

# The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in the Context of Peace Operations in Africa

## Policy Brief

### Emergence of the HDP Nexus

Since its development following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP or Triple Nexus) approach promises pathways towards greater coherence and joint approaches to addressing the complex needs in fragile and conflict-prone contexts. Implementation remains a work in progress, with numerous different initiatives implemented in different ways around the world. The interrelation of the HDP Nexus with peacekeeping operations in Sub-Saharan Africa is vital to address the humanitarian, development, peace, and security challenges that can be found across contexts in various configurations.

The New Way of Working (NWoW), developed for the 2016 WHS, provides the practical background for the HDP Nexus. The NWoW went well beyond the confines of the UN system, while seeking to address the effectiveness of humanitarian action and development. It functions as a multi-stakeholder approach, bringing together a much wider set of actors, including international NGOs, local NGOs, donor countries, host countries, and a wide range of international organisations outside of the UN system.

Adding the element of supporting peace to the humanitarian-development focus is the principal entry point for the HDP Nexus. Since 2017, the HDP Nexus has emerged as a widely recognised approach for addressing the needs of people and societies in protracted and complex crises. At its best, it represents the culmination of an evolutionary process of thirty years within the fields of humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Its distinguishing features are the focus on localisation, the definition of Collective Outcomes, operating on a multi-year timeframe, aiming to utilise comparative advantages of public and private stakeholders, and addressing risks, vulnerabilities, and the root causes to crises, in order to fulfil the (unmet) needs of the most vulnerable in a given context.

The HDP Nexus is not a rigid instrument that can be implemented solely through formalised mechanisms. Instead, it represents an approach of synergising comparative advantages towards joint goals pursued in a contextualised way. HDP

*“If you look at the development context today, across Africa, what you find is a constellation of crisis. So, you have a conflict, you also have a humanitarian crisis, and you also have these intractable development challenges. I have not seen in the African Development context where you wouldn’t see a variation of these three different challenges being manifested in any particular context.”*

*– HDP Study Interviewee*

Nexus efforts conducted over the past several years already offer valuable experiences and lessons to be learned, especially regarding institutional opportunities and shortcomings, funding instruments, and Collective Outcome processes.

Drawing on these experiences, this policy brief looks at the central concepts of the HDP Nexus, some of the challenges the approach faces, the ways it can be implemented, the national and regional dimensions, and concludes with a number of recommendations for taking this approach further.

### Cross-Sector Thinking as a Coordinated Multilateral Approach

There are two ways of thinking about the HDP Nexus approach. One is based on the HDP Nexus logic, that humanitarian, development, and peace are not siloed activities, that each needs to build on the other, and that there should be a connection to a broader aim – in HDP Nexus language, focused on the Collective Outcomes as common landing points. The interconnectedness of these sectors can be enhanced and developed within single organisations as well as in regional development frameworks. For instance, the World Food Programme has applied a community-based participatory approach to identify and implement food security activities to minimise risks of inequitable allocation resources and strengthen the resilience of communities as a structural contribution to positive peace. Larger international NGOs, such as Oxfam, are active across a range of humanitarian and development activities and use the approach for enhancing their intra-organisational collaboration capabilities across sectors.

The HDP Nexus approach can also be understood as a process that requires a critical mass of diverse stakeholders, from across the three HDP sectors, that elaborate recognised Collective Outcomes. Ideally, monetary incentives such as pooled funding are made available, and where the attainment of Collective Outcomes is monitored and evaluated. In this view, activities across the sectors are aligned through this context-wide process. This is the HDP Nexus writ large, and better able to fulfill the promise of the approach.

## Humanitarian Concerns and Conflict Sensitivity

For the humanitarian community, the protection of the Humanitarian Principles are a very relevant concern when implementing an HDP Nexus approach. Principles such as independence, impartiality and neutrality are seen as challenging to reconcile with development and peacebuilding agendas. The development cooperation sector benefits from substantially higher levels of funding and resources than the humanitarian sector, which is chronically underfunded. Hence, the shifting of funds away from humanitarian responses that address immediate needs of vulnerable populations in favour of development for a more sustainable infrastructure to address those same needs poses a risk for humanitarian assistance and harms those most in need.

