K4D

Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Learning Journey on Inclusion in Crises Briefing Note

Inclusion across the nexus in protracted conflicts

KEY FINDINGS

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires inclusion of the most vulnerable people affected by intersecting inequalities in coordinated humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance (the 'nexus') during protracted conflicts. This involves understanding 1) what inclusion means as a critical cross-cutting element of the nexus approach in conflict settings, and 2) how, in individual contexts, improved nexus coordination can support meaningful inclusion of the most marginalised people through local pathways to sustainable change. Key approaches include enhanced collaboration on intersectional analysis of marginalisation and contextual-specific approaches to navigating local power dynamics.

❶ Introduction

This briefing note summarises key considerations and resources to guide the inclusion of people most affected by intersecting inequalities in coordinated humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance programming in protracted conflicts. This provides an overview of the main issues, with the next briefing note in this series having a sector focus. This is a common resource for development, humanitarian and peacebuilding advisors and programme managers within the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and other aid organisations. It aims to inspire and inform cross-cadre discussions and collaborative synergies to achieve inclusion objectives in practice.

This rapid scoping of literature does not summarise guidance on inclusion developed for the separate domains of assistance – humanitarian, development and peacebuilding. Rather, it seeks to identify research on how to amplify an inclusion approach 'across the nexus' – through opportunities for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors to strengthen inclusion as they forge more effective connections between their work. This scoping work found limited empirical evidence of mainstreaming inclusion across the nexus in protracted conflicts. Given this – and bearing in mind that context is paramount with top-down, instrumentalised checklists generally unhelpful – the findings are presented in this note as guiding questions and key resources for further (contextualised) investigation.

❷ What is the nexus and why focus on inclusion within it?

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus is a response to ineffective, short-term, repetitive humanitarian action and uncoordinated humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance in a world of increasingly protracted conflicts and frequent climate shocks (Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019). The nexus approach aims to strengthen 'collaboration, coherence and complementarity' between humanitarian, development and peace actions 'to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2019). How the approach is operationalised depends on specific contexts,

Reading time:

🕐 10 minutes

Who is this for:

FCDO Advisors and Programme Managers in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding cadres; other humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations.

What you can find:

❶ Sets out the brief's objective, scope and methodology.

❷ Explains the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, how inclusion relates to the nexus, and identifies opportunities and challenges.

❸ Looks at ways to build a shared understanding of inclusion to support collaboration on inclusion across the nexus.

❹ Summarises guiding questions on operationalising inclusion across the nexus.

BOX 1

Inclusion and the nexus

OECD (2019) [DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#) sets out that: recognising the importance of putting people at the centre, tackling exclusion and promoting gender equality, nexus 'joined-up programming will seek to:

> Ensure an inclusive, people-centred approach in all crises and violent conflicts that respects international human rights principles and standards;

> Address conflict risks by tackling exclusion, persecution and injustice, promoting gender equality wherever possible as standard good practice; and

> Actively support the principles of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including through ensuring a focus on gender equality and women's leadership across humanitarian, development and peace actions as essential elements in achieving sustainable progress.'

but fundamentally seeks for humanitarian, development and peace actors to work together towards shared outcomes (OECD 2019; Development Initiatives 2019: 9).

Inclusion is a fundamental element of the nexus approach. Inclusion is both a key objective and a means for achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), with the constituent parts of the nexus – humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance – engaged diversely in addressing the intersecting inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind (Beck et al. 2021; OECD 2021).The nexus approach, as set out by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), is at its core an inclusive approach, aiming to '**put people at the centre**, tackling exclusion and promoting gender equality'. This involves ensuring accountability to people being assisted; strengthening transparency, voice and participation; and providing opportunities for affected populations to identify their needs, and articulate risks, vulnerabilities, and root causes and structural drivers of crises (OECD 2019) (See Box 1). The OECD DAC recommendation also emphasises the need for conflict-sensitive gender analysis that seeks to understand and measure exclusion, social cohesion, resilience, and accountability chains (among other points) 'to avoid unintended negative consequences and maximise positive effects' (ibid.).

An inclusion focus across the nexus brings opportunities for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors to work more effectively on existing common or overlapping objectives on inclusion. These objectives may focus on gender equality – as outlined in OECD 2021. They may seek to address intersecting inequalities shaped by discrimination along gender, disability, age, ethnicity, faith and sexuality lines. Moreover, it is a chance to bring more closely into focus the cross-cutting relevance of inclusion for a people-centred nexus approach and for other nexus objectives, given that exclusion and marginalisation are key drivers of fragility,

while inclusion is central to peace and resilience (OECD 2021, 2019).

