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MASTER THESIS

Operationalising the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus:

A Case Study Analysis of NGOs Implementing Nexus Programming

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Declaration

I, hereby, declare that this Master Thesis entitled 'Operationalising the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus: A Case Study Analysis of NGOs Implementing Nexus Programming', is my original work for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in International Development Studies – GLODEP. I confirm that the work contained herein is my own, except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text through references or acknowledgements.

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Zásady pro vypracování

According to OECD estimates, today nearly half of the 836 million people living in extreme poverty live in fragile contexts and they are projected to rise to 80% by 2030. With cases of protracted conflict and fragility becoming the norm, the need for a new way of working among stakeholders has been identified. A nexus approach consisting of better coordination, programming and financing among humanitarian, development and peace-keeping actions has been suggested by leading international organizations such as the OECD and OCHA as paramount for reaching coherent and sustainable collective outcomes. Although a wide consensus has been reached on the need for this new approach, limited action has been taken in regard to its actual implementation. Accordingly, this work will analyze an ongoing case of protracted fragility and examine whether a nexus approach is effectively being followed by the stakeholders involved.

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Abstract

With the average humanitarian crisis lasting more than nine years, the need for the international community to come together and operationalise the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus is felt now more than ever. While agencies of the United Nations and donors have started piloting some initial efforts of nexus coordination, NGOs on the ground have also began developing new programming approaches inspired by the nexus. With this in mind, this study explores how these organizations are operationalising the nexus and whether a model for its implementation can be inferred.

A case study analysis of different NGOs revealed a convergence of organizational practices towards more contextualized, flexible and integrated programming. Further analysis, guided by the theoretical framework of programme cycle management, allowed for the development of a Nexus Programme Cycle based on the sample's most successful practices of integrated programming while ensuring their added-value and complementarity within the programme's life-cycle. These findings can serve as guidance for NGOs seeking to implement nexus programmes while also serving as valuable practical lessons for policy makers.

Keywords: Operationalisation, Nexus, Project Cycle Management, Programming.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARP	Area Rehabilitation Programme
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DPP	Durable Peace Programme
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCA	Fragile Context Approach
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-government organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCM	Project cycle management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPO	Strategic Programme Objectives
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 marked a defining moment for international cooperation with a renewed commitment on behalf of humanitarian actors and donors to go beyond the humanitarian and development divide; the New Way of Working was inaugurated. From there on agencies of the United Nations, namely OCHA and IOM, alongside the OECD and major donors such as the European Union, started formalizing this new concept which was defined by OCHA (2017) as "working over multiple years, based on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors, including those outside the UN system, towards collective outcomes" with the objective of meeting people's needs while reducing risk and vulnerability. This definition was initially targeted at humanitarian and development actors, but soon came to include peace-building actors as well. The inter-linkages between these three actors came to be known as the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus.

The need for a coherent and comprehensive "nexus approach" is clear. According to the OECD in 2016, more countries experienced violent conflict than at any moment in the past 30 years. In 2017 alone the number of newly displaced people is estimated to have reached 16.2 million, contributing to a total of 68.5 million, a record high (UNHCR, 2018). By 2030, 80% of the world's poorest will be living in fragile contexts accounting for 620 million people. While Official Development Assistance (ODA) to fragile contexts has increased, it has become increasingly of a humanitarian nature accounting for half of all ODA to the fifteen most fragile contexts. The risk of using aid systemically to address increasingly long-lasting crises is becoming unsustainable for any long-term development to take hold.

Due to the gravity of the world-wide humanitarian crisis, efforts to develop a nexus agenda, and its operationalisation, continued soon after the World Humanitarian Summit. OCHA (2018, 2019) and IOM (Perret, 2019) published reports and guidelines on how to operationalise nexus outcomes; the OECD (2019) published its own set of recommendations to donors and the European Union even announced the launch of six nexus pilots in Chad, Uganda, Sudan, Nigeria, Myanmar and Iraq (General Secretariat of the Council, 2017; European Commission, 2018).

These works contributed to the construction of a substantial body of "nexus policy" addressed specifically at local and national authorities, UN agencies and donors.

Despite these efforts a study commissioned by FAO, the Norwegian Refugee Council and UNDP has found that the purpose and scope of the nexus is still unclear; joint programming among different actors has not taken place significantly, and there are still major disincentives to cross-sectoral coordination. Nonetheless, the study also found that there were, in fact, some positive examples of localised nexus approaches. These integrated programmes tended to be designed through a bottom-up approach focusing on a set of issues in a specific geographical area (Poole & Culbert, 2019). The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) came to a similar conclusion and identified successful cases of nexus implementation coming from the local level, from programmes often implemented by multi-mandate organizations working alongside affected communities (ICVA, 2018). If, indeed, a number of organizations have moved forward and started experimenting with the implementation of nexus programmes, then the very first practical examples of a New Way of Working may not be coming from international agencies but from NGOs in the field.

1.2 PURPOSE

This study aims at investigating how NGOs are contributing to define the humanitarian, development and peace nexus from the bottom-up. Specifically, this study is interested in understanding how NGOs are translating nexus policy, as developed by the international community, into concrete actions, and whether a model for the operationalisation of the nexus can be developed from them.

The first step requires answering the following question: how are organisations operationalising the humanitarian, development and peace nexus? The objective is to identify specific organizational practices implemented by a number of NGOs to address the needs of their integrated nexus programmes. Chapter 2 "Operationalising Nexus Programming" will address this first step. Once our understanding of these programmes is clear, the study will move forward to address whether it is possible to discern and propose a generic definition of nexus programming based on an identifiable set of successful and common organisational practices. Chapter 3 "Defining Nexus Programming" will explore this possibility.

By addressing these questions, this study seeks to be part of the larger debate on how the humanitarian, development and peace nexus is being defined and operationalised in the field by the initiative of innovative organizations. This aspect is particularly important for the development of the nexus agenda for a number of reasons. Firstly, NGOs have developed their programming through years of practical experience in the field alongside affected communities; ignoring the value of their learning would be unwise. Secondly, the work being conducted at this moment by the organizations that are piloting nexus approaches can provide invaluable lessons on the sustainability and effectiveness of the nexus, while also identifying enablers and barriers to its operationalisation. NGOs are ultimately the operational arm of international agencies, and not taking into account their input can be counterproductive, if not fatal, to the implementation of the nexus agenda. However, it is worth clarifying that the objective and focus of this study is to understand how these organisations are operationalising the nexus and is not an evaluation of these programs. Consequently, this study also doesn't intend to examine how the operations of these organisations align or break with nexus policies at regional or national levels as set by donors or international agencies.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Case Study Analysis

To achieve the purpose of this research a qualitative case-study analysis will be implemented. Case-study methodology is, in fact. indicated to answer the 'how' of a phenomena, in this case the organizational behaviour of NGOs, while keeping in mind the fragile and volatile environments in which nexus programmes take place.

The first step of this study will therefore take an exploratory case study approach of multiple organizations to identify which kind of activities are being implemented within nexus programmes. Alongside the identification of the individual practices, ongoing thematic analysis will aim to observe any differences and similarities between NGOs and to investigate potential organizational patterns, as well as their causal-links with best practices and challenges. To implement this analysis a framework had to be followed to make sense of the complexities of programme management and logically organize the vast variety of organizational practices and activities. To this end, all observed case studies will be deconstructed according to the theoretical framework of Project Cycle Management (PCM) which facilitates the coding of organizational

practices according to their temporal implementation in the programme life cycle as well as their purpose and scope.

PCM is an approach to structure and manage projects through a connected and sequential set of phases which outline specific actions to be taken in different moments of the project's life cycle (Umhlaba Development Services, 2017). Within international cooperation programmes, PCM approaches are widely used and are emphasized by donors and international agencies for the execution of their sponsored programmes. PCM approaches can, therefore, differ between organizations that will tailor them to align with their objectives and mandates by prioritizing certain phases over others and rearranging activities according to their needs. As several international agencies and donors apply slightly different approaches, this study will use a generalized one that can easily be related and confronted with more specific ones. The table below illustrates four of the most common programme cycles applied by major donors and international agencies alongside the one that was developed for the purpose of this study.

Table 1 Comparing Variations of PCM

OCHA	UNDP	EuropeAID	ECHO	This Study
Needs Assessment & Analysis	Analysis	Programming	Programming	Analysis
Strategic Planning	Strategic Planning	Identification	Identification	Planning & Programming
Resource Mobilization	Implementing	Formulation	Appraisal	Financing
Implementing & Monitoring	Evaluating	Implementation	Financing	Implementation
Peer Review & Evaluation	Completion and Transition	Evaluation & Audit	Implementation	Monitoring & Evaluation
			Evaluation	

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on IASC (2015), UNDP (2011),
European Commission (2004) and ECHO (2003).

Once the organizational practices of each organization are identified, analysed and assigned to the different phases of the programme cycle, the second step of the analysis will begin. The goal of the second step is that of determining whether a definition of nexus programming can be achieved. Accordingly, a cross-case synthesis will be carried out for each phase of the programme cycle, so that a core sample of activities that characterize each phase will emerge. Consequently, the resulting assumptions will be tested against the theoretical framework of PCM to ensure continuity and complementarity between phases in the respect of the logical and inter-linked nature of its cycle.

Finally, to guide the ongoing analysis process a conceptual framework was developed to focus on answering the research questions. The framework, illustrated in Figure 1, evolved throughout the study as new information was processed and proved particularly useful in identifying causality and relationships concerning the organizational process of developing a nexus programme. One of the first causal-links of developing a nexus programme was identified in the literature review and concerned the interpretation that NGOs gave to nexus policy. Indeed, nexus policy was internalized by NGOs through an interpretative process that adapted it according to the internal characteristics of each organization, such as: mandate, organizational culture and past programme experiences. During data interpretation it became apparent that programming was also being defined by the specific characteristics of the environment around it. Some of these external factors include the fragile and volatile contexts in which nexus programmes tend to operate, the idiosyncrasies of affected communities and stakeholders, as well as the funding conditions under which the programmes operate.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework: Operationalisation of a Nexus Approach

Nexus Policy
As defined by international agencies

Implementing Organizations
Humanitarian, development and peace actors

Understanding the Nexus

Operationalising the Nexus

Analysis

Planning and Programming

Monitoring and Evaluation

Programme Cycle

Implementation

Financing

Internal Factors
- Mandate
- Organizational Culture
- Experience

External Factors
- Fragile Context
- Affected Communities
- Stakeholders
- Funding

Source: Author's own elaboration

1.3.2 Unit of Analysis and Data

The operationalisation of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus is still in early stages of development, and only a few organisations have taken concrete steps to restructure their strategies and programming towards a new way of working.

