Nexus ambition. There are several examples where different combinations of EUMS, INTPA (NIP) and ECHO (HIP) funding have been brought together to finance a specific action. This also includes cases where EUTF actions have been co-financed by an EUMS.

Looking to the future, there is concern about the prospects for funding the Triple Nexus especially with the winding down of the EU Trust Funds. There are uncertainties on how far the NDICI will facilitate such funding. It is too early to tell. On the positive side, most MIPs (programmable funds) address the Triple Nexus and include in some cases clearly identified areas where the Triple Nexus can be operationalised. Non-programmable funds under NDICI falling under the Rapid Response pillar hold some potential especially for financing actions with a peacebuilding focus, but the funding provision within this pillar remains short-term and small, which will not necessarily allow going to scale and limits what FPI can do. The HIP meanwhile remains the principal mechanism for funding humanitarian actions. While it retains a certain flexibility, it operates with a short-term horizon, making it difficult to make longer term commitments that are essential. The overall budget for humanitarian actions is also under considerable stress forcing hard choices to be made on what can be funded. It is also noted that the provision that was available under the EDF to draw on envelope B to finance unforeseen humanitarian costs is no longer available under NDICI, meaning that humanitarian expenses must rely exclusively on the HIP.

Against these concerns, there are expectations among some stakeholders that the TEIs can become an alternative arrangement through which the Triple Nexus can be promoted and funded, leveraging a greater amount of funding from across EUMS and using these in a more coordinated manner to support the Triple Nexus. Various TEI documents speak to the issue of the Triple Nexus.

As the Triple Nexus is a "way of working" or an approach, it does not have a budget or financing instrument attached to it. Actions guided by the Triple Nexus approach therefore need to be financed through available funding instruments or through the design of dedicated mechanisms. The country cases reveal the different ways in which EU services have funded actions which have been designed from a Triple Nexus perspective. Findings are summarised below, with illustrations drawn from across the cases.

European Union Trust Funds – Trust funds such as Bêkou in CAR, Madad in Iraq and the EUTF for Africa (i.e. Sudan, Chad Nigeria and Uganda) have proven instrumental in enabling EUDs to operationalise the Triple Nexus approach. Although not designed as instruments to particularly fund actions to be operationalised through a Triple Nexus approach, their existence at the time of the launch of the Triple Nexus pilot phase provided a ready opportunity to explore ways of doing so and to provide a "bridge" between humanitarian interventions funded under HIP (see below) and more programmed INTPA actions. The various trust funds could be said to have been Triple Nexus-primed in so far as they focused mainly on building community resilience in post crisis situations and/ or addressing the needs of refugees and displaced persons. They also included a certain level of flexibility and a quicker turnaround time allowing therefore for a greater degree of responsiveness to needs on the ground, and with durations of 3-4 years provided sufficient time to deliver results. Thus, for pilot countries such as Uganda, almost all EUD actions informed by the Triple Nexus approach have been funded through the EUTF for Africa amounting to some Euro 300,000, including in part through co-financing from EUMS. In Chad, also examples of co-financing between EUTF and EUMS are cited, for instance AFD's co-funding of the DIZA programme. In CAR, actions implemented through Bêkou also amounted to some Euro 310 million. One observer moreover described Bêkou as "the perfect instrument for the Triple Nexus allowing for early recovery" by being able to straddle interventions attending to both humanitarian and development needs. In Sudan, concern is raised that the comparative flexibility of the EUTF (as mentioned above), which facilitated implementation of various actions operationalised through a Triple Nexus approach will not be so easily reproduced under the NDICI (see further below).

11th EDF – To a more limited extent, Delegations have been able to assign resources from their NIPs (and also from regional funds e.g. in Chad in relation to food security) towards actions that help to operationalise the Triple Nexus but the number of examples where this was done are few, highlighting the strategic importance of the trust funds as an alternative source of funding (although in the case of Bêkou in CAR, EDF non-programmable funds were used to establish the Fund and close to 50% of its fund came from the EDF). Using NIP programmable funds however presented several difficulties. In the case of the pilot countries, most NIP funding was already assigned by the time the pilots were launched meaning it was not easy to re-assign to new actions identified in the framework of the Triple Nexus. Compounding this was that any re-assignment would require the support of the partner governments, who might not necessarily regard the NIP as appropriate for funding the Triple Nexus. However, Uganda offers an example where 11th EDF funds earmarked for the water sector have been used to co-finance the redesign of a major water infrastructure project to include refugee and host community settlements, in collaboration with the French AFD. The team was also informed that EDF has been used in previous years to meet shortfalls in humanitarian funding through the assignment of funds from the "B" envelope under provisions set out in article 96. However, examples of this being done were not obtained from the case countries.

HIP – As the main funding instrument for ECHO, the humanitarian implementation plans (HIPs) have been used quite extensively to finance actions that help to operationalise the Triple Nexus. It is noteworthy that the guidance supporting the HIPs includes provisions on the Triple Nexus and encourages actions that promote cross-service collaboration. Actions that promote resilience are also encouraged and, in this regard, a "resilience" marker has been introduced into the Single Form call for proposals. It is difficult to distinguish clearly however what proportion of HIP funded activities can be said to have been used to operationalise the Triple Nexus, however, as a rule of thumb, those actions that go beyond provision of immediate life-saving interventions and aim at providing basic services and/ or promote resilience may be considered Triple Nexus-related depending on how they have been conceived. HIP funds have also been drawn upon for co-financing, in Myanmar to co-finance the NRM (see below), whilst in Uganda, to co-finance the AFD water supply project together with the EUD, as mentioned above. A limitation of the HIP (see further below) is the short time frame of actions and the annual programming cycle which raises issues related to predictability and long-term sustainability of actions. Concerns are also raised (e.g. in Nigeria and Iraq) regarding the tight funding situation facing the humanitarian sector that is limiting scope for funding beyond emergency/ lifesaving needs (see further below).

IcSP - This instrument was used by FPI to finance rapid response actions, including in the peace domain, but the instrument has now been replaced by the Rapid Response Pillar (RRP) of the NDICI. IcSP allowed for responsiveness and funding of short-term actions of a duration initially not exceeding 18 months. It is still early days for looking at the working of the RRP and how it can be deployed and connected to other NDICI funding in the context of operationalising the Triple Nexus. Views on how to use FPI in support of Triple Nexus processes differ across the EU, and are, of course, also very much situation dependent.

NDICI - The new integrated financing instrument was introduced with the launch of the 2021-2027 programming cycle. One of the motivations of the NDICI design was to precisely facilitate funding across the H-D-P divide and in so doing to resolve differences in funding mandate associated with different instruments. On paper, it thus offers scope to more easily programme and coordinate actions across services with respect to promotion of the Integrated Approach and indeed also the Triple Nexus, and allows for example a closer collaboration between INTPA, EEAS and FPI (e.g. through the rapid response pillar that replaces the IcSP as mentioned above). However, the instrument does not include the funding of ECHO. Therefore, the HIP continues as the main funding instrument for humanitarian action. As such, the NDICI can be regarded primarily as a funding instrument for development, livelihoods/ resilience, rapid response and civilian peace-related actions.

With the drafting of country level MIPs only recently completed, there is for now little insight on how programmable funds, or indeed those available from the thematic pillar and the rapid response pillar have been deployed and what this means in terms of facilitating the Triple Nexus. It was suggested that guidance on the use of non-programmable funds needs to be developed. Most MIPs examined from across the countries studied suggest that the Triple Nexus is recognised and can be used as a vehicle to operationalise relevant actions, however, the comparative importance attached to the Triple Nexus within the broader framework of engagement and prioritisation of actions varies considerably from country to country. In some instances, the Triple Nexus is treated as a cross-cutting issue whereas in others it is assigned a more strategic importance, such as in CAR where the expectation is for the MIP to carry forward and build on achievements of the Bêkou Trust Fund. And while in some countries it is considered relevant for the entire country engagement, in others it is considered relevant at a sector/ theme specific level such as in Uganda and in Chad. There is nevertheless an expectation that the MIPs will need to provide the bulk of funds assigned to actions informed by the Triple Nexus approach, picking up and taking over from the now ended/ ending Trust Funds. Whether the flexibility associated with the Trust Funds can be reproduced however remains to be seen, with concerns, e.g. in Chad, that priority will be accorded to large fast disbursing actions that are not necessarily suited to addressing resilience and peace-related interventions at the community level. Current global crises, including in Ukraine, have also meant that the funds earmarked for rapid response are already depleted for 2022 thereby limiting opportunities to test out the instrument in the countries concerned. Concerns are also expressed by INGO peace actors that the vast majority of funds earmarked for peace related actions are assigned to stabilisation and other state-centric actions leaving only a residual amount for community-based peace work[37].

TEIs – The Triple Nexus approach can be a good vehicle for certain Team Europe Initiatives in crisis contexts. At the same time, by including the Member States, the Team Europe Initiatives allow for a wider operationalization of the Triple Nexus beyond EU services, including with wider mobilization of resources. Examples include in DRC, the TEI on Peace and Security, in CAR the TEI on peace, security, justice and governance, in Uganda, the TEIs on Demography and Social Inclusion and on Sustainable Business, and in Myanmar, the TEI on the Green Deal. Given resource constraints already identified under the NDICI, being able to leverage funds from among EUMS becomes increasingly important. TEIs remain at this stage at a formulation stage and there is as yet no practical experiences to draw upon.

Dedicated Triple Nexus Funds – Myanmar provides a case where a dedicated programme, the Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM) was set up to finance actions informed by the Triple Nexus approach. The fund is co-financed by INTPA and at a later stage, ECHO, although the amount assigned through the HIP is quite modest. Although discussions between the EU delegation and EUMS have taken place about Member States joining the NRM with funds, to date this has not happened. An interesting feature of the NRM is that it is executed through UNOPS as a third-party provider as a means to speed up approval procedures and allow for a certain degree of responsiveness. Experiences of the NRM are overall reported to have been positive, however, concerns have been raised that it focuses on project delivery in pre-designated areas, rather than thinking about the Triple Nexus in a more strategic way, thereby missing opportunities that fall outside the specific remit of the NRM and reducing discussion on the possible future role of TEIs in working with the Triple Nexus.

Other sources of funding – Beyond EU services, it may be noted that various EUMS have assigned specific budgets to finance the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus either through global, regional or country specific

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[37] These observations were made to the study team during interviews with various different peace actors from the INGO community. However, the team was not able to substantiate the extent to which this is actually the case.

funds. Examples include Germany's Transitional Development Assistance Instrument, that enables flexible financing in crises situations designed to ensure that short-, medium- and long-term measures are connected, and the Netherlands globally financed "Prospects" strategic partnership programme in support of the CRRF/ refugee response which aims at improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons/ refugees and host communities by operationalising the Triple Nexus through the creation of strong partnerships between humanitarian (e.g. UNHCR) and development actors (e.g.: UNICEF, ILO and the World Bank). The new 2022-2025 Danish MFA strategic partnership framework[38] that guides its work with INGOs merges humanitarian and development funding streams into one instrument which incentivises INGOs to deploy a flexible engagement across the pillars of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, and potentially the Triple Nexus too.

2.3.3 Incorporation of Cross Cutting Issues – What are the Implications for the Triple Nexus?

Summary - The study finds that cross cutting issues have been generally well incorporated into the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus across the country cases. However, in saying this, it is important to note that there is no specific EU guidance on how to incorporate cross-cutting issues into the Triple Nexus beyond already existing guidance documents. As the Triple Nexus is operationalised through funding obtained from different instruments, the rules and guidance governing these, largely determine how cross-cutting issues are expected to be addressed. Any deficiencies in such guidance or in the way such guidance has been operationalised cannot therefore be ascribed to the Triple Nexus per se.

Because the focus of much Triple Nexus attention has been on refugees, IDPs and other communities directly affected by crisis and conflict, actions carried out in the name of the Triple Nexus are invariably sensitive to cross cutting issues of gender, disability, vulnerability and rights. Interventions are moreover increasingly sensitive to issues of environmental degradation, climate change and natural resources management. In this regard, the cases show that cross-cutting issues are not only taken on board but are often a core focus of attention.

Difficulties can arise where actions financed from different sources need to take account of different sets of guidance, such as on the issue of vulnerability. This might happen for example where an action funded through the HIP is linked in some way to an action funded through an EUTF, or where a single action is co-funded from different EU sources. This might affect the selection or eligibility criteria, the choice of status-based or vulnerability-based approaches, impartiality and exclusionary provisions. Overall, however, implementing partners who have considerable experience working with different sources of funding have found ways to accommodate different sets of guidance in consultation with the relevant EU services.

Findings from the nine country studies indicate that cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, human rights, environment have indeed been incorporated into Triple Nexus action plans and subsequent interventions. However, there is no evidence of such issues being taken account of in any different way than would be expected in any regular EU programming and project design work. Similarly, some of the known challenges of mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues into sector/ thematic work also arise. As such working differently across services through the Triple Nexus does not per se change the way cross-cutting issues are addressed, nor does it particularly accentuate or reduce the challenges that might arise. The design of any action implemented through a Triple Nexus approach is therefore guided by the rules and requirements of the funding instrument/source being used, including any guidance on the incorporation of cross-cutting issues.

