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NGO PERSPECTIVES ON THE EU's HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

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NGO PERSPECTIVES ON THE EU's HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS APPROACH:

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGIR – the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative

AICS – Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

ARP – Area Rehabilitation Programme

CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli

CONCORD – European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development

CPA – Community Protection Approach

CPG – Coordination Partners Group

CSOs – civil society organisations

DAC – Development Assistance Committee

DEVCO – European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development

DFID – British Department for International Development

DPP – Durable Peace Programme

DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo

DRR – disaster risk reduction

EC – European Commission

ECHO – European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

EiE – education in emergencies

EPLO – European Peacebuilding Liaison Office

EU – European Union

GA – General Assembly

GB – Grand Bargain

GBV – gender-based violence

HCT – Humanitarian Country Team

HDP – humanitarian aid, development, and peace

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

ICVA – International Council of Voluntary Agencies

IDPs – Internally Displaced Persons

INGO(s) – international non-governmental organisation(s)

IOM – International Organization for Migration

KBC – Kachin Baptist Convention

LCP – Lake Chad Programme

LNGO(s) – local non-governmental organisation(s)

LRRD – linking relief, rehabilitation, and development

M&E – monitoring and evaluation

MONUSCO – United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

MS – Member States

NDICI – Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument

NGO(s) – non-governmental organisation(s)

NNGO(s) – national non-governmental organisation(s)

NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council

NWoW – New Way of Working

OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODI – Overseas Development Institute

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

oPt – occupied Palestinian territories

PI – Plan International

PIN – People in Need

SG – Secretary-General

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SHARE – Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience

Sida – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SOPs – standard operating procedures

UN – United Nations

UNDAF – United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

VLSAs – Village Savings and Loan Associations

VOICE – Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies

WBPC – West Bank Protection Consortium

WHS – World Humanitarian Summit

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INTRODUCTION

VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies), founded in 1992, is a network representing 85 European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs. VOICE's engagement on the issue of better linking European humanitarian and development assistance is long-standing, thanks to the consistent engagement and expertise of members working in both areas.[1]

Driven in large part by the extent of protracted crises and conflict-generated humanitarian needs and displacement, 2016-2018 marked a series of conceptual shifts, new policies, new funding approaches, and a new momentum to link relief, rehabilitation, and development, at the global and European levels. This linkage is broadly known as the humanitarian-development nexus, or increasingly, the "triple nexus," which includes a peace dimension.

As a response to the scale of global need, and the sense that the scope of humanitarian assistance has been widening to cover the inflexibilities and gaps in other (development) toolboxes, the nexus is viewed as highly relevant and, for some, a potential opportunity for humanitarian actors to go back to basics in crises and emergencies. In keeping with the experience of working across the gap, this study has solicited huge interest from NGOs. VOICE's DRR-Resilience Working Group, involving 17 VOICE members, has contributed greatly to this study.

With this report, VOICE has sought to identify the current challenges and opportunities of working in a nexus approach from the humanitarian NGO perspective and to support NGOs to engage with the EU on the nexus approach. Already back in 1994, it was recognised that NGOs were able to link relief and development activities, particularly when they worked with local communities and organisations. Some of the obstacles identified at the time included the different mind-sets of humanitarian and development actors, as well as the "different procedures, budgets and organisational cultures of relief and development" within donor agencies.[2] Twenty-five years on, with the urgent need to better address people's needs in protracted crises, this report documents the current enablers and barriers to working in a nexus approach in different contexts. Through a number of case studies, the evidence base from NGOs' own work demonstrates the nexus' advantages, particularly with regard to retaining a people-centred approach and implementing community resilience.

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[1] See a selection of VOICE position papers on LRRD, DRR, and resilience in Annex 2.
[2] Ross et al., 1994, p. 1.

Most previous attempts generally have focused on linking humanitarian and development work. While some progress was made with each past attempt, some of the fundamental differences between humanitarian response and development – particularly in terms of ways of working, funding approaches, and structures – are persistent challenges.

This report, however, also identifies that there are limits to a nexus approach for humanitarian NGOs, particularly in the case of a triple nexus approach, e.g. if it endangers the humanitarian principles. With increasing efforts to bring together the different elements of the nexus toolbox, there is also a need to ensure that needs-based life-saving assistance does not become subsumed to broader political – or even security – agendas. While humanitarians operating in conflicts are among the first to recognise the importance of political solutions to conflict and for peace for affected populations, conflict prevention and peacebuilding require different approaches and timeframes, involve different stakeholders, and draw on different sources of funding.

The current focus on the nexus should also not be viewed as the only way of working. It is not a panacea and it cannot be seen as the "only game in town." Significant challenges remain in accessing and meeting the needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters. Each crisis is different and there is a consensus that the nexus approach should always be context specific. Because of increasing needs, there will always be humanitarian actors who retain their focus on providing life-saving humanitarian aid without engaging in the nexus approach.

In the context of growing needs, a global commitment to leave no one behind, and the sense that humanitarians are being stretched both beyond their capacity and comparative advantage, VOICE sees the nexus as an important opportunity to better address people's humanitarian and development needs, especially in protracted crises. VOICE hopes that this report can contribute to identifying and overcoming some of the persistent challenges associated with better linking aid efforts at the EU level.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

While NGO programming has long straddled the nexus, this way of working is not always well documented nor adequately showcased. This study identifies some of the opportunities and challenges of the nexus approach from a humanitarian NGO perspective. A mixed methodology was used to gather evidence and findings for the report: documentation review; interviews and discussions with VOICE members and key stakeholders; the gathering of case studies from VOICE members; and a workshop with local, national, and international NGOs and the EU in Myanmar (one of the EU's six nexus pilot countries), which gathered further examples of nexus programming.

Through this study a number of enabling factors were identified, which can contribute to more successful implementation of a nexus approach. A number of recommendations and ways forward are suggested to influence future work on the nexus, as well as to address some of the barriers to success.

CASE STUDIES AND INTERVIEWS/DISCUSSIONS

In order to identify what kinds of nexus programming NGOs are undertaking in different contexts, case studies were solicited from VOICE members and from NGOs in Myanmar. The criteria suggested for identifying case studies were as follows:

> Projects/programmes/work in a country/countries that has/have taken place over the last decade and has/have proven to be effective (i.e. through internal reviews, real-time reviews, or evaluations).
> Examples of how humanitarian and development programming and/or humanitarian/development/peace programming have worked well.
> The project or programme received funding from one or more donors.

The different case studies highlight varying approaches to implementing the nexus. Various factors make nexus programmes more – or less – successful. While VOICE members were asked to identify why they felt the case study was a good example, they were also asked to identify enabling factors, if apparent. At the same time, questions were also asked about what could have been done better. While many of the case studies provided considerable further detail, the most essential elements have been distilled down for the purposes of the study. Many of them demonstrated more than one finding, although not all may be visible in the case study as edited. More than 20 case studies were received. While not all the case studies have been included in this report in the interest of space, they have all – in combination with the interviews and other exchanges – informed the findings.
The other case studies can be found on VOICE website's publications and resources page.

MYANMAR NEXUS WORKSHOP

While there have been calls from NGOs for the EU to engage NGOs in the joint analysis and development of action plans in the six EU pilot countries, this involvement has been limited to date. In order to facilitate the engagement of NGOs in one of the pilot countries, a one and a half-day workshop was organised with NGOs, the EU delegation, Member States, and the UN in March 2019 in Yangon, Myanmar. A fuller workshop report, agenda, and methodology for potential replication in other EU nexus pilot countries is annexed to this report (Annex 1).

THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS
FROM INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS TO EU IMPLEMENTATION

World Humanitarian Summit (WHS)

In the first WHS in 2016, humanitarian actors and donors committed to transcend the humanitarian-development divide, to ensure that humanitarian needs are met, while at the same time risks and vulnerabilities are reduced over multiple years, based on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

By focusing on supporting the most vulnerable people in order to Leave No One Behind, the SDGs offer new opportunities for the humanitarian aid and development communities to work better together. Many of the 169 targets (from the 17 Goals) provide potential for the nexus to be implemented. Approaches like Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience are integrated into the various goals of the SDGs.

The UN New Way of Working

The New Way of Working (NWoW) name made its first appearance at the WHS in May 2016 under the Commitment to Action: Transcending humanitarian–development divides. It is described as a method of working encouraging partnership between humanitarian, development, and peace actors. The concept of 'collective outcomes' is at the heart of the NWoW and can be described as the result that the involved actors want to have achieved at the end of a 3-5 years period in order to reduce needs, risks, and vulnerabilities.

THE GRAND BARGAIN

Endorsed at the WHS by major aid organisations and humanitarian donors, the Grand Bargain commits its signatories to 53 engagements grouped around 10 work streams. The nexus is meant to be mainstreamed, notably by strengthening investment in prevention, mitigation and preparedness; multi-year funding and planning; performing joint multi-hazard risk and vulnerability analysis; and exploring new partnerships.

A chronology of the EU policy framework

2001: European Commission (EC) Communication on Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)

2007: European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, (Chapter 5 on LRRD and Disaster Risk Reduction 'Continuum and contiguum')

2012: EC Communication on the EU Approach to Resilience

2013: Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020

April 2016: EC Communication on forced displacement and development

May 2017: Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

May 2017: New European Consensus on Development

June 2017: EC and European External Action Service Joint Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience

Nov. 2017 Council conclusions on Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action

Jan. 2018 Integrated approach to conflicts and crisis

The six EU pilots with Member States: Chad, Uganda, Sudan, Nigeria, Myanmar, Iraq

The nature of today's crises often requires both development and humanitarian assistance, together with more flexible funding mechanisms and programmatic approaches. The humanitarian-development nexus is now on the EU agenda and is seen as a key tool for addressing complex and proctracted crises. The nexus calls for increased coordination, joint humanitarian-development approaches and collaborative implementation, monitoring, and progress tracking. In the Council conclusions on operationalising the humanitarian-development nexus, the Council recommends that the Commission and the EU Member States reinforce the links between humanitarian and development actors. They also recommend that they take forward their work in a number of pilot countries, starting with joint analyses and implementing it through coherent multi-year programming while respecting their distinctive mandates. In late 2018, the EU Member States acknowledged the peace dimension of the nexus.

THE NEXUS
LANDSCAPE

In 1967, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadruddin Aga Khan, when addressing the UN General Assembly (GA) optimistically stated that, "We have, I believe, won acceptance for the argument that development plans which disregard the presence of large numbers of refugees, often as many as hundreds of thousands of persons, amidst the indigenous population, would quite simply be doomed to failure."[3] It would take nearly 50 years before that argument became a clearer commitment at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016 and by States in the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, adopted by the UN GA in October 2016.

THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT AND THE NEXUS

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 marked an important milestone for commitments around better linking humanitarian and development actions. The UN Secretary-General (SG) and several heads of UN entities, with the endorsement of the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), committed to "Transcending humanitarian-development divides" and to move "from delivering aid to ending need" by implementing a 'New Way of Working'.[4] They committed to working to collective outcomes over multi-year timeframes in a collaborative manner based on the comparative advantages of diverse actors, depending on the context. The commitment clarified that there would be situations where humanitarian responses would continue to be necessary and that "nothing should undermine the commitment to principled humanitarian action."

The UN system reforms that have taken place since the WHS have tried to operationalise the New Way of Working (NWoW) and brought in the peace element into the nexus. As noted in the SG's July 2017 report to the UN GA on *Repositioning the UN*, "The New Way of Working is about offering a concrete path to removing unnecessary barriers between humanitarian and development actors as they jointly work towards strengthened investments in sustainable development, people and institutions, and doing so as early as possible. It is also about protecting sustainable development gains where possible, and preventing the loss of peace dividends whenever a crisis or shock hits" (para. 78).

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[3] Statement by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly at its 1519th meeting, 20 November 1967, quoted in *Forced Migration Review,* 2016.
[4] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/whs_commitment_to_action_-_transcending_humanitarian-development_divides_0.pdf

The Grand Bargain – also adopted at the WHS – committed donors and humanitarian organisations to a number of quid pro quo commitments to "better serve people in need." Amongst the Grand Bargain commitments that can have a positive impact on the nexus approach are those around increasing support and funding for local and national responders; collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding; and enhancing engagement between humanitarian and development actors.

The recent nexus efforts have benefitted from the work of various previous attempts. Earlier iterations have included, *inter alia*: the relief to development continuum; linking relief, rehabilitation, and development (LRRD); the transition between humanitarian and development responses; bridging the humanitarian-development gap; and addressing the humanitarian-development divide. The 1980s' food crises in Africa are cited as first giving rise to the concept of LRRD.[5] LRRD continued to be on the agenda into the 1990s, with resilience as a key related concept arriving early in the 21st century.

NGO APPROACHES TO OVERCOMING THE HUMANITARIAN - DEVELOPMENT DIVIDES

Humanitarian NGOs are essential implementers of principled humanitarian aid across a range of contexts. NGOs work in varying types of responses, including in conflicts; sudden on-set disasters (such as earthquakes or floods); slow on-set disasters (such as droughts); and (protracted) displacement situations. They work with internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, as well as host communities and authorities. Each response is tailored to the specific environment and needs that arise: no two responses are alike. NGOs generally aim to design programmes by working with communities and individuals, taking into account all their diversity, for example, looking at the different needs of women, girls, boys, and men of all different ages and considering their different (dis)abilities, qualities, cultures, and characteristics.

[5] See Christopolos, I., 2006, citing Wijkman, A. and L. Timberlake, 1988, *Natural Disasters: Acts of God or Acts of Man?*.

Working in these different contexts, NGOs have looked at ways to better link humanitarian responses with development (and peace) responses over decades. NGOs have extensive experience in working to help build the resilience of communities and individuals so that they can cope better with, and/or reduce the impact of, crises. NGOs facilitate disaster risk reduction (DRR) through tailored programmes as a way to help reduce humanitarian needs when crises occur. They have also worked to link humanitarian responses (or 'relief') to rehabilitation and development where possible, while ensuring the humanitarian principles are respected. NGOs have taken a principled approach, while ensuring that the work they do helps in practice to save lives in the short-term, but also prevents further suffering in the medium- to long-term, of the individuals and communities with which they work.

It is important to note that the work undertaken by NGOs has focused on individuals and communities affected by disasters and conflicts. This approach is unlike many of the current nexus discussions in which States and the UN often emphasise the need to build State resilience and work with State actors.

NGOs at work, Restoring hope to recover after Cyclone Sagar, Somalia. © NRC

NGOs at work, Mali © Action Against Hunger

THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT DIVIDE IN THE EU – THE VOICE NETWORK'S CONSISTENT ENGAGEMENT

This NGO experience of working in different humanitarian contexts across the nexus has been the reason behind the VOICE network's long-standing work around the issue. Given its expertise, VOICE has particularly focused its engagement around the nexus vis-à-vis the EU. As the largest humanitarian donor, the EU recognises that NGOs are among its key partners. The 2007 European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid recognises that NGOs "are essential to the humanitarian response as they deliver the majority of international humanitarian aid due to their field-presence and flexibility, often with a high-level of specialisation" (para 49).

In 1996, the European Commission (EC) of the European Communities issued its first Communication on LRRD. It also addressed the need to look at different contexts, include a gender analysis, and consider the role of peacebuilding in development cooperation strategies and conflict prevention.

