



Policy brief

Exploring systemic risk management as a contribution to the HDP nexus

A focus on disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding

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Key messages

Systemic risk management is a starting point for encouraging more comprehensive understandings of risk. Specific actions include establishing a cross-technical working group to explore the contribution of the DRR–peacebuilding intersection to the HDP nexus.

Financial incentives for collaboration are needed. This includes programme operations to enhance DRR outcomes within conflict and peacebuilding programmes, and conversely considerations of conflict sensitivity and peace outcomes in DRR programmes.

DRR–peacebuilding networks and technical capabilities should be enhanced. ‘Nexus literacy’ must focus on enhancing technical capacities related to the interconnections between DRR and peacebuilding.

Pursue advocacy directed at ongoing policy processes to encourage recognition of the potential value of systemic risk management approaches as a contribution to the HDP nexus. An advocacy goal should be inclusion of the topic in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction Mid-Term Review in 2023.

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On behalf of



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Towards alignment

The humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus was brought to the fore by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation of February 2019 (OECD, 2022a), which sought to galvanise action in light of persistently high humanitarian needs and overlapping crises across the breadth of dimensions tracked in the States of Fragility reports (OECD, 2022b): economic, environmental, human, political, security, and societal. The co-location of risks has been even more evident since, with many contexts experiencing the 3Cs of Covid-19, climate change, and conflict (Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, n.d.). In support of the HDP nexus, and independently from different entry points, there is growing interest in understanding and acting on the intersection of risks.

- From a disasters perspective: two successive Global Assessment Reports have encouraged greater attention to complex and systemic risk (UNDRR, 2019; 2022); there has been embryonic attention to the viability of pursuing disaster risk reduction (DRR) outcomes in contexts of fragility, violence and conflict (FCV) (Peters, 2019); flagship programmes such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's Comprehensive Disaster and Climate Risk Management explicitly seek to integrate risk-centred approaches into National Adaptation Plans (UNDRR, n.d.); and a cross-UN group on 'Scaling up DRR in Humanitarian Action' is exploring capacities and financing for DRR in crisis and conflict settings.
- From a climate perspective: the concept of Comprehensive Risk Management is being harnessed to encourage action that encompasses disaster risk management (DRM), social protection and climate resilience (BMZ, 2019; UNFCCC, n.d.). Relatedly but discretely, those concerned with climate security have been exploring the implications of climate variability and change on conditions of insecurity, conflict, and peace (Selby and Hoffmann, 2014; DPPA, n.d.). Programming has involved the production of risk and foresight assessments (adelphi, PIK and Germany Federal Foreign Office, 2020) and the establishment of the Climate Security Mechanism (DPPA, no date).
- For those concerned with peacebuilding: the do no harm and conflict sensitivity approaches stress the need for robust analysis of conflict contexts and the interrelationship with external interventions – promoted as part of the 2016 Sustaining Peace resolutions and broader agenda, and reinforced in the OECD DAC Recommendations (Ponzio, 2018; OECD, 2022a).
- From a broader developmental perspective: concepts of resilience and risk-informed development encourage holistic approaches to understanding and acting on the interconnections between hazards, shocks and stressors (Opitz-Stapleton et al., 2019); multi-mandated organisations are exploring how to enhance programming in transitional phases in and out of crises; and there are innovations in flexible financing such as forecast-based financing, adaptive social protection and crisis modifiers (Oxfam, 2019; Weingärtner and Wilkinson, 2019; Wagner and Jaime, 2020).

- The HDP nexus at large has formalised collaborations such as HDP Nexus Task Forces and is moving towards more adaptive financing practices to better reflect calls for multi-year and flexible finance in protracted crises (Oxfam, 2019; OECD, 2022c).

Though far from comprehensive, the above examples illustrate the drive towards alignment while respecting the humanitarian imperative.

The diversity of ways to conceptualise and act on the HDP nexus principles and the intersection of risks reflects different contextual realities, disciplinary starting points, and political agendas. Yet there are commonalities in that most approaches seek to protect the most vulnerable from the impacts of overlapping shocks and stresses. Systemic risk management offers one avenue through which to enhance action, with the potential for progress to be made against areas identified as requiring further attention in the interim progress review of the HDP principles (OECD, 2022c). Specifically, the progress review calls for (1) climate considerations to become part of the HDP nexus, rather than siloed areas of policy and action (in the context of *Using the HDP nexus as an integrator for other policy priorities*), and (2) the peace and security agenda to be explicitly linked with action on DRR (in the context of *Integrating a gender focus*) (OECD, 2022c).

