TRANSFORMING THE SYSTEMS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO FRAGILITY AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES: Programming across the triple nexus

OXFAM

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Conflicts and shocks linked to climate change are more frequent and intense, leading to poverty and inequality, exacerbating these phenomena and people's vulnerability.

In this context, humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding are not serial processes; they are all needed at the same time to tackle the systemic inequalities that trap people in poverty and expose them to risk.

The triple nexus, or programming across humanitarian-development-peace pillars, thus means creating synergies and common goals across short-term emergency response programmes and longer-term social change processes in development, as well as enhancing opportunities for peace so that individuals can enjoy the full spectrum of human rights.

This briefing paper aims to identify the tensions and dilemmas that Oxfam faces when programming across the nexus and sets out new policy to address these dilemmas, building upon Oxfam's 2019 discussion paper on the triple nexus.

1 MOVING FORWARD ON THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE TRIPLE NEXUS

Conflicts and climate-related shocks are becoming more frequent and intense, driving and exacerbating poverty, inequality, and vulnerability. These mutually reinforcing and cyclical dynamics are becoming the new normal for many places that are now labelled as fragile, complex, and conflict-affected contexts. As they respond to these dynamics, humanitarian and multi-mandated agencies are facing the need to find new ways of working, in recognition that the current model of offering humanitarian solutions to complex socio-political crises will not achieve long-term changes. Development action is also undergoing essential changes and broadening its scope: along with addressing the root causes of injustice, poverty, and inequality, development action needs to more systematically focus on drivers of risks, shocks, and uncertainty in contexts of recurrent or cyclical climate-linked crises. Longer-term development interventions must find ways to be agile and responsive to peaks in humanitarian need in order to uphold humanitarian mandates and protect development gains. Addressing the root causes of risks and conflicts is a key part of the solution—as well as the challenge. The understanding of peace, the third pillar of the triple nexus, is also changing amongst policymakers and practitioners. The concept of peace has evolved from a traditional state-centred, minimalist definition consisting of the absence of violence to a vision including a human security lens that recognizes safety, human rights, and the needs of all groups in society. Oxfam acknowledges that sustainable development and durable solutions are not possible without peace.

Oxfam believes that 'humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding are not serial processes; they are all needed at the same time'[1] to tackle the systemic inequalities that trap people in poverty and expose them to risk. The triple nexus, or programming across humanitarian-development-peace pillars, thus means creating synergies and common goals across short-term emergency response programmes and longer-term social change processes in development, as well as enhancing opportunities for peace so that individuals can enjoy the full spectrum of human rights. This approach builds on a legacy of sector and organisational approaches and programmatic evidence on topics like disaster risk reduction (DRR), linking relief to rehabilitation and development (LRRD), resilience, early warning/early action and Oxfam's 'one programme approach'. It fundamentally aims to build better, more resilient and sustainable local and national systems that enable people and communities to thrive, and not simply survive, when facing shocks and to live in more equal and peaceful societies. It has also emerged in the structures and architecture of the aid system to shape funding decisions, guidance on official development assistance (ODA) and planning processes. The triple nexus can potentially have

> "The local actors we are working with are already 'doing nexus'. As we go further up the chain, the separation occurs between humanitarian and development." Amjad Ali, Oxfam in Somalia

profound implications for how aid is planned and financed. It is therefore important for Oxfam to situate itself in this debate and engage with the consequent changes for how and what it will do going forwards.

Fight Inequality: Together, We Can End Poverty and Injustice, Oxfam Global Strategic Framework 2020–2030

Enhanced humanitarian action: We are committed to delivering life-saving assistance and protection in times of conflict and disaster.

We will work with others to mitigate crises by building resilience and tackling the underlying inequalities that lead to fragility. Our humanitarian and development work will continue to reinforce each other.

We will work with people and communities at risk of conflict and disaster before, during, and after crises. At the same time, we aim to transform the systems that contribute to fragility and humanitarian crises.

We will work with communities to help them address the inequalities that create and increase the risk of conflict and disaster. Oxfam will help people and communities develop core competencies to strengthen their resilience.

We will continue to reorient the humanitarian system towards local leadership and ensure the voices of all people affected by fragility, conflict and disaster are heard, and will support them in holding responsible actors to account.

We want to expand opportunities for those impacted by protracted conflict and recurring crises to lead on sustainable solutions. We will support their participation in relevant decision-making spaces and help them meaningfully engage in processes and structures that promote sustainable and inclusive peace.
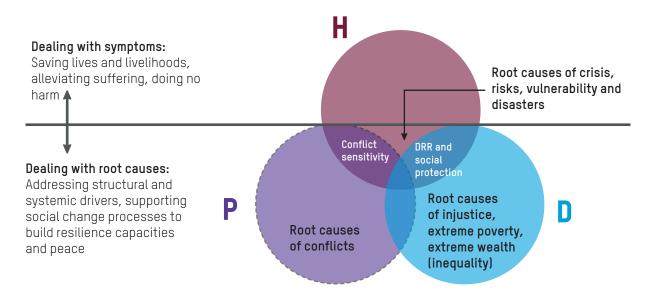
While Oxfam has already developed relevant expertise in double nexus interventions, particularly in relation to resilience and in response to natural hazards, as well as a body of work around inclusive feminist peace and the women, peace and security agenda, this document applies the triple nexus approach to operations in contexts of violent conflict, fragility and protracted crises. To do so, Oxfam identifies two premises: first, conceptual clarity must go hand in hand with practice, so the policy set in this document is fundamentally based on Oxfam's experience, lessons learnt and good practices that are already emerging from the country teams. Second, context analysis and an understanding of risk and opportunities must underpin different programmatic approaches and decisions about the right mix of humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) initiatives. While decisions around the triple nexus are always context specific, it is now possible to draw a clearer picture of a minimum set of policies that will allow Oxfam to move forward towards better practice.