What can arise are differences in the way cross-cutting issues are understood and addressed by the different services involved as well as by the implementing partner. In this respect there can be complications where an action focusing on one particular locality or addressing a particular target community is financed from more than one source and where the rules, or guidance of each differ. Differences might occur for example around issues of determining eligibility for assistance (e.g. cash transfers) resulting in different patterns of inclusion and exclusion depending on the rules, or guidance applied. In this regard, the distinction between ECHO's needs-based approach based primarily on status and INTPA's poverty focus based primarily on a rights-based approach can create difficulties when ECHO and INTPA funded actions run side by side or where issues of "hand over" from ECHO to INTPA are envisaged. Related issues can arise between ECHO and INTPA in the

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[38] See Voice out Loud, issue 32, The EUMS Implementation of the HDP Nexus, December 2021, p10.

context of on-going conflicts with regard to guidance on engagement with armed opposition groups and/ or working in areas controlled by such groups. Also, in relation to the need or not to vet final beneficiaries. Here, INTPA's restrictive measures might run up against humanitarian principles. Finding ways to reconcile these differences either within a single action or between different actions running side by side is often left to the implementing partners concerned. The team was also informed that in some instances, INGOs have had to walk away from funding opportunities, or even to terminate contracts, where it was felt that the applicable rules, such as "restrictive measures" were inimical to their own principles of engagement (see further section 2.3.5).

In practice, many actions informed by a Triple Nexus approach are community based with a strong social protection/ resilience focus. Implemented mainly by international and national NGOs, but also UN specialised agencies such as WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA, interventions typically address vulnerability with targeted interventions for children (especially nutrition), women (e.g. SGBV, financial literacy), youth (e.g. training and jobs), people living with disabilities (e.g. accessibility, protection). In Chad, the DIZA project (Programme for Inclusive Development in Reception Areas), funded by EUTF and implemented by a consortium led by the INGO Concern Worldwide, provides specific support to rural women (refugees and host communities) for their social and economic inclusion and the improvement of their livelihood.

Actions also often address issues of rights (e.g. the rights of refugees/ IDPs) as well as tackling other legal matters related for instance to access to land, access to financial services and civil registration. *The Triple Nexus is also used as a vehicle to operationalize many actions that typically tackle natural resource management issues at the local level* (e.g. the UNEP/ Practical Action project funded by EUTF in North Darfur, Sudan, and an Oxfam project funded by the EUTF in Kyegegwa refugee settlement, Uganda), as these quickly become the source of conflict over scarce resources, and which are at risk of escalating into more complex and protracted conflicts. In all such cases, so-called cross-cutting issues become the primary focus of attention, with results, or indicator frameworks expressed accordingly. Meanwhile, in Myanmar, a dedicated Gender strategy was developed to accompany all NRM interventions while due diligence criteria are applied to all NRM activities including integration of a Rights-Based Approach for all aspects of programme implementation.

2.3.4 Integration of the Peace Element – What Opportunities and Challenges have been Encountered?

Summary - As reported earlier, the introduction of the peace element to the Triple Nexus has been overall welcomed by EU services at both headquarters and country levels with clear recognition of its potential added value. At the same time, it has introduced some confusion and concerns largely due to uncertainties as to what the peace element is understood to embrace, who the peace actors are and the potential risks it might bring to otherwise more politically impartial actions.

To help understand the peace element of the Triple Nexus, the study team has proposed distinguishing so-called "small p" and "big P actions" with the former associated with actions aimed primarily at maintaining or promoting social cohesion, peacebuilding and mediation at the community level, whilst the latter associated with actions aimed at restoring peace mainly through stabilisation efforts, including military/ hard security support combined with stabilisation efforts and diplomatic means that address national and sub-national insecurity issues. Such a distinction inevitably risks over-simplifying the various nuances that exist in the peace landscape but can nevertheless help to cluster different core categories of peace actions.

Based on this distinction, the study finds that "small p" actions have been a common feature of many actions aimed at operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, and pre-date the incorporation of the peace element into the Triple Nexus. Such "small p" actions are often considered an intrinsic part of community-based work and on the whole attract comparatively little controversy. However, there are instances where even "small p" engagements in especially highly volatile contexts risk compromising humanitarian principles if not treated carefully and therefore are a concern for ECHO and the humanitarian community.

It is the "big P" actions that attract more concern and contestation and where actors struggle somewhat to know how best to respond through a Triple Nexus approach. Here, there is less practice to draw upon. The multitude of international actors and efforts in the peace and security domain moreover complicates a clear and coherent shared understanding and approach. One encounters more entrenched views held by different services, between the EU and other international actors and between ICPs and partner governments whose

military is generally difficult to connect with. Examples of issues where views might differ include the scope, role and timing of stabilisation programmes, especially the relationship between civilian and military components of such programmes, and implications for safeguarding fundamental humanitarian principles for humanitarian actors.

Issues and experiences related to the integration of the peace element of the Triple Nexus have already been addressed under the discussion of shared understanding, added value and challenges and bottlenecks, as well as in the context of discussions on conflict analysis. It is also addressed in connection with the protection of humanitarian principles (see section 2.3.5. immediately below). Here, a recap is made of the key issues arising as well as presentation of practical experiences drawn from across the country cases.

As noted already, *the introduction of the peace element has been overall welcomed by EU services with clear recognition of its potential added-value to the earlier Humanitarian-Development Nexus. At the same time, it has introduced some confusion and concerns* largely due to uncertainties as to what the peace element is understood to embrace, who the peace actors are and inevitably, due to its more political nature, the potential risks it brings to otherwise more politically impartial actions. This concern is most strongly felt by ECHO and its implementing partners because the peace element risks crossing certain red lines in relation to safeguarding humanitarian principles.

To facilitate understanding, a distinction is made between so-called "big P" and "small p actions" with the former associated with actions aimed at restoring peace through military, stabilisation or diplomatic means and addressing national and subnational insecurity issues, whilst the latter associated with actions aimed at maintaining or promoting social cohesion, peacebuilding and mediation at the community level. Such a distinction inevitably risks over-simplifying the various nuances that exist in the peace landscape but can nevertheless help to cluster different core categories of peace actions together. Such a distinction has proven helpful in guiding conversations and clarifying concerns and issues raised during the course of this study among Triple Nexus stakeholders.

Drawing from across the country case studies, the following observations are made:

The piloting of the Triple Nexus in six countries in 2017 started at a time when the focus of attention and practice was on the link between humanitarian and development actions. Peace as such was not necessarily considered as an integral part of the Triple Nexus**.** Nigeria for example drafted a Joint Humanitarian Development Framework in 2015 that was informed by the LRRD approach. The majority of actions operationalised through a Triple Nexus approach launched in the context of the pilots therefore addressed these two components with less explicit attention to the peace element. That said, the conflict analysis exercises that were part of the Nexus action plan preparation raised awareness of the need to take account of issues related to conflict sensitivity and to adopt "Do No Harm" approaches. The introduction of the CAS as a mandatory step in the preparation of MIPs in fragile contexts has given further incentive and attention to addressing the peace element of the Triple Nexus.

A closer examination of the actions carried out however indicate that attention to promoting social cohesion, and adherence to the Do No Harm principle have been part and parcel of most actions informed by the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, across most of the pilot countries. And in Sudan and Iraq, the attention to addressing challenges relating to natural resource management is regarded as addressing the root cause of conflict without necessarily considering these to be peacebuilding interventions. In this respect, one might conclude that the peace element has often been an integral part of interventions informed by the Humanitarian-Development Nexus approach though with a lower level of visibility and reflecting what some observers suggest simply constitutes good development practice.

The introduction of the Triple Nexus in 2018 has nevertheless prompted the pilot countries to reflect more intensively on what it means to operationalise the peace element. This includes how to interact on a more systematic basis with FPI so that actions carried out under their auspices can be more closely aligned to those of other services, and to avoid possibilities of funding almost identical projects but labelled in the one case as humanitarian, and another as peacebuilding. It also includes working out practical ways to integrate peace elements into otherwise actions with a humanitarian-development focus by working more closely with the political sections of the delegations, with the EEAS at headquarters and with EUMS and other like-minded countries on opportunities for political dialogue and related diplomatic work. A concern raised by a number of INGOs and recognised by INTPA is the practice of imposing conditions on the composition of consortia bidding

on actions to be operationalised through a Triple Nexus approach to ensure a balance of experience across the different dimensions of the Nexus, including on peace. While at a policy level this would seem to make sense, in practice this can generate a number of management and operational problems when parties are obliged to work together without the prior experience of working together and where mandates and interests are not necessarily aligned.

Overall, operationalisation of the peace element has progressed rather unevenly and with considerable caution, and has been contextually informed. The Iraq study reports that stakeholders within the EU and beyond, continue to struggle to understand what the peace element includes, with understandings very much informed by institutional mandates and interests ranging from what are defined above as "small p" or "big P" dimensions. The multitude of actors and efforts in the peace and security domain further complicates a clear and coherent shared understanding and approach towards the peace dimension (e.g. presence of UN mission, NATO mission, CSDP mission, etc.). There is, therefore, no joint strategic approach towards understanding and addressing peace as part of the Triple Nexus, with a risk that it falls between the cracks. In Myanmar, views already differed on how far the peace element could be advanced, prior to the coup. The NRM does not per se lend itself to peacebuilding perspectives beyond what might be broadly termed social cohesion measures. However, the FPI is engaged in various spheres addressing such issues as hate speech, support to media in exile and that are, in most cases, part of discussions with other services on how to address the peace element. More problematic is agreeing on a course of action given that engagement with the state has been suspended, and the peace process halted, thereby reducing the current level of diplomatic relations with the government. Integration of the peace element in Myanmar is therefore considered weak and poorly articulated with a mainly wait and see stance taken. The Nigeria report notes the absence of any sort of peace process in the North-East leaving very limited room for a coordinated approach to integration of the peace element into the Triple Nexus. The report however contrasts the volatile and deteriorating situation in Borno state where it is increasingly difficult to engage people in peace-related projects when their concerns are focused on survival and accessing basic lifesaving assistance, with the situation in Adamawe state where the lower overall level of insecurity and the willingness of the state government to engage with the international community creates the conditions for a more coherent approach for discussing peace.

The experience of the three non-pilot countries is quite varied, displaying different levels of readiness and opportunity to operationalise the peace dimension.

▪ In *Burkina Faso*, the pertinence of addressing the peace component is recognised across the services and marks a departure from previous country experience that had been largely in the humanitarian-development domain. The current political crisis and increasing levels of insecurity has brought home the need to address the peace element in a more explicit and strategic way, even though this is felt to introduce greater complexity including understanding who the different peace actors are. Overall, EU services struggle to find a way to translate appreciation of the importance of working with the peace element into concrete actions. One concern relates to the availability of suitable funding to support actions aimed at promoting conflict prevention mechanisms that are by nature longer term and require multi-annual funding. Provisions for addressing the peace element are however reflected in the 2021-27 MIP, in terms of support to internal security forces as well as to an inclusive national dialogue.

▪ *CAR* presents a similar picture where the value of the peace element becomes increasingly apparent. Prior experience, especially in the context of Bêkou was, as in many other countries, focused on humanitarian and development elements albeit with an underlying social cohesion objective. Such "small p" actions are regarded as valid and remain important. What remains less clear is how to address the "big P" elements that are equally present in the country and that are guided by a broader stabilisation agenda. Cross-service engagement on these issues is recognised as essential and does take place. In this regard, agreement has been reached between INTPA/EUD/EEAS/ECHO/CSDP missions on the distinct role of humanitarian aid in CAR and on the need to preserve the humanitarian space.

▪ In *DRC*, the peace dimension cannot be ignored and is at the centre of attention in the eastern part of the country, where MONUSCO is helping to establish the pre-conditions for stabilisation. Given the large numbers of armed groups actively involved in fighting, stabilisation efforts provide a common reference around which the different services can engage. In this regard, both ECHO and EUD recognise the critical role played by FPI in supporting mediation, reconciliation and social cohesion projects, however, these have to date taken place in parallel rather than in an integrated way.

2.3.5 Respect of Humanitarian Principles – Are They at Risk of Being Compromised?

Summary - The respect of humanitarian principles has arisen as an on-going topic of debate in connection with the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus. Concerns have increased since the incorporation of the peace element where concerns are associated primarily with "Big P" actions, and to a lesser extent with "small p" actions. Issues arising can be divided into two categories.

The first has to do with assuring the safety and access of humanitarian actors and in particular the imperative of upholding principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence that are at the core of humanitarian action. The concern arises primarily in the context of "big P" interventions including military presence/ hard security and stabilisation measures. However, they can also arise in the contexts of development actions that are perceived as politically-motivated. In such situations there are risks that humanitarian actions are instrumentalised within broader politically motivated agendas and/or perceptions of humanitarians taking sides and legitimising certain actors over others. From this vantage, humanitarian actors are concerned that the Triple Nexus can undermine mandates and operating principles and insist on maintaining their independence from any political agendas. In this regard, while subscribing overall to EU policy, ECHO reserves the right to distance itself from any EU external action agenda, where it considers its principles to be at risk of compromise. Despite this real concern, the cases do not reveal many examples where such principles have been transgressed due to committed action on the part of ECHO and its staff and it was noted on a number of occasions that through improved understanding of one another's mandates and engagement principles, it has proven possible to reach a modus operandi based on a level of pragmatism. That said, the cases however confirm that concerns about the potential risks of undermining humanitarian principles can create some reluctance and hesitation towards embracing the Triple Nexus.

The second has to do with respecting humanitarian principles that guide the way assistance is delivered in the context of mainly "small p" actions. Humanitarian actions are guided by principles that inform who is assisted, what is provided and how support is delivered. Challenges can arise when humanitarian actions are combined with or aligned to those of development or peace actions which are guided by different principles, as has been previously discussed already under cross-cutting issues. Implementing partners with experience working on both humanitarian and development entry points argue that there is usually sufficient readiness to find common solutions that accommodate the needs of different actors, which is not to say that tensions and dilemmas do not arise, and where on occasions, decisions are taken to disengage rather than risk comprising key principles.

