



A Learning Journey on the Triple Nexus

Synthesis report

January 2022, revised October 2022

Nexus definition

Adhering to the nexus definition agreed upon in the OECD DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus, SDC understands it as follows: *Nexus refers to the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions. Nexus is an approach that aims to strengthen collaboration, coherence and complementarity. It seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict.*

It works towards the achievement of collective outcomes, referring to a commonly agreed measurable result or impact enhanced by the combined effort of different actors, within their respective mandates, to address and reduce people's unmet needs, risks and vulnerabilities, increasing their resilience and addressing the root causes of conflict.

OECD DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus, February 2019

The process

The present report synthesizes the findings of SDC's Learning journey (LJ) on the triple nexus humanitarian-development-peace (HDP). The aim of this process was to develop a shared understanding of the triple nexus for Swiss International Cooperation and a common way forward. The LJ thus assessed the benefits of the nexus approach and identified conducive factors for its implementation via the collection and analysis of lessons learned from good practices and examples, as well as operational and institutional bottlenecks. A great deal of knowledge came from colleagues working in the field.

The journey started in August 2020 and lasted until September 2021. It was supported by a consultant, Ms. Anne-Lise Klausen from the Nordic Consulting Group, who was also in charge of SDC's external evaluation on the double nexus in 2019. The process consisted of a State of the Art Report (January 2021); interviews with FDFA staff and senior management (October 2020-January 2021); interviews with Swiss NGOs (November 2020-January 2021) and four sector dive-in workshops (Cluster Green; Peace Governance and Equality Cluster; Education in emergencies and durable solutions; and Swiss NGOs). The preliminary findings were presented to a Sounding Board at the end of March 2021. This final report synthesizes the findings of the learning process and proposes concrete action lines for the way forward. It builds upon the evidence gathered during the process, as well as several interim notes prepared and discussed internally, including with senior management. The LJ started just before the *SDC 2030 – fit for purpose restructuring process* and fed into it. Some of the action points proposed in this report have already been integrated in the accompanying measures for the new *modus operandi* of SDC. The report was presented to the Board of Directors and approved in early November 2022.

Executive summary

Multiple overlapping crises – climate crisis, COVID-19 and conflict – are undermining progress across all SDGs. Fragile contexts are most affected: an estimated 80% of people living in extreme poverty would be living in fragile countries and regions in 2030. The pandemic has exacerbated underlying causes of conflict and fragility, and climate change is multiplying those risks, making natural disasters more frequent and heightening food and livelihood insecurity. Humanitarian needs are at record levels, with an estimate of 274 million people needing humanitarian assistance in 2022. As needs have grown, funding for humanitarian and development activities has struggled to keep pace. Official Development Assistance (ODA) reached record levels in 2021 but needs continue to outstrip available resources. Therefore, it is essential that actions in support of humanitarian and development goals are as efficient and effective as possible.

Nexus is...

- an approach (not a strategy or a program / project);
- no merger of the HDP expertise;
- a way of working to increase complementarity and coherence;
- no threat to humanitarian principles;
- a way to lighten the humanitarian case load;
- a cost saving measure (as we become more efficient);
- not primarily a UN approach but a working modality for donors too (as most funds come from bilateral DAC donors)

SDC, in accordance with the OECD DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus, recognizes the need to rethink traditional ways of working and understands the nexus as the interlinkage between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peace promotion.

SDCs LJ on the triple nexus has shown that the institution is already implementing nexus programs in many places. The 2022 restructuring of SDC laid the foundation to increase humanitarian-development nexus activities. The present report points to a number of practical action lines to increase nexus thinking and operationalization within the organization. It highlights, among others, that nexus calls for an open mindset that helps to achieve greater impact and make results more sustainable. There is no one size fits all nexus, but various nexuses according to the reality on the ground. The advantage of working in the nexus relies on the specific expertise in each instrument, and a merger of instruments is never the objective. If we want to operationalize the nexus as a working modality we need to create an environment that enables joint

reflection, analysis, collaboration and synergies using the strengths of each instrument. Working towards collective outcomes is possible when we can rely on a mutual understanding and recognition of each other's strength, expertise and modalities of work ("nexus literacy") enhanced through concrete accompanying measures. In order to align processes and timelines, and to respond to volatile situations, "adaptive management" is key to success.

The report presents overall aspects that underline the value of nexus approaches and different views on nexus gathered in the interview process (chapter 1). Chapter 2 goes into specific points structured under the headings of: people, processes, and partnerships. The three 'p' capture the main issues for implementation and integration of nexus approaches in the institution. The three 'p' issues are not exhaustive, but they reiterate key messages both from those interviewed, and from workshops and sounding board discussions. The key action lines drawn from the process are in the first part of the report below.