This briefing paper aims to identify the tensions and dilemmas that Oxfam faces when programming across the nexus and sets out new policy to address these dilemmas, building upon Oxfam's 2019 discussion paper on the triple nexus. The four dilemmas are as follows:

1. upholding principles across the humanitarian-development-peace pillars;
2. working with states and government authorities;
3. balancing multiple programmatic priorities; and
4. defining peacebuilding as it relates to Oxfam's identity and added value.

This document further offers positions and guidelines for Oxfam's senior management teams, country teams and humanitarian, development and peacebuilding policy and programme advisors on a more coherent implementation of the nexus in settings of protracted crises and fragility. It can be used to engage with donors and other aid agencies to foster greater understanding and collaboration across the HDP pillars. These positions are in line with Oxfam's 2020–2030 Global Strategic Framework, where through our commitments to enhanced humanitarian action we emphasize supporting people in developing core resilience competencies, helping communities address the inequalities that create and increase risk of conflict and disaster and seeking opportunities for those impacted to lead on sustainable solutions, including inclusive peace. It also resonates with our commitment to more effective humanitarian aid as supported through the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change.

Enhanced Humanitarian Action: Rights, resilience and response in fragile states, protracted crises and conflict

Dealing with symptoms:
Saving lives and livelihoods, alleviating suffering, doing no harm

Root causes of crisis, risks, vulnerability and disasters

Dealing with root causes:
Addressing structural and systemic drivers, supporting social change processes to build resilience capacities and peace

H

Conflict sensitivity

DRR and social protection

P

Root causes of conflicts

D

Root causes of injustice, extreme poverty, extreme wealth (inequality)

As a multi-mandated organization, Oxfam links the humanitarian and development sectors and contributes to peace when necessary and possible
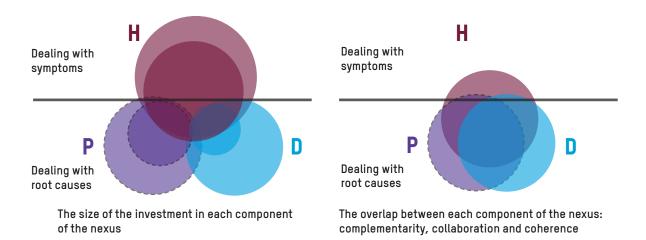
The diagram above illustrates a triple nexus approach to coherently addressing people's needs and vulnerability before, during and after crises and tackling the structural and systemic root causes of crises, conflict and fragility. It reflects Oxfam's value-added as a multi-mandated organisation, building on its legacy of linking humanitarian and development, and recognizes the need to work on peacebuilding when necessary and possible in order to meet its mission.

Oxfam is aiming towards enhanced humanitarian action that transforms the systems that contribute to fragility and humanitarian crises. Programming across the nexus will address the symptoms of crises (saving lives and livelihoods, alleviating suffering and do no harm) while also dedicating resources and attention to the root causes of crises and conflicts. In each context, Oxfam will define a clear theory of change, articulating how the three streams of work will work towards transformation of the system while

1. balancing priorities within a specific context and managing opportunities, risks and red lines
2. managing principled relations with state and government authorities for the optimal degree and form of collaboration
3. upholding humanitarian principles and aid standards
4. as a minimum, Oxfam adopts do-no-harm and safe programming approach that is conflict sensitive and engages in peacebuilding when entry points exist to do so.

The diagram below illustrates two decision points for country teams about how to approach the three elements of the triple nexus. The dotted circle represents peacebuilding interventions where possible and necessary, as defined in the peace element (dilemma 4). Responding and adapting to contexts and being aware of risks and opportunities, each country team should decide:

- **on the size of the three circles** (representing the size of the investment in each pillar). The decision should balance time and resources against Oxfam's priorities of addressing root causes (through structural and systemic change) and alleviating symptoms. In all circumstances, we must do no harm, adopt safe programming and exercise conflict sensitivity.
- **on the overlap of the three circles** (representing the continuum of complementarity to collaboration to coherence). The decision should reflect a more coherent theory of change and articulate how the triple nexus contributes to transformation of the system.

The size of the investment in each component of the nexus

The overlap between each component of the nexus: complementarity, collaboration and coherence

AN ITERATIVE AND GRADUAL EFFORT TO BETTER PROGRAMMING ACROSS THE TRIPLE NEXUS: COMPLEMENT, COLLABORATE TOWARDS MORE COHERENCE[2]

Given that each context is different, programming across the nexus will differ enormously from one fragile context to another. Nevertheless, Oxfam should define programming across the nexus as a gradual effort to move towards a more coherent approach, as a pathway to reduce and eliminate humanitarian needs, provoke social change and enhance peacebuilding outcomes.

At a minimum, programme design in protracted crises should build **complementarity** between emergency response work and longer-term development and social cohesion, and where possible advance peacebuilding objectives. This complementarity is facilitated by better articulating the links between crisis response and early recovery—for instance, a market systems approach to food security and vulnerable livelihoods can both meet immediate needs and strengthen local systems. Oxfam may coordinate and provide technical support to local governments, even in acute conflict. In terms of peacebuilding, Oxfam can play a role in promoting community cohesion and trust, such as when working on natural resource management within and between communities or when ensuring that conflict sensitivity is considered during food aid targeting. The minimum in all circumstances is to do no harm, adopt safe programming, and be conflict sensitive, considering DRR and social protection systems.