VOICE and its members have consistently sought to highlight some of the opportunities – as well as the very real challenges – of these various approaches. For example, a joint publication by VOICE and Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP) in 2001 called for greater flexibility in the European Development Fund; better coordination between the different parts of the EU; and measures to enable greater community participation from the beginning of responses.

The 2001 European Commission Communication on LRRD also recognised that disaster prevention and preparedness needed to be considered in humanitarian programmes and in development cooperation strategies. Additionally, the Communication noted that, particularly in conflicts, the link between relief and development needed to be viewed in "a broader context: political, developmental and humanitarian. It should be part of a consistent EU approach towards crises that links Community and Union interventions in an integrated way."[6]

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[6] Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p.7.

The vital role that development and prevention could play in reducing the need for humanitarian responses was highlighted, for example, in a 2002 VOICE statement on LRRD:

NGOs consider LRRD as one of the most crucial strategies in order to achieve sustainable development. Long-term development strategies have to include prevention and preparedness activities concerning conflict and natural disasters in order to reduce vulnerability to emergencies. Experience shows that if enough attention is given to prevention measures, the costs of humanitarian activities are reduced, and the loss in terms of human lives and infrastructure is reduced.[7]

The response to the 2004 tsunami saw NGOs implementing an LRRD approach to the extent possible. However, as noted in a joint European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD)-VOICE publication one year after the tsunami, the structure and organisation of the European Commission could be improved to better enable LRRD and disaster preparedness.[8]

The 2007 Council of the European Union ("Council") *Conclusions on Security and Development* further emphasised the links between development, peace, and security and called on the "nexus between development and security" to inform EU strategies and policies.

In 2007 VOICE members were very engaged in the development of the *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid* (recently reconfirmed by its signatories, the European Commission, Council, and the European Parliament), which further emphasised the importance of coordination between humanitarian and development actors for LRRD to be successful.

The European Parliament, Council and Commission reconfirming the relevance of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid in 2017.

[7] VOICE Statement, 2002, p.1.
[8] CONCORD and VOICE, 2005, p. 24.

By 2012 the notion of resilience – framed as part of the development process – was being increasingly reaffirmed in various EU policies. In a 2012 VOICE position paper, *Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) – a fundamental element of building resilience*, the need for enhanced investments in DRR to enhance community resilience was also emphasised, as was the need for DRR to be prioritised in development programming.

A 2012 joint VOICE-CONCORD position paper on LRRD highlighted some of the reasons for the 'gap' between humanitarian and development responses, which included organisational silos, bureaucratic hurdles, different funding structures, as well as differing skills and approaches. It also called for greater linkages between humanitarian and development donors and for DRR to be funded in development budget lines, among other recommendations.

Building on the 2012 EU Communication on *The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises*,[9] the 2013 *Council conclusions on EU approach to resilience* noted that:

> *…resilience is understood to mean the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to prepare for, to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks without compromising long-term development prospects. The new approach to building resilience provides an opportunity to bring together political dialogue, humanitarian and development work and priorities in a comprehensive, coherent and effective approach to achieve better results on the ground.[10]*

These conclusions were then implemented through flagship EU resilience building programmes such as AGIR (the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative) in the Sahel and SHARE (Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience) in East Africa.

A 2014 VOICE study on *The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid: an NGO Perspective* highlighted that there was still a need for better coordination between humanitarian and development agencies and more flexible LRRD funding to respond to evolving needs.

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[9] European Commission, 2012, *The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises.*
[10] Council of the European Union, 2013, p. 1.

2016 – A WATERSHED MOMENT: WHS, REFUGEES IN THE EU, THE NEXUS, AND PROTRACTED CRISES

In advance of the first World Humanitarian Summit, refugees were arriving in the EU in 2015 in unexpectedly large numbers. While the influx precipitated political divisions and a crisis in the European Union, it also focussed minds on the number and complexity of the protracted displacement crises globally. Humanitarians were involved in a growing list of activities and sectors to address the longer-term needs of crisis-affected people, without necessarily having the comparative advantage or sufficient resources to do so. This phenomenon was the result of humanitarians trying to fill the gap where tools were too inflexible and/or too little development was taking place by stretching their mandates and expertise.

Just prior to the WHS, in April 2016, a new policy framework in the form of a Communication was issued by the European Commission on *Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance – Forced Displacement and Development*, which "put forward a policy framework to prevent forced displacement from becoming protracted and to gradually end dependence on humanitarian assistance…."[11] The policy framework "aims to connect different instruments and actions to ensure that the EU has an **effective, full-cycle multi-actor approach to tackle forced displacement**."[12] The Communication recognised that,

> *A 'one-size-fits-all' approach is…not workable…the EU is committed to providing the **policy framework** for a more **efficient, context-specific** and **dignified global response** to forced displacement….by bringing together its approaches to political issues, conflict prevention, development, human rights and humanitarian assistance, and by bolstering the resulting nexus.[13]*

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[11] European Commission, 2016, p. 2.
[12] European Commission, 2016, p. 5
[13] European Commission, 2016, p. 4.

The Communication went further, citing the need for different actors to work together:

To implement the new policy framework to operate efficiently, existing operational silos must be overcome. **Political actors** *need to be more involved in negotiations to surmount obstacles preventing displaced people from developing their potential. Humanitarian and development actors operate within different structural, programming and funding cycles and procedures which do not reflect the real* **long-term needs of the displaced people or the host communities**….

Stronger cooperation between development and humanitarian actors – with **closer links in funding at programming level, exchange and assessment of information, and target setting** *– can enable the design of more effective and lasting* **protection** *and* **self-reliance** *strategies.*[14]

The *Lives in Dignity* Communication in many respects already describes a nexus approach for the EU.

THE EVOLVING CONCEPT OF RESILIENCE

At the same time, the EU's view of resilience was further developed in the 2016 document, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Strong Europe – A Global Strategy for the European' Union's Foreign and Security Policy* issued the month after the WHS. In Europe, security and terrorism were high on the agenda and the EU Strategy called for an expansion of the "comprehensive approach to conflicts and crises." It clarified that the EU would invest in State resilience, as well as the resilience of individuals and societies (in addition to energy and environmental resilience). In this context, countries of origin and countries of transit of refugees and migrants were also to be a focus of resilience efforts. NGOs, across the humanitarian-development-peace sectors, strived to influence this process to balance security interests with the protection needs of individuals and States' responsibilities under international law. The EU's 2016 Global Strategy, the WHS, and the 2016 *Lives in Dignity* Communication set the stage for a further Joint Communication from the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: *A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action* in 2017.

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[14] European Commission, 2016, p. 5.

VOICE members highlighted a number of issues throughout 2017, first during consultations on the draft Joint Communication and then in dialogue with the European Parliament. The network emphasised in particular its view that a widened concept of resilience – beyond individuals and communities – was of limited value; that needs-based humanitarian assistance would remain crucial: that development actors should lead implementation of the new resilience approach in support of Agenda 2030; and that the EU should focus on a 'people centred, context specific, and flexible approach.'

The Member States responded with a variety of Council Conclusions, which were issued at the time and in the years that followed, including on *Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus* (2017) and Council conclusions on State and societal resilience (2017), which recalled:

*the **importance of resilience in ongoing work on operationalising the humanitarian-development nexus**, which should now be rolled out in line with the Council's Conclusions in May, **starting from a number of pilot countries**. It welcomes current work on the integrated approach to violent conflict and crises, which aims to strengthen the EU's efforts to prevent and resolve conflict and to foster sustainable peace, and will incorporate a strong resilience dimension.*

VOICE recalled its main priorities in relation to the humanitarian-development nexus at its 2018 annual General Assembly in a policy resolution: *Ensuring people's needs are at the heart of the nexus approach: a humanitarian NGO perspective.*

SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTING THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS IMPLIES:

> ensuring people's needs are at the centre of the process, including through involvement of NGOs at field level;
> more multi-year planning and funding in humanitarian activities and the systematic introduction of crisis modifiers in development activities;
> conducting lessons learned to ensure the further development of the nexus approach and a commitment to it in the long term;
> using the opportunity to enhance a community resilience approach; and
> respecting and promoting IHL and humanitarian principles.

The policies on an *EU Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises* followed and on *Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises* in 2018. Together, these EU policies on resilience, protracted crises, the nexus, the integrated approach, and education in emergencies have all helped lay the groundwork for the operationalisation of the EU's nexus approach.

THE CHALLENGE OF INTEGRATING PEACE INTO THE NEXUS

Humanitarian NGOs, along with other humanitarian actors, work to save lives and restore human dignity in the face of natural and man-made disasters. This mandate shapes how humanitarians work. In order to ensure crisis-affected populations' safe access to assistance and protection, how humanitarians are perceived and accepted by the communities is crucial to maintain their access and security. To ensure this access and security, humanitarians strive to work to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality.

For many VOICE members that also work on development, linking humanitarian aid and development work is a daily endeavour, which has been reflected in the network's engagement with the EU. The question is not whether to link the two, but when and how. The consistency of the messages around what is needed to improve the linkage also shows how challenging making the links can be.

The 'peace' part is even more complex. Many members have actively integrated the principle of 'do no harm' into their work and are working towards peace, for instance, by further integrating conflict sensitivity into their approaches. Only a smaller number of them explicitly consider peacebuilding as part of their mandate.

Most of the EU's efforts in recent years have been focussed on making the links between humanitarian responses and development actions, including the commitment to have greater coordination in a number of countries in the South. Peace efforts have not been a consistent element in the previous nexus-like attempts of the EU. With the adoption of the EU's *Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises* and various discussions in 2018, the 'triple nexus' has become increasingly part of the EU's nexus deliberations and understanding.

Efforts are still underway to try to clarify the scope of what the 'peace' element means for the EU's nexus approach. There is neither a common definition or understanding of which elements of 'peace' are considered to be part of the triple nexus nor a real consensus on its added-value. For many VOICE members who are working in the humanitarian and development spheres, 'peace' generally involves working with communities around conflict resolution, reconciliation, building social cohesion, or peacebuilding at a community level. Some States consider 'peace' much more from the perspective of political processes, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, or the human security dimension. Increasingly, however, for many States the peace element is about security, counter-terrorism measures, and stabilisation issues; which is a concern because, as one stakeholder noted, "in peace, humanitarian principles vanished." The peace element was added without knowing exactly "what we were talking about."

Thanks to the engagement of the whole humanitarian community at EU level, the EU's *Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises* is meant to keep humanitarian aid "In-But-Out" with aid clearly firewalled: "EU humanitarian aid is not a crisis management instrument as such and therefore should not be used for accomplishing any other objectives beyond humanitarian ones."[15] This firewalling is positive at policy level. However, these policies need to be implemented. With the 'peace' element, humanitarian NGOs have observed with concern that States approach the nexus in a manner that may tend to instrumentalise aid for security or political objectives. While on paper, humanitarian objectives and principles are to be sacrosanct in the EU's Integrated Approach, the reality on the ground is that NGOs are increasingly seeing that political and security interests can seem to dominate. Similarly, with the UN's New Way of Working, there are concerns that "collective outcomes" could undermine humanitarian principles. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, the peace element was seen to be dominating conversations around collective outcomes to the potential detriment of humanitarian access to vulnerable populations.

Throughout the discussions around nexus-type approaches, VOICE has continued to emphasise the crucial role that NGOs play and the importance of ensuring and respecting principled humanitarian aid in any response linking humanitarian, development, and/or peace actions.

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[15] Council of the European Union, January 2018, para 7, p. 4.

PILOTING THE EU NEXUS APPROACH

The Commission chose six countries in 2017 in which to pilot only the humanitarian-development nexus with EU Member States: Chad, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan, and Uganda. While they were chosen with limited (if any) consultation with EU Member States, they were already part of the list of 14 countries where European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and the Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) had committed to work on humanitarian-development cooperation.

Each pilot country was to develop an action plan of how they would take the nexus forward. The update in 2018 showed varying progress between the countries. As a first step, ECHO, along with political and development cooperation sections in EU Delegations in the pilot countries generally started to work together before bringing in Member States. There was very limited engagement with NGOs or civil society in most of the pilot countries on the nexus.

Each of the pilot countries has been developing nexus strategies or action plans based on a joint situation analysis, which often included conflict analysis as a starting point. The EU's approach could be seen as a *de facto* sign to focus on the triple nexus. Member States gave a 'green light' to the EU institutions to work on the triple nexus at an informal meeting of ministers in the autumn of 2018. Among the pilot countries, Uganda and Chad are also rolling out the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). Chad, Sudan, and Uganda have developed collective outcomes under the UN's New Way of Working. However, progress has been uneven and considerable work remains before the pilot countries can successfully say they have put the nexus into action.

FINDINGS: ENABLERS AND BARRIERS TO A NEXUS APPROACH

The VOICE network has consistently engaged in the EU's policy development, based on the field experience of its 85 members currently working in over 60 countries. Against this backdrop of commitments, policies, and decisions, the nexus is being implemented in many practical ways. While the EU nexus pilots are still works in progress, there are numerous NGO examples of programmes and projects that link humanitarian, development, and/or peace responses for crisis-affected people all over the world. The case studies submitted by VOICE members and the findings of the nexus workshop in Myanmar all provide insights into what works well and what works less well. The case studies highlighted in this report reflect different contexts and approaches to show what nexus programming can look like in practice with increased support from donors. However, just as there is no agreed definition of the nexus, there is also no common agreement – as of now – on what constitutes good nexus programming. Similarly, as Mosel and Levine noted already in 2014:

> *Evaluation studies on LRRD […] found that the key to successful LRRD programmes is less in LRRD planning or LRRD-specific approaches, but in [those] interventions that had strong engagement and local partnerships on the ground [which] were best able to marry short- and long-term perspectives. A good LRRD programme, in other words, is first and foremost a good programme.[16]*

Looking back at the predecessors to the current nexus approach, and looking at the current efforts, it is clear that there are a number of factors that can enable – or can be barriers – to a successful nexus approach. Real effectiveness and efficiency gains can be made by giving attention to addressing the barriers in the field, rather than the gaps in policy, in order to strengthen the impact of NGOs' and other aid partners' work with, and for, crisis-affected populations.

Many of the findings related to the nexus are not new. The findings identify where there are still areas that require further efforts to ensure that the nexus succeeds this time where other attempts have fallen short. Some of the most fundamental challenges facing nexus programming are donor, organisational, and institutional barriers. Most of them will take years to adapt and require political will and commitment from relevant actors to have a tangible impact in the field. This fact is especially true given that enablers to the nexus approach can also be current barriers that are in place and which need to be addressed. If unaddressed, these barriers often prevent genuinely putting people and communities affected by crises at the centre of responses, which is essential if the nexus approach is to truly be successful.

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[16] Mosel and Levine, 2014, p. 13.

A: MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES TO SHAPE A NEXUS APPROACH

The numerous policies and documents around the nexus and the UN's 'New Way of Working' contain appropriate language around ensuring that the nexus protects principled humanitarian action and is context-specific. EU and UN documents around the nexus contain the right caveats, for the most part, to enable humanitarian action to respond to needs. Various documents also refer to the need to put affected people at the centre of responses and to include NGOs and civil society in nexus discussions. The reality, however, is that many of these policies are not yet reflected in the systems and practices that enable the nexus to be put into practice. Some of the main findings around the nexus policies and their operationalisation are related to fundamental issues for all the actors involved.