The Triple Nexus has been presented as posing a potential risk to upholding humanitarian principles, and thus compromising the freedom of action and modus operandi of humanitarian actors. The main concern raised has been the conflation of mandates across the services as a result of working in a Triple Nexus modality and the risk of politicisation of humanitarian work. This concern has been expressed in various international fora, most recently at the inaugural European Humanitarian Forum and through the INGO platform VOICE which in 2022 stated that "[w]hile the Triple Nexus approach offers an opportunity to adopt an operational flexibility to address people's needs in protracted crises in a coordinated manner, the different roles and mandates of all actors involved need to be respected", that the humanitarian mandate must be protected from politicisation and instrumentalisation and that "[h]umanitarian aid is neither a crisis management nor a foreign policy tool […]"[39].

Insights from the nine case studies do not, however, reveal many instances where principles have been compromised though it is clear that ECHO has on different occasions and in different contexts expressed the need to pay careful attention to this issue. A number of implementing partners, however, mentioned that they have had on occasions to back out of bidding for funds or to curtail implementation of on-going actions due to concerns that humanitarian principles were being compromised. A particular concern for INGOs is being asked to deliver basic services against the background of broader stabilisation measures (e.g. in various countries in the Sahel, where military interventions have taken place), or in contexts where the state is considered as being party to the conflict, and where, as a result, their actions might be perceived as working as a surrogate for illegitimate state institutions.

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[39] https://voiceeu.org/publications/voice-statement-ahead-of-the-european-humanitarian-forum.pdf

Overall, there is a sense that the dialogue and communication fostered through the Triple Nexus has allowed for a franker discussion across services and a better appreciation of and sensitivity to each other's mandates and operational constraints. In this regard, ECHO remarked that there has been growing acceptance of humanitarian principles among "big P" actors, allowing for a more mature relationship where it is possible to agree on a middle ground. Nevertheless, situations do arise where humanitarian, development and peace actors do not see eye to eye and reach different conclusions as to what is the appropriate mix of actions across the Triple Nexus and the relevance of each of the actors in the specific context.

The issue is clearly more alive in those contexts of on-going conflict where peace, development and humanitarian actors find themselves engaging simultaneously. This then is not only an internal EU services issue but extends to the way in which other institutional actors, including host governments, view the situation and act. Nigeria provides an example where the issue remains highly contentious, though with some nuances depending on the region concerned. In Borno state, humanitarians, including ECHO, are particularly wary of the state government's involvement in humanitarian efforts out of concern that this will undermine humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality. They would also like to limit their own engagement with state authorities under present circumstances. Increasing cases of attacks by Armed Opposition Groups on humanitarian and development workers is also a growing source of concern.

In a number of the country cases, the issue is less apparent. This includes most obviously Uganda which is not itself a country of conflict and where the refugee response does not raise immediate issues with respect to upholding humanitarian principles. In countries such as Burkina Faso, CAR, Chad, Sudan and Myanmar, despite the backdrop of political crisis, and military presence, most Triple Nexus experiences to date have been limited to community-based humanitarian and development actions where the peace element is mostly focused on the promotion of social cohesion. This is moreover where the different services can more easily find common ground, a comparatively safe space for collaboration, notwithstanding the risks that can occur with respect to humanitarian principles even in the "small p" realm.

The so-called "big P" issues, where connections are made with "hard security" measures, including the military, that more easily threaten humanitarian principles are likely to become more significant and draw greater attention as the peace element of the Triple Nexus takes on greater prominence, and in contexts where conflicts escalate and demand more forthright stabilisation measures. Such so-called (civilian) stabilisation programmes, promoted and implemented by UNDP with a view to re-establish the authority and legitimacy of the state in formerly abandoned or occupied regions of a country, are disputed by humanitarian organisations in particular. This is especially the case where such civilian actions are closely linked to military operations. What may be inferred is that the concerns to safeguard humanitarian principles is what continues to hold back the readiness of ECHO to engage more intensely in joint actions with other services and to rather see the Triple Nexus as a way of reconfirming red lines and safe spaces for humanitarian action.

There are other issues that do arise in terms of safeguarding the humanitarian principles that relate more to the delivery of "small p" interventions. Dual mandated INGOs, for example, are confronted with the need to work according to both humanitarian and development standards, and can find themselves at different times, or even at the same time, working on either side of the humanitarian – development divide, mostly at the community level. Feedback from INGOs however suggests that this is a well-trodden path, where they have learned to respect the rules, procedures and operating principles of different funders and to negotiate a modus operandi. Some have their own internal procedures and due diligence rules designed specifically to ensure that humanitarian principles are heeded in the preparation of funding proposals. Nevertheless, there are always risks that their actions on the ground might be interpreted by others as contravening fundamental principles.

2.3.6 Local Empowerment and Leadership Capacity – How Concerted an Effort has been Made?

Summary - There is an expectation that the Triple Nexus will contribute to the empowerment of community members and to strengthening the capacity of local leadership. This expectation is prompted by both the "localisation" agenda currently driven by the humanitarian community as well as by the aid and development effectiveness agendas (including the New Deal), that emphasise local/ national leadership and ownership, state building and country systems strengthening. The agenda is moreover informed by the thinking behind the former LRRD agenda of shifting from short term humanitarian action towards seeking longer term solutions embedded in country systems and that prepare the ground for humanitarian exit strategies (see also below).

The country cases provide a range of insights into the different ways local empowerment and leadership capacity has been addressed through interventions informed by the Triple Nexus approach. The nature and extent of this having been done across the cases, is contextually defined, in so far as one can find an inverse relationship between degree of conflict and state instability/ presence and the opportunities to empower and build capacities.

At the community level, there have been a range of actions funded especially by the EU Trust Funds that offer economic empowerment opportunities to affected populations, while other actions have worked to strengthen community-based institutions to play a leadership role in local conflict resolution and mediation as well as opportunities to participate within the structures of village and district government decision making. At the local government level, actions have sought to strengthen the capacity of local government entities to play a more proactive role in the management of refugee and displaced persons affairs, to acquire the capacities to lead on disaster risk management in all its dimensions and to take over the delivery of services, sometimes established through humanitarian actions. Where contexts permit, actions under the Triple Nexus have also aimed at strengthening national level policies, coordination frameworks and delivery capacities aimed at empowering country stakeholders to prepare for and respond to crises.

The localisation agenda is also concerned to empower national NGOs and local CBOs to play a more central role in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Here, the country studies have less evidence of this taking place on a concerted scale. There are however examples in some of the cases of national NGOs working in partnership with INGOs in the framework of EUTF projects and playing instrumental and decisive roles. There remain various "barriers to entry" for national NGOs in terms of accessing EU funding due to stringent and demanding eligibility criteria that cannot be easily complied with.

Deciding how far to go towards empowerment and strengthening the capacity of partner country actors constitutes a core Triple Nexus question and one that requires a shared understanding across services of the risks and opportunities involved and a readiness to engage in a process that is consistent and based on shared goals.

There is an expectation that the Triple Nexus should promote the empowerment of local actors and the strengthening of local leadership capacity. These are broad ambitions which can manifest themselves in different ways depending on one's understanding of terms such as empowerment, capacity, leadership and local actors. The opportunity for promoting this agenda is also very much contextually informed, particularly by the nature and level of on-going conflict and extent of state presence and legitimacy.

The agenda is inspired from at least two streams of thought. On the one hand is the "localisation" agenda that is currently advanced by the humanitarian community, and which gained attention after the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain. The issue here is about empowerment of national NGOs and CBOs but also local authorities to play a more direct role as implementing partners of humanitarian funding agencies. On the other hand, and not unrelated, is the systems strengthening and capacity building agenda more commonly associated with the development community and advanced in more recent years by the aid and development effectiveness discourse, the New Deal and somewhat earlier the OECD/DAC good practice paper on capacity development. This discourse was also part of the LRRD thinking and related challenges of shifting from short term humanitarian action towards longer-term solutions embedded in country systems.

The country cases raise a range of experiences in addressing local empowerment and leadership capacity. This is done in some cases rather more explicitly than in others. What clearly comes through as a determining

factor is the context in terms of the viability and legitimacy of state institutions at both national and sub-national levels and the extent of political stability:

- *In contexts of state illegitimacy, Sudan, Myanmar and certain federal states in Nigeria for example, opportunities for investing explicitly in state capacity are currently limited*. There is a tendency therefore to work directly with community institutions and in some cases with technical divisions of local governments and/ or sector departments where their assistance is deemed critical. Interventions tend to be "projectised" and generally run in parallel to government processes, systems and institutions, albeit with some cooperation at a technical level.

- *In contexts of weak administrative capacity and mixed/ changing levels of legitimacy, for example in CAR, Chad, and Iraq, there are instances where interventions have sought to strengthen the role and capacity of local government service providers but also locally based NGOs*. Bêkou provides a very good example of this, and the NRM in Myanmar, prior to the coup.

- *In contexts where state capacity and legitimacy are area bound, and where conflict is on-going, such as in the Eastern part of DRC, the expectation is that actions will implicate state institutions to the extent possible at national and provincial levels* but that delivery in the locale of conflict, will rely primarily on UN agencies and some locally-based NGOs until such time as a level of stabilisation is established. Such an approach does not preclude supporting behind-the-scenes diplomatic actions aimed at regaining confidence and trust with formal institutions.

- *In contexts of adequate state capacity and broad state legitimacy, as in the case of Uganda, the empowerment and capacity agendas are at the core of the Triple Nexus in the context of the CRRF*. Most actions promoted by the Government and supported by development partners aim at shifting responsibilities from external humanitarian actors towards government especially at the local government level. The example of the GIZ project funded by the EUTF and BMZ that aims to strengthen the capacity of refugee receiving district authorities in the West Nile region of Uganda is a case in point, as is the support provided by ECHO to strengthen the Disaster Management policy framework in the country.

How far to go towards empowerment and capacity strengthening of partner country actors is then a core Nexus question requiring a shared understanding of the risks and opportunities involved and a readiness to engage in a process that is consistent and based on shared goals. Joint analysis plays a very important role here as does dialogue with different stakeholder groups so that there can be agreement on how far to push and where credible entry points exist. In this regard, several country cases highlight the opportunities to transition cash transfer/ consumption support initiatives financed through individual humanitarian actions to country systems that can be supported to develop shock responsive mechanisms. Other sectors that hold promise include WASH, education and health. Here the potential for complementary programming from humanitarian and development sides is considered to be significant.

The above observations and illustrations speak mainly to the issue of empowering partner country institutions to lead and execute. *With respect to the localisation agenda and the role of national and local NGOs, a separate set of issues arise.* The cases confirm that a majority of actions that operationalise the Triple approach are implemented by INGOs. On occasions, stakeholders from partner governments have complained about their number and the consequent fragmentation of external assistance and that can also undermine state legitimacy if not carefully handled. In many instances, INGOs work in partnership with national NGOs and CBOs to good effect - this was witnessed for example in Uganda on a natural resources management focused project for refugees and host communities where national NGOs offered expertise in environmental management, in policy advocacy and in addressing issues of social cohesion.

There were few examples provided of national NGOs and local CBOs being directly funded by EU services, but this is seen as less of a Triple Nexus-specific concern and relates more to EU (and other DPs) rules regarding eligibility for funding as well as the complexity of procedures for submitting funding proposals. The Nigeria case shows that the EU has supported some local CBOs but that localisation could be certainly further intensified, in particular by working with CBOs that have better access to hard-to-reach areas.

Many established INGOs often find the rules and procedures governing the submission of funding proposals to the EU to be challenging (including submitting bids for EUTF funds) and sometimes need to think carefully if they can really afford to invest in bid preparation. A related issue concerns implementation obligations especially for reporting. For many national NGOs, these are considered prohibitive demanding a level of overhead and project management expertise that is not easily sourced. An observation made in this regard is that Triple Nexus ambitions can result in ever more complex projects with sometimes unrealistic results and demands to extend consortia to actors who are not necessarily familiar with one another.

2.3.7 Perspectives on Humanitarian Exit strategies – How does the Triple Nexus Help?

Summary - One of the longstanding questions of humanitarian action, surfacing in the context of Triple Nexus policy and practice, is how to design and plan for exit strategies. The experience of LRRD highlighted the limitations of linear thinking and expectations that the shift from humanitarian to development action could simply be programmed enabling a progressive withdrawal of humanitarian support. The Triple Nexus builds on a recognition that contexts of protracted crisis and conflict are volatile, unpredictable, partially cyclical and highly dynamic. In such contexts, the presumption that humanitarian assistance is short term and will hand over to development action needs to be approached with caution although it is clear that through Triple Nexus efforts that buttress stabilisation, this can eventually take place.

The cases confirm that the pertinence and timeliness of considering humanitarian exit strategies varies from context to context and the extent to which the Triple Nexus can facilitate a humanitarian exit is therefore informed by such contextual realities. The Ugandan case can be considered somewhat of an outlier in so far as conditions are relatively conducive for considering a managed reduction of humanitarian presence in the context of refugee management. But even here, the practical challenges of doing so are multiple and the recent new influx of refugees places renewed pressure on humanitarians to remain.

A number of other cases also highlight uncertainties related to the extent to which humanitarian action can be withdrawn. Yet actions are being operationalised under a Triple Nexus approach that aim at reducing the need for humanitarian support whether in terms of helping to build individual and community resilience, or whether in terms of strengthening the capacity of state institutions to provide security, disaster response and access to basic needs/ services. The design of exit strategies is therefore closely linked to the local empowerment and leadership capacity discussion addressed above and is therefore a core policy consideration at the heart of the Triple Nexus.

As answers are contextually informed, the Triple Nexus way of working offers the opportunity for humanitarian, development and peace actors to address the issue of humanitarian exit in a collective way informed by the findings of conflict analysis, coordinated action and dialogue with relevant actors at country level. The Triple Nexus does not offer a solution but nevertheless provides an approach that recognises the need for Triple Nexus actors to co-design the way forward including consideration of the pre-conditions for humanitarian exit and roles and responsibilities of the different actors in facilitating that exit process.

