



# THE TRIPLE NEXUS IN PRACTICE

## Challenges and Options for Multi-Mandated Organisations

Ralf Südhoff  
Sonja Hövelmann  
Andrea Steinke

October 2020



# **THE TRIPLE NEXUS IN PRACTICE**

## **Challenges and Options for Multi-Mandated Organisations**

Ralf Südhoff  
Sonja Hövelmann  
Andrea Steinke

*With contributions from Martin Quack, Darina Pellowska,  
Arvid Radsey and Goda Milasiute*

October 2020

## Abbreviations

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CHA	Centre for Humanitarian Action
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
EUTF	EU Trust Fund for Africa
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FFO	Federal Foreign Office
GAAP	Gemeinsamen Analyse und Abgestimmten Planung
HR	Human Resources
IASC	United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NWOW	New Way of Working
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN	United Nations
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

## Abstract

Few debates on international cooperation currently generate as much momentum and controversy simultaneously as the discourse around the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (Triple Nexus). However, the discussion on a better coordination embedded within the framework of a 'Humanitarian-Development-Peace' Nexus remains mostly abstract and theoretical. The lack of analysis and debate on the Triple Nexus from a practical perspective, and its peace pillar in particular, are evident. At the same time, aid agencies have to position themselves in the field of the intensively discussed Triple Nexus, which is characterised by substantial incoherence and conflicting views about its concept, terms and practical impact. The Triple Nexus is of substantial relevance to particularly multi-mandated organisations, who are committed to fight root causes of poverty and humanitarian needs while conflicts are - next to climate change - the main driver of humanitarian crises today.

To take a strategic decision on the way forward aid agencies are advised to look into three spaces identified by the CHAvocado model: The organisational internal space, the local civil space, as well as the macro space including actors like national governments, United Nations missions, the military and related coordination fora. Building on this spatial analysis, this research has identified three options for aid organisations on how to engage in the Triple Nexus: a core approach, a proactive approach and a criteria-based local approach as well as their respective pros and cons. All three options will come with substantial implications for an agency's policies, donor strategies, future programmes, the political role it intends to play and its corporate strategies. For this, multi-mandated organisations are advised to decide in a participatory, yet strategic way on which direction they want to go in one of the most relevant and contested fields of aid agencies' work today.

Not taking position  
in the Nexus debate  
is not an option for  
aid actors.

## 1. Introduction

Few debates on international cooperation currently generate as much momentum and controversy simultaneously as the discourse around the Triple Nexus. However, the discussion on better cooperation embedded within the framework of a 'Humanitarian-Development-Peace' Nexus (Triple Nexus) remains mostly abstract and theoretical: the lack of analysis and debate on the Triple Nexus from a practical perspective, and its peace pillar in particular, is evident.

At the same time aid agencies have to position themselves in the field of the much-debated Triple Nexus. While to many of them the peace component was of limited relevance in the past, not taking a position in the crucial debate cannot be an option for aid actors. This is particularly true for multi-mandated organisations committed to fight root causes of poverty and humanitarian emergencies, as these challenges along with most large-scale crises in the modern era are heavily embedded into contexts of fragility, conflict and war. Besides, many multi-mandated organisations are heavily funded by Triple Nexus supporting donors and rely on the latter's funding.

Most donor governments and UN actors promote a Triple Nexus approach, while the substance of the concept remains quite diverse and diffuse. Also on the civil society side, at least three NGO conceptions of the Triple Nexus can be identified, such as considering it as a) the next buzzword in a resurfacing debate, b) a chance to overcome siloed, ineffective approaches, or c) a dangerous agenda further blurring the lines of neutral and impartial humanitarian action with far more political approaches of development and security actors. These concerns are also closely linked to much-contested understandings of peace and its boundaries with security and stabilisation policies. Local actors' views in the Global South on the Triple Nexus vary substantially, too.

Given the conflicting views and vague definitions of the concept Triple Nexus, it is even more important for aid actors to understand what the impact of the concept is in practice. At the same time some INGOs have adopted a variety of ways to engage with the peace component of the Triple Nexus in practice, such as a conventional or a more flexible Dual Nexus approach, incorporating regular shocks, adding conflict sensitivity and integrating risk analysis components. Formal Triple Nexus approaches are also pursued, while most include peace elements based on a broad peace definition including social cohesion, education or economic opportunity programmes, and cause debates about their substance versus a re-labelling exercise of pre-existing programmes. Moreover, none of the approaches above has resulted in comprehensive and evidence-based outcomes in terms of the actors' lessons learnt so far. Aid agencies can neither build on a consensus about the Triple Nexus theoretical concept, nor on practical experiences on a substantial scale while aid actors' fundraising competition is also increasing pressures to position themselves.

This is also confirmed by a CHA survey among aid practitioners: 70% of respondents name the “uncertainty what it means in practice” as a key challenge to implement a Triple Nexus approach (see chapter 3).

Against this backdrop, CHA has so far issued an introductory paper on the ‘Triple Nexus in Practice’ (Hövelmann 2020b), while undertaking studies on three very diverse country settings: Pakistan (Hövelmann 2020a), Mali (Steinke forthc.) and South Sudan (Quack and Südhoff 2020).

With this paper, the CHA team intends to provide further guidance on the concept’s background and history (chapter 2), to share aid practitioners’ views on the Triple Nexus based on a CHA survey (chapter 3) and to highlight the Triple Nexus’ practical implications, and options for a way forward. The latter are elaborated by sharing a model for analysing the relevant spaces of a Triple Nexus approach in a given setting and by offering three options for multi-mandated organisations how to position strategically in the Triple Nexus arena.

**Aid agencies  
can neither build  
on a consensus  
about the  
Triple Nexus  
theoretical concept,  
nor on practical  
experiences.**

## Methods

The following study is based on qualitative and quantitative data. The main data sources and collection methods were:

- Organisations’ internal documents;
- Staff interviews (semi-structured interviews, workshops, informal talks);
- Stakeholders: partner organisations, state and donor representatives, target communities (semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions);
- Organisations’ internal documents;

Secondary data and survey results were supplemented through three in-country studies in Mali, South Sudan and Pakistan. Between September and November 2019, two researchers travelled to each country.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, in 2020, an online survey was conducted to collect Dual and Triple Nexus experiences among aid agencies’ staff based in Germany and beyond.

## 2. Context: Triple Nexus in Theory and Practice

To understand the Triple Nexus debate, it is crucial to first look into the previous Dual Nexus debates and analyses on humanitarian-development linkages. This includes the extensive discussion on Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) (cf. Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994; Mosel and Levine 2014; Otto and Weingärtner 2013; Macrae 2019). Based on the following short overview of LRRD approaches, the state of the emerging Triple Nexus debate will be briefly discussed. Then, experiences and different contexts of the Triple Nexus in practice will be analysed, along with their impact on multi-mandated organisations.

### LRRD and Resilience

Debates around better connecting immediate relief with rehabilitation and long-term development activities originated in the 1980s. Since then, the discussion on how to overcome output-oriented aid operations in silos with limited coordination has continued with different semantical frameworks, such as developmental relief, continuum vs. contiguum,<sup>2</sup> early recovery and resilience. In essence, these concepts all have similar objectives but vary in focus as well as regarding their main drivers or initiators. Introduced by the European Parliament in 1996, the term LRRD has since dominated the discourse. It was taken up by other humanitarian actors, including various donors and NGOs. Furthermore, it has become an important goal in the sector, for example through its inclusion into the 23 principles of *Good Humanitarian Donorship* (2003) and the *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid* (2007).

While in the early 1990s the sole focus was improving the transition between humanitarian action and development cooperation, the debate then shifted to a second generation of LRRD approaches, which included linking assistance more closely to political and security objectives as well as discourses around stabilisation and early recovery (Mosel and Levine 2014, 4; Macrae and Harmer 2004). Some donors introduced *whole-of-government* approaches, which aim at integrating the work of different ministries (for example defence, foreign, economic) in partner countries.

Recurrent and frequent weather-related disasters as well as the long-term impact of conflict in the largest humanitarian crises in recent years highlighted the challenge to deal simultaneously with development objectives and recurring humanitarian emergencies. Lately, new approaches and terms have been added, such as the concept of crisis modifiers (Peters and Pichon 2017). According to this concept, development actors need to integrate possible shocks, crises phases and responses into their long-term plans from the beginning. This can include programmes' backlashes, change of budgets, flexible conceptual approaches or staff capacities. Cash programming has contributed to an integrated way of humanitarian and development support, linking relief cash support to reconstruction, training, asset creation or employment activities.

The second generation or LRRD approaches links assistance more closely to political and security objectives.



However, none of the multiple concepts have to date enabled a continuous, reliable transition between humanitarian and development work. Several authors have conducted research on reasons as to why this gap continues to persist. Key challenges include bifurcated aid and donor structures, profoundly different *modi operandi* and different understandings and interpretations of the humanitarian mandate between strongly principled and more pragmatic organisations (cf. Macrae and Harmer 2004; Otto and Weingärtner 2013; Kocks et al. 2018; Steets 2011).

At the same time, pressures to achieve better outcomes by working in a more integrated, efficient and effective way are rising in times of increasing humanitarian needs and lacking resources. With 80% of humanitarian assistance provided in conflict contexts, the need to work on the root causes of today's crises and related peace issues is obvious (Churruca Muguruza 2015, 20).

With 80% of humanitarian assistance provided in conflict contexts, the need to address the root causes of today's crises and related peace issues is obvious.

## WHS and the Triple Nexus

In 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) provided a moment of reflection for the humanitarian community on how to better address recurrent conflict and protracted crises. To fulfil the agenda of *leaving no-one behind*, the United Nations Secretary-General's (UNSG) report called for a *New Way of Working* (NWOW) across sectors (United Nations 2016, 23). It proposed a reform in the UN system and promoted the cooperation between UN institutions and the World Bank to deliver a connected approach. Many humanitarian actors agreed under the scope of the *Grand Bargain* to work across the *Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*. The third element of the Triple Nexus – peace – has been introduced into the discussion by the UNSG, who called for peace to be considered as the “third leg of the triangle”, for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ultimately materialise.

While the policy debate around the NWOW and the Triple Nexus has largely been spear-headed by the UN and donors, NGOs find themselves increasingly under pressure to take position in the debate. Currently, NGOs view the Triple Nexus, for example, as the next buzzword in a resurfacing debate, as a chance to overcome siloed approaches in terms of outcomes and funding, or as a dangerous and politicised agenda (see chapter 3 on survey results).

It needs to be noted that there is a striking lack of thorough analysis regarding the Triple Nexus.

## NGO Approaches

Overall, three different NGOs' positions on the policy level of the Triple Nexus can be noticed. One position is to criticise and distance oneself from the Triple Nexus in a principled way due to its incorporation being seen as threatening to dissolve humanitarian action, following its own principles of neutrality and impartiality, in political agendas (Pedersen 2016). A second position criticises specific elements of the Triple Nexus, for instance, when they are ignoring civil society inputs or undermining humanitarian principles (Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019). A third approach includes a pragmatic incorporation and programmatic operationalisation of the Triple Nexus wherever possible (Plan International 2018; Böckler 2019; Save the Children 2018).

Local perceptions of the Triple Nexus also vary. For example, local faith-based organisations in South Sudan appreciate the re-integration of all three elements, whose previous separation they regarded as artificial (de Wolf and Wilkinson 2019; Agensky 2019; Barakat and Milton 2020), and external actors are pushed to engage at a greater scale in the country. At the same time, for example in Mali, local actors are often suspicious of other external parties, which are perceived as being driven by their own political agenda (Steinke forthc.).

In fact, several humanitarian organisations have been rather cautious to engage in the Triple Nexus agenda. They are concerned that it might increase the instrumentalisation of humanitarian action and contribute to a further shrinking of humanitarian space, because it might give, for example, state actors a dominant role in organisations' programmes and policies (DuBois 2020). Surely, this is also due to very different conceptions of peace.

At the same time, the aim of the Triple Nexus to foster peace and to address conflict is a very relevant and legitimate claim, as conflict – next to climate change – is the main driver for today's large-scale crises, hunger and protection issues.

Against this backdrop, multi-mandated organisations need to position themselves in a highly complex and diffuse debate. Especially to organisations with high shares of public and institutional financial support, this donor-driven debate is of great relevance.

Given the conflicting views and positions on the Triple Nexus on a conceptual level, it becomes even more important for multi-mandated organisations to understand the impacts of this concept in practice.

On the research and analysis side, while outputs are slowly picking up, it needs to be noted that there is a striking lack of thorough analysis regarding the Triple Nexus in practice. Few studies have been published, and existing ones often focus on Dual Nexus approaches, with only a handful touching on the newly-added peace element (cf. Obrecht 2019). Other studies are more thorough, while focussing on single contexts (Tronc, Grace, and Nahikian 2019; Medinilla, Tadese Shiferaw, and Veron 2019; Agensky 2019; Zamore 2019; Mason and Thomas 2020).

