

# THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE (HDP) TRIPLE NEXUS APPROACH IN ACTIONS FUNDED BY ELANKIDETZA

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Introduction

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus is one of the most recent approaches devised with the aim of adapting the response of international development cooperation agencies to a global context marked by increasingly complex and protracted crises. It therefore seeks to achieve coherence, complementarity and coordination between different humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actions, taking into account the principles and objectives of each of these elements.

In 2021, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presented a paper with recommendations and a set of principles for the implementation of the triple nexus, to improve collaboration, coherence and complementarity across the three pillars of the triple nexus. Thus, according to the OECD DAC, the aim is: “to reduce overall vulnerability and unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflicts”.

The triple nexus approach is a relatively recent and new concept, meaning that it is still a work in progress, which may result in operational difficulties when implementing it. However, despite this, it is also a great opportunity for discussions and sharing experiences, understanding its challenges and benefits to ensure its effective and contextually appropriate implementation. One of the options for its implementation is to employ conflict-sensitive tools and methodologies such as Do No Harm.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the implementation of this approach to international cooperation by eLankidetza-Basque Agency for Cooperation and Solidarity, in the actions it funded between 2018 and 2023. Recently, eLankidetza has been engaged in a knowledge exchange process centred on the triple nexus with organisations and experts. This illustrates eLankidetza's commitment to understanding the triple nexus approach and incorporating it into different areas of action.

**Figure 1.** Convergence of the HDP triple nexus.



Source: IECAH

## Objectives and methodology of the study

Main objective: To analyse the opportunities, challenges, and constraints for implementing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Triple Nexus approach in actions funded by eLankidetza.

Secondary objectives:

1. To analyse the degree of implementation of the HDP nexus in the actions funded by eLankidetza during the 2018-2023 period.
2. To analyse and assess the criteria applied by eLankidetza to implement the triple nexus approach, identifying any problems and opportunities that have been found.
3. To provide specific, purposeful recommendations on how to improve the implementation of the HDP triple nexus approach in future eLankidetza-funded actions.
4. To facilitate learning and collaboration in the implementation of the HDP approach through a one-day workshop for Basque humanitarian organisations and local partners, in order to present the results of the study and discuss practical experiences.

In terms of the proposed methodology, qualitative and quantitative approaches have been combined to analyse the extent to which the HDP nexus has been incorporated into the strategic framework and into the actions funded by eLankidetza between 2018 and 2023. It includes a comprehensive review of relevant documents (at planning regulation level and a sample of 57 case files). Regarding actions (strategies, projects, and direct grants), we selected those that are most closely related to the pillars of the HDP nexus or that are directly implemented in settings where there is war or violence.

**Table 1.** Case files approved and analysed in this study (2018-2023).

Instrument	Files approved from 2018-2023	Files analysed	Percentage of files analysed
PRO K1	320	11	3%
PRO K3	122	5	4%
PRE	118	25	21%
EHE	23	10	43%
ZUZ	104	6	6%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from eLankidetza (annexes, funds and reports).

We analysed the documents by applying questions that considered the OECD DAC criteria of coordination, coherence, and complementarity, as well as the project cycle of the actions. Interviews were also conducted with key actors to record their experiences and perceptions. We also included a quantitative data analysis to identify patterns and trends, and an in-depth qualitative analysis to gather information on challenges, opportunities and lessons learned. Thus, a set of findings emerged from our analysis of primary and secondary sources, forming the basis of our conclusions. In turn, these led to the recommendations that we have made.

## Conclusions

### STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- 1. The legal and strategic framework of eLankidetza's international cooperation implicitly incorporates elements of the HDP nexus, both in Act 3/2024 and in the current Master Plan.** Moreover, both documents promote policy coherence and the interlinkage of human rights and peacebuilding. This coherence provides the policy basis to facilitate the future implementation of the HDP nexus. (See [R1](#))
- 2. The 2018-2026 Strategy for Humanitarian Action is the document with the strongest links to the triple nexus.** This Strategy details how humanitarian action should support the development and peacebuilding nexus. Furthermore, its key priorities could also foster this connection by targeting aid at conflict settings, focusing on localisation, raising awareness among Basque citizens on these issues or on elements of the triple nexus, as well as strengthening eLankidetza by promoting the exchange of knowledge and discussions with other actors. As such, the structure of the strategy provides a framework within which humanitarian actions can be integrated with development and peace initiatives, but this integration depends largely on cross-cutting approaches and a willingness to interlink the three pillars. (See [R2](#))

