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# The Triple Nexus Framework and its Operationalization across UN-Agencies

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Christina Plesner Volkdal

## Introduction

The Triple Nexus framework, which integrates humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts, is increasingly recognized as essential for addressing complex crises in fragile and conflict-affected settings. However, its operationalization across UN agencies remains inconsistent, shaped by varying institutional mandates, governance structures, and funding mechanisms. While the framework aims to enhance coherence, complementarity, and collaboration, persistent challenges such as sectoral silos, funding fragmentation, and limited institutional commitment to peacebuilding hinder its full implementation.

This policy paper critically examines how UN agencies apply the Triple Nexus framework, identifying key institutional challenges, funding constraints, and inter-agency coordination gaps. Through a comparative analysis of UNDP, UNHCR, WHO, WFP, FAO, and ILO, it explores how these agencies translate Triple Nexus principles into practice, highlighting areas for improvement and best practices. The paper further assesses inter-agency coordination mechanisms, governance structures, and the role of political economy in shaping the effectiveness of integrated programming.

Despite the growing emphasis on the Triple Nexus framework, UN agencies struggle with fragmented governance, siloed funding, and inconsistent integration. This paper critically examines these systemic barriers and proposes institutional,

financial, and operational strategies to enhance Triple Nexus coherence across UN interventions.

While the Triple Nexus framework seeks to enhance coherence across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts, its implementation remains fragmented due to institutional, financial, and political barriers. This paper critically examines these challenges by conducting a comparative analysis of UN agencies, assessing political economy constraints, and evaluating operational gaps. By bridging theoretical aspirations with practical implementation strategies, this policy paper presents targeted recommendations to drive structural reforms in governance, financing, and localization within the Nexus framework.

## Triple Nexus Implementation Strategies Across UN Agencies - Comparative Analysis

The operationalization of the Triple Nexus varies significantly across UN agencies due to differences in governance structures, institutional mandates, and sectoral priorities. While some agencies demonstrate strong governance frameworks that facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration, others struggle with institutional rigidity and funding fragmentation, limiting their ability to integrate humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions effectively.

UNDP integrates crisis response through localized governance frameworks, ensuring that interventions are both adaptive and context-sensitive (UNDP, 2023). It employs a hybrid approach that combines centralized policy guidance with decentralized

implementation. For example, the UNDP Crisis Bureau coordinates interventions across regions while aligning strategies with local needs through country-specific resilience-building programs (UNDP, 2024a). UNDP also emphasizes risk-informed planning, resilience-building, and adaptive programming to address crises systemically (Ryser, 2020).

UNHCR operationalizes the Triple Nexus through initiatives such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which links humanitarian assistance with development and peace strategies (Schmidt, 2024). In Niger, UNHCR integrates refugee housing projects with national development plans, fostering long-term stability and socio-economic inclusion (UNHCR, 2023). In Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia, UNHCR's energy sector initiatives promote sustainable, market-based solutions, enhancing livelihoods and fostering social cohesion (Schmidt, 2024).

WHO's approach to the Triple Nexus is centered on strengthening health systems in emergencies. The Health Systems in Emergencies Lab (HSEL) exemplifies a nexus-driven initiative that integrates emergency response with sustainable health system development (Ardalan, 2023). WHO's interventions in Yemen and Sudan highlight how health services can act as an entry point for broader peace and development efforts (WHO, 2020c). The Universal Health Coverage Partnership plays a central role in funding and coordinating nexus interventions, ensuring WHO's adaptability to complex crises (WHO, 2020a, 2020c).

WFP and FAO employ integrated programming models to enhance food security, reduce vulnerability, and foster resilience. WFP's Resilient Food Systems Framework ensures a cross-sectoral approach that links humanitarian food aid with long-term agricultural development and climate adaptation strategies (WFP, 2022). Similarly, FAO's Corporate Framework for Sustainable Peace operationalizes food security within broader peacebuilding efforts (FAO, 2021d). FAO prioritizes natural resource management, linking environmental sustainability with social stability, as

demonstrated in dryland ecosystem initiatives across regions like Africa and Asia (FAO, 2023).

ILO focuses on economic resilience through employment creation as a means of sustaining peace in fragile settings. The Decent Work Agenda, embedded in ILO Recommendation No. 205, promotes livelihoods as a pathway to recovery and long-term development (Aviles, 2023). In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, ILO integrates cash-for-work programs with national social protection systems to enhance stability and economic inclusion (ILO, 2023c). In fragile states such as Yemen and Jordan, ILO emphasizes transitioning from temporary livelihoods to sustainable job creation (ILO, 2023a, 2024b).

The table summarizes key differences and similarities in the Triple Nexus approaches of the UN agencies.

