



Programming Considerations for Humanitarian-Development-Peace Coherence: A Note for USAID's Implementing Partners

Resilience Leadership Council & Technical Working Group



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ABBREVIATIONS

BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CHAT	Crisis Humanitarian Analysis Team
CLA	collaboration, learning, and adaptation
DA	development assistance
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEIA	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EKISIL	Securing Peace and Promoting Prosperity Activity
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HA	humanitarian assistance
IHP	USAID's Integrated Health Program
IRC	International Rescue Committee
HDP	humanitarian-development-peace
INFOSAN	International Food Safety Authorities Network
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGBTQI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex
MEL	monitoring, evaluation, and learning
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PfRR	Partnership for Recovery and Resilience
PREG	Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth
SAFER	Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency Project
SAGE	Strategic Advisory Group for Emergencies
SCC	Sahel Collaboration and Communication Activity
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WASH	water, sanitation, and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

PURPOSE

Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) coherence aims to promote complementary collaboration across humanitarian, development, and peace actors in pursuit of a common agenda. Its goal is to maximize impact and sustainability of programs across different kinds of assistance and to reduce the need for humanitarian assistance (HA) over time.

USAID's HA aims to save lives, reduce human suffering, and reduce the physical, social, and economic impact of disasters. It is provided in such a way as to support implementers' adherence to [humanitarian principles](#) of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Development assistance (DA) is focused on promoting social and economic development in the longer term; it is not necessarily provided based on humanitarian principles and has a stronger emphasis on strengthening government systems and capacity. Peace assistance refers to stand-alone programming that directly addresses the root causes of conflict and violence.¹ HA and DA contribute to peace when possible, but the primary goal of peace assistance is to build peace.

Today, unprecedented and compounded shocks and stresses are impacting the populations USAID serves. Hunger is on the rise globally for the first time in decades, with conflict and climate change as key drivers. The climate crisis and conflict have led to increasing poverty and hunger since 2015, primarily in Africa and Asia, reversing positive trends from the decade prior² ([FAO 2018](#)). Extreme poverty is increasing globally for the first time in two decades. The latest estimate from the World Bank is that in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused up to 97 million people to become or remain in poverty globally. In 2021, these poverty impacts are expected to persist, with 98 million more people living in poverty than pre-COVID projections.³ Crises such as climate change, conflict, and COVID-19 also exacerbate a range of other shocks while fueling vicious cycles of poverty, income inequality, food insecurity, malnutrition, gender and social inequality, and economic instability. Today's risk context underscores the urgency for USAID and its partners to work together across various types of assistance, build resilience, and affirm our commitment to HDP coherence.

Continuing to operate in sector silos without coordinating across types of assistance is not efficient or effective for addressing immediate needs and the root causes of our greatest development challenges. HDP coherence offers a critical step forward in moving beyond silos, prioritizing a common agenda, and enhancing coordination across types of assistance in a way that puts local communities and people (including those that are traditionally excluded) front and center. We are committed to better meeting the needs of those we serve through more coherent, inclusive, equitable and impactful humanitarian, development, and peace assistance.

This document has been developed by USAID's Resilience Leadership Council and its Resilience Technical Working Group and it represents our best, current thinking on the topic of HDP coherence. It is a working document and does not reflect official Agency policy or formal guidance. Rather, this document has two goals; first, to briefly share USAID's core principles on HDP coherence, and second, to share programming examples and takeaways that may be helpful for USAID staff and our partners to learn from and apply themselves. This document is focused on day-to-day programming decisions and draws from consultations with USAID implementing partners. There is so much to learn in the HDP space, and USAID views this document as an important, early step in this journey.

Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) coherence

aims to promote complementary collaboration across humanitarian, development, and peace actors in pursuit of a common agenda.

BACKGROUND

In June 2020, USAID approved a set of internal programming considerations on HDP coherence during the COVID-19 pandemic following the onset of the COVID-19 primary health and secondary economic impacts. COVID-19 was the forcing event for a workstream that was long overdue, punctuating how crucial it was for our investments to strategically reinforce each other, as well as to center on people's lives, needs, and priorities. USAID has made public, high-level commitments to better collaborate across the HDP nexus through efforts such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)) [Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\) nexus recommendation](#) and recommendations under [USAID's 2020 COVID strategic review](#). Additionally, HDP is included as an important component of new policy and strategy processes under development, including the Global Food Security Strategy Refresh, the Resilience Policy, the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, and the USAID Climate Strategy.

We are demonstrating these high-level commitments at the implementation level through key principles and everyday, practical approaches to navigating the HDP nexus. In fall 2020, a USAID working group began developing a public version of these programming considerations to share with USAID's partner community. From September 2020 through February 2021, we engaged in an inclusive, consultative process with USAID implementing partners on challenges and best practices for promoting HDP coherence, as well as how USAID can better support these efforts. USAID consulted approximately 20 partners that represent multi-mandated organizations delivering a combination of humanitarian, development, and peace assistance; traditional humanitarian relief, development, and peacebuilding organizations with expertise ranging from displacement, health, education, and agriculture, to nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and local peacebuilding, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) coordination bodies as well as UN agencies. While the principles below stem from USAID's initial internal product, examples and ideas in this text emerged from USAID's partners and USAID practices.

To that end, these programming considerations share both what USAID has learned in its pursuit of HDP coherence as well as promising practices and ideas we have identified through our partner consultation process. By sharing USAID's promising practices, we demonstrate our commitment to HDP coherence, offer potential models for partners to follow and build upon, and in some cases, indicate opportunities for collaboration that partners can leverage. We also hope these partner programming considerations can directly inspire partner approaches.



OUTLINE

This document begins with and is organized around USAID core principles on HDP coherence. Under each principle are key steps USAID is taking in this area followed by illustrative examples and practical ways our partners integrate these principles in operational plans, structures, and day-to-day implementation processes. Throughout the document these practices are rolled up into clear pathways through which partners are promoting HDP coherence. The examples apply to a range of partners and crisis contexts, from multi-mandated organizations to traditional HA, DA, or peacebuilding actors, as well as in stable contexts to acute and protracted crises. The document concludes with core challenges documented through the consultation process and action steps USAID is dedicated to taking to address them.

As we strive for greater HDP coherence at USAID, we hope our implementing partners leverage these programming considerations and together help us maximize the impact of USAID investments across different kinds of assistance and to reach and benefit people in all their diversity. We see this effort as part of a learning journey that donors and partners are on together. It is the shared responsibility of USAID and its implementing partners to create the enabling conditions for these principles as well as to apply them in practice.



USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) conducts land use planning in Central Africa. Photo credit: USAID

Key Principles for Humanitarian-Development-Peace Coherence

- Uphold and respect **humanitarian principles** to ensure HA remains unhindered and effective
- **Plan jointly and seek a common agenda**
- Create and strengthen **communication, coordination, and learning** platforms across different kinds of assistance
- Strategically **sequence, layer, and integrate** humanitarian, development, and peace assistance where appropriate
- Promote **shock-responsive programming and data-driven adaptive management**
- **Champion conflict integration** and opportunities for enabling or building peace where possible
- Ensure programming is **with, by, and through local partners and systems**

Underpinning each of these key principles is USAID's cross-cutting commitment to gender equality and inclusive development. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) are at the heart of USAID's mission. Beyond ensuring that our resources and services are available to all without discrimination or prejudice, USAID strives to close gaps, ensure meaningful participation and leadership, address the differential needs, protect from harm, and elevate the agency of marginalized populations. This is underscored by numerous USAID and U.S. government policies and strategies that promote gender equality and inclusive development.⁴

PROTECTING PRINCIPLED HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



Sorghum bags are dispatched from Jijiga to drought affected areas in Ethiopia. Photo credit: U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa

USAID Efforts

It is important that development actors understand how humanitarian principles (humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence) and humanitarian standards⁵ inform and drive every aspect of humanitarian response. This understanding is especially important as we seek better coordination across actors and short-, medium- and longer-term types of assistance toward reducing humanitarian need and building resilience to shocks and stresses. Development actors should respect the parameters and principles that their HA counterparts and their implementing partners adhere to, and ensure that principled HA is not undermined by resilience or recovery efforts.⁶

Through our work with the OECD DAC, the United States is participating in key workstreams to operationalize the DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus, a seminal policy instrument in the DAC articulating principles for HDP coherence. Eight UN agencies have since adhered to the Recommendation. USAID co-chairs with World Food Programme (WFP) a UN-DAC Dialogue on the HDP Nexus, which brings together all DAC and UN adherents. The aim of the dialogue is to foster greater coordination and joint analysis and planning among bilateral donors and UN organizations, at both the global and country level. This dialogue includes the development of inclusive Common Country Analysis and humanitarian and development Collective Outcomes processes. The dialogue also includes the creation of a “Nexus Academy” to improve understanding and technical awareness across the three pillars of the nexus. This work is expected to aid in the development of a broader understanding of common objectives across the nexus, including the importance of upholding humanitarian principles. Currently, country-level engagement, with the leadership of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, has begun in Niger and Mozambique.

Partner Programming Considerations

While there is no magic bullet for how to uphold humanitarian principles within HDP efforts, partners shared several examples of how they are participating in internal dialogues and debates for how to navigate these challenging issues in their work. For instance, one partner shared how they are hosting brown bags and engaging in debate to question and reaffirm their organizational stance on the principle of neutrality. Another multi-mandated partner is similarly holding regular, informal meetings to discuss and deliberate over best practices for when operating in a context where the government has recently engaged in hostilities and is a party to the conflict.

PLAN JOINTLY AND SEEK A COMMON AGENDA



Traders at Oldonyiro livestock market in Isiolo County with USAID's PREG in Kenya. Photo credit: Eric Onyiego/USAID Kenya

USAID Efforts

USAID recognizes that the first step toward joint or shared planning is to disrupt the business as usual of programming in silos. We recognize that HA, DA, and peace programming typically have varying goals, incentives, approaches, mandates, funding sources, timelines, cultures, partnerships, and beyond. There are clear structural and programmatic challenges, which are also summarized through partners' feedback at the end of this document, but the reward of greater impact from joint planning is worth the hard work. USAID strives to plan jointly when possible. USAID aims to look comprehensively across existing programming and leverage the comparative advantage of different types of assistance. Mechanisms and funding sources have varying lead times and time limits that we need to work with (i.e., humanitarian programming generally has shorter lead times and one-year awards or cycles whereas development programming has longer-term lead times and awards) and some emergencies cannot be predicted in advance. However, many contexts are facing recurrent and protracted crises and more predictable emergencies that include multiyear planning and implementation timelines. Ideally, planning should span a multiyear timeframe to take into account the risk context and protracted and recurring crises in many of the countries where we work. Joint or shared planning can take a variety of forms, from informal briefings and sharing assessments to formal and elaborate strategic planning processes.

Thinking in multiyear terms toward a common agenda allows us to strengthen our focus on the design of effective disaster risk management, early warning, shock-responsive mechanisms, emergency response and early recovery, and longer-term adaptation to build resilience. A common agenda can include a specific collective outcome⁷ or a broader aim that different actors are working toward. For example, [USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy process](#) increasingly includes humanitarian and transition assistance, as recommended in ADS 201, and a number of Missions have integrated Development Objectives (DOs) that articulate outcomes requiring strengthened coherence across HA, DA, and peace programming. Additionally, the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) in Kenya is an example of a USAID partnership that works toward HDP coherence and a common agenda. Reporting on shared indicators is another tangible way that Missions are putting a common agenda into practice. We are also exploring [theories of change and logic models](#) that demonstrate the different and complementary ways HA, DA and peace interventions lead to greater coherence and contribute to a common agenda, and how they can be monitored and evaluated.

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Partner Programming Considerations

Partners identified a number of levels at which they have been planning jointly and seeking to contribute to a common agenda. This can range from having a shared strategic vision and collective theory of change, to conducting joint and systems analyses, to developing simple shared objectives with thematic and geographic boundaries. In general, partners identified that systems mapping can be an excellent tool for identifying entry points for coordinated HDP action.

Seek out joint analyses and systems approaches

A coordinated analysis process can be a crucial building block toward joint planning. Without it, partners noted that joint planning becomes an uphill battle. A less time-intensive option is to share analyses and data among organizations in a very specific geography. Sharing analysis and data can be valuable for cross-organizational communication and collaboration, but it can also provide a solid basis from which to carry out joint planning. For instance, systems analysis, gender and inclusive development analyses, and shared risk analyses that adopt a systems lens can be helpful for bringing people together and identifying entry points for programming across the HDP nexus that serves and protects the greatest range of people.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been [applying systems analysis and approaches](#) in its programming to strengthen social cohesion. This project was implemented through a number of civil society organizations with deep knowledge of the context and in collaboration with local administrative and traditional leadership as well as a diverse set of citizens.

In Iraq an assessment working group informed the work of many UN clusters. The assessments were examining early recovery and provided shared evidence that facilitated longer-term thinking across sectors and clusters on HDP coherence.

USAID and partners in North Kivu, DRC 2017. Photo credit: USAID



Develop a common agenda early in the process that has practical boundaries

Without a clear purpose, coordination can be too time consuming and lack value. Creating a common agenda from the outset is key for impact and coherence. While sometimes a common agenda can be driven by donor-led joint frameworks, other times it can be driven by organic and bottom-up processes. For instance, a markets working group in Somalia is addressing market support across humanitarian and development actors. Another example of facilitating joint planning on a common issue across stakeholders could be choosing a specific theme, such as livelihoods, child protection, gender inequality, or extension services. Partners also identified a scenario where a common agenda can sometimes become too sector-specific or too high-level. Therefore, adjusting the common agenda based on local analysis and local needs is key. Additionally, while some actions are at the national level, others can be designed to meet needs in a specific geographic area to make them more actionable, such as in specific subnational geographic areas, market catchment areas, livelihood zones, agricultural planning zones, or health districts.

COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, AND LEARNING ACROSS KINDS OF ASSISTANCE



High iron beans are sorted by cooperative members in Bugesera, Rwanda. Photo credit: Herve Irankunda/USAID

USAID Efforts

USAID is making efforts to foster open communication as a crucial step toward enhanced coordination. These efforts include participating in relevant host government and donor information-sharing and coordination structures and consistent communication, such as regular partner meetings with implementing partners. We have found that formal coordination roles and structures can be effective at ensuring adequate cross-communication, coordination, and collaboration. For example, a dedicated USAID advisor or coordinator, such as the Resilience Coordinator position that has been established in USAID's resilience focus countries, can support partners and operate across the HDP nexus and sectoral programming. These roles build trust in coordination, creating a virtuous cycle. At the country and regional Mission level, USAID also invests in senior level decision-making bodies, such as the Strategic Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) model in Ethiopia. SAGE meets regularly to share information about possible shocks and emergencies and advises if and how humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding programs should adapt in response to shocks. At the country and global level, USAID has invested in the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN)'s One Health Secretariat. The One Health Secretariat strengthens country stakeholder membership in INFOSAN's global and country networks across HA and DA to enhance integration of immunization, disaster risk reduction, and zoonotic disease spillover and outbreak management efforts.

Consistent use of [Collaboration, Learning, and Adaptation \(CLA\)](#) approaches among USAID, partners, and local actors are also crucial to good communication and continuous learning and adapting toward achieving collective impact. CLA is an approach and set of tools that ensure USAID programs are coordinated with others, grounded in a strong evidence base, and iteratively adapted to remain relevant throughout implementation. We have also found that backbone support can be essential to effectively coordinate programs implemented across different kinds of assistance, sectors, and places. A backbone support mechanism⁸ also facilitates collaboration and learning among partners and other stakeholders. Where a backbone support mechanism does not exist, USAID also leverages monitoring, evaluation, and learning support mechanisms to coordinate activities and ensure local feedback is integrated throughout the program life cycle.

Partner Programming Considerations

Partners identified a number of levels at which they have been working to strengthen communication and coordination across different kinds of assistance, ranging from fostering internal dialogue across teams and units, to activity-level stakeholder engagement, to leveraging internal and external coordination structures for better HDP coherence.

Leverage existing coordination structures

Partners often coordinate with in-country coordination structures, such as with the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator to discuss options for engaging on longer-term, integrated goals that straddle the HDP nexus. Such efforts can build on humanitarian and development systems and structures, such as national level emergency response mechanisms, the UN cluster system², or established technical working groups where appropriate. Other examples may include strengthening local systems and structures, such as national social protection systems.

Beyond the international humanitarian coordination system, many partners coordinate with national, subnational, or local governments; communities; civil society; and the private sector whenever possible and as appropriate. Many partners have leveraged donor-funded coordination and collaboration structures when available, such as the Sahel Collaboration and Communication (SCC) Activity in Burkina Faso and Niger, the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) in South Sudan, or the PREG in Kenya.

USAID-funded resilience backbone coordination and learning structures can be critical for enabling humanitarian, development, and peace actors to collaborate. Additionally, partners can identify creative ways to “decentralize” coordination and cross-partner engagement so that they can engage jointly around key issues at the subdistrict level. For example, in Niger and Burkina Faso, the SCC facilitates working groups across HDP actors, arranged around joint outcomes under the Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced strategic vision. Partners working on land tenure and natural resources governance, whether at community or regional scale, jointly engaged with Niger’s local and district-level land management commissions to define roles and responsibilities among actors and develop a time-bound plan for jointly working toward specific results to improve peaceful management of pasture and water resources. This approach motivated shared engagement, demonstrated wins and benefits for all, and reduced perceived competition.



Develop or reinforce internal coordination structures

Implementing partners have developed a range of approaches to coordinate across the HDP nexus within their institutions. For example, partners facilitate HDP dialogues within their organizations and country offices. They also promote strategic planning that is applicable to all sectors and types of assistance. An example of a more robust approach is to develop internal teams and frameworks that rationalize an organization's work across kinds of assistance, or to institutionalize operational strategies, country plans, and country-level structures that facilitate working across the HDP nexus. In all cases, USAID plays a driving role in ensuring that support for coordination activities is a priority and that there is associated reporting relevant to the context.



Launch of the UNICEF/WFP Joint Nutrition Response Plan for South Sudan in Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghazal State. Photo credit: USAID

In South Sudan, the WFP has formulated a strategic framework for its efforts to contribute to peace. It builds on WFP's comparative advantages, and highlights that WFP can have a significant impact on the prospects for peace in South Sudan, particularly at the grassroots level. It does this by leveraging WFP's operational reach and access, local level presence, wide range of partners, and mechanisms for community engagement in a deliberate effort to address the root causes of conflict and violence.

At the global level, UNICEF has developed a white paper on its [key operational strategies to operate across the triple nexus at the country level](#), which focuses on concepts that cut across the HDP nexus such as local systems- strengthening, localization, multirisk analysis, and inclusive beneficiary participation.

In eastern DRC and especially the North Kivu and Ituri provinces, Mercy Corps DRC established a Triple Nexus Blueprint that lays out a roadmap for meeting the five conditions for collective impact. The Blueprint establishes collective outcomes for food and economic security, improved water security, and peace. It identifies mutually reinforcing interventions across programming that can sequence, layer, and integrate to build resilience capacities and advance outcomes. It also proposes improved mechanisms for joint crisis and context analysis and common measures of success, and promotes structures for shared communication and backbone coordination. Within this Blueprint, Mercy Corps is identifying both short and longer-term organizational change strategies, developing a shared learning agenda across HDP programs, and working to put in place practical coordination tools such as interactive maps to facilitate sequencing, layering, and integrating activities and to help advance the Blueprint. Mercy Corps is also organizing to implement small-scale HDP nexus intervention pilots that will help to test the feasibility of sequencing, layering, and integrating programming within targeted sectors in DRC.



Mariam manages one of the clean water tap stands Mercy Corps installed in Goma. Photo credit: Mercy Corps

Promote a culture of HDP coherence

Personalities and organizational cultures that are “HDP-friendly” can be key for effective collaboration and change. HDP-friendly cultures are characterized by both staff and a broader organizational culture that understands the respective mandates, constraints and roles for different kinds of assistance, a willingness to collaborate and identify synergies, and a perspective that seeks to break down silos with creative problem-solving whenever possible. Sometimes success depends on a personality that is willing and able to engage across kinds of assistance and bring people to the table together. To move beyond individual champions, many organizations work to foster a collaborative culture that values working together and sees the rewards of HDP coherence. Partners also promote capacity development for staff to learn about other kinds of assistance being delivered within their organization.