The Triple Nexus opens up opportunities to consider exit strategies for humanitarian actors in a more explicit and coordinated manner. For ECHO, it is clear that the Triple Nexus invites possibilities to burden share with other actors and to focus more exclusively on addressing its core mandate, particularly in a context of growing needs and diminishing resources. However, whilst in some of the country cases, this is a relevant point for discussion and operationalisation, in others, the call on humanitarian action is intensifying and the issue of exit might seem rather academic.

Yet even in such situations, *good practice underscores the need to design exit strategies from the start and this is where the Triple Nexus offers some potential for promoting in-depth discussion and exchange of views.* Moreover, understanding of the Triple Nexus as promoting contiguum, rather than continuum, helps to avoid falling into linear thinking, and to recognise that even in a trajectory towards exit, there may well be calls on humanitarians to re-engage. Exit strategies are not just about finding alternative funding sources to pick up the costs of maintaining services set up on an emergency context. In this respect, INTPA underscores its role in systems strengthening, promoting ownership and in ensuring sustainable outcomes. Exit strategies therefore need to factor in how any investment made in the perspective of short-term response takes account of what already exists on the ground and is implemented with a view to sustainability and system strengthening. Tensions can exist however between the humanitarian actions informed from a "needs based" approach and development actions that privilege ownership, system strengthening and a rights-based approach. There are clearly no easy solutions here, which is precisely why the Triple Nexus has a crucial role to play. ECHO moreover acknowledges that it faces a genuine risk of "mission creep" when it enters situations ostensibly to provide immediate life-saving support but ends up performing core service delivery functions because of a total absence of state services. Prospects of hand-over can however be challenging to realise if development actors have not identified the same geographical areas to work in or even where they have, that their

programming cycle is such that funds will only come on stream at a much later time. Here the risk of curtailment of service is very real, if humanitarian funding cannot be sustained.

Uganda offers the best illustration from among the country studies of where exit strategies are being explicitly attended to. The CRRF to which the EU and other ICPs have aligned their Triple Nexus support envisages a progressive transfer of responsibility for the management of the refugee response from humanitarian actors to development actors and from development partners to host country institutions. This is however expressed in terms of burden sharing in so far as it is recognised that humanitarian actors will need to remain engaged in attending to new influxes of refugees and in addressing emergency needs. At the same time, there is a role for humanitarians to hand over non-emergency service delivery responsibilities and other forms of resilience support to other actors. A similar picture emerges in the context of disaster risk management with ECHO investing (together with INTPA) in strengthening country systems (both state and non-state) as a way to relieve pressure on humanitarians to continue as first responders. This is obviously proving possible - notwithstanding many policy, institutional and financial challenges – because Uganda offers a comparatively stable and legitimate institutional framework.

In countries where the state is failing or lacks legitimacy and against the spectacle of significant IDP growth and high levels of vulnerability in general, humanitarian presence remains critical and prospects for disengagement would appear remote. This would certainly be the case in Myanmar and Sudan, given the recent military coups, where relations have been suspended between EU actors and national authorities but also Chad and Burkina Faso, where the state is simply weak and where prospects for normalised development action are limited. Similar discussions have taken place with respect to Eastern DRC, where needed humanitarian action is also premised on stabilisation of the region. ECHO, however, is concerned that the level of humanitarian assistance is ever growing and, without attention to addressing underlying causes of conflict, will not be sustainable. In this regard, the Triple Nexus is seen potentially as a way to reduce the burden placed on the humanitarian sector. The Nigeria study contrasts two very different contexts – one where the prospects of humanitarian exit is not even open to discussion due to an intensification of conflict and growing humanitarian need, the other where the basic preconditions for pursuing a cautious shift towards recovery and development can be contemplated. However even here, there are concerns regarding state capacity (and willingness) to finance and take over the running of facilities established by the humanitarian sector, and the role development partners can play in enabling this process.

In countries which have benefitted from Trust Funds (such as Bêkou in CAR, EUTF in Sudan and Uganda, and MADAD in Iraq), or even the NRM in Myanmar, the logic underlying actions funded under these arrangements has been to reduce reliance by and the comparatively high cost of short-term humanitarian actions. This is done by strengthening community resilience, addressing issues of communal conflict and by strengthening the capacity of local systems to carry a greater burden of responsibility. The various trust funds and the Triple Nexus thinking that has been applied can thus be regarded as constituting exit strategies. Specifically in CAR, a Bêkou "Exit Strategy" has been drafted along sectoral lines with the aim to support consolidation of ongoing projects and strengthening of state and local actors. The exit strategy moreover details how Bêkou interventions will be continued as part of the MIP 2021-2027 (and to some extent the 2022 HIP). The Iraq report meanwhile cites examples where MADAD has taken over projects initially funded by ECHO to enable it to focus on its core mandate, while ECHO itself through HIP funding is working with government actors to progressively transfer responsibility for service delivery.

2.3.8 Operationalising the Triple Nexus – What have been the Principal Enablers and Constraints?

This section of the report considers several enablers and constraints that have had a bearing on the ability of EU services to operationalise the Triple Nexus. The review covers five elements comprising i) mandates, structures, rules and structures; ii) leadership readiness; iii) organisational capacity; iv) country partner expectations; v) complexity and timing.

2.3.8.1. Mandates, Structures, Rules and Procedures – How Constraining or Enabling are These?

Summary - Issues related to EU services' mandates, structures and operating procedures were highlighted in most cases as limiting factors with respect to realising Triple Nexus ambitions. Such limiting factors are well known and are indeed one of the reasons for advocating for the Triple Nexus and for finding ways to work in a more coordinated and joined up way across the different services. The principal concerns relating to the EU's operations are four-fold.

The first relates to differences of programming cycles that can impact on the sequencing, alignment and intentionality of actions across different services.

The second relates to differences in organisational structures, field presence and the extent to which decision-making authorities are delegated to the country level. These impact on the ease of communication and speed of decision making across the different services.

The third relates to the different mandates and operating rules and principles of the various services. These can reveal differences in the way issues are viewed and understood, the principles that guide engagement (including respect for humanitarian principles), the tools and methods used to conduct analytical work, and the criteria applied in the design, monitoring and evaluation of interventions.

The fourth relates to the extent of readiness across services to embrace a common position towards promoting a wider integrated approach to the EU's external action. Whereas coordinated work between EU services can be a catalyst for advancing the Triple Nexus, there remain differences in mandate across the different services that need to be treated with sensitivity.

Such factors can enable but also disincentivise the strive for closer coordinated action and to a perpetuation of so-called silo approaches to working. This is inimical to Triple Nexus thinking and risks a business-as-usual approach that has proven inadequate in addressing the complex challenges of protracted crisis and conflict. But to do so requires leadership, capacity and opportunity as explored in the following sub-sections, as well as the readiness of committed individuals to find ways to work around constraints.

Issues related to mandates, structures and operating procedures were highlighted in most cases as a limiting factor with respect to realising Triple Nexus ambitions. Such limiting factors are well known and are indeed one of the reasons for advocating for the Triple Nexus in the first place and for finding ways to work differently across the different services. The following points are drawn from across the cases and from the teams' discussions with key informants at the headquarters level.

Programming Cycles – Both FPI and ECHO work on much shorter time frames than INTPA. The timing of programming and the time required to prepare proposals also varies. By the nature of their mandate, FPI and ECHO need to be able to respond quickly and to adapt to rapidly changing contexts therefore resulting in programming cycles focused on short-term interventions. This can be contrasted with INTPA and EEAS that take a longer-term perspective and which in the case of INTPA design much larger actions that are multi-annual in nature. These different programming logics and cadences can stand in the way of coordinated, synchronised and aligned of actions across services.

Decision-making, field presence and delegation of authorities – Differences in the degree to which staff is present at county level and the extent to which decision-making responsibilities are devolved can also impact on the ease of communication and the speed of decision-making between services. In this regard, there is a perception according to the case findings that the EEAS is the more centralised of the services, as compared to INTPA and ECHO. ECHO and FPI also have presence at the regional level. Notwithstanding the opportunities afforded by virtual communication, face to face engagement remains important especially in terms of building consensus and shared vision across services and being able to engage sometimes informally

on an as-needs basis. The fact that each service works principally autonomously of the other with no common reporting framework and separate lines of accountability to their respective principals makes the challenge of holding each service accountable to the other with respect to addressing common goals all the more difficult.

Political engagement – The Nexus has the potential of letting different EU services be part of a wider and more integrated EU external action, if well managed by headquarters and the EUD. ECHO, as the EU's service dealing with humanitarian matters, has nevertheless reserved the right to decide whether to join such a joined-up approach and, if yes, at which level of intensity and to what effect. It can be "in or out" in line with its mandate and prevailing country context. The cases have shown that the coordinated work of the political and cooperation sections of an EUD can be crucial for promoting and even leveraging a Nexus response vis-à-vis the national government and non-EU actors which is in line with the EUD's insights, priorities and values. This is particularly the case where linkages need to be made to the peace dimension of the EU's engagement with a partner country, i.e. in relation to stabilisation-related interventions, engagements via dedicated peacebuilding tools and instruments, or where linkages need to be made to CSDP missions. As such, the political dimensions of EU engagement at country level needs to be seen as a potentially relevant enabler for promoting the Nexus, beyond an aid effectiveness perspective.

Mandates and operating rules and principles – The different EU services are established to perform different tasks, to meet different objectives and to operate in different ways (even to the extent of rules governing the movement of staff at country level). These different set ups or "organisational DNA" help ensure that each service is "fit for purpose" and able to serve the respective objectives set out in the respective legal basis. However, inevitably, this will mean more investment needs to be made in order to minimize friction and misalignment when the different services strive to work collectively/ in unison. Differences can arise with respect to what is deemed a priority, what principles are used to guide engagement, what tools and methods are used to conduct analytical work, and the criteria applied in the design, monitoring and evaluation of interventions. Most obviously, adherence to humanitarian principles is a non-negotiable for ECHO, while for FPI, retaining a relatively high degree of independence of action is key to facilitate a rapid response way of working. For INTPA, there are policy objectives, including adherence to a rights-based approach, operational rules on transparency, related to disclosure of information, and exclusionary or restrictive measures, as well the development principles of alignment, ownership and aid effectiveness that need to be respected. For EEAS, there are political objectives to observe as highlighted before. The Triple Nexus provokes the different services to understand the policy and operational constraints within which each works, to identify opportunities for joint action and to work in ways that can overcome potential barriers. Various cases offer examples where "can do" approaches to working together in spite of these challenges have made a difference, allowing progress to be made.

2.3.8.2. Leadership Readiness – To what Extent is Leadership Championing the Triple Nexus?

Summary - Leadership, exercised by the heads of services at country level, was frequently mentioned as a critical enabler for advancing the Triple Nexus. Its absence can consequently limit ambition levels and stall progress. In this respect, it was acknowledged that the Triple Nexus has to be driven from the country level placing a particular responsibility on the Head of Delegation.

Country experiences, however, illustrate that the Triple Nexus is operationalised with different degrees of intensity and with differing degrees of leadership attention. In some cases, it is treated as a whole-of-service imperative with a high degree of political underpinning, whereas in other cases, it is treated as a more sector-specific or thematic issue to be handled at a technical level. This in large part reflects the country context and the strategic importance therefore attached to the Triple Nexus (see further below). But it also reflects the personal views and perspectives of the HoD/ HoC/ Heads of ECHO office whether to fully embrace the Triple Nexus as a key agenda informing the way of working of the services or not. Certainly, the introduction of the peace element has elevated the Triple Nexus from a more technical issue to a far more politically sensitive one and in this regard, the leadership from the level of the HoD becomes increasingly essential.

The nature and extent of senior management attention to the Triple Nexus also influences the ability and credibility of the EU to exercise leadership in relation to other stakeholders in country, particularly in terms of mobilising a joint EU response in tandem with EUMS, as well as in terms of promoting coordinated actions across the wider international cooperation community and partner government.

The study equally underscores the importance of leadership exercised at the headquarters level. Here the general view is that whilst political leadership on the Triple Nexus has generally been clear and visible, at a technical level, the leadership exercised across the key services has been less pronounced with less consistent cross-service messaging and accompanying distribution of technical guidance and support.

Leadership, exercised by the heads of services at country level, was frequently mentioned as a key enabler for advancing the Triple Nexus, as in essence the Triple Nexus is to be seen as a change process guided by a clear vision and supported by a credible pathway of change. This requires services being encouraged to break with "business as usual" routines and recognising the cost-benefit of working differently. Some argue that the Triple Nexus demands a mind-set change but arriving at such change requires the use of different tools and incentives.

Whilst a top-down steer exercised at the political level from headquarters is important and has been forthcoming as evidenced by the joint letter of the respective DGs INTPA and ECHO and the Secretary-General of the EEAS, the EEAS recognises that more could be done to communicate more clearly the vision and ambition of the Triple Nexus agenda. At the same time, it is recognised that the Triple Nexus needs to be driven by the country context, thereby placing responsibility for guiding the process at country level on the respective heads of each service and in particular, the Heads of Delegation, who are best positioned to facilitate the needed engagement across services and overcome any blockages/ resistance encountered.

The country cases suggest that the degree of leadership exercised varies considerably. Most noticeable is that in some cases, the Triple Nexus is treated very much as a cross-service imperative to be mainstreamed across all areas of business, including the political section of an EUD, and in such cases, there is strong engagement by the HoD. In other cases, Triple Nexus is treated at the cooperation level with the HoC in the lead. And in others as a sector or theme specific issue which does not necessarily capture the same level of attention from senior management levels. Where there is an alignment of thinking between heads of services, then the role of the HoD may be less critical, but where such alignment is not present, the intervention of the HoD becomes essential.