On the civil society side, several INGOs have engaged in studies on the Triple Nexus (de Wolf and Wilkinson 2019; Norman and Mikhael 2019; Mason and Thomas 2020). This has resulted in publications like an Oxfam discussion paper, characterising the Triple Nexus as a profoundly new approach with great opportunities and challenges, while providing limited insights into its practice (Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019). Other NGOs, like the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), have looked into specific topics, such as the relevance of donor policies, calling for flexible, multi-annual humanitarian funding (Poole and Culbert 2019). A recent VOICE study has taken a similar approach with a focus on European Union (EU) policies (Thomas 2019).

Donor policies are indeed a decisive factor in the Triple Nexus practice, identified by all kinds of actors as a key obstacle even for implementing a substantial Dual Nexus approach, while research on latest policies is slowly emerging (Swithern 2019; Thomas 2019; Friesen, Veron, and Mazzara 2020).

Hence, a key question for aid actors is whether Triple Nexus approaches have so far had any impact on donor policies in terms of either requested reforms (flexibility and predictability of funding, multi-year grants, etc.) or of problematic reforms, potentially blurring the lines between for example needs-based humanitarian approaches and specific political agendas of donor countries juxtaposed to the humanitarian imperative.

In sum, so far there is on the one hand little tangible policy output from donor governments as to what strategies they pursue with regard to the Triple Nexus and on the other hand there is an identified lack in practical steps for coordinated, flexible and predictable funding instruments, as NGOs and UN agencies jointly stress.

## The Role of Donors and Policy Actors – Spotlight: Germany

Regarding Germany as a donor a lot of attention has been given to the division of financing instruments offered by the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which are divided into stabilisation, humanitarian, transitional and development funding lines. The 2018 *Spending Review Report* urged both ministries to work together in a more coherent way. At the same time, the same review and Federal Ministry of Finance representatives keep requesting a clearer distinction of budget lines and respective mandates, which remains an obstacle for implementing organisations. Several government representatives describe the latest efforts to follow up on the Spending Review as well as on Triple Nexus objectives as two “conflicting processes”.<sup>3</sup>

Government representatives describe the latest efforts to follow up on the Spending Review as well as on Triple Nexus objectives as two “conflicting processes.”

Government publications on the Triple Nexus use the terms peace, stability and security rather interchangeably, fostering overall concerns of a blurring of concepts due to Nexus policies.

The Triple Nexus is touched upon in several new strategies of the German government, such as the 2017 Guidelines on *Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace*; a 2019 review of the BMZ *Transitional Development Assistance Strategy*; as well as the new FFO humanitarian strategy, published in 2019. However, despite a general affirmation, neither the new BMZ transitional aid strategy nor the FFO document provide many detail on how to operationalise the Triple Nexus. The latter deficit might stand for an ongoing issue regarding the future institutional setup in Nexus contexts. In the negotiations of the WHS process, FFO has been advocating for a strict division of labour between humanitarian and development actors, while supporting linkages and cooperation. However, with the peace component added, FFO embraced the Triple Nexus debate and identifies the latter today as an opportunity to engage development actors in funding efforts at a much earlier stage of protracted crises. Yet, this funding related focus is not the approach of BMZ.

The institutional set-up within the ministries can be challenging as well. For example, the unit for humanitarian policies in FFO is integrated into the division called *Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Post-Conflict Management and Humanitarian Assistance*. This raises concerns about missing firewalls between principled humanitarian action and German stabilisation and security policies. Latest government publications on the Triple Nexus, using the terms peace, stability and security in a rather interchangeable way, fed into these concerns (Schröder and Schilbach 2019, 18). Within the German NGO community this has reinforced concerns of the past, when former Development Minister Dirk Niebel required civil society actors to engage in a security-development nexus (*Vernetzte Sicherheit*) in Afghanistan operations as a prerequisite for a BMZ funding line. At the same time, the Federal Ministry of Defence coordinates a forum with other ministries and NGOs (*Sektorübergreifendes Fachgespräch*) to discuss interlinkages of security, development, humanitarian and political affairs.

With respect to the latest German funding instruments, BMZ and FFO are piloting a so-called *Chapeau Approach*. Organisations can submit separate projects to BMZ and FFO for funding, with a transitional assistance focus and a humanitarian focus respectively. These are linked by collective outcomes set and monitored through the Chapeau document. NGOs criticise that funding lines and reporting remain separate, and the whole approach is limited to transitional and humanitarian assistance only.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Germany has started Triple Nexus pilot projects in Somalia for example, while these have made limited progress and 'are now overridden'<sup>5</sup> by another follow up instrument, the 'GAAP' (Gemeinsame Analyse und Abgestimmte Planung). This is meant to improve joint planning and analysis processes while in the starting phase only. Moreover, said initiatives have a Dual Nexus focus only and government representatives have confirmed that the peace component of the Triple Nexus is still an open issue, and further consultations are needed on how to deal with it in the future.<sup>6</sup>

## The Role of Donors and Policy Actors – Spotlight: European Union

The EU has for long been a driver of connecting humanitarian and development work on the policy side, despite its own fragmented institutional and programmatic set-up. In 2017, the EU Council published a recommendation on how to operationalise the Triple Nexus (EU Council 2017). In September 2018, all EU member states recognised the importance of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus but did not initiate a formal process to formulate a policy or plan for action (Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019, 18).

In its initial discussion, the EU rather focussed on the Dual Nexus, but since 2018 the understanding of the Nexus shifted to include the elements of security and peacebuilding (*ibid*). To this end, the EU and its humanitarian department European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) have established several funding instruments which clearly demonstrate a closer integration of development and security. For example, the *EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa* (EUTF) and the *EU's Integrated Approach* are among the newer instruments, which place an increasing emphasis on security, domestic and migration policies. The latter approaches are highly controversial and have initiated heated debates among civil actors whether NGOs should work and fundraise within these frameworks. However, NGOs are lacking a joint approach, often even within a double mandated organisation. Hereby, competitive behaviour can lead to missed opportunities to influence donors and Triple Nexus approaches.

This challenge has reached another level on the EU side in the context of the negotiations about the new *EU Multiannual Financial Framework* until 2027 (Friesen, Veron, and Mazzara 2020). Within the new framework, the *EU Development Fund* (EDF) shall be merged with the *Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument* (NDICI), with a major share of the latter being earmarked for migration management. In parallel, the EU initiated six pilot project countries for implementing the Triple Nexus – Iraq, Chad, Sudan, Nigeria, Myanmar and Uganda – although they were originally chosen to be Dual Nexus pilots (Thomas 2019, 23).

EU member states recognise the importance of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus but did not initiate a formal process to formulate a policy or plan for action.

Multi-mandated NGOs have adopted a variety of ways of dealing with the peace component of the Nexus in practice.

## The UN Collective Outcome Process

On the UN side, the collective outcome process and the reform process of the UN development system have gathered momentum in the Triple Nexus context. Perceptions of the collective outcome process remain context-specific so far: On the one hand, a more coordinated approach and related discussions of breaking down the silos are often welcomed, also by civil society actors. On the other hand, the degree of inclusiveness of the process varies strongly and is influenced by personal and local approaches, leading at times to fairly participatory procedures, while in other contexts NGOs have raised concerns about being side-lined in UN-dominated procedures defining “collective outcomes” for the whole community (cf. Thomas 2019). Several UN reform initiatives, like the proposal to ensure coherent procedures in the future by for example merging the posts of Humanitarian and Residential Coordinators, raised further concerns of blurring the lines between humanitarian and development mandates. Between UN and civil actors, especially the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is tasked with putting together operational guidance regarding the collective outcome process. In June 2020, UN-IASC Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes was published, a report “meant to ensure a common understanding of analysis, funding and financial strategies and effective coordination initiatives” with regard to the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (IASC 2020).

Against the backdrop of these developments on the donor and the UN side, multi-mandated NGOs have adopted a variety of ways of dealing with the peace portion of the Nexus in practice. NGOs actively dealing with the Triple Nexus in programme terms have broadly followed a range of the following approaches:

1. A conventional Dual Nexus approach relabelling already existing elements as the “peace component”.
2. A more flexible Dual Nexus approach, incorporating regular shocks, adding conflict sensitivity and risk analysis components.
3. A Triple Nexus Approach, including peace elements based on a broad peace definition (social cohesion, education, economic opportunities).
4. A Triple Nexus Approach, including peacebuilding / conflict transformation elements.
5. Peacebuilding as the core element of the aid programme.

However, none of the above approaches has led to broad and evidence-based analysis of the involved actors’ experiences on the lessons learnt so far. This is mirrored by limited available analysis and transparency about organisations’ core capacities and capabilities in a Triple Nexus context. Key issues such as systematic conflict analysis, streamlined conflict sensitive approaches, an encompassing risk management that looks beyond staff and asset security or comprehensive peace related programme know-how could rarely be confirmed in the context of in-depth country case studies conducted within the scope of the ‘Triple Nexus in Practice’ CHA project. Similarly, respondents of the CHA survey confirmed this tendency as 54% of them regard their employers’ preparedness to engage in a Triple Nexus as negative (“poorly” or “not well at all”) (see chapter 3).

The case study of South Sudan can shed light on INGOs' hesitance to take a systematic look on such capacities (Quack and Südhoff 2020), while in other contexts they might rather lack the scope to expand capacities and engagement (Hövelmann 2020a). Moreover, only few organisations have taken the lead and initiated external assessments like Deutsche Welthungerhilfe or the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) evaluation of the UN World Food Programme (Delgado et al. 2019) with mixed results.

At the same time, the following CHA survey results (chapter 3) underline that a majority of practitioners prefer their employers to engage in a Triple Nexus context, and that 51% of the respondents view it positively and consider it a 'chance' or a 'vision'. This makes it even more important to ensure aid organisations position themselves based on transparent criteria and options, and to base related debates on a common understanding of terms and concepts.

**Organisations' core capacities and capabilities in a Triple Nexus context remain intransparent.**

## Working Definitions

As the key terms of the Triple Nexus discussions are vague, some working definitions are useful for further analysis:

### Triple Nexus

Triple Nexus refers to "the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions" (OECD 2019).

### Peace and Peacebuilding

In this report, peace refers to a complex, long-term and multi-layered process of decreasing violence and increasing justice. Peacebuilding can be seen as an inclusive endeavour, aiming at improving relations between societal groups and decreasing violence. It includes work on structural contradictions and constructive changes in attitudes (Birckenbach 2012).

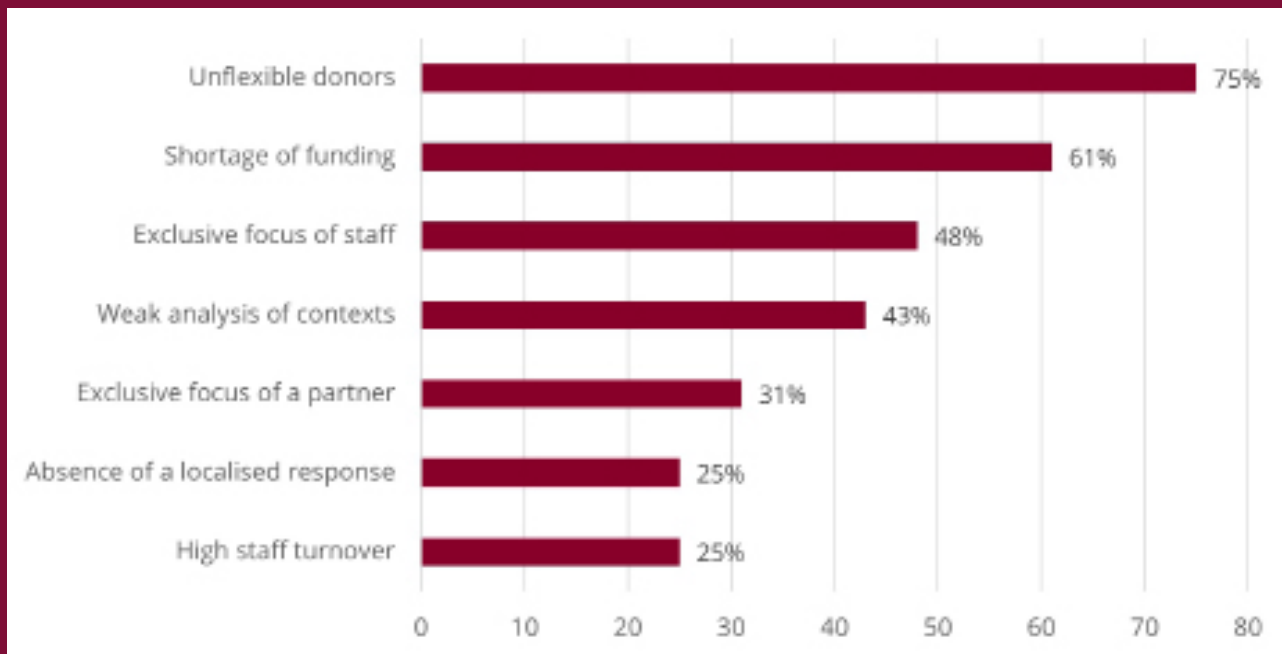
### Security

Security is defined in this study as a concept for the defence against threats. The nature and dimensions of threats are defined by each actor individually, possibly together with allies. Security defined by a government mostly includes the protection of citizens, sovereignty, and territorial integrity (also of allies), as well as the national economy. Security or stabilisation approaches tend to defend some groups against specific threats, while potentially excluding others (Birckenbach 2012).