Action lines

(1) **Mainstream the HDP nexus understanding** within SDC and ensure that nexus thinking becomes the commonly agreed approach at all levels of the institution, in line with the fit4purpose restructuring and on the basis of the core elements of the OECD/DAC recommendation.

(2) Develop a **common understanding of the peace element** of the nexus, capitalizing on SDC's engagement on peace over the years in terms of "do no harm", conflict-sensitivity, sustaining peace and addressing root causes of fragility and conflict. Identify ways to increase the impact of SDC's interventions on peace, in close coordination and collaboration with WOGA partners, and across sectors.

(3) **Increase "trilingualism"** across the HDP pillars (knowledge about mandates, logics, systems, approaches, tools and frameworks), as part of an **increased nexus literacy** within the organization through the following:

- Senior management should continue to signal the paradigm shift and support nexus efforts at all level. A strong **nexus-sensitive leadership**, both at HQs and at field level, is key to an effective cultural change in the ways of working across the pillars.
- Enhance the **permeability of careers**, taking into account the different deployment and rotation principles within FDFA, allowing for greater exposure to the different instruments and modalities of work.
- Develop a **more systematic training offer** that increases mutual understanding of ways of working across the HDP pillars and enables an improved mobilization of the relevant instruments to combine in a given context for greater impact of Switzerland's action. SDC should ensure that its trainings and tools help teams in the field to conduct comprehensive context and conflict analyses that include nexus perspectives and specifically refer to contributions to conflict transformation and peace. Partners should be included in trainings where relevant.
- Promote **spaces for peer exchange and learning** among practitioners on the field to enable mutual learning and spreading good practices, based on concrete difficulties.

For SDC, **trilingualism** is seen as a way to understand and bridge differences between key nexus actors. Trilingualism helps respective constituencies to better understand and respect the systems, approaches, tools and frameworks that inform and shape humanitarian, development and peace actions. Bottlenecks, constraints and capacity gaps must be recognized and tackled for constituencies to see values and build mutual trust, so nexus approaches can work and be sustained in practice.

Nexus literacy is created through trainings, staff rotations and other means. Trilingualism is a key element of establishing nexus literacy.

(4) Create a more conducive institutional environment for joint analysis and programming across the pillars by increasing **alignment and simplification** of administrative and programming processes and requirements, by promoting **adaptive management**, as well as adapted **funding modalities** for volatile, conflict and fragile contexts, such as contingency funds.

(5) While **operationalizing the nexus on the field**, partner with organizations that have built expertise and experience or have potential to implement nexus approaches, especially local organizations which have a people centered approach; consider **territorial-based approaches**, encompassing key local stakeholders and using nexus thinking as a local governance agenda that empowers local actors; draw lessons from interventions in **thematic sectors** that are nexus-conducive, such as DRR, protection, migration or education, making sure that transversal dimensions related to peace, governance, gender and inclusion are duly addressed to increase the peace dividend of the Swiss actions.

(6) Continue to **engage in the international policy debate** on nexus approaches in order to promote the operationalization of nexus approaches (i.e. through OECD/DAC INCAF). Use experience from the field for constructive inputs at the multilateral level. Knowledge about good examples and equally bottlenecks with regard to nexus program implementation should be used not only for substantive multilateral discussions but also to generate best practices to be shared by other stakeholders / donors. Engage in and play a **coordination role** in mechanisms that promote nexus approaches in country, global and multilateral fora and partnerships.

Nexus approaches at the core

Swiss cooperation offices have numerous good examples of how nexus approaches have developed organically, and how “siloed” and parallel processes are overcome.

Coherent, complementary programming and dialogue are of high priority in challenging contexts. Leadership and staff prioritize and see the inherent logic in applying double and triple nexus approaches, pointing to the complexity and need for a sea change in fragile and conflict affected contexts in which they operate. The extent of protracted crises in the world with its unprecedented levels of forced displacement and migration, exclusion of population groups, lack of democratic rights, and limited access to basic services, such as education and health, and to productive livelihoods, generate the momentum for urgent changes to “business as usual” models. The urgency of change is underscored by the steeply rising needs and costs of humanitarian assistance, and the erosion of development gains, because of the endemic and unresolved conflicts. The effects of climate change further exacerbate the negative spirals of crises.

Nexus approaches are pathways to bridge differences between instruments and stakeholder groups, to be more coherent and complementary and deliver better on collective outcomes. It is important to emphasize that rather than reducing or even erasing the differences between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approaches and instruments, nexus approaches aim to draw on respective strengths, reduce gaps and overlaps and develop complementarity. Both staff and management advocated for more *trilingualism*, i.e. bridging differences by increasing awareness across the three pillars of the nexus. Trilingualism helps the respective constituencies to better understand and respect the systems, practices, and tools of humanitarian, development and peace actions. Bottlenecks, constraints and capacity gaps must be recognized and tackled for constituencies to see values and build mutual trust, so nexus approaches can work and be sustained in practice.

