Environmental security & development portfolio

A portfolio containing responses to questions on aspects of environmental security & development, and a close treatment of a key issue

June Pickering

This portfolio contains responses to questions on aspects of environmental security and development, which investigate the following:

i. The environment during armed conflict

ii. Peacebuilding in fragile contexts

iii. Human rights, equity, and gender equality

iv. Humanitarian action from a development perspective, including the sociology of changing regimes and development action

v. Civil-military interaction and coordination in post-conflict and crisis-response settings

The portfolio concludes with a close treatment of the challenges of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, which was developed in response to the difficulties of international assistance due to climate change, protracted displacement, and the highly complex nature of sustainable development in fragile environments

Question 1

What are the main arguments made in support of the idea of Environmental Peacebuilding /

Peacekeeping, and how is the area developing in practical as well as strategic terms?

Understood as a radical shift in thinking from one of environmental scarcity to peace, environmental peacebuilding is founded on the premise that the biophysical nature of the environment can act as a driving force towards peace as opposed to the zero-sum logic of conflict. In this context, it "integrates natural resource management in conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery" and is instrumental in terms of building resilience in communities affected by conflict. (Environmental Peacebuilding Association, 2020). While it has been argued that there has been insufficient evidence and limited scholarship to support this premise, this new and evolving discipline has provided opportunities in both strategic and practical terms for establishing consensus across the conflict lifecycle and articulating a cohesive framework for environmental peacebuilding.

It was not until the influential Brundtland Report in 1987 that environmental issues were introduced as a possible source of violent conflict, followed by the 1992 Agenda for Peace which cemented the link between environment and peace (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). From a strategic perspective, the conversation over the last twenty years has moved from a focus on the scarcity of resources and away from the zero-sum understanding to environmental security and the dynamics of environmental resources and conflict to opportunities for cooperation and sustainable development. Environmental peacebuilding rests on the argument that rational choice is the primary human motivation, and the benefits of cooperation exceed the self-serving rational behind conflict. In this context, social interactions produced by ecological interdependencies can create solidarity and a win-win scenario (Conca et al, 2002). Critics have argued that this interpretation is unrealistic and a failure to consider the real-world realities of conflict can support solutions that obfuscate underlying social issues and politics and therefore consideration of practical realities must be considered.

Indeed, there have been many practical developments in the field of environmental peacebuilding from the creation of the Environmental Peacebuilding Association to further research

and training as well as numerous United Nations (UN) sponsored initiatives such as the Environmental Security and Peace graduate program at the University of Peace to the introduction of Environmental Justice Atlas (EJ Atlas), an interactive online tool to expand knowledge on global environmental justice. In addition, the 2030 Agenda recognises the critical impact of violence on development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have provided a valuable avenue to terms of managing the environment and conflict risks while developing peacebuilding initiatives that provide real opportunities for proactive intervention. In addition, a multiplicity of actors including national governments and civil society organisations have started to take SDG targets on board with civil society organisations actively involved in developing the 2020 agenda.

Environmental peacebuilding is now part of an international research agenda that has transformed over time into a broader framework which also includes prevention and peacebuilding. Although much work has been done in terms of sustainable development, there are important opportunities for the creation of proactive institutions for conflict resolution which focus on human rights and environmental mediation as part of this agenda.

Question 2

What would you see as the principal difficulties involved in arguing for the strategic and/or practical value of environmental peacebuilding as a central plank in peace work?

While there is ample evidence to suggest that environmental problems are contributory factors in the emergence of conflict from individual cases such as the genocide in Darfur or civil war in Papua New Guinea to the results of large-scale statistical analysis noted by Levy in his video, there are principal difficulties in arguing for the value of environmental peacebuilding in strategic or practical terms as a central component of peace work.

These difficulties stem from the fact that the causal links between the environment and violent conflict tend to be not only indirect and probabilistic, but also, conjunctural and contingent on the existence of other factors which are often political. Furthermore, such causal claims are difficult to monitor and there is arguably insufficient evidence or supporting literature.