The progress review thus identifies the need for enhanced action on natural hazard-related (including climate-related) disaster risks within the peace and security agenda. The observed need for further action on this intersection of DRR and peacebuilding has been noted elsewhere – in academia (Peters and Kelman, 2020) and in programmatic approaches (Peters, 2019) – and the case has been made that this must not become a missing piece of the HDP nexus puzzle.

There has been some progress in this regard. With the financial support of GIZ on behalf of BMZ, ODI has been exploring the viability of strengthening DRM in fragile and conflict-affected contexts – and by implication achieving dual DRR and peacebuilding outcomes – through a body of work entitled ‘*When disasters and conflict collide*’ (Peters, 2019). It was also a theme in the inputs to the Global Assessment Report (Peters, Peters and Walch, 2019; Siddiqi and Peters, 2019). ODI draws on these foundations, together with the OECD DAC progress review (OECD, 2022c) and another BMZ-funded policy advisory report exploring systemic disaster risk management (Brooks et al., 2022), to propose a set of priorities for action to (1) enhance HDP nexus action, (2) explore the use of systemic risk management within the HDP nexus, and (3) address the neglected DRR–peacebuilding links within the HDP nexus, with systemic risk management as one of a number of entry points for enhancing collaboration.

Applying systemic risk management to enhance HDP nexus action

Systemic risk management (Brooks et al., 2022; Sillmann et al., 2022) aims to recognise, connect, and articulate interrelated risks spanning different sectors and stakeholders. It can identify and probe interrelated risks, spanning natural hazard-related disasters, climate change, violent struggle, economic insecurity, and other fragility dimensions – to which HDP nexus approaches can then respond.

A full grasp of the interconnectedness of risks and consequences is a necessary starting point from which to effectively sequence strategies and actions to tackle them. This includes re-examining development, peacebuilding and humanitarian programming in the context of systemic risk management. It encompasses micro risk (impacts of hazards, conflict, displacement, etc., on households and local ecosystems) and macro risk (ineffectual governance, social exclusion, war, etc.). By using systemic risk analysis, it may be possible to identify hotspots of vulnerability and entry points for enhancing action across the HDP nexus, and specifically with regard to DRR–peacebuilding disciplines. This could enhance the utility and relevance of the HDP nexus, conjoining humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actions and actors, with the aim of yielding more context-applicable and sustainable outcomes.

If successful, systemic risk management provides an improved vantage point to identify and catalyse DRR–peacebuilding collaborations. It does not originate from a specific sector or discipline but is overarching, while its emphasis on interconnections fosters the identification of viable strategies for reducing disaster risk and windows of opportunity for collaboration on peacebuilding.

Foundational work will need to take place to ensure different technical experts are employing coherent and consistent terminology (a task undertaken by many different but related expert groups in the past, including for example the climate change and disaster risk communities). If designed effectively, this process itself is an important contribution towards improved collaboration across the HDP nexus, and learning could be used to develop guidance to support other DRR–peacebuilding communities to establish better working connections (Peters, 2019).

Actionable recommendations

Start from a genuinely comprehensive understanding of risk

The ideas associated with systemic risk management can be used as a starting point for bringing together different technical expertise:

- Use different ways of understanding risk (e.g., Brooks et al., 2022; Peters and Tanner, 2023) as a starting point for discussion with a cross-technical working group interested in exploring the contribution of the DRR–peacebuilding intersection to the HDP nexus. The working group would aim to (1) enhance networking across disciplinary expertise, (2) identify the degree of commonality and difference between interpretations of the HDP nexus, and (3) gauge the level of interest in the idea and application of the concept of systemic risk management as a means for developing a genuinely comprehensive understanding of intersecting risks.
- If there is uptake, then donors may:
 - require systemic risk management approaches to be adopted within calls for proposals and ask partners to demonstrate a more ‘joined up’ risk assessment
 - require multi-disciplinary teams to be made mandatory with demonstrable joint working (meaning avoiding having DRR and peacebuilding expertise working in parallel under a single project)
 - requiring peace and stability programmes to include disaster risk management or resilience components (for specific ideas see Peters, 2019).
- Establish a long-term learning process to help teams designing programming interventions to move away from siloed approaches to risk assessment in which, for example, DRR actors look at disaster risk and peacebuilders look at conflict/security risks. This requires taking specific contexts and exploring chains of causality leading back to more fundamental, structural drivers of vulnerability and fragility (Peters, 2022). Analysis needs to provide the contextual explanations for why peoples’ livelihoods are insecure. This more systemic risk analysis can help to break down the disconnect between local experience of risk and the design of programmes from separate development, peace and humanitarian actors.

