

SUMMARY

# GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Why is a triple nexus approach  
needed for Finland's development  
cooperation, humanitarian  
assistance and peace actions?

Analysis by the Development Policy Committee (DPC),  
March 2021



DEVELOPMENT  
POLICY COMMITTEE

## Summary

**P**rolonged and complex crises around the world pose a significant challenge to the functioning of communities and societies and the well-being/human security of their populations. Development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peace actions must therefore also be able to provide a more coordinated, comprehensive and efficient response to the needs of people living amidst crises situations. This calls for closer collaboration between various aid actors.

The publication of the Development Policy Committee (DPC) looks to the background, need for and factors to be taken into account in implementing a *triple nexus* approach to collaboration, particularly in fragile contexts and protracted conflicts. Readers are also familiarised with the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and the requirements set by it, published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Finally, the publication provides recommendations on how collaboration and interlinkages in accordance with the triple nexus approach can be promoted more broadly in Finland's development policy and external relations. The analysis and recommendations were produced by an expert group composed of members of the DPC.

The triple nexus approach refers to measures that aim to strengthen coherence and complementarity of development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peace actions. Its aim is to promote positive interlinkages between different actions and actors and to form a joint view among actors of the collective outcomes pursued by all through their respective activities. Collaboration with local actors and their commitment to the process also play a key role in this. When successful, this new and more coherent way of working can lead to sustainable peace through seamless and more appropriate actions, as viewed from the perspective of people in target countries and the realisation of their rights. This is the main objective of the triple nexus approach.

Implementing development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peace actions is particularly challenging in the most fragile contexts, where the situation is inherently weak. Factors generating and maintaining fragility may include e.g. dysfunctioning of society's institutions, poverty, exacerbated economic inequality, political instability and armed conflicts. Growing proneness to conflict may ultimately trigger a broader collapse of the entire state system. Climate change and weakening biodiversity, forced migration and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic in turn affect more stable areas, too.

A significant number of Finland's bilateral development cooperation partner countries are fragile states, such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Myanmar. Finland is further known as a committed provider of humanitarian assistance and as a peace actor. The preconditions for increased coordination and closer collaboration among humanitarian, development and peace actors are already in place, while the practical need for it is growing. The Finnish Government Programme also states that effective dealing with protracted crises requires coordination between peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation.

Pressure for reform arises from increasingly difficult operational contexts in which needs for humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peace actions often coexist. In these situations, humanitarian needs are often prolonged and they have a tendency to re-emerge over time. It is thus important to engage simultaneously in what is more traditionally regarded as development cooperation – in fields such as education, sexual and reproductive health, and water and sanitation. The demand for various forms of peace action is equally determined by the specific characteristics and needs of each operating environment.

Despite the growing need, bolstering collaboration between development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peace actions may be challenging. The DAC Recommendation serves in facilitating the change process by providing a compact guideline for the triple nexus approach and listing principles for actions required. Finland is also an Adherent committed to the DAC Recommendation, which is binding on DAC member countries.

The key aim is for development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peace actions funded by Finland to be greater than the sum of its parts. The transition to the triple nexus approach will not, however, take place automatically or by making only minor adjustments to current ways of working. This is why a special aim of this

---

*Pressure for reform arises from increasingly difficult operating environments often involving a coexistent need for humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peace action alike.*

publication is to spur the implementation of the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in the Finnish Foreign Service and to map out the basic prerequisites for successful operationalisation.

Finland is well-placed to strengthen its role as a triple nexus actor. This, however, requires stronger political will, determined leadership and goal-oriented policies supporting collaboration between sectors. For closer collaboration and joint objectives among development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peace actions to become a reality, there is also a need for change in ways of thinking and working in both donor and recipient countries. Finland has yet to develop a jointly adopted triple nexus approach to guide its activities in fragile situations. In addition, aid and civil society organisations (CSOs) require more specific instructions on how and for which kinds of nexus-supporting activities Finnish government funding can be channelled.