For example, Levy argues that the direct causes of violent conflict are the result of choices made by those in control of the means of violence, however, the forces that influence these choices are often the result of the dynamics of oppression, institutions, or conflicting incentives but not because of environmental factors. Given the root cause is not the direct result of environmental issues, it is more difficult to argue for the value of environmental peacebuilding when arguably the focus of peace work should be around socio-economic and political factors.

The most significant environmental categories typically linked to violence include environmental scarcity or abundance, degradation, or climate stress. A key issue with each in terms of their importance in peace work is that the causal claims for each are not only indirect but contingent on the existence of other factors. For example. scarcity in terms of natural resources has been known to incentivise actors to violence such as in the uneven concentrations of oil in Sudan which contributed to the civil war, however, this arguably amplified existing problems with identity politics in the region. Again, environmental degradation can also link the environment and resources, particularly in situations where communities feel unjustly impacted, however, political

power structures play a more pivotal role in situations where groups are undermined or underrepresented.

To gain a substantive understanding of these linkages, Ide (2015) examined natural resources conflict to identify patterns of conjunctural causation and while the results suggest that the presence of two structural (negative othering and low power differences) and one triggering condition (recent political change) of a violent escalation is sufficient regarding resource scarcity, this causal pathway could only account for four of seven cases examined. The results also indicate that this relationship is conjunctural and no single condition is sufficient for escalation to violence thus undermining an argument for environmental peacebuilding as a central focus in peace work.

Nevertheless, while environment problems are not the direct cause for the emergence of violent conflict, they can impact choices that lead to violence. Effective peace work including the structural, physical, and cultural cannot succeed without environmental peacebuilding which impacts each category.

Question 3

Post-conflict peacebuilding strategies need to consider the place of natural resources – both renewable and non-renewable – in any proposals for a sustained peace, and systematically factor this into any stabilisation and subsequent development programmes What insights does Jensen provides into this complex, highly context-specific, and deeply politicised process?

Given the immediate challenges for the international community in terms of assessing needs in sometimes hostile and often highly politicised post-conflict environments, prioritising natural resource management is difficult, however, according to Jensen (2012) these natural resources are a crucial component of an effective peace process as they underpin other peacebuilding sectors.

To ensure appropriate environmental and natural resource management is factored into post-conflict recovery plans, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have developed four post-conflict environmental assessments, including needs, quantitative risk, strategic and comprehensive assessments, with findings used across several post-conflict policy frameworks. For Jensen, these assessments are crucial in terms of evaluating the status of the environment, understanding the impact on natural resources and how they can support post-conflict peacebuilding in relation to economic recovery, empowerment of marginalised communities, resilience and institutional rebuilding and inclusive political processes.

Jensen evaluates the efficacy of the UNEP assessment approaches and their policy impact in relation to the environment and natural resources across seven field operations between 1999 and 2007 and provides insights from this analysis. For example, he suggests that national resource management will be prioritised when the requirements have a humanitarian component, the UNEP/UNCHS environmental assessment report in the Kosovo conflict in 1991 is a strong example as it focused on specific threats to public health and successfully argued for clean-up measures which were easy to implement, increased visibility and encouraged financing. Jensen's evaluation also suggests that equitable sharing of natural resources is pivotal in terms of reconciliation as in oil reserves in Iraq and Sudan. In addition, an active field presence is crucial for effective coordination and development of assessments that match the needs of the policy framework with UNEP high-

impact assessments holding project offices in Afghanistan in 2001, Kosovo in 1999 and Sudan in 2005. In this context, Jensen notes that that it is critical to integrate national capacity building for addressing environmental issues into the design and implementation of an assessment for it to be effective.

Given that the availability of funding and time to conduct assessments and develop concrete plans and detailed budgets affects Its impact, a common thread is the importance of consulting with and including national experts in the international environmental assessment team. Jensen identifies national ownership as one of the key success factors and although the UNEP maintain institutional neutrality, it can inadvertently undermine local ownership in relation to natural resources and their importance in post-conflict peacebuilding. He argues that the success of assessments and subsequent policy impact relating to these resources rests on the level of stakeholder involvement and awareness-raising to bolster national interest. For example, the UNEP in Sudan conducted six months of stakeholder meetings to build national support, resulting in a report with the highest policy impact to date. The importance of social relationships Is again echoed in Jensen's lecture on post-conflict security and stabilisation operations with linkages to natural resources.