Together with partners in the international community, Switzerland has engaged in the nexus deliberations of the OECD/DAC, which resulted in members and adherents agreeing on the Recommendation on the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDP) in 2019. The Recommendation provides a useful conceptual framework and broad principles for engagement both in double and triple nexus approaches¹. The Recommendation is a milestone because it draws in and cements the importance of sustaining peace and peacebuilding aspects in nexus approaches. The Recommendation also includes earlier nexus related principles, such as the New Way of Working and Grand Bargain. There is a process agreed upon among the OECD/DAC stakeholders to follow up, deepen certain aspects and monitor the Recommendation. The Recommendation is expected to help Switzerland as well as other members and adherents to further develop and fine-tune their nexus approaches.

The LJ found that the Recommendation adds conceptual value at this point but is too remote from operations to be useful for practitioners. The weakness lies in its length and its presentation. It has eleven principles and sub-sections that only to some degree are logically presented and prioritized. For practitioners, this shadows the merits of the effort and the core contents. To maximize the value of the Recommendation there is a need to draw out priority principles and main points for Switzerland and present these in a succinct and manageable “pixi” version, together with a practical guideline on nexus approaches that are specific to Switzerland’s systems.

There is broad consensus that nexus approaches must be presented as a menu of options and be pursued in the most relevant combinations in each context. Context specificity has been underlined as the most important principle of a nexus approach. Nexus approaches are a *means to an end* – but never the end in itself. Dependent on context, nexus approaches can be humanitarian-peace nexus, development-peace nexus, humanitarian-development, humanitarian-development-peace, or other combinations. The LJ showed that there are opportunities for development and humanitarian aid to work more on peace elements, i.e., applying CSPM for conflict prevention in programming and integrating conflict transformative approaches, and also deliberately addressing root causes and drivers of conflict towards violence reduction and transformation. There are also situations where the inclusion of peace elements may jeopardize the independence and impartiality of humanitarians. Nexus approaches therefore have to be developed with respect for the different mandates. Nexus approaches may seem difficult to develop or maintain in an overwhelming situation of emergency, in open conflicts, or when it is impossible to work with a government. However, such situations may still give opportunities to work at community level and with local actors. It is in these situations particularly important to conduct a thorough analysis to determine potential entry points and think ahead and long term.

¹ SDC had already commissioned an evaluation of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (2019) [4571.pdf \(admin.ch\)](#) focused on operational and institutional aspects.

The LJ took deep dives into sectors and themes, which illustrated good examples, as well as the potential for further development of aspects of peace in order to address root causes and enhance sustainability. SDC has a strong track record of projects and other types of engagements, for example in water management, food security, durable solutions, and other projects aiming to build resilience to prevent and reduce disaster risks and climate change effects. These projects essentially take an HD nexus approach. Such projects emphasize capacity building of communities and often support local platforms and institutions for better management of common natural resources and addressing and preventing resource conflicts. Such local platforms and institutions already include HD nexus elements, and conflict mitigation and resolution elements that may be further developed in the direction of peacebuilding. Education projects in fragile, emergency and protracted crises settings also show examples of nexus approaches at both policy and operational levels. Often, they include the HD nexus, but some projects also include peace elements.

Box I

Education and the triple nexus

In **Afghanistan**, SDC has been engaged in the education sector for a long time. The office is integrated, and the education program has been a double nexus approach from the outset, well-aligned to the response plan for Afghanistan. But at a closer look, the program includes peacebuilding. The protection component of the education program bridges humanitarian response to peace and security, covering psychosocial support, infrastructure (school safety plans), sexual abuse, gender-based violence and harassment, but also political dialogue to ensure that schools are a safe environment. Dialogue is seen as an important dimension of peacebuilding at the local level, and children's safety and need for education is a strong pathway to engage in peacebuilding in the communities.

In **South Sudan**, building a school at the cross-roads between different tribes was used as a means to build social cohesion and unity amongst the children. Another example emerges from **Burkina Faso**, where the deteriorating security situation has led to a 'resilient schools' program which includes a remote-learning, radio-based education.

This box is based on staff interviews. The box was written prior to the Evacuation from Afghanistan in August 2021.

While most staff see the value of nexus approaches, a degree of skepticism remains, for example when discourses or agendas surrounding the nexus are experienced as top-down or when involved stakeholders fear that nexus approaches lead to mandates and approaches being weakened, diluted, or jeopardized. About the first point, there is strong support for the implementation of nexus approaches among staff, but there is currently little tolerance for further discussion of nexus at a conceptualization level because practical (field) experiences are ahead of conceptual discussions. About the second point, responses and proposals were made to ensure respect for different mandates and communities. Staff repeatedly emphasized the need to operationalize nexus "bottom-up", with context as the starting point, and share examples and conduct training that relate to the context and sectors in which they work (discussed in section 2).