SEQUENCE, LAYER, INTEGRATE¹⁰



Damisa Rahila, volunteer for the USAID-funded Sustainable Mechanisms for Improving Livelihoods (SMILE) activity teaches children in Sakwatawa, Nigeria. Photo credit: USAID

USAID Efforts

USAID portfolios aim to sequence, layer and integrate through mutually reinforcing activities. When appropriate, USAID has integrated HA and DA into models such as Ethiopia's [Productive Safety Net Program¹¹](#) (PSNP) that effectively integrated HA and DA in wide-scale and longer-term programming. Layering is often the most common technique to strategically steer existing investments in rapidly evolving contexts. An example of layering is when Feed the Future development funds were layered on top of the PSNP to expand livelihood opportunities for PSNP beneficiaries and enable many to graduate from PSNP assistance. Another example of layering is the addition of people-to-people peacebuilding support to a women's land tenure and agriculture activity in Burkina Faso. Sequencing is less common than might be expected since the traditionally envisioned trajectory of relief to development is rare in areas of recurrent and protracted crisis. A good example can be found in northeast Nigeria, where USAID HA programs [supported safe healing and learning spaces for displaced children](#). These programs responded to the immediate protection needs of children, establishing a secure environment where they can learn and play, while trained child protection staff provided psychosocial support and assisted children experiencing violence, exploitation, and abuse. Once families were more settled, they were able to [transition to local schools or non-formal education](#) supported by USAID DA programs. Sequencing, layering, and integrating HA and DA is also a core driving component of the [USAID 2012 resilience policy](#), subsequent programming, and the forthcoming update to the resilience policy, which also heavily emphasizes the importance of HDP coherence.

Backbone support mechanisms often play an essential role in sequencing, layering, and integrating activities. They bring partners together to develop a common agenda, plan jointly, and share information. Examples involving USAID include Kenya's PREG, South Sudan's PfRR, and the SCC. They play a key role in promoting local systems strengthening too, and ensuring that coordination and joint planning includes local partners, national governments and civil society structures, communities, and private sector as relevant.

Backbone support mechanisms often play an essential role in sequencing, layering, and integrating activities. They bring partners together to develop a common agenda, plan jointly, and share information.

Partner Programming Considerations

Partners identified a number of ways to sequence, layer, and integrate activities. For instance, they have identified targeted and discrete geographies for peacebuilding and development actors to sequence, layer, and integrate with humanitarian activities. In addition to leveraging external structures and coalitions, they have also adopted internal adaptive management strategies that facilitate sequencing, layering, and integrating. The following examples illustrate how this has been done.

Consider strategically coordinated geographical targeting, when appropriate

While HA is delivered based on need, it is possible to define discrete geographic areas where development and peacebuilding actors can “follow” HA to defined geographies. This is especially feasible in recurrent and protracted crisis contexts. For example, in USAID resilience focus countries, there is a resilience focus zone. One of several key criteria for establishing the resilience focus zone is its vulnerability to recurrent crises. Partners and donors alike have found that it can be easier and more practical to sequence, layer, and integrate in discrete geographic areas, when appropriate. Whether NGO, UN or donor-led, these approaches often engage multiple stakeholders working toward goals that straddle the HDP nexus in a specific subnational zone. These approaches often focus on a specific problem set that is unique to the area in question as well, which further leads to more discrete and manageable boundaries for sequencing, layering, and integrating activities. That said, HA programming is often unpredictable and different sectors and types of assistance often operate at different levels and with different targeting criteria. Coordinated geographic targeting must be appropriate to the context.

In Baidoa, Somalia, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is improving the living conditions of internally displaced people at risk of eviction. The relocation site was planned through regular and close collaboration among multiple actors across humanitarian, development, and peace assistance to ensure that humanitarian needs were met, in addition to planning and integration for durable solutions and urban development. Humanitarian shelter and WASH units supported relocation and provided immediate assistance, while the IOM durable solutions program and other development actors planned for longer-term development of the site to become an extension of Baidoa town. A relocation task force was established to bring together key actors from the humanitarian and development sectors. IOM has started to coordinate with the relevant stakeholders through the task force on site development and coordination with partners to ensure access. Responding to the immediate humanitarian needs of the affected population while also addressing concerns in long-term and sustainable urban expansion of Baidoa city was crucial to ensure longer term integration of internally displaced persons. The project not only focused on immediate humanitarian needs, but long-term processes, including the site being developed as a city extension, ensuring [land tenure security](#).

Leverage adaptive management and shock-responsive theories of change to sequence, layer and integrate

Partners described shock-responsive theories of change and adaptive management techniques to facilitate sequencing and layering on the ground. Internal efforts to learn and adaptively manage throughout programming can translate into new opportunities for sequencing and layering activities.

In several crisis-hit eastern provinces of the DRC, Mercy Corps leads Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency Project in South Sudan (SAFER), a consortium for first-line response to conflict and disaster-triggered population displacement. The consortium coordinates with other implementing agencies including Norwegian Refugee Council, Aid Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, Solidarité Internationale, and Concern Worldwide to triangulate and share alerts and crisis information, and then respond rapidly to immediate needs in partners’ respective areas of coverage. Mercy Corps then sequences support to rapid response participants, host communities, and other populations in need such as refugees, with second-line and early recovery interventions through USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) programming. These second-line interventions include conflict-sensitive multipurpose cash assistance and agricultural livelihoods recovery. Mercy Corps is planning to layer WASH support in one area through USAID/BHA programming and under this model has also worked with consortium partners to safely share participant registration lists to enable targeted populations to better access multisectoral interventions for a layered, more holistic impact. In Ituri Province, Mercy Corps and another implementing organization were planning integrated programming between early recovery in agricultural livelihoods with a longer-term market systems development program. This approach included jointly identifying agricultural value chains and training needs to link participants to longer-term economic support. In general, the consortium faced a rapidly shifting security context, and coordination efforts were stalled. However, this strategy still shows a good example of how a program can coordinate collective outcomes across the HDP nexus.

SHOCK-RESPONSIVE AND ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING



Local women help unload humanitarian aid from a WFP helicopter in Bebedo, Mozambique following Cyclone Ida in April 2019. Photo credit: Sgt. Corban Lundborg/U.S. Air Force

USAID Efforts

USAID is dedicated to designing more adaptive, [shock-responsive and inclusive programming](#). This is more important than ever in the current risk context, where countries are confronted with climate change and variability, COVID-19, and conflict, all of which exacerbate a range of other shocks and stresses. Adaptive shock-responsive programs ensure that we do not undermine local systems and prospects for development. Our shock-responsive programming guidance offers practical ways to make sure programming is flexible and responsive to shocks, such as utilizing crisis modifiers, [scenario-based strategic planning](#) and contingency planning, coordination with other donors, and a variety of additional [adaptive management approaches](#) that can be incorporated during the design phase. Finally, it is crucial to build in analyses and learning from the beginning, with clear links to decision-making.¹² Ongoing data collection and analysis for adaptive management is most impactful when timed alongside key events such as portfolio and report reviews, work planning, and partner meetings. Beyond adapting to shocks, we also prioritize adapting to new knowledge about the context or assumptions that guide our programming. In general, we prioritize CLA, mentioned earlier, which includes a range of adaptive management practices such as [pause and reflect sessions](#), scenario-based strategic planning at the country level as well as activity-level scenario-planning, and [complexity-aware approaches](#) to monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