Question 4

What were the key insights in Michelle Bachelet's SIPRI Forum address?

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) forum address by Bachelet was thought-provoking and inspiring, given the auspicious nature of the event and the standing of the speaker, the clear and to the point messaging of the address was refreshing and a clear example of the effectiveness of both of Bachelet's self-acclaimed keystones throughout her career, namely open and clear dialogue inspired by a genuine intent to convey meaning as well as to understand, and a passionate conviction to strong humanitarian principles.

A key insight that aligned with sustainable development was Bachelet's focus on the value and importance of human dignity, equality, and rights as the foundation of a sustainable society. As Bachelet points out, human rights underpin all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and therefore cut across the four dimensions (social, economic, environmental, governmental) of sustainable development and are necessary if the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement are to be achieved.

For example, while justice can bring peace, Bachelet advocates for policies that are grounded in dialogue, built on inclusion, and guided by human rights as they build confidence, deepen trust, and form the basis of social equity but also drive stronger economies and better frameworks for education, healthcare, and other services. Again, to generate growth that is socially legitimate, environmentally sustainable, and inclusive, Bachelet suggests that we need to change our development models, reform institutions, and reinforce multilateralism. With growing economic equalities, a fair and sustainable model of development is not feasible when only a privileged minority benefit from economic growth. For Bachelet, the principles of human rights provide a detailed guide for the pathway forward to support these transformations that are required to build more stable and sustainable societies.

Another insight which may not seem so important at first was Bachelet's resounding belief that the SDGs are achievable. While they are the clarion call of our times to mobilise for change and ensure the ability of future generations to meet their needs, they've been dismissed as being overly

ambitious, a greenwashing tool or even "worse than useless" in The Economist (2015). Given Bachelet's wealth of experience and knowledge from human rights activism to ground-breaking leader, there is substantial weight to her belief that" optimism is realistic" and that the types of structural and institutional reform that bring about sustainable societies can happen. Bachelet tells us if we doubt this possibility, we must reflect on our own lives and note that we have seen important societal changes implemented before. From a constructivist perspective in international relations theory, the belief that reform can happen and that societies can work together to mobilise meaningful change as outlined in the 2030 Agenda is not trivial. As the constructivist Wendt famously noted, "Anarchy is what states make of it" and so too, from this perspective, can be sustainable development, indeed, constructing knowledge is arguably a sustainable development process itself. Bachelet's address is a compelling antidote to scepticism about what can be achieved and a powerful and effective call-to-action.

Question 5

Reflecting on studies in development practice, what are the key similarities and differences between 'development' and 'humanitarian' approaches? Why is it important for someone studying development practice to understand these distinctions?

Both humanitarian action and development practice involve providing support to communities in need, and while they are quite similar and their work can overlap, there are also important differences. Founded on the key principles of neutrality and impartiality, humanitarian action is apolitical in nature, and often involves a rapid and short-term response to a humanitarian crisis with the goal of saving lives, alleviating suffering, and maintaining human dignity. Humanitarian aid provides access to basic services such as food, medicine, water, and shelter. While development practice also works to improve lives and maintain human dignity, the goal of sustainable development is to meet the needs of people today without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Development practice therefore involves structural and systemic changes across social, economic, environmental and governance sectors. Engaging across these dimensions necessitates working with state actors, is intrinsically political and operations are run on a long-term basis.

Nevertheless, despite differences in focus, humanitarian action and development are closely related and underpinned by a respect for human rights, equality, and dignity. Humanitarian principles support humanitarian action and similarly, eradicating poverty and inequality to ensure equal access to health, justice, and prosperity is the goal of sustainable development. It's worth noting that while state actors and organisations draw distinctions between the nature of their work, recipients are not concerned with institutional boundaries and do not neatly transition from needing aid to development resources. Development and humanitarian agencies look very similar to their beneficiaries and are complementary forces working to alleviate suffering under different approaches.