There are also challenges to an inclusion approach across the nexus. Some are inherent to the nexus approach, for example, the tensions involved in balancing humanitarian, development and peacebuilding mandates and approaches, and safeguarding rapid, neutral and impartial humanitarian action (OECD, 2019; Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019; Development Initiatives 2019). Another challenge, as with other large collaborative exercises, is avoiding 'over-investment in coordination mechanisms' that risks 'diversion of scarce resources from 'doing'' (Swithern 2019: 43).

Others are more specific to developing an inclusion focus across the nexus. Shared understanding of what inclusion means as a cross-cutting element of the nexus agenda, and how to operationalise this, could be improved (Beck et al. 2021). A vital first step includes building recognition of 'inclusion as a key element for operationalising the principles of impartiality and humanity' in humanitarian assistance (Barbelet, 2021: 14; see Box 2). There also appears to be a gap in understanding exactly how a nexus focus on inclusion can contribute to 'transformational change' (Beck et al. 2021). That is, how it can address the root causes of inequalities and discrimination – the social norms, cultural values and power structures (ibid.: 7) (see Box 3).

Guiding questions

> How can humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors support an inclusion focus across the nexus in a way that: 1) contributes to strengthened understanding (and consensus-building) on what the nexus approach means in practice, particularly at country level, and how inclusion is fundamental to achieving nexus objectives; and 2) factors in the often limited resources and capacity for working on inclusion issues at the country level? (Beck et al. 2021)

> How can nexus actors best balance investment (time and resources) in coordination on inclusion across the nexus approach with support for on-the-ground implementation of inclusive approaches?

> How can nexus actors build a shared understanding of the context-specific tensions in the nexus approach – and how an inclusion focus is affected by, and in turn can impact on, these? Depending on the individual setting, questions that may be relevant include:

— How can nexus actors effectively balance the need for holistic, joint and/or shared contextual intersectional analysis coordinated across the nexus with safeguarding space for stand-alone, rapid, needs-based humanitarian assessments? (Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019: 5)

— How can nexus actors balance an increased emphasis on the role of state-led institutions (such as through intentional development work with national and local authorities) 'where the state is party to a conflict and/or unable or unwilling to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people'? (Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019: 4)

Key resources

> The humanitarian-development-peace nexus. What does it mean for multi-mandated organizations? (Fanning and Fullwood-Thomas 2019)

> DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (OECD 2019)

> Donors at the triple nexus: lessons from the United Kingdom (Development Initiatives 2019)

> In search of inclusive humanitarian responses (Barbelet and Lough 2021)

> Inclusion strategy and roadmap: outcomes from the inclusion priority topic at the 2021 (Barbelet 2021)

> OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles (OCHA 2012)

> Review of Progress: Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls into the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Nexus Agenda (Beck et al. 2021)

> Gender equality across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (OECD 2021)

> More Relevant? 10 ways to approach what people really need (Swithern 2019)

BOX 2

Humanitarian principles and inclusion

Humanitarian principles (UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) Emergency Handbook, 2015 online version) (see UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) 2012)	'The concept of inclusion in humanitarian action' (Barbelet 2021: 5)
'The principal motivation of humanitarian action is to save lives and alleviate suffering in a manner that respects and restores personal dignity. Accordingly, **humanity** is the principal driver for any response to a crisis, whether caused by conflict, violence or natural or man-made disaster. At the same time, humanitarian actors distinguish themselves from other actors responding to a crisis by their **impartiality**. This means that humanitarian action is based solely on need, with priority given to the most urgent cases irrespective of race, nationality, gender, religious belief, political opinion or class. The **neutrality** of humanitarian action is further upheld when humanitarian actors refrain from taking sides in hostilities or engaging in political, racial, religious or ideological controversies. At the same time, **independence** requires humanitarian actors to be autonomous. They are not to be subject to control or subordination by political, economic, military or other non-humanitarian objectives.'	> '**Inclusion as impartiality:** ensuring through inclusive assessments and the use of disaggregated data that humanitarian action reaches and focuses on the most urgent cases and those most affected by crises, without discrimination. > **Inclusion as equitable access:** ensuring that all individuals affected by crises can have equal access to services and assistance. > **Inclusion as specific and diverse needs:** ensuring that humanitarian responses address the specific needs of individuals and cater to diverse needs, including tailored programmes. > **Inclusion as participation:** ensuring that all individuals are able to participate in humanitarian responses, including influencing the strategic direction of humanitarian responses; that capacities of all individuals are recognised and harnessed; and that humanitarian responses listen to the voices of those too often marginalised in societies and communities.'
Source: UNHCR. Retrieved from Humanitarian Principles in UNHCR Emergency Handbook (UNHCR 2015 online version)	Source: ODI. Retrieved from Inclusion strategy and roadmap: outcomes from the inclusion priority topic at the 2021 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week. (Barbelet 2021) CC-BY-NC-ND-4.0

