



EU-CORD and the triple nexus

**Bridging the peace-humanitarian-
development divide**

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List of acronyms

BBB	Building Bridges Burundi	HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
BTI	Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation	INGO(s)	international non-governmental organisation(s)
CEPAC	8e Communauté des Églises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale	INTPA	European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships
CSO(s)	civil society organisation(s)	KIRDARC	Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	LNOB	Leave No One Behind
DEVCO	European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (now renamed INTPA)	LRRD	linking relief, rehabilitation, and development
DEVE	European Parliament Committee on Development	ME	Mission East
DOM	CEPAC Department of Health	MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument
EC	European Commission	NGO(s)	non-governmental organisation(s)
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management	NWoW	New Way of Working
ECHO	European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
EEAS	European External Action Service	OPD(s)	organisation(s) of persons with disabilities
EHP	Elimu-Haki Programme	PADDC	PA Development Disabilities Council
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office	Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
EU	European Union	SF	Stromme Foundation
FBO(s)	faith-based organisation(s)	UN	United Nations
GNI	Good Neighbour International	VOICE	Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies
HDI	Human Development Index	WVI	World Vision International
HDP	humanitarian aid, development, and peace		
HI	Handicap International		

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Introduction

EU-CORDs' Funding and Partnerships group expressed their interest in engaging in a discussion on the peace, development, and humanitarian – or triple – nexus to further their understanding of the nexus in EU external policymaking and, through sharing of their own experiences, contribute to the broader debate on how working in the nexus can be better realised.

This study was subsequently developed to fill three broad objectives:

- To connect EU-CORD members working with nexus methodologies to better understand their approaches and strengthen partnerships;
- To help EU-CORD members and their partners understand the development of the EU's approach to the triple nexus and;
- To place EU-CORD member experience in implementing a nexus approach within discussions on the engagement of local actors, faith-based approaches, humanitarian principles and alignment with the peace component.

The study is primarily targeted at EU-CORD members and their partners, but as a consequence of this research, members also identified recommendations for external stakeholders, and these are also included here.

Study outline

As a European network, we are concerned with the approaches taken by the European Union and its Member States regarding nexus approaches. Consequently, the first part of the study summarises the most important landmarks in the EU approach to acknowledge and implement the triple nexus, and it identifies reasons of concern and potential opportunities for development. Secondly, the study takes a brief look at how the nexus can be defined, and members identify and respond to some of the challenges that working in the nexus poses for them. Lastly, the study proposes recommendations addressed not only to EU-CORD members aiming at further working on the nexus, but also to donors and EU institutions.

Methodology

The study is based on a literature review of existing reports and evaluations of both members and external organisations to identify definitions, widespread concerns, and practices. Subsequently, conversations on the broad nexus approach have been held with interested members to dig deeper into such issues. Mission East and Fida have submitted specific case studies on their experience of working with the nexus addressing pre-agreed questions.

Contributing EU-CORD members to this study are CORD, Dorcas, Fida, Help a Child, LM International, Medair, Mission East, PMU Interlife, Sign of Hope, Woord en Daad and ZOA.

European Union perspective

Evolution of the EU perspective on the nexus

In the 1990s, the EU started to base its humanitarian action on the principle of linking relief, rehabilitation, and development (LRRD)¹, with a 1996 communication addressing the need to look at different contexts, including gender analysis, and consider the role of peacebuilding in development cooperation strategies and conflict prevention². Building on this document, the 2001 Commission Communication on LRRD argued that 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”³.

In 2007, the 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 to contribute to the coherence of external action⁴. Then, in 2013 the Council issued the conclusions on the EU approach to resilience, which provided an opportunity to bring together political dialogue, humanitarian and development work and prioritised a comprehensive, coherent, and effective approach to achieve better results on the ground⁵.

In 2016, the European Commission Communication on “Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance” recognised that a “one-size-fits-all approach is not workable” and that “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”⁶. This set the stage for the 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”⁷.

In the same year, the Council issued the “Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus”, which underlined the need to coordinate humanitarian and development actions to address the root causes of vulnerability, fragility and conflict while simultaneously meeting humanitarian needs and strengthening resilience⁸. Consequently, six countries were designated by the Commission in consultation with Member States for a pilot project to operationalise the nexus by systematising cooperation and enhancing the use of best practices and the generation of evidence. In January 2018, the EU adopted the Integrated Approach, which outlined the importance of shared analysis, conflict sensitivity, mediation support, security sector reform, conflict early warning, prevention and early action, response to crises, stabilisation, and transitional justice⁹.

Lastly, the 2021 European Commission Communication “The EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles”¹⁰ aims to provide key guidelines on how the EU’s work in collaboration with Member States, local partners and international organisations can meet these new challenges while respecting humanitarian principles. The communication committed the EU to step up its work to link humanitarian relief with development and peacebuilding, recognising that humanitarian aid is not designed as a long-

term solution to the needs of people impacted by crises. It also stressed the necessity to ensure that humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, and other policies all work together to better link urgent relief and longer-term solutions, aiming at reducing needs and tackling the root causes of conflicts and crises.

The ensuing Council Conclusions welcomed the communication and affirmed the need for more consistent and effective implementation and operationalisation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach¹¹. Similarly, the European Parliament issued a report on the role of the EU's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in addressing the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic in which it insisted for a new standard for cooperation in the fields of humanitarian aid and development policy¹².

EU current approaches — concerns and opportunities

The current EU approaches towards the nexus present reasons of concern as well as opportunities for further development. Under the first point of view, VOICE notices that in the nexus pilot project, coordination between EU institutions has taken considerable time and effort, while Member States and NGOs have not been sufficiently involved in the process¹³. This runs against the requirement for the EU to work with partners to ensure a higher level of engagement and the sustainability of nexus programming, as pledged in the UN's New Way of Working (NWoW) and in the EU communications on the matter.

Another reason of concern is represented by the risk of blurring the lines between humanitarian, development, and security spheres. Commentators feel that this is heightened by increasing frictions between the EU's political role and humanitarian interventions, resulting for example, in the stronger stance taken by the EU in conflict prevention and financing external activities with military and defence implications, such as training and equipment for military actors¹⁴.

A study conducted by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) points out that there is still a lack of conceptual clarity regarding the appropriate term to refer to peacebuilding interventions from EU institutions. This results in EU institutions using different terms and expressions, such as crisis response, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, stabilisation, and resilience-building, which translates into different ways of understanding peacebuilding in practice¹⁵. For example, the Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian Development Nexus (2017) speak of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, whereas the Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises (2018) refer to stabilisation action.

Turning to potential opportunities, an article of Capacity4Dev highlights two positive examples of nexus programming carried out by the EU. In Nigeria, the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO, now renamed as Directorate-General for International Partnerships, INTPA) worked alongside the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) by involving it in the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment nexus. Civil society organisations working with ECHO were also included in the process through funds that permitted an evolution from pure humanitarian work to an approach that included immediate response, development, and peace work¹⁶.

Similarly, the work started in Myanmar in December 2019 with the "Nexus Response Mechanism" is another example of the interplay between EU institutions with a fund operated by DG INTPA and ongoing collegial consultation with ECHO and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The fund operated a flexible adaptative approach, allowing regular assessment and reallocation of funds¹⁷.

Nexus in the Global Europe Instrument

The NDICI, the new single funding instrument created by the EU as part of the current seven-year funding cycle (2021 — 2027), is expected to be more flexible and able to fund rapid response, civil security, and development activities¹⁸. As part of the resilience framework, the NDICI aims at increasing coordination, coherence and complementarity between humanitarian aid, development actions and, where relevant, peacebuilding. The instrument also stipulates that for countries and regions in crisis or post-crisis and for fragile and vulnerable situations, a conflict analysis needs to be conducted to inform the programming¹⁹. Thus, this new approach creates hope that the EU is committed to following a more inclusive process and working more jointly with a variety of stakeholders for the next funding cycle.

The EU's commitment to fund projects that operationalise the nexus is also proved by the Resilience Marker, adopted by ECHO to ensure that interventions reduce risks and strengthen people's coping capacities to minimise humanitarian needs²⁰. According to the General Guidelines, a project is considered to be resilient framed if:

- It conducts an analysis of risks and an analysis of vulnerabilities and their causes.
- Is risk informed.
- Contributes to building local capacities so that the most vulnerable can cope better with a future crisis or an after-shock.
- Includes a deliberate strategy to reduce future humanitarian needs and identify modalities to connect with ongoing/possible future development interventions²¹.

Consequently, the Resilience Marker permits to enhance the quality of humanitarian actions by ensuring a systematic consideration and inclusion of resilience in context evaluation, project design and implementation²².

Nexus definition and frameworks

There is no definitive nexus definition or framing, as the needs and purposes vary depending on the specific context in which it is used. Nevertheless, there needs to be some commonality of understanding so we can at least speak the same language. EU-CORD members looked at the OECD DAC framing as a starting point:

- **OECD DAC framing:** The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines the nexus as a “framework that can incentivise and implement more collaborative and complementary humanitarian, development and peace actions”²³. This should occur by capitalising “on the comparative advantages of each pillar in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict”²⁴. While widely accepted, the DAC definition still relies primarily on the conceptualisation of the three distinct pillars of the nexus rather than on their interrelatedness.
- **DEVE Committee nexus framing:** A study requested by the Committee on Development of the European Parliament defines the three areas of work involved in the nexus by means of the goals they aim to achieve. These are the rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, maintenance, prevention, and development interventions to restore and ameliorate local structures, and long-term operations to set up long-standing peace to avoid future humanitarian crises²⁵.