Certainly, the line dividing the structures and polices guiding each sector is not clear in practical terms as illustrated in the transition from humanitarian action to development aid in

northern Uganda. However, as Harold Sande Lie (2020) suggests, this "humanitarian mission creep" was the result of a humanitarian response shaped by new realities as the Ugandan government remodelled the humanitarian crisis to one of recovery and development. This blurring of lines is further exacerbated by the changing face of humanitarian engagement itself. Hoelscher et al (2017) explore whether the politicisation and militarisation of humanitarian operations is a causal factor in the increase in attacks on aid workers and suggest that the growing similarities between corporate, military, and humanitarian operations has created further confusion around the role of agencies.

In this context, the humanitarian–development nexus as a "transition or overlap between the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the provision of long-term development assistance" (Strand, 2020) is important. It's been suggested that the relationship can be seen as non-linear and a "contiguum" in which both can work simultaneously within the same context. Indeed, successful development can mitigate the need for humanitarian aid and aid can support development.

These similarities, differences and transitions between humanitarian action and development practice are complex and in terms of development studies, an understanding of key actors, goals, and political context is key to making an effective contribution in development practice whether operationally or in terms of developing policy.

Question 6

What are the key functions, objectives, and challenges faced by OCHA in relation to its activities?

As the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) notes, it was established in 1991 to strengthen the international response to complex emergencies and crises and while it has several core functions, it ultimately is responsible for bringing humanitarian actors together to ensure a coherent humanitarian response to emergencies. Coordination is essential as according to OCHA, it not only reduces duplication of efforts, but helps ensure aid is prioritised according to needs.

OCHA supports many humanitarian organisations through their core functions including advocacy, humanitarian financing, information management and policy development as well as coordination at country levels through the cluster system, humanitarian country teams and bilateral relationships. As a coordination mechanism, the cluster system consists of groups of UN and non-UN organisations in key sectors such as water, health and logistics which have clear responsibilities appointed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee IASC. As OCHA note, they also provide humanitarian leadership in country teams through Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) or United Nations Resident Coordinators (RCs) and although responsibility for coordination is with local authorities, HCs or RCs will coordinate the UN and non-UN efforts when international support is required. OCHA also work at the country level with partners to identify needs, develop responses, and build common implementation plans.

OCHA have several mechanisms to help coordinate humanitarian response. As the secretariat for IASC and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), OCHA also manage tools for emergency response such as the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system (UNDAC) which they can mobilise in the event of natural disasters or sudden changes in complex emergencies as well as On-Site Operations Coordination Centres (OSOCC) which provide onsite emergency response and guidance.

Coordinating humanitarian organisations in a crisis is challenging, and the speakers in the Harvard, PHAP and ICVA event touched upon OCHA's key difficulties. For example, alignment and agreement across the NGO community is difficult and competition between NGOs with similar mandates can be problematic. Reconciling differences is critical to working towards a coherent

response and therefore, flexibility around organisational mandates to support the delivery of joint outcomes is strongly encouraged. Ensuring that all key stakeholders are included and securing agreement on a unified message is seen as important and not always easy to achieve. In addition, understanding the realities of humanitarian principles in action and the sensitivities around localised challenges and constraints was identified as crucial and equally as challenging. Indeed, the nature of the changing landscape, the increasing number of humanitarian actors and the need for a rapid response ensures that developing coordination strategies is ever more demanding.

  To provide a more effective response to changing needs, OCHA underwent a significant change management process and identified key transformational priorities to meet humanitarian needs in their Strategic Plan 2023-2026. These took on a more sustainable approach and focused on a people centred, context specific and inclusive humanitarian response as well as systematic leadership and strategic risk analysis. Although the challenges for OCHA are manifold, they continue to advocate for effective and democratic humanitarian action.