It is a real challenge to quantify nexus related outcomes, as nexus essentially materializes in interlinkages and complementarities that are expected to be comprehensive and enhance quality and lead to better outcomes. In the course of the LJ, qualitative statements and examples, as well as workshop presentations provided many examples of how nexus approaches deliver better aid. Staff found that change stories, which continuously contribute to a body of evidence and joint learning should be the main documentation to be expected and provided. However, at a global level, the reduced scale of the need for humanitarian aid would be a real measure of success.

Box II

Horn of Africa – nexus as the obvious approach

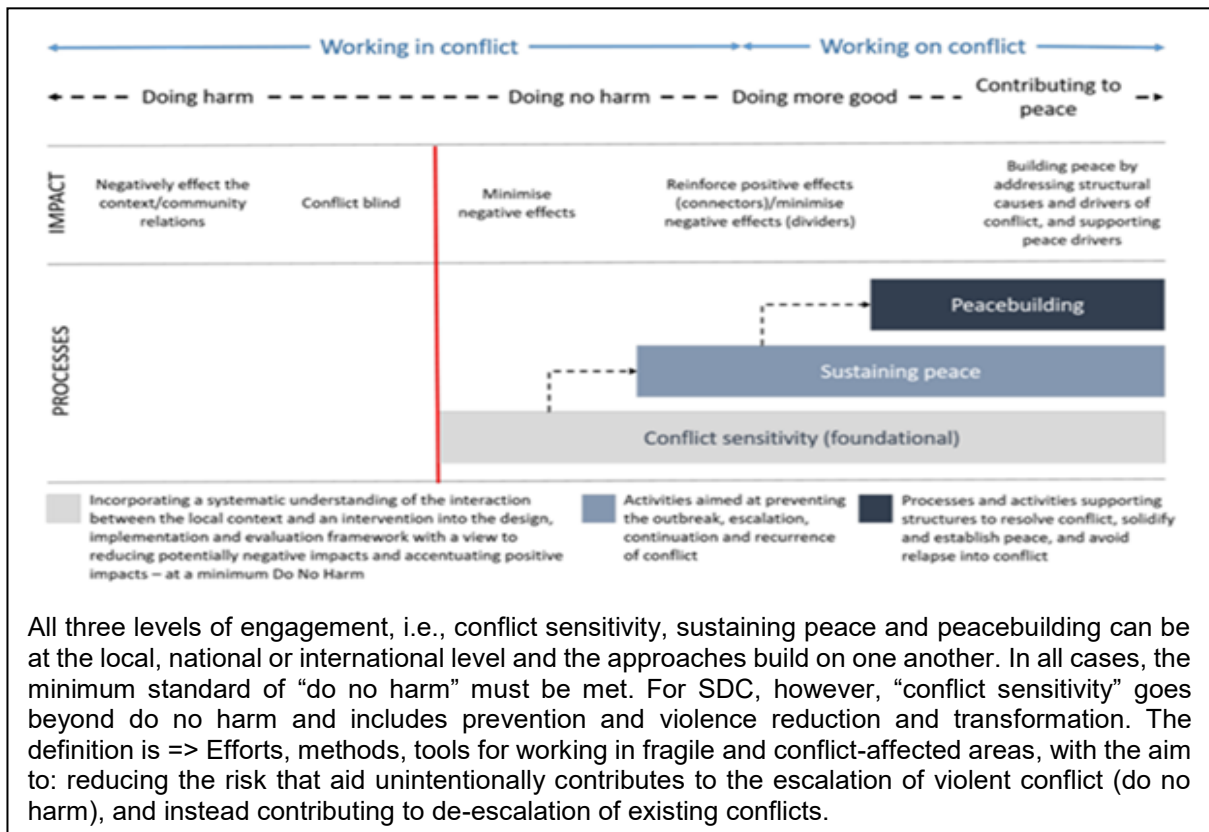
Double nexus approaches have over time emerged organically in SDC's program in the **Horn of Africa**. The program started with humanitarian aid in connection with the drought and subsequent famine that hit **Somalia** in 2011. The drought in 2011 caused catastrophic losses, as well as displacement and conflicts. SDC's first regional strategy (2013-2017) took a traditional course and included parallel humanitarian and development approaches and projects. However, the actual situation led to a broad realization in the international community that there was a need for a major rethink and complementary rather than parallel approaches. The Somalia Resilience Consortium (SomRep) is one nexus example in the program. The program focuses both on the immediate needs of the communities while also building their capabilities for longer term resilience and sustainable development. The partners now include Switzerland together with other bilateral donors and a number of implementing NGOs. For Switzerland, the SomRep engagement presents a journey. From 2014-2017, the main emphasis was to support the consortium's humanitarian interventions, such as Cash4Work, water trucking and food vouchers. The engagement then grew into a strategic focus on resilience, which led to close collaboration between Humanitarian Aid (HA) and South Cooperation (SC), i.e. combined interventions, including joint funding, support to crisis modifier funds for emergency situations and increased engagement with local government institutions and private sector. While projects in the HoA program continue to be focused on building households' and communities' resilience to deal with shocks, they also aim to address root causes of fragility. Upcoming projects are characterized by a comprehensive understanding of the political economy and provide a basis for conflict mitigation activities. However, challenges around the balancing of priorities, funding and interventions persist, as well as difficulties associated with the fragility of the context and 'heavy' administrative processes within SDC. Currently, PHRD is not present in Somalia, meanwhile, SDC supports local peacebuilding organizations, which in some locations complement other projects.