Additionally, the initiatives taken so far by these organisations are based on their individual interpretation of the nexus, which is further influenced by their respective niches of expertise and mandates. It is not surprising then that the literature on the topic is still scarce, since only a few organisations have documented their nexus programmes. This study will therefore analyse a group of representative organisations that have been intentionally documenting their progress in the implementation of multi-sectoral integrated programmes. These organisations are: World Vision, CARE, Plan International, Oxfam and WeWorld-GVC.

Therefore, this study will analyse as primary sources the progress reports of these organizations, as well as workshops and conferences where they have presented their experiences. Alongside these organizations a number of reports from NGO networks, consultancy firms and a variety of

other sources were extremely useful in adding detail and analysis to different aspects of integrated programming and the development of nexus approaches. These studies also enriched the sample group with additional cases of organizations that have not been publicly reporting on their nexus approaches. Organizations added by secondary sources include the Norwegian Refugee Council, Action Against Hunger and Christian Aid among others.

1.3.3 Limitations

As already mentioned, the nexus is still a fresh conceptual shift with most of its policy at the international level being defined in the past two years. Moreover, policy frameworks have until now mostly focused on the country level and have involved international agencies, donors and large scale stakeholders; they have not paid equal attention to implementing organisations and their field operations. The result is that there are limited examples of nexus influenced programming, and, furthermore, that only organisations with specific characteristics have had the flexibility to promptly enact these practices in their programmes. Multi-mandate organisations, so not limited to only humanitarian or development mandates, represent the majority of instances of organisations operationalising nexus theory.

This is a fact to keep in mind as it influences the general validity of the study's findings, while highlighting the challenges that humanitarian organisations have found in accepting the broader concept of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. Additionally, organisations that are experimenting with new programming practices are still in the initial stages of planning and implementation. This means that most nexus programming is still in a piloting phase and will need to be monitored and evaluated before final conclusions can be made on its effectiveness and validity.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the methodology that was first chosen for this study involved field visits to NGOs in a designated geographic area in order to carry out first-hand case study analyses of their programmes. The study was intended to focus on data gathered from interviews with programme managers and focus groups with staff and communities. Unfortunately, due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, these field visits became impossible, which therefore changed the methodological set-up of the research to include self-reported case studies and secondary sources.

2. OPERATIONALISING NEXUS PROGRAMMING

As the United Nations and other institutional actors such as the OECD and the European Union define and pilot the nexus, implementing organizations complement this activity on the ground. For institutions it is a matter of finding the right approaches to lead, coordinate and articulate all the stakeholders; for organizations it is a matter of changing organizational structures and business models (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

From programme design to its implementation and monitoring this chapter will follow the different phase of the project cycle management to examine which actions are being taken and which practices adopted to operationalise nexus theory into programming. The phases that will follow are: analysis, planning and programming, financing, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

2.1 ANALYSIS

The starting point for any humanitarian or development programme requires organizations to build up a case for their intervention. Organizations can carry out an array of assessments to collect the evidence needed to justify a proposed intervention and to build a case for its feasibility. The information gathered during this phase will be instrumental to develop later steps of the PCM, in defining strategic objectives, programme design, resource requirements and will also serve as baseline for future programme evaluations (IASC, 2015). According to nexus policy, this phase should occur jointly between humanitarian, development and peace actors, while also including donors and other relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the analysis should carefully examine the context of the situation, the root-causes and structural drivers of instability. Special consideration must also be paid to risk analysis when operating in conflict scenarios (OECD, 2019).

2.1.1 Joint Analysis

Joint analysis is generally a widely accepted practice (VOICE, 2019) but bringing stakeholders to the table encounters challenges. In particular, humanitarian NGOs have responded cautiously on the basis that information sharing could lead to the deterioration of humanitarian principles and place their beneficiary communities at risk (Action Against Hunger, 2019). For example, humanitarian organizations could be addressing the immediate needs of communities while development and peacebuilding actors are working with institutions that might be responsible for

the creation of those same needs (VOICE, 2019). The disincentives can also extend to development actors who may not find it useful to allocate limited resources and efforts to collective plans that are not endorsed by the government actors they work with (Poole & Culbert, 2019). Consequently, as experienced by WeWorld-GVC (2019c), organizations may not be naturally predisposed to share information towards the development of common objectives.

The NGO network of VOICE (2019), therefore, specifies the use of joint analysis as a method to enable and promote the nexus approach; insofar as this joint analysis respects both the context in which the programme takes place and the humanitarian principles involved, as well as the mandates of all other actors.

For multi-mandate NGOs the call to a joint analysis poses less of an existential dilemma as the sharing of information can be carried out between the humanitarian and development branches of the same organization. This interpretation of joint analysis addresses many concerns about confidentiality and removes some of the barriers to coordination.

Plan International, as a multi-mandate organization, took an in-house approach to joint analysis in its Lake Chad Programme; nonetheless, the analysis process was left open to consultations with communities and key stakeholders. Based on data collected from situational analysis, they set up a three-day workshop to determine the strategic choices of the programme. The workshop included representatives from three country teams as well as national organizations. This process was crucial in switching from a coordinated approach to an integrated one (Plan International, 2018). Furthermore, the joint analysis between the organization's humanitarian and development teams contributed to the identification of both community needs as well as root causes of the crisis, in line with the desired nexus approach (VOICE, 2019). While it could technically be called a joint analysis, it escapes the wider scope as underlined in nexus policy, which focuses on reaching out to different actors with different expertise and identifying their comparative advantages to develop, jointly, the desired collective outcomes (OCHA, 2017).

2.1.2 Context Analysis

In order to determine the analysis tools that should be used, nexus policy suggests the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) as well as other risk and vulnerability analyses (OCHA, 2017). The OECD recommends gender-sensitive and root cause analyses, as well as the

identification of positive factors of resilience (OECD, 2019). In fact no standardised methodology is imposed, and as confirmed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), different country level approaches are used from HNO or Joint Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments (RPBA) to nationally developed SDG plans to name a few (IASC Humanitarian Development Nexus Task Team, 2019). At the field level, NGOs are accustomed to carry out context analysis within their programming; some are even developing their own nexus oriented practices.

One such framework is the Community Protection Approach (CPA) developed by WeWorld-GVC. The aim of the CPA is to produce multi-sector and multi-year analyses that can promote coordination among stakeholders and complementarity within existing aid strategies. Their initial assessment begins with an analysis of bias and exclusions of the affected populations by identifying their multi-dimensional needs and setting up a risk severity index with triggers to monitor and highlight particularly vulnerable groups. Additionally, a profile of each community is created through direct qualitative enquiry, which identifies causes and consequences of needs, vulnerabilities, threats and existing coping strategies and solutions that are implemented or proposed by the communities (WeWorld-GVC, 2019a).

Furthermore, WeWorld-GVC is piloting in its operations in Palestine the use of a Context Analysis Matrix, which is specifically meant to guide the organization in designing a nexus strategy supported by robust context analysis. Based on definitions provided by IASC[1] and OECD[2], the first step of the matrix identifies the typology of crises and shocks that affect or could affect the targeted communities; it then outlines priorities, challenges and vulnerabilities according to those scenarios. The second phase focuses on identifying specific determinants of the context at hand, and particularly those structural aspects that may influence the design of a nexus strategy. Focus is placed on the role played by local authorities, and by the administrative and territorial structures in place, as well as by the different states of fragility that may be present, as defined by the OECD[3]. These assessments are finally meant to identify the comparative advantages of the organization within that environment and how to structure a consequent and effective nexus strategy (WeWorld-GVC, 2019b).

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[1] Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group XVIth Meeting (1994). Definition of Complex Emergencies.
[2] OECD (2014). Guidelines for resilience systems analysis. OECD Publishing, Paris.
[3] OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018. OECD Publishing, Paris.

Moreover, CARE has identified certain aspects of context analysis that are crucial for the fragile scenarios in which nexus approaches are intended to operate; these findings are a result of its experience with nexus approaches in the MENA region. The organization stresses the importance of including root cause, gender and power analyses which can be carried out with fragility analysis frameworks, gender in emergency analysis and political economy analysis. The latter should also be adapted to different micro-climates that can be found within the broader environment by looking at the interlinkages between needs, fragility, peace and power dynamics. Furthermore, due to the fragility and instability of the environment, analyses should not only assess immediate needs but also the factors that could trigger them and change existing trends. They conclude that only through in depth and ongoing context analysis can organizations appropriately combine and layer humanitarian, development and peace actions (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

In the phases of the programme cycle that will follow the need for well-structured context analysis will be addressed frequently. Indeed relying on flows of timely and accurate information is vital to building effective nexus programming. In fact, as it will be described in section 2.2., it is a requirement for elaborating effective anticipatory strategies that can allow programmes to react and adapt to the constantly changing environment (Alcayna, 2019).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that an important contribution to consistent context analysis can be promoted and coordinated by the donors themselves. The OECD recommends donors to use their capacity to bring stakeholders together and to coordinate them towards the objective of joint context analysis (OECD, 2019). Additionally, as recommended by World Vision, donors should introduce requirements in their calls for proposals to include joint context analysis with regular impact assessments and emphasis on root-cause analysis. This guidance would indirectly facilitate context adaptation and empower staff to take evidence-based decisions (Pickwick, 2020).

2.1.3 Community-based Approach

For context analysis to succeed, the involvement of affected communities in the analysis process is of paramount importance to understand and map local needs and challenges (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018). Another important contribution in the direction of involving communities into nexus programming is that unlike the humanitarian and development industry apparatus, affected

populations do not operate nor think according to this division in silos (Christoplos et al., 2019). Taking a community driven approach will, therefore, allow for the development of short-to-long term strategies that will naturally target all areas of the nexus according to the needs and priorities of those communities (WeWorld-GVC, 2019b).

