Gender Equality Perspectives Series

GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS

July 2021
Adopted in 2019, the OECD DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus provides a pathway towards greater collaboration and coherence in addressing the underlying causes and drivers of inequalities and fragility. As one such driver of fragility, persistent gender inequalities limit effective international engagement in humanitarian assistance, development actions, and peace processes. Thus, gender equality is essential to nexus approaches. This perspective reviews selected Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members’ nexus strategies and contributes to the interim review of the HDP Nexus Recommendation by providing an overview of how adherents to the nexus recommendation have taken a gender equality perspective into account in their strategies and guidance for nexus implementation. In doing so, it also provides guidance and actions derived from promising practices that can be taken to strengthen the role of gender equality within members’ nexus strategies.
Key messages

In the review of selected Development Assistance Committee members’ strategies and policies on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus, gender equality is integrated throughout most of the strategies reviewed. Yet, there is room to further expand on how gender equality is reflected for greater impact.

In the integration of gender equality into HDP nexus policies and strategies, DAC members should:

• Strengthen messaging around the importance of gender within an HDP nexus approach;
• Highlight and act on the interlinkages between the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the HDP nexus agenda as a key component to drive forward both agendas.

Overall conclusions as part of this review also point to a need for clearer guidance on the design of gender-sensitive context analyses. Additionally, further reflection on, and definition of, the principle of “do no harm” within the HDP Nexus Recommendation can help in driving positive, transformative change with regard to engagement across the nexus pillars, along with an increased focus on the role of masculinities.

Gender equality across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (“nexus”) approach is based in part on the recognition that emergency needs are often symptoms of underlying issues that make people and societies vulnerable in the first place – and that a more effective international response needs to do more to address these root causes. In this regard, gender inequalities and discrimination constitute major drivers of vulnerabilities. Women’s unequal economic participation can hold back economic growth and recovery. In addition, sexual and gender-based violence can destabilise communities and reduce trust in the state, especially when committed by national security forces. Thus, attention to gender is essential to the nexus approach. Conversely, women’s active societal contribution can serve as a source of resilience and increase the effectiveness of prevention efforts and sustainable peace agreements.

Against this backdrop, the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (hereafter “the HDP Nexus Recommendation”) reflects the importance of the gender dimension. This includes recommendations for adherents to incorporate gender-sensitive analyses of the root causes and structural drivers of conflict within risk analyses, and to ensure that humanitarian, development, and peace actions are undertaken in gender-sensitive ways. An interim progress report of this Recommendation is due in 2021 to assess its implementation, including on its gender equality aspects.

This paper contributes to the interim review of the HDP Nexus Recommendation by providing an overview of how adherents have taken into account a gender equality perspective in their strategies and guidance for nexus implementation. The paper also provides suggestions on how to achieve further progress. Annex A gives an overview of the strategies and guidance that have been reviewed for the purpose of this paper.
Box 1. Collaboration between GENDERNET and INCAF

The DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) and the DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) have worked together since 2017 to conduct research and policy dialogue on how to best develop programming and policies on gender equality and women’s empowerment in fragile contexts. Publications include a policy paper (Gender equality and women’s empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected situations: A review of donor support) and two how-to notes (Engaging with men and masculinities in fragile and conflict-affected states and Politically informed approaches to working on gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected contexts). This collaboration is advancing further with a joint focus on the HDP nexus and on factors affecting gender equality in fragile contexts.

For full reports listed here, please see:

Gender equality, Women, Peace and Security, and the HDP Nexus in fragile contexts

Two years after the adoption of the HDP Nexus Recommendation in 2019 by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the DAC engagement in fragile contexts remains significant. DAC members gave USD 56.7 billion in official development assistance (ODA) to fragile contexts in 2019, and recognising its importance, they pledged quickly to protect ODA in light of COVID-19 (OECD, 2020[4]). Additionally, 45% of all bilateral allocable ODA to fragile contexts in 2018-19 integrated gender equality as a primary or significant objective (OECD, 2020[5]). However, fragile contexts continue to face significant hurdles towards achievement of the SDGs. Over 601.3 million people currently live in extreme poverty, and are concentrated in fragile contexts. As such, fragile contexts were home to 460 million people living in extreme poverty in 2020 before COVID-19, or 76.5% of the worldwide total. They account for 23% of the world’s population, but also 43% (26 million people) of those expected to fall into extreme poverty due to COVID-19 by the end of 2020 (OECD, 2020[6]).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted pre-existing fragilities and inequalities in those contexts, one of them being gender inequality – which is directly linked with fragility and crises (Goemans, Koester and Loudon, 2021[7]). It is strongly associated with all dimensions of fragility, underscoring the importance of gender for addressing fragility. While, even before COVID-19, there were signs of setbacks in progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment in fragile contexts, none of the 55 fragile contexts for which data are available are on track to achieve SDG 5 (gender equality and women’s empowerment) (OECD, 2020[8]). COVID-19 has made achieving SDG 5 even harder as an estimated additional 47 million women will be pushed into extreme poverty as a direct result of the pandemic (UN Women, 2020[9]; UN DESA, 2020[10]). Additionally, the COVID-19 crisis has led to increased levels of gender violence in what has been termed the “shadow pandemic”.
The interlinkages between fragility and gender inequalities call for an increase in the level of ODA targeting gender equality in those contexts. Increased attention to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 can aid in bringing about this increase in ODA.