Question 7

What are the advantages and limitations of 'Transition management' as outlined by van Welie & Romijn (2018) and Loorbach (2010) in the context of transitioning from a post-conflict or fragile social environment?

While Transition Management (TM) provides an analytical lens to assess how society deals with complex issues as well as developing strategies to influence governance Loorbach (2010), Van Welie & Romijn (2018) note the potential challenges when applied to the process of transitioning out of post-conflict situations given their cultural, economic, and institutional contexts. They stress that TM offers a systematic approach that emphasises strategic, tactical, operational, and reflexive governance and while in principle it creates space for frontrunners to initiate structural change through transition experiments, it's value and shortcomings in the transition from fragile scenarios raises several important considerations.

Value

i. **Holistic approach**

Van Welie & Romijn (2018) expand upon TM's focus on addressing complex issues from a holistic perspective. This is beneficial in a post-conflict scenario as it not only takes into consideration the many challenges, but also helps support the development of a broader understanding of the context to facilitate a more effective response.

ii. **Stakeholder engagement**

TM encourages the involvement of a range of stakeholders and pushes for broader participation, Van Welie & Romijn (2018). This is important in terms of sustainable development and particularly in relation to marginalised communities. Including a diverse range of perspectives can promote ownership and empower disadvantaged communities and help support the creation of more stable environments.

iii. **Capacity building**

Van Welie & Romijn (2018) outline the value of capacity building as part of the TM strategy. This is crucial as it empowers communities in situations where local institutions have been weakened or destroyed and thus support a move towards a more stable environment.

Shortcomings

i. **Institutional resistance**

As Loorbach (2010) notes, TM challenges deeply ingrained cultural norms and structures in the highly politicised context of a fragile situation and there is the possibility of resistance from established institutions which can impede progress.

ii. **Limits**

Loorbach (2010) outlines the importance of a small group of frontrunners in terms of sustainable development, and although TM strategy encourages diversity, the size of the group has the potential to exclude many stakeholders.

iii. **Imbalance in the TM cycle**

Striking a balance in the TM cycle which Loorbach (2010) suggests is flexible enough for adaptation yet prescriptive enough to be functional may not be possible in a fragile situation.

iv. **Practical challenges**

Again, Loorbach (2010) speaks about translating TM into operational models that align with different phases in policy and decision-making, however, this is difficult in practical terms and as Van Welie & Romijn (2018) suggest, the application of TM in post-conflict low-income countries may not be appropriate given the complex and fragile power dynamics.

v. **Unsustainability**

As both Van Welie & Romijn (2018) and Loorbach 2020 note, there are practical issues with sustaining transition experiments which are time-consuming and resource intensive. Given that post-conflict situations are characterised by limited funding, this can pose serious practical challenges to maintaining long-term initiatives.

While TM provides a detailed framework for addressing sustainability goals, it's focus on ongoing learning in the form of research and experimentation can help to further develop and refine the approach and its value in a post-conflict situation, however, a more nuanced understanding of the local political context and the suitability of TM must be considered.

Challenge 8

What are the key challenges in coordinating crisis response and post-conflict or early-stage recovery efforts among humanitarian and development actors in fragile settings, and what role does the CMCoord play in addressing these challenges?

Coordinating crisis response and post-conflict recovery work among humanitarian and development actors is particularly challenging for several reasons including conflicting values and principles across actors, blurred distinctions between political, military, and humanitarian action, structural barriers in terms of practical implementations and conceptual dilemmas regarding comprehensive and integrated approaches. Furthermore, these causal factors occur in highly politicised tense and complex situations where institutions have been weakened or destroyed.

Conflicting principles between political and security actors can create significant challenges in terms of coordination particularly in contexts where the international and local actors including the host government are hostile to each other as with an insurgency as in Afghanistan. As de Conig (2008) notes, actors have different priorities; political and security actors may focus on stabilising a situation before addressing human rights violations which will bring them into direct conflict with the humanitarian actors. Aulin and Vogelaar (2015) echo this and suggest that these conceptual differences pose challenges to coordination, with inconsistent approaches to insurgency, conflict transformation, and governance-oriented security sector reform.