From its experience in the Democratic Republic of Congo, World Vision highlights how crucial the adoption of a people-centred, community-based approach has been to nexus programming, since the context itself is driven by strong community relationships. Applying this approach from the very first steps of the programme allowed communities to participate in context analysis; thus making them accountable and active participants of the programme throughout its execution and monitoring. Their analysis looked at multiple drivers of fragility including economic, political and social factors and then examined three possible scenarios for that context: one improving, one deteriorating and one stationary. Involving and consulting with communities throughout this analysis helped identifying unmet needs while also strengthening trust (World Vision, 2019).

CARE took a similar approach and set local participation and ownership as one of the guiding principles for its nexus approach. Target groups should not only participate in needs analysis, design and evaluation, but should also hold key positions within these processes giving particular emphasis and attention on the presence and role of women. Moreover, and depending on the specificities of the context, analysis should also be open to unconventional actors such as social movements, workers' organizations and religious and civil leaders (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

However, while NGOs have been involving local communities and civil society on the ground, the same cannot be said of international agencies. These actors have largely been missing from nexus policy literature and have not been included alongside national and regional authorities, among the key stakeholders of the nexus approach (Moriniere & Vaughan-Lee, 2018). Indeed, the absence of affected people (World Vision, 2019) and civil society organizations (ICVA, 2018) from global decision-making forums has not gone unnoticed. The International Red Cross (2018) for example has described this lack of attention as regrettable, and has recommended that the European Union ensure a higher degree of participation and engagement of Civil Society Organization (CSO) in its nexus forums in order to ensure the level of localisation that is required to enable predictable and long-term standing partnerships.

2.2 PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

Once all required analyses have been carried out, the programme strategy can be constructed; in this phase, the programme's relevance and feasibility are determined. Starting from the insights from the analysis, specific objectives can be set, as well as the indicators to track their progress and the activities necessary to achieve them. During this phase specific programmatic documents will be elaborated that will be continuously used by the staff and management of the programme; such as narrative, budget proposal, logical framework and theory of change. These documents will also serve an important role for advocacy purposes, and to communicate with donors about the scope of the programme and the mobilization of resources (IASC, 2015). Applying a nexus approach to this phase will require the rethinking of programme frameworks towards more flexible models and addressing one of the defining characteristics of the New Way of Working, the collective outcome.

2.2.1 Collective Outcomes and Strategic Objectives

In the New Way of Working, OCHA (2017) defines collective outcomes as commonly agreed upon, quantifiable, and measurable results; these outcomes aim at reducing people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities, and increasing their resilience, through the combined effort of different actors. Furthermore, these efforts should be based on each actor's comparative advantages and the results achieved in a medium to long time-frame of 3 to 5 years. Ideally, collective outcomes should be designed towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite efforts from OCHA and OECD to define and operationalise collective outcomes, it is still unclear to the community at large how they should be interpreted and implemented, which has led to a variety of proposed collective outcomes that vary in specificity and in targeting on both national and sub-national levels and in time-frames (IASC Humanitarian Development Nexus Task Team, 2019). Accordingly, it has been found that processes to develop and operationalise these outcomes haven't been able to influence existing planning frameworks and practices (Poole & Culbert, 2019). A consultancy report commissioned by IASC, which involved perspectives from UN actors as well as implementing organizations and donors, confirmed the lack of agreement on collective outcomes and proposed, through consultations with key informants, a revised generic definition. Within this definition they identified three key features of effective collective outcomes: they should be context specific, operate over multi-year time-

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frames and be leveraged on actors' comparative advantages. Joint analysis, co-planning, effective leadership and appropriate funding were identified as further enablers of this approach rather than strict requirements (Moriniere & Vaughan-Lee, 2018).

Among this ongoing debate organizations have expressed and enacted their own interpretations of collective outcomes; taking these outcomes from the country level, as preferred by the international agencies, to the field level of programmes and operations. VOICE (2019) takes a critical stance highlighting the potential conflict of interest between the collaborative approach of collective outcomes towards governmental actors and the need for neutrality of humanitarian principles. Ultimately, VOICE determines that collective outcomes should not be the objective of nexus programmes as there could be more practical ways to deliver on complementarities of actions without putting humanitarian principles at risk of politicisation. The multi-mandate World Vision sees collective outcomes more favourably and has integrated them in their operational frameworks. The organization considers them prerequisites of integrated programming, which are essential in addressing emergencies in fragile contexts and therefore instrumental to achieve the SDGs. Nonetheless, recommendations are made for collective outcomes to be context specific and context appropriate. Situations may arise where to avoid compromising humanitarian or development principles and priorities the different areas of the nexus could and should operate distinctively albeit always in a coordinated manner (World Vision, 2019).

Another organization that has interpreted and adapted the theory of a collective outcome approach into its programming is Plan International. Moving from the participatory context analysis described in the previous section, Plan International escalated the findings of that process to a stakeholder meeting where the strategic choices of the programme were refined. The overarching goal of this joint planning process was to create an integrated approach that would systematically foster complementarities, synergies and collaboration across the three functional areas of the nexus. Out of the planning came an overall programme goal and four strategic programme objectives (SPO) to achieve it. Each SPO was further divided in what the organization defines as collective outcomes or nexus outcomes; each of these outcomes was then sub-divided in three targets each representing respectively the three components of the nexus: humanitarian, development and social cohesion as a proxy for peace. All of these targets would

then be monitored by a set of specific interventions and indicators. The table below illustrates the breakdown of SPO1 as developed by Plan International in its Lake Chad Programme (Plan International, 2018).

Table 2 Plan International's Lake Chad Programme: Strategic Programme Objective 1

OVERALL PROGRAMME GOAL			
Girls and boys in the Lake Chad region are resilient and realise their rights in safety and with dignity.			
SPO 1: **Ensure and maintain equal access to relevant safe, quality and inclusive education for girls and boys in the Lake Chad region.**	**Outcome 1.1**: Girls and boys equally access relevant education opportunities.	**Humanitarian Target**: Continuation of education services for girls and boys in emergency and/or fragile settings is ensured.	1. Provision of school kits 2. Provision of cash for education 3. ...
		Development Target: Lasting systems, structures and services are in place at local and national level and enable equal access of girls and boys to education.	1. Strengthening of school-based management committee towards promoting girls' agenda based on girls' rights and gender equality 2. Strengthening of community structures to build resilience to identified shocks and stresses 3. ...
		Social Cohesion Target: Access to accountable education services and opportunities to promote social cohesion between refugees, IDPs and host community children.	1. Support to host population's children to alleviate tension with IDPs and/or refugees 2. Engagement with Islamic council of Ulamas on integration of Islamiya schools and formal education
	Outcome 1.2:	Humanitarian Target	Interventions
		Development Target	Interventions
		Social Cohesion Target	Interventions
	Outcome 1.3	Humanitarian Target	Interventions
		Development Target	Interventions
		Social Cohesion Target	Interventions

Source: Plan International. (2018). *Lake Chad Programme Strategy 2018-2023*. Plan International.

This structure allows for programme flexibility while targeting all areas of an integrated nexus approach. Under this umbrella different projects can focus on different strategic objectives and outcomes while ensuring the overall coverage of the programme through a synergy of projects (Plan International, 2018). While not stated directly by Plan International this setup would allow

organizations to assign specific interventions to actors and partners, either inside or outside the organization, based on their expertise, mode of operations and, ultimately, on their comparative advantages. Plan International is, therefore, an appropriate example on how to operationalise at the field level the theoretical framework of joint analysis, planning and collective outcomes into a nexus programme. Additionally, Plan International's integrated approach is enabled by its focus on education, child protection and gender based violence, as well as the targeting of specific communities neighbouring Lake Chad. Adopting thematic approaches such as rights-based interventions and targeting of geographical areas can facilitate the development of action plans that operate across all three functional areas of the nexus (VOICE, 2019).

Plan International as a multi-mandate organization managed to construct its programme by relying mostly on its own operational capacities; yet there are other ways for specialized organizations to achieve forms of nexus programming, as demonstrated by the experience of the Durable Peace Programme. The Durable Peace Programme (DPP) is a consortium operating in Myanmar led by seven local and international NGOs[4] with over twenty-five sub-grantees involved in its implementation. The DPP applies an integrated approach of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions to facilitate durable peace and equitable development in conflict-affected communities with particular attention given to internally displaced people (IDPs). Similarly to Plan International's strategic objectives and collective outcomes; the DPP identified five main outcome areas on which to structure the programme. These outcome areas are: durable solutions and community resilience, livelihoods and income, peacebuilding and social cohesion, gender equality and prevention of GBV (Gender-based violence) and deepening expertise of civil society (Durable Peace Programme, 2019). The first three objectives correspond specifically to development, humanitarian and peace outcomes with the last two being a combined effort of the three. Oxfam, one of the consortium partners, identified these outcome areas as strengths of the programme and a recommendation for nexus programmes more broadly. According to the organization, thinking in terms of outcomes rather than outputs facilitates the creation of partnerships with other stakeholders and addressing non-linear, long term and systemic challenges (Oxfam, 2019).

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[4] Consortium members include Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS), Metta Development Foundation, Nyein (Shalom) Foundation, Swissaid, Trocaire, and Oxfam.

Nonetheless, outcome areas that span all areas of the nexus wouldn't be possible without leadership and coordination, including the capacity to carry them through. The diversity and experience of the DPP consortium partners was, therefore, essential to the success of the integrated programme. During a workshop between NGOs and the European Union in Myanmar the DPP self-identified the diversity of its seven consortium partners as not only an element of nexus programming but as one of its strengths with some of the partners focusing on humanitarian response and others on development or peace interventions (VOICE, 2019). The comparative advantages the partners hold between each other align with nexus theory towards more efficient and more sustainable integrated programmes.