### CALLS FOR PROPOSALS AND ASSESSMENTS

- 3. The HDP nexus is implicitly referred to in the assessment criteria of calls for proposals for development and education for social transformation (K1 and K3) and humanitarian action (EHE and PRE).** The calls for proposals require coherence between eLankidetza's development cooperation planning framework, the (H)ABIAN 2030 strategy, and the strategic planning of the applicant organisation and the local partner. Coherence is viewed as essential, and it is explicitly stated that this coherence is clearly aligned with the triple nexus approach. (See [R4](#))
- 4. The calls for proposals require the application of the logical framework approach,** which is referred to throughout the assessment criteria. **This is an opportunity to incorporate conflict-sensitive tools such as Do No Harm,** as this makes it possible to adjust the planning matrix to factor in contexts of violence. Calls for proposals for humanitarian action include criteria to analyse and mitigate the risks of the actions themselves and to do no harm (e.g. considering the host population in the actions). However, this does not the case with development-related calls for proposals. Furthermore, although both calls require a context analysis, there is no requirement for an in-depth conflict analysis to inform the design of the action so that it is conflict-sensitive, i.e. to include or change elements of the planning matrix in order to reduce the risk factors. (See [R8](#))
- 5. In all calls for proposals, cross-cutting approaches could facilitate the implementation of the HDP nexus.** Such approaches could facilitate the incorporation of the three pillars by helping to reduce vulnerabilities, advocate for more durable solutions and build peace. (See [R5](#))

**6. The degree of flexibility in budget allocations hinders the effective implementation of the triple nexus.** Calls for proposals for humanitarian actions afford greater flexibility to adjust budgets than calls for development cooperation. In addition, calls within the scope of humanitarian action strategies (EHE) allow more durable solutions to be designed and implemented. However, additional resources are needed to ensure that humanitarian interventions are not only interlinked, but also that a three-way connection is established between the three pillars of the triple nexus approach at the same time. Furthermore, the aid policy framework hampers the incorporation of humanitarian elements into development projects implemented in conflict situations, which require rapid adaptability to changing circumstances. (See [R3](#) and [R7](#))

**7. Calls for proposals for development and humanitarian projects can promote coordination, collaboration, and complementarity in the activities of organisations working on each element of the HDP nexus through the submission proposals for consortia projects.** The possibility of submitting proposals for consortia projects could optimise resources and facilitate the joint work of development, peace, and humanitarian actors. However, the lack of specific guidelines on the triple nexus limits the effectiveness of such collaborations. (See [R6](#))

**8. Calls for proposals promote cooperation between the beneficiary population and formal and informal authorities.** This is essential for gaining insights into conflict settings and is a key aspect of conflict sensitivity, which is an important factor to consider in the HDP nexus. (See [R6](#))

## HUMANITARIAN ACTION STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS ANALYSED

**9. Most of the humanitarian action strategies and projects have adopted the LRRD (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development) approach.** We also identified strategies with conflict-sensitive elements of the Do No Harm approach. All projects that we studied included an in-depth analysis of the context and the conflict, highlighting sources of division or tension (factors that can lead to violence), as well as sources of cohesion (local dimensions and capacities for peace). These are the types of interventions that best incorporate elements of the triple nexus. Hence, we observed a trend in the implementation of the triple nexus, which starts with humanitarian action and then follows a *continuum* approach. (See [R4](#) and [R8](#))

**10. Most organisations coordinate with different actors, such as local and national authorities, INGOs, UN agencies and OCHA, as well as civil society organisations.** These actors are mainly linked to humanitarian action or development, but coordination with peacebuilding actors was also observed. (See [R6](#))

**11. Most humanitarian actions promote more durable solutions through capacity building, refugee integration and community building, among other things.** In terms of the peace component, these activities focus mainly on protection and access to rights, advocacy, collecting testimonies and awareness-raising. Activities to promote social cohesion as a peacebuilding element have also been carried out in various

settings. All these elements have great potential to be interlinked with development and peacebuilding initiatives. (See [R5](#))

#### DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND DIRECT GRANTS ANALYSED

**12. We identified coordination mechanisms with different actors in these projects, especially with development and peacebuilding actors,** given that the projects under analysis are implemented in conflict situations. The actors with whom implementing organisations engage include, for example, human rights organisations, public institutions and local organisations. However, we did not observe such coordination between humanitarian actors and development and/or peacebuilding actors. (See [R6](#))