In a more **collaborative approach**, we aim for a shared analysis of context and conflict among the three pillars, while recognising that each pillar can still pursue specific programmatic objectives while seeking synergies and contributing to mutually beneficial goals. Guided by careful conflict analysis when working with the state, Oxfam could take the role of a key collaborator with the local or national government or by conveying the demands of the most marginalised and affected groups to the authorities. Working in this way would involve further developing existing approaches that work at the intersection of humanitarian and development objectives, with the addition of peacebuilding interventions that enhance and support local capacities for peace. This work often includes support to locally led initiatives to prevent, mediate or transform conflict.

Iterative reflection on what does and does not work will enable Oxfam to design better programmes across the nexus. Where possible, this can lead to greater **coherence** across the different HDP spheres and the design of better-balanced theories of change that respond to needs and transform the systems that contribute to conflict and fragility. Programming across the nexus aims to address the links between people's immediate needs and the pre-existing inequalities that are replicated and exacerbated by crises, such as gender inequality, socioeconomic inequality, conflict, forced migration and vulnerability to climate-induced shocks. This approach tackles the structural causes of violence[3] alongside its consequences, with the outcomes reflecting positive transformations across the HDP disciplines. Interventions build resilience and social cohesion while reinforcing and supporting key social change processes, including multi-stakeholder processes in pursuit of gender justice, accountable governance, innovation and learning, and flexible and anticipatory planning. In its engagement with the state, this approach may entail engaging in meaningful partnership with government on specific components of government policies and practices, while still supporting democratic country ownership.

2 DILEMMA 1: UPHOLDING PRINCIPLES ACROSS THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE PILLARS

The dilemma regarding upholding principles across humanitarian-development-peace pillars stems from the tensions between humanitarian principles, development effectiveness standards and peacebuilding practices. It is further complicated by vastly different understandings and perceptions of what peace or peacebuilding entails. These concepts are equally focused on the rights and needs of people and individuals, yet they differ in the role the state plays in meeting those rights, the degree of interaction between the authorities and civil society actors, and the timelines for action.

Humanitarian relief is short term in nature, and humanitarian agencies are independent of political, military and economic objectives set by the state. They are guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, which are often crucial for access to communities and acceptance by non-state actors. Meanwhile, development and peace are often more political in nature and involve longer-term processes as well as greater coordination with the state.

Conflicts and fragility are key characteristics of protracted humanitarian crises, and programming across the nexus risks undermining principled humanitarian action if no adequate safeguards and red lines are in place. Oxfam must remain independent from the government where that government is party to a conflict or is committing human rights abuses, while avoiding taking sides in a conflict (see dilemma 2). However, Oxfam will also speak out on human rights violations. Governments may actively deny the rights or needs of its citizens and allow assistance to only one part of the population in need, making it a challenge for humanitarian agencies to be impartial. Applying feminist principles or working on gender transformation programs involves making use of humanitarian principles to address the cultural, social and political aspects of gender. However, challenging patriarchy and systems of oppression that contribute directly to the needs and vulnerabilities of marginalized groups is in line with humanitarian principles and essential to build resilience.[4]

In prolonged crises, humanitarian assistance tends to creep into the development realm, often taking on functions of the state, such as providing basic services. In so doing, it may bypass national and local systems and undermine development standards such as democratic country ownership and alignment with national development plans. On the other hand, development programmes can have difficulty adjusting to volatile contexts, especially recurrent and complex crises such as those due to climate change or spikes in violence and displacement. They often do not have the resources or experience to scale up timely life-saving humanitarian responses in line with humanitarian principles, and close ties with government may lead to challenges for community acceptance where the state is a party to the conflict.

Refugees carry food parcels through Thengkhali Camp in Bangladesh. Credit: Bekki Frost/Oxfam

Programming across the nexus will definitely involve trade-offs that teams will have to manage (see dilemma 3) according to context. In other words, the amount of focus and resources allocated to root causes in the spheres of development and peacebuilding may be smaller, equivalent to or greater than that allocated to the emergency response addressing the symptoms of crisis. Previously, decision-making in complex humanitarian crises had already involved recognizing red lines and managing humanitarian principles. Now, current operating contexts demand that Oxfam expand considerations to include development effectiveness standards (including accountable governance and democratic ownership) and peacebuilding (applying a conflict sensitivity lens at a minimum) to remain fit for purpose and meet its organisational mission.

People's needs for development and peace cannot be divorced from humanitarian needs.[5] In assisting people in need, Oxfam will also address risks and vulnerabilities that affect their dignity and well-being and build on their capacities. Oxfam can work with other HDP actors, articulating coherence in a complex crisis, and join efforts with others to set shared goals and objectives. At a minimum in fragile or conflict settings, Oxfam must adopt a do-no-harm, safe programming and conflict sensitivity approach in all its programs across the nexus.

Oxfam will:

1. Respond quickly and to scale to deterioration of humanitarian indicators, especially in protracted crises, to ensure that people access the essential and life-saving aid they deserve and the protections afforded to them under international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

2. Continuously affirm that its role in the triple nexus of reducing people's needs over time is compliant with its specific humanitarian mandate as an independent and impartial organisation with interventions spanning programme delivery and influencing. Its humanitarian and development mandate allows it to advocate on root causes of poverty, inequality and conflict.