### Stabilisation

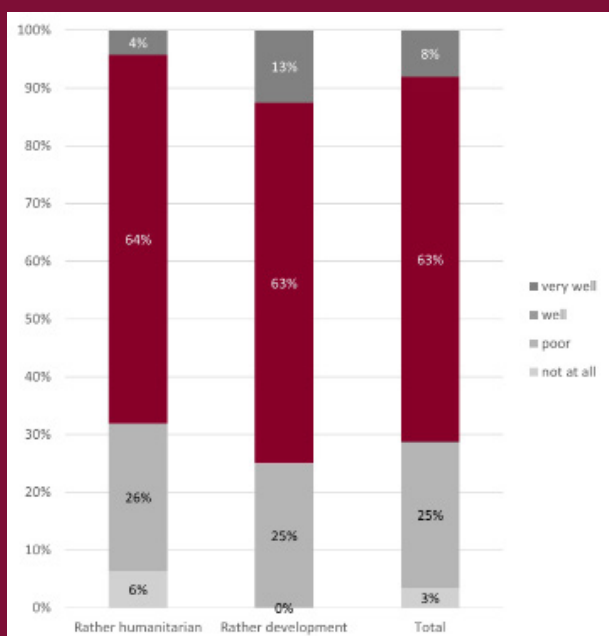
Stabilisation is a process that – via a political strategy – combines civilian, police and military means, and aims at quickly reducing violence, improving living conditions, and creating the preconditions for development and peace. Stabilisation practice has at times been criticised for strengthening authoritarian governments (Reder, Schneider, and Schroeder 2017).

Graph 1



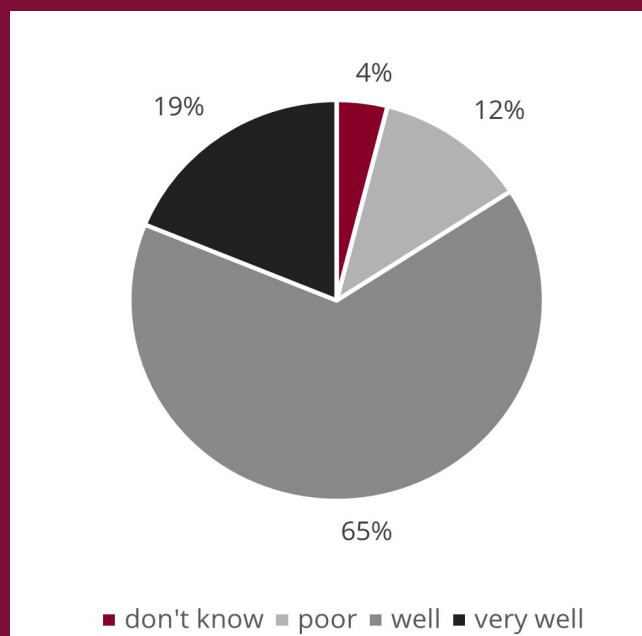
Reasons that hinder effective LRRD programming (N=101; multiple answers possible)

Graph 2



Perception of the ability of the organisation to connect development and humanitarian action in its current programming by professional background of the respondent (N=87)

Graph 3



Mainstreaming of Do No Harm approaches in projects of respondents' organisation (N=101)



### 3. Survey Results: Perceptions of Aid Actors on the Triple Nexus

The Triple Nexus debate is currently shaped largely by perceptions, as the operationalisation and roll-out in practice are slowly emerging. Therefore, within the scope of this research project, a survey was conducted, which aimed to collect perceptions from aid actors from development cooperation, humanitarian action and peacebuilding. A total of 101 development, humanitarian or peace professionals participated in the survey.<sup>7</sup> However, due to the small number of participants, the results can only be considered as indicating tendencies of collected individual views and opinions and cannot be generalised nor are they statistically representative. Further details on the methodology or on the background of the respondents can be found in the annex.

Almost half of the respondents (44%) think that conflict analysis is “weakly” or “very weakly” integrated into their organisations’ programming.

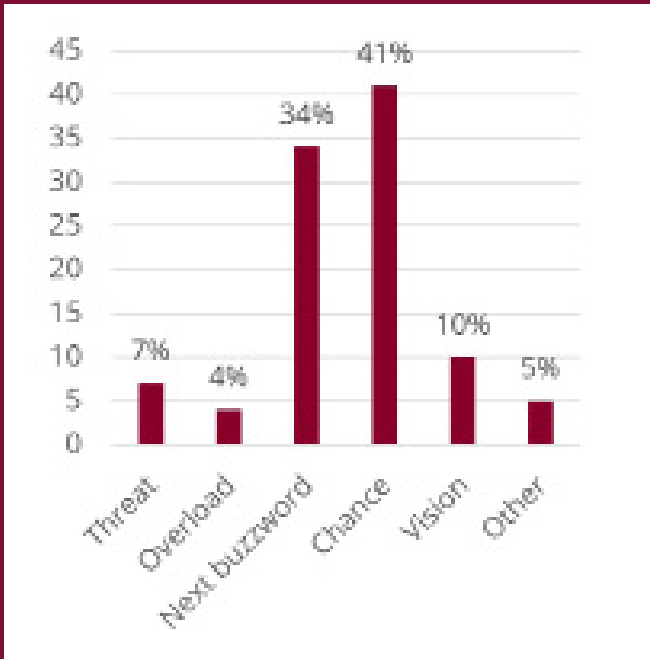
#### Perception of Dual Nexus, Mainstreaming Do No Harm and Integration of Conflict Analyses

Many multi-mandated organisations have been practicing a Dual Nexus of connecting humanitarian and development work for a long time. Therefore, we asked respondents how they view the Dual Nexus, performance of LRRD, as well as mainstreaming Do No Harm<sup>8</sup> and integration of conflict analysis that form the basis of any additional component in a Triple Nexus setting.

Two-thirds (67%) of the respondents indicate that they think their organisation is performing “well” or “very well” in connecting humanitarian and development approaches. Only 25% think their organisation is “poorly” connecting development and humanitarian action in their current programming (see graph 2). While the majority of both respondents with a “rather development” (61%) and a “rather humanitarian” (59%) background perceived their organisations’ performance on Dual Nexus as “well”, interestingly, those with a rather humanitarian background were slightly less optimistic regarding the performance of their organisation on the Dual Nexus (see graph 1 and 2). On the performance of Do No Harm, respondents were even more positive than on the Dual Nexus. 84% perceive the mainstreaming of the Do No Harm approach as “well” or “very well” in their organisations’ projects (see graph 3). However, interestingly, the perception of the integration of conflict analysis is less positive: Almost half of the respondents (44%) think that conflict analysis is “weakly” or “very weakly” integrated into their organisations’ programming.

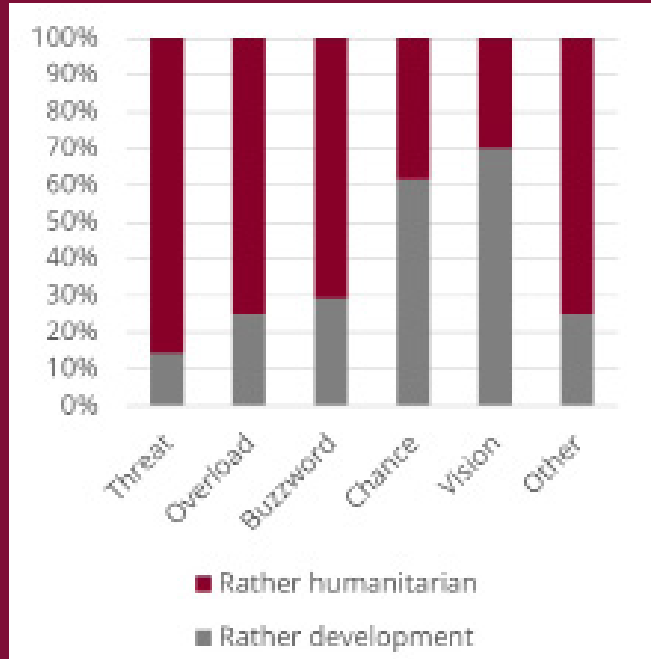
Overall, findings indicate that most respondents are satisfied with the performance of their organisation in the context of previous Dual Nexus efforts (about better connecting development and humanitarian work only), and are convinced that Do No Harm approaches are well mainstreamed into projects. However, in particular with respect to the new peace leg of the Nexus, substantial room for improvement on conflict analyses and conflict related capacities can be deduced from the answers.

Graph 4



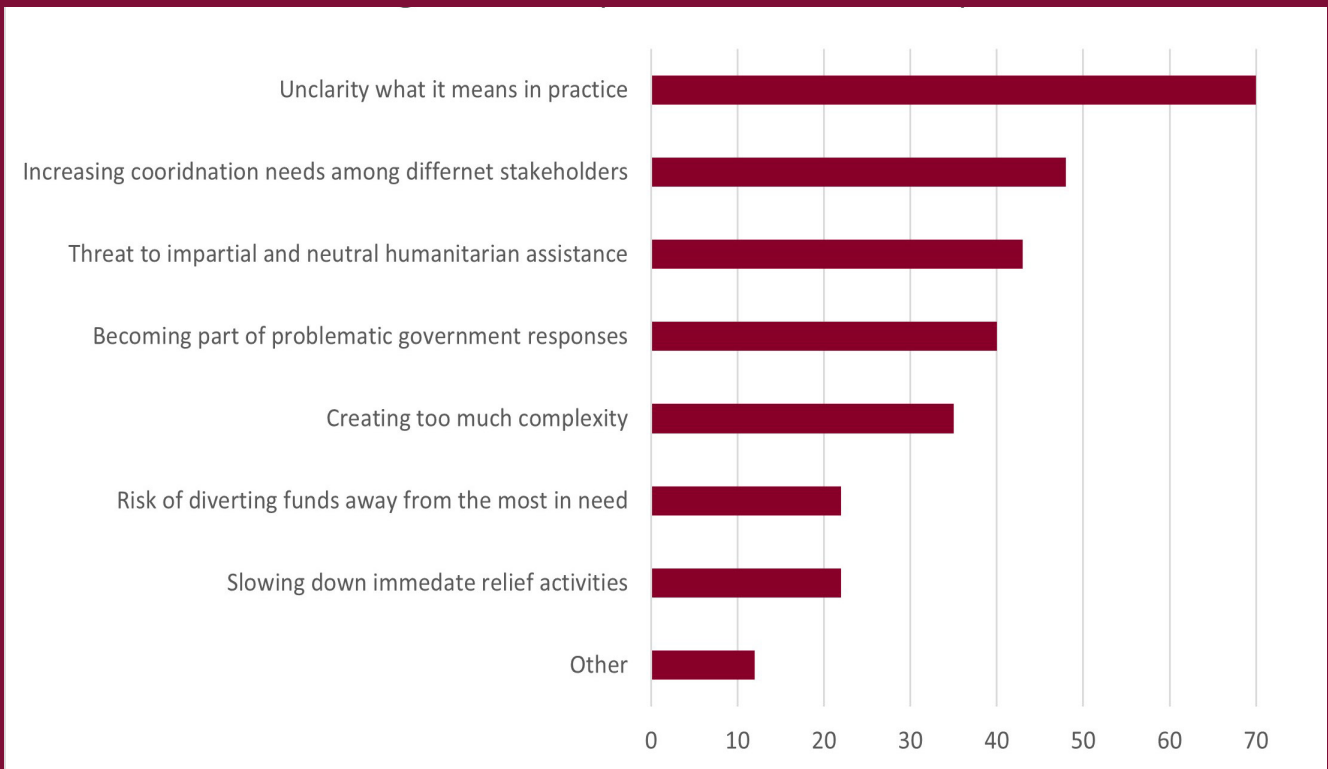
Perception of the Triple Nexus Debate (N=101)

Graph 5



Perception of Triple Nexus Debate by organisation type (N=98)

Graph 6



Challenges to the implementation of the Triple Nexus (N=101, multiple answers possible)

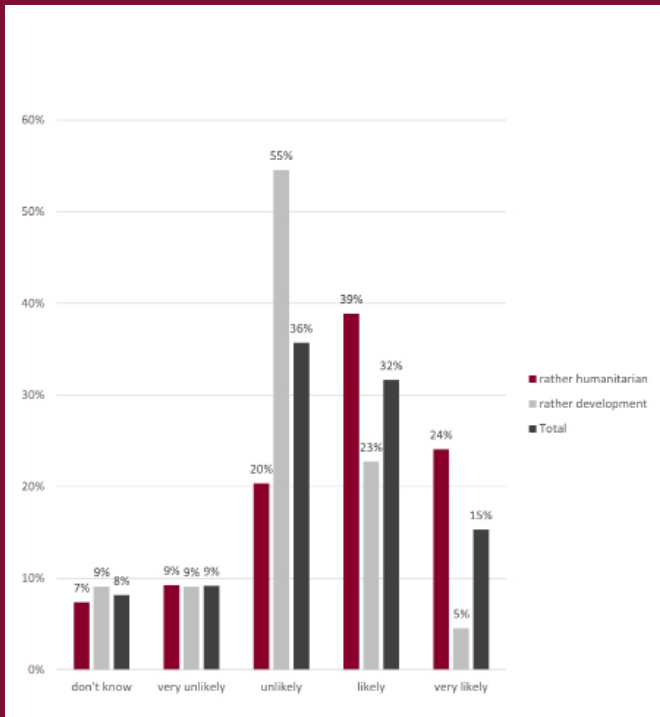
## Perceptions on Triple Nexus Debate

Findings from the survey indicate that respondents view the Triple Nexus as a rather top-down approach. When asked to evaluate the current Triple Nexus debate, a majority of 51% of respondents see it as a "chance" or a "vision", while 34% consider it as the next buzzword (see graph 4). Only 11% evaluate it as a "threat" or an "overload". However, matching these answers with explanations provided in the corresponding open question shows that respondents who view the Triple Nexus positively remain cautious if obstacles to realising it will be overcome.