Leadership from the EU is also required to promote and advocate for the Triple Nexus more broadly, among EUMS and beyond. In only a few cases has the EU shown itself to be ready to play this leadership role. In some instances, a particular member state (e.g. Sweden in DRC) is found in the forefront of discussions in donor forums or in engagement with partner governments on the Triple Nexus, or the role is taken up by the UN system. In Chad, the absence of national leadership for the Triple Nexus has made it difficult to decide who is best placed to lead the Nexus Task Force. Interlocutors interviewed across a number of cases hinted that they would like to see the EU playing a more proactive role in Triple Nexus promotion at country level.

2.3.8.3. Organisational Capacity – Is it Sufficient to Implement the Triple Nexus?

Summary - Organisational capacity is raised as a key concern limiting ambitions to operationalise the Triple Nexus at both headquarters and country levels. It is a particular concern for EU services at country level but is also raised as a concern for various EUMS.

Capacity issues include an absolute shortage of staff to take on the additional tasks associated with coordination, planning, follow-up and reporting on operationalisation of the Triple Nexus. Shortage of staff is one of the reasons given for the difficulties encountered in implementing the Nexus action plans and in operationalising coordination arrangements, and reporting. Capacity issues also relate to gaps in substantive expertise to guide effective operationalisation of the Triple Nexus approach, learn from them and to participate actively in policy dialogue with other development actors and with the partner government. This includes expertise related to conflict analysis as well as expertise related to the various areas of intervention such as resilience, social protection, etc. An observation made from across a number of the cases was the relatively poor institutional memory at country level relating to the Triple Nexus. This was attributed in part to a high turnover of staff, but also to poor records/ knowledge management, with the result that information on Triple Nexus experiences can be difficult to track down.

A unanimous view (from across services) is that effective implementation of the Triple Nexus depends on having the right staff with the right skills in place. Findings also underline that the EU would benefit from having a help desk type facility in place to provide support on an as-needs basis to the country level, although this was not raised in every case. In this regard, it may be noted that the various EU Trust Funds

that have delivered actions informed by a Triple Nexus approach have all had dedicated project management set-ups to support delivery. These will now close with the possible disbandment of project management staff. In so doing, a further burden of responsibility will fall on existing EU staff to design and monitor actions that operationalise the Triple Nexus.

Beyond the structural and leadership issues discussed above, *EU services highlighted limited human resources, high staff turnover impacting on institutional memory and lack of appropriate substantive expertise as factors that can make operationalising the Triple Nexus more challenging.*

As noted in section 2.1, *services note the transaction costs associated with working through the Triple Nexus.* There is additional work that needs to be done in terms of facilitating coordination, conducting analytical and design work and potentially complying with additional monitoring and reporting responsibilities. EU services invariably pointed out being already over-stretched and unable to take on additional responsibilities ("carry the weight of the Triple Nexus") without more "hands on deck". One of the main reasons for the difficulty to sustain the initial Nexus Action Plans was precisely because it proved difficult to assign focal persons to ensure the needed follow-up. A temporary solution was to hire technical assistance, but this could not be sustained. As many Delegations reported, there is often simply not the time to invest adequately in the Triple Nexus, although this does raise the question as to the level of priority that is being accorded to the Triple Nexus by the leadership. It was also pointed out that Trust Funds such as Bêkou in CAR had dedicated programme management support to attend to day-to-day implementation. Similarly, the NRM, in Myanmar, has project management responsibility outsourced to UNOPS. Similar concerns were expressed by EUMS associated with the Triple Nexus piloting who in most cases also struggled to assign focal persons to attend to Triple Nexus matters.

Lack of appropriate expertise (e.g. substantive knowledge on conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding) to address substantive policy and operational issues related to the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus, including engaging in dialogue with other stakeholders, was also highlighted as an issue. ECHO for instance has a lean structure at country level focused mainly on attending to operational dimensions and cannot easily cover the various sector and thematic policy domains that need to be addressed on a regular basis with the other services. There is only one officer at headquarters (with other officers helping out) with assigned responsibility for guiding the Triple Nexus from a policy perspective. A number of geographical units also dedicate time to working on the Nexus. Similarly, FPI has a lean structure allowing it the ability to engage operationally in the field but limiting its ability to engage more systematically in headquarters and country level exchanges. Priority is therefore accorded to addressing needs in the field consistent with its core mandate. INTPA has only one officer located at headquarters with assigned responsibility for guiding the Triple Nexus from a policy perspective, with the result that there are certain areas of expertise relevant to the Triple Nexus that may not be adequately covered at Headquarters level. At country and regional levels, it is comparatively better staffed but there is a need to acquire further expertise.

This has a bearing also on the capacity of EU services to be a thought leader on the Triple Nexus at country level and to advocate more strongly for a Triple Nexus approach among development partners and partner country authorities. The lack of capacity is also a concern at the headquarters level where it was remarked by one of the services that there simply is not the quantum of expertise assigned to the Triple Nexus across the different services. This is believed to have had a knock-on effect on the effectiveness of the services to articulate common positions and to deliver clear messages in their engagement with other stakeholders, including with EUMS and other international development actors. As a consequence, the visibility of the EU's efforts to promote the Triple Nexus, both at headquarters and country level, has been quite limited beyond the concerned EU services and a number of EUMS. At country level, partner governments are not generally conversant with the ambition and intent of the Triple Nexus besides those departments or stakeholders directly associated with design and implementation of EU actions. The EEAS recognises the need to push for a stronger coordination function in support of the Triple Nexus at the country level supported by a communications and visibility strategy.

For these reasons**,** *various services plead for a pragmatic approach to operationalising the Triple Nexus, and keeping to a minimum, administrative overheads and obligations.* Equally, they argue that at this critical juncture of rolling out the Triple Nexus, exploring unchartered territories and with the need to draw lessons of experience, the establishment of a "help desk" function at headquarters and/or regional offices levels to service the needs at country level is urgently required.

2.3.8.4. Partner Government Expectations for the Triple Nexus – Are Explicit have these been?

Summary - Ideally the Triple Nexus should be country owned and led. However, the nature of protracted crisis and conflict is such that this ideal is difficult to achieve. In almost all cases, the Triple Nexus is at best loosely reflected in government policies and plans, and the general level of engagement of governments in Triple Nexus discussions is limited. As a result, the Triple Nexus remains very much "partner-driven".

The nature and extent of government engagement with development partners on the Triple Nexus depends in large part on the extent of state presence, its legitimacy and its capacity, including the level of internal government unity and common sense of purpose. The cases offer a wide range of contexts including Uganda where the state is present, has reasonable capacity and enjoys a relatively high level of legitimacy. Here there are clear policy frameworks that include references to the Triple Nexus and allow ICPs, including the EU, to align the Triple Nexus to a government policy framework.

In other country cases, there is tacit reference to the Triple Nexus in national development plans, or related frameworks, often supported by UN technical assistance. However, there is little evidence of a concerted effort by governments to align donor support in a coherent manner, with the result that different ICPs pursue their own (Triple Nexus) agendas independently of one another.

In other contexts where state legitimacy is in question, where capacities are limited, and where relationships have been suspended with the international community, the Triple Nexus discourse remains primarily an ICP affair placing limits on what can be achieved and raising questions regarding how best to engage diplomatically or politically with different political factions and interest groups.

In an ideal context, any country level Triple Nexus process would be country owned and led, offering a framework into which ICPs can align their support. The cases provide a number of examples where such partner country leadership and country Triple Nexus framework exist in some form. In Uganda, the CRRF addresses refugee management and in so doing embraces Triple Nexus thinking to support the process of transition and burden sharing. This framework has provided a point of reference for ICP support to the refugee response and was the basis upon which the EU Nexus Action Plan was drafted. Such frameworks provide for a degree of "on-plan" alignment of partner inputs (even if support remains largely "off-budget") and has been reinforced by the development of sector refugee response plans and the formulation of district development plans that incorporate refugee management issues.

A number of countries, such as CAR, Burkina Faso and DRC have developed national development plans and strategies that make generic reference to the Triple Nexus. This may however be attributed in part to the technical guidance provided by UN agencies (and to the EU and World Bank in CAR) to the drafting process. One might expect therefore a certain ownership and leadership by partner country actors with respect to the Triple Nexus that can help align ICP inputs. However, even in these situations the observation is often made that the Triple Nexus is regarded by governments as the business of the international cooperation community and is not necessarily operationalised within the government system. Weak capacity and limited funding further limits governments from exercising a stronger leadership role.

In other countries, the Triple Nexus concept has neither been embraced nor internalised by partner governments. This is especially the case in countries where the state is weak and where its legitimacy is questioned or where engagements between the state and ICPs has been suspended. In the absence of a government-led process, the risk is that multiple Triple Nexus-related concepts and initiatives emerge sponsored by different ICPs and running on their own momentum, resulting in a certain level of confusion as to what the Triple Nexus constitutes and bringing into question the sustainability of efforts. This is reportedly the case in Iraq, Myanmar and Sudan.

2.3.8.5. Complexity and Timing – How have these impacted Opportunities for Triple Nexus Engagement?

Summary - The cases confirm that protracted crisis and conflict can take many different forms, and that situations are fluid, sometimes dragging on for many years, sometimes fast changing. In this regard, the validity of the Triple Nexus as a way of working that draws on the comparative strength of humanitarian, development and peace actors is confirmed. The cases moreover underscore the fact that the appropriate configuration of humanitarian, development and peace inputs is context and time specific and cannot be

pre-determined. This places a premium on working with flexible instruments and on maintaining regular dialogue between EU services and other stakeholders. It also puts a premium on working in "real time" by updating joint conflict analyses, on monitoring actions on the ground and on adapting plans as needed.

The cases demonstrate how the Triple Nexus can be operationalised in quite different ways (different entry points) depending on the overall context (level of complexity) and depending on windows of opportunity (timing) that can open and close. In some situations, it is realistic to engage across services in more concerted joint action at field level, whereas in others Triple Nexus action may be limited to a more strategic inter-service consultation and information-sharing function.

There are stakeholders who argue that in more complex, violent and unstable contexts, the Triple Nexus is not well suited or premature. This viewpoint however risks missing the point that the Triple Nexus is not necessarily about implementing projects jointly, or even of maintaining presence on the ground at the same time, as it is about reaching a shared understanding of the context and agreement on what can be done, and as a result, pulling the respective humanitarian, development and peace levers with different intensities as might be appropriate.

The country cases confirm the primacy of taking account of context in order to understand the opportunities for working with the Triple Nexus. Context moreover reveals the more granular distinctions that need to be made so as to be able to take account of differences over space and time and in particular the opportunities for engagement that can open and then close.

This understanding of context in "real time" lies at the heart of the Triple Nexus and is at the basis for calls for joint analysis and monitoring across services on an on-going basis. The cases demonstrate the range of possibilities for operationalising the Triple Nexus, some where the prospects for more concerted joint action at field level across the Triple Nexus can be contemplated, but others, where engaging at field level in a joined-up way may be considered inappropriate, and where the Triple Nexus is limited to a more strategic and high-level inter-service coordination function. This might be the case where the state is weak, not present, or where access is limited.

The Triple Nexus is presented as a way of working that is suited to situations of protracted crisis and conflict. And yet, there are stakeholders across the Triple Nexus spectrum that argue that conditions are not conducive for operationalising the Triple Nexus in such environments. This is more specifically the case in situations of violent conflict and high instability where the following concerns are raised: (i) the risk that anything done beyond humanitarian support will be destroyed; (ii) that shifting to development actions risks sending a political message that a country/ region is safe, when this is not necessarily the case; and (iii) closer association with government actors that do not necessarily enjoy legitimacy or trust can undermine humanitarian principles and/ or put people and organisations at risk of attack.

This however might miss the essential point that the Triple Nexus is not so much about implementing projects jointly as it is about ensuring a shared understanding of the situation and agreement on an appropriate course of action pulling the humanitarian, development and peace levers with different intensities as might be appropriate. And indeed, some stakeholders (both noted in Chad and Burkina Faso) remarked that in challenging contexts, the Triple Nexus might serve as a stabilising force balancing out the needs for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions.

Nigeria presents a case where Triple Nexus opportunities vary from place to place. Thus, whilst in Borno state, the view is that opportunities are few, in Adamawa state, prospects are more promising because of a lower level of insecurity and a greater willingness of local authorities to engage with the international community. A similar picture is revealed in DRC where the intensity of conflict varies across the Eastern part of the country, where state capacities and readiness to engage differ and where progress on stabilisation moves at different paces. Iraq also presents a context where the geography of conflict, crisis and state authority is quite variable (liberated areas, Kurdistan Region (KRI) and federal Iraq), factors that inform the nature and extent of Triple Nexus operationalisation including questions of prioritisation and sequencing. Sudan and Myanmar present post-coup situations where EU services are having to re-evaluate their strategies following periods of democratisation with some limited level of engagement with state institutions. With the suspension of engagement with the state, the Triple Nexus is necessarily focused more at the community level and brings into question what can be achieved in terms of investing in service delivery and infrastructure development. In Burkina Faso, Chad and CAR meanwhile, the evolving political and security crisis with the presence of many

military actors has brought into relief the pertinence of embracing the peace element to what was hitherto a primarily humanitarian-development approach. However, this needs to be done in a cautious and politically sensitive way given the challenges of coordinating civil and military actions.

Uganda presents a quite different scenario in so far as the country itself is not enduring either protracted crisis or conflict. Rather it is a host for refugees hailing from neighbouring countries and offers a comparatively robust policy framework and institutional infrastructure for managing the refugee crisis. Although not without its challenges, the context provides a certain stability and predictability with ample opportunity to work with the Triple Nexus both across EU services as well as with other international partners, albeit with a main focus on humanitarian and development aspects.