3. Monitor the application of humanitarian principles in its programming across the nexus to enable it to operate effectively in complex and politicised contexts, including when negotiating with parties to a conflict to better support communities, meet their needs over time and manage protection risks. Depending on context-specific characteristics, it will be necessary to match and balance existing humanitarian principles and standards with those applied to development and conflict sensitivity.[6]

4. Ensure that all its programming across the nexus upholds the highest standards of do no harm, safe programming and conflict sensitivity, to minimize unintended consequences and, where possible, maximise positive impact.

5. Adopt policy positions and approaches to the triple nexus that are context specific and conflict sensitive, knowing that in certain contexts the term 'triple nexus' is equated with stabilisation and securitisation agendas. Whilst not endorsing this articulation of the nexus, Oxfam can still make important contributions to peacebuilding in such contexts without referring to the 'triple nexus' framing.

6. Align all humanitarian, development and peacebuilding endeavours towards women's empowerment, leadership and agency, and ensure that the different risks faced by women, men, girls and boys and their specific needs are addressed. Oxfam programming across the nexus will use all opportunities to fight against discriminatory norms and laws and promote gender justice.

7. Promote women's and girls' rights and gender equality as goals in themselves, as well as part of an effort to protect civilians and prevent conflict and armed violence, in acknowledgement that gender-based violence and gender inequality are both a root cause and a consequence of conflict.

8. Reinforce rather than replace existing capacities in national and local systems to support effective and accountable institutions that respond to communities' needs and provide access to basic services while supporting conditions and capacities for social cohesion and peace.

9. Maintain an open dialogue with government institutions to discuss a range of options ranging from humanitarian access to technical co-operation.

Oxfam will not:

1. Downplay or minimize protection needs in areas or countries where there is ongoing programming across the nexus.

2. Allow relationships with governments to interfere with its independence to speak out on inequalities, any form of discrimination, restrictions on humanitarian access and civic space, and human rights abuses.

3 DILEMMA 2: WORKING WITH STATES AND GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

The dilemma that underpins working with state and government authorities in a triple nexus approach is related to the humanitarian principle of independence, which is essential to deliver aid where the government is unwilling or unable to meet the rights of its citizens, is party to a conflict or is committing human rights violations. At the same time, prioritizing only emergency responses in fragile contexts risks failing to strengthen national and local systems to prevent and prepare for future crises, weakens the state-citizen compact and overlooks aid effectiveness standards, such as democratic country ownership. In addition, working with states can include relations with donors, who may use the triple nexus to align aid funding with their own foreign policy objectives (e.g., counterterrorism-related domestic interests).

Governments and state structures are not homogenous, but diverse entities with different levels of powers, priorities and incentives. Oxfam has successfully navigated complex relationships with governments, which can simultaneously be development and humanitarian partners and/ or advocacy targets. Programming across the nexus will generate multiples links with different entities and levels of government, and a more systematic process of weighing risk and benefits can identify an optimum degree and form of collaboration according to context.

Oxfam's relations with governments must be based on local knowledge and context analysis of protracted crises. Oxfam should use 'do no harm' and safe programming as guiding principles to preserve its independence and ensure that working with states does not contribute to increases in pre-existing discrimination and inequality that negatively affect women and girls or other marginalised groups or create new risks and vulnerabilities, including conflict.

In protection crises, where the state is party to a conflict and may be committing human rights violations against its own citizens, Oxfam will need to adhere to its red lines on humanitarian principles and the centrality of protection.

"Oxfam in Kenya has been operating for at least 70 years, in arid and semi-arid lands. In Turkana, when there is drought, through a humanitarian programme we drilled boreholes to increase water access. Some of the questions the country programme asked itself: are we making any difference or doing same thing over and over? Oxfam in Kenya shifted its approach, by investing on systems strengthening focused on local humanitarian leadership, long-term development and focus on sustainability. How do we work with the local government, at county level, as well as with local partners? The annual budget of county government is at least ten times bigger than our budget for work in Turkana. If water is the issue, there are ways to ensure we don't go back digging boreholes whenever there is a drought." Parvin Ngala, HECA regional platform.

Rapid changes in context may require unforeseen shifts from working mainly as a development partner on poverty eradication to working as an independent humanitarian actor to ensure humanitarian access and protection advocacy. Such changes will have impacts on Oxfam's relations with government structures. The perception of Oxfam's neutrality among the local population may be weak if it has been associated with a party to the conflict, a situation that may hamper humanitarian efforts and access. In such a scenario, Oxfam should reflect on potential implications of its partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs) to deliver aid, and seek to avoid any risk transfer. Moreover, Oxfam can help build the social contract between citizens and duty bearers by enabling dialogue with local government authorities, CSOs and grassroots groups, where possible.

In its engagement with government authorities and structures:

Oxfam will:

1. Consider that governments can carry out a wider range of roles beyond just advocacy target or development and humanitarian partner, taking into account that there are nuances in those functions and that government institutions are not single-sided or homogenous structures.
2. Evaluate the risks and benefits of engaging with government at different levels in different capacities, distinguishing between technical support, policy advice, campaign partnership, and enhancement of existing systems and services. This exercise must be guided by the principles of political independence and impartiality.
3. Ensure that all policy and political processes Oxfam participates in are oriented towards eradicating poverty, inequality and gender-based inequality; reducing humanitarian needs; and transforming conflict situations, guided by the standards set in international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.
4. Stand up for a vibrant, open and active citizenship and civil society that promote accountable and transparent governance.

Oxfam will not:

1. Renounce its independence and become partisan or party-political.
2. Renounce its commitment to support the centrality of protection and respect for international law, including human rights law, or its ability to advocate and campaign against rights abuses.

