



FDFA's approach to the Humanitarian, Development, Peace Nexus

Why is the HDP Nexus important and relevant?

The world today faces geopolitical tensions causing the fragmentation of the multilateral system, increasing gender inequality, democracy backsliding and a rising number of conflicts and protracted, long-term crises. It is crucial more than ever to advance coherent multi-faceted responses, using all relevant instruments of international cooperation to move beyond the concept of linear transition (from humanitarian aid to development to peace). A paradigm shift towards working collaboratively across institutional boundaries on the basis of comparative advantage is taking place. Global commitments, such as the SDG's, aid effectiveness, Grand Bargain, reducing aid dependency and locally led development remain relevant and have to be put in action. The Humanitarian, Development, Peace (HDP) Nexus is an approach to work more effectively and to achieve impact towards sustainable peace in contexts of overlapping needs and challenges.

Following an institutional journey (see Resources/underlying documents) this paper aims to showcase to an internal and interested external audience how FDFA understands and contributes today to the HDP Nexus.

Defining the HDP Nexus

A nexus approach refers to the combination of two or more intervention lines. The HDP Nexus approach stipulates that the meaningful interlinkage of humanitarian, development and peace intervention linesⁱ will achieve highest and sustainable impact, provided it is based on the respective comparative advantages of a diverse range of actors and applied at the right time and for the right duration. The starting point is a joint, sound and comprehensive context analysis (including the shared understanding of risks and vulnerabilities) that values and integrates the perspectives of all relevant actors and based on which a comprehensive and coherent response (one or more intervention lines combined) can be deployed. Switzerland adheres to the OECD-DAC recommendations of the HDP Nexusⁱⁱ which builds on the principle of "conflict prevention and peace always, development wherever and whenever possible, and humanitarian assistance only when and as long as necessary"ⁱⁱⁱ. Such a needs driven and flexible approach allows to maintain an impactful portfolio in a deteriorating context (staying engaged) or in an opposite scenario, to successfully phase out of humanitarian aid when redundant, since the HDP Nexus approach allows to increase or decrease intervention lines, as and where necessary. Its application requires great flexibility of all actors involved and institutional and political commitment to do so.

The HDP Nexus and the whole of government approach (WOGA)

WOGA^{iv} refers to the well-established coherent collaboration between the Swiss federal administration's main international cooperation actors: Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (State Secretariat/Peace and Human Rights Division (STS/PHRD)), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)), Federal Department of Defense, Civil Protection and Sport and Federal Department of Justice and Police (State Secretariat for Migration). The WOGA approach as in Cooperation Programs differs from the HDP Nexus, as long as there is no joint analysis with shared vision and outcomes, that flexibly engages and interlinks HDP intervention lines in a specific context, resulting in programmatic coherence going beyond mere complementarity.

Intervention lines of the HDP Nexus

- ❖ **Humanitarian:** addresses immediate threats to lives and livelihoods, aims at alleviating suffering, saving lives and strengthening resilience and protection of most at-risk and vulnerable people during and after crises, and as preventive measures. SDC's humanitarian mandate is universal and, in line with the humanitarian imperative, upholds the 4 principles of humanitarian aid (humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence).
- ❖ **Development:** addresses structural and systemic obstacles and impediments to development, aims at systemic changes to support sustainable, inclusive development. This includes social and human

development, good governance, sustainable economic development and natural resource management addressing adverse effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and root causes of conflicts. SDC's bilateral cooperation mandate is geographically focused on its priority countries and regions.

- ❖ **Peace:** Two entities of FDFA work on sustainable peace and prevention of violent conflict with different, yet complementary mandates: **PHRD's mandate** is to prevent violent conflict, resolve conflict and build peace through political processes involving relevant elites and decision makers of conflicting parties. This includes high-level mediation/facilitation, where Switzerland can take on a variety of roles (e.g. good offices and hosting of talks, dialogue facilitation, negotiation and mediation support, etc.) in order to influence conflict dynamics and gain access to influential actors. **SDC's mandate** in conflict prevention and peace addresses root causes of conflicts, aims at peacebuilding by creating peace infrastructures^v that further inclusive, peaceful societies and sustaining peace. This includes working at the individual, societal and institutional level^{vi}.

The intervention lines are not always clear cut or tied to specific actors or instruments. Objectives can overlap and co-exist.

The HDP Nexus approach at different levels

The non-exhaustive list shows how FDFA works on the HDP Nexus at different levels.

... on the strategic level

- A joint 4-year cooperation strategy of FDFA (SDC, STS/PHRD) and EAER (SECO) outlines the main intervention lines and budget, geographic and thematic priorities. Projects and programs implemented in a Nexus-approach are a possible result.

...on the policy level

- Switzerland promotes HDP Nexus approaches on global and national levels in relevant fora, as part of its policy dialogue at UN (UN-agencies, Resident Coordinator-System, etc.), WB-group, OECD, donor/thematic coordination.
- Switzerland's narrative of international cooperation englobes all available intervention lines, putting forward results, not the actor or instrument representing it.