Interestingly, findings indicate that those who stated to be "rather development" professionals tend to be more optimistic about the Triple Nexus debate seeing it as a "chance" or "vision" compared to who considered themselves "rather humanitarian" professionals, who more often see it as a "threat", "overload" or "buzzword" (see graph 5). At the same time, respondents indicated in the corresponding open questions that they see the policy being rather discussed within the humanitarian sectors than the development or peace sectors.

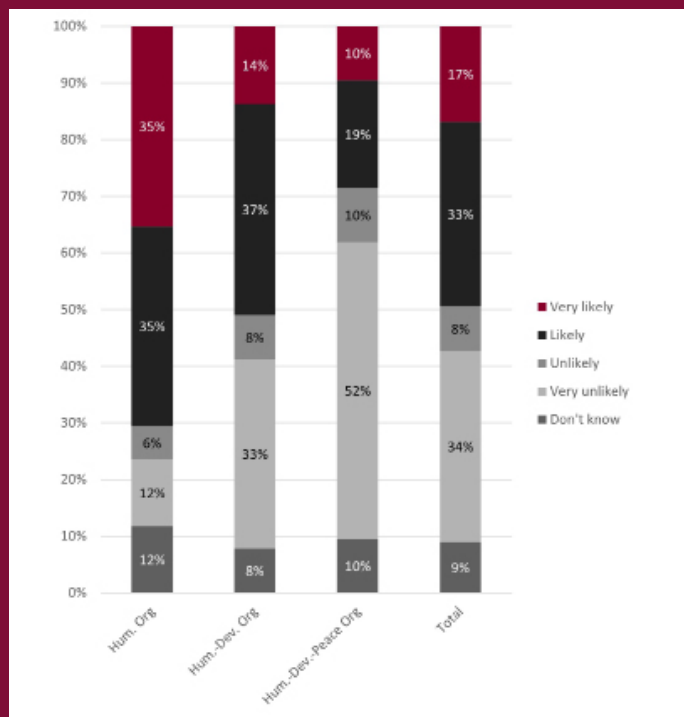
A slight majority of participants (46%) do not perceive their organisation as under pressure to implement a Triple Nexus, compared to 39% who do see their organisation as under pressure. When prompted to indicate where it is stemming from, the majority of those respondents who stated that they feel pressure (n=39), see donors as the origin for that (25,64%).

Graph 7



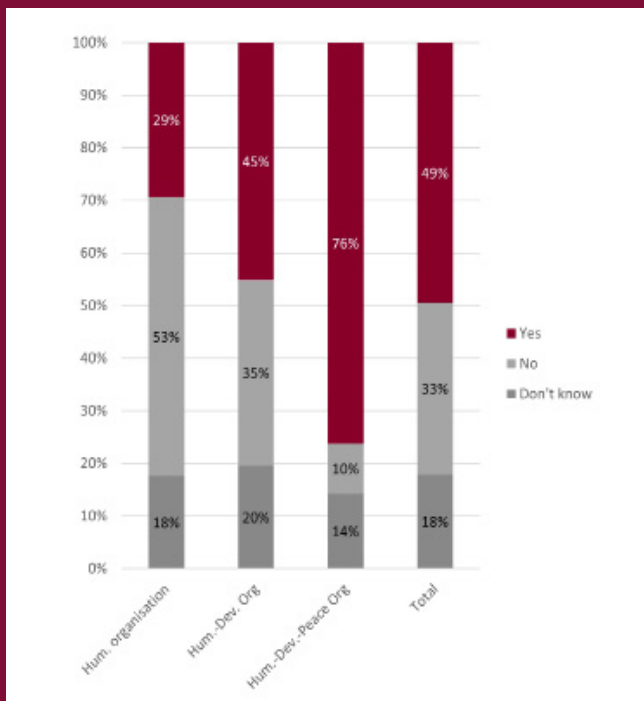
Risk of the Triple Nexus compromising the humanitarian principles by professional background (N=98)

Graph 8



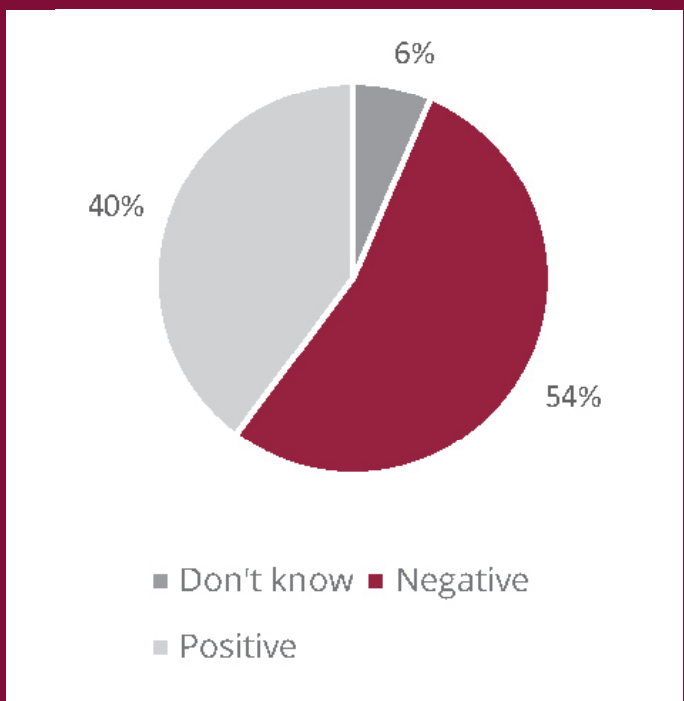
Risk of the Triple Nexus compromising the humanitarian principles by organisation types (N=89)

Graph 9



Should your organisation expand its engagement in peace efforts in future programming? By organisation type (N=89)

Graph 10



Preparedness of the respondents' organisation to engage in the Triple Nexus (positive vs. negative) (N=101)

## Perceptions on the Implementation of the Triple Nexus

Overall, 54% of the respondents viewed their organisation's preparedness to engage with the Triple Nexus as negative (either "poor" or "not well at all"), while only 40% saw it as positive (see graph 10). This more critical view is confirmed by the finding that the majority of survey participants (45%) indicated that their organisation has made "no changes" to enable a Triple Nexus approach. If at all, programming guidance was developed, as mentioned by 38 respondents. In addition, the majority of respondents (60%) stated that their organisation has no specific staff dedicated to the Triple Nexus.

When asked to specify the challenges to the implementation of the Triple Nexus, by far most respondents (69% of the overall respondents) indicated that they see an unclarity in what the Triple Nexus means in practice as one of the most common challenges. However, "increasing coordination needs among different stakeholders" (48%), a perceived "threat to impartial and neutral humanitarian assistance" (43%), the fear of "becoming part of problematic government responses" (40%) and the perception that the implementation of the Triple Nexus is "creating too much complexity" (35%) were also frequently indicated by the survey participants (see graph 6).

54% of the respondents view their organisation's preparedness to engage with the Triple Nexus as negative.

## Perceptions of the Risk to Humanitarian Principles

Answers of respondents are split whether they regard it as "likely" (46%) or "unlikely" (45%) that the Triple Nexus poses a risk to compromise the humanitarian principles (see graph 7). However, when integrating the organisation types, the picture becomes more detailed: The more multi-mandated the organisation type of the respondents, the less likely do the respondents consider the risk that the Triple Nexus might compromise humanitarian principles (see graph 8). This view is supported when looking into the professional background of the respondents: 63% of the respondents with a "rather humanitarian" background consider it "likely" or "very likely" that the humanitarian principles might be compromised by the Triple Nexus, whereas 64% of the respondents with a professional background "rather in development" consider it unlikely or very unlikely (see graph 7).

Two thirds (66%) think that it is "likely" or "very likely" that the Triple Nexus blends concepts and goals of peacebuilding with concepts of security, counterterrorism and stabilisation. At the same time, despite a blurring of security, counterterrorism and stabilisation concepts being identified as likely by most survey participants (66%), the same portion of respondents (66%) indicates that engaging in Triple Nexus activities did not lead to a reassessment of civil-military cooperation guidelines within their organisation.

Half of the survey participants (49%) think that their organisation should expand its engagement in peace efforts in future programming.

### Perceptions on the Peace Pillar

Half of the survey participants (49%) think that their organisation should expand its engagement in peace efforts in future programming (see graph 9). This picture becomes more textured if including the organisation type: A narrow majority of respondents working in purely humanitarian organisations (53%) think that their organisation should not engage more in peace effort in future programming. Only a third of this respondent group (29%) think that their organisation should do so. Answers of respondents working in humanitarian-development organisations are more divided, with 45% in favour and 35% against expanding the engagement in peace efforts in the future programming of their organisations. For respondents working for organisations active in all three areas of humanitarian action, development and peacebuilding the picture is very clear: More than three quarters (76%) say that their organisation should expand their engagement in peace efforts in future programming. Hence, this data shows a tendency that the more integrative the type of organisation for whom respondents are working is, the more positive respondents are towards a boosted engagement of their organisation in peace efforts in their future programming.

When adding the professional background as an additional layer here, it becomes clear that respondents with a "rather humanitarian" background are more divided with 46% indicating that yes, their organisation should become more engaged in peace efforts in their future programming and 43% saying that no, their organisation should not do so. Respondents with a professional background in "rather development" are more supportive, with 53% saying yes, their organisations should expand its engagement in peace efforts in future programming. However, nearly one third (32%) also indicate that they "do not know" what the right direction would be.

## 4. Triple Nexus: Options for Multi-Mandated Organisations

The outlined survey provides interesting indications why guidance is needed on the Triple Nexus, and on the potential way forward for multi-mandated organisations who wish to engage in it. 46% of the respondents perceive the humanitarian principles at risk due to the Triple Nexus approach. However, when judging on it overall, only 11% of respondents see it as a “threat” or an “overload”, while 51% consider it a “chance” or a “vision”. Correspondingly, a majority of respondents (49%) encourage their employer to expand efforts in the peace arena.

At the same time, when looking at organisational capacities, the picture is nuanced: Conventional Dual Nexus approaches and Do No Harm mainstreaming as a baseline are perceived as well implemented in multi-mandated organisation. However, respondents regard the integration of conflict analysis and sensitivity with substantial room for improvement, as the country case studies have also confirmed (see for example Quack and Südhoff (2020)), while especially relevant when working in fragile settings and on the peace leg of the Triple Nexus. Accordingly, a majority of respondents (54%) perceive their employers’ preparedness to engage in the Triple Nexus negatively. 70% of respondents see limited knowledge about what it might mean in practice as the most important challenge to implement it.