The second main area of concern is to ensure the possibility of humanitarian action, especially in contexts affected by ongoing violent conflict and radical disagreement between the conflict parties. The more humanitarian actors are identified with armed security personnel – even if it is multilateral peacekeeping missions – or as holding stakes in the conflict in its own right, the more likely they will be seen to be pawns of those security actors, and therefore legitimate targets.

The ability of humanitarian actors to maintain their independence and impartiality, to have access to all areas where there is need, should be ensured, and the HDP Nexus approach must not be used to justify restrictions or limitations of humanitarian activities. Experiences in multiple contexts show that these concerns are not unwarranted. All HDP Nexus implementation activities should be designed to respect the Humanitarian Principles and be conflict sensitive, and the overall approach should allow for stakeholders to engage in the HDP Nexus processes to the extent they consider to be most compatible with their mandates and values. Fortunately, the humanitarian arena has seen substantial developments in recent years that have resulted in a more pragmatic application of the humanitarian principles and more openness towards collaboration beyond the humanitarian sector. These developments are not the least a result from the discussions around the NWoW and the HDP Nexus and, in turn, support their anchoring.

## Peace in the HDP Nexus

Historically, the HDP Nexus emerged as an HD Nexus with the 'Peace' component added later. This trajectory is still felt in a conceivable gap between the clearly mandated fields of humanitarian aid and development, on the one hand, and the more loosely organised field of peacebuilding, including but not limited to peace support operations, on the other. The discussion of how peace should be incorporated into the Nexus have not adequately addressed how peace should be conceptualised. Is it the peace of civil society organisations, community activism, dialogue activities? Is it a 'local', 'positive' peace? Or is it the peace of peacekeeping, the 'hard' edge of peace, referring to the military forces which make up a considerable part of UN and AU Peacekeeping missions?

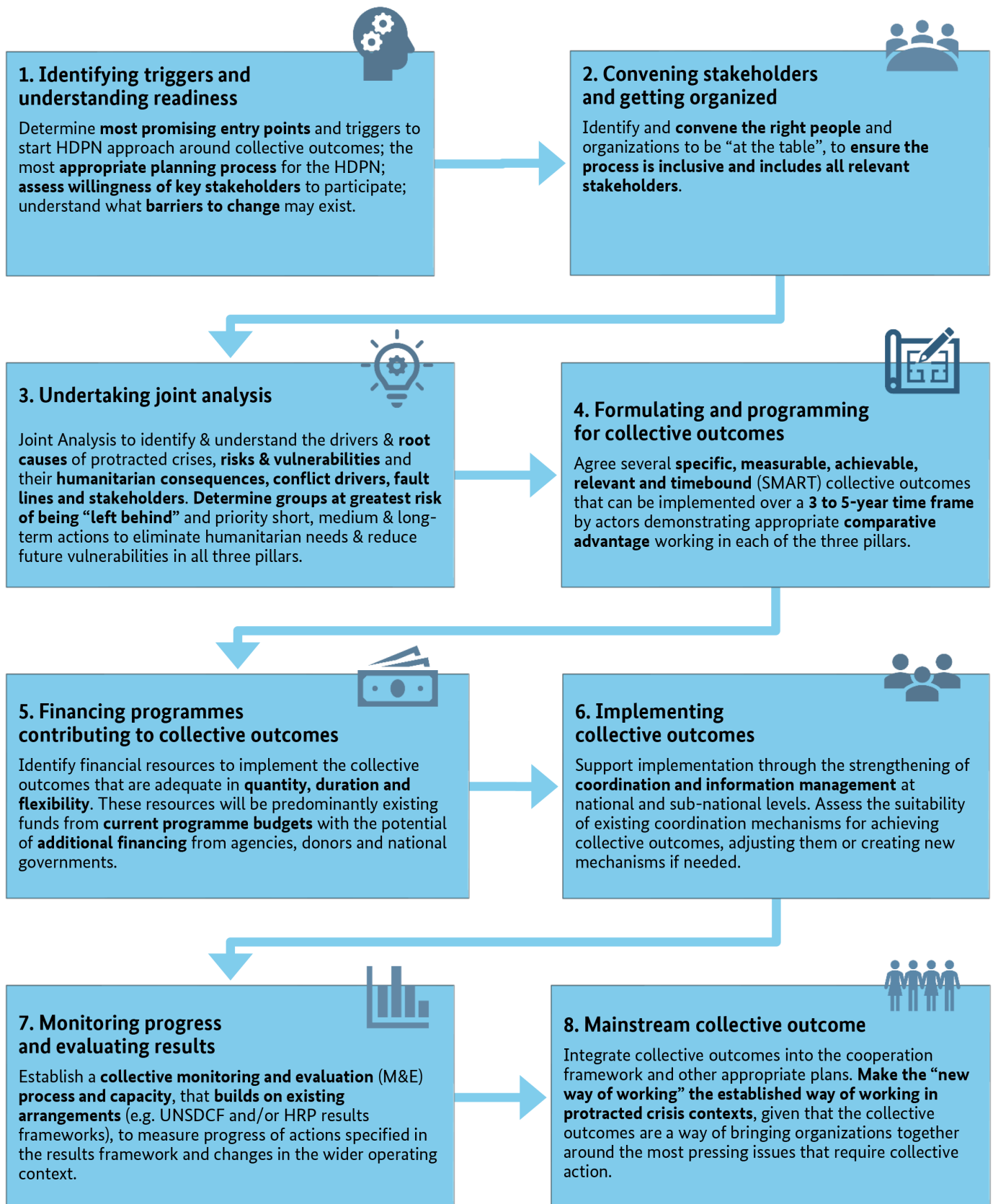
Deliberately linking peace with humanitarian relief and development unavoidably favours a broad concept of peace that goes beyond elements of a mainly stability-oriented peace in the sense of conflict management. In doing so, the HDP Nexus progresses on a path that UN peacekeeping started with the 'integrated mission' approach, which evolved out of the claim that 'hard' peacekeeping alone is too limited to work in situations of complex crises. Drawing on 'positive peace'-thinking, the 2030 Agenda process, especially via SDG16, added peace as a core component to the sustainable development effort.