EU-CORD nexus framing

EU-CORD has a diverse membership in terms of thematic sectors of expertise and countries of implementation. Leveraging this expertise to form programmatic partnerships is a network priority, and increasingly, these partnerships are formed to support the implementation of a nexus approach (although this might not be the language used within their organisation). To support these partnerships, it is important for members to come to a mutual understanding of the triple nexus and where their partnership fits.

While individual EU-CORD members have their own definitions, this study proposes a working definition that integrates the broad approach taken by most EU-CORD members:

Working in partnership with local organisations, faith actors and communities to take advantage of the specificities and minimise the constraints inherent in humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding approaches and how they interrelate to transform communities and build long-term community resilience.

Frameworks

EU-CORD members focus less on how to define the triple nexus per se and tend to take a more comprehensive approach to programming using frameworks.

Connecting the triple nexus approach to broader programmatic frameworks helps ensure alignment of activities to higher-level collective outcomes or long-term change and to make sure that there is not an excessive focus on one of the three pillars but rather a more holistic approach.

Mission East and KIRDARC²⁶

Resilience is often indicated as one of the most common frameworks for the nexus. Woord en Daad understands the nexus as “having the goal of building systems that can sustain and/or provide their key functions”. The project Building Bridges Burundi (BBB), implemented among others by Woord en Daad and Help a Child, operationalised a framework for the development of socio-economic resilience and the strengthening of the economic power of young people²⁷.

Similarly, in a context analysis carried out by Dorcas in southern Ethiopia to highlight the potential of triple nexus programming, the resilience of local communities is seen as an important structural factor to operationalise the nexus, and it is also stressed the need to further strengthen local pastoral communities and institutions to ensure sustainable development²⁸. Efforts should also be directed towards enabling local communities to identify their pressing needs, suggest solutions, mobilise their own resources, and take part in taking concrete actions in development endeavours²⁹.

Another example that falls into a resilience framework is the Elimu-Haki Programme (EHP) of Fida and the church denomination 8e Communauté des Églises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale (CEPAC) initiated in 2018 in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This development-peace nexus programme creates awareness of the rights of children to education and a safe living environment by organising in-service training for teachers on inclusive education, training on psychosocial support to build community resilience to cope with distress, addressing normative change through training on sexual reproductive health and rights and menstrual health management, supporting the creation of self-help groups, and providing training on entrepreneurship. The programme is also promoting dialogue between different peace actors for community cohesion and lasting peace in the target areas, e.g. by establishing Peace Clubs. To respect the Leave No One Behind principle, the programme crucially includes persons with disabilities in peacebuilding activities³⁰.

Lastly, the project “Working with local partners to build Resilient Communities in the Himalayan Region of Karnali Province, Nepal” carried out by Mission East and local organisation KIRDARC has the objective of reinforcing the adaptive capacity and social cohesion of vulnerable communities and strengthening civil society organisations to build collective capacities to combat the impact of climate and environmental crises. In this framework, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach focuses on the integration of a driver of fragility such as climate change with natural resource management and ensuring effective governance to reduce the direct effects of the climate and environment crisis³¹.

Indeed, the beneficial linkages between the triple nexus and climate are more and more evident, as proved by a report of the World Bank Group according to which internal climate migration should be placed at the intersection of humanitarian, development, and peace partnerships by working with national and local stakeholders for end-to-end solutions³². This would require bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to consider climate action, disaster risk reduction, development, and human rights protection, with the involvement of peace actors in settings where climate change impacts interact with armed conflict³³. The report also points out the need for locally led approaches in which civil society and community actors generate inclusive, participatory, and empowering solutions³⁴.

Nexus challenges

Respecting humanitarian principles

Respect of humanitarian principles¹ is one of the professional markers that EU-CORD expects its members to adhere to. Members working with a nexus approach are concerned that integrating development and peace in their work could put at risk the respect of humanitarian principles and thus lead to being perceived as working for an external political agenda. This is not a new concern, and organisations have been negotiating this space for many years. The peace component does, however, bring a new dimension to the discussion — especially when political agencies, such as the EU, use ‘security’ and ‘stabilisation’ terminology to describe peace and conflict prevention efforts. Such shifts will lead to the [further] instrumentalization of humanitarian interventions.

According to Mission East and KIRDARC, the risk of political interference in emergency response activities and in selecting beneficiaries for assistance is heightened in case of weak governance in the implementation process³⁵.

Similarly, Fida stresses the risk of reinforcing an existing tendency to politicise humanitarian action due to the absence of sufficient services, along with continued protection issues and hampered access to areas and access of all persons, without distinction, to humanitarian assistance³⁶.

Nevertheless, studies highlight solutions to such impasses, such as recognising the specificity of the humanitarian mandate and principles and the need to keep it separate from broader geopolitical objectives through stronger contextualisation of the reality on the ground³⁷.

Fida notices a tension between humanitarian action in conflict settings and an agenda for reformation aiming to drive wide societal structural changes. Humanitarian work has the tendency to focus on service delivery, and while Fida and CEPAC work with a strong localisation agenda, the life-saving role of humanitarian assistance dictates the need to move on to areas of more acute need and available funding. This leaves minimal time to continue building linkages or advocating for structural change alongside development actors in old areas after moving on to new humanitarian settings. The New Way of Working approach invites humanitarian and development actors to come together, but in complex situations like the DRC, organisations remain focused on the activities that their funding and outcome and impact expectations tie them to³⁸.

1 The principles are humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

Peacebuilding

Peace component — Framing challenge

While member organisations have a lot of experience working with a humanitarian-development or humanitarian-rehabilitation mandate for decades, the relatively new integration of the peace component as the third element of the triple nexus is a steep learning curve. As previously outlined, this is partly due to a lack of common understanding of how the peace component is defined (and what its purpose is).

Defining what peace means in the nexus context is complex both for INGOs operating in the Global South and for local implementing actors and communities. What is often observed is that civil society actors tend to understand peace as a community-level reconciliation action aimed at building social cohesion, while states may interpret peace through the lenses of peacekeeping, security, and stabilisation, which raises considerable difficulties and tensions when coordinating with civil society organisations². On top of this, local communities can find it hard to differentiate between peacebuilding actors and their mandates and motives, leading to further confusion and possibly also to the breakdown of trust with implementing organisations³⁹.

This lack of conceptual clarity creates obstacles for organisations willing to integrate the peace component at a programmatic level, with the result that peacebuilding aspects of the nexus are regarded as a side effect or as a cross-cutting issue to humanitarian and development efforts. This occurs despite the perception by local stakeholders and communities of the interdependence between creating peaceful societies and preventing conflict, and having access to safe livelihoods, water, education, and land.

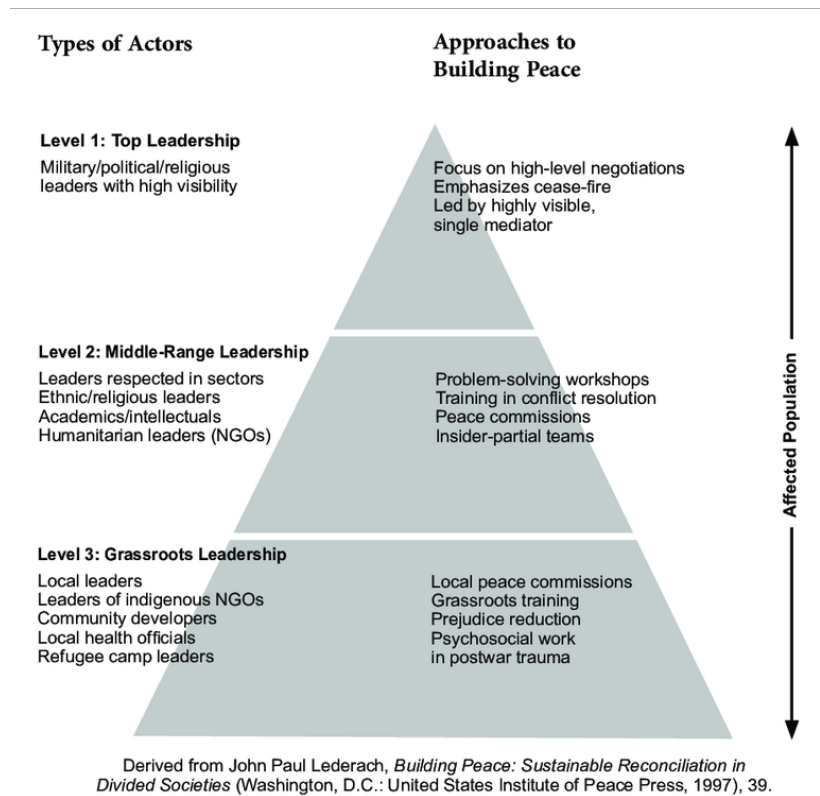
A possible way out of this is through a positive peace approach when interpreting the peace component of the nexus to ensure that this pillar is not instrumentalised for security or political agendas⁴⁰. While negative peace interprets peace as the absence of direct violence, positive peace aims at eliminating structural violence by achieving social justice, reconciliation, and mutual development⁴¹.