There are different interpretations of what 'peace' entails for an HDP nexus approach, ranging from conflict sensitivity and social cohesion to diplomacy and support for and engagement in formal peace processes. This is necessarily so, given the varying contexts of engagement, and in practice, there are at times a combination of all possible mechanisms of engagement. The LJ found there are many opportunities for practitioners to engage in a range of peace promoting and peace sustaining engagements, some are exploited currently, and others are not yet capitalized upon. Interviews and workshops concluded that a broad spectrum of activities included peace elements, although peace language is not applied, and peacebuilding outcomes (of humanitarian and development activities) are not always clearly stated nor monitored. Staff would like to have a "*toolbox*" and clearer understanding of how they can contribute to peace, i.e., see opportunities, constraints, grey zones and red flags in analysis, planning, and implementation.

As a starting point, it is useful to know the terminology of 'Peace Writ Large' and 'peace writ little'. This distinction sets the scene for the different context specific forms of understanding peace in a triple nexus approach. 'Peace Writ Large' refers to changes at the broader, societal level, and formal peace processes. Meanwhile 'peace writ little' seeks to deliver a local peace dividend, promote social cohesion activities and community dialogues. For SDC **conflict sensitivity** and **do no harm principles** are the basis foundations to be applied consistently. This implies the incorporation of a systematic understanding of the interaction between the local context and an intervention into design, implementation and evaluation phases with a view to reducing negative impacts and accentuating positive impacts. Activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict help to **sustain peace** while processes and activities that support the resolution of conflict and solidify or establish peace, and avoid the relapse into conflict will help to **build peace**. For SDC interventions at all three level are possible.

There are often red flags when peace is seen as closely linked to the concept of stabilization. This raises concerns over the securitization of humanitarian assistance and development and the risk of over-militarizing engagements in complex political settings. Peace should not be understood as the absence of violence (negative peace), but as the political will to regulate through politics rather than violence, and from the angle of a conflict transformation approach. The aim is not to manage conflict, but to transform conflicts to be non-violent and to contribute to positive peace. Interviews emphasized that there is a need for practitioners to understand that peace related development activities operate well at different vertical levels; include a range of different actors and local to global opportunities.

A recent paper by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) starts to unfold the peace elements in nexus approaches² with an operational lens. This is a useful framework for FDFA in the continued operationalization of the triple nexus. Of particular interest is the paper's proposition of a peace spectrum, which visualizes both opportunities and cut off points in specific contexts.



Localization is at the center of a HDP nexus, and local understandings of peace must be acknowledged in programming. The LJ found that practitioners were looking to bring together the different FDFA stakeholders and external partners in a **people centered approach** and to apply a Human Rights Based Approach. The people centered approach calls beneficiaries, local institutions and local organizations to be at the center. This seems to be the right overall approach for nexus programs to be context specific and locally owned, as well as an entry point to localization. This also includes emphasizing local understandings of conflict prevention and peace. Local understandings of peace are closely related to development interventions, i.e. projects that help equal access to resources and services and not least support to livelihoods and jobs.

Both the double nexus and the triple nexus approach present opportunities to work on peace through different themes and instruments. The transversal themes of gender, governance and human rights are entry points to work on peace aspects. Principles of equality, inclusion and opportunities for political participation underpin non-violent response to conflict and prevention of conflict and should be explored as entry points to engage with peace activities.

With focus on protracted crises situations, there are grounds for closer and more systematic collaboration between PHRD and SDC. Such collaboration opens new doors. SDC increasingly works in crises situations, where contextual understanding of conflict drivers and conflict sensitive approaches *must* inform projects and SDC's Conflict Sensitive Program Management (CSPM) tool must be applied. PHRD is at the same time taking bigger roles in peace mediation processes, in normative processes (for example in relation to the Security Council) and strives to link country level engagement to global processes. With regard to country level engagement, there are both increased collaboration and exchange which can contribute to more aligned programming and stronger vertical links, for example for policy dialogue and advocacy at different levels.