2.2.2 Logical Framework and Theory of Change

Once the overall objective and purpose of a programme are identified, a framework of activities and strategies for their achievement needs to be put in place. The logical framework approach is a common analytical tool used for this purpose. It allows for information to be structured into a way that clearly explains the process of interlocking activities, and the results they deliver, that are required to achieve the programme's purpose and objective (European Commission, 2004). Nonetheless, nexus programmes, which are intended to operate in fragile and volatile contexts, might find the linearity and practicality of the logical framework approach more of a hindrance than a solution. One speaker at a nexus-orientated conference organized by WeWorld-GVC (2019b) suggested that tools such as the logical framework are now inadequate to understand the reality on the ground, since consequential schemes of cause-effect actions can not accurately represent the complexity of aid programmes. Nexus programming, he remarks, could be a possible solution to overcome these instruments and to direct programming towards more contextualization and the use of narrative approaches such as the theory of change.

The preference for narrative approaches over rigid frameworks is confirmed by VOICE (2019) which identifies log-frame practices as not sufficiently flexible in emergency scenarios and, in fact, limiting adaptability to community feedback. The recommendation is for lighter systems based on theories of change and long term outcomes. CARE, in its study on implementing nexus programming in the MENA region, came to a similar conclusion. The continuously shifting context of fragile environments and the many different micro-climates make the application of one universal framework impossible. Nexus frameworks should instead be based on root-cause

and immediate needs analyses, organizational position and theory of change (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

Ultimately, structuring programmes around theories of change gives them the flexibility to adapt quickly to changing environments in a way that is absent in projects structured on particular activities or results (Fabre, 2017). Furthermore, theories of change can help to better explain in a narrative approach how humanitarian, development and peace efforts come together and describe the complex dynamics that affect target populations (WeWorld-GVC, 2019c).

With logical frameworks being considered incompatible with nexus programming at an organizational level, it is also worth mentioning that institutional programming frameworks such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) of UNDP and the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) of OCHA have also not been aligned with each other to promote a nexus approach (ICVA, 2018). Under these circumstances a few multi-mandate NGOs have resorted to their own experience and know-how to develop frameworks and plans suitable to the implementation of nexus programmes.

2.2.3 Programme Design

Organizations like WeWorld-GVC and CARE have built their nexus approaches on specific cross-cutting themes. WeWorld-GVC, with their Community Protection Approach (CPA), has structured its nexus programming following an integrated protection framework. The protection approach and its Context Analysis Matrix, described in section 2.1.2., allow WeWorld-GVC to operationalise their findings by linking identified needs and vulnerabilities to specific duties and responsibilities while ensuring the respect of humanitarian principles (WeWorld-GVC, 2019c). The overall ambition of the CPA is that of establishing an overall framework based on principles of territoriality, empowerment and community protection, which can guide participating actors and organizations to carry out needs-based interventions while providing capacity and support to rights-holders (WeWorld-GVC, 2019a). The convergence of multiple actors would consequently open a discussion on the structural drivers of needs and vulnerabilities, the identification of each actor's comparative advantages, and, finally, the definition of collective outcomes (WeWorld-GVC, 2019c).

CARE also took a thematic approach, but decided to structure its nexus programming around resilience instead. The organization sees resilience as the connector of its programming, going beyond the simple ability to withstand shocks but also to the community's ability to anticipate, absorb, adapt and transform. Focusing on resilience is recognizing the complexity of fragile contexts and the inter-linkages of different social, ecological, technological and economic systems. In practice, CARE has applied this approach in the MENA region by establishing resilient market systems. This approach allows the developing of integrated strategies that tackle immediate needs, as well as root causes of poverty and social injustice. However, the organization warns that operating in value chains requires awareness of power dynamics, fragility and the political economy, but it can be an important opportunity to establish and strengthen locally grown solutions (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

While these approaches, almost by definition, naturally come to consider all areas of the nexus, they don't necessarily mean that organizations will have the flexibility to translate them all into practice. Effective and relevant nexus interventions require agility to address humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs. These efforts can, at times, concentrate on one aspect of the nexus or on all three simultaneously, according to the gravity of the situation. Ideally organizations should be able to monitor changes in real-time, and not only to react rapidly but also to adjust their present and future planning accordingly. If these changes occur during the life-cycle of a programme, then anticipatory strategies can be structured into programming frameworks (Alcayna, 2019).

World Vision is one organization that has developed a programme framework that is anticipatory and flexible in nature, the Fragile Context Approach (FCA). FCA, at the heart of its design, has an in-depth scenario analysis that starts from the planning stages of the project. Firstly, triggers and defining factors of change are identified using the input of context and root-cause analyses as well as for the crucial contribution of local communities. Secondly, the scenarios are elaborated alongside the responses that the organization would be expected to implement, and, finally, specific indicators are set to monitor the defined triggers of change (Alcayna, 2019). Once the scenarios and their triggers are identified the FCA articulates for each scenario what World Vision calls the three dials of action: survive, adapt and thrive. These dials are to be turned up or turned down in response to the changing scenario. The survive dial is used when

responding to an increasingly volatile and violent context, and recommends activities that target livelihoods and immediate life-saving needs. The adapt dial is tuned up when the situation stabilises and shifts the programme's attention to adaptive activities such as rehabilitation, social cohesion, recovery and access to basic services. The thrive dial can be used once the situation has continuously improved and more long-term developmental and transformational investments can be made (World Vision, 2019). This design, alongside constant monitoring of indicator and triggers, allows for programmatic and multi-sectoral agility to intervene in a non-linear way between all areas of the nexus, moving back and forth according to the context (Pickwick, 2020).

Anticipatory strategies such as the one implemented by the FCA have multiple benefits. By anticipating how a mix of the dials can tackle each scenario, they avoid default reactions to events that could compromise previous programme achievements, and, therefore, make the recovery after the emergency much harder. Furthermore, de-structuring the complexity of the context makes the situation less intimidating for the organization; the staff becomes accustomed to think in terms of contingencies and prepared to respond to them quickly and accordingly (Alcayna, 2019). For these reasons, staff and management take a particularly important place in the correct implementation of anticipatory strategies, and their role will be explored more in detail in section 2.4.

2.3 FINANCING

To advance towards the New Way of Working, OCHA (2017) has envisioned financing strategies composed of a broad range of flexible, predictable and multi-year funding tools. These tools can enable the layering of medium and long term programmes in order to achieve collective outcomes over a three to five year period. Accordingly the OECD (2019) has guided its donors by recommending that they develop financing strategies that facilitate the layering and sequencing of flows, and that they promote the use of joint analysis mechanisms that bring nexus actors to work together. The underlying idea is to have donors create the necessary incentives for actors to work jointly towards collective outcomes (Fabre, 2017). Furthermore, the OCED has recommended providing flexible funding to the three pillars of the nexus and their alignment with needs, risks and root causes, which are important in supporting prevention, preparedness and early action (OECD, 2019).

Despite these commitments financing and funding policies have not yet adapted to the overall nexus agenda. While new, crisis-sensitive instruments have been rolled out by development actors too many of them are still thematically earmarked and micro-managed to the point of discouraging their use (Poole & Culbert, 2019). The two NGO networks of ALNAP and VOICE both confirm these findings and the existing gap between policy commitments and funding. Grants are still earmarked and constrained to the financial year (Alcayna, 2019) and there is a general absence of transitional funding that can bridge the in-between periods of humanitarian and development interventions (VOICE, 2019).

2.3.1 Multi-year and Flexible Financing

In the absence of appropriate funding, a few NGOs have moved forward and have come up with their own solutions in building up the long term, flexible financing that is required to operate nexus programmes. The careful and intricate layering of strategic objectives that Plan International built for its Lake Chad Programme, as seen in section 2.2.1, allowed it to solve a significant barrier to the attainment of the needed resources. By involving donors in the early stages of planning, Plan International quickly realized that donors were not able to fund collective outcomes, since their mandates restrained them to only fund humanitarian or development specific interventions. To address this, the programme's strategic objectives were subdivided to include within each objective distinctive elements of humanitarian, development and social cohesion interventions; consequently, removing the formal restrictions that may have influenced donors (VOICE, 2019). In practice, depending on the funding streams and on the scope of projects, the organization could easily select key interventions listed under one or more targets, and if donor requirements and project design allowed, the organization could even mix and match humanitarian, development and social cohesion interventions (Plan International, 2018).

CARE Jordan took a similar approach to tackle the challenge of donors that were not set up to provide flexible and long-term funding. In an effort to carry out nexus programming CARE's humanitarian projects started including components of development interventions and vice versa. The advantages of this restructuring were two-fold. Firstly it allowed CARE to layer and shift resources between projects, as well as guaranteeing two to three years of sequenced funding. Secondly, it strengthened the coordination between its humanitarian and development staff, since

they operated under the same funding contracts, which led to more efficient programme implementation in order to avoid overlapping activities and duplicate efforts (VOICE, 2019).

In its Area Rehabilitation Programme (ARP) in the DRC, World Vision has tackled the lack of flexible funding by designing an integrated, multi-sectoral approach led by one overarching goal rather than a grant. World Vision, therefore, anchored the ARP on private funding that they had accumulated from donations and then used to cover all core operations. As institutional grants became available these projects were then aligned to the ARP's overarching goal and used to target unmet needs. While this approach allowed the programme to operate, it is not sustainable. As the numbers of small grants increased, it created a complex and expensive administrative load which ultimately diminished the effectiveness and impact of each grant (Pickwick, 2020).

These cases show that implementing integrated and flexible programmes places a significant administrative burden on organizations in the field, as they are made responsible for patching and blending together the multi-year flexible funding envisioned by the New Way of Working. A further impediment is represented by the difficulty these organizations encountered in experimenting with flexible programming, such as the case for World Vision's FCA, as donors would not approve flexible funding unless the organization had previously piloted such programmes; however, without flexible funding no flexible programmes could be piloted in the first place (Alcayna, 2019).

2.3.2 Flexible Financing Mechanisms: The case of crisis modifiers

One crucial characteristic flexible funding must have, in a fragile scenario, is the ability to provide the resources organizations need to address the unexpected crises that are produced by a rapidly changing context. Such flexibility can be facilitated through the use of various financing mechanisms; for example, crisis modifiers, contingency budgets, top-up mechanisms and sub-grant shifting (VOICE, 2019).