Level of conflict that NGOs can influence

A second issue linked to the conceptualisation of peace regards the level of conflict that NGOs operationalising the nexus can influence. The interplay between conflict levels can be both conflict-reinforcing or conducive to reconciliation, so it could be regarded either as an enabler or a barrier to the implementation of a nexus approach.

A theoretical framework for understanding how different types of actors influence approaches to peacebuilding is provided by John Paul Lederach. He describes the interplay between actors as a pyramid with the top-level military, political or religious leaders with high visibility that is brought to high-level negotiating tables either as parties directly involved in the conflict or as third parties. Middle-range actors are leaders with a determinant location in the conflict who can provide the key for achieving and sustaining peace, while the bottom level involves a broader range of actors such as international and local NGOs, parties to the conflict, and other relevant groups within the affected societies. According to Lederach, NGOs can deeply understand the conflict's roots and work closely with affected communities. This is usually done by supporting and sustaining local groups and social movements, building peace constituencies, strengthening local capacity, empowering key actors, and organising development and networking training⁴².

² We can think of the 'little p', involving long-term development cooperation efforts for civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention, inclusive approaches, and social cohesion efforts, and the 'large P', which includes military actors and activities, such as peacekeeping, political missions, mediation and civilian security actors.



Bottom-up approaches can be regarded as a fundamental instrument to take advantage of the interplay between conflict levels and to increase the chances for community and elite reconciliation.

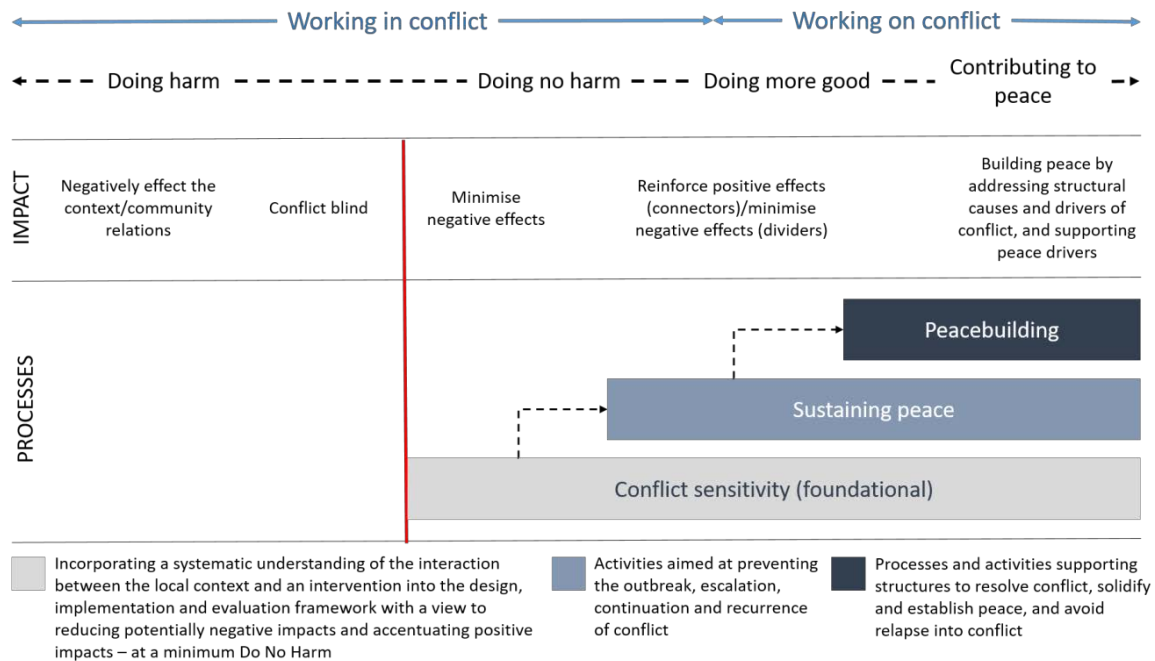
A good example in this sense is represented by the results achieved by the project Building Bridges Burundi (BBB), which contributed to human security and stability by building social cohesion and trust in local communities⁴³ and by developing community structures to give people a voice in the dialogue with authorities to address security concerns. On one hand, this permitted to reduce grievances and clashes within the communities and to foster reconciliation, and on the other to reduce the gap between local authorities and the population in terms of collaboration⁴⁴. Overall, this also led to a strengthening of the social contract between administrative authorities, civil society, and communities through participatory top-down and bottom-up accountability processes by administrative authorities⁴⁵.

Thus, an effective interplay between conflict levels seems to require implementing organisations to conduct context and stakeholder analysis to determine who to engage with at the national and local levels, from government authorities to community members⁴⁶, in order to ensure coordinated peacebuilding initiatives at the top and bottom levels of intervention.

Moving from 'doing no harm' to peacebuilding

The concept and methodology behind 'doing no harm' has been with us for some twenty years, but we now see ourselves shifting from the negative 'doing no harm' to the more positive framing 'doing more good.' For this, the Peace Spectrum is a useful tool to understand how working in a conflict situation can affect the prospects of peace and/or the continuation of conflicts. It also permits understanding how any kind of intervention in a conflict can go from doing harm, meaning negatively affecting the context and

community relations, to building peace by addressing structural causes of conflict. As we know, the triple nexus is about exploiting one’s comparative advantage and recognizing that not everyone can include all three dimensions in their action. Thus, the main discriminant between the results envisaged by the Peace Spectrum⁴⁷ is the adoption of a conflict-sensitive approach.



Conflict sensitivity can be regarded as the first stage of the Peace Spectrum, and it implies a systematic understanding of the interaction between the local context and an intervention on the design, implementation, and evaluation framework with a view to reducing potentially negative impacts and accentuating positive impacts⁴⁸. Therefore, conflict sensitivity is to be understood as the foundational approach to pursuing humanitarian and development activities that not only do no harm, but that are potentially able to pursue peacebuilding objectives.

In its 2019–2022 Strategic Plan, ZOA underlines its aim to plan and monitor activities in a conflict-sensitive way to prevent ‘doing harm’ to long-term development processes. Since most activities are carried out in the most fragile states in the world, often affected by conflicts, conflict sensitivity must necessarily be integrated in the sectoral work to create opportunities to contribute to more peace and less conflict⁴⁹. Besides, conflict sensitivity should not just be about the projects, but about organisational values and culture, staff attitudes and diversity, processes, structures, and incentives that promote conflict sensitivity thinking, and increased knowledge and practical skills to work in a conflict-sensitive way⁵⁰.

It is eye-opening to do a full conflict analysis when you start a project. It makes such a difference. If you reflect on different dynamics each month or quarter, at field level, at management level, you achieve better results, and you see it.

ZOA⁵¹

Similarly, PMU regards conflict sensitivity as a relevant concept when engaging in development cooperation and poverty alleviation, whether working in war-torn areas or in regions free from

open and violent conflicts⁵². LM International operates with a conflict-sensitive approach both in its development and humanitarian programming since conflict sensitivity is regarded as a necessity for successful implementation when working in conflict-prone areas⁵³. Fida highlights the need for quality risk assessment, conflict analysis and do no harm measures to be in place and constantly reviewed and updated as the situation in the working environment changes⁵⁴.

Lastly, using tested nexus approaches emphasising collaboration, coherence and complementarity and working in conflict-sensitive ways over the years, Mission East and its long-term partners in Nepal like KIRDARC have worked actively on the drivers or root causes of conflict and fragility, such as poverty and deprivation, conflict over land, use and management of water, communal/tribal rights, and access to livelihood opportunities and markets. This has been done by drawing upon their deep understanding of the local context and up-to-date analysis of prevailing power and conflict dynamics, supplemented by the tools of mediation and dispute resolution tools to help build community cohesion and recognition of the benefits of collective action⁵⁵.

Conflict analysis should normally be conducted jointly with as diverse a group as possible, including donors, UN agencies, NGOs, national civil society organisations, government entities, and stakeholders in the community⁵⁶. As noted by the ECDPM, joint context analysis is a necessary step for developing a shared understanding of the context among the actors involved in the nexus and for identifying risks, needs, vulnerabilities, potential conflict dynamics, underlying causes, and coping capacities and resilience at different levels⁵⁷.

However, conducting conflict analysis is not without challenges. ZOA points at constraints in terms of time and the need to budget conflict analysis in proposals, to link it to existing processes in order not to duplicate and to cross-cutting themes to show where they could benefit from each other. Another challenge concerns the diverse levels of capacities within an organisation and the need to invest in cross-country and tailor-made learning⁵⁸.

Fida stresses the link between disability inclusion and the peace nexus. When activities focus on connectors and dividers, they must include the full community, no one should be left behind. Conflicts often cause injuries and leave people with disabilities, including psychosocial ones, casting them aside from opportunities to work, build families, or rebuild their lives. Likewise, persons with disabilities are affected by conflict with a 10% higher risk of exploitation and sexual abuse⁵⁹, while children with disabilities are almost four times more likely to experience violence than children without disabilities. This risk is especially higher for girls with autism, deaf and blind girls, girls with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities and girls with multiple impairments⁶⁰. Peace processes, whether they are activities to prevent conflict, during conflict or after a conflict, must always include persons with all abilities⁶¹.

Staff technical capacities and skills

Linked to conflict sensitivity is the need for technical capacities and skills for staff members working on nexus operationalisation. Mission East and KIRDARC point at the lack of experienced and qualified human resources for effective humanitarian response and of people who know how to integrate activities across the nexus spectrum⁶².

