The Triple Nexus (H-D-P) and Implications for Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement

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This research briefing paper examines what has worked (or not) when utilizing a Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding (H-D-P) or 'triple nexus' approach to facilitate solutions to internal displacement, drawing on an analysis of concrete examples and existing studies.

1. What is the H-D-P approach or triple nexus?

The HDP triple nexus is the term used to capture the interlinkages between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors. It specifically refers to attempts in these fields to work together to more effectively meet peoples' needs, mitigate risks and vulnerabilities, and move toward sustainable peace. This approach calls for a New Way of Working (NWOW) that transcends the humanitarian-development-peace divide, reinforces (not replaces) national and local systems, and anticipates crises by working toward (i) collective outcomes (ii) over multi-year timeframes (iii) based on leveraging comparative advantage. Since agreeing to the triple nexus and its NWOW at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), the UN as well as national governments and donors have begun to slowly make progress on its uptake and implementation.

2. Conceptual linkages between the triple nexus approach and durable solutions

The main elements of the triple nexus are also foundational to durable solutions to internal displacement. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement highlight the imperative to address people's immediate protection and humanitarian needs during displacement while also enshrining the necessity to prevent or mitigate such forced movement in the first place and to ensure non-recurrence through durable solutions, both of which are predicated on the ability of States to reduce risk and vulnerability. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) builds on this and details the manner in which IDPs must be enabled to determine how they seek to sustainably resolve their displacement either through return, local integration, or resettlement and the rights attainment necessary to do so, ensuring IDPs do not face discrimination due to their displacement status. These run the gamut from immediate needs to longer-term citizenship rights, including accountability and redress.

3. Triple nexus in practice and implications for facilitating durable solutions

Practically, as internal displacement is a hallmark of emerging and protracted crises, the pursuit of durable solutions will invariably intersect with the implementation of the triple nexus. How well integrated in practice the triple nexus and durable solutions are remains to be seen, as it is still too early in the process of nexus implementation to fully evaluate outcomes. However, drawing on the few, recent, larger-scale assessments of the operationalisation of the triple nexus to date, it is possible to identify certain apparently effective practices and other issues to take into account related to focusing on communities, national and local ownership, coordination, analysis and collective outcomes, and funding.

While there remain both operational and conceptual concerns over the triple nexus, progress is occurring in its implementation. Internal displacement and durable solutions are becoming more

integral aspects of it. Given the ongoing efforts to better define, document, and measure displacement and solutions, they serve as critical entry points and can provide necessary evidence to help improve nexus linkages, progress, and funding.

3.1 Centrality of context and communities

- The triple nexus and durable solutions must both be context-based. Approaches for nexus implementation and indeed durable solutions may not be linear or sequential but will vary depending on circumstances on the ground and government functioning. On this latter aspect, communities' views on what constitutes legitimacy in terms of governance and with different levels of state and non-state authority is critical.

- Both the triple nexus and the IDP durable solutions framework rightly emphasise the need to place the experiences of local people and communities at the centre of their planning and interventions. Understanding these realities from the 'bottom-up' brings IDPs' knowledge to the fore and may help to address certain operational and technical challenges in implementing the triple nexus approach.

3.2 National and local ownership

- One of the most important early findings related to operationalising the triple nexus is that government leadership is a critical factor for success. Often this means that national governments have adopted dedicated laws to deal with protracted humanitarian crises as well as included humanitarian crises and conflict drivers into national development or peace planning and analysis.

- National and local policies on or including internal displacement and durable solutions may be key to ensuring IDPs and solutions are embedded into integrated triple nexus planning and interventions. National IDP laws in Colombia and Ukraine and specific national and subnational plans and policies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are some examples of this specific focus on displacement in contexts that have humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding needs.

- Even with these laws and policies in place, adherence to the Guiding Principles and IASC Framework with respect to who states do and do not define as IDPs, what they consider durable solutions to be, and how well prevention or non-recurrence of displacement is connected to more structural reforms, is variable across contexts. As is government commitment to humanitarian principles and human-rights based approaches.

- Incentivising adherence to the Guiding Principles as well as in-depth analysis and understanding of who transformational actors are within formal and informal bureaucracies is necessary. Regular and consistent engagement of national and subnational authorities by nexus actors could also help in ensuring better legislation and implementation of IDP laws and policies (e.g. as in Somalia), as would inclusion of displaced populations in these processes.

3.3 Coordination

- Key recommendations around triple nexus implementation emphasise the need to clarify roles and responsibilities between UN agencies to know who sets policy guidelines and who is designated for providing technical guidance to UN presences in country. This could entail establishing a coherent UN-led planning discussion with governments as

the standard approach to avoid duplication of plans, programs, and funding instruments at country level and ensuring UN country leadership not only to have multi-disciplinary backgrounds to further bridge silos but have access to advisors with specific expertise in different aspects of nexus implementation, including on durable solutions.

