

IMPLEMENTING THE HUMANITARIAN–DEVELOPMENT– PEACEBUILDING NEXUS: FROM GOOD INTENTIONS TO ACTIONS

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

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OVERVIEW

Calls for greater collaboration between the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors are getting louder. This session discussed the reasons why some aspects of this ‘nexus approach’ work while others face resistance. It took as its point of departure insights from new research conducted by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) on the nexus approach to humanitarian aid, peacebuilding and development cooperation in Somalia.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the session was to encourage an honest exchange on what works, what does not and in what context when implementing the humanitarian—development—peacebuilding nexus in general, paying particular attention to realities in Somalia. The idea was to go beyond the conceptual appeal of the ‘nexus approach’ and why it is needed, to discuss the incentives and disincentives for collaboration and coordination across these sectors.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

There is almost a consensus on the need for clarification of the term ‘nexus’. It means different things to different people, depending, among other things, on their institutional mandates, approaches or positions (or location) within organizations. This nexus approach is still new to some actors and the difference between nexus and resilience or durable solutions is not well understood or established. From a humanitarian field worker’s point of view (in Somalia), it is something that is already done everyday by responding to various needs of the population.

The relevance of the nexus approach is contested. Some question the usefulness of the term: should it be operationalized by each actor on the ground or is it useful just as an analytical tool? A critique of the approach is that it is a supply-driven approach—it is the viewpoint of international actors, not national or local actors. It is frustrating to use the nexus as a concept, as it is difficult to categorize the phase in which Somalia is now today: is it humanitarian crisis response, peacebuilding, state-building, stabilization or countering terrorism? Additionally, each of these terms is ambiguously defined. No impact has been observed in practical terms in Somalia.

There are many challenges to implementing the nexus, some specific to Somalia. There is fragmentation across and within organizations: this concerns how donors and the United Nations are organized. Not only are actors in each sector fragmented, they are fragmented internally: by sector or location (e.g. in headquarters, the capital or the field or as policymakers versus practitioners). This adds burden on the government. There is a lack of incentives: there are not enough incentives to work together and the current funding mechanisms do not allow it. Regarding security and access, the Somali Government is confined in Mogadishu and has been unable to reach many parts of the country. It is impossible to apply the nexus approach in such areas. In Somalia in particular, security has been given such a priority that it displaces people-oriented peacebuilding. In such a context, humanitarian and development organizations are reluctant to collaborate with the peacebuilding sector. Moreover, it is challenging to fully apply the humanitarian principles in such contexts. It is also challenging in the sense that the peace process in Somalia is not following the traditional path, from peace agreement to its implementation (i.e. there is no agreement

with al-Shabaab). National ownership is necessary: there is a need to integrate the views of the government.

Some achievements can be recognized. There are increased funding mechanisms for the nexus approach and diversification of funding modalities, such as community-driven development projects for the World Bank. The need to work together has now been recognized, whereas previously humanitarians, development workers and peacebuilders criticized and even neglected each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider how the widely recognized need for localization is implemented. Consider how to strengthen the role of government in such contexts, since civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector have been more capable and more noticeable through their implementation of services and their longer existence.
- Determine what national governments and local actors can bring to the table and how each can help the other.
- Bring innovation to funding: the way that the donors are structured and the way that the UN is organized are preventing implementation of the nexus approach. For example, while the recipient of World Bank funding is generally a state, in Somalia the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has received funding for the first time due to the government's lack of capacity to borrow and execute. Replicate such innovation in other areas.
- Consider how to create a real platform for collaboration that does not depend on the willingness of individuals.
- Think beyond the nexus and re-evaluate the fundamental approach of the nexus.
- Look at the nexus as a continuum and embrace its complexity, rather than seeking its simplification.
- Build bridges between policymakers and practitioners.

HIGHLIGHTS

It is more important to reflect on how we help people make progress than how we want to deliver together.

It is also important to reflect on the context in which this nexus approach has emerged (out of increasing humanitarian needs) and put it into a wider context.

RESOURCE LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

Medinilla, A., Tadesse Shiferaw, L. and Veronet, P., *Think Local: Governance, Humanitarian Aid, Development and Peacebuilding in Somalia*, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) Discussion Paper no. 246 (ECDPM: Maastricht, Mar. 2019), <<https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/DP246-march-2019-think-local-Governance-humanitarian-aid-development-peacebuilding-Somalia-ECDPM1.pdf>>.

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