



DRG Learning Digest

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and DRG

March 2022

Unprecedented and compounding shocks and stresses are impacting the populations USAID serves. 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 prior. Extreme poverty is [increasing globally](#) for the first time in two decades. These crises exacerbate a range of other shocks while fueling vicious cycles of poverty, income inequality, food insecurity, malnutrition, gender and social inequality, and economic instability. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are more than [84 million forcibly displaced people](#) worldwide, the highest number ever recorded. These are people displaced not by natural disasters, but “as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order” ([Migration Data Portal](#)); in other words, “human-made” disasters that, according to the [World Bank](#), drive 80 percent of all humanitarian needs.

Today’s risk context underscores the urgency for USAID and its partners to work together across various types of assistance, to promote peace, build resilience, and affirm our commitment to [humanitarian-development-peace \(HDP\) coherence](#) - including the democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) aspects of that 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.

This edition of the Learning Digest explores the DRG ramifications of what has become known as the “HDP nexus:”

- **The HDP Nexus:** The nexus builds on the comparative advantages of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts to address fragility and build resilience.
- **Putting the Nexus into Practice:** The [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability](#) (called for by the Global Fragility Act) creates an interagency policy framework to put the nexus into practice.
- **The Nexus and DRG Programming:** To implement the Strategy, USAID can build on similar efforts to date from across the Agency.

Please also make use of DRG Evidence and Learning Team resources! (See text box at the end.)



A young woman signs a peace mural during the USAID Kenya Tuna Uwezo (KTU)-sponsored Community Achievements celebration held in 2016 in the informal settlement of Eastleigh, which is home to a significant immigrant and Muslim population. KTU worked to reduce politically-motivated conflict and violent extremism in Nairobi's informal settlements by reaching out to young people to act as agents of change, strengthening social networks of community members and civil society groups to collaborate productively on community issues and address grievances. (Photo: Stephine Ogutu/Global Communities)

The HDP Nexus

Humanitarian assistance aims to save lives, reduce human suffering, and reduce the physical, social, and economic impact of disasters. It is needs based and is provided in such a

way as to support implementers' adherence to [humanitarian principles](#) of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. **Development assistance** 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 programming that directly addresses the root causes of armed conflict or violence. The goal of USAID peace programming is to prevent the outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violence and to promote peaceful, resilient societies. **DRG programming** is part of development assistance, but often complements peace and humanitarian assistance, as described throughout this edition.

According to a [USAID programming note](#), “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 over time.” Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) [Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#) emphasizes “strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict.” The nexus is increasingly described as a “solution to humanitarian concerns, new and protracted crises, and to manage complex war-to-peace transitions.” ([Lie 2020](#)) The majority of stakeholders at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) – donors, nongovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, and crisis-affected countries – identified [enhanced engagement between humanitarian and development actors](#) as a key commitment.

How is this any different from what we are already doing? For decades development assistance, humanitarian action, and peacebuilding (including defense and security) efforts were distinctive, compartmentalized, and linear. In contrast, the nexus represents more of a harmonized approach, engaging these three pillars together, including in violent conflict-affected or conflict-prone areas. Note that a harmonized approach doesn't necessarily mean that programming across the three pillars is concurrent (it could also be sequenced), but it does mean that program planning is co-located and coordinated. Nonetheless, operationalizing a HDP nexus approach is easier said than done, as these actors may operate with distinct governing principles, frameworks, funding streams, and methodologies, and even within their respective arenas there is significant internal diversity. Humanitarian assistance, for example, as a needs-based, here-and-now set of actions and objectives, stakes its identity and legitimacy on operating by principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence, and being inherently apolitical – and in most contexts, providing lifesaving assistance to those in need is only possible by adhering to these principles. A nexus approach may encourage humanitarian actors to program in a way that promotes conflict prevention, when appropriate, and ensure at a minimum adherence to conflict sensitivity and the do no

harm principle. For some, an increased humanitarian emphasis on political diplomacy is viewed as putting humanitarian actors further at risk by pushing against their apolitical identity. ([Lie 2020](#))