Oxfam works with governments in their capacity not only as duty bearers, but also as aid donors. Donors' interest in the triple nexus is occurring in a wider context of aligning aid with foreign policy objectives, particularly in the sphere of national security.

The trends toward the "securitisation" and politicisation of aid are encroaching upon aid's core functions of eradicating poverty and inequality and addressing humanitarian needs. Some aid instruments incorporate national security objectives under the guise of development or crisis response work. Donors may favour security actors that are parties to or enablers in a conflict under the peace pillar of the triple nexus at the expense of addressing local grievances,

addressing the root causes of the conflict or supporting conflict transformation through peacebuilding and governance. Similar concerns about the politicisation of aid have been expressed about donors' use of the preventing and countering violent extremism agenda.

In its engagement with donor states,

Oxfam will:

1. Carry out a thorough risk assessment, inclusive of political and conflict analysis and reputational impact, on specific funding opportunities that are available in fragile and conflict-affected states to ensure that they are aligned to criteria of aid effectiveness and relevant OECD DAC standards, including on the triple nexus.
2. Ensure that the risk assessment is used to reach a final decision on bidding or not for funding, taking into account Oxfam not only is a recipient of funding but also often engages in critical advocacy directed towards the same funding sources.
3. Ensure that funding from sensitive sources complies with Oxfam's existing ethical fundraising guidelines, which reflect an independent, impartial, multi-mandated organisation.
4. Advocate with donors on the implications of politicised aid programmes based on Oxfam's presence on the ground.
5. Re-affirm that the core function of aid is to eradicate poverty, inequality and gender inequalities; promote sustainable development; reduce humanitarian needs; and enhance peace.

Oxfam will not:

1. Support through its interventions any donor-led programmes in the field of securitisation or stabilisation that conflate humanitarian, development or peacebuilding objectives with security and military goals.

Kadigueta Barry, 34 years old, mother of 4 children, internally displaced for 12 months, Burkina Faso. Credit: Oxfam

4 DILEMMA 3: BALANCING MULTIPLE PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES

The dilemma on balancing priorities stems from the challenges Oxfam faces in adopting a more systematic approach to decision-making that guides and informs programme design, learning and ways of working in fragile and conflict contexts in line with the triple nexus. Programming across the nexus must aim for the right balance and entry point of humanitarian, development and peace interventions and optimise the ways in which they interact with each other. Thus far, Oxfam has delivered a nexus approach through context-based decision-making and isolated actions rather than by design through a planned process of common learning.

Working across the nexus requires a paradigm shift in the way we currently work. To fully address the root causes of conflict and fragility according to the HDP model, Oxfam needs to adopt systems thinking approaches and shift from short-term to longer-term (10–15 years) programming. As a multi-mandated organisation, Oxfam must continue to explore the breadth of its interventions in the peace pillar. Moreover, a shift is required from output-oriented thinking – the current modus operandi for project design and donor reporting in development and humanitarian practice – towards outcome-based planning, including better links between programming and advocacy and influencing efforts. Lastly, this paradigm shift will require greater risk taking and risk appetite, which must account for insecurity and the unpredictable, non-linear paths of crises.

> "A nexus approach requires the flexibility to realign or revert to a specific approach. It's about strengthening our different abilities. Contingency plans give us the freedom and flexibility to (re)allocate resources and rapidly scale up or down." Pierre Koivogui, formerly in Oxfam in Chad

Oxfam benefits from valuable humanitarian, development and peacebuilding experience in different contexts and excellent conceptual frameworks, such as one programme approach and the resilient development framework. These form a solid basis for addressing decision-making challenges posed by the nexus approach and for achieving an optimal balance in setting priorities.

We identified **five areas of improvement to better balance Oxfam's priorities** and deliver better programming across the nexus:

A) BETTER FUNDING FOR THE NEXUS

The quality, predictability and availability of funding for the different components of the nexus are decisive in delivering programmes and addressing the nature of the challenges in fragile contexts.

Country offices are faced with underfunded humanitarian appeals and low levels of developmental ODA invested in fragile countries, which constrain programmes.[7] Moreover, those country offices with more unrestricted funding[8] have been able to do significantly more to strengthen coherence and complementarities across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming.

The donor practice of earmarking funding for a specific output rather than an outcome poses a challenge for building coherence between humanitarian and development programmes. Keeping a separate funding channel for humanitarian work while ensuring coordination and coherence with other components of the nexus will safeguard independence and impartiality in those instances where governments may misappropriate ODA resources to drive a protection crisis.[9]

In the short term,

Oxfam will:

1. Work with donors to obtain more agile, timely and predictable funding, including multiyear, flexible and more softly earmarked funding that allows for adaptive and anticipatory programming.[10] This includes forecast-based funding and crisis modifiers.
2. Design programmes encompassing all nexus areas wherever possible, and be agile and creative in allocating development and humanitarian funding to support holistic delivery.
3. Advocate to donors for funding for pilots and innovation, and work to attract a greater share of unrestricted funding to support pilots and innovation in programming across the nexus that will inform replication and scale-up.
4. Work with donors to invest in the capacity of their staff and in enabling conditions at the country level to enable shared analysis and design and delivery of transformative nexus programmes.
5. Influence donors to fully deliver on the local humanitarian leadership agenda by adopting suitable financial arrangements that support risk sharing, promote innovation, and can be directly allocated to local humanitarian actors. Donors should capture and share lessons learnt on their efforts to support local humanitarian leadership.