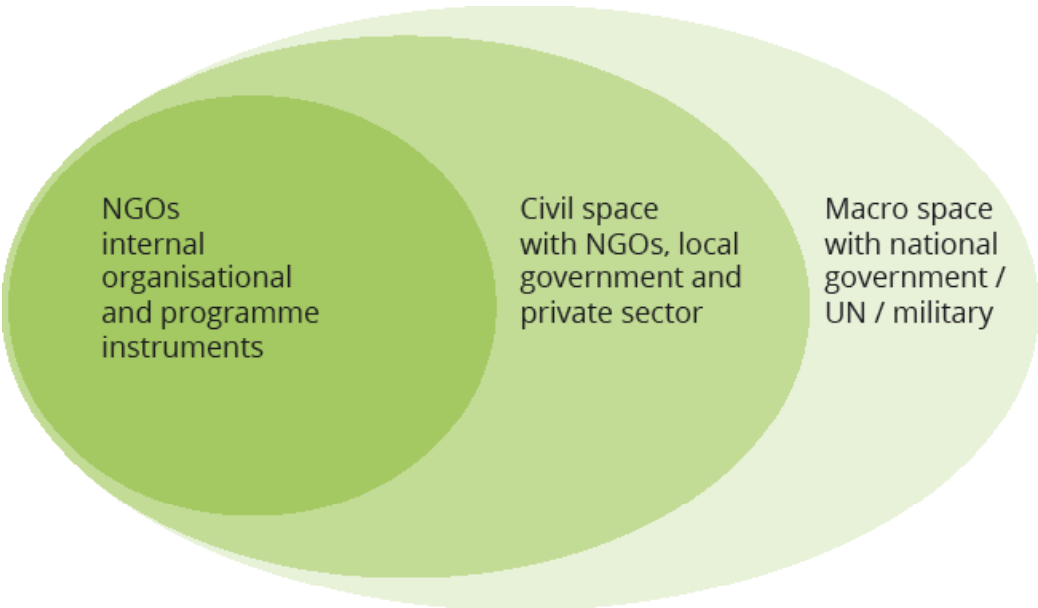
Thus, in a context of a highly complex and abstract Triple Nexus debate, with limited practical experience and research as a point of reference, organisations with often limited capacities have to take a position. The Triple Nexus approach will be “with us for years, if we like it or not”, as an interviewee put it.

In light of the respective dilemmas for aid organisations to position themselves, this research will outline three relevant spaces for a practice-oriented Triple Nexus analysis and three options for aid organisations’ future Triple Nexus strategies.

46% of the respondents perceive the humanitarian principles at risk due to the Triple Nexus approach.

However, when judging on it overall, only 11% of respondents see it as a “threat” or an “overload”, while 51% consider it a “chance” or a “vision”.

# CHAvocado Model



Graph 11



## Spaces – the CHAvocado Model

Three spaces of the Triple Nexus can be identified for organisations to look into. These spaces start at the core of the CHAvocado model (see graphic 11): the structures and processes within an organisation. The next layer is comprised of a civil space with actors such as local and international NGOs. The outer layer of the CHAvocado combines international actors and forums, with for example UN and military actors bringing potentially different challenges into this space:

- Internal space: organisational structures, capacities, programmes and other organisational issues;
- Civil space: community-based organisations and NGOs / local government / local private sector;
- Macro space: national government / UN / military.

The exact delimitation of the three spaces is clearly context-specific; however, particularly for the distinction of a potentially less sensitive, less contested civil space and a potentially controversial and militarised arena, it can be helpful to analytically distinguish these three spaces.

Concerning the internal space, organisations have both the greatest scope of action and the greatest responsibility compared to the other two spaces. The responsibility would include ensuring coherent internal approaches, for example concerning Dual Nexus approaches as a baseline, concerning conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive programming as well as Do No Harm as a streamlined tool and with respect to partnership approaches or Human Resources (HR) capacities and policies.

In the civil space, organisations will have less direct impact while seizing additional opportunities thanks to working in partnerships. Actors in the civil space would again be context-specific but in many cases encompass local and international NGO partners, community leaders or private enterprises when these can act independently from overarching politicised agendas.

For example, in various local contexts, organisations might identify opportunities to work on the community level in conflict transformation projects by cooperating with community-based organisations, or to join forces with NGOs bringing in peacebuilding know-how and respective local field experience.

**A Civil Nexus could be an interesting approach for multi-mandated organisations to engage in Triple Nexus activities.**

The civil space could allow organisations to engage in the area of a Civil Nexus. This could potentially enable them to engage in a less controversial space and enact less challenging approaches, for example with respect to principled humanitarian action and their reputation as a needs-based actor. A Civil Nexus approach can make the civil space an interesting area for multi-mandated organisations to engage with Triple Nexus activities, even in contexts where further engagement with UN processes and military actors - the macro space - is inadvisable.

In this final space, the macro space, actors such as national governments, UN agencies, the military and related forums can be identified. In this space, further considerations and potential sensitivities for humanitarian action need to be taken into account. These actors might be, more frequently than civil ones, perceived as parties to the conflict, as following other political agendas, or mixing peacebuilding with security or migration deterrence issues.

At the same time, using a global model of analysis will always come with grey areas: In some contexts, partnering with INGOs might be associated with controversial government agendas; local NGOs might be considered as party to the conflict due to ethnic backgrounds of staff, or private companies might have strong links to controversial government actors. On the other hand, UN actors might be perceived as more neutral and impartial partners in some contexts. However, if carefully adapted, it is advisable to distinguish the outlined three areas of an internal, a civil and a macro space, and to develop options on this basis.

Building on this assumption, three options for an organisation on how to engage in the Triple Nexus can be set out: a core engagement, a proactive engagement and a criteria-based local approach.

## Options for Multi-Mandated Organisations

As CHA research including the outlined survey indicated, aid organisations consider the Triple Nexus as either a chance or at least a pressing policy issue that demands their attention. Interviews as well as survey results underline a significant interest in Triple Nexus engagements, even by aid practitioners, who do not consider their employer as well-prepared but rather project a strategic shift into the peace arena.

As agencies cannot build on common understandings of the approach, and as challenges and opportunities strongly vary from context to context, an often-heard phrase in this debate states that organisational approaches will depend on local contexts.

Yet, it is doubtful that this provides sufficient answers and guidance for the way forward in the Triple Nexus arena. The cross cutting character of the highlighted Triple Nexus challenges touch on core structures, procedures, capacities and mandates within organisations in a way which will not allow to handle this as a decentralised issue only.

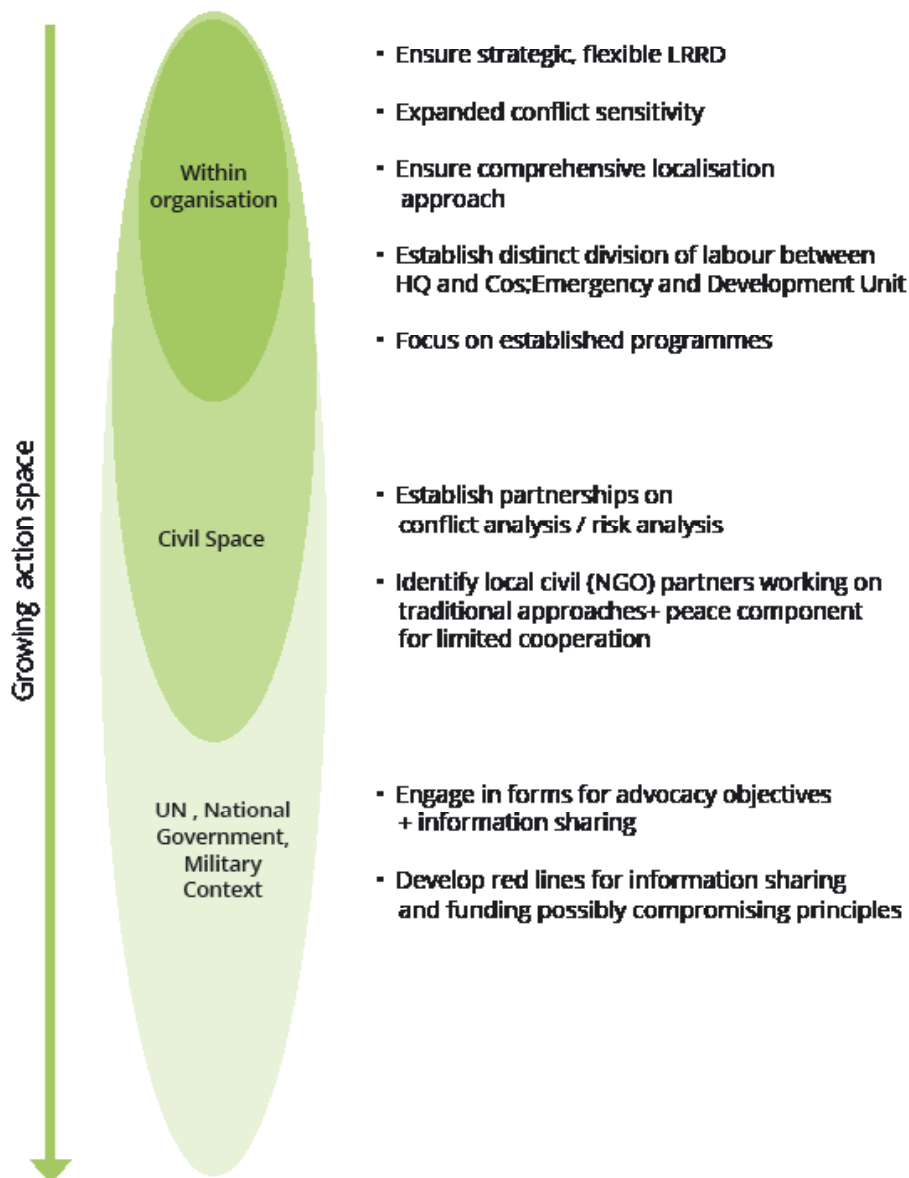
Taking these decisions on each local level of an INGO, for example, could also risk making personal preferences and backgrounds of local leadership the decisive criteria for the way forward in an area where decisions in one region of the world can heavily impact the standing of the same organisation elsewhere. This would be a risky and not very strategic approach, given substantially sensitive issues involved, for example with respect to diverging mandates and cultures in areas such as impartial humanitarian action versus more political development and peace-related programmes.

Because of this, aid agencies positioning themselves in this field have to find a challenging balance between local ownership and required global strategies for an overall approach. In this light, a corporate decision is needed on the way forward, and this research has identified three options for multi-mandated organisations in this regard.

**Aid agencies need to find a challenging balance between local ownership and required global strategies.**

Graph 12

## CORE APPROACH



## Core Approach

A core approach would, first of all, mean to work on internal organisational issues, which are at the core of any of the selected Triple Nexus approaches. It is essential that these be handled internally, even independently from any Triple Nexus engagement, according to this analysis.

Areas of concern are, for example, to ensure a strategic and flexible LRRD approach as a baseline for peace work; to recheck if comprehensive conflict analysis capacities are in place; if a streamlined conflict sensitivity approach has been established, or whether a strategic local partnership approach is in place.

Following a core approach, peace and conflict engagement on a limited scale with civil space partners would nevertheless be possible, if these could be linked to pre-existing programmes and focus on peace issues in a broader sense, such as social cohesion, mitigating resource conflicts and economic opportunities.

Beyond the civil space, organisations would focus their engagement following a core approach in Triple Nexus forums and processes on advocacy purposes only; they would share very limited information with security actors and turn down funding options with ambivalent political agendas, which could potentially undermine a needs-based approach or other humanitarian principles.

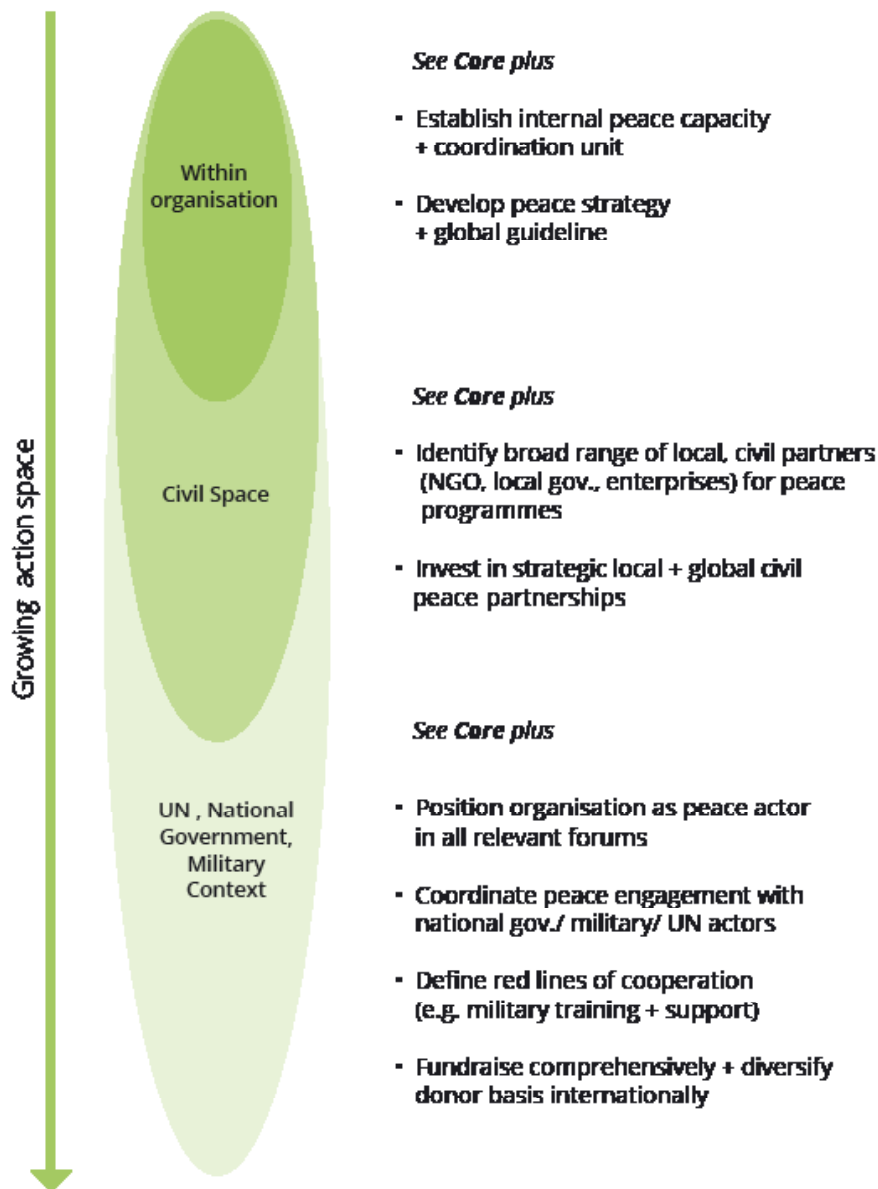
This approach could safeguard the humanitarian actor from potentially tapping into politically sensitive and grey areas of the CHAvocado. It could be considered a strong reputational asset and help ensure the security of staff. It would provide room for outspoken advocacy engagement, including advocacy on the challenges of the Triple Nexus process.