However, 2020 also saw strategic momentum to advance gender equality as a renewed priority, such as the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on WPS; and now with the development of the Compact on WPS and Humanitarian Action. The interlinkages between fragility and gender inequalities call for an increase in the level of ODA targeting gender equality in those contexts. Increased attention to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 can aid in bringing about this increase in ODA. In this way, the DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus and the WPS Agenda share a strategic aim of strengthening collaboration between actors and more effectively delivering assistance to those who need it most. This is especially true in fragile contexts. Implementation of nexus approaches — in line with the WPS Agenda — may therefore provide new opportunities to develop more transformative support to gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

**Gender equality is a key component of ensuring coherent nexus approaches**

Given that gender inequalities are often a root cause of fragility and that women’s empowerment can contribute to building resilience within countries, increasing the focus on the drivers of fragility also implies increasing the focus on gender equality. Overlapping objectives of the nexus recommendation and the WPS Agenda provide pathways for strengthening coherence across the nexus and work on gender equality; in addition to providing useful lessons and improving effectiveness.

As crises become protracted, humanitarian needs become enduring and the distinction between humanitarian and development actions are often increasingly blurred. Increased collaboration and joined-up approaches by humanitarian, development, and peace actors is necessary in order to reduce the growing inequality gaps, such as women’s economic and political participation, and gender-based violence. Likewise, gender equality plays a major role in the ability to provide — and build — peaceful, resilient, and inclusive societies — both during and following crises.

Nexus approaches allow better coherence and complementarity between emergency response and development co-operation, both having an influence on peace. Addressing the main drivers of the crisis is a key priority in decreasing needs of the most vulnerable, including women and girls. The HDP Nexus recommendation makes direct reference towards gender through ensuring better co-ordination, better programming, and financing — namely: joint risk-informed, gender-sensitive analysis; promotion of gender expertise; and a people centred approach that includes financing local-level women’s organisations. Ensuring that programming takes into account the implications on gender equality can contribute to a more accurate contextual analysis, facilitate the development of effective responses and help avoid doing harm.

**There is scope to strengthen messaging on the important contribution gender sensitivity can make to the ambition of the nexus approach**

Addressing gender norms, inequalities, and women’s empowerment contributes to an underlying objective of strengthening coherence between humanitarian, development and peace efforts in order to reduce risks and vulnerabilities effectively, while also supporting prevention efforts. Gender equality is also a significant area of overlapping (and, at times, joint) commitments between humanitarian, development and peace actors — offering a potentially impactful testing ground for HDP nexus approaches. Finally, other areas considered key to bridging the humanitarian-development-peace
nexus have significant gender implications – and addressing these can increase effectiveness and avoid harm. Gender sensitivity can therefore make an important contribution to HDP nexus approaches – and HDP nexus approaches to gender equality.

Increased collaboration and joined-up approaches by humanitarian, development, and peace actors is necessary in order to reduce the growing inequality gaps, such as women’s economic and political participation, and gender-based violence.

Promising practices in this regard include, for example, World 2030: Denmark’s strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action (2017[9]), which focuses on human rights, democracy and gender equality as one of four commitment areas. Several statements throughout the strategy point to connections between gender equality and conflict prevention and resolution, highlighting the need to substantively include women in peace negotiations and other conflict resolution approaches.

While members’ strategies and policies that were reviewed generally highlight gender equality as a priority, they could further emphasise these connections and explicitly discuss why gender sensitivity matters for HDP nexus approaches and should, additionally, be reflected accordingly within members’ strategies. Greater analysis of and attention to these links could strengthen understanding of the critical contribution of gender equality to the overall rationale and effectiveness of nexus approaches – and help avoid framing gender as an add-on in a long list of thematic priority areas.