As de Conig (2008) stresses, these situations can also **blur the distinction** between the political, military, and the humanitarian and thus undermine the independence, neutrality, and impartiality of the humanitarian actors. This negatively impacts relationships with the local communities and insurgents creating further tension and barriers to effective crisis response. Again, according to Aulin and Vogelaar (2015), a lack of understanding across sectors based on false assumptions and confusion around civilian and military labels further blurs these distinctions as military forces take on civilian tasks or provide logistical support civilian organisations.

Structural barriers too can pose significant obstacles at the field-level in terms of coordinating a crisis response which as de Conig (2008) suggests, relates to problems with rules and regulations and resource-management. While sharing resources across agencies supports coordination,

inflexibility around the use of allocated budgets particularly in relation to donation funds can cause issues for field-level managers in dynamic and changing environments and may force organisations to operate independently. Furthermore, Aulin and Vogelaar (2015) argue that **practical implementation** at the field level poses serious challenges and requires a clear understanding of operational reality and constraints. International missions often face ambiguous and changing mandates, which cause difficulties in collaboration, while varying expectations and short-term commitments hinder productive relationships. Trust and expectation management are particularly critical in fragile contexts and require collaboration and robust needs assessments

Another key challenge to coordinating a crisis response relates to what Aulin and Vogelaar (2015) refer to as a **conceptual dilemma** with regard to the Comprehensive Approach and an ongoing lack of consensus around what it involves, it therefore manifests in multiple ways including a 'whole-of-government', 'whole-of-mission' and 'whole-of-society' approach by state actors, international missions, and international peacebuilding organisations respectively. Differing levels of structural integration and mechanisms for communication further compounds these issues.

The role of UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN CMCoord) is very important in terms of addressing these challenges and is defined as the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies to protect and promote humanitarian principles, and avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and pursue common goals. (UN 2004). The McCord role is crucial as it not only promotes dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors but also helps fosters cooperation across a broad range of competing actors and is instrumental to mitigating any potential challenges and conflict in fragile post-conflict environments.

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Integrating the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: challenges and opportunities

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus, often referred to as the triple nexus, represents a transformative approach to addressing complex global crises in fragile settings. Aiming to meet the needs of vulnerable people before, during, and after crises, this integrated framework recognises the interconnected nature of these crises and seeks to break down the traditional silos of humanitarian assistance, sustainable development, and peacebuilding and bridge the gap between immediate crisis response, long-term development goals, and efforts to build and sustain peace. Heralding a new way of thinking which interconnects the three pillars, the triple nexus is of profound importance and worthy of close examination. This treatment will explore the meaning of the triple nexus, the challenges it presents, and potential strategies for addressing these challenges, with a focus on integrating sustainability for a resilient future.

Understanding the nexus

Gaining prominence at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, the triple nexus represents a paradigm shift in the way the international community responds to crises and called for a 'new way of working' (NWOW) among humanitarian and development and peace actors towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While linking short-term humanitarian assistance with efforts that address the root causes of crisis or support longer-term well-being is not entirely new (ALNAP, 2023), earlier initiatives through link relief, rehabilitation, and development (LRRD) faced criticism for failing to acknowledge the protracted nature of many crises and the inability of humanitarian actors to provide medium term solutions (Brown & Mena, 2021). For the most part, the three pillars have been treated as separate with distinct methodologies, and objectives. Humanitarian responses have typically focused on providing immediate relief in the aftermath of crises, often neglecting the underlying structural issues. development initiatives have aimed at addressing these issues; but are ill-equipped for the urgency of crisis situations. Alternatively, peacebuilding activities work to establish stability and prevent further conflict but are detached from the immediate needs of the community. A key aim

of the nexus approach is therefore to challenge this linear and sequential intervention logic so that humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding programmes are simultaneously implemented to address systemic inequalities and weaknesses. (Oxfam, 2023) and represent a "contiguum".

Challenges

While the triple nexus is forward thinking in its approach, its implementation is not without its conceptual, operational, or political issues.