On the other hand, organisations might be cut off from crucial donor processes and related information, limit themselves by not substantially engaging in peace matters, and potentially lose out on major public funding lines that could enable their work. Due to vested donor interests in the Triple Nexus, a core approach could also question organisations' status in case they are a rather government-liaised, publicly-funded and politically-cautious organisation.

**A core approach would mean to first of all work on internal organisational issues including conflict sensitivity and conflict analyses.**

Graph 13

## PROACTIVE APPROACH



## Proactive Approach

Following a proactive, Triple Nexus-embracing approach would require looking into the previously outlined internal issues as a prerequisite for organisations work overall, as these provide the core capabilities to work in today's conflict-driven and fragile contexts.

Engaging in a strategic Triple Nexus approach would, however, mean to additionally establish internal peacebuilding and coordination capacities and to develop a peacebuilding strategy and global guidelines. It would mean to establish new partnerships on a global and local scale and to potentially change the profile and perception vis-à-vis operational partners and donors.

While establishing internal peacebuilding capacities at some scale would be crucial, a strategic engagement in the Triple Nexus area would not necessarily mean having to turn organisations into a full-fledged triple mandate organisation. While organisations might establish basic internal peacebuilding know-how and coordination capacities, in case they have a lack of experience in this regard, peace partnerships could be crucial for conflict analysis and peace programme implementation.

Following a proactive approach, organisations would position themselves within the UN and military arena as an important peace actor in all relevant fora, coordinating its peace engagement with all relevant actors (national governments, UN missions and military actors), based on red lines such as clear rules for civil-military coordination while fundraising in a comprehensive way.

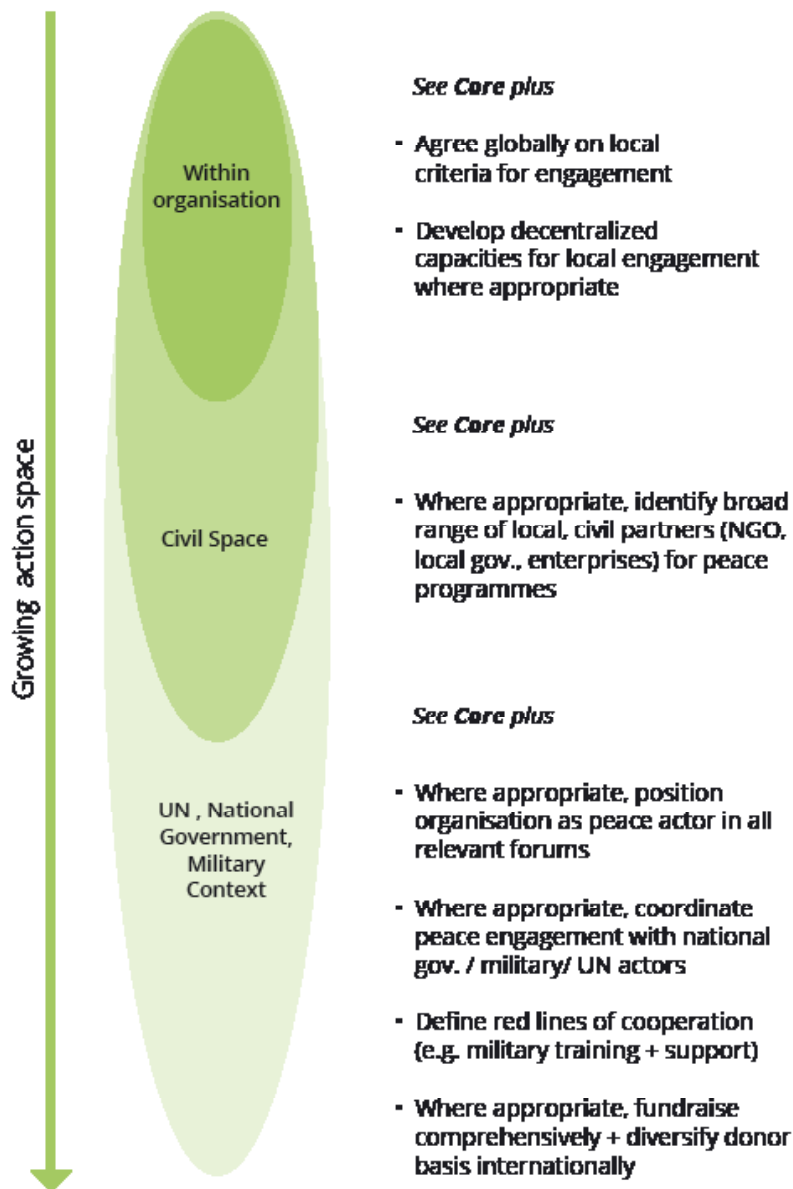
The proactive global approach would allow organisations to potentially diversify their donor bases, expand their reach to people in need and to potentially tackle root causes of today's emergencies and conflicts at a greater scale. Organisations would intervene and engage in all relevant discussions and access to crucial information streams on both the donor and the military sides.

However, a proactive Triple Nexus engagement can lead to a trade-off between humanitarian principles and needs-based approaches, the subordination to dominant national governments and their political agendas, or an association with UN actors when considered party to the conflict. In turn, those factors can damage the organisation's reputation, pose security risks to staff and partner organisations, and jeopardise access to populations in need. Particularly, the Mali case study (cf. Steinke forthc.) has underlined the risks that might come when applying a global Triple Nexus approach without taking local conditions and their entanglements to regional and international figurations into account.

**A proactive approach would mean for organisations to position themselves as important actors, coordinating their activities with UN and military actors.**

Graph 14

## LOCAL APPROACH





## Criteria-Based Local Approach

Research on the Triple Nexus in practice, including the three country studies conducted for this research project (cf. Hövelmann 2020a; Quack and Südhoff 2020; Steinke forthc.), underline the degree to which Triple Nexus settings vary from context to context, for example in Mali and South Sudan. Therefore, it could be a comprehensible choice to agree on a case-by-case basis on an organisation's approach thoroughly based on the assessments of in-country staff, especially in decentralised organisations.

However, as the Triple Nexus is a cross-cutting topic, crucial to all kinds of strategic and programmatic approaches, organisations need to position themselves in one strategic way or the other. Any decision will come with substantial repercussions beyond any given local context. Following a purely decentralised approach might, therefore, result in an erratic approach, based on local preferences linked to staff's individual experiences and backgrounds.

In this light, as well as to bridge the outlined tensions of a globally directed approach versus a fully localised decision-making process, a third option would be to follow a local approach based on globally agreed criteria.

To bridge the outlined tensions of a globally directed approach versus a fully localised decision-making process, a third option would be to follow a local approach based on globally agreed criteria.

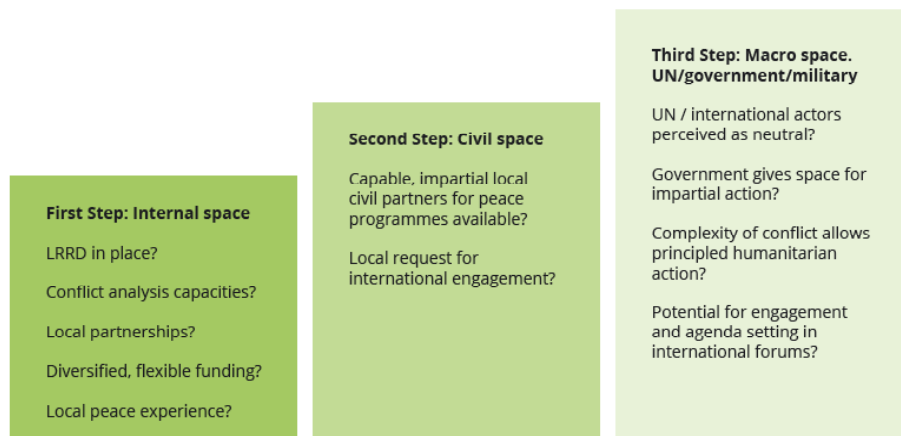
This would require working on the core issues, as required in any case, while agreeing on a participatory process to define said criteria for potential local Triple Nexus engagements.

Based on CHA’s research, we suggest that a preliminary set of criteria should be amended and discussed in a participatory way while covering key issues such as:

- Is the Triple Nexus approach locally perceived as a helpful, needs-based and integrative approach?
- Can the peace component of the Triple Nexus be clearly distinguished from a securitised agenda?
- Is the risk of compromising humanitarian principles and the organisations’ reputation limited?
- What is the existing know-how, and where are capacity gaps on LRRD and conflict sensitivity in the given country, and are adequate HR in place?
- Do organisations have or see a potential to establish essential local partnerships on conflict analyses?
- Do organisations have peace-related programme approaches already in place?
- Do these follow a positive understanding of peace in a locally appropriate way?
- Do organisations see local potential to establish essential partnerships in peacebuilding programmes?

Looking into a final set of questions to be defined internally could mean to follow the model below when analysing local contexts based on globally agreed criteria. Moving from one step to the other would require that most of the criteria of the previous step would be fulfilled (see graph 15).

### Criteria for a local approach



Graph 15

These approaches and the related impacts can be summarised in the 'CHAvocado Matrix: Options for a Triple Nexus Approach'. The latter combines these three options while adding two further dimensions:

First of all, the further organisations move from the core of the CHAvocado to a proactive approach, and to related peace engagements in a more narrow sense (peacebuilding, conflict transformation, reconciliation), the more comprehensive organisational change will be required (see graph 16 in CHAvocado matrix).

A core approach will focus on the baseline of most actors' work and streamline key issues such as a conflict-sensitive approach, even when working in conflict only versus on conflict. However, a locally or globally more engaged approach will require peace-related capacities and partnerships, engagement in Triple Nexus related fora, different advocacy measures et cetera.

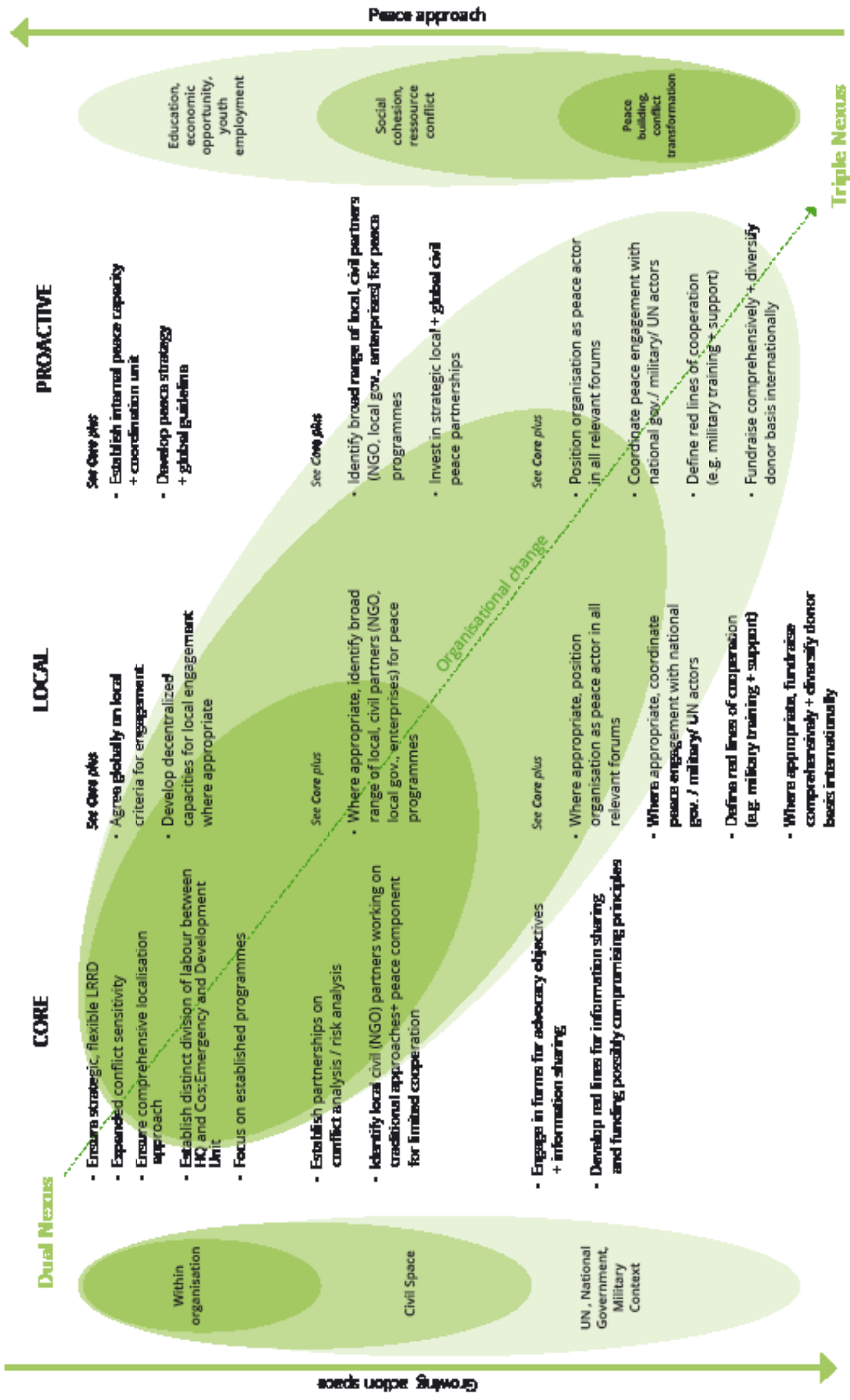
Moreover, the dimension of peace engagement and the related peace definition provide another relevant angle mirrored in the matrix 'peace avocado': The more agencies engage proactively in the Triple Nexus, the more their efforts will become part of the core of peace work (reconciliation, conflict transformation).