Consequently, various studies stress the need to support the development of 'soft skills' through specific training and ongoing investments in human resources. Among these, VOICE mentions

flexibility and creativity, both at an institutional and individual level, combined with political/personal will or engagement⁶³, while Islamic Relief adds management skills, technical expertise, attention, and diplomacy⁶⁴.

ZOA supported staff knowledge and capacities on the conflict sensitivity agenda through different training formats, cross-learning between countries and sectors, and practical accompaniment. It also worked on encouraging, discussing, and managing staff diversity, particularly with teams in polarised country contexts⁶⁵.

Similarly, Fida continues to build the capacity of CEPAC and their department of health DOM in financial and administrative management and advocacy, strengthening them to be an independent agent of transformative change in DRC⁶⁶.

Donor funding and working in silos

Current funding trends often lack a facilitating framework for nexus programming and entail a significant preference for siloed thinking and financing. One of the most common problems is that donors often ask for triple nexus approaches but without adapting siloed policies and budgets, which tend to lack the flexibility for nexus programming⁶⁷ as they continue to categorise funding as either for humanitarian or for development projects⁶⁸. A major consequence is short-term financing, with project objectives often unattainable for nexus implementing actors and that do not permit adaptation to evolving contexts.

Current donor approaches also entail strict rules and requirements and varying timeframes and reporting methods. Mission East and KIRDARC point at the lack of harmonisation with multiple reporting and monitoring requirements of different donors adding to the workload of implementing organisations, particularly local partners⁶⁹. This requires an additional number of dedicated staff for compliance, internal control, and audit management⁷⁰, taking away human and financial resources that could be employed for program work.

Besides, donor preferences are often based on priority thematic areas and geographical contexts that donors wish to fund⁷¹, with the result of not allowing to adapt to acute crisis situations, to put people at the centre of programming, and to promote localisation by enabling local actors.

The Elimu-Haki Programme of Fida and CEPAC has separate funding for humanitarian and development, although both are largely funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. As peacebuilding is a part of the development cooperation programme, separate funding for peacebuilding has not been applied for. Furthermore, programmes have different cycles, with humanitarian interventions being shorter and the development programme being implemented in four-year cycles. One challenge is that the funding for humanitarian aid is very inflexible and focused on delivering aid stringently to plan, which is good but not very easily adapted to a shared nexus approach, whereas the development funding has some flexibility and can adapt to situations to seek the best outcome for its goals. Consequently, activities may need to be adapted due to the different length cycles by taking into account pre-emptively the kinds of activities that can be supported and possible geographic opportunities along with lessons learned⁷².

On the contrary, what INGOs and local actors would need to operationalise the nexus effectively is predictable, flexible, multi-year and risk-tolerant financing available to actors across the nexus⁷³. Longer-

term financing instruments are necessary to strengthen and sustain the organisational capacity of local and national NGOs⁷⁴, which can be properly consulted and involved in activities, to put in place joint and inclusive sense-making processes, to enhance trust-building between different partners and to take sufficient time to step back and assess if activities are indeed contributing to their intended objectives⁷⁵. Mission East and KIRDARC suggest that resources should be allocated for humanitarian response in development projects, and a humanitarian response should be considered a cross-cutting issue⁷⁶.

Flexible and efficient funding mechanisms are also among the objectives of the Grand Bargain, which binds various donors including the EU. As noticed in a report of VOICE, multi-annual EU development funding has already played an important role for a deep understanding of context and good relations with stakeholders, and more multi-annual, untied, programmatic and coordinated funding would likely strengthen timely and adaptive nexus programming⁷⁷.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland has funding instruments for development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding. According to Fida, these instruments have some degree of flexibility as programme-based support instruments allow development programmes to reallocate funds in the event of disasters or crises. For example, after the Nyiragongo volcano eruption, Fida and CEPAC started humanitarian assistance in the Goma area with self-financed assistance and submitted a reallocation request of the development cooperation funds. When such reallocation was approved, the response continued with the re-allocated funding. However, the reallocation was not meant for a long-term commitment, so Fida and CEPAC applied for humanitarian assistance funding from the Finnish MFA and continued with a longer humanitarian programme in the area. Without this flexibility, the work would have halted and re-started several times, but thanks to continued funding the psychosocial support work in the area continued seamlessly. However, in order to successfully implement triple-nexus approach and disability inclusion, the adequate financial resources allocation for disability inclusion is needed in annual budgets⁷⁸.

Other effective funding tools would be forecast-based financing, which has the potential to utilise financing more effectively and use data to inform interventions and plan before disaster strikes⁷⁹; solutions with higher start-up costs but lower operational costs⁸⁰; the inclusion of crisis modifiers to enable a shift from development to humanitarian programming as the context changes; emergency or contingency budget lines to secure development gains by quickly addressing new humanitarian crisis; and flexibility to shift sub-grants from one recipient to another⁸¹. Combining funding streams that support strategic objectives rather than siloed projects would be another useful solution⁸², especially when based in a specific country, to channel more funding to national and local actors⁸³. Dorcas also highlights the need to conduct donor mapping to understand and document their interests and preferences and to further develop them into concrete fundraising strategies⁸⁴.

Another example of innovative funding solution is provided by KIRDARC, a member of Start Network which works for Humanitarian response. KIRDARC has mobilised the fund of Network in Humanitarian response in alignment with ongoing development projects in the Karnali and Lumbini province in Nepal. For instance, KIRDARC supported by Mission East was able to align funding from different sources for a harmonised response to the pandemic. During the Covid-19 response, KIRDARC received funding from CISU, BMZ and CKU through Mission East. Besides, thanks to the nexus implementation, harmonisation and partnership between and among the donors have been increased in terms of resource mobilisation⁸⁵.

Coordination between organisations and division within organisations between sectors

The siloed approach to the nexus is also evident in the way our organisations are organised. Organisations have evolved to specialise their 'development', 'humanitarian' and 'peacebuilding' expertise within different departments, implementing different approaches. As such, we also find ourselves challenged to coordinate and collaborate internally when implementing the nexus (and the resulting challenges when partnerships/consortia arrangements become more complex).

In the following example, Fida and CEPAC share how they are working to address these challenges.

The Fida and CEPAC staff in the DRC occupy the same offices, and this facilitates smooth information flow by sharing experts across departments and by learning from reports and evaluations. The development and humanitarian programmes are run by the same Country Programme Manager, and this saves overhead costs and reduces the difficulty of communication and coordination between the two programmes. However, this practice also carries risks, such as the workload, reduced transparency, loss of information and knowledge, but these can be mitigated through good management and practices as well as continuous capacity building.

Continuous and well-structured reflection and discussion between departments is critical also for disability inclusion. The nexus approach ensures that structures and processes for disability inclusion in communities are sustainable and there is a high level of preparedness in conflict prone areas. The difficulty in complex crisis is the continuous movement of people. There is no static geographical area in which to build disability inclusive communities, rather communities evolve, migrate, and encounter continuous needs and changes on many levels. Building conflict preparedness, ensuring not only disability inclusion but meaningful participation as well as sustainable structures for community life, with truly changed attitudes towards persons with disability, is a complex and time-consuming process that requires commitment and a multi-angle approach.

A risk spoken out by staff is the fear of confusing the teams with respect to their roles, budgets, limitations, and opportunities. However, CEPAC staff in both development and humanitarian cooperation are equipped for disability inclusion and it is a matter of finding time in the middle of dire needs and ongoing crisis to develop new ways of working. Disability inclusion provides a clear specific targeted area to build, clarify and rewire procedures and coordination. A risk is that under the stress of a humanitarian setting, any new crisis or urgent situation will deter teams back to familiar ways of working until new ways become standard practice with time⁸⁶.

Fida works with the same partner in development, including peacebuilding, and humanitarian assistance, and this provides an opportunity for shared expertise and knowledge. As triple nexus practices continuously develop, it increases the quality of the work through joint planning, shared knowledge and expertise, and more efficient use of resources.

From a disability inclusion perspective, shared expertise and joint networks with different actors are extremely important. Working closely with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) provides an advantage with the triple nexus. Partners to the Elimu-Haki Programme have a wide network with OPDs in the area. Their knowledge of persons with disabilities has an impact for successful disability inclusion as members of OPDs provide important knowledge of the situation of persons with disabilities in DRC for the staff, both in development and humanitarian work. Networking with OPDs ensures also supporting the agency of persons with disabilities and their full participation in their communities in development and humanitarian activities.

Moreover, Fida created a Nexus Working Group and coordination system in the DRC. A group has been formed in Teams to share material and come together to discuss strategy. Monitoring trips are also joined and Fida development and humanitarian staff visit across humanitarian and development sites. Teams review activities together and plan deepened synergies as well as joint risk assessments and conflict assessments. A monthly roundtable brings teams together to discuss and develop the work.

Furthermore, CEPAC has many stakeholders and is working actively with United Nations organisations, other NGOs and clusters focusing on coordination, security, and child protection. The partner also relates to the Ministry of Humanitarian and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Planning, local security forces and UN Humanitarian Air Services. In addition to this, CEPAC has a wide network in the country with other international (HI, CARITAS) and local actors and CSOs, including organisations and associations of persons with disabilities⁸⁷.