B) QUALITATIVE INDICATORS

Protracted conflicts and fragile settings are non-linear, with violence following a bell-shaped curve that alternates between peaks of violence and periods of relative stability. In those settings, development interventions are slow and prone to setbacks. While the majority of Oxfam programming is still sequenced or siloed, programming across the nexus requires simultaneous interventions.

In each context,

C) FLEXIBILITY IN PROGRAMMING

Programme design must be flexible and factor in non-linearity and uncertainty through mechanisms that enable a quick crisis response.[11] Such mechanisms are likely to include humanitarian preparedness measures and pre-positioning of stocks to quickly react to a crisis outbreak, crisis modifiers in longer-term budgets, or engagement with conflict resolution structures to plan for and mitigate risks in humanitarian responses. Furthermore, regular reviews of relevant plans such as country strategies, programme theories of change and context analysis must create feedback loops and drive adaptation as context changes.

Beyond programme design, Oxfam's internal systems need to allow for flexibility too. Several levels of bureaucracy lead to considerable delays in transferring funds to partners and slow down aid delivery to communities and individuals.

D) KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING MANAGEMENT ACROSS TEAMS AND DIALOGUE ACROSS SILOS

Staff continuity in leadership roles and commitment to longer-term visions and objectives for the organization in their given context is a factor for success. When institutional memory is limited,

similar cycles of programming are repeated over and over again. In fragile settings, Oxfam staff generally do not stay much longer than three years. To achieve sustainable results across the HDP nexus, Oxfam will invest in regular learning loops and knowledge management.

Additionally, Oxfam leadership must foster greater collaboration across the different components of the organization, including by building a nexus working group within the country team to gather specialised input on humanitarian, development and peace elements when defining a country strategy; this has been tested in the Somalia office. While integrating teams should not be the sole objective of a triple nexus approach, joint analysis and planning will help maximize impact in terms of both meeting needs and addressing the root causes of crises.

Delivering programmes in fragile and highly volatile contexts will require greater risk taking and risk appetite, which must account for insecurity and the unpredictable, non-linear paths of crises. Oxfam will establish and review risk management frameworks that prioritise the security of its staff and the communities it supports.

Oxfam will:

1. Use the country context analysis and theory of change as living documents that are regularly updated and reviewed in partnership with a broad range of actors – including women's rights organisations – to guide the decision-making, prioritisation and resource allocation processes.
2. Improve its capacity to share, track and enhance knowledge across interventions that support the same population groups, through joint data collection and on-going context analysis inclusive of gender, protection and conflict-sensitivity matters, based on greater responsible usage of technology and data.
3. Embed flexibility in its programmes by adopting forward-looking and adaptive plans that can quickly respond to a shift in context.

E) TOWARDS A NEW OPERATIONAL ROLE

Oxfam should transform its organisational culture to promote greater dialogue and collaboration across existing silos and barriers. The organisation should not assume it will carry out interventions by itself but rather adopt a more coordinated and collaborative approach with other actors.[12]

An honest assessment of Oxfam's capacities and strengths will be key in generating greater impact in programming across the nexus, articulated through the suggested degrees of complementarity, collaboration and coherence. In line with its commitments on the Charter for Change and Grand Bargain, Oxfam must rethink its current ways of working and consider embracing a new role as a potential convenor of alliances, knowledge broker or hub manager for influencing activities.

Oxfam should be bolder in acknowledging and accepting its current limitations in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work and redefine its role on the basis of comparative advantages that will clearly emerge through collaboration, joint analysis, and a theory of change focused on collective outcomes. Oxfam is not going to deliver everything by itself, but it might

drive the creation and facilitation of networks and coalitions with national and local civil society in order to build create the coherence necessary for meaningful sustained change.

There are also opportunities to advance the nexus through the localization agenda, in the form of support to local humanitarian leadership and local capacities. Myanmar's Durable Peace Programme (DPP) has shown the added value of Oxfam as consortium leader while partners are at the helm. Oxfam needs greater feedback loops with its partners and communities if it is serious about implementing a nexus approach.

> "The theory is easy –but difficulty lies in getting the resources to match emergency and development programming in the same area targeting the same communities. Because if there is a 100km division, that isn't nexus."
> Andres Gonzalez, Oxfam in Iraq

Oxfam will not:

1. Assume that it can deliver nexus interventions in isolation from other actors across the humanitarian, development and peace pillars.
2. Stifle critical conversation with partners about funding, power and influence in the aid ecosystem.
3. Delay implementing its commitments to support local humanitarian leadership and strengthen systems in fragile and conflict-affected states.

A Yemeni woman weaving cloth after receiving training and a grant to improve her livelihood. Credit: VFX ADEN/Oxfam

5 DILEMMA 4: DEFINING PEACEBUILDING AS IT RELATES TO OXFAM'S IDENTITY AND ADDED VALUE

The dilemma on the peace element of triple nexus stems from the lack of an agreed-upon definition of that element by aid actors, the breadth of a multi-mandated organisation's role in the peace pillar and possible tensions with humanitarian principles. For this reason, this document suggests that Oxfam adopt the term 'peacebuilding' instead of 'peace' to deliberately counter dominant narratives and policies that equate 'peace' with 'stabilization.' Oxfam's peacebuilding activities, when possible and necessary according to context, must be consistent with its principles and added value, aiming to reduce needs and build a more resilient and peaceful society. As stated in the Global Strategic Framework, Oxfam seeks to transform the structural causes of conflict. As such, becoming a peacebuilding entity is not in itself a goal of the triple nexus.