Crisis modifiers, in particular, are a practical financial tool that allows organizations to address crises while continuing to work on root causes of vulnerability and resilience building. Ideally, well built crisis modifiers can bring programmes a number of advantages, such as faster approval processes for disbursement, and they can be scaled down once the crisis is over. These modifiers do not have to affect the programme's budget, and, if shared with local partners, can contribute

to building stronger community partnerships. On the other hand, implementing them will also bring challenges. These instruments are not yet standard procedure, and this factor can lead staff and management to encounter difficulties in understanding and applying them properly; furthermore, development focused staff might not be suitably prepared or trained to provide urgent humanitarian aid (Peters & Pichon, 2017).

The development programme BRACED (Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters) decided to pilot the use of crisis modifiers among its partners in the Sahel region; the goal was to support vulnerable communities while preserving development progress and long-term objectives. These instruments were made available at a regional programme level by an additional ad hoc fund to which implementing agencies could apply for their disbursement. Ideally, the whole proposal and decision process, which included fund manager and donor assessment, was envisioned to take up to 15 days. Moreover, the crises modifiers were designed to protect development gains and to fund new, not chronic, humanitarian needs. These modifiers were to be used in the project's affected area only and most importantly, were not dependent on early warning triggers allowing for maximum flexibility (Peters & Pichon, 2017). Based on its theory of change BRACED further developed the causal chain these instruments were intended to follow (Figure 1) and used as its assumption to test the effectiveness of its pilots on the ground.

Figure 2 Causal Chain of BRACED Crisis Modifiers

Source: Peters, K., & Pichon, F. (2017)

The experience of BRACED has led to some recommended changes in order to maximise the effectiveness of crisis modifiers. The need to implement these mechanisms in a pre-existing contingency plan is particularly important. Scenario planning and trigger indicators can prepare staff to react accordingly if and when a change in context occurs, and, therefore, provide them with a logical path to guide nexus complexities (Alcayna, 2019). The absence of a plan would instead cause a disorganized response, which would increase the agency workload and the

misuse of crisis modifiers. Accordingly, BRACED also realized the importance of effectively transitioning into and out of recovery periods by aligning contingency programming with adaptive management, which can guide the project through a changed context by revising its trajectories and recalculating outputs (Peters & Pichon, 2017).

The experience of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in their Somalia programme confirmed the findings of BRACED. The NRC combined the use of crisis modifiers, which unlike the ones deployed by BRACED, were built into the organization's budget alongside adaptive programming. The modifiers, therefore, were employed quickly to address urgent food needs by using funding initially assigned to its infrastructural work. The role of empowered staff, who now have a grasp of both the humanitarian and infrastructural situation, was considered essential to successful implementation (VOICE, 2019).

2.4 IMPLEMENTATION

The first three phases of the project cycle set up the planning and financing structures of the programme; the fourth phase is about implementing those plans. The purpose of this phase is to effectively deliver the results that are necessary to achieve the programme's objective and to ensure the efficient management of resources: financial, human or material (European Commission, 2004). To this end, programme monitoring takes place at the same time as implementation to ensure that activities are being carried out according to the programme's framework. Following traditional PCM structures, this study will first describe practices of implementation, followed by those of monitoring, but they should be understood as simultaneous and interdependent activities.

2.4.1 Adaptive Strategies and Complex Situation Thinking

In section 2.2 this study explored the importance of embedding anticipatory strategies into programming to ensure flexible frameworks capable of anticipating and responding to a changing environment. Nonetheless, anticipatory strategies are only half of the picture, since their utility is limited to those changes that can be realistically anticipated. If changes cannot be anticipated, then the programmes will have to implement approaches that will allow them to adapt on their own; these approaches can be defined as adaptive strategies (Alcayna, 2019).

Adaptive strategies have a dual role; on one side, like anticipatory strategies, they add flexibility to the programme's operations; on the other, they control and balance the limits to which that flexibility potential can and should be applied. In fact, programme frameworks structured on anticipatory approaches help make sense of complexities, but can also be overly relied on, and this could lead to excessive and continuous organizational shifts that can ultimately undermine the pursuit of the overall objective (Alcayna, 2019). The need to pair anticipatory and adaptive strategies comes with realizing that the contexts in which nexus programmes operate are both complicated and complex. Complicated systems are hard to navigate, but once the connections between events are understood, they can also be predicted. This is the point where anticipatory strategies play their role. In complex systems, events are too interrelated and unstable to be predicted; this is where adaptive strategies can help (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018). To navigate both systems a mental shift at the strategic level of an organization is required. Management needs to become adaptive and to shift from complicated system thinking to complex system thinking.

2.4.2 Adaptive management

In a nexus environment, defining the most appropriate path to address short and long-term vulnerabilities, as well as their root causes, is beyond the reach of a logical framework, but the basic principles of adaptive management can assist in smoothing that process. Adaptive management seeks to implement a flexible decision-making process that can quickly react to new information and context changes. To this end, administrators need to continuously monitor and analyse the context in an ongoing learning process in order to identify the best course of action to any unplanned change. The goal is to be able to keep the programme on the path of achieving its overall objective by adapting and changing the steps that were originally considered to be sufficient to reach it (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018). For its implementation, adaptive management relies on flexible strategic planning and on administrative and organizational procedures that facilitate innovation, responsiveness and experimentation (Rondinelli, 1993).

Organizations wishing to apply adaptive approaches to their programme management need to equip their administrators with the right tools. Supervision protocols should be kept simple and the line of command short to ensure quick reaction time. Operational manuals should be avoided to prevent administrators to passively refer to them in search of protocols that are, in fact, inadequate to the circumstances (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018). Instead, administrators should respond

creatively and rapidly basing their judgement upon knowledge, resources and experiences that can be found in the programme's monitoring practices, or even among staff and beneficiary communities (Rondinelli, 1993).

However, CARE, which has identified adaptive management as one of the guiding principles of a nexus approach, warns that implementing this organizational shift should not translate into an added layer of processes. Instead, organizations should focus on developing sets of principles and practical trainings that equip administrators with the insights to understand and react in a suitable manner to their individual context, and to steer them away from protocols and automated responses (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

2.4.3 Leadership and Empowerment

While anticipatory strategies depend on flexible frameworks, adaptive strategies depend on the ability of people to be flexible in critical situations. For adaptive approaches to take hold, organizations need to support their programme leadership in order to foster an open and positive organizational culture that empowers staff to propose and manage change (Alcayna, 2019). This approach is particularly important in industries in which compliance and risk-avoidance tend to be the cultural standard, and risk-averse leadership may just refer opportunities to partners, rather than taking charge of them in the first place. To this end, Development Initiatives has suggested implementing a series of organizational practices to promote the needed cultural shift. Specifically, they suggest implementing reward systems in management to incentivise leadership to take risk and to work in collaborative and innovative ways. Alongside of creating nexus indicators for management performance and including nexus requirements into job descriptions, these practices can contribute to instilling in leadership a new and flexible way of working (Development Initiatives, 2019). While leadership should be the first concern, staff, at all levels of the organization, should be trained and sensitized to the advantages and challenges of working in a flexible manner (Pickwick, 2020).

If staff is aware that the framework in which they operate is not rigid, but that the framework can adapt with them and for them, they will become more attentive of their environment and request and justify programmatic changes every time they are deemed necessary. When empowered staff is coupled with strong ties with local communities and a faster decision making process, then a

programme is favourably positioned to implement effective adaptive approaches (Alcayna, 2019).

World Vision, which has been piloting both anticipatory and adaptive strategies in the DRC, has had very positive results in the area of human resources. In their Area Rehabilitation Programme, the organization recorded very high and unusual levels of staff retention and several of its staff members, particularly in key positions, demonstrated increasing levels of critical thinking and flexible working. World Vision believes that the promotion of adaptive approaches triggered a self-investment on behalf of staff and leadership, as they took charge over the programme's implementation and were allowed to adapt it and change it in accordance to their own analysis and findings (Pickwick, 2020). They were, therefore, incentivised to see projects to the end.

Furthermore, ALNAP observed that World Vision enabled this organizational culture by training staff to think creatively and holistically and to act on available information within the constraints of limited resources. Furthermore, World Vision made its decision-making process more participatory, including leadership of the programme, and shortening the process to less than a week. Staff was, therefore, able to make their case for changes and receive answers more rapidly which benefited both staff motivation and programme effectiveness (Alcayna, 2019).

2.4.4 Cross-sectoral Staff Coordination

Implementing nexus approaches creates unique challenges for the organizational structure of a programme. Externally, this is represented by an unpredictable and fragile environment and to the wide range of issues a programme may be called upon to address; whether they are humanitarian, development or peacebuilding actions in nature. Internally, to properly address these challenges with limited resources, programmes need to employ multi-disciplinary teams that are capable of working across the functional areas of the nexus, while also ensuring a high degree of staff coordination (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

Two organizations that have paid particular attention to cross-team management are Plan International and CARE. The first created a whole new organizational structure, while the latter restructured their existing one. Specifically, Plan International, in its Lake Chad Programme, built an additional managerial level to oversee the three country teams involved in the project. The goal of this team, the LCP Unit, was, therefore, to operationalise the programme by ensuring

coordination of delivery and strategic integration. This unit worked alongside national Head of Programmes and Emergency Response Managers to bring together the different humanitarian and development teams of each country to share joint analysis and planning. Finally, to ensure the high quality of human resources, the LCP unit focused on providing practical training and technical support to teams, while also promoting opportunities for them to communicate, share knowledge, and exchange best practices (Plan International, 2018).

CARE, somewhat differently, completely restructured its Jordan and West Bank & Gaza country offices; their objective was to achieve an integrated and complementary approach to humanitarian and development action. To make the transition a smoother process, the organization realized the importance of hiring staff members who were capable of understanding the functioning of both silos and able to work with either or both as circumstances dictated. To this end the organization implemented administrative changes which also impacted job descriptions, partnerships and contracts with donors. The merger was so successful that the country offices also experimented with rotating team members, and, thereby, developing, simultaneously, teams that could work on both development and humanitarian projects when emergencies arose (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

In contrast, Action Against Hunger had a different experience with integrating humanitarian and development programmes. Following the initiative of the donor, the organization decided to integrate two different projects, one humanitarian and one development focused, into one complementary strategy. Both programmes were based on the organization's joint analysis and objectives. Despite all their efforts, the two programmes and teams continued to act separately with no formal coordination or consultation, which hindered cross-team collaboration. Complicating matters further, one of the two projects had started at an earlier time than the other. While there were some positive outcomes, such as increased information sharing and a certain degree of continuity between development and humanitarian activities, the experience of Action Against Hunger offers an important lesson on working with integrated approaches. Firstly, coordination mechanisms are necessary. As identified by the same organization, the attempt to carry out both humanitarian and development actions under one unified programme would have been more successful. Secondly, before implementing nexus programming a preliminary

contextual analysis should be carried out to assess whether the context is appropriate to a nexus approach and if so how it should be applied (VOICE, 2019).