**Joint, gender-sensitive analysis can provide the critical starting point for a gender-responsive nexus approach – but there may be room for more practical guidance**

An analysis that assesses how gender inequality is influencing a context (i.e. fragility, and the crisis or conflict economy) will help to improve coherence across the nexus between humanitarian, development and peace. Importantly, the DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus makes explicit reference to this type of analysis. Other OECD research has emphasised the significance of context-based analysis as a starting point for more transformative approaches to gender equality and fragility. In addition, it indicates the importance of co-ordination and collaboration frameworks for effective responses in fragile and conflict-affected situations (Schreiber and Loudon, 2020[10]; OECD, 2020[3]). However, the research has also pointed to significant gaps in this regard, noting that current analytical tools available are not effective in bringing gender, conflict and fragility aspects together into one framework (OECD, 2017[1]; OECD, 2020[4]).

Most policies and guidance reviewed commit to gender-sensitive analysis and some explicitly refer to the need to consider a gender equality perspective in this context. For example, SIDA’s Guidance Note on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (2020[11]) recognises that joint analysis is the point of departure and explicitly commits to support “joint, risk-informed gender-sensitive analysis of root causes and structural drivers of conflict”. Amongst other steps, strengthening joint analysis should involve ensuring participation of humanitarian and peace advisors in SIDA’s multi-dimensional poverty analysis (MDPA) and building on information from humanitarian reports in this context.

In general, however, existing policies and guidance provide little information on what would make gender-sensitive conflict analyses effective as context-specific input for response planning and programming. Given common gaps in analysis identified in previous OECD assessments, there may therefore be room for further guidance and research on what joint, gender-sensitive analysis can and should look like in practice.
There is scope to strengthen reflection on synergies between the nexus and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, and other related frameworks

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325) and follow-up resolutions set out a comprehensive agenda for the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment before, during and after crisis – an agenda that encompasses peace and security, development, and humanitarian actors. Almost all (93%) of the OECD members adhering to the DAC recommendation have developed National Action Plans (NAPs) to accelerate implementation of UNSCR 1325 (UN Women, 2020[12]; Hamilton, Naam and Shepherd, 2020[13]).

National Action Plans highlight shared objectives and distribute responsibilities across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. These existing frameworks could provide a source of common goals across the HDP nexus, for example through shared analysis and data. Notably, Austria’s 3-year development co-operation strategy includes commitments to strengthen the nexus approach and to promote the implementation of UNSCR 1325 within the priority area on peace, security, and development (Austria, 2019[14]). Belgium’s NAP on WPS was drafted jointly through a federal inter-agency design process, in consultations with civil society – and identifies responsibilities of such actors in a common framework. It could therefore contribute to comprehensive approaches across the nexus.

Previous OECD research on gender equality and women’s empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected situations has highlighted that, generally, existing policies and guidelines on gender equality do not tend to be well integrated into other conflict and security strategies, resulting in a disconnect between these issues and related policy commitments in their application to those contexts (OECD, 2017[1]). It could be useful to discuss opportunities that existing National Action Plans can provide for a more coherent approach across the HDP nexus. The 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 and the development of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action can provide important momentum to bring different stakeholders together and build synergies between National Action Plans and DAC members’ strategies that are coherent across the HDP nexus.

Attention to the role of men and masculinities is limited

Research and policy discussions on gender in fragile and conflict-affected situations have tended to focus predominantly on women, while often neglecting the important role that societies’ expectations for male behaviour (masculinities) can play in advancing or constraining peace, recovery and gender equality. Amongst other issues, research points to significant connections between masculinities and different forms of violence. The recruitment of men into armed groups often draws on societal expectations that link masculinity to aggression, domination and the use of violence. This is in addition to the expected norm that masculine leadership is competitive and often aggressive (OECD, 2019[2]). Important, this norm highlights potential difficulties that may arise during peace negotiations within fragile and conflict-affected situations when women are not included as active members of negotiating teams. Men and women, as well as wider institutions, all play roles in perpetuating such norms (for overviews of evidence see (OECD, 2019[2]) and (Wright, 2014[15])).

Understanding and engaging with norms for male behaviour is therefore an important element of a transformative, prevention-oriented approach to gender equality, peace and development in fragile and conflict-affected settings. An example of promising practice in this regard would be Ireland’s Policy for International Development: A Better World, which recognises, in the priority area on gender equality, that “transforming gender relations also involves a focus on boys, men and masculinities.”