USAID is committed to leveraging flexibilities in our programming wherever we can. Some types of programming, award agreements, and funding sources are inherently more flexible than others and require less upfront planning and approvals. For example, BHA can be nimble in responding to urgent, lifesaving needs by deploying funds and setting up new activities quickly. In addition, guided by the [Early Recovery, Risk Reduction, and Resilience \(ER4\) Framework](#), BHA seeks to transition from rapid response to early recovery as soon as appropriate. It is also able to respond quickly during a shock by layering emergency responses onto longer-term programming focused on early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience. This flexibility is exemplified in the use of emergency funds to supplement the [Title II-DA funded Resilience Food Security Activity \(RFSA\) mechanism](#) when acute need arises. For HA, USAID can leverage contingency budget line items in awards and create rapid response funding mechanisms that allow funds to get out the door faster. For DA, a variety of award mechanisms can include budget flexibility in the award through the inclusion of [crisis modifiers](#)¹³, and in the work plan through scenario planning, or at the intervention level. It is important to note that certain pivots might be within scope and easy for DA partners to implement while still achieving their activity objectives, such as additional flexibilities granted due to COVID-19, or the ability to pivot market systems programming based on market fluctuations and opportunities.

Partner Programming Considerations

Partners identified a number of ways they promote shock-responsive and adaptive programming, such as adopting key adaptive management approaches, better anticipating and acting on changes in the environment, collaborating within and outside of their organizations to better link across HDP actors, and thinking strategically to ensure they have appropriate staffing and expertise to meet needs across kinds of assistance.

Anticipate and act on changes in the environment through adaptive management practices

Partners described pause-and-reflect sessions to learn from the past, as well as [examples of contingency](#) and [scenario planning exercises](#) to plan out how they would respond in key shock or crisis situations. Integrating shock-responsive approaches and mechanisms into theories of change and program logic models as well as continuous monitoring are also important practices. Partners also mobilize partnerships that support systems-based responses, such as the Mercy Corps' Crisis Humanitarian Analysis Team (CHAT) example below from the DRC. Finally, partners have worked with their Contracting Officer Representative or Agreement Officer Representative to discuss potential changes within scope to identify additional program flexibilities where needed.¹⁴

Mercy Corps has moved away from one-off, high-level and strategic assessments, to ongoing, granular analysis of risks and resilience capacities in a program context. Its crisis analysis methodology is now deployed in complex crisis contexts such as Nigeria and the DRC. The methodology explores the interconnected political, economic, social, technological, and cultural dynamics driving crisis events, and mapping crisis actors at institutional and individual levels.

For example, Mercy Corps' CHAT in the DRC was established in 2019 to inform targeted humanitarian interventions, including cash assistance; distribution of nonfood items; and WASH programming among crisis-affected populations. Over the last two years, CHAT has provided analysis for decision-makers to ensure that assistance is appropriately targeted and conflict-sensitive, that communities are well-informed, and that organizations have a better understanding of the drivers of conflict, displacement, and the perceptions of the people they are serving. CHAT has a core team of analysts embedded within Mercy Corps' team in Goma and select suboffices and partners with a diverse network of informants, including individuals and local organizations. While the CHAT initially focused on displacement alerts, it quickly began developing monthly reports and situational briefs to provide more in-depth analysis on immediate sociopolitical conflict drivers—or variables influencing the escalation of violence—including predictive analysis. In 2020, the CHAT added a weekly report for mission leadership and launched a weekly monitoring of community health perceptions in areas affected by Ebola for the humanitarian sector as a whole. This allowed teams to make more appropriate operational and technical decisions that ultimately supported the resilience of local populations.

Think strategically on how to ensure appropriate staffing and expertise to meet needs across different kinds of assistance

There are unique benefits to multi-mandated organizations that can communicate across their development and humanitarian programming units in the event of a crisis, and may also have many local and international experts available in the event of changing needs on the ground. Subcontracting to other organizations for required expertise is also widely practiced, such as a health organization subcontracting to a peacebuilding organization when addressing Ebola in the eastern DRC. Finally, partners described how they have devolved decision-making to field teams and ensured close consultation and coordination with local partners and leaders in order to ensure they had the appropriate expertise behind decision-making in a fast-moving environment.

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CONFLICT INTEGRATION



People line up to receive supplements in North Kivu, DRC 2017. Photo credit: USAID

USAID Efforts

USAID has renewed its commitment to conflict integration through its reorganized [Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization](#) and reinvigorated mandate to support field Missions in promoting conflict integration across USAID investments. This means that we question whether the goals, approaches, and measures of success for our interventions across different kinds of assistance are appropriate in the midst of conflict and violence. In a fitting example from DRC, USAID humanitarian programming has pivoted to the needs of internally displaced persons in Ituri and Tanganyika provinces through humanitarian mediation methodologies and legal mobile clinics that provide guidance for the reclamation and restitution of housing and disputed land in conflict-affected areas. These programs are also building the capacity of informal and formal government leaders involved in land affairs to resolve conflicts.

Conflict sensitivity centers on understanding the context, the rationale for USAID interventions, and the dynamic interplay between the context and our interventions—and to continuously reviewing and adapting interventions as these evolve.

Conflict sensitivity is a key part of conflict integration. Conflict sensitivity centers on understanding the context, the rationale for USAID interventions, and the dynamic interplay between the context and our interventions—and to continuously reviewing and adapting interventions as these evolve. This ensures that our interventions *Do No Harm*¹⁵ in a rapidly changing context. Conflict sensitivity also creates opportunities to protect humanitarian principles and to transition to long-term development programs. For example, USAID has recently produced a [technical note on conflict sensitivity](#) and routinely conducts country-level conflict assessments to inform Mission planning and

programming. Identifying and maximizing opportunities for peace is a crucial part of conflict sensitivity. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches can be applicable in many contexts, and can bring adversaries together through transparent and participatory implementation processes. For example, [the Good Water Neighbors development program](#) raised awareness of the shared water problems of Palestinians, Jordanians, and Israelis as the basis for dialogue and cooperation on sustainable water management.

Partner Programming Considerations

Partners identified several levels at which they have been championing conflict integration, ranging from promoting conflict sensitivity to identifying creative opportunities to enable peace, to questioning whether the goals and approaches to sectoral activities are still valid in certain conflict contexts. Partners also identified that it is key for them to ensure they have qualified staff with a skill set focused on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and social cohesion.