1. **The triple nexus concept**

   Although the concept has been widely endorsed, practical implementation has posed many challenges for stakeholders. Despite the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD, DAC) 2019 recommendations, the absence of clear theories of change or objectives has compounded challenges and there is confusion over what implementing the concept involves practically and operationally (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2023). Although these recommendations were adopted by the European Union (EU), several United Nations (UN) agencies and 29 member states, many professionals in these sectors view the nexus as theoretical rather than operational (Brown & Mean, 2021). Indeed, varying opinions on what the triple nexus approach is and what a successful model would look like prohibits an effective implementation.

2. **Incentive structures**

   Challenging linear logic and cooperating beyond institutional borders is a key element of the triple nexus approach and requires changes to deeply embedded organisational structures and processes which require internal leadership and incentive structures for joint intervention which are typically absent UNOCHA (2022). This is due to a lack of strategic focus in building national capacity to drive sustainable outcomes or clarity in terms of leadership and mandate function in relation to Resident Coordinators (RCs) and Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs). Furthermore, issues around fragmented funding

particularly in relation to constraints around donor funding as well as conceptual and cultural divisions between humanitarians and development actors further compound these challenges (New York University Centre on Cooperation, 2019). Indeed, according to UNOCHA (2022)., there is little understanding of the work of other stakeholders across sectors, thus undermining the possibility of joint analysis and planning.

3. **Localisation**

Arguably greater efforts are needed to ensure that the ideas of local actors are central to any humanitarian, development, and peace initiative. Involving local communities and leaders increases engagement and local ownership which supports sustainability and responsiveness to local needs. Proximity also provides valuable opportunities for local insights and is important in terms of effective operationalisation and local buy-in. For example, in his analysis of the efficacy of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) post-conflict environmental assessments to ensure appropriate environmental and natural resource management, Jensen (2012) illustrates how active field presence as well as national ownership and consultation with local stakeholders is key in terms of effective policies. A top-down implementation of the triple nexus in which local communities and civil-society organisations are not fully incorporated poses a real risk for triple nexus projects.

4. **Understanding peace**

According to Norman et al (2023) while the triple nexus was introduced to link humanitarian aid, international development, and peace initiatives, little consideration was given as to how this would be integrated within programmes. Furthermore, the meaning of peace was not clearly defined with ambiguity around operationalisation in humanitarian spaces leaving opportunities for co-option in relation to political or security agendas Oxfam (2019). Conflicting values and principles can create significant challenges, as de Conig (2008) suggests, political and security actors can focus on stabilising a situation before addressing human rights violations bringing them into conflict with humanitarian actors. Practical implementation requires a clear

understanding of operational reality however, international missions often face ambiguous and changing mandates, while varying expectations and short-term commitments hinder productive relationships (Aulin and Vogelaar (2015). The importance of framing peace as a community-based approach that addresses root causes or 'positive peace' rather than 'negative peace' from a humanitarian-development-peace nexus perspective cannot be understated.

5. **Humanitarian principles**

Despite wide interest in the nexus approach, the triple nexus model has also been viewed with some scepticism in relation to humanitarian principles of impartiality which may be undermined by development or peace agendas. As Guinote (2018) notes, the purpose of humanitarian action is to save lives and protect dignity, however, if the commitment to neutrality is perceived to be politicised, the humanitarian principles or perception of them is strained and certain communities run the risk of marginalisation. Arguably, the division between the structures and polices guiding the humanitarian and development fields is no longer clear in practical terms and has been compounded by the changing face of humanitarian engagement which as Hoelscher et al (2017) argue, is underpinned by growing similarities between corporate, military, and humanitarian operations. Indeed, Shusterman (2011) queries the siloed interpretation of humanitarianism suggesting that it often requires political trade-offs and the gap between development. peacebuilding is merely rhetorical and bureaucratic.