What are the implications for the DRG sector? More than 75 percent of the countries in which USAID operates are affected by violent conflict. Working in these countries or regions requires an integrated, cross-sectoral approach to analysis, design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning. The trends and statistics cited in the introduction, as well as the corrosive effect of prolonged violent conflict on the [core values of DRG programming](#) (participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability), create greater urgency for DRG programming to be integrated with humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts. The recent [Summit for Democracy](#) underscored the need for multi-sectoral, interagency DRG initiatives supporting anti-corruption, rule of law, protection of human rights, freedom of expression, independent media, election integrity, etc. Conversely, these DRG efforts can also contribute to peacebuilding, as exemplified by research by the [Brookings Institution](#) and the [International Peace Institute](#). For some specific country and regional examples, please see the third section below.



In a complex crisis such as what Burma is experiencing, it is important to provide assistance that spans the HDP nexus. (Left: Displaced children using a water pump in Rakhine State, Burma, [Photo: Brian Heidel/USAID](#). Right: Still from the video, "[Meet Nang Phyu Pyar who is a member of Shan State Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee](#)," exploring the importance of the inclusion of women in the ceasefire monitoring process in Burma.)

Putting the Nexus into Practice

Despite the challenges of putting the core ideas behind the nexus into practice, around the world governments, civil society, the private sector, bilateral partners, and multilateral agencies are increasingly bringing the three pillars together in their planning and policy approaches to address needs coherently in an environment of violent conflict. Stemming from World Humanitarian Summits, the ["New Way of Working"](#) and the [Agenda for Humanity](#)

represent UN approaches to putting the nexus into practice. Similarly, the UN and the World Bank collaborated on the ground-breaking [“Pathways for Peace”](#) approach to bringing DRG and peacebuilding efforts together to prevent violent conflict in the first place. Governments, including the United States, are developing and implementing integrated interagency initiatives to address conflict and promote peace in conflict-prone countries and regions. In 2019, the U.S. Congress passed the [Global Fragility Act](#) (GFA), requiring the creation of “a unified U.S. strategy that is intentional, cross-cutting and measurable, and harnesses the full spectrum of United States diplomacy, assistance, and engagement over a 10-year horizon.” In line with this mandate, the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability](#) was approved in December 2020. The GFA also mandated the selection of five priority countries or regions for which the federal government must develop and implement 10-year interagency strategies to operationalize working differently to increase resilience. The interagency selection process led by the State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) and the USAID Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS), included consultations with Missions and Regional Bureaus, drawing on indicators of levels of violence and resilience as well as assessments of the capacity of host country government and civil society partners. Field work to develop the country and regional strategies is beginning in the spring of 2022.

The primary implementing agencies for the Strategy are USAID, the Department of Defense, and the State Department. There are several ways in which this initiative will involve the DRG global cadre, because any efforts to reduce armed conflict and violence and promote resilience will require “attention to the problem of corruption, and integration with and leadership from national and sub-national partners, including local civil society organizations, traditional justice systems, and local governance structures.” The country/regional strategies must “ensure that appropriate local actors, including government and civil society entities and organizations led by women, youth, or under-represented communities, have an appropriate ownership stake in developing, implementing, assessing, monitoring, evaluating, and updating relevant activities under each such plan.” In short, DRG officers should seek opportunities to integrate DRG approaches, leverage DRG programming and partnerships to contribute to these joint efforts, and be prepared to apply lessons from these efforts to inform future interagency efforts that promote resilience.



The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Mission’s HDP nexus work [integrates](#) “programming that combines HA [humanitarian assistance] short-term emergency nutrition programming with DA [development assistance] livelihoods, health, WASH, and education programming to address the underlying causes of vulnerability.” On a personal level, [the story of “Susan” from DRC](#) illustrates the power of a USAID gender-based violence program that confronts trauma and stigma while also providing economic opportunity.