Conduct conflict analysis

Having a careful understanding of the context is crucial for HDP coherence. Partners identified the importance of carrying out conflict analysis and political economy analyses or seeking out existing analyses on the specific context. Ideally, this should be done during program design, but can be done later as needed, and should be monitored and updated based on need and the context. Conflict analyses examine the causes and drivers of conflict and how they interact with each other.¹⁶ They highlight upcoming opportunities for either explicit peacebuilding programming or other opportunities for peace to bring adversarial groups together, address potential triggers for violence, and engage with key actors involved in fueling the conflict or in a position to promote peace.

Promote conflict sensitivity

Conflict sensitivity is all the more crucial as partners identify the various ways in which different kinds of assistance can inadvertently exacerbate the harmful dynamics within all social, economic, and political systems. A key feature of conflict sensitivity is that it engages with the differential effects of conflict on women, youth, LGBTQI people, persons with disabilities, or indigenous communities. Integrate conflict sensitivity throughout the program cycle, which will include engaging with an inclusive representation of affected and marginalized communities. A thorough understanding of conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm principles is a critical first step before pursuing wider goals around conflict integration and peacebuilding.



Children carry containers of water drawn at a UNICEF-built water point in Tshinyama Village in Kasai Orientale province, DRC. Photo credit: UNICEF

[The Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility](#) in South Sudan is a multidonor initiative that provides institutional support and capacity building to donors and development and humanitarian agencies. The facility offers interactive short courses on conflict sensitivity and develops conflict sensitivity guidelines and principles for the South Sudan context. The facility also provides ad hoc support through its help desk that is open to all aid actors in South Sudan who are interested in strengthening the integration of conflict sensitivity into their programs and operations.

In the DRC, and in implementing the Integrated Health Program (IHP), the IRC conducted a conflict sensitivity analysis to provide insights into the four primary types of conflicts present in the program's nine implementing provinces. The analysis and the resulting implementation strategy have informed program partners of the challenges of working in conflict-affected communities in the DRC and have ensured that a conflict-sensitive approach is employed to mitigate potential risks. As part of this process, the IRC facilitated a workshop to tap into contextual knowledge through a series of conflict analysis and Do No Harm exercises such as conflict mapping, connectors and dividers, and scenario-planning exercises that led the IHP program to draw conclusions and recommendations for implementation.

Seek opportunities for peace across all kinds of assistance

One way to integrate peacebuilding into the HDP nexus is by designing interventions with a “peace lens” and aiming to integrate outcomes such as stronger social cohesion through sectoral programming when appropriate. For example, all kinds of assistance can promote peace through community dialogues, empowerment, and by fostering inclusive and consultative processes.¹⁷ Programming can also be designed in a way that helps build trust, strengthen social cohesion, and promote interaction across groups. Additional efforts can address short-term violence reduction (i.e., conflict resolution or stymieing recruitment) or longer-term drivers of inequality such as political or social marginalization or economic inequality. Humanitarian actors might need to address short-term violence reduction in order to facilitate the delivery of HA, while development actors are well suited to address both short- and long-term conflict prevention.

In the Philippines, the WFP [supported the establishment of the Convergence Development Model](#) to support the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao authorities in addressing humanitarian needs while promoting sustainable and conflict-sensitive livelihood strategies among socioeconomically vulnerable conflict-affected communities. With a focus on supporting the reintegration of former combatants and their families, the convergence development model aims to embed components of social cohesion between local communities and decommissioned soldiers.

In Jordan, Mercy Corps has implemented a series of social cohesion programs to bring together Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities. The program was designed to address three challenges: economic hardship among Syrian refugees, lack of service provision within Jordanian communities and resentment toward Syrian refugees for increasing the burden on existing services, and ongoing ethnic divides. The programs aim to 1) promote social interaction through sports and community events and build local conflict-management capacities through negotiation and mediation support and 2) facilitate joint initiatives in which both communities identified and implemented infrastructure projects that addressed shared governance and service needs. An [impact evaluation](#) found that the combination of “software” and “hardware” interventions increased social cohesion between hosts and refugees.

*Evacuees wait for relief aid inside one of the evacuation sites in Datu Piang in Maguindanao province, Philippines.
Photo credit: USAID*



Promote conflict integration and be willing to question the goals and approaches behind sectoral interventions

Partners noted the importance of being open to rethinking sectoral goals, measures of success, and programming approaches in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. For example, humanitarian actors should design lifesaving programming to take into consideration conflict dynamics and conflict sensitivity. Development actors might also adapt conventional approaches to include informal systems or authorities, such as by strengthening the informal seed system or collaborating with traditional leadership in a conflict-affected area. Conflict integration is critical in the midst of violent conflict but it equally applies to fragile contexts where factors such as social marginalization, violence against women, criminal violence, and corruption similarly demand a conflict integration lens. It is also important to engage with the diplomatic community and activities such as formal peace processes and dialogues, as well as global factors influencing the context to better understand peacebuilding dynamics at the strategic level.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL SYSTEMS AND ACTORS



Traders from Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia conduct business at Moyale Livestock Market, constructed by USAID in 2016. Photo credit: Tine Frank/USAID

USAID Efforts

USAID recognizes that we need to reinforce local systems and engage communities across different kinds of assistance. In alignment with the OECD-DAC Nexus Recommendation, USAID is committed to recognizing, reinforcing, and strengthening the capacities that already exist at national and local levels. USAID has learned from past crises that we need to work through and reinforce local systems, and avoid creating parallel systems whenever possible, while taking into consideration local capacity and opportunity for joint planning and decision-making. Engaging with local systems may mean strengthening local government systems, while respecting humanitarian principles, as well as strengthening other local actors such as the private sector, local civil society organizations, and community-based organizations. Building trusting and mutually accountable relationships with local communities through meaningful engagement that intentionally includes the most vulnerable and traditionally excluded (e.g., women, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI people, and indigenous communities) sets the stage for continued positive engagement as we sequence, layer, and integrate investments. USAID's [local systems framework](#) and robust community of practice, as well as tools such as [the 5 Rs framework](#) guide our work in this space.

USAID is dedicated to ensuring our efforts support local organizations and promote [locally led development](#). USAID initiatives such as [Local Works](#) and the forthcoming [Local Capacity Development Policy](#) steer our efforts around locally led development. Engagement with community-based organizations, including local humanitarian partners as organizations that are already engaged and trusted in affected communities, is also critical for supporting our Agency goals around DEIA. We are dedicated to supporting and engaging with local actors and ensuring that diverse and especially marginalized groups are represented and can equally access programming and opportunities. Implementing partners are encouraged to work with one another and USAID staff to reinforce local systems and engage communities in a way that ensures equity, inclusion, and access for all.

Partner Programming Considerations

Partners identified a number of levels at which they have been working with and through local systems, ranging from careful local systems analysis, to mechanisms for empowering local actors, to involving local actors in coordination platforms, and partnering with local government when possible. Many partners viewed HDP coherence and local ownership as related efforts since local actors are naturally “nexus dwellers” with less interest in sectoral stovepipes.¹⁸

Carefully understand and work through local systems whenever possible

This means conducting assessments, such as stakeholders analysis and political economy analysis, to inform partnership approaches as well as capacity-building needs. It is crucial that any assessment or analysis is sensitive to and inclusive of women and girls, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI people, and indigenous communities. It is also important to recognize intersectional identities and vulnerabilities and not treat any demographic as a monolith. Following an assessment phase, design programming approaches that carefully consider the needs, opportunities, voices, actors, and complex interplay underlying those systems.