Vice versa, if agencies engage in their 'peace work' following a much broader definition of peace, such engagements are often covered by pre-existing programmes on social cohesion, education, economic opportunities and can be managed within a core approach and more limited organisational change.

This paper does not recommend following any specific option, as decisions need to follow organisations' characteristics and a participatory process. However, pros and cons of all three options can be identified and are shared in graphic 16.

The further organisations move from the core of the CHAvocado to a proactive approach, the more comprehensive organisational change will be required.

# CHAvocado Matrix: Triple Nexus Frameworks and Organisational Options



## The CHAvocado Matrix – Country Examples

In concrete terms, based on the indicated CHA case studies, for example the outlined pros and cons and the criteria highlighted above could result in very different Triple Nexus engagements of an organisation in settings like Mali, South Sudan and Pakistan based on agreed criteria for a local approach.

In the contested Triple Nexus arena of Mali for example, a core approach might be advisable if an organisation has opted for a criteria-based local approach. With the given politicisation of the Triple Nexus, a mixed peace and security agenda of external actors, with humanitarian principles at risk and limited peace and partnership capacities in place, an engagement beyond a core approach is not recommendable in the Mali Nexus context (Steinke forthc.).

A core approach would not rule out engaging in some civil space projects on the community level, yet it would remain the most extensive form of peace engagement on the country-level. If this was the chosen option, it would still require further action on the country level to evaluate essential issues such as conflict analysis as a transversal axis in projects; to ensure systematic conflict sensitivity, and to strategically check on terms of LRRD approaches and organisations' future engagement in the humanitarian arena; to agree on future readiness to take risks and to manage risk transfers by providing partners with the necessary knowledge and assets to implement in conflict.

In South Sudan, local conditions make a proactive, strategic engagement with the Triple Nexus a realistic option, going well beyond the civil space and potentially turning organisations into a Triple Nexus actor in the country (cf. Quack and Südhoff 2020). This is due to the more positive or neutral perception of the Triple Nexus on the local level; due to local actors welcoming a broader external engagement while perceiving military actors like the UN mission UNMISS as fairly neutral and crucial protection actors.

However, this would require organisation to not only invest in the outlined basic issues, but also to develop decentralised capacities for engagement, to identify a range of local partners in the peace and conflict analysis arena, to position organisations as a peace actor in relevant fora and to coordinate its peace engagement with relevant actors while fundraising accordingly.

In Pakistan, the Triple Nexus is not as much at the forefront as the restricted and militarised context. This makes working on conflict issues a very sensitive endeavour. Based on a locally flexible Triple Nexus strategy, a core approach might be advisable: The example of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) demonstrates that there is a great danger of the state instrumentalising the Triple Nexus for other purposes, threatening NGOs to become "service providers" of a governmental trajectory. Yet, outside of a state-led Triple Nexus, there is some room in the civil space to work more on drivers of instability (cf. Hövelmann 2020a).

The criteria highlighted above could result in very different Triple Nexus engagements of an organisation in settings like Mali, South Sudan and Pakistan.

## CORE APPROACH

- Opportunity for active advocacy engagement on Triple Nexus
- Strong reputational asset for safeguarding humanitarian principles
- Staff security is backed in sensitive locations by limited engagement in controversial areas
- Opportunity to engage in "Civil Nexus" remains an option

## PROACTIVE APPROACH

- Opportunity to establish new partnerships on local and global levels
- Opportunity to expand organisation's profile and mandate
- Option to position organisation within the macro space (with UN and military actors) and coordinate its peace engagement with relevant actors
- Option to maximise programme reach and to work on root causes of conflict and drivers of humanitarian needs
- Opportunity to maximise reach of people in need by expanded and diversified funding basis

## CRITERIA-BASED LOCAL APPROACH

- Providing programmatic flexibility for locally diverse settings
- Potential reputational asset due to transparent, criteria-based approach
- Opportunity to initiate a participatory corporate process on Triple Nexus approach and related criteria
- Opportunity to integrate local staff in decision-making, potentially resulting in improved inner-organisational coherence
- Avoiding a purely decentralised, erratic approach by agreed criteria
- Opportunity to follow flexible funding approaches
- Potential to make use of the advantages of a proactive approach, where appropriate, while avoiding the disadvantages in difficult contexts

## PROS

- Potentially limited involvement in crucial Triple Nexus / donor processes and related information
- Limited scope to engage in conflict matters while at the same time a major cause of hunger and poverty
- Limited funding opportunities, potentially undermining reach of people in need
- Might require fundamental reorientation if organisation is a rather government-leased, public-funded and politically cautious organisation

- Potential trade-off of humanitarian principles and needs-based approaches
- Potential subordination to dominant national governments and supranational organisations and their political agendas (if the peace component rather becomes a security component)
- Potential loss of a clear core of the organisations, turning into a "jack-of-all-trades"
- Potential association with UN or state actors considered as party to a conflict
- Potential damage to reputation as neutral humanitarian actor may pose further security risks to staff and partner organisations, jeopardise access to populations in need

- Complex approach requiring case by case analyses and approaches
- Complex internal communication and participatory processes needed
- Risk of reputational spill over beyond locally-non-sensitive context
- Potentially limited fundraising and cooperation opportunities to work on Triple Nexus challenges.

## CONS

## 5. Conclusion

As outlined in this report, multi-mandated organisations need to take position in the Triple Nexus field, which is characterised by substantial incoherence and conflicting views about its concept, terms and practical impact. At the same time, the Triple Nexus is of substantial relevance to multi-mandated organisations, who are mandated to fight root causes of poverty and humanitarian needs. Besides, many multi-mandated organisations rely on large shares of institutional funding by donors promoting a Triple Nexus approach.

To take a strategic decision on the way forward, aid agencies are advised to consider the three spaces identified by the CHAvocado model:

It is within the internal space that organisations have the greatest scope and the greatest responsibilities. The responsibility would cover to ensure a streamlined Dual Nexus approach as a baseline, an appropriate conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive approach, Do No Harm as a streamlined tool, decent partnership approaches as well as ensuring that HR capacities and policies are in place. This will be a requirement no matter whether agencies plan to work only in conflict or also on conflicts in future.

In the civil space, partnering actors would be context-specific while in many cases encompassing local and international NGO partners, community leaders or private enterprises, assumed that these can act independently. The civil space could allow organisations to engage in the area of a Civil Nexus. This could potentially enable agencies to get involved in a space linked to much less controversial issues and challenging approaches, for example with respect to principled humanitarian action and agencies' reputation as a needs-based actor. A Civil Nexus can make the civil space an interesting, though limited area for multi-mandated organisations to engage with Triple Nexus activities.

Actors like national governments, UN missions, the military and related forums are assembled in the macro space. This space could open doors and leverage for more comprehensive impacts while at the same time more potential sensitivities for humanitarian action need to be taken into account, as these actors might be perceived more often than civil ones as parties to the conflict, following political agendas, or mixing peace work with security concepts.

Building on this space analysis, this research has set out three options for organisations on how to engage in the Triple Nexus: a core approach, a proactive approach, and a criteria-based local approach.

To revisit  
comprehensive  
conflict analyses,  
ensure conflict  
sensitivity and  
streamline  
*Do No Harm*  
will be a prerequisite  
for any aid agency.



Building on this space analysis, this research has set out three options for organisations on how to engage in the Triple Nexus: a core approach, a proactive approach, and a criteria-based local approach.

1. A global “core approach”, limiting the engagement (if at all) to the civil space of the Triple Nexus or to a Civil Nexus approach. This would mean, if at all, to partner with NGOs, local communities and private sector actors, if eligible ones are present, while focussing only on advocacy engagement and coordination beyond this space; a core approach would in many cases first of all mean to work on the organisational internal issues outlined above. Substantial improvement of those issues might be essential, independent of any Triple Nexus engagement.

2. A global “proactive approach” by embracing the Triple Nexus in the civil space as well as in the spaces of UN processes, UN missions, military actors and national government policies. This could raise the organisation’s profile as a peace and conflict actor in policy as well as programmatic terms and expand an organisation’s leverage. However, it entails establishing new partnerships on a global and a local scale, including potentially sensitive ones concerning humanitarian principles such as neutrality and impartiality.

3. A criteria-based local approach, mirroring the diversity of local contexts, as analysed in the case studies of Mali, South Sudan and Pakistan, while ensuring decisions are taken based on corporately agreed criteria. It would go beyond a purely decentralised concept which might result in an erratic approach, based for example on staff’s individual experiences and backgrounds only. As an alternative, a set of potential criteria has been shared for profound and transparent decisions to be taken.

Given the cross-cutting nature of highly complex and sensitive Triple Nexus engagements, there is no easy way out for any organisation. All three options will come with substantial implications for an agency’s policies, donor strategies, future programmes, the political role it intends to play and its corporate strategies. For this, multi-mandated organisations are advised to decide in a participatory, strategic way on which direction they want to go in one of the most relevant and contested fields of aid agencies’ work today.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the methodology regarding the in-country research, please consult the country study publications.

<sup>2</sup> In the continuum approach aid is progressive and linear: humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath of an emergency, followed by rehabilitation, and then development. The contiguuum approach allows for humanitarian and development aid to work simultaneously.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with government representative.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with NGO representative.

<sup>5</sup> BMZ representative at CHA event.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with government representative.

<sup>7</sup> We wholeheartedly thank all participants of the survey for their generous time as well as sharing their perceptions and views on the Triple Nexus in this survey.

<sup>8</sup> Do No Harm is a conflict sensitivity tool used by many aid organisations to help understand the context in which they are working as well as how their interventions interact with that context (Anderson 1999).



## Bibliography

- Agensky, Jonathan C. 2019. 'Religion, Governance, and the "Peace-Humanitarian-Development Nexus" in South Sudan'. In *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, edited by Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter, 277–95. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99106-1\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99106-1_14).
- Anderson, Mary B. 1999. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace--or War*. Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Barakat, Sultan, and Sansom Milton. 2020. 'Localisation Across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus'. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, May, 154231662092280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316620922805>.
- Birckenbach, Hanne-Margret. 2012. 'Friedenslogik Statt Sicherheitslogik'. *Wissenschaft & Frieden* 2: 42–47.
- Böckler, Fabian. 2019. 'Nexus ist sinnvoll'. E+Z, May. <https://www.dandc.eu/de/article/der-krise-im-tschadseebecken-ist-humanitaere-hilfe-allein-nicht-ausreichend-es-braucht-auch>.
- Buchanan-Smith, Margaret, and Simon Maxwell. 1994. 'Linking Relief and Development: An Introduction and Overview'. *IDS Bulletin* 25 (4): 2–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.1994.mp25004002.x>.
- Churruca Muguruza, Cristina. 2015. 'Towards More Effective Global Humanitarian Action: How the EU Can Contribute'. Brussels: European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/549048/EXPO\\_STU%282015%29549048\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/549048/EXPO_STU%282015%29549048_EN.pdf).
- Delgado, Caroline, Suyoun Jang, Gary Milante, and Dan Smith. 2019. 'The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace—Preliminary Report'. Stockholm: sipri.
- DuBois, Marc. 2020. 'The Triple Nexus - Threat or Opportunity for Humanitarian Principles?' Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action. <https://www.chaberlin.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020-05-discussionpaper-triple-nexus-threat-opportunity-humanitarian-principles-dubois-1.pdf>.
- EU Council. 2017. 'Operationalising the Humanitarian Development Nexus'. EU Council. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Nexus%20st09383.en17.pdf>.
- Fanning, Emma, and Jessica Fullwood-Thomas. 2019. 'The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. What Does It Mean for Multi-Mandated Organizations?' Oxfam Discussion Papers. Oxford: Oxfam. <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620820/dp-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-260619-en.pdf;jsessionid=751B87D3A5937CF056E874922AA318F8?sequence=1>.