**13. There was a strong focus on human rights in the development projects we analysed, where they sought to protect the beneficiaries.** The project activities were focused on capacity building, empowerment, human rights advocacy, awareness-raising, integration, and working with rights-holders and duty-bearers. This was aimed at reducing vulnerabilities, promoting development and building peace. Furthermore, all the projects we studied were focused on preventing violence and ensuring access to and the defence of rights. (See [R5](#))

**14. In the development projects under study, an analysis was carried out of the setting in which the action took place and of the conflict.** To this end, sources of tension and factors of cohesion were identified to explain the situation and the existing conflict. However, these were not used to design conflict-sensitive outcomes and activities. (See [R8](#))

**15. Most of the education for social transformation (K3) projects we analysed were aimed at raising awareness among the Basque population about protecting human rights defenders.** Although none of the projects refer to implementing the triple nexus approach or the use of conflict-sensitive methodologies, all of the projects support long-term peacebuilding through capacity-building activities for protection organisations, advocacy, dissemination and awareness-raising among Basque citizens about the situation faced by vulnerable and crisis-affected populations. (See [R5](#) and [R8](#))

**16. In the case of direct grants (ZUZ), applications are made by submitting a document called a “concept note”, which is shorter and simpler and does not require as much detail as the others.** ZUZs cover activities related to advocacy for the protection of human rights, research and training initiatives, peacebuilding and violence reduction initiatives. As this type of call does not require as much detail to be entered into the form, it could serve as a basis for planning strategies that incorporate the triple nexus. (See [R3](#))

## Recommendations

The following recommendations have been drawn up based on our findings. However, the recommendations focus on the aspects of strategies and calls for proposals that need to be improved, based on our analysis of them and of the projects and initiatives we examined.

### 1. Explicitly incorporate the triple nexus approach into the Master Plan

When drawing up the next Master Plan, it is important to consider explicitly incorporating the HDP nexus. Not only theoretically, but also through a methodological proposal that has been agreed upon with NGOs and relevant public and private bodies in the field of international cooperation and peacebuilding.

The HDP nexus should be viewed as an approach that seeks to reduce the violence caused by conflicts in the settings in which eLankidetza carries out its cooperation activities. This should be the focus of all development efforts, of humanitarian action itself and, naturally, of peacebuilding. Each element should be considered according to its own principles and objectives, but with a common goal of shifting from violence to peace in the settings in which it is implemented.

In turn, the triple nexus should be seen as a combination of elements that interlink, merge, and overlap wherever it is implemented, whether inside or outside the Basque Country. It is therefore important to promote localisation within the local-global approach already introduced in the IV Master Plan and Cooperation and Solidarity Act 3/2024.

### 2. Foster the triple nexus approach in the Strategy for Humanitarian Action

The Strategy covers all three pillars of the nexus; however, it should explicitly implement the approach by developing a specific or cross-cutting focus on the HDP nexus. This may help to enhance the approach, if it is done in a holistic and comprehensive manner, to avoid the risk of it becoming “just another section of the form”.

Regarding pillar 4 of the Strategy, efforts to promote exchanges of experience and knowledge should continue, so that together, the authorities, NGOs, local partners and other relevant actors can build coherent strategies related to the HDP nexus.

### 3. Introduce new categories in calls for proposals

Calls for proposals should not separate the different components of the HDP nexus, which should never have been separated. Therefore, calls for proposals should not distinguish between development and humanitarian initiatives, they should be categorised according to other criteria, for example:

- Calls for proposals according to the level of planning, divided into plans/programmes/strategies and projects/actions, regardless of whether they are for direct grants. This would mean that all initiatives contain elements of the HDP nexus and only the level of planning would differ. In calls for proposals for plans/programmes/strategies, the concept note that is currently submitted for direct grants could be used, to simplify the process of granting funding and reduce the amount of detail required.
- Calls for proposals for training, research, and knowledge exchange initiatives that include

- Calls for proposals to strengthen local organisations to improve their responsiveness.

Due to the challenges involved in making such changes, we recommend that they be implemented in the medium to long term.