In the Karamoja cluster spanning Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, [Mercy Corps partnered on the PEACE III program with Pact and has since led a follow-on USAID-funded program, Securing Peace and Promoting Prosperity \(EKISIL\) Activity](#). These programs seek to strengthen peace outcomes through a combination of supporting local conflict management and early warning and response systems, facilitating collaboration across divides, and (in the case of EKISIL) empowering women leaders and youth to provide trauma healing and advance reconciliation. The EKISIL program specifically sought to build on existing mechanisms for natural resource management by harnessing formal and informal mechanisms for climate-responsive natural resource management, as well as to promote the leadership of women in existing regional early warning and early response mechanisms, specifically the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN). After two years (with two more years of the program yet to come), a qualitative review found that the program has strengthened community-led natural resource sharing agreements and that individuals participating in the trauma-healing sessions have demonstrated improvements in their attitudes toward violence.

Despite the de-escalation of much conflict in Karamoja, persistent trauma perpetuates tensions; increasing scarcity of resources fosters competition among different identity groups, and decades of government marginalization has deteriorated social institutions and governance structures. Assessing and then tapping into existing networks, especially those at the subnational level that had not reached the community level, was important to make sure the program's work on early warning and early response is sustainable. Also, involving formal government actors in the natural resource-sharing-agreements promotes both ownership of the project as well as future accountability.

Push for local engagement at the highest levels, such as through close engagement or direct partnership with governments, as well as local engagement in country platforms and partnerships

Establish partnerships with local government and other locally led organizations early and ideally before a crisis strikes as well as during a crisis. Advocate for local NGOs and civil society representation in country platforms (especially those that represent systematically marginalized populations and demographics), which has been successful in places such as Haiti, Somalia, and Liberia at both high and technical levels. High-level participation can nudge civil society groups into a collective action platform.

In Haiti, the Kore Lavi program accompanied the Haitian government to launch and lead a nationwide social safety net for extremely poor households using a national poverty and vulnerability index. Kore Lavi was led by CARE in partnership with the WFP, Action Against Hunger, and World Vision International. The program used electronic vouchers to reinforce local vendors and suppliers by creating a stable demand for locally grown nutritious foods and diverse diets. When Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti in October 2016, leading to a major humanitarian crisis in Southeast and Central Plateau departments, Kore Lavi worked closely with the Haitian government's Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor to extend the existing social safety net system to respond to the humanitarian crisis by supplying additional gender-sensitive cash and voucher assistance. Assistance reached vulnerable households in remote and hard-to-reach areas in a timely fashion while continuing to support local food systems and producers.

Invest time and energy into building relationships with local groups

Prioritize and set goals around consulting with a diverse set of local groups—formal and informal—and potential partners. Pursue programming approaches that bring together diverse local stakeholders and level the playing field (e.g., language translation) for important but perhaps less mainstream local actors.

KEY CHALLENGES TO HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE COHERENCE

While we are excited about these everyday opportunities to maximize the coherence of USAID investments through our partner consultation process, we also heard a number of frustrations about key factors that are standing in the way of greater HDP coherence. We want to recognize these challenges and share our commitment to addressing them.

1. First, we hear that partners can be frustrated with the lack of flexibility in DA awards for meeting crisis needs. Efforts to push adaptive management from a technical perspective outstrip the ability for procurement processes to keep pace, and modification processes can be complicated and time consuming. Some partners worried that rigid DA awards jeopardize community trust when they cannot respond to real needs on the ground.

“ We are less able to be shock-responsive if the funding mechanisms are not in place behind it. ”

2. Second, we hear that, while coordination opportunities might exist in one context, in others they are absent altogether. Few platforms exist to bring HDP actors together and humanitarian clusters are generally limited in their ability to operate across the HDP nexus. When coordination roles do exist, they might not be a priority, or might not be filled by high-performing coordinators.

“ It's not our grant mechanisms that prevent coordination. It's the structure and platform for coordinating the triple nexus effort that is most often missing. ”

The incentives to coordinate on HDP are unclear. Some partners argued that coordination becomes unpredictable when it is driven only by the interest and goodwill of implementing partner organizations. Time, resources, and other donor incentives are not dedicated to coordination across the HDP nexus. Field teams need incentives to engage in a meaningful way at the country level in HDP-related dialogue. Partners argue that they need the right mix of incentives to collaborate, including incentives in the areas of career advancement and procurement. For example, requiring shared indicators for success is one potential procurement solution.



Participants speak together at the Business to Business Forum (B2B) organized in Isiolo County by the USAID East Africa Trade and Investment Hub and International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). Photo credit: Judy Kimani/ILRI

3. Third, we heard that it is important to be keenly aware of the different principles, processes, and cultures behind different kinds of assistance. For example, it is essential to ensure that HDP coherence efforts uphold humanitarian principles, which can be challenging—but is vitally important—in complex environments. Beyond these ethical considerations, there are real and practical differences between a humanitarian sector that is driven by immediate and lifesaving needs and longer-term DA. Different actors can have a different vernacular and different frames of reference as well as fundamentally different understandings of success and what makes for effective programming.

“ We were in the same building and often in the same geographies and still had an immensely difficult time getting on the same page. The timeframes, the speed of action, the language and terminology. ”

4. Fourth, we hear that the personnel skills and time needed to promote HDP coherence are not necessarily valued, incentivized, or planned for. They can often be an afterthought, tacked on to a partners’ existing duties. Partners argued that the aid sector values technical and sectoral expertise over local expertise, and approaches problems this way, which exacerbates silos.

“ The skill set needed for [HDP nexus] coordination is not necessarily the skill set that is promoted in the development and humanitarian industry. ”

Additionally, the skill set needed for HDP nexus coordination is very different from the skillset that aid professionals are rewarded for. Partners noted how key personnel requirements typically require high levels of education and experience, often in one sector, that could make them even less likely to have the experience, skills, and mindset for collaborative work. One colleague recommended that we prioritize hires that have worked across kinds of assistance so that they can better leverage each other, while another recommended training and exposing staff to other sectors on the job.

5. Finally, a key entry point for collaboration across the nexus is to carefully understand local systems, but we heard that USAID can undervalue the importance of understanding local systems and engaging with local actors for HDP coherence. Partners noted how it should be easier to work with and through local governments and to devolve decision-making to people who are closer to realities on the ground.



Partners of USAID Kenya's PREG gather in Turkana, Kenya for a learning event. Photo credit: Africa Lead

CONCLUSION

These programming considerations are intended to begin a dialogue and process for what will be a much longer journey in promoting HDP coherence together. As part of that journey we look forward to sharing more about current practices and emerging solutions as well as guidance on specific topics in the future. In the meantime, we want to conclude by sharing steps we are taking to engage with these challenges as a good faith effort for the collaborative partnership we have in steering USAID investments.