...on the programmatic level

- Swiss supported or self-implemented programs, projects or multilateral institutions (i.e. the Peace Building Fund) often combine development, humanitarian or peace intervention lines to reach the objectives. Projects may work through a nexus-approach or have a nexus impact without explicitly referring to nexus as such.
- In line with the context requirements, an HDP Nexus approach can be applied through a WOGA-approach or by SDC alone (self-implemented or through its partners with specific HDP expertise (see Resources/Nexus Video Series). Partners (e.g. local actors) may be chosen precisely because of their nexus-thinking.
- Where relevant, partners are encouraged to apply a Nexus-thinking and the FDFA also builds on their Nexus experiences.
- FDFA deploys Nexus or interventions specific secondments through its pool of experts and provides advisory services (see "Resources").
- Financing HDP Nexus projects requires specific procedures with the FDFA (see "How To Note").

...on the institutional level

- Opening up of institutional boundaries (as in the SDC's Fit for Purpose-process (F4P)) is a political message in itself, facilitating information sharing and working together.
- With the F4P process, SDC institutionalized the HDP Nexus approach at desk-level of the geographic divisions, through joint thematic and multilateral sections at HQ or via nexus advisors in the field. The PGE-section became the institutional host for the HDP Nexus.
- As an institutional partner, FDFA promotes WOGA- and Nexus-approaches.
- Switzerland adheres to the OECD-DAC Nexus Recommendations and its peer review process.

Possible focus for better leverage

Continued learning on HDP Nexus is key to gain a common understanding and shared vision. Policy coherence is difficult when the political understanding of the contexts (global and local) varies between actors. Nexus-thinking requires specific competences and coordination. Regular context analysis can be time consuming. Administrative hurdles or financial constraints complicate adaptive programming and flexibility. Aid architecture (country or global level) structured around specific coordination fora (e.g. humanitarian clusters and developmental working groups) undermine bridging silos.

Examples

Sustainable Water management in Lebanon

Since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011, Lebanon has been hosting a large number of Syrian refugees. Many reside in the Bekaa Valley, exacerbating existing challenges related to water (shortages, quality, unequal access, infrastructure), even more so since Lebanon's economic, financial and political crises in 2019. Consequently, water-related tensions amongst Lebanese as well as between Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities were on the rise and further challenged the already fragmented social fabric and cohesion.

To improve health and well-being of the population through continuous access to essential water services, three interlinked intervention lines, pulling together SDC's and PHRD's expertise and based on a maximalist conflict sensitivity approach, ensure the overall impact and efficiency of the Swiss response:

- Peacebuilding and social cohesion: Fostering local dialogue early on between communities and between them and local authorities, to address long-standing water inequalities, reduce social tensions and enhance trust in institutions, as well as ensuring continuous conflict analysis of the whole intervention.
- Development cooperation: Supporting the responsible national water establishment in infrastructure management, operation and maintenance, through technical innovations and capacity-building, to ensure a cost-effective and sustainable management of water resources. In addition, policy advocacy work with likeminded donors to support the water reform and recovery plan.
- Humanitarian action: Responding to urgent needs by rehabilitating and repairing pumping stations to improve access to safe drinking water for the most vulnerable persons.

Scaling-up Solutions to Displacement in Somalia

In Somalia, rapid and unplanned urbanization is reshaping cities. Urban and peri-urban areas are absorbing large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, fleeing conflict, political instability, and climate change-induced disasters. Weak urban systems, however, are unable to deliver essential services and infrastructure or provide durable solutions. Municipal, regional, and federal authorities face numerous challenges, including securing access to safe and suitable land for settlement, social and economic (re-) integration, or the development of a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for governance, land administration, and urban planning.

To address these challenges, SDC supports the UN Joint program *Saameynta*, which promotes durable solutions through the close interlinkage of the three intervention lines:

- Peacebuilding and social cohesion: Fostering inclusive institutional dialogue between displaced persons, host communities and authorities, while supporting the authorities in participatory land rights mapping and the development of land-related policies and tools for tenure security and to reduce tensions.
- Development cooperation: Supporting local authorities in the urban planning processes that secure land tenure for IDPs and enable their economic integration, contributing to inclusive and sustainable urban growth.
- Humanitarian action: Addressing immediate needs by providing shelter materials, water facilities, and cash-for-work opportunities, facilitating permanent housing and supporting pathways to sustainable livelihoods.

Accompanying peace negotiations and protecting civilians in Colombia

Colombia remains a country of parallel and contradictory realities, with a solid democratic system and institutions, a relatively stable economy, and being OECD member since 2020. However, extreme inequalities persist, with ongoing armed conflicts and violence affecting civilians that hinder the provision of public services, security guarantees and social equality. As a result, half of its territory is in crisis, marked by a minimal state presence and serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and large forced internal displacement, preventing sustainable and equitable economic and social development.