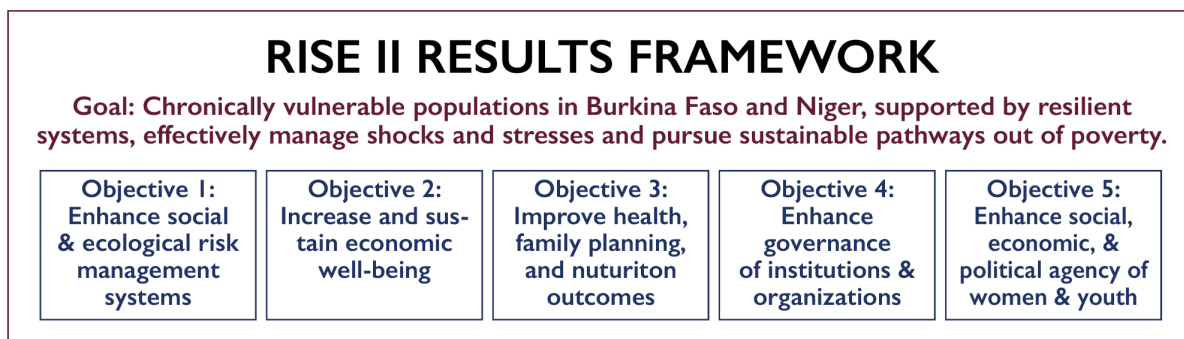
The Nexus and DRG Programming

The HDP nexus is not a new concept, and similar approaches can be found in existing USAID strategies such as the [West Africa and the Sahel Regional Development Cooperation Strategy](#) and the [Democratic Republic of Congo Country Development Cooperation Strategy](#). The nexus is also operationalized in the United Nations Development Programme’s [response to conflict in Somalia and Nigeria](#). These approaches acknowledge the importance and linkage of DRG programming to achieving peace, which includes an active civil society, increasing accountable governance, upholding rights for women, strong rule of law, and many other DRG objectives.

Accordingly, DRG programming is being adapted and woven into a HDP nexus approach. For example, the USAID/Nepal Mission is working with the government and private sector to implement best practices in disaster risk financing to improve quality, affordability, and equity. Nepal has one of the highest disaster risk profiles in the world, yet spends just under one percent of GDP every year responding to and recovering from floods, landslides, earthquakes, and a variety of other natural and human-caused disasters. The low level of

commercial insurance coverage and the lack of risk-based pricing of premiums increases the financial vulnerability of households, and limits the market incentives to promote investments in risk reduction. The Mission’s governance activity is helping Nepal to develop appropriate property insurance regulations and subsidy policies, and assisting private-sector insurance providers to develop new insurance products and risk-based pricing techniques that will yield improved disaster risk mitigation and an efficient insurance market that promotes resilient development gains.

Africa’s Sahel region is “marked by food insecurity, persistent poverty, corrupt governance, high population growth rates, and recurrent climate shocks that often drive vulnerable communities into crisis, conflict, and frequently make them vulnerable to violent extremism.” USAID’s [Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced II](#) (RISE II) recognizes that while a humanitarian response can save lives, a more integrated approach is required to “build local capacities that reduce vulnerabilities and can reduce the need for humanitarian assistance.” This can be seen in the RISE results framework, in which the governance and inclusion Objectives 1, 4 and 5 enhance the likelihood of achieving the economic and health Objectives 2 and 3. As the working paper states, “Resilience investments respond to common grievances, such as lack of government services and poor economic opportunities, and address common drivers of instability, such as local conflicts and shock-related population displacements.”



RISE II results framework. (Source: RISE II Technical Approach [Working Paper](#).)