Some of these efforts are already underway at USAID but much more can still be done. **For instance, we are striving to improve the flexibility of development programming to be more responsive in crisis situations** and be more strategic about how to use our resources and their inherent qualities. **We will also strive to leverage our convening power to strengthen coordination.** We can champion these approaches in-country through efforts such as joint work planning and “local-to-local” exchanges that are facilitated and led by our Missions. We can also fund and support backbone support and coordination mechanisms, as well as foster burden-sharing with other donors to do so too.

We are also **dedicated to evidence-based programming and decision-making**, which can help alleviate the cultural differences or competing perspectives that can come up across different kinds of assistance. A strong practice around evidence-based decision-making can help steer us toward a common agenda and timely adaptive management, and away from sectoral silos. Evidence that includes disaggregated data also ensures we are meeting the needs of all.

Other responses will require new steps. **For instance, we are aiming to use consistent language across the Agency around HDP coherence.** By using consistent language and concepts on issues of HDP coherence and the nexus (notably in solicitations), we can develop a common understanding around these issues. We also aim to provide clarity in solicitations on what key concepts, such as HDP nexus or coherence, mean in a given country context.

Finally, **we will take steps to create the incentives and enabling environment for promoting HDP.** We can begin to incorporate HDP coherence language in solicitations and terms of reference and include related new proposal requirements, such as promoting the use of shared analysis and data in project design. We can also define and incorporate the skills that would be needed to foster HDP coherence in key personnel requirements, i.e., CLA-type capabilities in Chief of Party roles or experience collaborating across kinds of assistance. And finally we can incorporate these skills into activity design, with monitoring, evaluation, and learning that engages with how partners are collaboratively working together.

Thank you for your collaboration in promoting HDP coherence, which is truly a team effort. USAID looks forward to learning and changing alongside our partner community so that together we can maximize impact and sustainability across kinds of assistance while better meeting the needs of those we are dedicated to serving.



NOTES

¹ At USAID, peace assistance includes transition assistance as well as other kinds of peacebuilding programming. Transition assistance has the authority (i.e., notwithstanding authority) to bypass bureaucratic procedures that might hinder a timely response, much like HA. Other kinds of peacebuilding programming at USAID typically operate similar to DA.

² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2018. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018. Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition. Rome, FAO. [The State of Food Security and Nutrition, Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition.](#)

³ “Updated Estimates of the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Poverty: Turning the Corner on the Pandemic in 2021?” World Bank Blogs, last modified June 24, 2021.

⁴ USAID’s Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment Policy; Ending Child Marriage & Meeting the Needs of Married Children: The USAID Vision for Action; LGBT Vision for Action: Promoting & Supporting the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Individuals; Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (PRO-IP); Women, Peace and Security Act; USAID Women, Peace, and Security Implementation Plan; US Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally; USAID’s Protection From Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy; USAID Disability Policy Paper; Promoting Nondiscrimination and Inclusive Development in USAID-funded Programs: A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 200; USAID Policy on Standards for Accessibility for the Disabled in USAID Financed Construction. Several of these USAID or USG policies and strategies are currently being updated.

⁵ USAID supports and follows the [Sphere Standards](#), which is one of the most widely known and internationally recognized set of common principles and universal minimum standards in humanitarian response.

⁶ USAID [Policy for Humanitarian Action](#), Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (2015). This policy is currently being updated by the USAID/BHA.

⁷ [Collective outcomes](#) are a cornerstone of the [UN’s New Way of Working](#) and can be defined as quantifiable, measurable results that DA and HA actors want to achieve at the end of 3–5 years.

⁸ [Backbone support](#) refers to funding a dedicated, independent entity or team to help maintain strategic coherence, coordination and management of operations, and it is one of five key features to a collective impact approach. Examples involving USAID include Kenya’s Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth, South Sudan’s Partnership for Recovery and Resilience, and the Sahel Collaboration and Communication Activity.

⁹ [The UN Cluster Approach](#): Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action. They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and have clear responsibilities for coordination. Clusters are activated based on set criteria to respond to emergencies and can be deactivated based on criteria when the emergency subsides. Each country may have a unique mix of clusters to respond appropriately to the emergency.

¹⁰ (1) Sequence: timing HA and DA interventions to follow one another logically; (2) Layer: simultaneous HA and DA programming in the same targeted geographic area; (3) Integrate: achieving both HA and DA objectives in the same programming.

¹¹ PSNP combines food and cash transfers with skill and capacity development and market-based livelihood opportunities through development resources. The Joint Emergency Operation, funded with FFP emergency resources, is built around the PSNP, serving as an accordion that expands in times of crisis to reach additional beneficiaries and protect development gains.

¹² USAID requires that all programming across the HA and DA spectrum is informed by gender analysis; this is further codified by the Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act. USAID also requires that all person-level data is sex disaggregated. USAID additionally promotes and implements Inclusive Development analysis, which enables us to identify the specific needs of marginalized or underserved populations.

¹³ When using a crisis modifier, it is important for development actors to coordinate appropriately within the existing humanitarian system beforehand in order to ensure interventions are appropriate and do not duplicate efforts.

¹⁴ For development programming, modifications can be made to existing programs (recognizing that the process can be lengthy) and USAID can build in flexibility at the component or task level when the need for flexibility is limited to specific components or tasks within a given award. For grants and cooperative agreements, Agreement Officer Representatives and partners are encouraged to consult the recently revised ADS 303.

¹⁵ The Do No Harm (DNH) principle dictates that aid interventions should not exacerbate conflict or put beneficiaries at greater risk than they would otherwise face without the intervention. Whenever we bring resources, ideas or staff into a situation we become part of that environment. A Do No Harm approach recognizes this and takes action to mitigate the negative and optimize the positive impacts. DNH is part of a conflict sensitive approach to programming.

¹⁶ It is important to recognize that different identity and social groups experience conflict differently and face distinct challenges during and after conflict or in pursuing peace. Successful peacebuilding programs demonstrate an understanding of the different impacts conflict and peacebuilding can have on people along the gender spectrum, for example, and how these different experiences may contribute to the causes and consequences of conflict. They also include analysis about how to accommodate, and work with and across identities, and gender norms to promote peace and a reduction in violence.

¹⁷ For instance, inclusion of women's participation and leadership is critical in crisis prevention, response, recovery, and transition. Women and girls are uniquely positioned in their families and communities to play powerful, effective roles as peacemakers. Increasing the legal capacity, voice and agency of women to participate meaningfully in social and political processes, women's participation in decision-making, promoting women's roles in the prevention of and recovery from conflict, and strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence can all promote peace.

¹⁸ While the consultation process for these programming considerations included several local partners and this document aims to be relevant for local partners as well, this section is written primarily for an audience of non-local partners, since this is the majority of USAID's current implementing partner community.

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