The peace component of the nexus refers to a number of concepts around peace, including those driven by state actors (referred to as the Big P), such as security and stabilisation; state building or UN Security Council–mandated state-centric processes; and national-level peace processes; as well as community-level peacebuilding (referred to as small P). In some contexts, when it is associated with security and stabilisation in alignment with political goals, the peace pillar of the triple nexus may have a negative connotation or raise sensitivities. Based on context and risk, it is important to strike the right approach to this pillar or to deliberately disconnect Oxfam's peacebuilding work from any 'nexus' framing.

Oxfam has long and rich experience and expertise in working with partners on local-level peacebuilding. It favours initiatives that are human-centred, focus on communities and support social cohesion or reconciliation at the community level between different ethnic groups or between displaced and host communities. Furthermore, Oxfam often plays a key role in advocating for and supporting national partners' influence or engagement in peace processes. Partnering with activists and civil society organizations working on peacebuilding, Oxfam provides capacity building and creates spaces for their voices and peace claims to be heard through "unbranded" products (often in coalition with others) and arranges high-level briefings to the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council.

In a complementary way, Oxfam uses its influencing power to support international agreements with the potential to contribute to a reduction in the harm to civilians caused by armed violence and conflict. It also works to strengthen international law and humanitarian norms – for instance, in advocating for the Arms Trade Treaty.

Oxfam's experience illustrates a combination of behind-the-scene tactics to support partners and more proactive and visible activities. The choice between these approaches often depends on context and risk analysis designed to strike a balance with the humanitarian identity of the

organisation. Humanitarian principles, such as independence and neutrality,[13] may be at risk if Oxfam is perceived to be taking sides in a conflict, peacemaking in favour of one party, or responding to political and military objectives such as stabilisation.

In programmatic terms, Oxfam's peacebuilding interventions are highly context specific and may include the following areas:

"In the context of Afghanistan, there is little talk of durable solutions because control in some areas continues to change very rapidly. Only peace could change that." Sharon Beijer, formerly Oxfam in Afghanistan

- Enhancing local capacities for peace;
- Strengthening inclusive politics, political processes and accountability;
- Engaging in inclusive peacebuilding (women, peace and security; youth, peace and security);
- Addressing conflict, land and natural resources;
- Advancing cross-border and sub-regional peacebuilding;
- Participating in state–civil society engagement.

Looking ahead, although others consider efforts to 'preserve peace/stability through peacekeeping missions' to be part of the nexus, Oxfam's engagement with political or peacekeeping missions in triple nexus or peacebuilding initiatives should be driven by carefully considered context-specific factors given the potential risks around instrumentalisation.

The organisation will seek to contribute to peacebuilding in a way that is:

Positive: Conflicts are resolved through constructive resolution, positive relationships are restored, and a social system that serves the need of the whole population is (re)established. Oxfam strives to work not just on direct violence, but also on structural and cultural violence.[14]

Inclusive: Peace agreements must meet the needs and rights of all groups and members of society, such as women, youth, different ethnic groups and those who are marginalised or in poverty.

Feminist: A transformative vision of peace must address the structural inequalities and gendered social norms that contribute to all forms of violence (including gender-based violence). Feminist peace supports, recognises and values women's leadership and their role as agents of change.

Sustained: Peace must be supported even in the absence of a visible outbreak of conflict. Peacebuilding plays a preventive role in averting lapses into conflict in the first place as well as relapses.

NEXUS AND THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (WPS) AGENDA

At both a community and a national level, women's engagement in and leadership in peacebuilding efforts enable a more lasting peace. An increased understanding that security rests not only on the absence of violence but also on the well-being of individuals and communities has made women central actors and stakeholders in peace. Nonetheless, women continue to be largely excluded from most formal peace talks.

Oxfam's WPS work has often focused on supporting women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision-making spaces, which may include peace negotiation processes. Programming across the nexus will deepen Oxfam's commitment to the WPS agenda, through which it will embark upon local-level initiatives to support gender justice and women's rights and participation in peace and security activities more widely. In recognition that restrictive social norms and traditional gender roles are obstacles to women's participation in peace processes, Oxfam's programmes will prioritise gender-transformative actions before, during and after crises.

Oxfam will:

1. Continue to shape Oxfam's approach to peacebuilding in a way that contributes to peace that is positive, inclusive, feminist and sustained. In many contexts, this will require creative approaches to balancing conflict-sensitivity concerns, noting that in some instances the triple nexus is associated with stabilisation and securitisation, while in others terms such as 'social stability,' 'social cohesion,' or 'inter-communal collaboration' may be preferred to 'peacebuilding.' Ultimately, the wording is less important than the clear effort and strategic emphasis placed on addressing the structural causes of conflict.
2. Contribute, where appropriate, to feminist analysis of peace issues and support civil society groups in influencing peace processes.
3. Wherever feasible, aim to address root causes and structural drivers of violence and conflict and to offer sustainable, inclusive solutions.
4. Highlight and challenge horizontal and vertical inequalities as both root causes and consequences of violence and conflict.
5. Promote and stand up for women's rights and gender equality, as their denial is both a root cause and a consequence of conflict.
6. Endeavour to bridge the gap between local-level capacities for peace and national-level peace processes to ensure that they are inclusive and representative of women, marginalised groups and all those individuals who are traditionally excluded from decision-making.
7. Encourage donors to support women delegations as well as track II and track III initiatives.[15]

Oxfam will not:

1. Engage in the broader spectrum of peacebuilding work if it is not consistent with the organization's principles and added value.
2. Undermine Oxfam's and partner's ability to carry out standalone humanitarian or development programmes whenever needed.
3. Refer directly to the triple nexus framing in contexts where it is already associated with or at risk of being instrumentalised by securitised or stabilisation approaches. In such cases, Oxfam should consider explicitly framing peacebuilding and conflict transformation work in a way that clearly distinguishes it from stabilisation or securitisation objectives undertaken by other actors.
4. Seek to act as high-level mediator or negotiator in peace processes that are the mandates of United Nations or regional body special envoys recognising, its limitations in the sphere related to peace.