- Friesen, Ina, Pauline Veron, and Vera Mazzara. 2020. 'EU Humanitarian Aid: Caught between Nexus and Independence'. ETTG. [https://ettg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Ettg\\_EU\\_Humanitarian\\_Aid\\_Brief\\_April\\_2020.pdf](https://ettg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Ettg_EU_Humanitarian_Aid_Brief_April_2020.pdf).
- Hövelmann, Sonja. 2020a. 'Triple Nexus in Pakistan: Catering to a Governmental Narrative or Enabling Independent Humanitarian Action?' Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA).
- . 2020b. 'Triple Nexus to Go: Humanitarian Topics Explained'. Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA).
- IASC. 2020. 'Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes'. Internal document.
- Kocks, Alexander, Ruben Wedel, Hanne Roggemann, and Helge Roxin. 2018. 'Building Bridges Between International Humanitarian and Development Responses to Forced Migration'. Stockholm: EBA.
- Macrae, Joanna. 2019. 'Linking Thinking: Why Is It so Hard and What Can We Do about It.' London: KUNO. [https://www.kuno-platform.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Linking-Thinking-KUNO\\_Macrae.pdf](https://www.kuno-platform.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Linking-Thinking-KUNO_Macrae.pdf).
- Macrae, Joanna, and Adele Harmer. 2004. 'Beyond the Continuum: An Overview of the Changing Role of Aid Policy in Protracted Crises'. Research Briefing. London: HPG. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/341.pdf>.
- Mason, Therese Bjorn, and Manisha Thomas. 2020. 'Stepping Into the Nexus: INGO Pre-Positioning and Roles in the Humanitarian Development-Peace Nexus in Sudan'. Sudan INGO Forum.
- Medinilla, Alfonso, Lidet Tadese Shiferaw, and Pauline Veron. 2019. 'Think Local. Governance, Humanitarian Aid Development Peacebuilding Somalia'. Discussion Paper No. 246. ECDPM. <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/DP246-march-2019-think-local-Governance-humanitarian-aid-development-peacebuilding-Somalia-ECDPM.pdf>.
- Mosel, Irina, and Simon Levine. 2014. 'Remaking the Case for Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development'. HPG Commissioned Report. London: Humanitarian Policy Group. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8882.pdf>.
- Norman, Julie, and Drew Mikhael. 2019. 'Integrated Conflict Prevention and Humanitarian Resilience'. Christian Aid. <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/Integrated%20Conflict%20Prevention%20and%20Humanitarian%20Resilience%20May%202019.pdf>.
- Obrecht, Alice. 2019. 'Sifting Mindsets. Creating a More Flexible Humanitarian Response'. London: ALNAP. <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/shifting-mindsets-creating-a-more-flexible-humanitarian-response>.

- OECD. 2019. 'DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus'. OECD/LEGAL/5019. OECD. <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf>.
- Otto, Ralf, and Lioba Weingärtner. 2013. 'Linking Relief and Development: More than Old Solutions for Old Problems'. The Hague: Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/iob-study-linking-relief-and-development-more-than-old-solutions-for-old-problems.pdf>.
- Pedersen, Jens. 2016. 'The Nexus of Peacebuilding, Development and Humanitarianism in Conflict Affected Contexts: A Respect for Boundaries'. Geneva: MSF.
- Peters, Katie, and Florence Pichon. 2017. 'Crisis Modifiers. A Solution for a More Flexible Development-Humanitarian System'. BRACED. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11861.pdf>.
- Plan International. 2018. 'Lake Chad Programme Strategy'. Plan International. 2018. <https://plan-international.org/publications/lake-chad-programme-strategy>.
- Poole, Lydia, and Vance Culbert. 2019. 'Financing the Nexus Gaps and Opportunities from a Field Perspective'. FAO, NRC, UNDP. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/financing-the-nexus-gaps-and-opportunities-from-a-field-perspective/>.
- Quack, Martin, and Ralf Südhoff. 2020. 'Triple Nexus in South Sudan – Learning from Local Opportunities'. Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.
- Reder, Philipp, Sven Schneider, and Robin Schroeder. 2017. 'Stabilisierung in Akuten Krisen: Strategisch, Eigenständig Und Komplementär'. 13 February 2017. <https://peacelab.blog/2017/02/stabilisierung-in-akuten-krisen-strategisch-eigenstaendig-und-komplementaer>.
- Save the Children. 2018. 'Saving Lives through a Parallel "Response, Recovery and Resilience" Approach for Drought-Affected Children and Their Families in Somalia in 2018'. 2018. <https://somalia.savethechildren.net/news/saving-lives-through-parallel-%E2%80%98response-recovery-and-resilience%E2%80%99-approach-drought-affected>.
- Schröder, Ralf, and Mirko Schilbach. 2019. 'Closing the Gap - the German Perspective on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus', Rural 21 - The International Journal for Rural Development, 1 (53).
- Steets, Julia. 2011. 'Donor Strategies for Addressing the Transition Gap and Linking Humanitarian and Development Assistance'. Berlin: GPPi. [https://www.gppi.net/media/steets\\_2011\\_transition\\_web.pdf](https://www.gppi.net/media/steets_2011_transition_web.pdf).

- Steinke, Andrea. forthcoming. 'Triple Nexus in Mali: Coordination, Securitisation and Blurred Lines'. Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.
- Swithern, Sophia. 2019. 'Donors at the Triple Nexus: Lessons from Sweden'. Development Initiatives. <http://devinit.org/publications/donors-triple-nexus-lessons-sweden/>.
- Thomas, Manisha. 2019. 'NGO Perspectives on the EU's Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Approach: Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities'. Brussels: VOICE. <https://voiceeu.org/publications/ngos-perspectives-on-the-eu-s-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus.pdf>.
- Tronc, Emmanuel, Rob Grace, and Anaide Nahikian. 2019. 'Realities and Myths of the "Triple Nexus": Local Perspectives on Peacebuilding, Development, and Humanitarian Action in Mali'. Boston: Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3404351](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3404351).
- United Nations. 2016. 'One Humanity: Shared Responsibility Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit'. A/70/709. United Nations General Assembly. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Secretary-General%27s%20Report%20for%20WHS%202016%20%28Advance%20Unedited%20Draft%29.pdf>.
- Wolf, Florine de, and Olivia Wilkinson. 2019. 'The Triple Nexus, Localization, and Local Faith Actors: The Intersections between Faith, Humanitarian Response, Development, and Peace.' Washington, DC: DanChurchAid. [https://jilflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/TripleNexus\\_SouthSudan\\_ReviewOfLiterature.pdf](https://jilflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/TripleNexus_SouthSudan_ReviewOfLiterature.pdf).
- Zamore, Leah. 2019. 'The Triple Nexus in Practice: Toward a New Way of Working in Protracted and Repeated Crises'. New York: Center on International Cooperation. <https://cic.nyu.edu/publications/the-triple-nexus-in-practice>.

## Annex

### Survey Methodology

The survey was designed as a perception survey. This was deemed a suitable approach as the Triple Nexus is currently at a rather conceptual stage: Pilots to operationalise the approach are already being rolled-out but tangible results on operational performance and feasibility are still at an early stage, if assessed at all. Hence, the survey captures perceptions on the Triple Nexus among humanitarian, development and peace actors with a basis in Germany (50%) as well as staff in country offices (50%).

The questionnaire included a mix of closed and open questions. Where deemed appropriate, a four-item-Lickert-Scale design was chosen to supplement the qualitative data gained from open questions. However, in this publication format, qualitative questions will not be considered in greater detail. The 72 survey questions were grouped into eight categories, including (1) professional background of the respondent, (2) perceptions on Dual Nexus/ LRRD/ Do No Harm and conflict analysis, (3) perceptions on the Triple Nexus debate, (4) Triple Nexus in the respondents' organisations, (5) perceptions on the peace leg of the Triple Nexus, (6) Triple Nexus and the humanitarian principles, (7) perceptions on localisation and the Triple Nexus and (8) closing. The first seven categories served as sections of this data analysis as well.

The survey was designed as a self-administered online survey using KoBo Toolbox, an open source survey tool specifically designed for humanitarian purposes and managed by OCHA and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. The survey was composed in English and pre-tested with twelve respondents. Based on comments from the pre-tests, the survey was edited and adjusted.

For data gathering, the majority of large (I)NGOs and UN agencies registered in Germany and working in one or more areas of humanitarian action, development cooperation or peacebuilding were invited to participate. For each organisation, four individuals were selected based on their proximity to Dual and Triple Nexus experiences, to whom an invitation to complete the online questionnaire was sent via email. These included officers in advocacy, programmes, safety & security and institutional fundraising.

Furthermore, to increase the response rate, participation was also promoted via the CHA Newsletter, the Twitter account and in other online communication.

Due to the design of the survey, a determination of an equal share of participation of all invited agencies are not possible. Because the target group was not directly addressed, an accurate response rate could not be calculated. Hence this survey **cannot** be considered as a representative account.

Data collection was carried out using the KoBo Toolbox online survey and took place between 15 August and 10 October 2020. Two reminders were sent out to increase the response rate. This led to a total of 101 complete responses (N=101). The data was cleaned and analysed using Excel Spreadsheets. Due to the lack of representativeness and the rather small number of respondents, correlation and regression analysis were not carried out. Hence, this survey can only be considered as indicating tendencies of collected individual views and opinions and cannot be generalised.

### Limitations

As already mentioned above, due to the data collection design of the survey, findings and perceptions are only indicative and not statistically representative. Conclusions from findings of this survey to the general reality are not possible. Furthermore, also the small number of participants (N=101) did not allow for regression or correlation analysis, nor for an estimation of significance. All bivariate and univariate analysis are indicative only and just show tendencies among the specific group of respondents to this survey.

Perception surveys are very sensitive to recent experiences and may therefore disfavour long-term developments or changes that may be less present in the respondents' mind.

A second limitation regards the unequal representation of the sectors humanitarian action, development cooperation and peacebuilding. Humanitarian and development practitioners were equally well represented among the respondents while peace actors were highly underrepresented. The perceptions and data are therefore strongly influenced by these first two groups. Unfortunately, weighing was no option to rectify this because the number of respondents from peace organisations was all too small (3 out of 101 respondents indicated they had a background in "rather peace").



## IMPRINT

© Centre for Humanitarian Action, October 2020.

This paper is published as part of the research project "Triple Nexus in Practice" at the Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA).

Ralf Südhoff is the Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA). Sonja Hövelmann and Andrea Steinke are Research Fellows at CHA.

Darina Pellowska is a Research Fellow at CHA. Martin Quack is a CHA Fellow.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

Südhoff, Ralf, Sonja Hövelmann, and Andrea Steinke. 2020. The Triple Nexus in Practice: Challenges and Options for Multi-Mandated Organisations. Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.

## RECENT CHA PUBLICATIONS

Südhoff, Ralf, and Martin Quack. 2020. The Triple Nexus in South Sudan. Learning from Local Opportunities. Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.

Hövelmann, Sonja. 2020. Triple Nexus in Pakistan: catering to a governmental narrative or enabling independent humanitarian action? Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.

Roepstorff, Kristina 2020: Localisation and Shrinking Civic Space: tying up the loose ends. Berlin:Centre for Humanitarian Action.

DuBois, Marc. 2020. Triple Nexus – Threat or Opportunity for the Humanitarian Principles? Berlin:Centre for Humanitarian Action.

Hövelmann, Sonja. 2020. Humanitarian topics explained. Triple Nexus to go. Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.

Roepstorff, Kristina, Charlotte Faltas, and Sonja Hövelmann. 2020. Counterterrorism Measures and Sanction Regimes: Shrinking Space for Humanitarian Aid Organisations. Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.

Roepstorff, Kristina. 2019. Migration and the Shrinking Humanitarian Space in Europe. From maritime search and rescue operations to contested humanitarian action in EU countries. Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.

Steinke, Andrea. 2020. Haiti Ten Years After Douz Janvye. Humanitarian perspectives and lessons learnt from the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.

Südhoff, Ralf, and Sonja Hövelmann. 2019. Where does German humanitarian assistance stand? Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action.



**CHA | Maecenata Stiftung**  
Rungestrasse 17  
D-10179 Berlin  
Fon: +49 (0)30 2838 7911  
[info@chaberlin.org](mailto:info@chaberlin.org)

October 2020