1. GENUINELY PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE REQUIRES CHANGING PROGRAMME APPROACHES

A telling finding of the Myanmar nexus workshop – and which came out clearly in many of the case studies – is that for the nexus to work, it must genuinely put affected communities and individuals at the centre of responses. There are numerous commitments, many developed by NGOs, which emphasise putting people at the centre of humanitarian responses. The 1994 *Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief* committed to "strive to achieve full community participation in our relief and rehabilitation programmes" (#7). The Humanitarian Charter in *The Sphere Handbook* emphasises that, "We offer our services in the belief that the affected population is at the centre of humanitarian action, and recognise that their active participation is essential to providing assistance in ways that best meet their needs, including those of vulnerable and socially excluded people." The nine commitments of the *Core Humanitarian Standard* have communities and people affected by crisis at the centre. The right to development is enshrined in various human rights instruments. The recent OECD DAC Recommendation on the HDP nexus calls for mechanisms that put people at the centre of a nexus approach in an inclusive manner, as part of programming better within the nexus.

Any nexus approach must be built upon the perspectives, ideas, and views of people and communities who know their needs best. Their ability to make choices must be respected and promoted. While there are many policy documents and commitments that reflect this idea, the humanitarian, development, and peace systems are not necessarily designed with affected people at the centre.

BARRIERS: Donor funding preferences are often based on priority thematic areas and geographical contexts that donors wish to fund. These preferences are then imposed on those applying for the funds. In addition, organisational structures do not always allow for a people-centred approach to be effectively put into place – especially when there is a need to raise funds for operational activities.

The project and logframe approaches imposed by many donors and organisations generally do not allow the flexibility required to respond to the needs of people or to emergencies that may occur during the course of a project. While feedback from a community may indicate that certain changes need to be made during a programme, frequently, the systems to rapidly make those changes are not in place – either internally within an organisation or with a donor.

Within organisations, systems tend to encourage people to rush into emergency responses without necessarily involving affected communities at first. This approach needs to be changed to strengthen systems that ensure affected communities and people are involved from the beginning.

ENABLERS: There needs to be a shift in the focus and design of programmes to enable nexus thinking and approaches. Working on certain cross-cutting themes, like gender-based violence (GBV) or protection, can make it easier to shift from a humanitarian to a development response and vice versa. Using a rights-based approach can also be effective at putting people at the centre. 'Village Savings and Loan Associations' (VLSAs), which integrate social cohesion while addressing both short- and long-term community needs, are showing success from the experience of CARE International in various countries. CARE International has also found that creating community-led hubs that promote socio-economic development while responding to urgent needs, integrating women's rights in refugee support programmes, and stimulating markets through innovative cash and voucher services all provide opportunities for the nexus approach to be successful.

Longer-term outcomes and theories of change (versus logframes built around indicators and outputs) are better suited to people-centred nexus programming. Lighter systems are required to adapt programmes according to the changing needs of people and communities. In the Durable Peace Programme in Myanmar (*see _Case Study in section 5_ below*), the partners of the programme use theories of change and 'outcome areas' as they work to ensure that the needs of affected people are met.

CASE STUDY:
PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S REGIONAL LAKE CHAD PROGRAMME (LCP)

Adolescent girls in Nigeria. © Plan International / Will Ayemoba

Given the protracted nature of the crisis in the Lake Chad region, Plan International (PI) developed a regional Lake Chad Programme Strategy (2018-2023) that outlines the organisation's ambition to transform the life of girls and their families in the Lake Chad Region. The Strategy moves beyond a humanitarian vision towards a full spectrum programme, working at the nexus of humanitarian and development efforts to promote children's rights and gender equality.

The approach recognises the importance of meeting immediate humanitarian needs while tackling simultaneously the developmental deficit of the region, which is both a contributor to – and an outcome of – the crisis. Promoting social cohesion, girls' rights, and gender equality are at the heart of this strategy. Building the resilience of girls and their communities is vital to ensuring that they are able to cope with, and adapt to, the significant shocks and stresses they face now and potentially in the future.

Building on on-going work at the community level, the starting point for the strategy was a joint context analysis between PI's humanitarian and development teams in the region. In addition to identifying humanitarian needs, the analysis allowed the identification of the root causes and structural drivers of the crisis that could be addressed through PI's work. This analysis resulted in the formulation of collective outcomes and incorporating the functional areas of humanitarian, development, and social cohesion actions (to enhance peace and stability at the community level).

FUNDING: More than 24 international donors (ECHO, DEVCO, the German Federal Foreign office, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Irish Aid, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), etc.) have contributed to financing the LCP approach and are increasingly willing to improve the flexibility of their funding instruments to support the implementation of the LCP. Involving donors during the development of the strategy was essential. Many donors liked the idea, but could not put funding towards the collective outcomes, given that their funding was either humanitarian or development funding. To resolve this challenge, specific targets were included for each of the functional areas (humanitarian, development, and social cohesion) to facilitate different types of funding.

ENABLERS: A separate coordinating programme team leading on the collective planning and programme development has been instrumental. Flexibility has been needed in programming to adapt intervention approaches and to slow down programme implementation when necessary. Strong risk management capacity, functioning monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and feedback mechanisms, and conflict sensitivity have also been essential in building the LCP.

2. NO COMMON NEXUS DEFINITION

There is no common definition of the nexus in relation to the humanitarian-development nexus or the 'triple nexus' of humanitarian-development-peace. Trying to agree a definition of the nexus would not necessarily be a fruitful exercise, however, greater clarity could be helpful in moving ahead. As one interviewee noted, "The nexus is not meant to be a widening of [the work of] all actors, but more coordination: development actors should be coming in and filling gaps." This approach could, in theory, also free up some humanitarian resources to focus even more on the most critical needs, knowing that other needs are being addressed by other actors.

BARRIERS: Without a clear understanding of what the nexus entails, there is a risk that good programmes may be labelled as nexus programmes to attract donor attention and funds. The OECD DAC Recommendation adopted in 2019 defined the nexus approach as, "…the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalise on the comparative advantages of each pillar [humanitarian, development and peace actions] – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict."[17] While there will be concerns from an NGO perspective about the "coherence" component of that definition, there could be value in building upon the definition and ensuring that humanitarian principles are respected in any nexus approach.

As found in the Plan International case study on the Lake Chad Programme, the concept of the triple nexus remains unclear to many in the humanitarian and development sectors. There was a perception that there was little difference with their former LRRD approach, which can risk hindering the application of the nexus approach they were trying to implement. Beyond the case study, there is sometimes also a broad perception that the nexus is mainly a humanitarian-driven agenda because it is often referred to as an approach for protracted "crises" that came out of the WHS. However, most recently, at the EU level the perception appears to be shifting towards the nexus actually being part of a political agenda for implementing the EU Integrated Approach. This shift is of increasing concern to many humanitarian actors. The various interpretations of the nexus were identified as an obstacle blocking people from focusing on the key concepts and ideas behind the nexus approach.

ENABLERS: Without a clearer understanding of what the nexus entails and what the aim of nexus is, the quality of a nexus programme will remain quite subjective. Mosel and Levine (2014) proposed elements for evaluating LRRD programmes noting that, "'LRRD-ness' should not be the 'quality' of a project, but rather a way of approaching a situation"(p. 16). Similarly, evaluating a nexus programme could be focused on the approach or theories of change of the programme. Putting in place the systems to agree what a nexus approach entails and then evaluating it based on that could help determine the extent of successful nexus programming.

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[17] OECD DAC, 2019, p. 6.

CASE STUDY:
DEVELOPING NEXUS GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND A TOOLKIT, WEWORLD-GVC FOUNDATION

A Palestinian farmer poses with a plant in a newly established nursery in Jordan Valley. © WeWorld-GVC / Fadi Arouri

WeWorld-GVC Foundation has significant experience of implementing a Community Protection Approach (CPA) as part of the Integrated Protection Programming of the West Bank Protection Consortium (WBPC) in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). The WBPC brings together WeWorld-GVC, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Action Against Hunger, Première Urgence Internationale, and ACTED.

WeWorld-GVC has been designing humanitarian and development projects in complementarity with other consortium partners to contribute to a protective environment for local communities. Building on the lessons collected through their CPA experience, WeWorld-GVC has committed to the elaboration of a set of Nexus Guiding Principles to operationalise the nexus framework. It will translate the main propositions of the nexus into practical guidelines to enable the inclusion of the nexus rationale in the planning of projects and interventions in the field.

WeWorld-GVC is also planning on drafting a comprehensive Nexus Toolkit, in partnership with the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Jerusalem, to guide the actions of local and international actors and to inform the policy of international donors when intervening in protracted crises. The toolkit will offer a contribution to the operationalisation and mainstreaming of the nexus through guiding principles, best practices, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) building on the 2017 elaboration of their programmatic approach to LRRD in West Bank Area C.

3. COLLECTIVE OUTCOMES ARE STILL NOT COLLECTIVELY WELCOMED

There is considerable consternation not only among NGOs, but also among UN agencies and others about the focus and approach of "collective outcomes" within the New Way of Working. While the EU has not been focusing on collective outcomes *per se*, there have been EU nexus pilot countries where there has been an attempt to work towards collective outcomes where they exist. Individual EU Member States have also been supporting collective outcomes in different places. The EU's approach towards the nexus has been around working towards common understandings, shared analysis, and (where possible) roadmaps that focus on the complementarity of the added-value of different actors.

BARRIERS: The lack of clear guidance around how to develop collective outcomes or what should be included in collective outcomes was cited as a significant gap in a study commissioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team (IASC TT) on the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (IRMA, LLC, 2018). Having a joint analysis of a situation is generally quite widely accepted, as long as everyone's analysis does not have to be the same (*see further below Nexus Coordination is Needed*). After all, different actors will have different analyses of a situation based on their roles and mandates, ways of working, and approaches.

Without understanding the context and having a conflict analysis, humanitarian, development, and peace responses risk being inadequate. While some collective outcomes may be respectful of the complementarity of different mandates and approaches of humanitarian, development, and peace actors, other attempts have tried to subsume humanitarian responses under broader political and security agendas. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), during the discussions around collective outcomes, it was proposed that the UN Stabilisation Mission in DRC, MONUSCO, could negotiate access for humanitarian actors instead of simply having better civil-military coordination. This confusion of different roles has caused some NGOs to view the nexus approach in DRC as having negative consequences on humanitarian responses. Similarly, NGOs working in North-east Nigeria have expressed concerns about the difficulty to ensure principled humanitarian assistance, let alone come to agreement on a collective outcome, in a context where the State is a party to the conflict, imposes access restrictions, and denies the existence of many of the humanitarian needs.

ENABLERS: Further work to ensure clarity around how collective outcomes are defined and who needs to be involved in the definition could potentially be beneficial to ensure that humanitarian principles are not compromised. The IASC TT drafted guidance in 2018, but it has not yet been shared widely. All actors should be clear that collective outcomes are not the objective of a nexus approach. In some contexts, they may be appropriate and useful; in others there may be more practical ways to ensure the complementarity of different actions. Collective outcomes when used as an organisational strategy, as was done by Plan International in its Lake Chad Programme, can be useful to work across different departments within an organisation, but are substantially different than those sought by the UN at country level.

4. A LACK OF CONSENSUS AROUND THE TRIPLE NEXUS

While the UN has been explicitly bringing together humanitarian, development, and peace since the WHS, the EU seems now to be moving in that direction with increasing references to the triple nexus. From many humanitarian actors' perspectives, there remain serious concerns about this shift towards the triple nexus. As Hugo Slim noted, "The nexus looks like a triangle of everything – especially if we recognise that climate risk and adaptation are in there as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. This triple nexus clearly goes beyond the aspirations of the Red Cross/Crescent and NGO Code of Conduct. The Code emphasises capacity-building, inclusion, resilience, developmental improvements and environmental sustainability but it does not set its sights on peace."[18]

BARRIERS: The first focus of NGOs, EU, and global efforts over the past two decades has been to better link humanitarian and development efforts. Yet, after all this time, the same barriers to achieving this linkage still exist, showing that while the need may be evident, finding solutions and putting them into practice is challenging. The EU's pilots also followed this prioritisation of a humanitarian-development nexus, despite divergent views among Member States. The third part of the triple nexus is, in principle, not something most humanitarian actors were looking for or have embraced, but seems to have come more from donor countries or institutions in a **top-down** way.

In addition, the **scope and meaning** of the triple nexus are not agreed. The lack of clarity on the peace part is a barrier to many organisations having more robust advocacy around the parts of the nexus about which they are more enthusiastic. Most humanitarians would want there to be a bottom-up definition of the peace part of the nexus.

The nexus approach must be tailored to each **context**: there is no "one size fits all" nexus approach. The peace element of the nexus is also different in every context. From the perspective of humanitarian NGOs, there are cases where the triple nexus approach is leading to an instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid for political purposes. If there is an insistence on supporting peace processes or stabilisation in a conflict setting, there is the very real risk that principled humanitarian action cannot be effective – and that humanitarian actors will be denied access or become targets. As one interviewee put it, "the art of the nexus is not to throw everything into one basket and stir it," but to have everyone work with their own principles and objectives.

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[18] Slim, 2017, p.2.

ENABLERS: There is a need to have more **structured conversations** among various actors about the potential positive aspects – but also the potential pitfalls – of the triple nexus in different contexts and at the global level. While many NGOs and CSOs, particularly local and national ones, will engage in different aspects of peace, and look at the conflict sensitivity of their actions and ensuring a 'do no harm' approach, the State approach to peace will often be from a stabilisation or security perspective. At the same time, other NGOs will steer clear of the peace aspect of the nexus in certain contexts to ensure that they can deliver principled humanitarian action. In other contexts, they will find ways to work across the triple nexus.

As one interviewee noted, the goal of the nexus is not for NGOs to deliver on all aspects of the nexus. Humanitarian NGOs can, however, reflect on what others can do in the nexus and to share what they see as the risks and limits of a nexus approach on humanitarian response. After all, the idea is "not to have the nexus at any price."

In May 2019, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) played a useful role in convening peace, development, and humanitarian actors for a dialogue on what the peace part of the nexus could mean at the EU level. VOICE took this discussion further by looking at the humanitarian role in conflict sensitivity at an event in May 2018 and at the role of the nexus in the Agenda 2030 ambition to "leave no one behind" at the European Development Days in June 2019. The latter showed there was still no clear consensus on the peace part of the nexus, so this discussion must continue.

CASE STUDY:

MERCY CORPS – WORKING AT THE NEXUS OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION, PEACEBUILDING, AND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

Jummai Abdullahi takes care of goats near her home in Biu, Nigeria, 2018. © Ezra Millstein/Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps began humanitarian programming in Northeast Nigeria in 2014, with peacebuilding programmes being phased in as early as 2016. Five different projects, funded by different donors, complement the on-going humanitarian programmes. Mercy Corps' research, funded by the Ford Foundation, examined why male and female youth join, or are forcibly recruited into, Boko Haram. Building on that research, a stability-focused programme was proposed to DFID. A co-creation process took several months to establish the project. It took several more months to secure funding once the pilot was completed, which led to a gap in funding. Different donors eventually funded the different complementary programmes.