❸ Building a shared understanding of inclusion across the nexus

Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors define and approach inclusion in various ways which can complicate collaboration on inclusion. Inclusion[1] can refer to whether external assistance is reaching and helping the most marginalised people in specific contexts, addressing barriers to accessing aid that are created by entrenched power imbalances, and the consequent discrimination and denial of rights (Barbelet and Lough 2021). Additionally, inclusion can be about whether vulnerable people actively participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance – which evidence shows tends to be critical for reaching and supporting the most excluded (ibid; Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) 2019). Inclusion can also aim to be 'transformative', tackling structural inequities to improve 'the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society' (World Bank 2013: 4).

Approaches to inclusion emphasise the importance of intersectionality (Box 4), focusing on: addressing the processes of marginalisation and supporting local pathways to inclusion (Howard et al. 2018); achievement of human rights and participatory processes, taking into account people's capacities (as well as their vulnerabilities) (Barbelet and Lough 2021); universal design of programmes and services (Monjurul Kabir et al. 2022); and providing both mainstreamed inclusion and targeted interventions ('twin-track') (IASC 2019).

Operationalising these approaches can be 'politically and culturally loaded and practically tricky' (Swithern 2019: 20); these difficulties are historically compounded in crises. Challenges include: how can the transformative potential of intersectionality be operationalised in a protracted conflict setting, avoiding tokenistic and reductionist 'tick-box' approach focused on vulnerable groups that perpetuate the exclusion of the most marginalised while leading to practical 'inclusion overload'? (Swithern 2019: 19; Swithern 2020) What approaches can help humanitarian action balance reaching as many people as possible with tailoring responses to specific needs and vulnerabilities, and ensuring a needs-based approach is informed by rights? (Swithern 2019: 46; Barbelet and Wake 2020: 14). Such questions and others are currently being researched by the Humanitarian Policy Group at ODI (see Key Resources in this section).

Exploration of definitions of inclusion and related approaches, the opportunities and challenges involved and how to respond to these, will help build shared understanding as a basis for collaboration between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors.

[1] This paragraph draws on analysis in Slater forthcoming.

BOX 3

Findings on mainstreaming inclusion across the nexus – gender equality focus

Beck et al. (2021), focusing on one aspect of inclusion across the nexus in their review of progress on mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEEWG) across the nexus, find:

> A critical need to develop a strategic vision and/ or overarching framework for mainstreaming gender equality into the nexus;

> A lack of agreement on what 'transformational change' means in the context of the nexus approach;

> That 'several areas identified as the nexus 'glue' linking humanitarian, development and peace initiatives are also of particular importance in relation to gender mainstreaming, including cash transfers, social protection and localization, which adds to the argument for a specific focus on GEEWG' (Beck et al. 2021: vii).

BOX 4

Intersectionality

In their Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit Monjurul Kabir et al. (2022: 8) set out how intersectionality 'recognises that people's lives are shaped by their identities, relationships and social factors. These combine to create intersecting forms of privilege and oppression depending on a person's context and existing power structures such as patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia and racism.'

They go on to emphasise that 'It is important to remember the transformative potential of intersectionality, which extends beyond merely a focus on the impact of intersecting identities' (ibid.).

This resource guide and toolkit is the result of an inter-agency joint project between United Nations (UN) Women, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and supported by the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), with input from a Civil Society Advisory Group.

Guiding questions

> How do humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors define inclusion? Is there an understanding of potential synergies and tensions in different approaches to inclusion across the nexus in situations of protracted conflict? Where do opportunities for cooperation lie?

> How do humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors analyse people's intersecting inequalities, and the underpinning power dynamics and processes of discrimination and marginalisation, in order to understand their vulnerabilities and capacities, and entry points for external support?

> What theory of change do humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors have for how their assistance achieves inclusive results?