To contribute to the dividend of peace, Switzerland supports intertwined initiatives for fostering and sustaining peace:

- PHRD supports both the implementation of the 2016 peace agreements and the current official peace process consisting of several tracks of peace negotiations between the government and different armed groups within the framework of Switzerland's mandate as a guarantor state and through its good offices.
- SDC supports the UN Multi-Donor Trust Fund for peace together with like-minded donors, which was established to support the 2016 peace agreements with concrete measures and initiatives in favor of conflict-affected communities and former combatants. It serves to catalyze initiatives such as mine clearance, land restitution and rural development for the reactivation of the economy, among others and are combined with reconciliation efforts, including the full social and economic reintegration of former combatants, as well as access to services and comprehensive system of justice for victims.

Resources

Underlying documents

- [OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, 2019.](#)
- [OECD-DAC Interim Progress Review of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, 2022.](#)
- [OECD DAC High Level Meeting Communiqué, 2023.](#)
- [Nordic Consulting Group, Independent Evaluation of the Linkage of Humanitarian Aid and Development Cooperation at the Swiss Development Cooperation \(SDC\), incl. MR, June 2019.](#)
- [Learning Journey on the Triple Nexus, Synthesis report, 2022](#)
- [Notiz an die Direktion: Bericht Teilprojekt Nexus, 2022](#) (internal only)

Further resources

- [Shareweb of SDC's Peace, Governance and Equality \(PGE\) Network: general information on the HDP Nexus, Nexus Video Series](#) and policy messages (not available yet, internal only).
- SDC Brief on Peace in the HDP Nexus (not available yet).
- SDC Brief on Locally Led Cooperation (not available yet).
- Advisory services PGE: deza-pge@eda.admin.ch, HA: sekretariatstabhhundskh@eda.admin.ch, PHRD nexus focal point: sts.afm.stab@eda.admin.ch.

How to Note – FDFA internal

Financing a nexus approach

The main modality for financing a nexus project is through the **majority principle (Mehrheitsprinzip, see [FDFA directive 307](#))**, whereby the intervention line with the greater (financial) share of a project will finance the whole project. Such nexus project is then financed only through one transfer credit. This is valid for both SDC's (HA, EZA) as well as for Woga partner's transfer credits. Exceptions are possible but must be approved by the Federal Council. A transfer of budget cross Woga-partners is possible for large contributions as part of the budgeting process (starting early March for a following year). Please note that for SDC the development and peace intervention lines are both funded via the development transfer credit. In practice:

- The nexus-thinking and approach, while starting with the context assessment, is relevant throughout the whole project management cycle.
- In the SDC credit proposal (regular template), the (co-)responsibilities, including reporting lines and decision mechanism between involved actors, the intervention lines and their adherence to a specific framework credit, as well as their estimated (theoretical) financial share, must be defined. The information in the SAP-sheet reflects the funding modality (e.g. a development funded nexus project cannot tick HA priorities. However, all relevant sector markers are to be ticked).
- Note: the template of the financial table in a cooperation program refers to indicative numbers and thus should allow a certain flexibility in the use of the intervention lines.

A modality with **internal co-financing** is possible whereby a project is financed through two transfer credits, using the [cover sheet for internal co-financing](#), under the following cumulative conditions (see [FDFA directive 309](#) and its [annex](#)). Summarized:

- Minimum overall volume of 2m with no frame credit less than 10%;
- the distinct project components (intervention lines) are attributable to a specific transfer credit and cater to different needs and subgoals of the IC Message;
- they are separately described in a tender (if applicable), contract, budget, financial and operation report.

ⁱ This paper uses the term “intervention lines” and not “instruments” to describe specific activities, to avoid confusion with the humanitarian and development budget lines (ger. Verpflichtungskredite), which are often called “instruments”.

ⁱⁱ The OECD-DAC recommendation of 2019 defines nexus as the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions, while the Nexus approach refers to the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity, seeking 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.

ⁱⁱⁱ Communiqué of the OECD-DAC High Level Meeting, November 2023.

^{iv} Applied at program and policy level, WOGA aims at coherent and comprehensive responses for higher impact, through complementary interventions from different federal administration entities and their specific mandates and expertise.

^v Peacebuilding infrastructures are understood as formal or informal systems, structures, processes, etc., aiming at building and strengthening the capacity for inclusive societies, non-violent conflict resolution and peace. Examples are human rights institutions, formal or informal peace councils, constructive platforms for dialogue and debates, equitable social services, peacebuilding education and institutions, etc.

^{vi} Examples include among others the psychosocial approach (individual level), social cohesion, trust building, dialogue (societal level), inclusive governance, promotion of human rights, democratic processes, water diplomacy (institutional level).