A Syrian refugee woman in Jordan, with a harvest of cauliflower, to be sold at the local market. Credit: Nesma AlNsour/ Oxfam

"Within this context, peacebuilding is important –and should be included throughout the process. However, there is no time or space to do so during humanitarian operations: we deliver aid and provide basic services like providing water to camps. Too often, thinking about social cohesion comes later because we don't have sufficient time, capacity or resources. How, then, do we move towards early recovery and ensure we can start talking about social cohesion and rebuilding livelihoods?" Andres Gonzalez, Oxfam in Iraq

NOTES

[1] Oxfam International. (2019). *The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: What Does It Mean for Multi-mandated Organizations? Discussion Paper.* Oxford, UK: Oxfam International. Retrieved from: https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/the-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-what-does-it-mean-for-multi-mandated-o-620820/

[2] This briefing interprets the three Cs—complementarity, collaboration and coherence—in ascending order, as they are referred to by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in its 'DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus,' https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5019#mainText. We drew on the following analysis from Development Initiatives: "Collaboration, coherence and complementarity ('the three C's') are the stated ambitions of the DAC recommendation on the HDP nexus. They mean different things to different actors and are highly context specific. They could be viewed as a spectrum with the humanitarian-peace nexus at the lower end with a minimum expectation of complementarity; the development-peace nexus in the middle; and the more established and less contentious humanitarian-development nexus at the higher end between collaboration and coherence." S. Dalrymple and A. Urquhart, 'Peace in the Triple Nexus: What Challenges Do Donors Face?' Development Initiatives, https://devinit.org/blog/peace-triple-nexus-what-challenges-do-donors-face/

[3] Oxfam's research looks at issues such as gender inequality, unaccountable governance, and horizontal (sociopolitical, socioeconomic) and vertical (income-related) inequalities among the drivers of violence. See Oxfam (2019) Inequality and Conflict, Oxfam internal note.

[4] Ricardo Fal-Dutra Santos. (2019). *Challenging Patriarchy: Gender Equality and Humanitarian Principles.* Humanitarian Law and Policy, July 19. Retrieved from: https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2019/07/18/gender-equality-humanitarian-principles/.

[5] M. Dubois. (2020). The Triple Nexus – *Threat or Opportunity for the Humanitarian Principles?* Berlin: Centre for Humanitarian Action. Retrieved from: https://www.chaberlin.org/en/publications/triple-nexus-threat-or-opportunity-for-the-humanitarian-principles-2/, p. 15; Dubois, M. (2020). *Searching for the Nexus: Why We're Looking in the Wrong Place.* The New Humanitarian, January 7. Retrieved from: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2020/1/7/triple-nexus-international-aid-Marc-DuBois.

[6] For example, when the entry point is humanitarian, the applicable principles are impartiality and independence; when the entry point is development, the principle is democratic country ownership; when the entry point is peacebuilding, the principle is 'do no harm.'

[7] Development Initiatives. (2019). *What Do Emerging Trends in Development Finance Mean for Crisis Actors? Webinar.* Retrieved from: https://devinit.org/publications/emerging-trends-development-finance-mean-crisis-actors/

[8] Flexible funding, according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) definition, allows reprogramming and the use of resources to save lives and is disbursed quickly to respond to evolving needs. IASC. (2020). *Interim Key Messages: Flexible Funding for Humanitarian Response and COVID-19.* Retrieved from: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/interim-key-messages-flexible-funding-humanitarian-response-and-covid-19

[9] F. Schmitz Guinote. (2019). *The ICRC and the 'Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus' Discussion.* International Review of the Red Cross, no. 912 (November). Retrieved from: https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/qa-icrc-and-the-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-discussion-ir912

[10] Interviews with Andres Gonzalez, Marta Valdes Garcia, Kaspar Roelle, Amjad Ali, Amy Croome.

[11] Oxfam. (2020). *Nexus in Action. Oxfam internal programme guideline.*

[12] Interview with Andres Gonzalez.

[13] Oxfam is operationally neutral in delivering humanitarian programmes, but it has derogated on the principle of neutrality in relation to its advocacy against human rights abuses, as described in the Dilemma 1 of this briefing.

[14] Structural violence refers to the inequality and marginalisation embedded in the social, political and economic systems and structures that exclude and discriminate people and groups (such as apartheid in South Africa and the denial of education for girls in Afghanistan). Cultural violence refers to the norms, attitudes and beliefs that enable and underpin violence in societies, such as the negative gender norms that lead some groups or societies to view women as having a lower status or the entrenched attitudes of superiority and racism towards certain groups such as Pygmy groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Oxfam (2019) 'Oxfam's Engagement on Peace and Conflict Issues: Rationale for a New Approach to Inclusive and Sustained Peace,' Oxfam internal discussion paper, p. 15.

[15] Track II and track III diplomacy occurs when non-official actors, including individuals and NGOs, work as third-party mediators in a conflict. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020) States of Fragility 2020, Paris: OECD.

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Oxfam is an international confederation of 21 organizations, working with its partners and allies, reaching out to millions of people around the world. Together, we tackle inequalities to end poverty and injustice, now and in the long term – for an equal future. Please write to any of the agencies for further information or visit www.oxfam.org.

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