The scope for Triple Nexus actions is therefore conditioned by the local context. The cases moreover point to the fact that context varies within individual countries, so what is appropriate in terms of Triple Nexus engagement can differ from region to region within a country depending on needs and situations. That should also include taking account of the presence and actions of other actors (both country and international) in order to determine how far the EU's Triple Nexus ambitions can be part of a larger coordinated response.

2.3.9 Operationalisation of the Triple Nexus - How has this been translated into concrete actions?

Summary - The nine country studies reveal the many different ways the Triple Nexus has been operationalised at the macro, meso and micro levels. The studies confirm how it can be used to promote cross-service engagement in a variety of ways that respond to local contextual circumstances and needs and with a view to tackling both the manifestations and underlying causes of protracted crisis and conflict.

With this broader objective in mind, actions operationalised through the Triple Nexus – and with different combinations of humanitarian, development and peace elements - have to date focused particularly on community level interventions aimed at building individual and community resilience, reducing reliance on humanitarian assistance, and strengthening social cohesion. Actions have also focused on strengthening service delivery and local governance systems where opportunities for working with the state have existed as a way to improve access to basic needs, including water, health and education. There are also examples of actions aimed at strengthening more broadly country systems, institutions and national policy frameworks.

Fewer examples of actions with a clear peace focus have been recorded. As already noted in this study, "small p" actions with a social cohesion objective are often part and parcel of the community focused actions mentioned above and are typically subsumed within these. As the country studies have illustrated, the operationalisation of the Peace element of the Triple Nexus has overall advanced more slowly. Whilst "big P" operations are on-going in a number of the case countries, these were not necessarily conceived within the framework of a Triple Nexus action plan or strategy. They may be seen as being Triple Nexus related but this is rather by declaration than a reflection of intentional up-front design.

Nevertheless, the country studies (as well as information contained in the Triple Nexus good practices paper) do highlight a number of examples where the Triple Nexus approach has been used to promote political dialogue and related diplomatic engagements including policy advocacy and political messaging at international, regional and country levels. It has also served in some instances to inform decisions regarding the deployment of CSDP missions.

There are, therefore, multiple ways in which the Triple Nexus can be operationalised across EU services and doing so certainly goes beyond the delivery of projects alone. Joint analysis and programming, supported by appropriate coordination arrangements provides the basis for identifying the appropriate mix of tools and actions that reflect a more strategic use of humanitarian, development and peace actions in contexts that are sometimes highly unpredictable and volatile.

This section provides a snapshot of the diverse ways the Triple Nexus has been operationalised across the nine country cases. More detailed information of specific actions can be obtained from the individual country study reports.

- *A focus on refugees, IDPs and other affected communities* – The Triple Nexus approach has been used by EU services to explore ways to enhance the impact of actions that address refugee and/ or IDP communities. This is especially the case in Uganda, but also in Iraq, Sudan, Chad, Myanmar. Often included

in such engagements are members of refugee/ IDP hosting communities. In other contexts, actions target communities that find themselves in the midst of conflict or exposed to the effects of natural disasters.

Box 1: Case Illustration 1: DIZA Est/Sud - Chad

Chad's Programme for Inclusive Development in Reception Areas (DIZA) was developed by the EU with design input from ECHO to use EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) funds for longer-term programming for displaced and host populations. It is co-funded by AFD. The DIZA programme is a leading example in Chad of an integrated programme with humanitarian and development partners working to achieve a smooth transition through nexus modalities.

The overall objective of DIZA is to improve the living conditions of host and refugee/returnee populations in host areas through support to inclusive local development, in order to minimise factors contributing to inter-community tensions, instability and ultimately the risk of increased forced displacement and conflict.

The approach adopted by DIZA aimed to respond in the short term to the effects of the chronic crises affecting these areas (food insecurity, acute malnutrition) while reducing medium and long-term vulnerability factors (access to and strengthening of livelihoods, basic services, credit and training, involvement of communities in decisions that affect them). Humanitarian activities (taking people out of vulnerability through unconditional cash) thus facilitate the implementation of structural transformation activities (providing communities with livelihoods through income-generating activities, training, cash for work/HIMO etc.).

DIZA was designed as a 'humanitarian-development nexus' project rather than a triple nexus project. Following developments in Brussels, peace was added at a later stage. Thus the peace element can mostly be observed in attempts to foster social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, e.g. through awareness-raising with local associations, conflict prevention (e.g. on access to land, natural resource management) and dialogue led by traditional and customary leaders (an important local peace actor).

Source: Poole, L. 2019. Financing the nexus: Gaps and opportunities from a field perspective; EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa

- *A focus on building individual and community resilience* – Actions have typically focused on strengthening individual and community resilience so as to withstand shocks and reduce dependence on short term humanitarian assistance. Such actions are often multi-pronged including but not limited to skills development, financial literacy training and establishment of savings schemes, job creation and SMME support, as well as agricultural development including post-harvest management. In some countries, the focus is more restricted, such as in Chad, where the main entry points have been on promoting food security and nutrition.

- *Ensuring access to basic services and social protection* – Other actions have focused on ensuring access to basic health, education and WASH services, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and ensuring continuity of service (progression in the case of education and referral in the case of health). In this respect, increasing attention has been given to putting in place cash transfer schemes for consumption support including meeting the out-of-pocket expenses related to paying for health and education services as well as meeting nutritional needs.

Box 2: Case Illustration 2: From Cash distribution towards a systematic approach to Social Protection – Iraq

Social protection is seen as a core issue for the HDP nexus approach in Iraq. As the country has moved into a post-conflict situation, yet still fraught with instability, fragility, high poverty and a large presence of IDPs, the time is considered right for moving from a humanitarian response (e.g. cash distribution) towards a more systemic approach to addressing the needs of the population. The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic into Iraq in 2020 with its unprecedented impact on the socio-economic well-being of the population and the overall poverty rate has further raised the attention to the need of substantially reforming the country's social protection system including the establishment of a functional labour protection system covering the private sector. Through intense preparations with UNICEF, ILO and WFP throughout 2020 as well as equally intense policy dialogue with the Government entities (Ministry of Labour, Planning, Trade and Prime Ministers' Office), and consultation with and peer review by ECHO and MADAD, the EU (DG INTPA) has developed a programme that addresses the needs of the Iraqi population and benefits from full Government buy-in, as evidenced by the GoI reform White Paper that matches the EU programme.

The programme builds on the Madad-funded work of cash assistance through a humanitarian actor (previously funded by ECHO) but fully incorporates humanitarian development nexus considerations by working to reform the Government system in order to address the structural problem.

Source: EUD Iraq progress report, 2021; Action Document for Support to durable solutions for Iraq's displaced populations: integration into the national labour market and national systems for education and social protection, 2021

- *Protecting natural resources and promoting disaster risk management* – The Triple Nexus has also helped to identify actions across services that focus on protecting natural resources, on promoting the adoption of climate-smart farming technologies, and on enhancing land management while also building community level capacity to prepare and respond to disasters (community based early warning systems, mitigation measures that reduce the impact of drought and floods, mobilisation of first responders at the community level, establishment of peace committees to resolve disputes etc).

Box 3: Case Illustration 3: Wadi El Ku project in North Darfur, Sudan

The Wadi El Ku project, implemented by UNEP and Practical Action in North Darfur (through EUTF funding) since 2014 is a good example of a project that was not listed as a "nexus" project but contains all the elements of such an approach. The project focuses on water management and land use through the construction of so-called weirs ("dams") and the formation of local committees to manage these weirs. The project focuses on addressing the consequences of climate change, ensuring proper water and land use, ensuring better livelihoods while mainstreaming peacebuilding. There is solid evidence from reports, evaluations and focus group discussions on the ground that the project has addressed multiple dimensions of the HDP nexus in an integrated manner, i.e. ensuring immediate and longer-term food security and livelihoods, income-generation and market production, water management and better use of lands, and conflict management between farmer groups and farmers/nomads. Line ministries at state level are included in the various committees, e.g. the Technical Committee and Catchment Management Agency which assures a level of sustainability. The humanitarian aspect is addressed in a more indirect manner.

Further reading on this project: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/18/how-water-is-helping-to-end-the-first-climate-change-war

- *Promoting social cohesion and peaceful co-existence* - Community level actions mentioned above have typically included provisions to promote social cohesion and peaceful co-existence. Such actions can include setting up or strengthening of community level institutions and processes to ensure participation in local decision-making processes, providing resources to enable local CSOs/ NGOs versed in mediation and conflict resolution to play their roles, providing training on rights and grievance redress mechanisms, and providing support against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In other contexts, (e.g. Iraq) the de-mining initiatives have been supported as well as the provision of assistance to victims of mine explosions.

Box 4: Case Illustration 4: Malteser International – Incorporating the peace element into a H-D Nexus programme – DR Congo

Malteser International has for several years implemented LRRD approaches in the North and Northeast of the DR Congo which have later been enhanced by activities addressing peace/social cohesion following the approaches summarised in the concept of Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

Humanitarian and development-oriented projects have been linked both via parallel implementation and consecutive implementation. Combining funds from various donors both of the German government (GFFO, BMZ) and the European Union (INTPA/ECHO) allowed to address overlapping humanitarian and development needs, as well as including peace-components.

As an example, in Adi health zone, Ituri province, development-oriented health system strengthening projects funded by INTPA were supplemented by humanitarian projects that supported the specifically vulnerable refugees from South Sudan and assured rapid interventions in the case of outbreaks of epidemic disease. A resilience-building transitional assistance project funded by the BMZ in Adi then added a 'peace' perspective in its wider sense by mainstreaming social cohesion in WASH, Food Security and Health activities, bringing refugees and the local population closer together, for instance through common vegetable gardens. This approach allowed for addressing differing needs of populations of different

vulnerabilities, while simultaneously safeguarding the achievements of development-oriented projected even in times of crises, and introducing social cohesion-supporting activities.

Source: Malteser International

▪ *Strengthening sub-national governance and capacity* - Beyond the community level, actions have been directed at strengthening sub-national government capacities to better meet the needs of their communities and/ or refugee/ IDP populations. This has included strengthening physical and economic planning, local economic development and M&E capabilities, improving the skills and competencies of relevant technical officers/ departments, and building local government capabilities to negotiate, mediate and resolve conflicts, including strengthening mechanisms for dialogue and redress.

Box 5: Case Illustration 5 – Strengthening sub-national governance and capacity to support the Refugee response – Uganda

GIZ is implementing one of the components of the RISE programme (Response to Increased Demand for Government Services and creation of economic opportunities in Uganda) which is co-funded by the EUTF and BMZ. Focusing on six refugee hosting and affected districts in the West Nile region, the programme aims to strengthen the capacity of district local governments to deliver services to both refugee and host communities, in support of the Government of Uganda's policy of transition as reflected in the CRRF.

Of particular significance is the opportunity created to bring together humanitarian and development actors to address the transition challenges in the spirit of the nexus and building on their comparative advantages. Specifically, GIZ (a development organisation) is partnering with the UNHCR sub-offices (humanitarian organisation) and in partnership with Uganda's Ministry of Local Government. Whilst UNHCR is able to provide needed data on refugees as well as additional funding, GIZ has helped UNHCR to build stronger working relationships with district local governments. This has led for example to the drafting of district development plans that integrate refugee issues and that allow for the integration of refugee voice into the planning process. It has also helped shift the attitude of local government's towards recognising their role in addressing the refugee challenge.

The partnership has also addressed local governance issues at settlement level with GIZ drafting a training manual on the induction of Refugee Welfare Council members, that can be used by any partner supporting such processes. It has also involved the hiring of a local peacebuilding NGO to facilitate peace processes, and the resolution of conflicts at settlement level in partnership with local officials and the office of the prime minister.

Source: Based on Interviews with GIZ programme staff in Arua, West Nile, Uganda

▪ *Strengthening national institutions, policies and systems* - Although less common, the cases provide examples of actions that focus on the national level. This includes in areas related to policy and systems development such as in the realm of disaster risk management (policy frameworks and contingency funding), social protection (e.g. creating shock response cash transfer systems) addressing refugee management in the urban/ municipal context (Uganda, Burkina Faso) including property rights, or legal and justice sector reform (Iraq). Actions also target sectors such as water supply (infrastructure and tariffs e.g. Uganda), and natural resource management (budgetary provisions and regulatory frameworks e.g. Uganda).

▪ *Facilitating Political and Technical Dialogue and Advocacy*, at the international, regional and country levels. Often such efforts are not fully reported and can take place somewhat "off the radar screen". They can therefore be difficult to enumerate. Nevertheless, and as illustrated through this report, they play an important role in building consensus between EU stakeholders as well as with other ICPs and national stakeholders and can play a key role in preparing the ground for concrete actions on the ground. The Triple Nexus Good Practices paper notes that in Iraq, DGs ECHO, INTPA, NEAR and the EEAS consult regularly to ensure joint positions and messaging towards the Government of Iraq, the UN and other international partners (such as for forced displacement and IDP camp closures), as well as close coordination with EU Member States and likeminded donors. In Nigeria, the Good Practices paper notes that Coordination groups, at ambassadorial level, have been set up for the North-East and North-West crises to promote Triple Nexus coordination, respect for human rights, IHL and humanitarian access, and improved awareness and visibility of the crises.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Introduction

This final section of the report presents the study's conclusions and recommendations. These draw on the individual findings presented in the previous chapter and for the sake of consistency, are clustered around the study's core questions[40].

The study TOR asked for a comprehensive review of country level experiences in operationalising the Triple Nexus from mainly the perspective of EU services. While the study was to focus on actual experiences at the country level, it was also important to obtain the views of key stakeholders within and beyond the EU at the headquarters level and to take stock of the current debate on the Triple Nexus in international circles.