These experiences highlight the need for an overhaul of managerial and organizational structures, which does not come without challenges. ALNAP has found that there is a significant shortage of professionals that have the mindset and skills to navigate adaptive management strategies (Alcayna, 2019) while VOICE (2019) also extends this concern to professionals with work experience in both humanitarian and development fields. For nexus programming to succeed it will require empowered administrators and well coordinated staff capable of working between silos; therefore, the lack of appropriate candidates who can fulfil these roles is a significant barrier to the development of nexus strategies. To overcome these challenges it will be necessary to strengthen teams in delivering nexus approaches, while balancing the need for both specialization and flexibility. Development Initiatives (2019) recommends that humanitarian teams should be trained to work with governments and, at times, independently of governments; this flexibility would be crucial in transitional periods of recovery. Similarly, the results of interventions would be more effective if development and peacebuilding teams were trained in humanitarian response, conflict sensitivity, and risk financing in periods of crisis.

2.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The last phase of the programme cycle brings all the previous phases together and contains different parts, namely: monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, also known as MEAL. Broadly speaking, the purpose of this phase is to ensure that the programme is proceeding as intended, that it is mindful and accountable to the target population and that it is designed to learn and improve upon itself. Specifically, through monitoring, which occurs at the same time as implementation, the programme's management systematically collects, analyses and manages information to support and guide the decision making processes. In other words, the implementation phase is carried out as a continuous learning process through which past experiences are promptly reviewed and used to inform and adapt current and future planning. Furthermore, monitoring acts as a bridge between the baseline values identified in the analysis phase and the end-line values set in the planning phase; the monitoring of the progress in achieving these values will define the expectations of the programme. Evaluation is, instead, a

periodical assessment of the design, implementation and results of a project and its findings can be capitalized on by deriving best practices and lessons learned (European Commission, 2004).

Nexus policy does not add specific recommendations on the monitoring of this phase with the exception of pointing out the fragile contexts in which nexus programmes often operate. Specifically, monitoring practices in changing scenarios should focus on programme adaptation to ensure that programmes remains relevant to their surroundings (Fabre, 2017). OECD DAC (2019) also recommends that monitoring practices be aligned with the risk environment of fragile contexts, and, therefore, they should include early warning systems and joint horizon scanning. These general recommendations are not new to organizations with experience in fragile contexts, which instead have developed their own MEAL systems to follow up on their nexus programming.

2.5.1 Enabling Adaptive Strategies and Complementing Anticipatory Strategies

Just as robust analysis can enable the development of anticipatory strategies, as seen in section 2.2.3, so can diligent monitoring systems enable the effective implementation of adaptive ones. As described in the previous section, a strong monitoring system is essential if management is to respond quickly to new information, so that they can keep the programme responsive and relevant (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018). Regular context monitoring and conflict analysis, indeed, facilitate information flows that can prepare administrators in responding to sudden changes by taking advantage of the flexibility their programme frameworks provide (Alcayna, 2019). Nonetheless, ALNAP has found that monitoring systems are not always flexible enough to operate effectively in rapidly evolving situations. The first challenge is to design a reporting system that matches the speed to which staff needs to react in fragile contexts. The second challenge is embedding that system within the programming framework to ensure both regularity and pertinence in specific phases of the programme cycle, as well as to the potential recurrence of predictable crises (Alcayna, 2019). Monitoring systems, therefore, play a dual role; they enable adaptive management, but they need to be incorporated within anticipatory programming if the two parts are to work together.

The Fragile Context Approach elaborated by World Vision (described in section 2.2.3) is an example of a flexible anticipatory framework that has been complemented with adaptive monitoring practices. Once contingency scenarios are set, the organization identifies specific

context indicators to monitor whether the situation is improving or deteriorating. In its programme in the DRC and by looking ahead for potentially destabilizing elections, these indicators were set to observe population movements, displacement and the return of people. However, these indicators can be flexible and adapted to different circumstances in order to measure, for example, the establishment or opening of markets, the presence of armed groups or the return of child soldiers. These indicators are normally implemented in security analysis and more commonly in the humanitarian sector, but World Vision has adopted them as an organizational practice and embedded them within routine monitoring systems. With the inclusion of context indicators that keep track of changing scenarios alongside programme indicators that measure outputs and outcomes, there is a shift from traditional project MEAL to an adaptive MEAL. Adaptive monitoring systems encourage a constant review of assumptions and scenarios with the possibility of adding and removing indicators as the context changes over time (Alcayna, 2019).

Another instance where monitoring systems complement anticipatory strategies is with flexible financing mechanisms, such as the crisis modifiers explored in section 2.3.2. These mechanisms depend on contingency planning to be designed and on context monitoring to be deployed. For their effective implementation, for example, these financing mechanisms require a monitoring system capable of explaining changes in the affected communities from the onset, during and outset of the crisis. Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative indicators need to be monitored to evaluate not only the impact of these instruments, but also their true added value by running cost-benefit analysis (Peters & Pichon, 2017).

2.5.2 Community Involvement

In the analysis phase, this study discussed the importance that taking a community based approach signified for implementing organizations. Specifically, involving communities in the analysis phase contributed to obtaining results that would accurately reflect their context, needs and challenges. Additionally, by involving communities, organizations can circumvent the silos divide by leaving it to them to detect their own priorities and causes of fragility. These considerations still hold true and are relevant to the monitoring phase but with one additional contribution; by opening monitoring practices to affected communities, organizations become immediately accountable to them for programme implementation.

To ensure programme accountability to target populations, several of the observed organizations such as Plan International, CARE and WeWorld-GVC have recommended opening participation to community members into MEAL systems. WeWorld-GVC for example envisions for the monitoring system to be gradually transferred to local communities, and, thereby, empowering them with a voice to engage with implementing partners and local actors on a more levelled ground (WeWorld-GVC, 2019a). Both CARE and Plan International recommend this inclusion to be accompanied with the introduction of effective feedback and complaints mechanisms to enable affected communities to have direct access to the organization if required (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018; Plan International, 2018). Christian Aid in its Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP) in Burundi also identified the importance of formalizing accountability mechanisms; they, accordingly, developed a protocol which empowers communities to decide their preferred method and frequency of delivering feedback (e.g. one-to-one, through telephone help lines, periodical help-desks, community gatherings). Christian Aid complemented these feedback mechanisms with periodical community visits that included staff members from different branches of the organization. These visits have ensured a broad control on the programme's progress, have expedited decision making time and have proven to be a valuable opportunity for organizational learning (Alcayna, 2019). Another example of accountability mechanism is employed by CARE, which has identified localization, local participation and ownership as guiding principles of its nexus programming. CARE has included in its monitoring and learning systems a baseline/end-line assessment directly aimed at the final recipients of their programmes. With this assessment the organization seeks to give voice and representation to its target groups, and to evaluate the capacity of local partners to actually assist, represent and provide to these communities. This is to address any risks of local partners, that have been chosen to carry out specific aspects of the programme, of being politicized or selective in their response to the real programme beneficiaries (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018).

World Vision also identifies a people-centred, community-based approach to be an enabler of nexus programming. Therefore, within the FCA implemented in the DRC, World Vision set up a monitoring system that intentionally consulted and extended participation to local communities leveraging on community-based structures such as local committees. By involving communities in context monitoring and identifying multi-sectoral needs, the programme's implementation improved in both effectiveness and accountability (World Vision, 2019). The new MEAL system

was embedded into programming and consisted of monthly two-way conversations between staff and community members which provided staff with greater understanding of the community's perspectives and behaviours, while opening a space for the community to express its opinion, concerns and suggestions. For both parties these conversations reinforced trust and provided a learning opportunity for better programme implementation. These conversations were a useful space to promote community led context monitoring and scenario planning as well as for World Vision to validate information, and, if necessary, to expedite decision making processes (Alcayna, 2019). For example, during conversations in 2018 communities in the DRC voiced concerns over adverse climatic conditions that could affect crops, and, therefore, they requested improved food distribution, better seeds and a monitoring of social cohesion indicators as they feared increasing food prices might lead to an increase in violence (World Vision, 2019). In other situations, these communities also helped to identify possible scenarios that would affect future programming, which included increased military interventions, climate change and a possible outbreak of Ebola. World Vision, then, prepared contingency plans and specific indicators and triggers to be monitored for each scenario. World Vision's experience exemplifies how communities can facilitate valid context monitoring to enable both anticipatory strategies and adaptive ones (Alcayna, 2019).

2.5.3 Learning

Integrated nexus programming requires a shift for organizations towards more agile, responsive and relevant programming, which will require implementing organizations to strengthen programme quality by reinvesting in positive impact and establishing effective learning and knowledge management systems. To this end, CARE stresses the importance for management and staff to participate in learning and reflection opportunities, at programme and organizational level, by addressing community-wide questions on resiliency, interactions and contributions of stakeholders, on the impact on markets, as well as trust and peace (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018). Development Initiatives also highlights the usefulness of implementing adaptive programming which naturally encourages experimentation and therefore learning and adaptation (Development Initiatives, 2019). The International Committee of the Red Cross (2018) further recommends that lessons-learned exercises be conducted alongside affected communities and involved CSOs by analysing programme procedures and practices as well as the efforts employed to produce results as compared to the desired outcomes.