- With respect to displacement contexts, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework is perhaps where nexus programming is most advanced (e.g., as in Lebanon), though it is not specifically coordinated with other nexus initiatives and runs in parallel to the NWOW. Resolution of internal displacement may be difficult to delink from broader national plans given that IDPs are within their own countries and durable solutions are often contingent on broader reforms therein.

- Even when durable solutions for IDPs are the central component of a triple nexus strategy for both national and international actors (e.g., as in Iraq), there still remain gaps in implementing connected and consolidated approaches on the ground, leaving IDPs with limited access to durable solutions for longer. This stems in part from lack of clarity on definitions and how certain nexus components fit together, particularly the peace component. It becomes more complex as the nexus and durable solutions intersect with stabilisation components increasingly embedded in country mission (e.g. as in Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Iraq – with implications for countries with high levels of IDPs and stabilisation actors already on the ground including Libya and Yemen).

- Such configurations have allowed for the separation of humanitarian space from, for example, military elements linked to counterinsurgency or counterterrorism, and at the same time enabled larger scale reconstruction to take place. They have also generated conceptual confusion that hinders coordination, diverted funds and programs intended for peacebuilding elsewhere, and required partnerships with host governments engaged in conflict that may limit the UN's impartiality and shrink the political space for broader participation and inclusive and transformative peacebuilding – which also impact impartial IDP protection and rights-based approaches to durable solutions.

- Effort by actors in each nexus domain must be placed on defining and improving upon their concepts, mandates, and transitions and how they intersect. Durable solutions themselves may be one way to help in supporting this, as they can be a cross-cutting framework for nexus components with increasingly better delineated indicators to potentially collectively measure against.

3.4 Analysis and collective outcomes

- To ensure relevance of interventions and effective, coherent coordination, triple nexus implementation requires country-specific collective outcomes for stakeholders to work toward. As such, there is need to ensure that collective outcomes are strategic, specific, and developed in a more inclusive manner, with indicators monitored across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding dimensions and complemented through context monitoring tools.

- The increasing body of research exploring and contextualising the IASC Framework criteria on durable solutions (e.g., as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan, among others) taken together with in-depth context analysis and monitoring may be a way to contribute to more strategic and specific outcomes, that have links to humanitarian, development, and peace work while also ensuring resolving displacement is better incentivised and integrat-

ed within nexus implementation.

- An important analytical dimension that is often underfunded and overlooked is better support to policy analysis and recommendations in general within nexus implementation. Given the growing plethora of data on durable solutions being collected at ground level it is necessary to be able to connect this to national or local policies through both technical assistance and robust advocacy. This includes harmonising operational and official displacement data in order to develop relevant guidance, improve policies, and again better shape broader indicators, collective outcomes, and track progress against them.

3.5 Funding

- Changes in funding structures can further incentivise and bolster accountability with respect to triple nexus implementation. These changes include shifting to flexible, multi-year, country-level pooled funding. While donors are beginning to adapt, change remains slow on the ground and funding remains linked to short-term projects.

- Continued short-duration programming and funds has implications for durable solutions as they require both top-down and bottom-up approaches, occur over a spectrum of time, and necessitate often non-linear and sometimes simultaneous sequencing of nexus interventions.

- Humanitarian actors' concerns over the politicisation of aid through pooled funds and broader concerns about compromising humanitarian principles through the potential the inclusion of security spending in nexus funds, concentrating or trapping resources to one side of a conflict, and/or forcing plans to align with donor foreign policy also have implications for durable solutions. Specifically, they may also limit the prospects for inclusive, rights-based, and IDP-driven approaches to durable solutions.

4. Conclusions

Taken altogether, there are both conceptual and practical linkages between the HDP nexus and durable solutions, with the latter potentially able to help in shaping the former, as resolving displacement involves addressing needs and governance gaps across the nexus. In outlining the best practices documented so far in HDP nexus implementation, four main points are relevant to bear in mind that have implications for durable solutions.

First, that any response or plan must be based on context and an understanding of communities' experience. No two contexts are identical and approaches for nexus implementation and indeed durable solutions may not be linear or sequential but will vary depending on circumstances on the ground and government functioning.

Second, national or subnational authority engagement helps drive any process. However, this is also dependent on how well authorities adhere to humanitarian principles and guidance for IDPs. Incentivising adherence as well as in-depth analysis and understanding of who transformational actors are within formal and informal bureaucracies is necessary.

Third, while the HDP nexus inherently must be contextualised, the overall organisation of how nexus operations take place and who provides policy and technical guidance needs centralisation. This impacts the manner in which displacement is resolved (if at all). At the same time, because durable solutions are cross-cutting and have increasingly delineated indicators, they can help in

shaping collective outcomes to be more specific and strategic, which may also better support nexus linkages and conceptualisation.

Finally, flexible, longer-term funding is necessary both for nexus implementation and for durable solutions. While there seems to be general consensus about this, change in this regard is also relatively slow. Of importance is the need to include different actors into these processes including civil society and NGOs.