² IASC: Issue Paper, EXPLORING PEACE WITHIN THE HUMANITARIAN- DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS (HDPN), IASC Results Group 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration, October 2020. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/>

People, processes and partnerships

The LJ structured the issues raised and proposals for enhancing nexus approaches in three topics: people, processes, and partnerships. The points raised below cover key issues which were highlighted as a key priority by stakeholders in the interviews with staff and management, and in the thematic workshop discussions. Within these topics - processes – received the most attention and feedback from staff.

People

Mindsets should be opened to unlock hesitation and resistance towards nexus approaches among staff. This implies a recognition of each other's strengths rather than a focus on critique and weaknesses. It was also found that mindset change is only one element. There should be formal recognition of staff that take nexus portfolio initiatives.

Training in nexus literacy and trilingualism should be extended to all relevant staff. Trilingualism is expected to enhance respect between different departments and staff groups. Trilingualism is institutionally enhanced by the merger of HA and SC/EEC, where staff handles both humanitarian and development portfolios. There are though still training needs for SDC staff, including for new staff joining the institution and not forgetting members of the Swiss Humanitarian Corps. Local staff is a core resource in the institutionalization of nexus literacy and trilingualism.

Better knowledge and understanding of nexus approaches will enhance the quality of processes for internal Swiss collaboration, and for staff when they reach out to partners. Nexus literacy training should also include partners, both local partners, and multilateral, bilateral and international NGOs, as demanded and relevant. Switzerland is often a small donor in a country context and in multi-partner programs, and when nexus is a key approach and a potential Swiss niche, there is a need for staff to use nexus literacy skills externally. It was also pointed out that nexus literacy is needed in advocacy work and advocacy is seen as a Swiss niche.

The regular staff rotation is important to strengthen nexus literacy among staff. Additionally, the permeability between SDC and PHRD should be strengthened to allow for staff to rotate across humanitarian/development and peace roles. Joint analysis and joint and complementary planning in country contexts to ensure knowledge of each other's specific mandates, normative frameworks and principles also promote nexus literacy. Another point is that there is an imbalance between humanitarian and development positions from a human resource perspective (short-term contracts for humanitarian staff versus 4-years rotation positions for SC). Some of these imbalances need to be factored into the further development of all round staff competencies.

Senior leadership at HQ and leadership at the level of SCOs have an important role in signaling adaptiveness and openness for nexus approaches and initiatives in protracted contexts to incentivize staff. Examples so far include joint missions by senior leadership to different countries/regions, which have encouraged staff and helped see nexus opportunities. Interviews also emphasized that the role of the head of mission is the pinnacle for nexus successes. Leadership for institutionalizing nexus approaches is important because nexus approaches at this point are dependent on individuals rather than systems. There were warnings against matrix organizations and top-down directives from HQ on how to develop ideas and collaborations.

The presence in a mission of a Human Security Adviser can facilitate inter-departmental communication. In this way, nexus approaches may develop organically through interactions and common "ground". Staff working in PHRD said they have fewer opportunities to learn about humanitarian and development fields than is the case for SDC because PHRD has fewer transferable staff than SDC. Joint training is therefore important.

Processes

Institutional issues

There are complications, but there are also real breakthrough stories from the field. With HDP increasingly becoming a priority there is a range of good examples of a close working relationship between SDC and PHRD. There are also stumbling blocks, one of which is PHRD's limited budget and staff resources. Voices both from SDC and PHRD said that instead of focusing on constraints, it is better to develop smart and realistic ways to cooperate, grounded in what could work in specific contexts. A "low hanging fruit" is to invite PHRD and especially HSAs to bring in their expertise in joint analysis, where this is not already happening.

It was a consistent message in the LJ that integrated embassies and joint desks for humanitarian aid and development cooperation are conducive for nexus approaches. The fit for purpose exercise institutionalizes joint desks and thereby promotes institutionalization of a double nexus

approach. However, it was also said that it is important to pay attention to the alignment of administrative processes, there are different timelines and administrative guidelines for projects between HA and SC/EEC, and PHRD has a different way of working altogether. Joint desks should therefore be supplemented by training in trilingualism and alignment of administrative processes should be promoted to further bridge differences and raise awareness of the different instruments including the role of PHRD, and external partnerships.

Field staff expressed frustrations that their nexus efforts were not replicated at HQ. The organizational set-up and administrative processes frustrate field staff, who see the logic of nexus approaches, while they see a lack of risk appetite and openness for innovation at HQ. Field staff also gave examples of a heavy HQ bureaucracy that hinders nexus efforts – lighter processes must be introduced. There is a need to monitor that field level efforts are being adequately supported by HQ, not least in relation to the collaboration between PHRD and SDC.