Create financial incentives for collaboration

Complementing the findings of the progress review of HDP nexus action to implement ‘inclusive financing strategies’ (OECD, 2022c), we suggest replicating successful examples wherein financial incentives have been employed to enhance collaboration across DRR–peacebuilding and broader FCV cadres:

- Donors should consider replicating the experience of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), wherein funds (among others from BMZ) are allocated to incentivise the integration of disaster and conflict disciplines. Financial incentives – meaning funds to support

expansion to programme operations – could focus on enhancing DRR outcomes, including climate adaptation within conflict and peacebuilding programmes, and conversely considerations of conflict sensitivity and peace outcomes into DRR programmes. Fund allocation – accessed on the basis of meeting a set of pre-determined criteria, such as the inclusion of multi-hazard risk assessments and conflict-sensitive approaches – can help incentivise internal collaboration, promote joint DRR–peacebuilding technical teams, and encourage joint programme design.

- Relate to the above, with so few dedicated spaces for action on disaster–peace intersections, continued and scaled-up funding for GFDRR’s DRM-FCV Nexus Programme would be worthwhile.
- Ongoing efforts by the cross-UN Core Group on Scaling-up DRR in Humanitarian Action should be supported, with donors commissioning independent case study-based work to understand the viability of funding DRR actions in different humanitarian, crisis and conflict settings. Empirical evidence is desperately needed on what types of DRR actions are viable and fundable in different settings; such insights would help develop a neglected intersection within the HDP nexus.
- Related to the above, donors should consider mechanisms to better tag and track programme funding which works directly on the interconnection between disaster (including climate change) and conflict risks (Peters, 2021). Only then will it be possible to start to better quantify the level of investment being channelled to tackle disaster, risk and peace outcomes and assess this in relation to upcoming needs. It may also be necessary to assess the impact of failing to take DRR into account in peacebuilding programmes – qualitatively and quantitatively – and build this into business cases for enhanced integrated HDP nexus action.

Enhance DRR–peacebuilding networks and technical capabilities

The progress review for the HDP nexus principles includes the need to promote ‘nexus literacy’. A crucial, neglected aspect of this is enhancing technical capacities – for policymakers, funders and operational staff – related to the interconnections between DRR and peacebuilding. Ways to achieve this include:

- Designing and delivering DRR–peacebuilding training as part of broader efforts to scale-up technical capacity on the HDP nexus.
- Ensuring there is DRR and peacebuilding expertise within Nexus Task Forces – and other coordination equivalents – with a specific mandate to explore the intersections between disaster resilience and peacebuilding outcomes.
- Ensuring the intersection of disasters and peace is part of the curriculum of the Nexus Academy – and other donor or agency equivalents.
- Establishing or strengthening internal and external networks dedicated to advancing the disaster–peace intersection as a direct contribution to the HDP nexus. Current examples include the internal GIZ Network International Cooperation in Conflicts and Disasters (NICD), which is both a sector network for projects working on conflict, violence, displacement, DRM and security and a context network for all projects working in environments affected by conflict, fragility and violence.

Advocacy directed at ongoing processes

Having surpassed the mid-way point for Agenda 2030, a number of ongoing monitoring processes present important opportunities for advocacy on this topic:

- Ongoing preparations for the High-Level Meeting on the Mid-Term Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction – including a series of Rethinking Resilience dialogues – present important outreach opportunities for encouraging recognition of the potential contribution of systemic risk management approaches to the HDP nexus; and within that the neglected connections between DRR and peacebuilding. An advocacy goal should be to get this topic into the political declaration due to be released May 2023 alongside the Mid-Term Review.
- Convening a dedicated roundtable for OECD DAC donors on the theme would be valuable as an input into the continued review process of the nexus principles. A potential outcome of that discussion would be to devise a joint statement of intent to work more collaboratively across the DRR and peacebuilding cadres, as an important and neglected component of action on HDP nexus action, with systemic risk management as a useful hook to bring diverse perspectives together.

Address stified progress head-on

Finally, if there are persistent barriers to more collaborative working, then insights from organisational change management may be required. For example, it may be necessary to conduct an internal review into the processes, incentives and mechanisms through which joined-up investment and programme design have succeeded in other sectors/themes (this may be required by government departments, operational agencies, and/or within specific teams). This is not about the technical content of programmes or policies per se, but the specific institutional drivers for change which need to be leveraged in order to spur collaborative action and to identify and remove barriers to change.

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