Such an interpretation of peace is certainly a challenge for peacekeeping missions which, through their mandates, are still predominantly concerned with a more limited vision of peace, and this provides a challenge to the integration of peacekeeping missions into the HDP Nexus. However, if collaboration in the field between armed peacekeeping forces and other HDP actors is problematic, as it can blur the lines between the two, coordination and discussion on a strategic level is possible and needed.

Several peacekeeping missions have actively engaged in HDP Nexus initiatives. In South Sudan, for instance, UN Special Representative David Shearer initiated the establishment of the Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) that institutionally links the UN Peacekeeping mission UNMISS, the UN Country Team, the international donor community and national stakeholders. Embedded in a Collective Outcome process, the RSRTF pursues a strategy of area-based programming that actively aims to span across all three pillars of the HDP Nexus and incentivises these efforts with additional funding.

# HDP Nexus Implementation Steps

Based on IASC Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes, May 2020





## Implementation Challenges

Convening stakeholders across sectors may be a more centralised initiative, often under the aegis of the UN Resident Coordinator. However, this is not always the case. Nor should it, given the structural role that national stakeholders and local communities are meant to play. Multiple convening patterns exist, led by NGOs, as well as host government ministries, as well as various UN agencies and offices. Such multiplicity of efforts has the advantage of allowing a wide range of actors to participate in the process. Once convened, the actors involved can work to develop a common understanding of the challenges faced, and to develop the basis for a consensus for how to tackle those challenges.

Out of the joint analysis and a basic consensus of the challenges faced, key goals – the Collective Outcomes – can be developed. Collective Outcomes should make it possible for humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and other actors to align efforts around clear and jointly shaped goals. The form the basis for the shared vision to which all actors are called to contribute to, developed through the broad stakeholder consultation process. On this basis, diverse actors can overcome their different orientations across the HDP Nexus by placing the emphasis on an agreed landing point, with the actors asking themselves “What do we want to achieve collectively over 3 to 5 years?”