> How can coordinating inclusion across the nexus avoid a shallow, instrumentalised roll-out of inclusive processes, and enable meaningful inclusion and support for contextually-specific local pathways to change?

> How will humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors ensure their approach to supporting inclusion across the nexus is conflict-sensitive (the process and outcomes reduce and mitigate harm as far as possible), principled, and ethical, with appropriately situated approaches and practices to safety and risk mitigation, communication modes and processes, safeguarding, navigating power dynamics, confidentiality, data protection, and informed consent?

> What are the practical linkages across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors with related goals of participation, localisation and accountability to affected populations and preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (including in the aid sector)? (OECD 2021)

Key resources

> Humanitarian Policy Group's project on Falling through cracks: inclusion and exclusion in humanitarian action:

— In search of inclusive humanitarian responses (Barbelet and Lough 2021);

— Inclusion strategy and roadmap: outcomes from the inclusion priority topic at the 2021 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (Barbelet 2021);

— Inclusion and Exclusion in Humanitarian Action. The State of Play (Barbelet and Wake 2020)

> Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity (World Bank 2013)

> Navigating the Pathways from Exclusion to Accountability: From Understanding Intersecting Inequalities to Building Accountable Relationships (Howard et al. 2018)

> Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit (Monjurul Kabir et al. 2022)

> Standards and guidance on inclusion in humanitarian assistance:

— Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (IASC 2019)

— Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action (IASC 2018)

— Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities (Age and Disability Consortium 2018)

> Humanitarian and Social Protection Approaches to Inclusion: Knowledge Gaps and Implications for Working in the Humanitarian–Social Protection Nexus (Slater forthcoming)

> More Relevant? 5 calls for action (Swithern 2020)

> More Relevant? 10 ways to approach what people really need (Swithern 2019)

> Gender equality across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (OECD 2021)

> Why does inclusion matter for peace? (Dumasy 2018)

> Disability-Inclusive Peacebuilding: State of the Field and the Way Forward (Murray 2021)

❹ Operationalising inclusion across the nexus

Coordination on inclusion between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors has multiple potential dimensions. Deciding on what to collaborate on and how will depend on the individual context. IASC Results Group 4 (2021: 2) sets out four potential mechanisms for connected working across the nexus: shared/joint analysis of need, risk and vulnerability; articulating collective outcomes/priority areas; supporting those outcomes/priorities through coordinated planning and programming; and aligned or harmonised financing.

Nexus programming may be sequential (with primary use in sudden onset disaster contexts) or simultaneous (involving 'closely joined programmes, and more parallel, complementary approaches') (Box 5) (Development Initiatives 2019: 25). In longstanding conflicts humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors will need to decide which programming approach(es)

are relevant for achieving inclusion objectives in their operating context, and how to overcome structural barriers ('e.g., different project timelines, funding cycles, and sources of funding and compartmentalized humanitarian and development divisions within institutions') (Mendenhall 2019: 83).

In implementing these approaches, lessons learned from crisis and non-crisis settings on how to support meaningful inclusion will help avoid the pitfalls of instrumentalising inclusion (for example, counting who is present in a participatory process) without achieving meaningful inclusion (for example, ensuring the most marginalised person present can share their views confidently and safely, which are listened to and used to inform and shape the process). This involves being aware of power dynamics within and between excluded groups, between them and local and external agencies, and among other collaborating stakeholders. It also often requires separate safe space to engage with the most vulnerable individuals, along with time and skilful facilitation (Shaw et al. 2020).

BOX 5

Menu of potential programming approaches

Sequential programming	Simultaneous programming	
'Establishing mechanisms which enable development and humanitarian programmes to scale up and down as a crisis emerges, intensifies or contracts'	'Laying the foundations for longer-term development and peacebuilding through or alongside humanitarian programmes'	'Investing in resilience, preparedness and peacebuilding to prevent the risk of crisis'
'Approach 1: Embedding crisis modifiers for early response into development programmes, although the challenge continues to be integrating this approach more systematically. Approach 2: Flexible or shock-responsive nutrition, social protection and health programming to put contingencies in place, enabling rapid resource reallocation, a scale-up or shift in focus. Approach 3: Flexing to respond to contextual changes when countries move out of crisis.'	'Approach 4: Humanitarian programmes that plant the seeds for longer-term social protection programming through cash transfers. Approach 5: Development and peacebuilding programmes that support peace dividends in parallel with humanitarian assistance to lay foundations for early recovery. Approach 6: Providing support to longer-term livelihoods and market expansion during a crisis to lay foundations for recovery.'	'Approach 7: Systematically embedding resilience into humanitarian and development programmes. Approach 8: Integrating a peace lens into development programming.'