#### 4. Promote the coherence of the triple nexus approach in calls for proposals

The HDP nexus approach does not entail starting with humanitarian action and then linking it to development and peacebuilding. Each element of the nexus is equally important, and it is the context in which the initiative is to take place, i.e. the violence in the setting, that should determine which types of action are to be prioritised when drawing up a project proposal. Calls for proposals should therefore specify the need to implement the threefold approach of the triple nexus.

The assessment criteria may continue to require projects to be aligned with the strategic planning of the applicant organisation and local entity, and with the sectoral plans of the Basque Government, and for them to be in line with the international development agenda.

#### 5. Include guidance on implementing the triple nexus

In relation to the above recommendation, each call for proposals, whether they be calls in their current forms for development and humanitarian actions or those proposed in this study, should include sections that provide applicant organisations with guidance on how to show that they have incorporated the pillars of the HDP nexus. This will depend on the setting and the capacities of the organisation and the local partners. Cross-cutting approaches are still useful in this respect, especially when focusing on human rights, protection, testimonies and gender equity.

The gender approach should take greater account of the cultural and structural violence suffered by women and the LGBTIQ+ community (engaging with men, promoting new forms of masculinity, awareness-raising and prevention). The human rights approach should also prioritise activities that involve duty-bearers more, to ensure that the empowerment of rights-holders is truly effective and helps to reduce their vulnerability. Overall, more emphasis should be placed on prevention, mediation, advocacy and social cohesion activities that can have a positive impact on communities.

For initiatives that include elements of education, whether in emergencies or in chronic crises, it is very important that they are aligned with the INEE Minimum Standards for Education. In any event, they should consider conflict sensitivity and the role of education in conflict transformation.

## 6. Improve coordination and complementarity

Regarding coordination and complementarity, we recommend encouraging applicants to submit proposals for consortia projects with organisations that incorporate elements of the HDP nexus. Similarly, the inclusion of initiatives by various local or international institutions in plans/calls and involvement in humanitarian clusters and coordination spaces should continue to be viewed positively.

In addition, it is important to strengthen support and collaboration with local partner organisations, as well as with the beneficiary population and other relevant actors in the setting by involving them in the project. It is also important to encourage the involvement of formal and informal authorities, and public and private institutions. On this latter point, it is highly important to consider the perception that beneficiaries have of these authorities and whether the action could have any negative effects on distribution or legitimacy. It is therefore important to continue promoting the exchange of knowledge between the actors involved in the actions. This may mean involving non-traditional cooperation actors (technology centres, companies, professional associations, or social movements, etc.).

## 7. Focus on flexible and strategic funding

Flexibility in budget allocation and justification should be continued and enhanced, especially if the applicant organisation uses the implementation scenario to justify the need for funding.

This study proposes flexible, predictable and unearmarked funding to enable adaptive programming. This would mean that, if the situation changes, the actions can be adjusted accordingly, with the funds being reallocated as needed. This would help to coordinate the humanitarian, development, and peace elements.

## 8. Incorporate conflict-sensitive methodologies such as Do No Harm

Calls for proposals should include, at the very least, the use of planning methodologies that employ conflict-sensitive tools and consider the conflict transformation component. The relative importance of the given element of the triple nexus will determine the feasibility of having this transformational impact. The context analysis, risk assessment and contingency measures that are to be carried out should be considered in the assessment criteria. Regarding direct grants (ZUZ), these proposals should include a planning document that covers conflict sensitivity by way of incorporating an aspect of the HDP nexus.

Descriptions of conflict settings should include an in-depth analysis of the context, the structural causes, and the actors relevant to the conflict. Any factors that may trigger violence must also be examined, in addition to an analysis of areas where local capacities for peace can be enhanced. In this respect, collaboration between different actors in the HDP nexus would be extremely positive. The aim should be to incorporate this analysis of sources of tension or division and cohesion into action planning and throughout the project cycle. Thus, these factors should have a bearing on the design of activities or outcomes within the planning matrix. Similarly, the risk assessment should identify the potential impact of the action in the setting in which it is to be implemented. If there are any unexpected impacts, changes should be made during implementation, where possible, to reduce the unintended negative effects.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### The Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Triple Nexus approach in actions funded by eLankidetza

Regarding monitoring and assessing actions, monitoring documents should include aspects that encourage consideration of the HDP nexus and/or conflict sensitivity. Furthermore, insofar as possible, each action should at least be evaluated to assess the impact of the actions in relation to the pillars of the HDP nexus and/or conflict sensitivity.