The inclusion of local partners and the promotion of localisation

One of the main strengths of EU-CORD is that through its 26 members is able to reach out to a wide variety of actors, including over 800 local partners ranging from faith actors to organisations of persons with disabilities. Supporting and developing these partnerships within a nexus approach underpins all our approaches. The challenge that we experience as INGOs is in communicating [our] perceived differences between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approaches, rules, and modalities — distinctions which, to our local actors and communities, can seem quite arbitrary. Renewed approaches to partnership development are a key strand in EU-CORDs strategy to re-frame our approach and understanding to work more inclusively with local actors looking at partnership principles, decision-maker, power dynamics, roles, and responsibilities in the partnership and how the partnership deals with disagreement and conflict.

Fida's guiding philosophy is to work through a strong partnership stance, where local partners are not only the main implementing body, but also part of the programme cycle management in all its phases. This ensures a better participation of beneficiaries as active partners in any development or humanitarian action, and it is especially critical when it comes to disability inclusion because building local capacity ensures that no one is left behind and that persons in vulnerable situations gain acceptance and a place⁸⁸.

According to Mission East and KIRDARC, local partners are best placed to engage with communities at the grassroots level as frontline responders, and to show them the benefits of working together for collective outcomes and engaging with and advocate towards duty-bearers to claim their rights and entitlements, both during crises and for longer-term development⁸⁹.

Mission East is committed to reinforcing the diversity of local partners through a partnership and collaboration approach which enables identification and engagement with local actors of varying form and scope. Based in robust context and stakeholder analysis, informal and semi-formal actors including youth groups, women's groups, community-based networks, parent groups and others are gathered around common agendas and capacitated as agents of change for their families and communities. Mission East's approach to working with local partner organisations aims to enhance the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of humanitarian and development interventions, increase civil society capacity, diversity, and legitimacy, and contribute to the Localisation Agenda⁹⁰.

The project “Building Bridges Burundi” integrated the views and suggestions of implementing partners and local community structures, as well as target communities, into programming thanks to monitoring, supervision and coaching field visits, quarterly meetings, and analysis sessions between partners and community structures. This resulted in the facilitation of local ownership of the programme’s achievements as well as in a good level of sustainability of the programme’s impact⁹¹.

The added value of faith-based organisations

As a faith-based network, we have a special interest in the role of Christian-based INGOs and local faith-based actors across the triple nexus. This section contributed by EU-CORD Faith in Action group was aimed at helping members articulate the faith dimension in their organisational theory of change⁹², but it also provides some relevant insights on the added value of faith-based organisations (FBOs) to the operationalisation of the nexus.

FBOs themselves are religious in their foundation and understand the world spiritually, which makes them different from their secular counterparts. This faith perspective enables them to interact and respond to the faith-dimension of the communities they work with. This is relevant in terms of impact in the triple nexus as worldwide more than eight in ten people identify with a religious group which influences how they see the world and act within it⁹³.

Fida’s partner CEPAC is one of the big church denominations in DRC, with around two million members and represented by 1336 local churches and many branches. CEPAC has strong departments running social initiatives including the Department of Community Development, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health. CEPAC is grounded at community level and has influence among communities with good relationships and cooperation with other stakeholders. CEPAC has experience in running development, including peacebuilding, and humanitarian programmes and is accepted and trusted in communities.

Furthermore, a strong and supportive faith-aware constituency is key to legitimising FBOs and to ensuring space for faith considerations in humanitarian, development, and peace-building work. A sufficient space for faith considerations is supported by positive attitudes of donors and the public regarding the role that faith has in promoting better development, humanitarian, and peace-building outcomes. Simultaneously, the positive change in the attitude of donors, governments, and the public on the role of faith is achieved through challenging sceptical mindsets linked to beliefs of the wider public, which are barriers to development. Challenging these barriers happens as FBOs are connected to and actively involve themselves in multi-stakeholder platforms and processes.

Fida observes that partners in the DRC call for EU faith-based organisations to create synergies with African/DRC faith-based organisations to approach conflict actors and for EU-based churches to network with African churches to address peacebuilding at the community level. Churches are viewed to act as part of the civil society with a spiritual mandate, which frees them from being viewed as a political actor as they work to build peace in their communities. The programme staff view their place in society and communities as a good position to act as peace advocates and peace makers with means to also approach conflict actors.

This value-adding contribution is achieved through a transformative force for change in society. This is the result of faith actors at different levels in communities engaging in development responsibly, mirroring

Christ by giving attention to justice, and through long-term relationships with local partners. Faith communities are thus supported to address society needs and become effective mobilisers of volunteerism in their communities.

Fida's model of working through the church partner brings continuation and evolvement of activities through the work of volunteers and church activities even as funding ends and the humanitarian teams leave the site⁹⁴.

Lastly, FBOs can address issues across the nexus in an inclusive and sustainable manner by reaching out to the most marginalised in their programmes. This is a logical effect as FBOs mirror Christian values in their activities and programmes so that they consciously leave no one behind. FBOs are also able to deal with development issues in an inclusive and sustainable manner by addressing all spheres of human development, including the spiritual and existential needs of people in their programmes.

Churches can also have a big impact on how communities perceive persons with disabilities and how they can support their full inclusion in the society. As in many cultures and religions disability is often seen through a spiritual approach, churches can play a vital role in a change away from this perception towards the human rights-based approach to disability⁹⁵.

The example of Fida's work in the DRC neatly illustrates what many members identify as the added value of working with churches and other local faith actors. As summarised in our co-authored toolkit "Engaging with Local Faith Actors and Communities"⁹⁶:

The deep embeddedness of faith communities and networks builds a relationship based on mutual trust and fosters the leverage of multi-dimensional interventions. Religious leaders — including women and youth leaders — have a meaningful role in building resilience and sharing effective communication, providing psychosocial and spiritual support, promoting inclusion and countering stigma and they enable the adaptation of traditional practices in case this is needed to avert risks.

Conclusion

The practice and experiences of both EU-CORD members and other NGOs and institutions point toward an increasing interest and commitment to bringing together the three components of the nexus. What emerged more evidently from the conversations held with members is a growing willingness to learn from other people's experiences and ideas, to share lessons learnt and challenges, and ultimately to collaborate on possible ways forward.

This approach is paramount to an effective and coherent nexus operationalisation at all levels and across all phases of the project cycle management. As we have seen in this study, the path towards an integration of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work is not without obstacles. Common challenges identified in the literature review and by members through conversations and case studies include the difficulty in framing the nexus and especially its peace component, the risks posed to the respect of humanitarian principles, organisational — and staff-related adaptation needs, donors' requirements and logic, and the inclusion of local — and namely faith-based — partners and communities. Such adaptation will surely require considerable time and efforts, as well as the acknowledgement that achieving great goals involve cooperation and inclusiveness.

Recommendations

For members

1. As we build our in-country approaches, the going-in point should be to work with a nexus framework.
2. Members should play to their strengths and work collaboratively and strategically within nexus approaches in different contexts.
3. Strengthened relationships with local actors is paramount to an effective nexus approach, and this should occur by putting local actors at the centre throughout all phases of the programme cycle management.
4. Ensure that engagement with local actors is inclusive of diverse groups, such as organisations or networks of youth, women, people with disabilities, faith actors, and that they are effectively empowered as agents of change in their own communities across the triple nexus.
5. More clarity on the definition of peacebuilding is needed to make sure that the peace component of the nexus is well understood by the organisation and appropriately integrated. At a minimum, a conflict-sensitive approach must become a priority for any attempt at nexus programming, even in non-conflict situations and if peacebuilding activities are not envisaged.
6. Invest in staff training and in restructuring organisational sectors to make them suitable to the nexus.
7. Explore opportunities for flexible funding and multi-donor approaches through strengthened and collaborative donor mapping exercises.
8. As faith-based actors, consider the unique added value that this can bring to programmes, engagement, and partnerships in the operationalisation of the nexus.

For donors

1. Commit to reinventing siloed funding logic by:
 - ▶ Recognising that many organisations are multi-mandated and overcoming siloed thinking and financing.
 - ▶ Adopting predictable, flexible, multi-year and risk-tolerant financing for all actors across the nexus.
2. Simplifying and harmonising reporting and monitoring requirements for projects that implement the nexus.
3. Include NGOs and local partners in negotiating the financial/action multi-annual and multi-purpose plan.
4. Encourage coordination between actors, for example by facilitating discussion among implementing experts, increasing accountability and impartial assessment of needs, and encouraging multi-level and multi-stakeholder actions.

For the EU

1. It is paramount that the EU contributes to achieving conceptual clarity regarding the peace component:
 - ▶ When conceptualising the peace component of the nexus, it is key to prefer 'little p' and 'positive peace' efforts based upon long-term development cooperation efforts for civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention, inclusive approaches, and social cohesion efforts.
2. The EU should ensure a higher level of engagement with partners both in member countries and locally for example, by:
 - ▶ Conducting joint conflict and context analysis, planning and monitoring exercises throughout which stakeholders from all fields are integrated and represented.
 - ▶ Integrating analysis and lessons learned by monitoring implementation of the nexus approach to evaluate the impact of nexus programming.
3. The EU should adopt more long-term and flexible funding to facilitate nexus programming.
4. Lastly, the EU should create more opportunities for interplay between DG ECHO, DG INTPA and the EEAS building on successful examples of cooperation between European institutions.