The organisation's *Advancing Peace in Complex Crises* framework guides the programmes in Northeast Nigeria with its three pillars: (1) conflict sensitive humanitarian action; (2) violence reduction; and (3) development and peacebuilding. By emphasising community engagement, community resilience to conflict and shock is promoted. Having worked in other parts of Nigeria before the response in the Northeast meant that donors had a level of trust, which allowed Mercy Corps to propose innovative blended humanitarian and peacebuilding programming. Bringing in different technical experts to design fully integrated programmes was important. The activities covered by the pillars include social protection, livelihoods, especially for youth and cash grants, but also initiatives that counter extremist doctrine through radio programmes working with the leadership of different faith communities.

Some donors were convinced by the need for more integrated programming. However, others were not keen on funding non-humanitarian programmes when the Boko Haram crisis and resulting displacement were prominent in international media. Tensions between humanitarian and development actors (mostly about coordination and scarce resources) presented risks and challenges. Security concerns also meant that Mercy Corps staff had to keep a low profile to be able to work across the triple nexus.

5. DIFFERENT ACTORS, DIFFERENT METHODS

BARRIERS: Bringing together humanitarian and development – and even peace – actors to work on a nexus approach takes time and careful coordination. The same is true for donors, for example, ECHO and DEVCO or between the different sections of a (donor) government. The different mandates of actors mean that they work with varying approaches and partners in terms of the activities in which they will engage or fund and for how long that engagement and/or funding will last.

First and foremost is the necessity to overcome the "cultural" barriers between the different actors. They each come with their own ways of working. Even within the same organisation, there are often divisions between humanitarian and development departments. They have specific terminology, timeframes, and acronyms for their approaches. They will engage with affected people, (local) authorities, government, donors, and other actors in different ways. Their principles and approaches will often be unfamiliar to others. Humanitarians, for example, are less likely to work in partnership with government in order to act in line with the humanitarian principles while development actors are more likely to focus on strengthening the actions of local authorities and governments. Development actors may view humanitarians as moving too quickly. Humanitarians may see peace and development actors as moving too slowly. Many noted that there are not enough individuals who have worked across the different programme areas, especially in leadership or management positions.

Humanitarian principles and the legal basis for humanitarian response can be quite different to the 'principles' that are used for development (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), human rights, or the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness principles). These different principles mean different approaches and understandings of what the best response might be in a given context and what success looks like. Without having an appreciation for these different ways of working, it will be difficult for the nexus approach to succeed.

ENABLERS: There is a need to find ways to bring humanitarian, development, and peace actors together within and across organisations. Allowing time for different actors to get to know and understand the different ways of working and approaches is necessary. Having staff who have worked across the different pillars is a further enabler as they can help 'translate' the ways of working for others. By better understanding what different actors are doing and why, a complementarity of roles can be fostered.

CASE STUDY:
COMPLEMENTARITY IN THE DURABLE PEACE PROGRAMME (DPP), MYANMAR


IDPs in North Myanmar © Oxfam/ Dustin Barter

The DPP works across the triple nexus (humanitarian-development-peace) in Kachin and Shan States in Myanmar. Initiated in 2014 by the Joint Strategy Team (a group of local NGOs (LNGOs)), they subsequently asked international NGOs (INGOs) to join. The consortium, currently led by Oxfam, is diverse and the design and implementation of the programme is driven by 27 local organisations, ranging from small-scale community development associations to those with influence in the national peace process. They bring their diverse expertise together to enable the delivery of a range of activities across the 'triple nexus' of humanitarian, development, and peace spheres.

One of the ways in which the DPP has implemented a nexus approach has been by working across several outcome areas in conflict-affected communities, including: durable solutions to displacement; livelihoods and income generation for IDPs; peace and social cohesion; gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and gender equality; and capacity-building with local civil society. The DPP centres its programme decision-making on the preferences of displaced people, which helps to mitigate the risks associated with engaging with national peace processes, which are inherently political, but need to be balanced with humanitarian principles and development practices. The DPP has also benefitted from long-term funding, spanning 7 years, from the EU, which has enabled the deepening of trust between organisations involved in the consortium and with communities, more integrated programming and for all stakeholders to learn from previous efforts.

LESSONS ON RISK FROM THE GRAND BARGAIN ALSO APPLY TO THE NEXUS
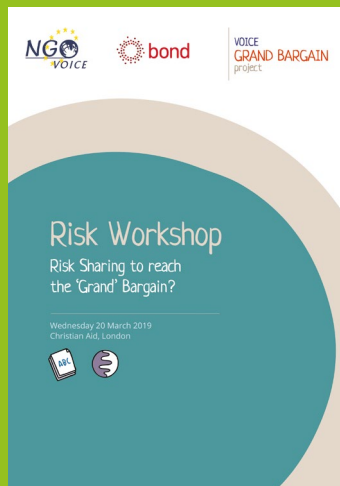
As highlighted during the VOICE workshop on the Grand Bargain and Risk in London, UK in March 2019, the concept of risk is broad, complex, and often changing. It ranges from safety and security, to reputational risks and touches on issues of ethical, financial, and fiduciary risks. The risks each stakeholder faces can differ (including NGOs, donors, broader government structures, banks, etc.) making risks difficult to address. Furthermore, because it is an innovative process, the nexus approach inherently implies taking risks. The nexus approach suggests new ways of working potentially affecting humanitarian actors' capacities to remain principled and to be perceived as such. Risks linked to programming, funding, and partnerships may also be further exacerbated for all actors involved. While the aid sector is under increased scrutiny, the demand for transparency, accountability, and counter-terrorism measures tends to increase and change donors' perceptions of risks and translates into a heavier administrative burden for implementing organisations. Against this observation, signatories to the Grand Bargain (GB) have raised this issue at the highest levels. Kristalina Georgieva, then Eminent person to the GB, tasked The Netherlands and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in September 2018 to follow up on a discussion on risk-sharing. In the 2019 independent report on the GB, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) suggests that building on this initiative, "signatories should work together to understand the risks that different constituent groups face in taking actions or not taking actions towards their commitments, and how respective efforts to mitigate risks may impact – positively and negatively – on other constituent groups." This review should include commitments linked to the nexus (GB former workstream 10) and widen it to the triple nexus.

B: THE NEXUS FRAMEWORK NEEDS TO INVOLVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE

In order for the nexus to work optimally, the right policies and frameworks need to be in place, but the right people and actors also need to be brought into the earliest attempts to come to a common understanding of what is required in a crisis. In reality, this study found that often, the right mechanisms to bring people together are missing and they do not function in a sufficiently inclusive manner to truly capitalise on the added-value and role of each actor and their comparative advantages and expertise.

1. NEXUS COORDINATION IS NEEDED

BARRIERS: Different actors need to be brought together in order to understand what others are doing to ensure the complementarity required of the nexus approach. On the humanitarian side, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) brings together the UN and NGOs and the HCT often meets with donors. There is no similar coordination body for development or peace that brings a wide range of actors, including the government, together. This lack of coordination structures makes implementing the nexus approach more challenging.

Coordination is complex, even within organisations. The coordination among parts of the EU in the nexus pilot countries has taken considerable time and effort. While the initial coordination has been between ECHO and EU Delegations for the most part, it has meant that EU Member States have not necessarily been as involved. The inclusion of NGOs in the EU nexus pilot countries to date has been even more limited. There are concerns that if EU Member States and NGOs are not brought into the EU's efforts, especially in the pilot countries, that the interest to engage from those States risks being lost and the rich experience and broad expertise from actors on the ground, such as NGOs, being missed.

ENABLERS: The 2016 UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/243, which reviews the UN system's operational activities for development, calls on national governments to consult "with relevant stakeholders, including civil society and non-governmental organisations" as part of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) or similar planning framework (para. 48). It also calls on UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to consult with governments, civil society, and NGOs (para. 49).

This push for broader development coordination is a welcome step, but will require time, patience, on-going dialogue, and a willingness to work at different paces to understand each other. It also requires a readiness on the part of governments to engage and involve NGOs in development planning and peace strategies, which is not always the case currently. It will require coordination that goes beyond simple information sharing and enables discussions around principled decisions.

There is a need to identify and open up coordination mechanisms to enable cross-fertilisation across the UN, donors, and NGOs and, where appropriate, government. Regular substantive engagement is needed to develop trust, meaningful partnerships, and more responsive ways to address challenges within the nexus approach. It is also important for donors covering humanitarian aid, development, and peace to coordinate their approaches if the nexus is to be successful.

Insisting on common analysis risks being a barrier to successful nexus programming. However joint – not common – analysis is also an essential part of the coordination needed for a nexus approach. Such joint analysis requires sharing information and respecting principles and the ways of working between humanitarian, development, and peace actors. It should also be a result of working with communities who can best identify capacities, vulnerabilities, threats, and coping strategies, as highlighted in the response of the West Bank Protection Consortium and flagged by VOICE member WeWorld-GVC in the case study (*above*). It does not mean that there will be a common analysis, given that different actors will have different perspectives.

CASE STUDY:
ACTION AGAINST HUNGER: IMPLEMENTING A NEXUS APPROACH IN TIMBUKTU, MALI

Delivery of sanitation kits to women's organizations in Tombouctou. © Action Against Hunger

Action Against Hunger in Mali has been implementing two complementary projects: a development project (December 2015-September 2019), *Integrated project to strengthen the resilience of rural communities in Kita and Timbuktu circles in Mali*, and a humanitarian project (April 2018-March 2019), *Integrated response to the humanitarian nutritional crises in Timbuktu and Taoudenit, North of Mali*. The two projects were developed based on Action Against Hunger joint analysis and objectives.

The humanitarian project is the third phase of the emergency intervention funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). It focuses on addressing undernutrition, including through the delivery of treatment against severe acute malnutrition of children under five. The development project adopts a complementary multi-sectoral approach (nutrition, food security, etc.) to improve vulnerable populations' resilience and improve the livelihoods of vulnerable populations.

The initiative for these complementary projects came from Sida, which wanted to experiment with this way of working. The development project is contracted locally with the Swedish Embassy in Mali, while the humanitarian project is part of the multi-year humanitarian agreement signed between Sida and Action Against Hunger.

Having complementary humanitarian and development projects does not, however, mean that the two teams necessarily worked easily together. In fact, setting up this dual approach required additional efforts, such as aligning objectives, making localised assessments of humanitarian and development needs, and coordinating two different and separate projects while ensuring that they remained complementary. The humanitarian project was elaborated after the development project started, thus hindering coordination between the two. There was also no formal coordination or consultation between the two projects. In terms of efficiency of this dual approach, project teams support each other in implementing certain activities, such as mass sensitisations and information sharing, and the approach created continuity between humanitarian and development activities.

In the future, having only one multi-year project, with integrated development and emergency objectives and activities, would help to ensure that the project is easier to implement, more effective, and has more impact. A preliminary contextual analysis should assess the relevance of a nexus approach. Action Against Hunger Mali identified that it is important to establish formal coordination mechanisms between the different teams in the case of two distinct projects. It is also important to establish formal consultations and coordination frameworks with all relevant stakeholders.

CASE STUDY:

FUTURE – EXPANDING EXISTING SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS TO MEET HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN MALAWI

Children in a preschool in Zomba District © Jonathan Hyams / Save the Children

An on-going development programme in Malawi, called FUTURE (Food and NUTrition for REsilience) was funded by DEVCO and implemented by a consortium (United Purpose, Save the Children, and Concern Worldwide), in partnership with governmental stakeholders from November 2017 to November 2020. FUTURE delivers a comprehensive package of interventions designed to break the cycle of food and nutrition insecurity in Malawi. It improves the capacity of households to prepare for, withstand, and bounce back during and after shocks. It creates direct synergies with the government's National Social Support Programme (NSSP) and linkages with resilience-building approaches and actors. The FUTURE project provides social cash transfer top-ups through manual payments for households that are fully labour-constrained to enable them to be more resilient to food and climate change shocks.

The EC (ECHO) helped to initiate a programme (August 2018-January 2020), implemented by Save the Children in consortium with Oxfam and Goal, and in partnership with governmental stakeholders, to provide a vertical top-up during the lean season to 2,000 of the beneficiaries of the FUTURE programme, using an innovative e-payment system. The ECHO action, PREPARE (Social Protection and E-Payment for inclusive cash Response), was implemented within the FUTURE framework. The interventions targeted households with pregnant and lactating women and children under 5. It provides an added-value with technological solutions for enhanced delivery of social protection and resilience and reinforces national level learning on Shock Responsive Social Protection.

The complementarity of the DEVCO and ECHO programmes with a vertical top-up mechanism ensured greater resilience of the target population to shocks. Advocacy for cash preparedness for humanitarian response among multiple stakeholders, including the private sector, ensured that system challenges to operational efficiency and the scale-up of cash transfer programmes were addressed. By focusing on strengthening the capacity of the existing social assistance programme, the humanitarian caseload was addressed through the expansion of the on-going programme.

Instead of setting up separate, ad hoc humanitarian responses to address people's chronic vulnerability, the national social protection system is invested in shock responsiveness to expand to meet the emergency needs of the population, as well as build long-term resilience. By having accurate data about the humanitarian needs and a system capable of expanding, the existing system is able to cover humanitarian needs.

2. NGOs NEED TO BE MORE CONSISTENTLY ENGAGED IN NEXUS DISCUSSIONS

NGOs bring a wealth of experience of programming across the nexus. They work with communities and individuals affected by crises. That proximity to affected populations, combined with the diversity and expertise of NGOs working across different sectors, enables them to bring learning and lessons around the nexus. They are often in a good position to help identify gaps between different forms of aid and are familiar with donors' rules and administrative barriers to do better nexus programming.

BARRIERS: To date, NGOs have not been adequately involved in the EU nexus pilots or in the UN's New Way of Working. It will take time to bring in all relevant stakeholders into nexus discussions and to build trust between those partners. As one (non-NGO) interviewee noted, the longer the EU goes without involving partners, the greater the lack of a relationship. With the EU with its Member States as the biggest donor, however, partners must work with the EU. There needs to be a greater level of dialogue around the nexus before it is too late to ensure greater and sustainable engagement and implementation – not only with NGOs, but also EU Member States and the UN.

ENABLERS: Consultations with NGOs should be an on-going process and should include civil society organisations (CSO) at national and local levels. Building trust between partners engaged in the nexus approach – CSOs/LNGOs/NNGOs/INGOs/UN/donors/government – takes time and effort, but when trust is built, it can be an enabling factor that allows programming to be more adaptive and flexible. The fact that those implementing have not been consistently consulted to date in the EU pilots, "makes no sense: how can you have a coherent approach without them?" asked one interviewee. The EU still has an opportunity to involve other partners to ensure that the nexus approach can build on the different strengths of different actors.

3. LOCAL ACTORS MUST BE MEANINGFULLY ENGAGED

For the nexus to be successful, in addition to putting crisis-affected people at the centre, it must also meaningfully engage local and national actors from the beginning. Which local and national actors need to be engaged will depend on the context and the specificity of the programme, but can include local authorities, businesses, influential community actors, and informal, as well as formally established, community groups, NGOs, and others.

When local and national NGOs design programmes, as was the case with the Durable Peace Programme in Myanmar, there is often greater ownership. They are potentially more sustainable and responsive to the needs of affected people, given their roots in the communities.