Source: Development Initiatives, 2019. Donors at the triple nexus: lessons from the United Kingdom. Chapter 3, page 26. Available at: www.devinit.org/resources/donors-triple-nexus-lessons-united-kingdom/. Used with permission.

Guiding questions

Across all mechanisms

> How and in what circumstances can vulnerable and marginalised people participate as active agents, with the various nexus coordination processes on inclusion informed and shaped by their capacities, knowledge and aspirations? (IASC 2018) What are the enablers and barriers for this?

> How can multi-stakeholder support for inclusive outcomes and processes be strengthened across the nexus (including in participatory monitoring and evaluation), important for articulating outcomes and for building understanding of how to achieve them? (IASC Results Group 4 2021: 3) Are national and local authorities, and organisations of women, older people and people with disabilities and faith-based organisations involved?

Undertaking a shared or joint data exercise and analysis of need, risk and vulnerability

> How can collaboration between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors best support participatory, qualitative, and disaggregated data collection, with a focus on strengthening data management and data ethics?

> How can collaboration between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors support in-depth intersectional analysis looking at lived experiences of the most marginalised, potential pathways to inclusion, and entry points for external support?

Articulating collective outcomes or priority areas for inclusion

> How and in what circumstances can inclusion be a focus in the collective outcomes or priority areas? Have humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors considered how collectively they can:

— address the environmental, attitudinal and institutional barriers to reaching and supporting vulnerable people?

— support the participation and capacities of vulnerable people and organisations of people affected by social inequalities and discrimination?

— contribute to transformative social inclusion?

Coordinating planning, programming and financing to support these outcomes/areas

> How and under what circumstances can coordinated sequential and/or simultaneous programming approaches to the nexus support achievement of inclusion outcomes? For example:

— How can an initial humanitarian response lay the groundwork for transformative change on inclusion of the most vulnerable? (Beck et al. 2021: 7)

— How can collaborative humanitarian-development-peacebuilding programming with an inclusion focus flex to respond to acute needs alongside chronic vulnerabilities in protracted conflicts? (Beck et al. 2021; Development Initiatives 2019)

> What are the structural barriers (timeline, programme cycle, funding sources, national laws) to more coordinated programming and financing on inclusion across the nexus and how can these be addressed?

Key resources

> Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes. Planning and implementing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in contexts of protracted crisis (IASC 2020)

> Mapping Good Practice in the Implementation of Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Approaches, Synthesis Report (IASC Results Group 4 2021)

> Donors at the triple nexus: lessons from the United Kingdom (Development Initiatives 2019)

> Navigating the humanitarian-development nexus in forced displacement contexts (Mendenhall 2019)

> Building inclusive community activism and accountable relations through an intersecting inequalities approach (Shaw et al. 2020)

> A review of the triple nexus approach in discourse and practice: with a focus on Islamic Relief's triple nexus programme (Brown and Mena 2021)

> Development actors at the nexus: Lessons from crises in Bangladesh, Cameroon and Somalia (FAO et al. 2021)

> Changing humanitarian practice on localisation and inclusion across the nexus (Christoplos et al. 2018)

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Learning Journey resources

AVAILABLE NOW

> *Inclusion in crises: Building a common learning agenda within the FCDO* (K4D Discussion Paper) – This is an FCDO-Only document. To access, contact K4D using your FCDO/DFID email.

> *Analysing intersecting inequalities in crisis settings*
> (K4D Helpdesk Report)

> *Impact of social inequalities and discrimination on vulnerability to crises*
> (K4D Helpdesk Report)

> *Inclusion in crisis, response, recovery and resilience*
> (K4D Helpdesk Report)

> *Social inequalities and famine and severe food insecurity risk*
> (K4D Helpdesk Report)

COMING SOON

Briefing Note 3: Aimed at programme managers and advisers, highlighting what works to effectively monitor inclusion in crises. This will include:

> How to generate good monitoring data, including examples of useful KPIs, metrics, and indicators.

> Disaggregating data and undertaking intersectional analyses to identify and include those hardest to reach.

> How to develop VfM indicators around inclusion in crises.

This will be available on the K4D Learning Journey Platform and K4D OpenDocs.

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