Annex 1

Fida case study

Disability Inclusion and the Development-Humanitarian-Peace Nexus in DRC

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Country context

The second largest country in Africa and the largest country in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo faces a strange set of development, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding challenges across its 26 provinces. Decades of violent conflict have left public institutions weak, and unable to alleviate poverty or promote development across the country. Regions like South Kivu, North Kivu, and Tanganyika are still prone to violent conflict, and the enormous number of internally displaced people suffer especially harshly from poverty. The country is still recovering from a series of conflicts that broke out in the 1990s. The DRC is making headway against the Ebola epidemic, which has been raging for almost two years in the North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces. The country has also been battling the Covid-19 pandemic since March 10, 2020 and is currently implementing urgent measures to contain its spread.

Protracted civil wars coupled with the continued mismanagement of state resources have placed the Democratic Republic of the Congo among the group of fragile states with the world's poorest infrastructure. As per fragility of states in the world 2021⁹⁷, DRC is ranked the 5th of 178 countries worldwide, among the 5 countries ranked under "Very High Alert" score. The DRC sits at 175th place out of 189 countries listed on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2020⁹⁸.

Due to the protracted crisis, it is estimated that around 4 % of the population are internally displaced persons in DRC. Proper statistics on the number of persons with disabilities in DRC are hard to find⁹⁹. SIDA (2014)¹⁰⁰ estimated cautiously that around 11 % of population are persons with disabilities but on the other hand PA Development Disabilities Council (PADDC) (2019)¹⁰¹ estimated the number being around 10.5 million (approx. 15% of the population). PADDC continues to estimate that most common reasons behind the disability prevalence are infectious diseases such as polio and leprosy, war injuries, congenital defects, and obstetric emergencies. Also, the lack of health care access has its impact. Persons with disabilities in DRC are largely facing stigma and discrimination. Although laws and international commitments support their inclusion, very little is done for the implementation of the laws in practise.

Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI)¹⁰² 2020 report reveals that there are more than 5 000 registered NGOs in DRC. However, these associations rarely act for common social benefit. NGOs are often set up as means to receive funds for the private benefit of a few individuals. As per the CIVICUS¹⁰³ Civic Space ratings, the DRC civic space is considered as "repressed state". Although some civil society organizations exist, their advocacy work is regularly impeded, and they face threats of de-registration and closure by the authorities. This impacts willingness of CSOs, organisations of persons with disabilities in this instance, to advocate and voice the challenges they face in their societies.

1.2 Partnership context

Fida International (Fida) partners with a church denomination, 8e Communauté des Églises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale (CEPAC) and CEPAC Health Department (DOM). Both Fida and CEPAC are triple nexus actors, with departments and teams working in development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peace work.

CEPAC is one of the big church denominations in DRC, with around 2 million members. CEPAC is present across the country and is represented by 1336 local churches and many branches. CEPAC has strong departments running social initiatives including the Department of Community Development, the Department of Education with 1710 schools (28 nursery schools, 1146 primary schools, 534 Secondary schools, 2 Universities), the Department of Health (DOM) with 5 Referral Hospitals, 36 Small Hospitals, 300 Health Centres, 1 Pharmaceutical Store, 2 Medical Schools, 3 Health Zones, 1 Faculty of Medical Sciences in UEA University. CEPAC also has several sub-departments (e.g., youth and children). CEPAC is grounded at community level and has influence among communities with good relationships and cooperation with other stakeholders (e.g., the DRC government, UN agencies). CEPAC has experience in running development, including peacebuilding, and humanitarian programmes and is accepted and trusted in communities.

Fida is a Christian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Organization, founded in 1927. Fida partners with local NGOs and communities in fragile countries to combat poverty and strengthen the human rights of people groups in vulnerable and marginalized situations. Currently Fida's main donor is the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, which has funded Fida since 1974; self-funding consists of sponsors, private donors, and Fida second-hand stores. Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 aims to improve the rights of children and youth to quality education and a safe living environment in 11 countries in Asia, Eastern Africa, and the Middle East. The Programme also includes a peacebuilding activity. Fida's Humanitarian Assistance Programme is implemented in 1-year

cycles with programmes on-going now in Yemen and the DRC. Each programme period can have a differing sectoral approach according to needs, but there is a strong focus on psychosocial support and disability inclusion, and they are mainstreamed in all activities.

The partnership between Fida and CEPAC started in 2008 through the humanitarian assistance programme. Now, with a four-year Development Cooperation Country Programme (2022-2025) with a newly started peacebuilding activities and continued humanitarian assistance both funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and implemented by CEPAC and Fida, there is a unique triple nexus approach in the 3 Eastern Provinces of DRC. Fida's guiding working philosophy in both humanitarian assistance and development cooperation is to work through a strong partnership stance, where local partners are not only the main implementing body of any programme but part of the programme cycle management in all its phases. This also ensures a better participation of beneficiaries as active partners in any development or humanitarian action as Fida's partners are rooted in community. This is especially critical concerning disability inclusion. Building local capacity ensures that no one is left behind and persons in vulnerable situations first gain acceptance and a place, and then remain as part of the community in times of both peace and conflict or crisis.

1.3 Programme context

The Elimu-Haki Programme (EHP) is an ongoing Development Cooperation Country Programme which was initiated in 2018 and focuses on the right of children to education. The new four-year Country Programme 2022-2025 is in itself a development-peace nexus programme as it has peacebuilding activities included. The Country Programme creates awareness on the rights of children and youth on their rights related to education and safe living environment with in-service trainings for teachers on improved knowledge and skills in inclusive education, organizing trainings on psychosocial support to build community resilience to cope with distress, addressing normative change through trainings on sexual reproductive health and rights and menstrual health management,

supporting the creation of self-help groups and providing trainings on entrepreneurship. The Country Programme is also promoting dialogue between different peace actors for community cohesion and lasting peace in the target areas, e.g., by establishing Peace Clubs. In order to follow the Leave No-one Behind principle, it is crucial to include persons with disabilities in peacebuilding activities. As a people group, it is important to involve them in peace education and peace dialogue.

Humanitarian assistance throughout the years has focused strongly on Food Security and Psychosocial Support. However, other areas of intervention have been and are e.g., Education in Emergency and Non-Food Items. Disability inclusion, local partnership and the triple nexus are mainstreamed throughout programming and implementation.

A disability focused external evaluation was conducted regionally in Eastern Africa, including the DRC, for Fida's development cooperation activities in 2020. And a disability and nexus specific external evaluation was conducted in 2021 in the DRC for Fida's humanitarian assistance work. The evaluations brought recommendations which support the great need for taking a nexus approach in crisis settings to ensure disability inclusion. These findings and recommendations along with follow-up actions are discussed in this case study.

1.4 Faith-based action

Partners in the DRC call for EU faith-based organisations to create synergies with African / DRC-based faith-based organisations to approach conflict actors as well for EU-based churches to network with African churches to address peacebuilding at the community level. Churches are viewed to act as part of the civil society with a spiritual mandate, which frees them from being viewed as a political actor as they work to build peace in their communities. The programme staff view their place in society and communities as a good position to act as peace advocates and peace makers with means to also approach conflict actors.

Churches and faith-based organisations can be true change-makers in their own communities. As their networks are not artificially planted to support the nexus approach but networks are already there, it enables churches to have impact around the country, on a national level.

Churches can also have big impact on how communities perceive persons with disabilities and how they can support the full inclusion of persons with disabilities. As disability is often in many cultures and religions seen through a spiritual approach, churches can play a vital role in a change away from this perception towards the human right based approach to disability. This will support inclusive nexus where no one is left behind.

2. THE TRIPLE NEXUS AND DISABILITY INCLUSION

2.1 Strengths

Fida works with the same partner in development, including peacebuilding, and humanitarian assistance, and this provides an opportunity for shared expertise and knowledge. As triple nexus practices continuously develop, it increases the quality of all the work through joint planning, shared knowledge and expertise, and more efficient use of resources. The triple nexus approach provides an opportunity to strengthen both internal and external coordination. Additionally, any experts in staff can be shared across departments allowing for smooth information flow (e.g. disability inclusion focal point person).

From a disability inclusion perspective, shared expertise and joint networks with different actors are extremely important. Working closely with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD) provides an advantage with triple nexus. Partners together with Elimu Haki-Programme have a wide network with OPDs in the area. Their knowledge of persons with disabilities in their own communities has an impact for successful disability inclusion as members of OPDs provide important knowledge of the situation of persons with disabilities in DRC for the staff, both in development and humanitarian

work. Networking with OPDs ensures also supporting the agency of persons with disabilities and their full participation in their communities in development and humanitarian activities as in community life.

Fida's development — and humanitarian programming, monitoring and reporting include similar tools and practices. One of the recommendations given in the humanitarian assistance disability inclusion evaluation was to include a specific reflections section in the bimonthly reporting template to reflect specifically on the success or failure of disability inclusion in the given period; this is a practice already in Fida's development cooperation reporting. The practice of sharing and learning from reports and evaluations between programme staff is practiced with both Fida and CEPAC staff and development and humanitarian staff also occupy the same offices which makes information sharing easier.

Continuous and well-structured reflection and discussion between departments is critical for disability inclusion. The nexus approach ensures that structures and processes for disability inclusion in communities are both sustainable and there is a high level of preparedness in conflict prone areas. The difficulty in complex crisis is the continuous movement of people. There is no static geographical area in which to build disability inclusive communities, rather communities evolve and migrate and encounter continuous needs and changes on many levels. Building conflict preparedness, ensuring not only disability inclusion but meaningful participation as well as sustainable structures for community life, with truly changed attitudes towards persons with disability is a complex and time-consuming process that requires commitment and a multi-angle approach.