Presently, the learning discussion on the nexus, however, is relevant to the local dimension as much as it is to the global one. Nexus programming is still a relatively recent experiment for organizations with many of them only recently piloting nexus approaches into their traditional programming, or by testing whole new programming frameworks. Learning from these experiences will clearly be crucial to the advancement and improvement of operationalising nexus theory into effective programming. Indeed, organizations like CARE and World Vision have escalated the pursuit of learning and have called for both donors and implementing organizations to document and share successful experiences and best practices of nexus programming (Kittaneh & Stolk, 2018; World Vision, 2019). Similarly, Development Initiatives (2019) has recommended that donors institutionalise mechanisms of learning and information sharing, which can be particularly important in tackling new policies. These recommendations will help establish the conditions for continuous experimentation and improvement of the nexus agenda.

3. DEFINING NEXUS PROGRAMMING

In the previous chapter, this study explored how NGOs have operationalised the humanitarian, development and peace nexus though a series of organizational practices and strategies that were derived from their direct experience in the field or by piloting and trialling new and innovative approaches. With the common intent to implement nexus programming, the observed organizations differed significantly in their approaches, which were naturally influenced by each organization's experience with previous programmes and mandates. The different strategies that were adopted, as well as the varying degrees of success with their implementation, were, nonetheless, useful in highlighting which factors enabled certain practices and which factors limited their effectiveness.

By further analysing these experiences, some clarity can be achieved in understanding how these approaches and organizational practices should be implemented and sequenced to maximize their effectiveness within an integrated multi-sectoral programme.

3.1 THE NEXUS PROGRAMME CYCLE

From the programmes examined, a cross-case synthesis of their experiences can be outlined; a synthesis based on those sequential organizational practices that are useful for the implementation of a programme cycle predisposed to a nexus approach.

Two important observations should be made. Firstly, the organizational practices that were identified and collected are to be understood in a holistic and systemic way across the entirety of the programme cycle, since they are interdependent and complementary. Secondly, nexus programmes are by nature intended to take place in rapidly changing, volatile and fragile contexts; this changing environment will require a vast array of interventions and responses, and not all of them will be possible to anticipate and logically organize. While the programme cycle structure that follows takes these factors into account, it shouldn't be seen as a perfect blueprint to all scenarios.

1. **Analysis**
   a. Multi-sectoral Context Analysis: Nexus programmes should implement integrated analysis that goes beyond the silo divide, and, therefore, targets multi-dimensional needs as well as the root causes of vulnerability. Alongside the analysis, triggers and determinants of change should also be identified. These findings will be crucial in embedding anticipatory strategies within programming frameworks, as well as efficient and timely monitoring systems.
   b. Risk Analysis: In volatile contexts organizations should assess the state of fragility of target communities, identify recurring crises and shocks, and, accordingly, elaborate risk severity indexes and context indicators to track changing scenarios. The inputs of these assessments will be necessary for elaborating contingency plans and enable the use of flexible financing mechanisms.
   c. Systemic Analysis of Environment and Stakeholders: The wide scope of nexus interventions as well as their medium to long term commitment requires a holistic understanding of the environment and the actors involved. Assessments should focus on the inter-linkages between needs and fragility by deconstructing the micro-climates where the programme operates; this includes the analyses of their political economy, formal and informal institutions and power dynamics. Furthermore, target

communities and all relevant stakeholders should be mapped and profiled through qualitative enquiry and gender-sensitive analysis in order to identify causes and consequences of needs and threats, as well as strengths, weaknesses and determinants of resiliency. Particular attention should be given to identifying potential comparative advantages within the greater programme picture to facilitate more sustainable and efficient implementation.

2. **Planning and Programming**

   a. Overarching Strategic Outcomes: The overall goal of nexus programmes is that of reducing people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities in a medium-to-long-term time-frame. To this end, strategic outcomes should be designed in an integrated manner by planning interventions that include actions, results and indicators reaching across all the functional aspects of a nexus approach. Outcomes designed in such a way can serve as organizational bridges and can promote complementarities and collaboration between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions, as well as with partners and stakeholders. Designing outcomes inclusive of all aspects of the nexus will be valuable for advocacy and fundraising purposes.

   b. Anticipatory and Flexible Programme Frameworks: If the findings of the assessment phase identify changes that can be expected during the implementation of the programme cycle, then organizations should include anticipatory strategies in their programming, such as contingency planning. Once the triggers of change are identified, then possible scenarios, informed by previous analyses and experiences, can be elaborated, so that each scenario receives the appropriate plan. De-structuring complicated systems into contingency scenarios can make the situation less discouraging for staff members, since they are better prepared to respond quickly and effectively to change. To further ensure programming frameworks capable of remaining relevant to volatile contexts, organizations must shift from log-frame approaches towards narrative ones. Applying theories of change for example, can grant more contextualization to a nexus programme by describing complex systemic dynamics while ensuring greater flexibility, as it is not restrained by predefined activities and results. Designing an anticipatory and flexible framework is a

prerequisite to implement flexible financing mechanisms and adaptive strategies in management and monitoring.

3. **Financing**

    a. <u>Resourceful Sequencing and Layering</u>: To successfully implement nexus programmes, organizations need to ensure layering and sequencing of funds on a multi-year time-frame and with sufficient flexibility to re-invest them where needed. To this end organizations can implement creative and resourceful strategies by leveraging on the specificities of the nexus approach. Specifically, by designing overarching collective outcomes organizations can advocate for funding from donors and institutions regardless of their humanitarian, development or peacebuilding mandate. If all specific objectives include targets of one of these areas, then there are no restrictions on where the funding can be allocated within the programme's overall strategy. Involving donors during the planning phase can further ensure that the programmes' goals are in fact aligned with their funding requirements and facilitating advocacy efforts. To achieve similar results programmes can systematically include within humanitarian interventions specific development actions and within development projects, humanitarian ones. Multi-sectoral overarching programmes that succeed to attract funding in this manner, and in accordance to donor's requirements, can experience increased freedom in its use across projects and over time. It is worth mentioning that this practice is not preferred or ideal, but it is necessary due to the scarcity of flexible multi-year funding.

    b. <u>Flexible Funding Mechanisms</u>: To manage unexpected or recurring crises, organizations should embed within their anticipatory and flexible programme frameworks funding mechanisms that can be used ad hoc when such instances occur. Crisis modifiers, contingency budgets, top-ups and sub-grant shifting are some examples. These mechanisms should benefit from fast approval processes, or none at all if pre-agreed and monitored by indicators; allowing programmes to address unforeseen needs while continuing to work on the root causes of vulnerability without losing any development gains. For these mechanisms to be implemented efficiently, staff, trained and prepared in their use, will be able to apply adaptive management

and monitoring approaches in order to follow the programme from the onset to the end of the crisis.

4. **Implementation**

    a. <u>Adaptive Management</u>: While anticipatory strategies are enabled by flexible frameworks capable of navigating predictable changes, adaptive strategies depend on flexible people capable of reacting rapidly and efficiently to unexpected ones. Therefore, to complement flexible frameworks, organizations should invest in their human resources and foster adaptive management practices. The objective of adaptive management is to keep the programme on schedule in terms of its overall goal and, at the same time, addressing any short term needs that may arise. To enable adaptive management, decision making processes need to be kept short and flexible; this can be achieved by short command lines, uncomplicated internal protocols and more participatory processes open to staff input and participation. Furthermore, to promote experimentation, innovation and responsiveness; operational manuals and standardized protocols should be avoided and risk taking behaviour encouraged. While adaptive management practices are essential in fostering the flexibility provided by programme frameworks, such as employing innovative financing mechanisms, they need to be enabled by robust and well-timed monitoring systems, since only the rapid delivery of information will allow management to assess the situation and to respond in time.

    b. <u>Empowering Organizational Culture</u>: For adaptive strategies to be successfully implemented, the organization should reassess their human resource management practices and aspire to foster an organizational culture that promotes new and flexible ways of working. Staff should be trained and sensitized on the advantages of working flexibly, thinking creatively, and acting on available information in order to propose the appropriate changes when necessary. Consequently, an organizational culture which successfully empowers staff to actively and reactively navigate the complexities of the environment with the support of flexible and adaptive organizational structures can aspire to achieve higher staff retention, leadership buy-in and increased team morale. To implement such measures, the programme can make use of reward systems that promote collaborative and risk taking approaches, as

well as design management performance indicators that are tailored to assess the adaptability and flexibility of staff.

    c. <u>Cross-sectoral Coordination</u>: Nexus programming implies a complete overhaul of managerial and organizational structures in order to move from the more traditional silo approach to the concerted use, either sequential or simultaneous, of humanitarian, development and peace-building interventions. To this end, organizations need to reinforce coordination mechanisms and guarantee strategic integration between teams and coordinated delivery of services. Staff, especially in different teams, should have opportunities to communicate, share and learn from each other; shared planning sessions and internal job rotation, for example, can encourage the kind of joint analysis, planning and programming which is crucial in fostering multi-disciplinary teams: teams that are then capable of tackling both urgent needs and the root causes of vulnerability. To ensure teams can work across the nexus while maintaining high degrees of specialization, organizations will have to pay particular attention to their human resources. Multi-disciplinary teams can be developed by hiring professionals with experience in more fields and with the right mindset and skills to work flexibly in an integrated manner; existing teams can be strengthened with training and workshops by familiarizing them to the modus operandi of other sectors.

5. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

    a. <u>Adaptive Monitoring:</u> Monitoring systems enable adaptive management by providing pertinent and timely information to ensure the continuous relevance of the programme to its changing surroundings. Therefore, organizations should shift their monitoring practices from the traditional and passive measuring of outputs to the constant and proactive review of assumptions, scenarios, contingency plans and context indicators. To this end monitoring practices need to be embedded within programme frameworks and aligned to the risk environment and the programme cycle, which should match the speed required by the teams working in volatile contexts. Adaptive monitoring systems are of particular importance as they tie together anticipatory strategies built into programme frameworks with adaptive management.

a. Iterative Learning: The medium-to-long term commitments of nexus programmes, and the adaptive strategies required for proper functioning, imply an organizational investment in knowledge management systems and in continuous programme learning. By committing to organizational learning, organizations can positively counterbalance and complement the risk-taking behaviour that management needs to experiment with new solutions and to implement best practices.