Analysis and programming

New projects/programs must take the context as the starting point and should have a nexus lens at the analysis stage. From this starting point, it should be assessed if and how a nexus approach is feasible and adds value. Comprehensive and joint analysis and focus on collective outcomes is a key process for a successful nexus approach. In the workshops conducted in the LJ, it was stressed that the triple nexus is a useful framework to understand the multi-dimensions of the context, help clarify common objectives and synergies, break down instrument silos, and plan for financing to be aligned and be medium to long term. Likewise, a context analysis is key for making a realistic assessment of the feasibility of nexus approaches (or not), and if a double or triple nexus is most appropriate, and in which combination – this could include other nexus combinations than HD and HDP

Questions were raised with regard to what context entails - it was noted that “contextual units” are important to define in order to work within a manageable geographic unit or theme. The different mandates and traditional ways of engagement include different focus areas and levels of engagement (community, sub-national; national; existing projects/new projects etc.; approach to advocacy, different networks and partners etc.).

Nexus processes must be well structured, coordinated and inclusive in order to enable a joint understanding of context and objectives for engagements. Thorough preparation was seen as a way to incentivize joint context analysis and complementary programming, because staff already have busy schedules and heavy workloads. It was also noted that in some cases existing projects do not easily lend themselves to be transformed into nexus approaches, in other cases changes are possible, for example can a crisis modifier fund be included, which will enable a development project to respond to a sudden onset crisis.

Adaptive programming and management are integral parts of a nexus approach. Joint or complementary programs are important, but they are not sufficient because they are often hinged on joint understanding at a particular point in time. For a program to remain relevant in volatile, fragile and conflict affected contexts, adaptive programming strengthens and is crucial for the implementation of a nexus approach. Adaptive programming entails regular assessments of context changes and flexibility to adjust projects and programs accordingly. This includes adapted funding mechanisms, such as contingency funds.

Given the experience and size of Switzerland, the sub-national level is seen by many as the most impactful way to implement nexus approaches. Swiss engagement in Haiti is a good example of

Box III

Sub-national level offers nexus approach opportunities

Nexus initiatives in specific locations or within administrative boundaries (local or regional entity) are both manageable and yielding results. The Beka’a Valley water management project in **Lebanon** is a case in point. The project adopted a humanitarian-peace approach, aiming to address the increasing tensions between Lebanese and Syrian communities, as well as weak governmental institutions in Beka’a Valley. The project started as a Direct Action in the first phase from 2015-2019, with the objective to improve access to water and sanitation services, as well as to enhance resilient, sustainable and conflict-sensitive public water management in the Valley. In phase two, from 2020-2023, the project aims to ensure that host communities and Syrian refugees in the Beka’a Valley benefit from safe, affordable and equitable access to well-managed drinking water and sanitation services, resulting in fewer water-related conflicts. The project integrates conflict-sensitivity as a key element and adopts a strong focus on strengthening institutions to contribute to conflict prevention and mitigation and to ensure fair and transparent regulation.

The box is based on a presentation in the LJ workshop series.

this, where the intervention logic has been that it is better to work at the local level, where resources can be concentrated and where the work is closer to the population and institutions that deliver services.

Partnerships and niche of Switzerland

There are good examples of promoting nexus approaches in Switzerland's work with external partners, through strategic placements of secondees, representation in high-level panels and hosting of events. Switzerland's strong support to the UN-World Bank Partnership Fund helped to pilot the HDP nexus initiative in five country contexts, which was presented at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016), and the Swiss support to the Peacebuilding Fund and advocacy for closer collaboration of activities with humanitarian and development engagements at country level also pushes for more coherence and joint nexus approaches of these institutions.

Deployments seem to be a strategic "injection" to promote nexus approaches, both SDC and PHRD post nexus advisers within the multilateral system. This happens for example to promote durable solutions in the Resident Coordinator's office in Somalia, and in South Sudan. This helps both the partner (for example the UN or other multilateral institutions and IFIs), and the positions enhance Swiss interests in promoting nexus. Likewise, in some sectors such as in education, SDC is involved on a global and multilateral level in both development and humanitarian funding mechanisms and thereby has access to platforms to promote nexus approaches.

Box IV

Promoting durable solutions and the role of secondees

The Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI) was launched in early 2016 by the Federal Government of **Somalia** and the UN Resident Coordinator. It is managed by the Durable Solutions Unit (DSU) located in the Integrated Office (IO) of the UN's Resident Coordinator in Mogadishu. The DSI has been guided by Professor Walter Kälin, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs, and since 2015 the Special Advisor on IDPs to the Resident Coordinator in Somalia. The DSI is based on the premise that durable solutions to displacement can be attained only through strong government leadership and by engaging all relevant actors in the process, including both the public and the private sectors, a mix of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, and the displacement-affected communities themselves. The initiative is funded by SDC, with an in-kind contribution from UNDP, covering six missions of Walter Kaelin, and the secondment of five durable solutions experts from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid (SHA) expert pool who were deployed between 2016 and 2020.