2.2 Risks and barriers

Confusing and time-consuming

Due to a history of separated mandates and working teams, the programme staff is calling not only for "preaching nexus" but also defining strong strategies for implementation where, while mandates still differ, harmony is built, and linkages

are defined between the three areas of work. There is a process on-going to clarify defined, shared and understood strategies concerning budgeting, opportunities, and limitations.

A risk spoken out by programme staff is the fear of confusing the teams of their roles, budgets, limitations, and opportunities. However, CEPAC staff in both development and humanitarian cooperation are equipped for disability inclusion and it is a matter of finding ample time in the middle of dire needs and an ongoing crisis to develop new ways of working. Disability inclusion provides a clear specific targeted area to build, clarify and rewire procedures and coordination. A risk is that under the stress of a humanitarian setting any new crisis or urgent situation will deter teams back to familiar ways of working until new working ways become standard practice with time.

The development and humanitarian programmes are run by the same Country Programme Manager in the DRC. While this brings a lot of benefits, it also carries risks (e.g. workload, reduced transparency, loss of information and knowledge). On the other hand, risks can be mitigated through good management and good practices as well as continuous capacity building. Sharing the manager saves overhead costs and reduces the difficulty of communication and coordination between the two programmes.

Funding

Currently the two programmes, the humanitarian programme and the development Country Programme have separate funding (although both are largely funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland). As peacebuilding is a part of the development cooperation programme, separate funding for the peacebuilding has not been applied for.

Both programmes have different programme cycles, with humanitarian interventions being shorter naturally and the development programme being implemented in four-year cycles. Diversified funding and new donors and funding possibilities are also actively being sought out. One challenge is that the funding for humanitarian aid is very

inflexible and focused on delivering the planned aid stringently to plan, which is good but not very easily adopted to a shared nexus approach, whereas the development funding has some flexibility and can adapt to situations to seek the best outcome for its goals. The current four-year programme for development cooperation was planned and budgeted without specific knowledge of all humanitarian activities or nexus opportunities and synergies. It will have to adapt its activities and budget during 2022. Activities may need to be adapted due to the different length cycles in the future by taking in to account pre-emptively the kinds of activities that can be supported and possible geographic opportunities in advance along with lessons learned.

Differing mandates

There is tension between humanitarian action in conflict settings and an agenda for reformation aiming to drive wide societal structural changes. Humanitarian work has the tendency to focus on service delivery, and while Fida and CEPAC work with a strong localisation agenda, the life-saving role of humanitarian assistance dictates the need to move on to areas of more acute need and available funding. In reality this leaves minimal time to continue building linkages or advocating for structural change alongside development actors in old areas after moving on to new humanitarian settings.

Focusing on building linkages with development actors during implementation allows for positive structures and relationships to continue. However, there is a lack of willingness for actors to remove “unnecessary barriers” that hinder collaboration. The New Way of Working (NWoW)¹⁰⁴ approach invites humanitarian and development actors to come together but in a complex situation like the DRC organisations remain focused, understandably so, on the activities that their funding and outcome and impact expectations tie them to.

As CEPAC is a nexus actor with humanitarian and development teams working side by side, this allows for visiting activities or monitoring trips across departments, while at the same time separate funding does create boundaries.

Additionally, Fida’s model of working through the church partner brings continuation and involvement of activities through the work of volunteers and church activities even as funding ends and the humanitarian teams leave the site.

Politics, peace and security

Working for peace is risky. The drivers of the conflict have power and will attempt to quash any work that draws attention to perpetrators in the conflict and those benefiting from it by extension. In practice there is a risk of harm, harassment, death, or terrorism. Quality mitigation measures are needed. Quality risk assessment, conflict analysis and do no harm measures need to be in place and constantly reviewed and updated as situation in the working environment changes.

There is a risk is reinforcing an existing tendency to politicize humanitarian action. There is an absence of sufficient services, along with continued protection issues and hampered access to areas and access of all persons, without distinction, to humanitarian assistance. Persons with disability especially are in a vulnerable situation, and it should not be forgotten that they are also part of groups of perpetrators, e.g., child soldiers.

2.3 Enabling factors

Willingness and capacity

Fida continues to build the capacity of CEPAC & their department of health DOM in financial and administrative management and advocacy, strengthening them to be an independent agent of transformative change in DRC. The situation in the DRC is dire and there is a willingness to walk new paths to reach goals. Peace is a great need and priority in the DRC and the new peacebuilding sub-component has been embraced by the teams that already work in the development and humanitarian sectors.

Structures of coordination

Fida has created a Nexus Working Group and coordination system in the DRC. A group has been formed in Teams to share material and come

together to discuss strategy. Also monitoring trips are joined and Fida development and humanitarian staff visit across humanitarian and development sites. Teams review activities together and plan deepened synergies as well as joint risk assessments and conflict assessments. A monthly roundtable brings teams together to discuss and develop the work.

Partnerships and networks

CEPAC has many stakeholders and is working actively with e.g. United Nations organisations, other NGOs and clusters focusing on coordination, security, and child protection. The partner also relates to the Ministry of Humanitarian and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Planning, local security forces and UN Humanitarian Air Services. In Kalemie, coordination is done with all relevant clusters and working groups.

In addition to the governmental level networks and clusters, CEPAC has a wide network in the country with other international (HI, CARITAS) and local actors and CSOs, including organisations and associations of persons with disabilities.

Intersectionality is crucial to understand when discussing an inclusive triple-nexus approach. As persons with disabilities are already among the people living in most vulnerable situation, they are often perceived as a homogeneous group and certain intersectional factors are not recognized. Working together with OPDs in the region or area, organizations are able to gain this knowledge and recognize the factors of intersectionality. Networking with local ODPs and their participation in joint planning will strengthen disability inclusion on a practical level (planning accessibility, mapping persons with disabilities in the area).

Contributing activities and geographical harmonisation

There are several activities in the development and humanitarian programmes that are similar or can link together. Psychosocial support is part of both programmes and often linked to child friendly spaces; food security is supported through training farmers and providing seeds and tools; and

resilience building activities focus on sensitization, preparedness and supporting livelihoods.

Peacebuilding in the triple nexus approach is targeted on two fronts, one that focuses on root causes, and the other on social cohesion and building resilient communities that become change actors for peace with skills to dialogue and strategically plan to mitigate peace threatening factors. Disability inclusion is also linked to the peace nexus. When activities focus on connectors and dividers in the community it must include the full community, no one should be left behind. Often wars and conflicts cause injuries and/or disability leaving persons disabled, including psychosocial disabilities, and cast aside from opportunities to work, build families, or rebuild their lives. Likewise, persons with disabilities will have been affected by conflict with a 10% higher risk of exploitation and sexual abuse than their non-disabled peers¹⁰⁵. In addition to this, children with disabilities are almost four times more likely to experience violence than children without disabilities. This risk is especially higher with girls with autism, deaf and blind girls, girls with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities and girls with multiple impairments¹⁰⁶. Peace processes whether they are activities to prevent conflict, in the midst of conflict or after a conflict, must always include persons with all abilities.

Current steps also include harmonizing plans by focusing on the same geographically situated IDP's and communities, by increasing planning and matching activities that can be transitioned from humanitarian assistance to development cooperation or that can co-exist and contribute to each other coherently. There is also an on-going process to harmonize planning tools and conceptual goals as well as mapping and approaches. The goal is to use the same tools to define and map different disabilities among the beneficiaries to support inclusion throughout both programme processes.

3. LESSONS LEARNT AND OUTCOMES

3.1 Geographical alignment

The Fida and CEPAC teams in the DRC are purposefully aligning geographical areas for programme activities. When done purposefully, it helps with mapping persons with disabilities in the area and this information can be transferred from humanitarian assistance work to development cooperation and peacebuilding. It makes planning the accessibility easier, first in humanitarian assistance delivery and later supporting the full participation in development cooperation and peacebuilding activities.

3.2 Staff collaboration

Staff at CEPAC work in the same country office and have a shared office in all the working areas among communities. Part of the staff is working in a dual role as are some of the volunteers. Resources are used more effectively due to this closeness in work. Also, it is easier to adjust and align planning and programming frameworks with this team collaboration. Staff focal points and for example disability inclusion officers can be shared across departments.

Close collaboration ensures shared expertise as well. Expertise in disability inclusion can be shared within the staff and this ensures organizational learning on the topic. Also learning and understanding peacebuilding can be ensured through joint training and strategizing. When peacebuilding and disability inclusion expertise are developed and shared within the staff, staff are more competent in their work and can increasingly bring disability inclusion as part of peacebuilding activities and vice versa.

3.3 Reallocation and flexibility of funds

The Finnish MFA has different types of funding instruments. Fida receives programme-based support for its development cooperation. As mentioned, this programme includes peacebuilding. Humanitarian Assistance

programme is also funded by Finnish MFA. The MFA of Finland also has funding instrument of peace programmes, however, Fida has not applied for funds from this separate instrument.