Besides Collective Outcomes, financing is a pivotal pillar of HDP operationalisation. Firstly, there needs to be an alignment with Collective Outcome processes, attracting implementing agencies from different sectors, ideally in joint collaborative efforts. Secondly, funding flexibility and risk taking are needed. A considerable challenge is aligning the different funding patterns between short-term humanitarian funding, mid-term project cycles in development, and ideally long-term peacebuilding financing. Regional country-level pooled funding has been identified as one of the main instruments to support these aims and for linking them to collective outcome processes as well as to the localisation agenda. Pooled funding can have a catalysing effect on collaborative efforts between HDP actors, or even within larger organisations with both humanitarian and development programmes. Ideally, the HDP Nexus can be used as ‘an opportunity to further use development aid to attract private sector investment’, although evidence of this in practice is lacking.

## Regional and National Ownership

Three international groupings are essential in driving forward the HDP Nexus. All of them are either UN-based or include the UN. The Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration, the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Group 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration, and the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have all been influential settings for building a broad consensus for developing and implementing the HDP Nexus. Yet unlike the Capstone Doctrine and integrated peacekeeping missions, the HDP Nexus is not a UN-centered approach.

The HDP Nexus is purposely designed as an open multi-stakeholder process. It advocates context-sensitivity, and spreads in many different set-ups and modalities. In particular, the HDP Nexus enables synergies with the existing processes driven by regional and sub-regional organizations – especially the African Union and the African RECs which make up Africa’s Peace and Security Architecture. The AU and UN have well-established ties and forms of cooperation on a wide range of issues across the HDP spectrum, if not specifically on the HDP Nexus approach itself, and often with a peace and security focus. The ‘Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security’ and the ‘Framework for a Renewed UN-AU Partnership on Africa’s Integration and Development Agenda 2017-2027’ (PAIDA) are specific formats for enhancing cooperation, especially in the dimension of peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

The support to the AU also includes integrating development approaches into its peacebuilding, peacekeeping and training activities. Several regional NWoW/HDP Nexus workshops have been organised in Dakar, Senegal and Entebbe, Uganda in 2017 and 2018, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, which helped to bring to the fore examples and good practices. This included the participation of regional organizations, including ECOWAS.

The application of the HDP Nexus approach in Africa requires strengthened cooperation between the UN, World Bank and Nexus-oriented actors with the African Union and regional economic communities (RECs), such as ECOWAS, IGAD, and SADC. There are a number of key policies documents within the

APSA organizations in terms of the AU and RECs of particular relevance. Guiding documents from the AU such as APSA and CEWS strategies. The AU's own experience in peacekeeping and development offer opportunities to find linkages to the HDP Nexus approach. On the REC level this is also the case, for example the ECOWAS 2050 vision, the ECOWAS humanitarian policy and plan of action/handbook, and the DRR plan of action.

One of the questions in implementing the HDP Nexus approach is the role which should be played by the national host governments. In principle, their role should be central to all HDP Nexus activities. However, national governments can play an ambivalent role. Specific issues concern their capacity and willingness to implement Nexus-related activities, their willingness to uphold obligation and responsibility to protect those to whom they are duty-bound, and the level of security and access which may be limited due to active violent conflicts. These issues should guide the engagement of the international community and other stakeholders in how to engage with the national government. Nevertheless, any humanitarian, development or peacebuilding efforts are greatly facilitated if there is an earnest engagement by the national government, and it is very much also the case with the HDP Nexus approach.

In Nigeria, for example, the HDP Nexus has emerged under several configurations. In early phase in 2017-2018, efforts were undertaken to implement the NWoW, with policy

dialogues between the UN, the Federal Government of Nigeria and humanitarian and development actors. In August 2018, a joint OCHA-UNDP mission identified potential thematic areas for Collective Outcomes that humanitarian, development and other relevant actors could achieve jointly for the North East, including Borno. By 2019, the process had developed into an HDP Nexus approach, five Collective Outcomes were identified, and Transition Coordination Teams at the state level were tasked to help tailor the Collective Outcomes to the operational realities of their state. A dedicated nexus adviser in the RCO facilitates the process of assisting the Government and other stakeholders to work in closer collaboration. At the same time, from the grassroots and INGO level, Search for Common Ground and Actionaid Nigeria have fostered dialogues and workshops on implementing the Nexus in the North East of Nigeria.