BARRIERS: While some progress has been made, more support and funding for local and national actors is still not being consistently put into practice, despite commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit and in the Grand Bargain. The Grand Bargain committed to increasing funding and multi-year support for the institutional capacities of local and national responders. In a nexus context, providing such support can ensure that local and national actors are able to respond more quickly when crises strike. At the same time, donors are becoming more risk averse. Even when a certain degree of risk is accepted, for instance, to allow specific operating rules for specific contexts, these risks are usually transferred from the donor to the NGOs. Specific financial and eligibility rules make it difficult to finance local NGOs directly or local NGOs do not have the systems in place to comply with all the different rules required by the donors. This risk aversion can have negative implications on the likelihood of national/local actors being more consistently supported.

ENABLERS: Building on the leadership of local actors can result in programmes that are better designed for what affected people want/need, while respecting humanitarian principles and different actors' ways of working. More advocacy to increase support to local actors can help boost the commitment to localisation from the Grand Bargain and the World Humanitarian Summit) by donors and other international actors. The issue of risk transfer and risk management is an important one for the sector and particularly for INGOs and NNGOs. The recent report from InterAction and Humanitarian Outcomes, *NGOs & Risk: managing uncertainty in local-international partnerships*, underlines that, "The collision between the increased needs (and stated will) for partnering and the growing risk aversion in the sector has distorted national-international partnership dynamics, resulting in greater risks, hindrances and inefficiencies for humanitarian response." (p.4) Ways to ensure that risks are shared – and not simply transferred to NGOs – will be essential so that local/national organisations can be better supported. The InterAction/Humanitarian Outcomes study recommends, among others, a systematic introduction of *force majeure* clauses in contracts and ensuring that those clauses are equally present in sub-granting agreements. The principle of agreeing to local and national organisations' active participation in the nexus needs to be followed with concrete support measures, such as ensuring that information is accessible to them in an appropriate language or covering travel to meetings where key decisions are likely to be made. Ultimately, longer-term financing instruments should be available to strengthen and sustain the organisational capacity of local and national NGOs, if localisation efforts are to be truly supported.

CASE STUDY:
ADRA AND THE RISE NETWORK: EDUCATION IN MYANMAR

Wan mike Kin Kaw village classes. © ADRA

ADRA Germany, ADRA UK, and ADRA Myanmar – in partnership with a range of local organisations that are part of the Rural Indigenous Sustainable Education Network (RISE)[19] – implemented two education projects from May 2016 to May 2019. The first project – Conflict Areas Support for Education (CASE) – ran from May 2016 to April 2018 and was supported by ECHO Children of Peace funding (EU Nobel prize for support to education in conflict areas) to target "conflict-affected communities." The second project – CASE+ – ran from July 2018 to May 2019 with development funds from the EU Delegation and expanded the focus to support ethnic minorities not directly affected by conflict.

ADRA's partnerships with local organisations, the relevance to the current education reform and peace process, and the strong vision of the local organisations for education in conflict and post-conflict areas of the country, all contributed to the funding being received. As donors began to shift more funding to government areas and more accessible areas for aid and development, the funding received was able to address gaps between humanitarian and development funding and the declining funding to Ethnic States and Regions in Myanmar.

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[19] The RISE Network includes the following local organisations: Karen Teachers Working Group (KTWG), Ta'ang Student and Youth Union (TSYU), Lahu Development Network (LDN), Shanan Education Networking Group (SENG), Rural Development Foundation of Shan State (RDFSS), Pa'oh Health Working Committee (PHWC), Karenni Education Department (KnED), Eastern Naga Development Organization (ENDO), Chin Education Network (CEN), Zomi Development Foundation (ZDF), and Karen Women's Organization (KWO).

The programme focuses on the HDP nexus for education and targets conflict-affected/minority population groups. The humanitarian sector, until 2018, had targeted IDPs and development funding tended to fund the more accessible, non-conflict-affected townships. The programme engages Indigenous Providers of Education throughout the country through the RISE network to support education service provision. The programme promotes cohesion; facilitates harmonisation to sustain education services; and reaches out-of-school children. It also promotes meaningful dialogue on education reform issues with the Myanmar Ministry of Education to work towards a coherent and inclusive national education system that ensures Indigenous children's rights to a relevant quality education are upheld.

Initiating the programme with support from ECHO was useful as the humanitarian programmes intrinsically have more flexibility to adapt to the complex environment and allowed for the piloting of approaches, particularly in terms of reaching out-of-school children. Transitioning to EU development funding enabled the inclusion of longer-term developmental approaches and increased engagement with other education actors in the country.

Working with multiple stakeholders has its own challenges, for example, in trying to achieve a balance around ownership of the programme. There was also a tension in finding the right balance between bottom-up planning/implementation and maintaining coherence/strategic alignment. While a centralised approach enables better quality control and harmonisation, de-centralisation enables greater empowerment and ownership by the local RISE network partners.

A localisation approach enabled greater teacher retention and resilience in education programmes in conflict areas. The commitment of resources into these types of programmes generated interest from additional stakeholders and put pressure on other humanitarian and development programmes in the area to be more inclusive of local actors.

C. TRANSLATING THE FRAMEWORK INTO APPROPRIATE TOOLS

The systems, policies, and frameworks need to be in place, with the right actors engaged, but it is equally important to ensure that the necessary tools are in place to allow implementation to move ahead smoothly. There currently remain several barriers that need to be addressed to enable more effective nexus approaches: from the timespan of funding, to the rules and regulations for implementation of funds, to the roles given to key staff to interpret and innovate how to spend the funds.

1. MORE FLEXIBLE, MULTI-YEAR FINANCING IS REQUIRED FOR THE NEXUS

BARRIERS: A persistent challenge from previous nexus-like attempts to better link humanitarian aid and development is around financing mechanisms and systems. While some donors have adapted their financing to allow more flexible and multi-year financing, there are several donors – including UN agencies – that still have quite restrictive financing models. More flexibility is also needed in the EU financing mechanisms and some proposals to create more flexible development financing are on the table. As VOICE noted in a July 2018 report,

> *NGOs have seen opportunities lost due to a lack of suitable and flexible financial instruments – the next MFF provides an opportunity to address this. More multi-year planning and funding in EU humanitarian activities, and the systematic introduction of crisis modifiers in EU development activities are concrete elements that the EU can introduce to enable its partners to effectively contribute to the nexus implementation.[20]*

Some have cited the EU's Madad Fund as an example of a flexible financing mechanism. There are others who have concerns that the EU Trust Funds may not consistently enable adequate respect for humanitarian or development principles, given that there is a perception that the underlying motives for their creation are the EU's political and security interests.

Humanitarian funding timelines are generally quite short and should be longer in protracted crises. ECHO is a signatory of the Grand Bargain and is making efforts, in particular, to move towards multi-year programming in certain regions or via piloting exercises. Multi-year funding is currently very difficult under EU financial rules: ECHO contracts barely exceed 18 months.

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[20] Statement on the next Multiannual Financial Framework, VOICE, July 2018, p.3.

The EU, for example, currently does not have a financial mechanism to operate in the gap between DEVCO grants and ECHO operations. Participants in the Myanmar workshop suggested that more flexible or transitional aid mechanisms could potentially help fill that gap. The current draft proposal for a new development funding instrument – the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – creates a mechanism for rapid response funds for LRRD/resilience measures, with a longer time-frame than humanitarian funding, but which is shorter than programmed development funding. If adopted, it should come into force in 2021. The funding instrument is, however, small and without adequate involvement of all the relevant EU services, including ECHO, risks becoming an opportunity lost to really implement a humanitarian-development nexus approach. Advocating with DEVCO and ECHO headquarters for more flexibility for field level interpretation of the financing instruments, as suggested in the Myanmar workshop, could potentially help remove some of the barriers to financing nexus programmes. NGOs should also explore the options for ensuring the eligibility of DEVCO funding in complex protracted crisis situations, for example, by seeking the necessary exemptions. NGOs are supporting ECHO in making the case for more multi-year funding in humanitarian action to remove this EU financial limitation.

ENABLERS: Flexible, adaptive, multi-year programming and funding based on what affected people and communities suggest or with which they are actively involved, enables better nexus programmes. The inclusion of crisis modifiers can enable a shift from development to humanitarian programming as the context changes. An emergency or contingency budget line can help secure development gains by quickly addressing a new humanitarian crisis. Top-up mechanisms for existing grants can be used to address humanitarian needs when they arise, as is seen in the case study from Malawi (*see above*). Flexibility to shift sub-grants from one recipient to another and flexible financial limits are useful to enable more creative and responsive programming.

Donors enable nexus programming when they respond in a timely and positive way to proposed modifications in activities, which are driven by changes in the context or based on what affected populations see as necessary. For example, if the situation changes and an organisation requests changes to its DEVCO funded programme, ECHO could help assess the changes necessary.

Increased and timely use of crisis modifiers and other elements supporting programming flexibility to frontline responders is needed. It would also be an important concrete element translating the NGO demand for risk sharing and strengthened trust. Given that predictability, timeliness, and flexibility are already meant to be supported through the EU's Framework Partnership Agreement with its humanitarian partners, it should be feasible to implement such changes.

CASE STUDY:
CARE JORDAN: A UNIFIED, HOLISTIC RESPONSE

Syrian refugee family in Jordan. © Josh Estey / CARE

Instead of having separate humanitarian and development programmes, CARE Jordan merged its activities into one holistic programme in 2014. This approach transcends sector-thinking and allows for cross-fertilisation between humanitarian and development approaches to identify the most appropriate response to the needs and vulnerabilities of affected individuals and families, irrespective of their nationality.

CARE's response model uses a combination of social work tools, including vulnerability assessment; information provision; referrals; and case management. These are combined with emergency cash assistance (complementary to UNHCR's monthly cash assistance); livelihood support (e.g. vocational training); psychosocial support activities; and other services designed based on the continuous analysis of evolving needs. The design of the approach is complementary with inter-governmental and UN support to the Government of Jordan, which has focused on expanding the capacities of public services, and with the efforts of INGOs to temporarily fill sector-specific service gaps. CARE's programmes are also gender transformative, rather than simply gender-sensitive.

Given that not all donors have the organisational or policy set-up to provide flexible, longer-term funding, CARE Jordan's project development teams strive to include development components into humanitarian funding proposals and vice versa, when possible. This approach allows CARE to shift resources between humanitarian and development components during the implementation period – following approval by donors – and facilitates coordination between CARE's humanitarian and development teams, given that they operate under the same funding contracts. As a result, they interact on a regular basis at the management and operational levels, mitigating the risk of overlapping activities or duplicating efforts.

Where strictly necessary, CARE also maintains a separation of humanitarian response and development activities, including by firewalling operations between Jordan and Syria. This approach ensures that CARE remains capable of addressing risks and responding to emergencies if, and when, they occur. With updated emergency preparedness planning, CARE ensures the training and capacity-building of staff for emergency response.

Among the lessons learned from CARE Jordan's approach is the need for more advocacy for flexible, long(er)-term funding and a mixed funding portfolio. CARE Jordan's current approach has two- to three-year humanitarian and development funding thanks to the integration of relief components in funding proposals for sustainable development and vice versa.

2. SIMPLIFIED AND HARMONISED CONTRACTUAL FRAMEWORKS: AN ESSENTIAL STEP TO A NEXUS APPROACH

BARRIERS: Different financial instruments and financial oversights contribute to the divide between humanitarian and development responses. Barriers related to financial systems range from 'simple' things – like different exchange rates and procurement rules between ECHO and DEVCO – to more 'complex' issues like different reporting requirements between donors. The impact of working with different sets of rules and requirements should not be underestimated. NGOs working with multiple donors are constantly juggling different donors' requirements, including for visibility, which are sometimes neither respectful nor empowering for crisis-affected people. NGOs report that the number of dedicated staff for compliance, internal control, and audit management is growing faster than for operational staff and dedicated trainings need to be organised regularly for all staff to maintain knowledge, given staff turnover and to adapt to any revision of the rules.

Humanitarian and development funding modalities often present different sets of rules, as well as different timeframes and reporting requirements. Templates to submit concept notes and proposals, as well as those used for reporting purposes (interim and final), are quite different and donors have very varying expectations in terms of frequency of reporting.

At the EU level, eligibility criteria to access EU funding for humanitarian aid and for development assistance are not the same and the whole set of rules and compliance requirements tends to be particularly substantial and not necessarily aligned. However, while the rules should be simplified, and the existing possibilities within the broader EU financial rules should be used to harmonise them as much as possible, ultimately, they do serve different purposes. As such, any changes should not be done at the expense of either Good Humanitarian Donorship or the development effectiveness principles.

As a consequence, translating a nexus approach into the daily work of NGOs with the EU is difficult. It is hard to seek synergies between funding for humanitarian and development programmes in the same areas. In the case of protracted crises, when NGOs seek co-funding arrangements between humanitarian and development donors, ensuring compliance with both sources of funding is often done by using the strictest rules and thereby losing much of the flexibility margins existing in each of the funding streams. Dealing with the complexity of donor requirements – and the risks inherent in those relationships – is a significant barrier to NGOs and their potential role in a nexus approach.

ENABLERS: There is also a need to simplify contractual frameworks. As mentioned above, 'simple' steps could be taken, such as allowing the same exchange rates between ECHO and DEVCO contracts. More 'complex' steps could include allowing for common audits for ECHO and DEVCO projects.

The proposal process for EU funds could also be simplified and streamlined. While a Grand Bargain workstream is testing harmonised reporting templates, EU and ECHO reporting templates could be streamlined and harmonised where possible to avoid double reporting on nexus programmes.

The Less Paper More Aid campaign, led by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) with the support of VOICE and a number of NGOs, identified a useful number of enabling factors for (local and international) NGOs to reduce the administrative burden for programme implementation. It

includes cross reliance on assessments and audits; harmonisation of narrative and financial reporting requirements and templates; alignment of reporting periods and deadlines to avoid re-collection of funds; and multiple data analysis.

The VOICE comparative study on EU donors' conditionalities (2015) when granting funding to NGOs highlights the differences in donors' requirements from exchange rates to visibility demands. It concludes that at the EU level, a simplification and harmonisation of rules could lead to substantial efficiency gains and is a pre-requisite for the localisation agenda.

> *In order to generate inclusiveness and increase the capacity of the sector to meet the growing needs, NGOs urge donors to simplify their administrative requirements (p. 26).*

As noted above, the role of NNGOs in the nexus is key to a successful nexus approach and requires their access to financing instruments. Just as the simplification and harmonisation of donors' funding conditions are paramount to reducing the financial risk that NGOs take when engaging with institutional donors, these changes are also pre-requisites for localisation.

3. HUMAN RESOURCES PLAY A KEY ROLE IN SUCCESSFUL NEXUS PROGRAMMING

BARRIER: Institutional structures and ways of working can be barriers to the nexus approach, particularly if individuals do not take the time to look for solutions to get around those structures and ways of working. Organisational imperatives (e.g. staffing, presence, relationships, competition) can often trump engagement based on principles, but individuals can work to change the focus of institutions.