These instruments have some flexibility in them. For example, programme-based support instruments allow development programmes to re-allocate funds in the event of disaster or sudden crisis. After the Nyiragongo volcano eruption Fida and CEPAC started humanitarian assistance in the Goma area with self-financed assistance. During this time, the re-allocation request of the development cooperation funds was submitted to the Finnish MFA. When the re-allocation was approved, the response continued with this re-allocated funding. However, the re-allocation of development cooperation funding is not for a long-term commitment. Therefore, Fida and CEPAC applied for humanitarian assistance funding from Finnish MFA and upon approval of the proposal, continued again through MFA funds for a longer humanitarian programme in the area. Without this flexibility the work would have halted and re-started several times. But due to continued funding for example the psychosocial support work in the area continued seamlessly.

Although there is some flexibility in the instruments, new instruments that allow more adaptive management of triple-nexus approach are called for.

In order to successfully implement triple-nexus approach and disability inclusion, the adequate financial resources allocation for disability inclusion is needed in annual budgets. This principle applies to development work including peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance. Budget allocation support accessibility issues (physical & information) as well the use of versatile communication methods. Assistive devices are also needed; thus this needs to be budgeted.

3.4 Monitoring

Disaggregated data is a crucial tool to monitor disability inclusion. It helps to set disability inclusive targets and to monitor the impacts of intersectionality as well (age, gender, type of

disability, possible ethnicity). Through this type of data it is possible to monitor that all different groups have access and full participation. It is important to agree common method inside the organisation, both development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, to gather data on persons with disability and train staff to use it correctly. Training needs to support the skills to analyse the data as well.

Disability inclusion must be included into the monitoring systems. It is recommended to include this approach in all monitoring tools an organisation is using as well as being part of systematic reporting. When the staff in humanitarian assistance and development work are used to monitoring disability inclusion in all their work, it will have a positive impact on the quality of work from a disability inclusion perspective. It is also crucial to involve persons with disabilities themselves and OPDs in monitoring and reporting to ensure that specific needs of persons with disabilities are met.

Annex 2

Mission East and KIRDARC case study

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction to the project and its objectives

- **Title:** Working with local partners to build Resilient Communities in the Himalayan Region of Karnali Province, Nepal
- **Key Objective:** To reinforce the adaptive capacity and social cohesion of vulnerable communities and to strengthen civil society organizations to build collective capacities to combat the impact of climate and environmental crises in Humla, district, Karnali Province

1.2 Country/regional/local and historical/political/social/economic contexts (brief outline)

Nepal still has a low HDI (142 of 189 countries in 2020) with 34% of the population living in multidimensional poverty. While some progress has been secured in the political participation and representation of women, there is general concern over increased restrictions on civil society, especially with additional barriers caused by COVID-19. Rights-based approaches such as participation, Leave No One Behind, and empowerment through civic education remains far from the grasp of the most marginalized groups such as women, Dalit, and persons with disability, as well as challenging concepts for duty bearers. The social inequalities in Karnali arising from gender, caste, ethnicity, language, region, and sexual orientation remain structurally ingrained and all-pervasive.

The remote and mountainous Karnali province has the highest incidence of poverty (55%) and the slowest progress in poverty reduction. This is manifested in food insecurity, with insufficient food intake among the population, as well as

low economic activity and high vulnerability to increasing climate and environmental shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed further challenges to the livelihoods of the people of these districts. Overall, 31% of households reported a reduction in income in the first three months after the pandemic, resulting in insufficient daily food availability.

2. STRENGTHS

What strengths do you expect from taking a nexus approach to the project?

Using tried and tested Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approaches emphasizing collaboration, coherence and complementarity and working in conflict-sensitive ways over the years, Mission East and its long-term partners in Nepal such as Kirdarc have worked actively on the drivers or root causes of conflict and fragility, such as poverty and deprivation, conflict over land, use and management of water, communal/tribal rights, and access to livelihood opportunities and markets. This has been done by drawing upon their deep understanding of the local context and up-to-date analysis of prevailing power and conflict dynamics, supplemented by the use of the tools of mediation, and dispute resolution to help build community cohesion and recognition of the benefits of collective action.

Recently initiated projects by Mission East and Kirdarc have incorporated this principle of integrating humanitarian response and rights-based development approaches. The overall security situation has improved considerably but the climate and environment crisis is exacerbating Nepal's economic and political vulnerabilities and fragilities and is driving conflict over resources such as land and water and risks leading to widespread displacement and deprivation, adding

an additional layer of risk to Nepal's resilience. The HDP nexus approach focuses on the integration of climate change with natural resource management and ensuring effective governance will reduce the direct effects of the climate and environment crisis. As a result, more sustainable results can be attained within the expected timeframe and resources.

3. RISKS

What do you see as the risks deriving from implementing the nexus approach (e.g. respecting humanitarian principles, being perceived as working for a political agenda, etc.)?

Though nexus approaches are quite relevant and effective in a country like Nepal, using them does entail some risks in the implementation process and the attaining of results. In case of weak governance in the implementation process, political interference might arise in emergency response activities and in selecting beneficiaries for assistance. Similarly, there might be less experienced/qualified human resources for effective humanitarian response and people who know how to integrate activities across the nexus spectrum. Lack of political will to work in coordinated, integrated ways can also, pose a significant barrier to working across the nexus.

4. ENABLING FACTORS

What are the factors that enable you to work with a nexus approach? For example — material and human resources/coordination with local actors/partnerships with peacebuilding actors/conflict and context analysis/women and youth inclusion, etc.

There are multiple enabling factors in applying the nexus approach at the grassroots level in countries like Nepal. First of all, an integrated approach ensures efficient management and careful utilization of resources. In the process of the nexus approach, multi-stakeholder

partnership engagement, particularly of local communities and local civil society actors is high so all the stakeholders are active in participating in a collaborative implementation process. Taking ownership increases if all the stakeholders are involved in equitable ways in the same process or approach. Possible conflicts and misunderstandings are significantly reduced if this approach is applied as all the stakeholders are on the same platform with a collaborative approach. Meanwhile, local government has to prioritize this approach as well through necessary policy/plan introduction. Applying nexus increases engagement and ownership of community people (women, youth, marginalized communities); hence, contributing to better results in the long run for all concerned.

5. BARRIERS

What are the barriers that hold you back from a successful nexus approach? Donors, funding etc.

In applying the nexus approach in a country like Nepal might have some barriers as well. They include: shifting donor priorities in terms of thematic intervention areas and regions, and the current reality of shrinking funding in the region. Other barriers can be lack of predictable flexible multi-year funding, and lack of harmonization with multiple reporting and monitoring requirements of different donors adding to the work-load of implementing organizations, particularly local partners.

Similarly, changing governments and their approaches to mobilizing development partners and donors might also pose challenges in applying this approach.

6. FUNDING

6.1 How it was obtained, who was the donor(s)

The funding was received through open competition. The fund has been provided by donors. KIRDARC Nepal is receiving funds from various funding partners. The top funding partners are Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision International (WVI), Danida SPA funding through Mission East (ME), Good Neighbor International (GNI), and Stromme Foundation (SF).

6.2 Experiences in finding innovative solutions to overcome funding barriers to nexus approaches (e.g. aligning funding portfolios from different donors, harmonized reporting and monitoring systems, flexibility to allow funding for duty-bearers response to crisis)

KIRDARC is a member of Start Network which is work for Humanitarian response. KIRDARC has mobilized the fund of Network in Humanitarian response in alignment with ongoing development projects in Karnali and Lumbini province. For instance, KIRDARC Nepal supported by Mission East was able to align funding from different sources for a harmonized response to the pandemic. During the COVID 19 response KIRDARC received funding of CISU, BMZ and CKU through Mission East.

7. OUTCOMES

The following are the results of the implementation of the nexus:

- Expertise of KIRDARC has been increased in emergency response, and integration of the humanitarian component into development interventions.
- Harmonization and partnership between and among the donors have been increased in terms of resource mobilization. As a result of this, humanitarian actions have been timely and effective.

8. LESSONS LEARNED

8.1 Could they be applied elsewhere? What could have been done better?

- Resources should be allocated for humanitarian response in development projects. A humanitarian response should be considered a cross-cutting issue.
- Humanitarian response projects should have recovery and development interventions immediately after the humanitarian response.
- Capacity building of staff who works for development projects for timely and accountable humanitarian response.
- Local partners are best placed to engage with communities at the grassroots level as frontline responders and are also, best placed to show them the benefits of working together for collective outcomes and how communities can engage with and advocate towards duty-bearers to claim their rights and entitlements, both during crises and for longer-term development. More support needs to be provided to local partners in adherence to Localization Agenda and Grand Bargain commitments.

8.2 Is there anything to share from your perspective as a faith-based organization or engaging with faith communities in a nexus approach?

ME and partners are not working specifically with faith-based organizations in Nepal. However many different faith-based beneficiaries are benefiting from the programme and its activities. Nexus approaches can cover all these different faith-based communities as part of their emphasis on HRBA and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) approaches.

8.3 Do you have any perspective to share around working with local organizations in a nexus approach?

Mission East is committed to reinforcing the diversity of local partners through a partnership and collaboration approach which enables identification and engagement with local actors

of varying form and scope. Based in robust context and stakeholder analysis, informal and semi-formal actors including youth groups, women's groups, community-based networks, parent groups and others are gathered around common agendas and capacitated as agents of change for their families and communities. Mission East's approach to working with local partner organisations aims to enhance the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of humanitarian and development interventions, increase civil society capacity, diversity and legitimacy, and contribute to the Localisation Agenda.

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