Understanding and engaging with norms for male behaviour is therefore an important element of a transformative, prevention-oriented approach to gender equality, peace and development in fragile and conflict-affected settings
There is room to strengthen reflection on the gender elements of the “do no harm” principles of the DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus, and synergies with the DAC Recommendation on ending SEAH

The OECD DAC Recommendations on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) and the DAC Recommendation on the HDP nexus are mutually reinforcing. Echoing principles of the Recommendation on the HDP nexus, the Recommendation on SEAH emphasises conflict prevention, the need to put people at the centre of responses and invest in local capacity. Not only does the Recommendation on SEAH directly apply to development co-operation and humanitarian assistance but it also provides a comprehensive framework that can support and guide more coherent measures to prevent and respond to SEAH; calling on the “do no harm” provision within the Recommendation on the HDP nexus. Even still, implementing the recommendations on SEAH requires taking a HDP nexus approach to engagement in fragile and conflict-affected situations. In particular, the Recommendation on SEAH emphasises the need to ensure international co-ordination for SEAH prevention and response, including closer collaboration among DAC members, implementing partners and the UN. By contributing to closer co-ordination and collaboration of relevant actors, the HDP Nexus Recommendation may facilitate such steps. Additionally, and in line with the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH, DAC members should look to strengthen the “do no harm” elements within their nexus-related policies and guidance.

Continued collaboration between the DAC Networks on Conflict and Fragility and Gender Equality provides a pathway forward for complete implementation of the HDP Nexus Recommendation

While it is clear that gender equality plays a key role in the HDP Nexus Recommendation – and by extension, DAC members' nexus policies and strategies – it is time to drive up the quality and quantity of investments, policies and programmes to integrate gender equality across the implementation of the HDP Nexus. High-level messaging on the nexus could promote awareness of the contributions gender sensitivity and a focus on gender equality can make to the nexus approach. Additionally, there is a need to conduct further country-level research to explore how guidance and strategies are put into practice, in interaction with other frameworks, and what the integration of gender equality into nexus approaches looks like in practice.

Joint OECD-DAC INCAF and GENDERNET events on the nexus offer opportunities to support this research and promote awareness of synergies between the gender equality and nexus agendas – and the potential involved in seizing these. Further joint research could provide greater evidence bases and policies for members to use in the development and implementation of their own gender-sensitive HDP Nexus policies and strategies. As part of further assessment of the role of gender in joint analyses, it may be useful to review existing analytical tools from this perspective, including tools being developed and piloted in co-operation with the OECD.

Furthermore, the interim progress report on the implementation of the OECD DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus – while informal – provides ample opportunity to examine how members' nexus policies and strategies can best incorporate gender equality going into the formal 5-year review process. The HDP Nexus Recommendation cannot be fully implemented without adherence to the gender equality aspects of the recommendation. Together, through a greater evidence base, concrete recommendations and collective action, the international community – including the members of the INCAF and GENDERNET – can aid members in reaching a greater understanding of how this can be accomplished.
References

Austria (2019), Working together. For our world, Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs. [14]


### Table A.1. Overview of DAC Members’ strategies reviewed and promising practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strategy/Guidance</th>
<th>Gender Equality Elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Together. For our World. (3-year programme: 2019-21)</td>
<td>• Specific focus on women’s empowerment as part of 5 priority areas;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Strategy note on the comprehensive approach</td>
<td>• Development of common risk assessments and analytical tools;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>The World 2030: Denmark’s strategy for development co-operation and humanitarian action.</td>
<td>• Gender Equality as one of 4 commitment areas;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Overt references to a need to include women in peace efforts;</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus</td>
<td>• Highlights the central role that women’s empowerment plays in conflict prevention;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Joint Communication to the EU Parliament and the Council: A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU’s external action (2017)</td>
<td>• Emphasises the importance of mainstreaming gender into nexus approaches;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recognises that different crises (climate change, natural disasters, violent conflict) impact gender groups in different ways;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace</td>
<td>• Directly lists UNSCR 1325 and WPS National Action Plans to highlight the significance of women’s participation in the peace process;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Commits to joint gender-sensitive analyses for early warning, with the additional inclusion of gender specific indicators;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Policy for International Development: A Better World (2019)</td>
<td>• Lists specific priority area of addressing gender inequalities to focus on the furthest behind – including integrating women and women’s organisations in all partnerships and a whole of government approach;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Humanitarian Strategy; an effective and integrated approach</td>
<td>• Highlights girls’ education and sexual reproductive health as focus areas that cross the nexus;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Commits to integrating a gender perspective into refugee response;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Guidance note on the HDP Nexus</td>
<td>• In addition to specific references to gender, the note calls for SIDA to explore innovative approaches towards data collection, management, and sharing;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Explicitly commits to joint, risk informed gender-sensitive analyses;</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (2020)</td>
<td>• Actively reflects on the need to proactively integrate the needs and perspectives of women into nexus approaches;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Makes specific reference to applying a gender-sensitive analysis to address contextual gaps and better focus programme design.</td>
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