Other sectors within USAID also integrate DRG elements into their efforts across humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding. In response to a border crisis and war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the USAID/Armenia Mission has adapted its local governance activity with selected municipalities that is improving services to the local population, to work with displaced families as well. In another example, the USAID Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Bureau has led a large-scale multi-sectoral initiative to address root causes of irregular migration in the [Northern Triangle](#) of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). This effort increased support for vulnerable populations (youth, women, LGBTQ+, and Indigenous Peoples) and improved governance (including risk mitigation). For example, in El Salvador a program is improving the awareness, resilience, and capacity of El Salvador’s national and municipal disaster risk management authorities and civil society to efficiently and effectively

assess and respond to damages after an earthquake. On a smaller scale, the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) has multi-sectoral, integrated, long-term program designs – called the [Resilience Food Security Activity \(RFSA\)](#) – often implemented in conflict-affected countries such as Ethiopia, Haiti, and Mozambique. These programs include activities to combat food insecurity and malnutrition, promote economic growth, minimize disaster risks, and adapt to climate change, while incorporating important DRG elements, such as supporting local governments, encouraging respect for human rights, and promoting principles of inclusion.

Conclusion

The [World Bank](#) estimates that “by 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor could live in Fragile, Conflict and Violence (FCV) settings.” Human rights violations, political instability, and weak governance contribute to violent conflict, which in turn exacerbates humanitarian needs and impedes economic development. Resilience and fragility are complex, with political, economic, and social drivers. The HDP nexus recognizes this complexity and offers a path forward that combines comparative advantages to proactively support political, economic, and social solutions in a collaborative, complementary manner before, during, and after violent conflict. Critical to these efforts is the inclusion of planning, policy, and programming to support democracy, human rights, and governance.

Additional Resources

1. LSE-Oxford Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development, [Escaping the Fragility Trap](#)
2. USAID Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS), [Responsible Development: A Note on Conflict Sensitivity from USAID's Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention \(CVP\)](#)
3. USAID DRG Center, [Technical Note: Political Economy Analysis for Public Financial Management](#) (includes a section on disasters/crises; link only accessible to USAID personnel)
4. USAID Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), [Supporting Local Governance in the Absence of an Effective Central State](#) (link only accessible to USAID personnel)
5. Various [DRG Center-managed mechanisms](#) (link only accessible to USAID personnel), including Active Communities - Effective States (ACES), Human Rights Grant Program (HRGP), Human Rights Support Mechanism (HRSM)

Use Our Resources!

Welcome to the DRG Learning Digest, a newsletter to keep you informed of the latest learning, evaluation, and research in the Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) sector. Views expressed in the external (non-USAID) publications linked in this Digest do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Don't forget to check out our DRG Learning [Menu of Services](#)! (Link only accessible to USAID personnel.) The Menu provides information on the learning products and services the Evidence and Learning Team offers to help you fulfill your DRG learning needs. We want to help you adopt learning approaches that emphasize best fit and quality.

The Evidence and Learning Team is also excited to share our [DRG Learning, Evidence, and Analysis Platform \(LEAP\)](#) with you. This Platform contains inventories of programmatic approaches and indicators, evidence gap maps, and data portraits - all of which can be very useful in DRG activity design, implementation, evaluation, and adaptation. Some of these resources are still being built, so check back frequently to see what has been newly added.

We also want to share our [DRG Learning Harvest](#) with you! (Link only accessible to USAID personnel.) This is a searchable database of DRG learning products, including summaries of key findings and recommendations, drop-down menus to easily find documents related to a particular country or program area, and links to the full reports on the DEC.

Our friends at the [Varieties of Democracy \(V-Dem\) Institute](#) are also seeking to expand their research partnership with USAID on the complex nature of democracy by inviting research questions from you for V-Dem to work on. If there's a DRG technical question you've been wondering about, please email the Evidence and Learning Team at ddi.drg.elmaillist@usaid.gov.

We welcome your feedback on this newsletter and on our efforts to promote the accessibility, dissemination, and utilization of DRG evidence and research. Please visit the [DRG Center's website](#) for additional information or contact us at ddi.drg.elmaillist@usaid.gov.