As observed in some of the case studies, the divide between the humanitarian and the development domains is often engrained in the organisational structures of key actors. Staff sometimes display a certain suspicion around the motives and approaches of the other functional area or label the (triple) nexus as just another buzz-term that will pass and thus undermine its potential positive impact for affected people.

ENABLERS: Flexibility and creativity at an institutional and individual level, combined with political/ personal will or engagement, can play an important role in creative approaches to programming and funding. Ensuring that such 'soft skills' are part of human resources' systems is key. Identifying the right soft skills to implement the nexus will be important for moving ahead. Finding ways to institutionalise cooperative ways of working across departments that have been successful in the pilots, like through standard operating procedures (SOPs), could also help make individual commitments more sustainable.

For example, having a UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator who understands the importance of principled humanitarian response will help ensure that any discussions around collective outcomes respect humanitarian principles. In the case of Action Against Hunger's projects in Mali, having a supportive donor in Sida enabled blending the humanitarian and development projects into a nexus approach. Several case studies flagged ECHO proposed projects that were complementary to on-going DEVCO programmes.

CASE STUDY:
NRC SOMALIA: A COMBINATION OF A CRISIS MODIFIER AND ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING

How Women Entrepreneurs are building resilience. © NRC

The main objective of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Somalia's programme was to support vulnerable displacement-affected populations with emergency support, including durable solutions. All programmes were area-based and integrated with five of NRC's core sector responses. They were implemented concurrently with the same population groups, with protection mainstreamed across all areas. The programme ran from 2017-2018 and received funding from DFID, DEVCO, and ECHO. The primary project was a multi-year development project to which top-ups were added to allow modifications because of emerging needs. Crisis modifiers allowed for the adaptation of the programme to respond to emerging urgent needs. Funds were shifted away from infrastructure works to meet urgent food needs through cash distributions.

Staff understanding of when – and how – to propose changes, as well as staff having a good understanding of the context, were key in making the programme successful. The ability to accommodate both humanitarian and development work within the same population depended on good assessments and flexibility in programme design, as well as good relationships and partnerships. The flexibility and speed with which staff made modifications to the programmes – and the quick response by donors when changes were requested – were key enablers. Logistics and procurement systems needed to be sensitive to the programmatic adaptations to ensure timely adjustments. Staff capacity to understand both humanitarian and development work was essential for the success of this type of nexus programming.

CONCLUSIONS

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS

The time may finally be right for the nexus to be put into practice, given the confluence of various events – although it is not the first time that the right elements seemed to be aligned. If all the essential components are in place to make the necessary changes to enable the nexus approach, there could be enormous gains for those individuals and communities affected by conflicts or disasters. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that the ultimate nexus formula is implemented in a manner that does not compromise humanitarian principles. The nexus must not make humanitarian action subservient to broader development or peace goals, which are focused primarily on States and not necessarily on people or communities. The nexus is about reinforcing each approach's added-value and complementarity: not integrating them. The nexus is not for everyone in every context. After all, the humanitarian-development(-peace) nexus cannot exist without principled humanitarian action and International Humanitarian Law.

From an NGO perspective, there are numerous opportunities and ways to link humanitarian and development responses better. However, linking with the peace aspect requires more caution. Despite often having the right programmatic knowledge and mind-set, NGOs continue to stumble over the insufficient flexibility and/or complexity of donors' administrative conditions and financial instruments. Individuals within institutions can work as champions to find creative ways around the various barriers. They can suggest ways to make the changes necessary to put the systems and frameworks in place to make the nexus approach work while respecting principled humanitarian action.

The nexus approach highlights many of the challenges that are endemic to the humanitarian and development systems. The different languages and principles that various actors follow can make it hard to transition from humanitarian response to development or peace responses. Institutional barriers and financing mechanisms have long been identified as challenges to be addressed. For the nexus to really be put into practice, the existing systems need to adapt and be flexible to truly respond to the needs of crisis-affected people who should be at the centre of responses.

It should be noted that while there is a great deal of attention around the nexus approach, it should be tackled with a sense of realism. More pragmatic timelines and expectations are needed to avoid the nexus approach failing like so many previous LRRD efforts. Due to the global momentum, there is a chance that the nexus is more likely to succeed this time, but only if it is approached deliberately and systematically with the true intention of putting crisis-affected people and communities at the centre of responses and engaging meaningfully with various stakeholders, including NGOs. The changes required to ensure greater complementarity and coordination among actors and the shifts in programming and funding, etc. will take considerable time and effort. For example, nearly two years into the EU nexus pilots, there is still a long way to go to engage with Member States, NGOs, CSOs, and the UN. This engagement needs to be developed much further in order to get to a point of trust and understanding each other. These efforts will take longer and working on different nexus programming approaches will take even more time.

At the same time, some of the current trends must be taken into account. In the context of restrictive measures and counter-terrorism efforts, administrative and financial obstacles are growing. Civil society space is shrinking. Navigating humanitarian assistance in this environment is becoming more complex and resource intensive, while exposing NGOs to considerable risks and increasingly limiting access to crisis-affected populations. Addressing these issues is, in many places, a pre-condition to addressing the barriers to a nexus approach. These issues need to be brought much higher up on the nexus agenda in order to first ensure principled humanitarian action and then to bring development (and peace) efforts and actors into responses much earlier.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ENSURE A NEXUS APPROACH, IN LINE WITH HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES:

The EU and Member States (MS) humanitarian aid policies and tools must remain in line with the Lisbon Treaty, guided by the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, as reconfirmed in 2017, and humanitarian principles. The EU and MS should be very context specific when adopting a nexus approach.

I. In the EU nexus country pilots or in specific contexts, the EU could jointly agree red lines in relation to humanitarian principles to clarify where or when a nexus approach is not suitable or no longer considered appropriate. Due consideration should be given to the potential impact of a nexus approach on maintaining access and humanitarian actors' perception and capacity to stay. From a humanitarian perspective, this agreement would also require transparency about the EU and Member States' political or security objectives in a region.

II. The humanitarian, development, and political departments of EU delegations and Member States should standardise joint conflict analysis processes as a starting point for the nexus across all relevant crises – without delaying a prompt humanitarian response if required.

III. When there is a collective EU engagement in a nexus approach in a crisis, the importance and complementarity of both the bottom-up and top-down approaches to crises needs to be valued and ensured.

IV. Further dialogue is needed on the triple nexus in order to clarify the EU's understanding of peace in the context of the triple nexus and the EU's integrated approach.

V. Maintain the EU's global leadership in life-saving and principled humanitarian aid to crisis-affected populations through its professional humanitarian partners. Principled humanitarian action remains an essential building block and foundation stone to any nexus approach.

2. BUILD ON NGOs' EXPERIENCES AND LEARN LESSONS:

NGOs have a wealth of technical and field experience in LRRD, DRR, resilience, and nexus programming to contribute and practical challenges to share. This experience is of added-value in developing a nexus approach. The EU Delegations in the six nexus pilot countries should include (national/international) NGOs, in addition to EU Member States, the UN, and government, where appropriate, in the further development of joint action plans and their implementation. There is also a need to take the time to learn from each other, including from on-going nexus programming: only then can crisis-affected communities be better supported.

I. The EU and NGOs should consider organising joint NGO/EU workshops in the nexus pilot countries – similar to the one held in Myanmar – to learn from on-going NGO nexus programming and to develop joint ways forward.

II. The relevant EU services and MS must prioritise and take the time to share learning with all relevant actors.

III. The EU and MS must work together and involve all their partners, including NGOs, to identify and use the good practices developed in the six country pilots, before rushing to implement the nexus everywhere where the EU hopes to implement the EU's Integrated Approach.

3. ADAPT FINANCIAL FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS TO A NEXUS APPROACH:

EU and MS bilateral and multilateral aid must take the SDG's commitment to 'leave no one behind' into account. The EU and MS should explore ways to adapt their financial frameworks and tools to enable programmes that consider outcomes and theories of change so as to better meet and adapt to the needs of crisis-affected people and communities.

I. In most protracted crises and fragile situations, the EU's development interventions must start earlier and link up better to other EU engagements. The perceived gap between development and humanitarian aid can only be overcome if development responses come in earlier.

II. In order to achieve the desired outcome(s) and as a reflection of the risks in any specific context, donors should adapt their expectations of results to the specific context, and explore different partnerships, especially with NGOs and local actors.

III. EU and MS development assistance must be made more flexible to respond to emerging or deteriorating situations of crisis through the use of crisis modifiers, top-up mechanisms, and dedicated financing tools, such as Trust Funds, in order to support the best-placed partners to step up their engagement.

IV. The proposed new European Development instrument (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – NDICI) is an important opportunity to adapt the EU's tools for a nexus approach. The corresponding allocation for 'resilience of states, communities and individuals and LRRD' in the rapid response pillar is crucial, but also small. To ensure it functions in the best way possible for the nexus, it must include humanitarian expertise in all decision-making around its use. As a complement, the NDICI should foster a development culture with more flexibility to respond to operational needs, which anchors resilience programming and DRR across its geographic programmes and supports the work of NGOs at community level even more.

National and international NGOs have shared experiences of the complexity involved, and resources required, to use different EU and MS funding mechanisms. They identify the diversity of practices, rules, project proposals, and reporting formats of these funding mechanisms as key obstacles to effective nexus programming.

I. ECHO, DEVCO, and MS should simplify and harmonise project proposals, rules, and reporting across the different financing mechanisms, capitalising on the flexibility in the 2018 revision of the EU Financial Regulation.

II. EU and MS humanitarian aid policies and tools must better reflect the Grand Bargain commitments, especially for quality (multi-year and un-earmarked) funding and planning, and for localisation.

4. ALL RELEVANT ACTORS NEED TO WORK TOWARDS A CULTURAL SHIFT:

Where relevant, humanitarian, development, and peace actors who can contribute to a nexus approach to a greater or lesser extent, need to engage with each other, recognising that it takes time to build trust, find flexible ways to respond to the needs of crisis-affected populations, and to ensure that risks and accountability are shared. Management within organisations/aid departments/foreign ministries should strongly support this process in the long-term by undertaking the following:

I. Exploring incentives to work together across departments; and

II. Responding openly to requests from their colleagues to fund innovative or more joined-up approaches to work in a nexus approach.

ANNEX 1: MYANMAR WORKSHOP REPORT AND AGENDA

NGO/EU WORKSHOP IN MYANMAR, 14-15 MARCH 2019
WORKSHOP REPORT

BACKGROUND

As part of a broader study that VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is carrying out on how NGOs engage with the European Union's nexus approach, a workshop was held with NGOs and EU representatives in Myanmar: one of the EU's six nexus pilot countries. The workshop was held over two days. The first day brought together around 20 national, local, and international NGOs. The second day brought those same NGOs together with representatives from the EU (ECHO and DEVCO), EU Member States, and representatives from OCHA and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator's office.

INTRODUCTION

The workshop was intended to contribute to developing a dialogue between NGOs, the EU, and the broader UN related to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDPN). From the perspective of VOICE, the workshop could help showcase and highlight the opportunities and challenges, as well as the enabling environment required, to work on nexus programming. It also provided an occasion to consider the usefulness of the nexus approach and what it means for principled humanitarian action. While the "nexus" comes up frequently at different meetings in Myanmar, there had not been an opportunity for NGOs to collectively engage on the subject. As such, the workshop was a welcome first discussion on the nexus in Myanmar that brought together the range of different actors.

From the EU perspective, the workshop was seen as a timely opportunity to engage with NGOs, given that the EU in Myanmar was still at the "maturation stage" when it came to work on the nexus. Myanmar faces a human rights crisis, which has humanitarian and development consequences. For responses to be effective in such a context, a nexus type of approach is required. Within the EU Delegation, three main areas of focus had been identified within the nexus approach:

1. Forced displacement;
2. Nutrition and livelihoods; and
3. Natural disasters and resilience.

The EU's focus, to date, in Myanmar, had been to make sense of the nexus and develop a *Nexus Action Plan* to get the political, humanitarian, and development parts of the EU working together. A next step was to work with EU Member States around the nexus. From the EU's perspective, NGOs – as implementers of programmes – would have important answers to the questions around how to operationalise the nexus. NGOs were invited to provide constructive criticism and to suggest creative solutions to move forward, without focusing too much on the funding side, which is, of course, a key concern.

WORKSHOP PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The first day examined NGO experiences with nexus approaches and identified some of the enablers and barriers to nexus programming. The first day's findings were discussed with the broader group on the second day, which then led to jointly developing a set of proposed next steps.
The workshop's objectives included the following:

1. Identify ways that NGOs can better engage with the EU's nexus approach in Myanmar moving forward;
2. Highlight existing good practices of the nexus approach being implemented by NGOs;
3. Identify the challenges and opportunities of working in a nexus approach in Myanmar;
4. Consider potential thematic and geographic areas where the nexus approach could be usefully applied in Myanmar; and
5. Recommend potential changes that may be needed to enable a nexus approach in terms of funding instruments or other EU programmatic approaches in Myanmar or more broadly.

This report provides some of the main points of discussion and next steps arising from the two days. Elements and findings of the workshop also inform the broader VOICE nexus study.

NGO/EU WORKSHOP IN MYANMAR, 14-15 MARCH AGENDA

DAY 1: NGO WORKSHOP (14 MARCH 2019)

08:30-09:00	Registration
09:00-09:30	Welcome and Introductions of Participants (plenary)

- Welcome by co-hosts VOICE and EU and INGO Forum
- Why this workshop at this time? Introduction to VOICE and its work on the nexus and the intended outcomes of the workshop
- Introduction of Participants
- Overview of the workshop agenda over the two days and objectives

Expected outcome: Understand the objectives of the workshop and why the workshop presents an opportunity to better engage with the EU (and UN) on the nexus approach at this point in time, as well the opportunity to advocate vis-à-vis the EU in Brussels.

09:30-10:00	The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (plenary)

- Global developments: The EU's Nexus Approach and the UN's New Way of Working ("NWOW") [VOICE/Consultant, someone from the EU or UN]
- How the global developments around the nexus and NWOW are being translated to date in Myanmar [EU/UN/INGO Forum]

Expected outcomes: Understand the recent developments at the global level and their impact on Myanmar to date and in future.

10:00-12:15   NGO Programming across the Nexus (group work and plenary)
- Sharing of examples of nexus programming
- What were positive/negative aspects of these examples?
- What were the enablers or barriers to the nexus programming?
- What lessons were learned from the programming that can be replicated or built upon?
- What roles did donors play that was helpful or less helpful?

Expected outcomes: Capture examples of successful (and less successful) nexus programming, as well as identify concrete challenges and opportunities that nexus programming presents.

12:15-13:00   Break

13:00-14:30   Exploring the Enablers and Barriers to the Nexus Approach in Myanmar (group work and plenary)
- Building on the examples discussed in the morning, identify and prioritise the key enablers to nexus programming and how those factors can be achieved.
- Identify and examine the barriers to nexus programming and explore what can be done to reduce or remove those barriers

Expected outcomes: Develop a prioritised list of enablers for nexus programming and what needs to be done to achieve them, as well as define what barriers need to be addressed and start defining what could be done to remove those barriers.

14:30-14:45   Break

14:45-16:00   Developing Recommendations and Next Steps for Engagement with EU Donors and the UN (group work and plenary)
- Building upon the previous sessions outcomes, develop clear recommendations for the EU, its Member States, and the UN (in terms programmatic, financing, geographical priorities, etc.).
- Develop a proposed set of next steps for engagement with the EU, its Member States, and the UN in Myanmar and in Brussels for discussion on Day 2.