**Table: Comparative Analysis of UN Agencies in Triple Nexus Implementation**

Organization	Key Focus Area	Governance Model	Integration Approach	Key Challenges
<b>UNDP</b>	Crisis governance, resilience-building	Hybrid (centralized-decentralized)	Risk-informed planning, capacity-building	Funding fragmentation, coordination challenges
<b>UNHCR</b>	Refugee and displacement solutions	Multi-stakeholder partnerships	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)	Siloed funding, political barriers
<b>WHO</b>	Health system resilience	Regional and national coordination	Health Systems in Emergencies Lab (HSEL), universal coverage	Governance fragmentation, funding silos
<b>WFP</b>	Food security and resilience	Strategic global and country-level plans	Resilient Food Systems Framework, community engagement	Limited funding for resilience components
<b>FAO</b>	Sustainable agriculture, peacebuilding	Decentralized regional operations	Climate adaptation, participatory planning	Fragmented programmatic coherence
<b>ILO</b>	Decent work and livelihoods	Tripartite (government, workers, employers)	Social protection, employment-intensive programming	Donor dependency, policy alignment

A comparative analysis of UNDP, UNHCR, WHO, WFP, FAO, and ILO reveals notable discrepancies in governance models and integration approaches. Agencies such as WHO and ILO perform well in governance due to their structured decision-making processes, sector-wide coordination mechanisms, and well-established institutional frameworks. Conversely, FAO and WFP face challenges in integrating peacebuilding due to sector-specific mandates that prioritize food security and emergency relief over conflict-sensitive programming. UNHCR, while demonstrating strong integration within displacement and development frameworks, encounters structural limitations in implementing peacebuilding strategies due to its legally defined protection mandate.

Agencies with well-established governance structures (e.g., WHO, ILO) often have centralized decision-making frameworks and sector-wide coordination mechanisms but may lack the

flexibility to integrate Nexus programming across different operational contexts.

Agencies like FAO and UNHCR have embraced aspects of the Triple Nexus but face limitations due to their institutional mandates or sector-specific focus, restricting their ability to lead cross-sectoral coordination effectively.

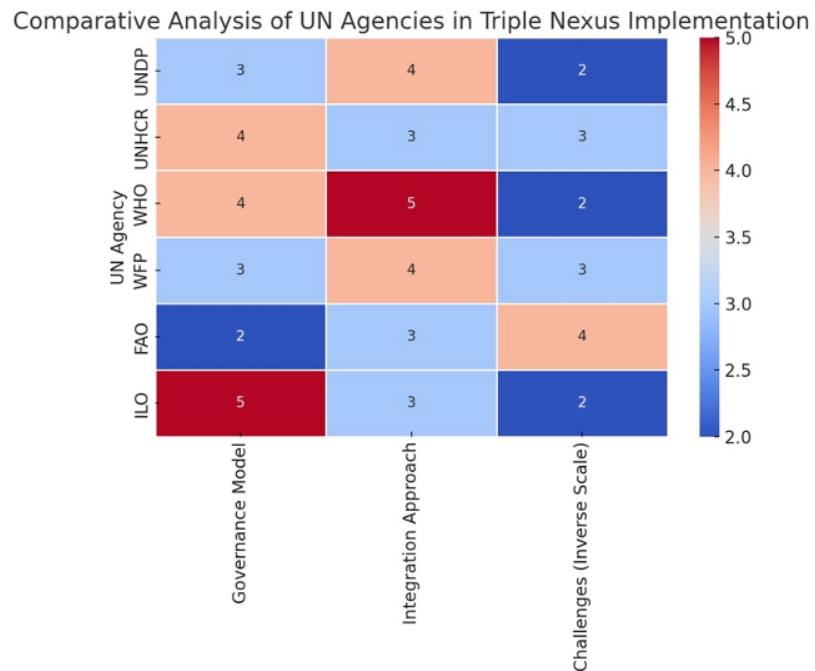
Agencies with strong governance but weak integration tend to work within institutional silos, requiring additional coordination mechanisms to enable cross-sectoral collaboration. Conversely, agencies with higher integration scores but weaker governance may struggle to institutionalize Nexus principles at a systemic level, limiting their ability to scale integrated programming effectively.

The following figure compares UN agencies' performance in Triple Nexus implementation across governance models, integration approaches, and challenges (inverse scale). Higher scores

indicate stronger governance and integration, while lower scores highlight greater challenges. WHO and ILO excel in governance and integration but still face operational barriers. FAO and UNDP struggle with weaker governance structures, impacting their Nexus alignment. Despite some integration

efforts, all agencies encounter significant implementation challenges, emphasizing the need for harmonized governance, inter-agency coordination, and flexible funding to improve Triple Nexus coherence.