3.2 TRANSVERSAL ENABLERS OF THE NEXUS PROGRAMME CYCLE

The analysis also identified certain practices, transversal to the phases of the programme cycle, which proved to further facilitate the operationalisation of nexus programmes. These practices, in different degrees, can be introduced within programming, but they can greatly contribute to the successful formulation of nexus approaches, and should, therefore, be the object of careful consideration while planning any programme that aims at implementing an integrated nexus approach.
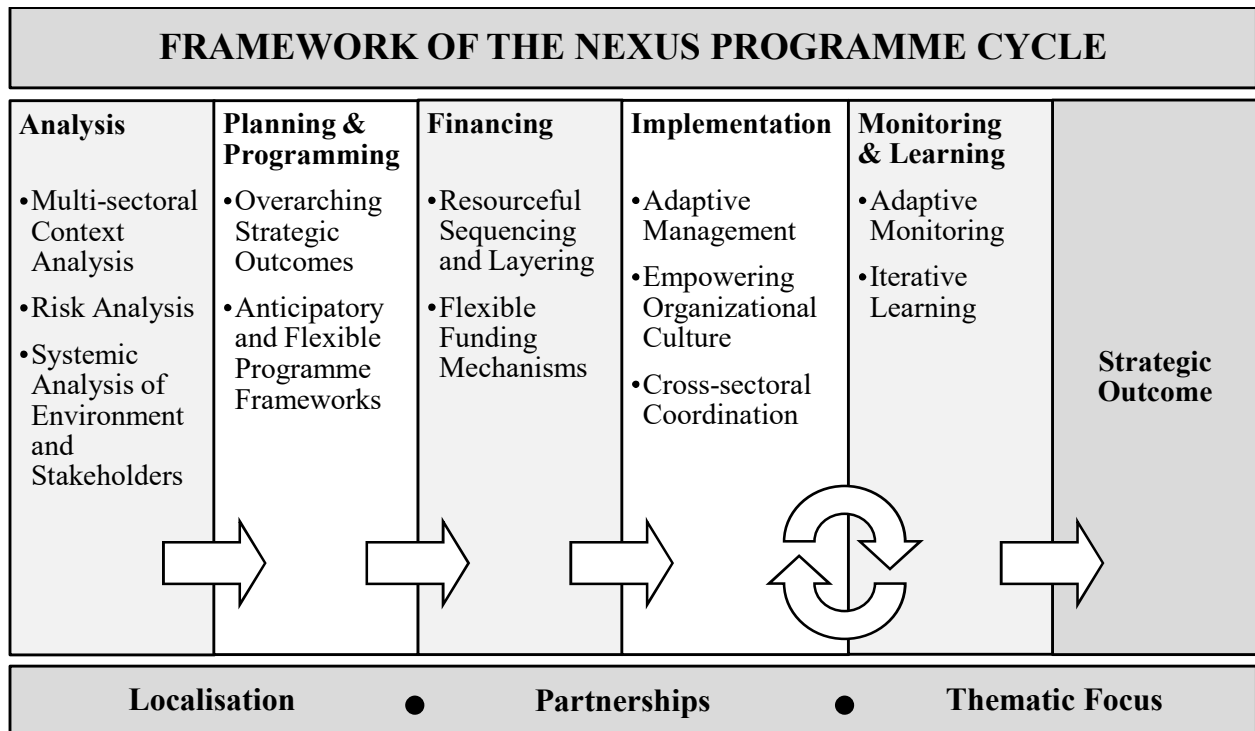
1. Localisation: Affected people and target communities do not operate according to the industry silo divide; therefore, developing strategies with their close participation will naturally develop a short-to-long term nexus approach that tackles immediate needs as well as root causes of fragility. It is also important to understand that the context is driven by the communities themselves and their relationship with the environment around them. Involving communities from the early stages of assessment and planning can lead to more robust context analysis and the identification of otherwise unnoticed needs and vulnerabilities. Additionally, communities are the most likely to perceive changes in the context and in potential scenarios; this perception will be crucial to the formulation of contingency plans. Finally, applying a participatory approach throughout programme implementation and monitoring solidifies trust and accountability. By leveraging on community-based structures, organizations should introduce feedback mechanisms and welcome dialogue, which represent an opportunity for the affected people to voice their opinion and to give recommendations. Staff, in turn, will benefit from the opportunity to have direct access to the community's thoughts and perspectives. Transferring certain programme duties, such as monitoring responsibilities, to community actors while also involving others in key positions of the programme cycle can further contribute to the

sustainability and effectiveness of the programme. Considering the key role communities take in the definition, development and employment of both anticipatory and adaptive strategies, organizations should define their role and embed it in programming frameworks.

1. Partnerships: Taking on a nexus approach individually as an organization can present a daunting series of problems; they may not have the required skills and expertise to follow through. Therefore, by working collaboratively in partnerships, such as consortiums or coalitions, organizations can team up and deliver nexus outcomes without sacrificing their specialization or compromising their mandates. The adoption of these collaborative approaches will, therefore, be crucial to organizations that are not multi-mandate, and will help them to take an active role in defining and implementing nexus programmes. Partnerships can also be leveraged in conjunction with the need to localise and contextualise nexus programmes. Specifically, coalitions can and should include local CSOs, which can be very useful in navigating complex political contexts, increasing trust and accountability to affected communities and, generally, ensuring more efficient and sustainable programming. To facilitate the use of partnerships, organizations should adopt broad systemic outcomes targeting all areas of the nexus and making use of each member's comparative advantage to achieve them efficiently and effectively.

2. Thematic Focus: Structuring programmes around cross-cutting themes, such as rights-based interventions, protection, and resiliency, or even by taking a systemic approach to operations in a specific geographical area can ease programming into a more natural implementation of a nexus approach. Thematic and systemic approaches can naturally facilitate the development of integrated strategies that go beyond humanitarian and development divides by identifying and tackling both urgent needs and the root causes of vulnerabilities.

The framework shown in Figure 3 summarizes the findings of this analysis by illustrating, through the sequential phases of the programme cycle, the organizational practices that define a nexus approach alongside its transversal enablers.

Figure 3 Framework of the Nexus Programme Cycle

FRAMEWORK OF THE NEXUS PROGRAMME CYCLE					
Analysis	**Planning & Programming**	**Financing**	**Implementation**	**Monitoring & Learning**	
•Multi-sectoral Context Analysis •Risk Analysis •Systemic Analysis of Environment and Stakeholders	•Overarching Strategic Outcomes •Anticipatory and Flexible Programme Frameworks	•Resourceful Sequencing and Layering •Flexible Funding Mechanisms	•Adaptive Management •Empowering Organizational Culture •Cross-sectoral Coordination	•Adaptive Monitoring •Iterative Learning	**Strategic Outcome**
Localisation ● **Partnerships** ● **Thematic Focus**					

Source: Author's own elaboration.

4. CONCLUSION

The objective of this investigative study was to understand how organizations are operationalising the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, and whether a guideline for nexus influenced programming could be derived from their direct experiences. The programmes that were enacted by these NGOs differed in objectives and approaches; some experimented with new and bold practices of integrated programming; others took more prudent steps towards increased multi-sectoral coordination. Nonetheless, all followed a similar understanding of what constitutes a nexus approach, such as: developing context relevant programming, addressing both urgent needs and root causes of fragility and adopting approaches capable of delivering services in non sequential ways. The implemented practices, therefore, focused on localising programmes to gain a better understanding of the complex systems in which they operated, and to develop programme frameworks with sufficient in-built flexibility to navigate them while providing coherent and relevant assistance to their target communities.

Despite these similarities, nexus programmes will always have inherent differences, since they depend on continuously changing environments, and are implemented by a range of actors who are able to leverage on different expertise and talents. While this variety of implementation and of methods could be interpreted as a hindrance to a systematic transition to nexus programming, it should rather be seen as great potential for the development of effective and highly specialized partnerships capable of delivering on nexus results in a coordinated and efficient manner.

While there is a great deal of interest in integrated approaches, the creation of supporting consortiums and partnerships has not been very widespread; therefore, organizations with one mandate, mainly the humanitarian ones, have not been able to fully participate in the operational aspects of the nexus. Contrarily, as most of the observed cases can attest, multi-mandate organizations have taken a primary role in defining and implementing nexus approaches due to their natural advantage in implementing integrated programmes by piloting new approaches and making policy recommendations. In future studies and research it will be important to examine this trend and whether humanitarian NGOs will take a more active role in the nexus debate and whether multi-mandate organizations will move towards more collaborative ways of working.

Finally, a cross-case analysis was conducted which compared and matched the most successful practices enacted by the observed NGOs. To ensure the coherent sequencing of these practices, they were tested against the theoretical framework of the project cycle management to ensure their systemic relevance and to safeguard the added value of their complementarities. The result was a generic programme cycle that relies on highly contextualised and localised programming, which is highly flexible and capable of navigating both complicated and complex systems by enacting anticipatory and adaptive strategies alike. To fully enable this programme a focus on management and staff will be paramount, and organizations seeking to implement this cycle will have to invest time and resources in changing their organizational culture by fostering multi-disciplinary, empowered and flexible teams. The programme cycle that was derived can, therefore, provide future guidance to organizations seeking to implement nexus influenced programmes and be useful for future research in determining the most successful ways to operationalise the nexus agenda. There are nonetheless some observations to be made. The cases that were observed in this study dealt, mainly, with self-reported ongoing programmes which may imply a bias towards successful practices and the omission of negative ones. As the

objective of this study was to discern organizational best practices, the impact of this bias to the study's validity should be minimal, nonetheless it is present.

The analysis also identified some common external challenges to the development of nexus programmes; more specifically, a shortage of appropriate funding and a general absence of coordination from international agencies and donors. For the continued development of the nexus agenda, agencies and donors alike will have to be more supportive with NGOs that have taken it on themselves to pilot and implement nexus programmes by providing funding and encouraging experimentation with flexible setups. Although there have been signs that more flexible and long term funding is increasing, organizations are still forced to operate below optimal circumstances, if they are to ensure the flexibility required of their programmes. Donors and agencies could also play an important role in encouraging NGOs to work collaboratively in partnerships, which would guarantee a place for single mandate organizations as well as promoting joint programming and the elaboration of collective outcomes. Finally, as long as nexus programmes will be operating in volatile and fragile contexts, risk management will be a constant concern for NGOs. Under these circumstances donors need to accept risk and be willing to share it with their partners on the ground.

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