Making judgements about progress on operationalising the Triple Nexus has however not been easy as there is no results or indicator framework to measure against. As such, there is no common agreement on "what success looks like" making it a challenge to track and compare experiences. Views on what success looks like are informed by institutional mandates, the ambition level of stakeholders involved and the specific context in which the Triple Nexus is being applied.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the study concludes that the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus has progressed positively. At the same time there is still much that needs to be done before one can declare that the Triple Nexus has been fully adopted and institutionalised across EU services and that it is leading to concrete results on the ground. The study is confident of the future operationalisation of the Triple Nexus and on this basis presents the following conclusions and recommendations.

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[40] For ease of presentation, conclusions and recommendations related to question 4 has been integrated into question 3

Figure 5: Overview of Conclusions and Recommendations

Question	Conclusions	Recommendations
On Understanding	C1: A shared understanding of the Triple Nexus across EU services and recognition of its value-added	R1: Further develop the policy and operational framework of the Triple Nexus
	C2: Challenges and constraints remain with respect to what the Nexus offers and what it can deliver	R2: Devise an internal learning and knowledge sharing strategy
	C3: The Triple Nexus enjoys support among the international cooperation community, facilitated by the OECD/DAC Nexus principles	R3: Play a stronger "thought leadership" role in promoting the Nexus.
On Mobilisation	C4: Piloting provided opportunity to understand what it takes to implement the Triple Nexus and confirmed the validity of its "eyes on, hands off" approach	R4: Continue to apply the "hands-off, eyes-on" approach in promoting the Triple Nexus beyond the initial pilot countries.
	C5: The human and financial resources required for the Triple Nexus were under-estimated as was the need to invest in knowledge sharing and awareness raising	
On Implementation & Results on the Ground	C6: Experiences from non-pilot countries highlight the value of emergent processes that build on locally identified needs and opportunity	R5: Further promote the CAS and other joint country context analyses to inform the Nexus at country level.
	C7: Progress in implementing the Triple Nexus depends on strong EU leadership at country and respect for each service's respective mandate	R6: Carry out a stock taking of lessons of good practice on funding the Triple Nexus and on this basis disseminate guidance on options and possibilities
	C8: Various EU-internal structural and procedural bottlenecks as well as capacity constraints, can impede operationalising the Triple Nexus	
	C9: Joint analytical work can broaden understanding across services, but consensus building between different institutional perspectives and interests remains key	R7: Review current guidance on cross-cutting issues and provide guidance to ensure their smooth incorporation in the Triple Nexus
	C10: To finance the Triple Nexus, EU services need to find creative ways to mobilise funding from available EU funding instruments as well as to leverage funding from external sources	R8: Communicate an updated position on the integration of the peace element in the Triple Nexus and clarify the implications for the respect of humanitarian principles
	C11: Cross-cutting issues have been generally well catered for in the Nexus however, there can be challenges in working with the different rules and guidance	
	C12: The Peace element is considered a relevant addition to the Triple Nexus; however, it is not always well understood and there are concerns it can undermine humanitarian principles	R9: Give further impetus to the role the Triple Nexus can play in supporting the localisation agenda
	C13: The Triple Nexus has helped transition from emergency interventions towards more normalised and sustainable forms of service delivery through partner country institutions.	R10: Develop a technical note on humanitarian exit strategies and make explicit that exit strategies should be considered and designed as an integral part of a Triple Nexus approach
	C14: The intensity of EUMS engagement in the Nexus remains overall modest. Going forward, TEIs may offer an opportunity for greater EUMS engagement	R11: Proactively engage EUMS to support the Triple Nexus, building on progress made to date with the TEI formulations
	C15: The country cases have demonstrated the multi-faceted ways the Nexus can be operationalised, including across different sector and thematic areas and across the macro, meso and micro levels.	R12: Develop an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework to track Triple Nexus implementation

3.2 On Understanding the Triple Nexus

Conclusion 1: There is a broad shared understanding of the Triple Nexus across EU services and of its value-added in contexts of protracted crisis and conflict

The study confirms an overall shared understanding of the Triple Nexus as a "lens" enabling a more complete and shared understanding of context across services, as well as a "modus operandi" that promotes a way of working premised on shared goal setting, coordinated and joined up action, as well as more intense dialogue and information sharing across services. There is a recognition of its relevance and value added as a way to tackle the interwoven challenges that characterise contexts of protracted crisis and conflict. However, respective EU services have differing views on some of the operational implications of working with it although the principle of combining different elements of humanitarian, development and peace actions and working towards greater policy coherence is not disputed. In this regard, EU services recognise that the Triple Nexus is not just about delivering on the ground, but also about engaging at the strategic, political and diplomatic levels. Overall, the study notes the lesser involvement of FPI and the overall absence of NEAR in HDP nexus discussions.

Conclusion 2: Challenges and constraints with respect to what the Triple Nexus offers and what it can deliver nevertheless remain

Reservations do exist in different quarters, across EU services, regarding the uniqueness of the Triple Nexus and how it should be distinguished from other initiatives that promote integration, coherence and complementarity in contexts of protracted crisis, including more recently the Integrated Approach. Concerns are also expressed regarding the applicability of the Triple Nexus in certain contexts of high volatility and insecurity where in particular the respect of humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence might be compromised by closer association to other development and peace actions that are inherently political in nature. The peace element of the Triple Nexus moreover is not always well understood and there are concerns that it can undermine humanitarian principles if not carefully managed (see also conclusion 12).

Conclusion 3: Globally, the Nexus enjoys support from among the international development community, facilitated in large part by the OECD/DAC HDP Nexus principles, but the extent of adoption varies considerably from agency to agency

The OECD/DAC recommendations offer a common reference for understanding the Triple Nexus and monitoring its implementation among different ICPs. It has also helped the EU mobilise support for the Triple Nexus across its own services. The extent to which EUMS have embraced the Triple Nexus varies with some having adopted it in their policies and operations whilst others have been less engaged. The UN system has also been at the forefront of promoting the Nexus and is often a strong protagonist at country level. INGOs have been advocates for the Triple Nexus at both the international level as well as in field operations based on their extensive operational experience. Despite these positive steps, it has proven challenging to secure a common approach towards the Triple Nexus at country level, as further explained below, especially where government interest and awareness among country partners remains limited.

Recommendation 1: In support of the further implementation of the Triple Nexus in contexts of protracted crisis and conflict where the EU is working, EU services are encouraged to further develop the policy and operational framework of the Triple Nexus. This can be achieved by:

- drafting an EU Communication to underpin the political and policy weight the EU attributes to the Triple Nexus, including clarification on its operational implications and how to integrate the peace component
- drafting a cross-service technical guidance note on the Triple Nexus that will serve as a compendium of all relevant technical information pertaining to the Triple Nexus; to enhance existing guidance and to give greater formality and insight on practical implications for all parties concerned, including how to address thorny issues such as the peace dimension and respect for humanitarian principles

- Each service preparing their own Triple Nexus operational guidance (along the lines of what ECHO has done[41]) to guide staff and implementing partners at regional and country level on what is expected of them to work with the Triple Nexus
- facilitating closer engagement of FPI and NEAR in future internal and external policy exchanges on the Triple Nexus. and clarifying which institutional entity should take the lead on this

Recommendation 2: To counter reservations, concerns and hesitations regarding the Nexus, EU services should devise an internal learning and knowledge sharing strategy that would include:

- organising periodic EU-internal exchange and learning on how to operationalise the Triple Nexus, building on the current annual workshops
- publishing annual lessons learnt bulletins highlighting what can be achieved via the Triple Nexus
- Ensuring that the annual briefings of HoD, HoCs and Heads of Offices (ECHO) in Brussels include the Triple Nexus so as to provide an opportunity for discussion and peer exchange on the on-going operationalisation of the Triple Nexus

Recommendation 3: The EU is encouraged to play a stronger "thought leadership" role in promoting the Nexus among EUMS, multilateral institutions and INGOs at headquarters and country level. To this end, the EU should:

- Actively support the content development of the OECD/DAC-UN Nexus Academy and facilitate its implementation drawing on the relevant expertise and interests of each service
- Organise formal and informal exchanges on the Triple Nexus via dedicated learning events, workshops, topic-specific seminars, etc. at headquarters level with EUMS, multilaterals and INGOs
- As appropriate at country level, proactively engage partner governments and the international community at country level in adopting the Triple Nexus as a shared way of working
- Ensure the Nexus is a standing agenda item in HoD/ HoM and HoC meetings at country level in fragile contexts

3.3 On Mobilisation and Tooling Up

Conclusion 4: The piloting exercise provided a useful opportunity to understand what it takes to implement the Triple Nexus and confirmed the validity of its "eyes on, hands off" approach

The piloting approach provided a sensible balance between directed change and leaving space for local innovation and adaptation. In so doing, considerable learning has taken place at both headquarter and country level about the challenges and opportunities for the Triple Nexus in different country contexts. The pilot phase overall confirmed the validity of the Triple Nexus as a way to promote closer inter-service collaboration in order to achieve better results on the ground, but equally highlighted some of the policy and operational challenges involved when getting into the details of implementation. The guidance on joint conflict analysis, action planning and coordination as well as on related operational arrangements was generally welcomed though in some countries, concerns were expressed about the additional workload this generated.

Conclusion 5: The human and financial resources required to build interest in and sustain support for the Triple Nexus were under-estimated as was the need to invest in knowledge sharing and awareness raising

While the "eyes-on, hands-off" piloting approach was largely appreciated, country stakeholders believe that the effort required to sustain initial interest, build up and deepen the process has been under-estimated. As with any change management process, initial enthusiasm and dedicated attention can wane in the absence of sustained human, financial and material support, especially in situations where services consider themselves already over-stretched and where there is a high turnover of staff resulting in limited institutional memory. In this regard, it is felt that more could be done to accompany Triple Nexus implementation at country level through targeted technical support as well as more attention to knowledge sharing.

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[41] Reference is made here to ECHOs HIP Thematic Policies Annex, which includes a section on working with the Triple Nexus and which is also discussed in the instructions for completing the Single Form funding application.

> **Conclusion 6:** Experiences from non-pilot countries highlight the value of emergent processes that build on locally identified needs and opportunity

Practice from non-pilot countries shows that the Triple Nexus can be initiated from the bottom-up through vision and initiative of EU services at country level and without the benefit of a formal steer or accompaniment from headquarters. These processes remain relatively new and are in some respects unstructured. As with the pilot countries, additional support/ accompanying measures from headquarters would help to sustain momentum, share knowledge and build on good practice experience from elsewhere. In this regard, the technical guidance on the Triple Nexus developed by ECHO (see footnote 42 above) to accompany preparation of the annual HIPs and Single Form guidelines is an example of targeted support that can help sustain attention on the Nexus.

> **Recommendation 4:** To support the roll-out of the Triple Nexus beyond the initial pilot countries, the EU is encouraged to pursue its "hands-off, eyes-on" approach. However, the approach should be reinforced by:

- Establishing a Triple Nexus Help Desk, as critical cross-service resource to facilitate and monitor the further operationalisation of the Triple Nexus and determining where the Help Desk should be institutionally homed at headquarters level.
- Appointing Triple Nexus country level focal points in EUD and ECHO country offices at senior level, with a clear mandate to coordinate Triple Nexus related engagements (policy-wise and operationally)
- Intensifying the Triple Nexus operationalisation between Nexus focal points at EUD and ECHO Office level throughout all key tools and steps (joint analysis, joint planning, implementation, financing mechanisms, monitoring/evaluation), including sharing workshops and guidance, as well as pairing pilot-EUDs with non-pilot EUDs on topical issues as part of the learning strategy
- Putting in place incentives (performance assessment indicators) for HoDs, HoCs and Heads of Offices (ECHO) to promote the Triple Nexus and to make it a key agenda informing the way of working across the services.
- Whilst leaving flexibility for emergent and context driven approaches, and encouraging pragmatism, there should be a limited minimum set of core Nexus processes and frameworks that are observed by all Triple Nexus countries, consistent with those outlined in the current Guidance Elements document[42].

3.4 On Implementation

> **Conclusion 7:** Meaningful progress in implementation of the Triple Nexus depends on strong country level leadership and respect for each service's respective mandate

The study confirms that in encouraging closer collaboration and joint action across services, the need to respect the mandates of each service and to understand the constraints within which each operates is essential. The cases further confirm that progress in implementing the Triple Nexus depends on clear leadership support exercised by the heads of each service, and in particular the HoD. Through cross-service messaging and clear communication, including unambiguous political backing from the headquarter level, such leadership can be instrumental in ensuring that the Nexus is assigned the level of strategic attention that it merits, and that staff across services are motivated to embrace a Triple Nexus mindset. Strong leadership is also crucial for mobilising interest in the Triple Nexus beyond EU services. This includes efforts to encourage EUMS to join forces with EU services as well as to promote a consistent Triple Nexus approach among all development partners and partner country governments.

> **Conclusion 8:** The Triple Nexus way of working and its promotion must contend with various EU-internal structural and procedural bottlenecks as well as capacity constraints, however these are to some degree counter-balanced by the efforts and enthusiasm of committed individuals to make the Triple Nexus work and the concrete benefits that can be expected to accrue

Structural and procedural bottlenecks to more joined-up working are well known and can undermine efforts to work in more coordinated and coherent ways. Staffing shortages as well as gaps in substantive expertise can also put brakes on rolling out the Triple Nexus, as can poor knowledge management systems that support

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[42] Updated and shared in 2022, no URL available

institutionalisation. Attempts towards operationalising a Triple Nexus approach have helped shine light on some of the major bottlenecks and have encouraged the identification of practical and sometimes pragmatic ways to overcome them. The efforts of committed individuals with a "can do" attitude to make the Triple Nexus work is important to recognise, including initiatives taken to conduct joint field missions and assessments, peer review each other's proposals and to share information on a regular basis.