An evaluation of the DSI in 2020 concluded that the DSI in early 2016 was needed, given the severity of the displacement situation across the country, its protractedness. The report noted the importance of making a collective approach to finding durable solutions by the humanitarian and development organizations. It was also noted that the interventions by UN agencies and NGOs were disjointed, and the recognition that success in addressing the displacement problems would depend on government ownership and government leadership. With regard to influencing and supporting the formulation of durable solutions policies, the key achievements are the adoption in November 2019 of a National Policy on Refugee Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, the National Evictions Guidelines, and an Interim Protocol on Land Distribution for Housing to Eligible Refugee-Returnees and IDPs. Moreover, internal displacement issues have been included in Somalia's National Development Plan. The DSI has been influential, too, in its emphasis on seeing displacement in Somalia as essentially an urbanization problem. On the extent to which the DSI has influenced the way the durable solutions programs have addressed gender, inclusion and conflict sensitivity issues, the general view of the respondents was that the current projects do not effectively address the underlying causes of gender disparities or clan conflicts. The evaluation recommended inter alia to support local area-based durable solutions coordination and programs and liaising with district-based development programs.

However it should be noted that there are also voices in the field, especially in representations and NGOs that indicate that they see more value added in exchanges with peer practitioners on concrete issues than in the presence of a nexus expert.

There are however also mixed views on the partnerships between the multilateral actors in the field, and there is a sense that there is a gap between multilateral nexus narratives and what really happens in the field. This was the message in field interviews, and there is an important dimension of joint field and HQ approaches. One entry point is to support the reform and strengthening of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) system, as RCs are enhancing their capacity and legitimacy to promote system-wide nexus approaches. The UN Peacebuilding Fund is another promising entry point

to enhance the multilateral work on the triple nexus. An innovative joint approach on the PBF has been recently launched by SDC and PHRD, involving field, HQ and mission colleagues; the approach should be monitored and, if successful, should be expanded and replicated.

Swiss civil society organizations increasingly orient their work around nexus approaches and the institutional partnerships with some of them are an important resource for SDC in the continued implementation of nexus approaches. Civil society organizations' work is primarily rooted in increased contextual fragility, which affects the livelihood of target groups and community level dynamics in the areas of engagement. The organizations work with people centered approaches and localization, which are at the core of nexus approaches. Local rooted peacebuilding organizations have unexploited potentials, and currently, the SDC program in Horn of Africa has started to support local peacebuilders. The expectation is that such locally grounded initiatives have the potential to sustain peace, once it is established and prevent new conflicts.

Switzerland is seen by others as a partner that lives the nexus. There are opportunities to communicate the experience for partners to see Switzerland as an attractive partner that has principled positions, a long history of peacebuilding and the advantage of not having been involved in conflict. Moreover, at a general level in the further development of nexus approaches take advantage of the WOGA approach, the neutral political stance and early involvement in humanitarian response, coupled with international cooperation and peace dialogue is a major comparative advantage of Switzerland and the nexus agenda. Switzerland often takes a coordination role among stakeholders in different contexts,

Box V

Food security is political and requires a multi stakeholder approach

In **South Sudan**, Switzerland supports food security and livelihoods, protection and peacebuilding through different partners. The support to food security is crucial, given the cycles of violence from recurring crises and resource shortages. There is an emerging understanding in the development community (e.g., WFP and other UN agencies) and pushed by Switzerland that without peace components in their programs and the engagement of trusted security actors, it is difficult to sustain investments.

Another example comes from the **Great Lakes**, where there were initial tensions because of different approaches being managed in parallel, with HA working on acute nutrition needs and South Cooperation working on structural malnutrition. This has been solved by working through a consortium of NGOs for the long term programming and the use of crisis modifier funds for sudden crises.

In **Burundi**, there has been an opportunity to engage on food security politically, enabled by Swiss engagement at a high-level meeting in Washington. The close coordination between SDC and PHRD for political leverage allowed for the use of different instruments internally and lead to a greater impact of the support. The issues were leveraged to a global level, which created options for structural changes needed in Burundi for more people to benefit and for an improved, longer-term approach to food security.

Next steps

At SDC's level, the fit for purpose reorganisation is effective since 1st of September 2022 with the creation of double nexus geographical sections and divisions combining the humanitarian and development mandates. Measures are being put in place to accompany its implementation that address some of the action lines mentioned in this report.

The newly created Peace Governance and Equality (PGE) Section will, together with colleagues from other sections and Cooperation offices and WOGA partners, continue to work on nexus implementation, with a special focus on the peace component and its operationalisation within SDC. It will strive to contribute to "nexus literacy" among staff and create incentives to analyse, plan and implement programs in a nexus approach.