The development of humanitarian response strategies, national development planning frameworks, or UN Sustainable Development Partnership Frameworks are entry points for beginning conversation and discussions around the HDP Nexus. Top-down processes and bottom-up processes can coexist and feed into the establishment of an overarching HDP Nexus approach in the given contest. National ownership is a natural development of the HDP Nexus approach, as long as the capacity and willingness to fulfil obligations is met.

## Developing Common Definitions

The OECD-DAC “Recommendations on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus” include a number of definitions which can serve as a basis for a common understanding of the HDP Nexus.

**Nexus** refers to the interlinkages between humanitarian, development, and peace actions.

**Nexus approach** refers to the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence, and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalise on the comparative advantages of each pillar – 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.

**Collective outcome** refers to a commonly agreed measurable result or impact enhanced by the combined effort of different actors, within their respective mandates, to address and reduce people’s unmet needs, risks and vulnerabilities, increasing their resilience and addressing the root causes of conflict.

**Comparative advantage** refers to the demonstrated capacity and expertise (not limited solely to a mandate) of one individual, group or institution to meet needs.

**Joined-up** refers to the coherent and complementary coordination, programming and financing of humanitarian, development and peace actions that are based on shared risk-informed and gender-sensitive analysis; while ensuring that humanitarian action always remains needs-based and principled.

*OECD (2019). “DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development Peace Nexus”*

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The HDP Nexus requires the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, especially in-country and by national counterparts. Important is a pragmatic application of the HDP Nexus that works 'with the grain' of already established collaboration mechanisms in-country. National government counterparts play a critical role, especially as primary partners in development compacts, and in most humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts. However, this engagement should not undermine humanitarian principles and take into account the ability and willingness of a government to fulfil its obligations.

**Financing is a crucial implementation tool for the HDP Nexus.** Two main priorities for implementing the Nexus approach is to ensure greater flexibility of funding oriented towards Collective Outcomes, and a longer funding cycle of 3-5 years. Ideally, the Nexus approach can serve as a catalyst for multi-stakeholder projects that rely on a variety of funding instruments, including the private sector.

**Collective Outcome processes** have proven themselves as an effective way for developing joint portfolios and financing mechanisms across the three HDP sectors. They also enable a better collaboration between peacekeeping missions, the UN country teams, and other public and private actors. Conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity capacities are still perceived as one of the major weaknesses in Nexus-related work, especially in-country. This is both due to an often-perceived shortage of coordination and exchange between existing conflict analysis facilities within organisations, and a lack of conflict analysis capacities among technical staff.

**Enhance dissemination of the HDP Nexus approach and the capacity to implement it.** This includes one-time events, locally and regionally, as well as training courses on the HDP Nexus

as well as incorporating HDP Nexus introduction in a wide range of existing training courses relevant for humanitarian, development, peace, and security actors. These trainings need to especially focus on including national stakeholders, also from a non-governmental background.

**Allow for multiple parallel and flexible HDP Nexus processes rather than wait for a single centralised and top-down 'Official HDP Nexus Process'.** The logic of the HDP Nexus can be harnessed and implemented within the planning and activities of local NGOs, INGOs, international UN and REC bodies, and within host government agencies and ministries at various levels. Parallel processes emerge organically, and can gradually be increasingly coordinated and built up.

**Start on multiple elements of the HDP Nexus approach concurrently.** The elements of the HDP Nexus approach – from stakeholder engagement, to developing Collective Outcomes, creating joint funding mechanism, setting up or re-tasking existing coordination structures, and developing a monitoring and evaluation approach – should not be developed sequentially, but started on in parallel, by whoever is able and willing.

**Ensure that HDP Nexus implementation efforts do not negatively impact the delivery of humanitarian assistance or undermine humanitarian principles.** The HDP Nexus approach is conceived as a means of reducing the need for humanitarian relief in a given context, by enabling sustainable development and strengthening peace, over time. However, fulfilling humanitarian needs in the present should not be undermined for future outcomes, and humanitarian principles must be preserved in the process.



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