> **Conclusion 9:** Aligning the scope and ambition of the Triple Nexus to the country context is facilitated by joint analytical work but consensus building between different institutional perspectives and interests remains key

The conduct of joint analytical work as part of the CAS exercise or any other contextual analysis process has helped shape a common understanding of the opportunities, challenges and ambitions of working with the Nexus among different EU services and to a lesser degree with EUMS. This has been especially important in complex and fast changing environments, where strategic and tactical decisions need to be regularly reviewed. Inevitably, views on the extent to which humanitarian, development and peace actions can be deployed via joined-up approaches differ across services, however in most (but not all) situations, services have been able to reconcile their differences and reach a common EU position. However, efforts to reach a common understanding between the EU, other development partners (including some EUMS) and host governments have proven more challenging and has on only a few occasions resulted in a common way forward being agreed.

> **Conclusion 10:** As there is no budget line or dedicated funding stream for the Triple Nexus, the onus is on EU services to find creative ways to mobilise funding from available EU funding instruments as well as to leverage funding from external sources

The study illustrates the multiple ways Triple Nexus actions have been funded. These include the funding of different actions from different financial sources but with coordination among those actions to a lesser or greater degree, the co-financing of specific actions from more than one source, or through the establishment of a dedicated Triple Nexus funding mechanism based on some kind of pooling arrangement. The various EUTFs played an important role in enabling EUDs to design a substantial volume of Triple Nexus actions that complemented actions funded through the HIP, EDF, IcSP, etc. The introduction of the NDICI is expected to streamline funding and to make it easier for the different services to coordinate their actions but whether this proves to be the case remains to be seen. Humanitarian funding however remains separate and the scope for funding the Nexus is limited by an overall constrained budget and the short nature of this funding. For INTPA there are concerns in some quarters that the opportunities for Nexus funding availed of by the EUTFs will not be replicated by the NDICI programmable funds/ MIPs, due in large part to more limited flexibility and opportunity for adjustment. However, there are examples where the MIP has already been used to develop multi-pronged programmes operationalised through a Triple Nexus approach. Notwithstanding these funding opportunities, structural and institutional factors, related to different and not easily reconciled programming and funding cycles, procedures and rules will continue to challenge smooth alignment of actions across services and with EUMS.

> **Conclusion 11:** Cross-cutting issues have been generally well catered for in the Triple Nexus and are important elements of interventions, however, operationally there can be challenges in working with the different rules and guidance of the different services involved

Cross-cutting issues related to gender, disability, vulnerability, human rights, and the environment are an integral part of most actions undertaken from a Triple Nexus perspective, particularly those that address individual, household and community resilience. There are, however, no Triple Nexus-specific guidelines on how to mainstream these cross-cutting issues. At times, the guidance linked to different funding sources can differ in detail resulting in some operational challenges related to, for example, agreeing on criteria for beneficiary targeting, observance of social and environmental safeguards, application of exclusionary rules and adherence to protocols related to information sharing and disclosure. These can impact on the coherence, alignment and sustainability of actions.

Conclusion 12: The peace element is considered a relevant addition to the Triple Nexus and is regarded as the missing link that can bolster the Triple Nexus approach especially in contexts of protracted crisis and conflict. However, it is not always well understood and there are concerns that it can undermine humanitarian principles if not carefully managed

Despite steps taken by EU services to clarify understanding of the peace element (e.g. the EU internal non-paper), stakeholders continue to hold divergent views on what the peace element is, who it involves and how it interacts with other Nexus elements. Differences of view are not restricted to EU services alone and can be similarly found in Nexus discussions among other ICPs. A broad distinction can be made, however, between the peace related actions of hard security actors and civilian and/ or military stabilisation measures, including EU-sponsored CSDP missions (the so-called "big P") and those of mainly civil society actors that typically comprise actions aimed at community level mediation, conflict prevention or social cohesion (the so-called "small p"). Concerns are primarily raised with regard to the "big P" actions where Triple Nexus stakeholders are unclear how these are best incorporated within a Triple Nexus approach. For humanitarian actors, including ECHO, the juxtaposition of "big P" actions and humanitarian interventions is a source of major concern and in contexts of intense conflict can jeopardise basic humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality. This does not mean, however, that the "big P" cannot be part of the Triple Nexus, on the contrary, practice shows that "big P" interventions can be an element of a country-wide Triple Nexus approach. Nexus opportunities for combining humanitarian, development and "small p" actions are generally less contentious, but risks of undermining humanitarian principles can still arise especially in contexts of high volatility and on-going conflict and in contexts where development interventions are politically motivated.

Conclusion 13: The Triple Nexus has been used to operationalise actions that can help transition from a reliance on mainly externally supported emergency interventions towards more normalised and sustainable forms of service delivery through partner country institutions. Progress has been made particularly in the WASH, education, health and social protection sectors.

Such actions constitute essential elements of an exit strategy for the humanitarian sector and is consistent with the aim to reduce the burden placed on humanitarian actors by empowering communities to become more resilient and by strengthening the capacity of partner governments and their partners to assume a greater responsibility for crisis/ disaster management and for the normalisation of service delivery. It also supports the localisation agenda. However, the scope of doing so is determined by contextual realities – namely the extent of local stability, including the prospects for sustained peace and the extent to which the state is present, has sufficient capacity and enjoys a certain legitimacy in protracted crisis environments. In this perspective, EU services have considered carefully the opportunities of aligning actions operationalised through a Triple Nexus approach to stabilisation processes sponsored by other international actors that can pave the way for such transition, an issue that remains highly contested in certain EU circles and by a number of INGOs.

From the perspective of the "localisation" agenda, the considerable reliance on INGOs (among other implementation partners) to deliver EU funded Triple Nexus actions is criticised by some stakeholders for putting a break on localisation, by withholding opportunities for local actors (both state and non-state) to play a fuller role in service delivery across the Triple Nexus, and to build up relevant capacities and expertise.

Conclusion 14: While some pilot countries took concerted steps to involve EUMS in their Triple Nexus mobilisation activities, the intensity of EUMS engagement in the Triple Nexus remains overall modest. Going forward, TEIs are regarded by some as offering an opportunity for greater EUMS engagement

The involvement of EUMS has varied from country to country and no common patterns can be found. In some, EUMS participated in the pilot roll out and have gone on to co-finance specific actions operationalised through a Triple Nexus approach. In others, EUMS have shared information at the level of HoMs meetings and participated in coordination events but have otherwise operated independently. And while some EUMS have been active proponents of the Triple Nexus at country level, others have remained on the side-lines. Engagement of EUMS has proven particularly challenging in contexts of heightened insecurity where EUMS country presence is limited. TEIs are viewed by some as creating an opportunity for more intense participation of EUMS in the Triple Nexus both at a political level and at a resource mobilisation and operational level.

Conclusion 15: The country cases have demonstrated the multi-faceted ways the Triple Nexus can be operationalised, including across different sector and thematic areas and across the macro, meso and micro levels. Its adaptability to different contexts and opportunities however makes it challenging to monitor and to agree on what "success looks like"

The Nexus' flexible character has allowed stakeholders to operationalise the Triple Nexus in quite different ways that respond to local needs and opportunity. In some situations, it has promoted the design of interventions that incorporate elements of humanitarian, development and peace engagements. In others, it has promoted closer coordination and alignment between distinct humanitarian, development and peace actions that share a common goal. In other situations, it has privileged the implementation of one element of the Triple Nexus over another where conditions are not deemed appropriate for across-the-board engagement. The Triple Nexus has also sought to promote more intense dialogue and understanding between EU services through, for example, the conduct of joint conflict analyses and to encourage more joined up political, diplomatic and policy dialogue between EU services, EUMS other development partners and partner governments.

However, finding a common framework for measuring Triple Nexus results is not straightforward given its multiple applications and the fact that some Triple Nexus results have more to do with how things are done and the impact this has on how actors work differently together (process related) while others have more to do with what is done and the impact of actions on the ground on tackling protracted crises and conflict (outcome related).

Recommendation 5: The EU is encouraged to further promote the CAS and other forms of joint country context analysis as a viable element to inform the Triple Nexus at country level. For these exercises to be fully relevant, the EU should:

- encourage joint country analyses (in whatever form) to account of Triple Nexus concerns so that their findings can serve as a key reference for guiding Triple Nexus operationalisation
- continue with the practice of inviting EUMS to CAS, or other assessment workshops or meetings but invite them to share their own conflict analysis about a country or specific context during such events to better inform the EU's Triple Nexus process in so far as the information is not classified
- carry out regular (e.g. annual) updates of these analyses in fast changing contexts
- consult with NGOs regularly (at headquarter as well as field level) to update the analysis from the perspective of implementing partners.
- Seek opportunities to engage with and share the findings of analytical work with other non-EU Nexus stakeholders, including other ICPs and country actors to promote a common understanding of opportunities and challenges.

Recommendation 6: To ensure an appropriate funding architecture for the Triple Nexus, the EU is encouraged to take stock of lessons of good practice and on this basis disseminate guidance on various options and possibilities under the NDICI. To this end, the EU should:

- make an inventory, for use in trainings and briefings, of the different ways the Triple Nexus has been funded by different services, and in collaboration with EUMS and non-EU partners
- learn from the implementation of the different EUTFs about the funding of a variety of Triple Nexus related interventions under one funding decision and how this can be adapted, or replicated under the NDICI
- With the termination of EUTFs, use freed-up staff at headquarters and field level to support Triple Nexus implementation
- conduct a review of the experiences gained with respect to Myanmar's Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM) as one of several models for Triple Nexus operationalisation
- use new NDICI-funded programmes operationalised through a Triple Nexus approach as learning cases for implementation in other country contexts, particularly on addressing the challenge of narrow funding mandates that have characterised pre-NDICI instruments.

Recommendation 7: To support the smooth mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues across Triple Nexus actions, and to ensure coherence and complementarity of existing guidance, EU services are encouraged to:

- review the extent to which existing cross-cutting issue guidance on gender, youth, human rights, environment, vulnerability and working with civil society needs to be updated in light of emerging Triple Nexus practices and findings
- include a section in the proposed cross-service Triple Nexus guidance note/ compendium mentioned under recommendation 1 on ways to reconcile contradictory or different existing guidance with respect to addressing cross-cutting issues.

Recommendation 8: To ensure that the peace element of the Triple Nexus is able to reinforce the collective actions and impact of different EU services working on the Triple Nexus, the EU should communicate an updated position on the peace element's integration in the Nexus and the implications this carries for the respect of humanitarian principles. This should be done as part of the guidance proposed under recommendation 1 above. To this end, EU services should:

- update the Peace non-paper, and continue to revise periodically the Triple Nexus good practices document based on feedback from the field and evolving country experiences. The peace non-paper should again be a joint service paper drawing on experiences obtained by the different services. This can become a guide on working with the peace element and could eventually include a case book of good practice.
- clarify the position of the Triple Nexus in relation to civilian and military stabilisation actions sponsored by other international actors, taking account of the experiences where the EU has deployed a CSDP mission (and identify lessons for mutual learning and possible replications).

Recommendation 9: The Triple Nexus creates an opportunity to support the localisation agenda from a cross-service perspective. To this end, EU services should give further impetus and visibility to the localisation agenda by:

- placing more emphasis on the role the Triple Nexus can play in implementing the localisation agenda
- financing more dedicated NGO, CBO (and other community-based structures) capacity building projects that stress Triple Nexus conceptual thinking alongside basic organisational development skills and financial aspects
- creating opportunities to work, where appropriate, with country level local authorities, NGOs as well as local (smaller) NGOs to support Triple Nexus delivery on the ground.

Recommendation 10: The Triple Nexus implicitly foresees a gradual exiting of humanitarian assistance and a transfer of focus towards development actions over time in line with prevailing context and opportunity. To clarify institutional positions across EU services on this issue, including on working in "contiguum", and to guide programme design, the EU should:

- develop a technical note/ good practice guide on humanitarian exit strategies. This should focus on practical "how to" guidance building on actual practice from the ground and can be part of the guidance proposed in recommendation 1 above.
- make explicit that exit strategies should be considered and designed from the outset and should therefore be a key consideration of any Triple Nexus country strategy or action plan.

Recommendation 11: There is considerable potential to engage EUMS more fully in the operationalisation of the Triple Nexus. To this end, the EU is encouraged to proactively engage EUMS building on progress made to date with the TEI formulations. The EU should therefore:

- systematically engage EUMS at headquarter and country level in the further roll-out of the Triple Nexus, ensuring their participation both in higher level policy discussions as well as in exploring practical ways for their participation in country level policy dialogue and in joint funding of actions on the ground.
- support EUDs that have developed TEIs for which the Triple Nexus can be a good vehicle to operationalise these through technical assistance.

Recommendation 12: Because of its flexible nature and process orientation, progress on the implementation of the Triple Nexus and the measurement of its impact is challenging from a methodological point of view. The EU should develop an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework to track Triple Nexus implementation that spells out a set of principles and generic success indicators against which implementation can be reviewed. This should focus on:

- development of a generic monitoring framework building on the success indicators presented in annex 2 and guided by a set of key principles to be adhered to
- inclusion of the Triple Nexus as a key marker for reporting in EAMR, reports, evaluations of interventions, and review in ROM exercises
- Scheduling an evaluation of the implementation of the Triple Nexus within the next three years.
- Actively encouraging joint monitoring and the conduct of joint missions with UN agencies, the World Bank and EUMS to facilitate a common understanding of the results of working with the Triple Nexus.