Expected outcomes: A clear set of recommendations and proposed next steps for engagement with the EU, its Member States, and the UN in Myanmar and in Brussels.

16:00-16:30   Wrap Up and Agreement on Day 2's presentation/format (plenary)
- Summary of the day and the recommendations and next steps to be proposed on Day 2.
- Agreement on who will present what elements on Day 2, how, and when.
- Thank you and closing

16:30   Close of Workshop

DAY 2: EU/NGO WORKSHOP (15 MARCH 2019)

08:30-09:00   Registration

09:00-09:30   Welcome and Introductions
- Welcome by co-hosts VOICE and EU and INGO Forum
- Why this workshop at this time?
  - VOICE's work on the nexus and purpose of the two days of workshops (5 min)
- EU's nexus approach and the EU's priorities in Myanmar (10-15 min)
- Introduction of Participants
- Overview of the day's objectives

Expected outcome: Understand the objectives of the day and why the workshop presents an opportunity to better engage with the EU (and UN) on the nexus approach at this point in time, as well the opportunity to advocate vis-à-vis the EU in Brussels.

09:30-10:00   Overview of the Outcomes of Day 1 (plenary)
- Recommendations and proposed next steps for engagement

Expected outcome: Clear understanding by new participants of the outcomes, recommendations, and proposed next steps from the NGO workshop

10:00-11:30   Discussing the Recommendations and Proposed Next Steps for Engagement (group work)
- What recommendations are realistic or not? How can the unrealistic ones be changed to be more realistic?
- Are the proposed next steps for engagement realistic or do elements need to be adjusted to be more realistic?
- Are there elements that were missed that need to be included in terms of recommendations or next steps for engagement?

Expected outcome: Examining and suggesting adjustments to make the recommendations and proposed next steps achievable and realistic

11:30-12:30   Agreeing on Recommendations and Next Steps for Engagement (plenary)
- Take the outcomes of the group work and agree in plenary on the way forward

Expected outcome: Agreeing on a collective engagement strategy on the nexus in Myanmar and recommendations to be taken forward in Myanmar and in Brussels

12:30-13:00   Wrap Up and Closing
- Summary of the day and next steps
- Thank you and closing

13:00   End of workshop and Lunch

NGO GOOD PRACTICES OF THE NEXUS APPROACH

The workshop deliberately did not attempt to reach a consensus on what comprises nexus programming, as finding consensus around a common definition risked dominating the workshop. There were also no criteria imposed on what constitutes a "good practice" of the nexus approach, given that it was an initial conversation. Further down the line, there could be discussions around trying to define, 'What is good nexus programming?' The result is that some of the examples highlighted by NGOs as examples of nexus programming could be considered to be examples of good programming rather than nexus programming. Organisations self-identified the enabling environment and factors, as well as the barriers they faced in implementing a nexus approach.

Before discussing the different types of nexus programming being undertaken by NGOs in Myanmar, the example of the Durable Peace Programme (DPP) was presented as a long-standing programme in Kachin and Northern Shan, which is being implemented by a consortium of national and international NGOs. Other examples highlighted by NGOs of good nexus programming covered different regions and sectors, including: education in Kachin and Northern Shan; a rights-based empowerment approach; and an area-based rehabilitation approach in Kachin. (*See Annex 1 B for more details of some of the good practices identified.*)

The Nexus workshop in Myanmar

IDENTIFYING THE ENABLERS AND BARRIERS TO A NEXUS APPROACH

Based on the exchanges of experiences in implementing a nexus approach, it was clear that there were a number of common challenges in bridging the humanitarian-development-(peace) divide. Among the most common barriers identified were donor approaches and demands; organisational cultures; and institutional and systemic ways of working.

Many organisations are trying to do some elements related to nexus programming. It was consistently found that the donor, organisational, and institutional barriers, which, at times, prevent genuinely putting people and communities at the centre of responses is one of the most fundamental challenges facing more nexus-like programming. Further exploration of enablers and barriers led to a number of agreed areas, some of which fall into both categories, depending on how they are approached.

ENABLERS:

1. **Putting affected people and communities at the centre of responses:** Any nexus approach must be built upon the perspectives, ideas, and views of people and communities, who know their needs best, with targeting strategies to ensure the inclusion of the most vulnerable.

2. **Joint analysis of the context:** Joint analysis of a context is necessary before embarking on a successful nexus approach. Joint analysis requires sharing information and respecting principles and the ways of working between humanitarian, development, and peace actors. In the case of the EU and governments, they also have the added element of their political and foreign policy sides, which can contribute to the context analysis.

3. **Building on the leadership of local actors:** By working with local actors and building on their leadership – given their close connections with communities – programmes can be better designed for what people want/need, while respecting principles and the ways of working of different actors. Local leadership strengthens accountability and trust with communities, and enables effective programming in a very difficult and politicised context.

4. **Flexible, adaptive (creative), multi-year programming and funding:** Programming and funding for programmes must be based on what people and communities propose. Funding over multiple years has proven to be beneficial to learn from previously implemented activities; to increase joint programming; and to build trust between consortium partners. For example, pre-defining the areas of focus for the EU's nexus approach does not really allow for putting people at the centre: they may have other priority areas that would benefit from a nexus approach.

   • **DEVCO calls for proposals allow for the inclusion of crisis modifiers**, which can enable a shift from development to humanitarian programming as the context changes, although the overly prescriptive requirements of the call to proposals are seen as a barrier.

   • Including an **emergency budget line or contingency line in budgets** that allows shifting to an emergency response provides much-needed flexibility.

- **Top up mechanisms for existing grants are helpful if humanitarian needs arise**: They should be considered more broadly so that the whole proposal/contract process does not have to be repeated when an emergency response is required.

- **Flexibility to shift sub-grants** from one recipient to another are useful, but more flexible limits are required to enable more creative and responsive programming.

- **More appropriate and flexible visibility requirements:** Some visibility requirements are neither respectful nor empowering, but INGOs and the EU (as well as other donors) often insist on displaying their logos prominently, for example, on people's houses or on toilets that have been constructed. The strict rules around visibility need to be made more flexible. For example, a central board could indicate which donors/NGOs have contributed what resources in a particular area.

- **Activities driven by context changes:** Finding ways to work across humanitarian and development funding by having donors respond positively to changes. For example, if the situation changes and an organisation requests changes to its DEVCO funded programme, bring in the ECHO person to help assess the changes required.

- **Donors** must be open to risk and sharing accountability, but that requires trust.

5. **Building trust between partners:** LNGOs/NNGOs/INGOs/donors: Building trust takes time and effort, but when trust is built, it can be an enabling factor that allows for programming to be more adaptive and flexible.
   - The good working relationships that implementing partners have with DEVCO and ECHO should be used to work towards the adaptation of programmes with more of a nexus approach.

6. **Programmatic coordination of internal humanitarian and development programmes, complemented by staff with experience of both:** Coordinating internally between humanitarian, development, and peace programmes requires time and understanding of the different principles and ways of working involved. Having individuals with experience working across the different elements can enhance such internal coordination.

   - In some organisations, combining humanitarian and development departments, developing joint strategies, and investing in shared human resources has helped with better nexus programming.

7. **Coordination and deep discussions across humanitarian-development-peace organisations are needed:** There is currently no forum that brings together the different actors to discuss the nexus approach in a concerted, thoughtful manner. Donors have discussed the nexus. The UN has discussed the nexus, the 'new way of working', and Strategic Frameworks for Kachin and Northern Shan, but there is no forum that brings donors and the UN together with NGOs and which goes beyond simple information sharing.

- NGOs, ECHO, and DEVCO should share relevant information with all parties on the nexus (between themselves and with external parties). NGOs can share their experience of working on the nexus with ECHO and DEVCO to help influence their thinking and funding.

- Use existing platforms or working groups, e.g. Southeast Working Group (in existence since 2015), to ensure regional and sub-regional discussions around the nexus are integrated to enable better coordination among different actors.

8. **Flexibility and creativity at an institutional and individual level combined with political/ personal will or engagement.**

- **Individuals matter:** Individuals can play an important role in creative approaches to programming and funding, for example, in exploring the existing flexibility in donor contracts or navigating internal institutional systems. When those individuals leave, however, there is a risk that someone with the same creative approach will not replace them. Ensuring that such 'soft skills' are part of human resources' systems is key.

- **ECHO and DEVCO:** Consult each other on calls for proposals and review proposals based on their respective expertise to ensure that humanitarian principles are respected and to consider ways to jointly fund nexus proposals.

- Combine efforts to better communicate what the EU is doing: many local organisations were unaware of the EU's work on the nexus, for example.

9. **Working on a thematic area**: Certain cross-cutting themes, like gender-based violence (GBV) or safeguarding make it easier to shift from a humanitarian to development response and vice versa.

The Nexus workshop in Myanmar

BARRIERS

1. **Putting affected people and communities at the centre of responses:** While it is a mantra in most organisations, the reality is such that it does not always happen, given various constraints (organisational, individual, donor, institutional, etc.). There is a risk that the nexus can become less linked to the needs of people and more linked to the needs of institutions.

   • Donor portfolios are imposed and do not put people at the centre.
     - Logframes do not allow the flexibility to respond to the needs of people and humanitarian crises that might occur during programme cycles: theories of change are better.
     - Lighter systems for adaptation and approval of changes to programmes are needed.
     - Donors need to do more to understand and communicate changes in a specific crisis/context with their headquarters.

   • The NGO community needs to advocate and communicate more on putting people at the centre and help take lessons learned forward.

2. **Joint analysis can be challenging, given different principles and ways of working:** The principles by which humanitarian actors, development actors, and peace actors work are different and sometimes may not align. For example, NGOs will work with communities to meet humanitarian needs, while development actors may work with government actors who may have contributed to the situation driving those humanitarian needs. Humanitarian actors and many development actors will have a people-centred approach (at least in theory). Many donors will support the development priorities of government actors, which may not have the same approach as other actors.

3. **Risk aversion/lack of sharing of accountability/responsibility:** Increasingly, risk, accountability, and responsibility are transferred to NGOs from donors. The nexus inherently implies taking risks, which must be shared across donors and those implementing programmes. Particular consideration must be given to the risk absorption capacity of local NGOs.

4. **Different principles:** Humanitarian principles and the legal basis for humanitarian response can be quite different to the 'principles' that are used for development (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals, human rights, the Paris principles). These different principles mean different approaches and understandings of what may be the best response.

5. **Different mandates:** Whether between humanitarian and development actors or between humanitarian and development donors (e.g. ECHO and DEVCO or within a donor government), the different mandates of actors mean that they work with different approaches and partners in terms of what activities they will fund and for how long.

6. **Financial systems:** Different financial instruments and financial oversights drive the divide between humanitarian and development responses. There are numerous barriers related to financial systems ranging from more ´simple´ things, like different exchange rates between ECHO and DEVCO and procurement rules, to more 'complex' issues like reporting requirements. While it is difficult to change from Myanmar, these are issues that should be addressed at the Brussels level.

- Humanitarian funding time lines are generally quite short and should be longer, particularly where there are links to the nexus.

- The different exchange rates used for ECHO and DEVCO contracts should be streamlined.

- Analyse (at Brussels level) the existing EU and ECHO instruments to seek flexibilities to support nexus programme. Consider how different EU financing instruments can be combined with ECHO funds and consider combined reporting. Financing instruments should not just be for INGOs, but also for NNGOs.

- ECHO and EU colleagues should advocate with their own HQs for more flexibility in the interpretation of financing instruments. The EU, for example, does not have a financial mechanism to operate in the grey area between DEVCO grants and ECHO operations. A flexible or transitional aid mechanisms could help fill that gap.

- NGOs should have discussions with their headquarters about the eligibility of funding in complex protracted crisis situations: are they seeking the right exemptions (e.g. on registration of organisations)? Does the EU have to ask partners to suspend all programmes if the context changes, given that it is a huge constraint to nexus programming?

- Increased support from ECHO and other EU financing instruments for early recovery.

- Allow combined ECHO and EU audits.

7. **Coordination mechanisms are not bringing different actors together:** Development generally does not have inclusive coordination structures that are comparable to humanitarian coordination. The Coordination Partners Group (CPG), which brings together development donors and the UN, has a nexus work stream, but there is limited engagement of NGOs. The UN Country Team, which addresses development matters, does not include NGOs. There are few opportunities for discussions on the nexus approach and to coordinate between the humanitarian and development coordination forums in-country.

8. **Institutions/Individuals:** Institutional structures and ways of working and individuals can be barriers to the nexus approach if they are not creative and take the time to look for solutions. Organisational imperatives (e.g. staffing, presence, relationships, competition) can often trump engagement based on principles, but individuals can work to change the focus of institutions.

9. Localisation is neither being put into practice extensively nor meeting targets despite commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain.

10. Lack of consultation with NGOs on the EU nexus pilot and three areas of focus:

- Consult NGOs and make it an on-going process of consultation, including by strengthening and consulting civil society organisation (CSO) coordination platforms.

- Consult at state and national level to ensure context specificity and the participation of more voices and linkages to the sector working groups.

NEXT STEPS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Following further discussions, a number of concrete recommendations and next steps were developed with all workshop participants to be taken forward in Myanmar, as well as at the Brussels level (*see Annex 1 A*). It was also emphasised that NGOs looked forward to being engaged by the EU as they developed their priorities and action plans under the previously identified three focus areas (forced displacement, nutrition, and natural disasters).

MOVING BEYOND INSTRUMENTS AND SYSTEMS

The recommendations and next steps were very much focused on instruments and systems. The programmatic elements of the nexus would need to be looked at further down the line. It will also be important to bring in the UN, other donors, and the government into the discussions at some point. It was proposed that a mapping of who is doing what, where, and when in the contested areas would be necessary to understand where funds are going over time, in order to join up the dots between different efforts related to humanitarian, development, and peace.

STRENGTHEN NGO INFLUENCE ON THE EU NEXUS

A recommendation was made for VOICE and CONCORD to consider joining forces on the nexus in Brussels. Given that DEVCO's primary NGO interlocutor is CONCORD, and that the two networks have many members in common, those NGOs could encourage CONCORD to engage with the nexus discussions. A joint VOICE-CONCORD position and advocacy strategy would strengthen NGO influence.

MOVING BEYOND THE EU

While the workshop and next steps were very much focused on the EU's nexus approach, it was noted that the conversations would need to look eventually at how EU Member States approach the nexus and how their systems and instruments enable or create barriers to the nexus approach.

CONCLUSION AND FOLLOW-UP

The workshop in Myanmar was meant to start a conversation on the nexus approach in Myanmar. In substance, however, many of the issues discussed have been raised before, more recently during the World Humanitarian Summit and in The Grand Bargain. The nexus approach brings to the surface many of the challenges that are endemic to aid: institutional barriers, financing mechanisms, individuals, different language and principles, and more. All of these issues make it challenging to seamlessly transition from humanitarian to development programming.

If there is to be a true shift towards ensuring no gap between humanitarian and development programming, the systems need to shift and centre around people's needs in a timely flexible adaptable manner. There are opportunities to be creative within institutions and to work with champions who can see ways around the various barriers. Many of these barriers are not new, but as they are linked to the nexus, there is an opportunity to use the nexus to make the case for change.