Addressing challenges and opportunities

1. **Connecting conflict and climate change**

As the effects of climate change continue to impact globally with environmental degradation and climate issues contributing to global poverty and more indirectly conflict, it has been suggested that a separate climate change stream should be included in the triple nexus, however, Mena et al (2022) argue for its integration into existing streams arguing that long-term development investments incorporating climate change adaptation

and mitigation can help reduce the need for urgent emergency relief by addressing the root cause of the issues. Furthermore, the addition of climate change as an independent stream can potentially exaggerate its role in post-conflict and fragile settings and obfuscate the interconnected nature of factors that lead to conflict. Arguably this approach is also in greater alignment with the triple nexus and sustainable development mindset and the move away from siloed practice as part of the paradigm shift to achieve the SDGs.

2. **Unifying assessments**

To understand the causes of vulnerability, fragility, there is a need to develop comprehensive multi-sectoral assessment methodology at the organisational level which involves considering political implications beyond program location as well as collaboration and shared knowledge. In addition, involving crisis-affected communities is crucial so that locally led knowledge is used to inform programmes and strengthen sustainability. Although collaboration at the organisational level is always important, independent humanitarian assessments at the response level may be necessary to ensure the needs of marginalised groups are considered. Sharing analyses with stakeholders is also important for integrated approaches and for accountability.

3. **Long-term country strategies**

Transformation requires time particularly in post-conflict and fragile environments and therefore projects need to plan for longer programmes. Oxfam (2019) suggest that their own work will need to shift from 6–12-month projects to a 10–15-year cycles that deliver across the humanitarian-development peace spectrum coupled with a move to outcome-based planning. They believe that this new approach represents opportunities to build capacity and partnerships as goals in and of themselves and advocate for a move beyond project specific work to draw on and engage in complementary initiatives.

4. **Agile management**

Another important aspect of nexus projects is the ability to adapt to changing circumstances which is reflected in flexibility around budgets, schedules, and objectives.

This is particularly important for multi-mandated organisations and often requires significant investment in upskilling and innovation to ensure appropriate assistance is provided to vulnerable communities. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation to assess programme impact as well as transparency and proactive engagement with stakeholders is important.

5. **Collaboration**

Collaboration and knowledge-sharing are key to the triple nexus, however coordinating humanitarian organisations in a crisis is challenging as alignment and agreement across the NGO community is fraught with difficulties and competition between NGOs with similar mandates can be problematic. Reconciliation requires flexibility around mandates as well as a clear understanding of the realities of humanitarian principles in action as well as a sensitivity to localised challenges. Therefore, prioritising capacity-sharing, cross-learning, and upskilling among staff and partners is key particularly for multi-mandated organisations. Collaborative co-production and adapting operational practices is important in fragile environments where close collaboration between business support and programs is necessary to address seasonal patterns, understand context and constraints and ensure timely and accurate financial reporting.

6. **Resilience**

Defined by the European Commission as "the ability of an individual, a community or a country to cope with, adapt and recover quickly from the impact of a disaster, violence or conflict" resilience serves as a useful bridging tool between humanitarian aid and sustainable development. While resilience measurements range from objective indicators to subjective self-reporting, enhancing local involvement in resilience conceptualisation can improve the efficacy of the triple nexus in conflict settings. The benefit of a resilience as a boundary concept is that it belongs to different spheres and can assist with communication across pillars and therefore resilience as the ability to resist, recover or adapt from change is of great importance.

Conclusion

Representing a paradigm shift, the triple nexus offers a transformative approach to addressing complex global crises. Its implementation faces many challenges including conceptual ambiguities, issues with incentive structures and top-down implementation and maintaining humanitarian principles in relation to neutrality and impartiality. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach which involves joint assessments, long-term country strategies, and agile management practices as well as collaboration and capacity-building. Furthermore, incorporating climate change adaptation and mitigation across the nexus is key in terms of environmental peacebuilding. Despite many challenges, fostering collaboration, enhancing coordination mechanisms, and adopting inclusive approaches, the triple nexus has the potential to develop from a theoretical and conceptual framework into a clear and practical strategy that addresses the three pillars and provides a pathway to a more resilient and sustainable future.

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