There was a commitment from the organisers to ensure that the dialogue would continue with concrete actions and not be just another workshop without follow-up.

Both NGO and EU colleagues stated that they should be accountable and committed to meet in 6 months to see what has been done, with a check-in requested from VOICE in the interim.

Manisha Thomas, Independent Consultant

ANNEX 1A:
NEXT STEPS/ ENGAGEMENT ON THE (EU) NEXUS APPROACH

PROPOSALS FROM THE NGO/EU WORKSHOP IN MYANMAR, 14-15 MARCH 2019

WHO/WHAT	WHERE	WHEN	HOW	OTHER/RELATED
VOICE/ CONCORD	Brussels	ASAP	Advocacy around the "traditional" mechanisms to move more towards a more transitional funding mechanism (e.g. like Germany's). Address the following: • top-ups • responsive • direct-granting • sub-grant ceiling	• VOICE and CONCORD should join voices and take this forward in Brussels
EU and Chair	Yangon	ASAP	• Reinvigorate the CPG's nexus work stream	
EU and other donors	Yangon	In the interim	• Continue to consider use of multi-donor funds (not trust funds) as a modality for nexus and to get around institutional funding restrictions	

WHO/WHAT	WHERE	WHEN	HOW	OTHER/RELATED
NGOs	Myanmar	At contracting stage	• NGOs to engage more with DEVCO more for "protracted crisis" declaration, which provides the justification for flexibility in contract negotiations	Having an institutionalised tool for DEVCO to work in protract ted crises would be an interesting opportunity to explore in Brussels
			• Openness to adaptive log frames rooted in theories of change and NGOs to include in special conditions	Hope there will be support from the donors to be more flexible and adaptable log frames that are open to theories of change
DEVCO Call for Proposals			• Add contingency/ crisis modifier in DEVCO funded projects • If contingency/crisis modifiers are already used/applied, ECHO and DEVCO should coordinate more on humanitarian components of DEVCO programmes	
Applicants/ NGOs/INGOs			• When contingency is activated, ensure quick situation/context updates • Triggers (e.g. safe/ unsafe, stable, etc.): to be systematised and streamlined, but light	
ECHO/ DEVCO	Regional basis		• The 3 nexus themes identified by the EU should not exclude other contextual critical humanitarian needs: continue the conversation to allow for adjusting based on the needs • Should not be too prescriptive	

WHO/WHAT	WHERE	WHEN	HOW	OTHER/RELATED
ECHO/ DEVCO			• Share the EU Nexus Action Plan (including national priorities) • Provide a short overview of the nexus in an easy to understand way	
EU and humanitarian/ development partners (local/ national international)	Regional basis	Regularly	• Regular coordination to ensure the premises/ analysis are relevant and agree a response plan	
DEVCO			• To rigorously apply the due diligence/safe- guarding in protracted contexts	Helps to speak the lan- guage of development actors and humanitarian actors
ECHO/ DEVCO			• Adaptable/contextual response plan – allows for flexibility if there are humanitarian needs to be met	Being introduced by Metta
ECHO/ DEVCO/ Donors			• Joint missions will help learning around the nexus and context	
ECHO/ DEVCO/ Donors			• Identify champions because change really comes from individuals – put in place SOPs so that coordination does not disappear • Document/Systematise ways of working to help bridge the divide (SOPs at country-level)	Operational change can lead to institutional change
EU/ECHO and nexus pilots	Projection implemen- tation	Regular evaluation cycles	• Need to see more proof/evidence that nexus approach is work- ing: the 4 DEVCO pilots should share approaches and lessons • Ask ourselves is the nexus approach is working in the context so have contextualised evidence	• DPP is willing to contribute to the exercise • Meet with other nexus pilot projects quarterly to share information and learn

WHO/WHAT	WHERE	WHEN	HOW	OTHER/RELATED
EU/ECHO and nexus pilots and nexus work stream	Yangon	Quarterly	• Sharing of approaches	
EEAS/DEVCO/ECHO	Brussels	ASAP	• Identify Lessons learned from blended financing instruments – analysis of nexus programming	
EU and ECHO partners/implementers	Myanmar	Ad hoc • June 2019	• Joint monitoring visits by EU political/ECHO/DEVCO	
EU and ECHO (other donors)	Yangon	ASAP	• Potential nexus fund given that the current financial instruments do not exist (justification is needed)	
Donors and partners	Myanmar	Whenever launch takes place	• Consultations when funds are launched	
EU	Myanmar	ASAP	• Principle setting—shared positions, if possible, but at least some red lines, which could show intent and help shift the focus of EU engagement	• Trade has not even been discussed yet… • E.g. redlines on camp closures
EU and partners	Myanmar	ASAP	• EU Nexus Action Plan – NGOs would like to contribute to help operationalise it	• Find a format to work on operationalising the EU Nexus Action Plan

ANNEX 1B:
EXAMPLES OF NGO (EU) NEXUS PROGRAMMING IN MYANMAR

The following highlights some of the self-identified examples of NGO nexus programming in Myanmar that were discussed during the workshop.

THE DURABLE PEACE PROGRAMME (DPP)

Overview: The DPP works across the triple nexus (humanitarian-development-peace). Started in 2014 by the Joint Strategy Team (a group of local NGOs (LNGOs)), they later asked international NGOs (INGOs) to join. An integrated context analysis has been part of how the DPP is addressing humanitarian-development-peace challenges in a holistic way. The four LNGO and three INGO members of the consortium are diverse, with some being focused on humanitarian response, others on development, and others on peace, allowing each to contribute their own area of expertise. Currently in its second phase, the DPP has received EUR 19 million over 7 years from the EU. The EU's donor engagement has also been supportive in trying to consider the several theories of change and advocacy.

One of the ways in which the DPP has implemented a nexus approach has been by focusing on several outcome areas and working with host communities and displaced people, including:

- **Durable solutions and resilience** to address the consequences of displacement in Kachin and Northern Shan by providing internally displaced persons (IDPs) with information and by raising awareness to enable voluntary returns.
- **Livelihoods and income generation** for IDPs and conflict affected communities to ensure that they can increase their incomes.
- **Peacebuilding and social cohesion,** which includes work on interfaith dialogue at the local level, (para)legal support and complaints desks, and training peace builders who can influence the national peace process.

- **Gender equality and GBV prevention,** which was added as a standalone outcome in the second phase because mainstreaming gender in the first phase was inadequate. The DPP focuses on addressing national laws related to gender and responding to victims of gender-based violence (GBV).
- **Capacity-building and supporting local civil society** has meant that 27 organisations have been supported to work together, from small-scale community development associations to those influencing the national peace process and development agenda.

Self-identified Enablers/Barriers to the Nexus Approach: In addition to the diversity of the consortium, the positive donor engagement, and the long-standing programme, the fact that the DPP was set up and led by local organisations, which then asked INGOs to support and joint the programme, has been a positive enabling factor for the programme. The DPP agreed to centre its programme decision-making on the preferences of displaced people. This focus helped to mitigate the risks associated with engaging with national peace processes, which are inherently political, but need to be balanced with humanitarian principles and development practices. As such, the localisation agenda is seen as central to the nexus approach.

KACHIN BAPTIST CONVENTION (KBC)

Overview: The Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) started working first on community development before integrating humanitarian activities during the conflict. They decided to shift from a "receiving" model of humanitarian aid to a "self-reliance" model and so combined their humanitarian and development programmes to have integrated programmes. For example, they provide training in education committees, not just providing education kits. KBC provides training on wiring and repairs for shelters that they build. In addition to food distributions, KBC also supports home gardening programmes to ensure adequate nutrition.

Self-identified Enablers/Barriers to the Nexus Approach: One of the challenges KBC faced, having many donors as well as many implementing partners and sector programmes, was similar trainings and too much overlap. They were finding they had to fragment their programmes to fit the components into different donors' existing priorities, timeframes, and expectations. The organisation recently reformed to have a new oversight structure that combines the expertise of the humanitarian and development departments, which helps colleagues further understand and protect humanitarian principles.

PEOPLE IN NEED (PIN) WITH THE KACHIN BAPTIST CONVENTION (KBC)

Overview: People in Need (PIN), working with the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), addresses the gaps in standard programmes focused education in emergencies (EiE) in Kachin State. Given that humanitarian funding cycles for education programmes are too short, they have blended education for IDP children (i.e. access to education (student kits, rehabilitating infrastructure, and promoting enrolment) and quality education (teacher training and protection) components) with a livelihoods component. Through Technical and Vocational Training and Education (TVET) and 'life' skills development, they provide IDP children and youth (ages 15-25) who may not – or could not – access education with apprenticeship schemes and business skills and 'life' skills training. The project relies on building partnerships with the private sector to generate livelihoods opportunities.

Self-identified Enablers/Barriers to the Nexus Approach: The fact that KBC is one of the largest humanitarian aid providers in Kachin and Northern Shan, combined with PIN's technical and programmatic capacity, means that they have been able to find creative solutions around aid limitations and find local solutions through regular coordination, frequent field visits, and information exchange.

RIGHTS-BASED EMPOWERMENT APPROACH

Overview: The Rights-Based Empowerment Approach is people-centred, integrated, and focused on rights-based empowerment. The Lutheran World Federation works with a broad range of partners to facilitate processes that enable people to have the capacity and confidence to manage their own affairs and to close gaps between stakeholders (duty bearers and the marginalised/vulnerable populations). The programme links education in emergency programmes with the country's education strategies and policies. The programme also engages constructively with rights holders at various levels, which is essential for a rights-based approach. Such an approach takes time and requires listening to people and ensuring that the priority is people first, then organisations, and finally donors. The rights-based approach helps to promote evidence-based advocacy by identifying local issues and connecting them to the policy level.

Self-identified Enablers/Barriers to the Nexus Approach: Short-term emergency funding was helpful to address the initial emergency, but to be most useful, it needs to be followed by longer-term recovery and development funding, which is conflict sensitive and addresses root causes.

WORLD VISION'S AREA REHABILITATION PROGRAMME (ARP) IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

Overview: World Vision's ARP is being implemented over 5 years in Wingmaw township in Kachin. The ARP is a flexible, multi-sector programming model that starts with core funding over 3-5 years to address immediate needs, while also bringing together local community leaders and groups to enable a community-led vision for development. The ARP builds on WV's previous humanitarian work and can address emergency needs, recovery/medium-term needs, as well as longer-term needs. In Myanmar, the ARP ensures conflict sensitivity while focusing on rebuilding livelihoods, water resources, health, and education. The ARP concept recognises that in order to address poverty and vulnerability in fragile contexts, the root causes must be addressed.

The ARP seeks to confront the challenges most often faced in fragile contexts: the instability of funding streams and poor project integration. The Kachin ARP focuses on three main outcomes related to child protection, WASH, and livelihoods by working through three main spheres of influence: individuals and communities' livelihoods and well-being; the public sphere; and the private sphere.

Self-identified Enablers/Barriers to the Nexus Approach: The programme is flexible and can be adapted to a changing context: it can be used for emergency response or evolve into a longer-term development programme. The ARP is not solely dependent on donor funding: private sources fund the programme, which are then used to leverage other donor funding. As such, the scale of the programme will rely on other donor funding. The 3-5 year commitment allows for continuity in relationships with the community and other local stakeholders and enables greater community engagement and capacity strengthening, leading to greater self-reliance, resilience, and sustainability.

ANNEX 2:
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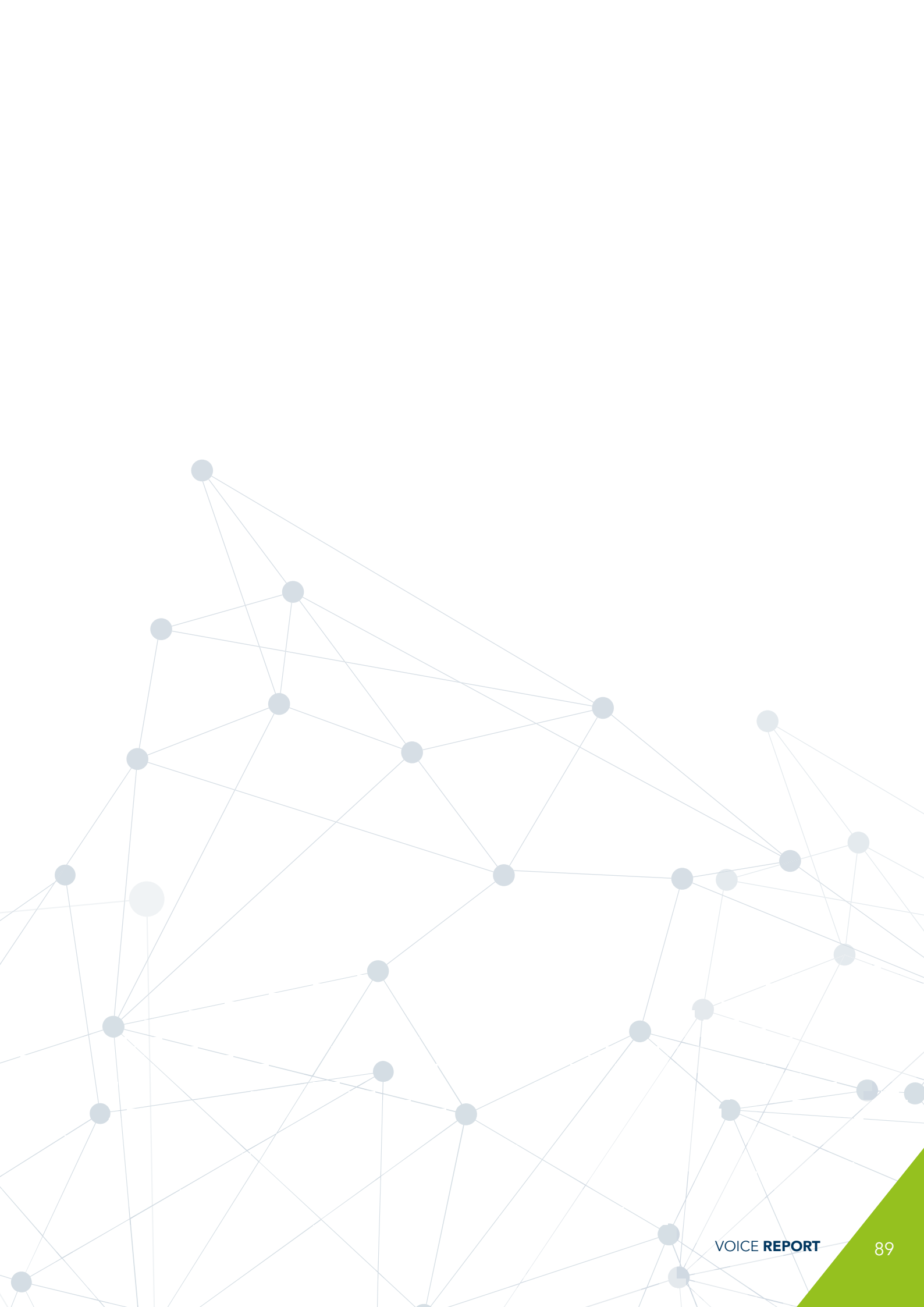
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