**Figure: Comparative Overview of UN Agencies' Triple Nexus Implmentation**



The comparative analysis reveals significant structural and operational disparities among UN agencies in implementing the Triple Nexus. While some agencies benefit from well-defined governance frameworks, their ability to integrate across sectors is hindered by institutional silos and rigid mandates. Conversely, agencies demonstrating higher integration capabilities often grapple with governance fragmentation, leading to coordination inefficiencies. However, beyond these institutional challenges, the broader political economy landscape—shaped by donor financing models, geopolitical influences, and governance fragility—further constrains effective Nexus implementation. Understanding these underlying factors is essential to designing governance and funding mechanisms that support a more cohesive and operationally viable Nexus approach.

Systemic fragmentation in UN agency governance and integration strategies underscores the urgent need for institutional reforms to enhance coherence, strengthen inter-agency coordination, and promote adaptive funding mechanisms. Disparities in governance structures not only expose inefficiencies in Nexus implementation but also reinforce sector-specific approaches that hinder multi-sectoral collaboration. These institutional limitations are further compounded by entrenched political economy constraints, including donor-driven priorities, restrictive funding conditions, and governance deficits in fragile states. Addressing these intertwined challenges necessitates a critical examination of how aid dynamics shape inter-agency coordination and the broader Nexus framework.

To bridge these structural and financial gaps, UN agencies must shift from fragmented decision-

making processes to integrated governance structures that enhance coordination across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions. Establishing joint decision-making platforms is essential for aligning governance structures with operational mandates, ensuring a more harmonized and effective implementation of Nexus principles. Furthermore, financing mechanisms must be restructured to emphasize multi-year, flexible funding streams that reduce dependency on rigid sector-specific allocations and enable adaptive, cross-sectoral programming. The following policy recommendations build upon these insights, proposing targeted institutional, financial, and governance reforms to strengthen the Nexus approach within the UN system.

While governance and integration structures vary across UN agencies, their effectiveness is further constrained by political economy factors, including donor financing models, state fragility, and competing institutional mandates. These structural influences shape how agencies operationalize the Triple Nexus, impacting inter-agency coordination, funding sustainability, and programmatic alignment. The following sections critically examines these political and financial constraints, highlighting their implications for Nexus implementation.

## Enhancing the Operationalization of the Triple Nexus Across UN Agencies

The effective implementation of the Triple Nexus framework across UN agencies is contingent upon overcoming structural, institutional, and operational barriers that hinder cross-sectoral integration. While the Triple Nexus aims to create coherence between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts, its realization is constrained by inter-agency fragmentation, bureaucratic rigidities, and inconsistent localization strategies. This section identifies key institutional gaps and outlines actionable policy priorities to enhance governance, resource mobilization, and localization within the UN system's Triple Nexus approach.

### *Inter-Agency Coordination and Institutional Alignment*

One of the most pressing challenges in operationalizing the Triple Nexus is the lack of systematic coordination across UN agencies. Variations in mandates, governance structures, and funding mechanisms contribute to programmatic fragmentation and inefficiencies (Weishaupt, 2020). While UNDP has leveraged its governance expertise to promote risk-informed planning, and UNHCR has incorporated displacement solutions into development frameworks, cross-sectoral collaboration remains hindered by siloed funding streams and competing institutional priorities (Schmidt, 2024).

To address these gaps, a formalized inter-agency coordination mechanism should be established at both the headquarters and country levels, facilitating integrated planning and joint program implementation (Plesner Volkdal, 2024a). Strategic frameworks, such as the UN's 'New Way of Working,' must be reinforced through dedicated coordination platforms that align humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors within a common operational strategy (UNDP, 2023).

### *Financing the Triple Nexus: Overcoming Funding Fragmentation*

A fundamental constraint in scaling up Triple Nexus interventions is the fragmented nature of funding. Short-term, sector-specific financing models prevent long-term resilience-building and adaptive programming (Gulrajani & Lundsgaarde, 2023). UN agencies frequently face challenges in securing multi-year, flexible funding mechanisms that support integrated responses, particularly in protracted crises (UNCHR, 2022; UNICEF, 2023; WFP, 2021).

To enhance the financial sustainability of Triple Nexus programming, pooled funding mechanisms and multi-donor trust funds should be expanded to support cross-sectoral collaboration (FAO, 2021; Igarashi, 2021). Flexible financing arrangements,

such as outcome-based funding models, should also be explored to enable agencies to dynamically adjust interventions in response to evolving crisis dynamics (Sida & Nelis, 2022; WFP & IOM, 2022).

### *Localization and Inclusive Governance*

Despite commitments to localization, significant power imbalances persist between international agencies and local actors, limiting the meaningful participation of communities in decision-making processes (Wilkinson & de Wolf, 2019). While UNHCR's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) seeks to align displacement solutions with national development strategies, and FAO integrates participatory planning into agricultural resilience programs, top-down decision-making structures continue to constrain local ownership of Triple Nexus initiatives (UNHCR, 2023b, 2023a).

To strengthen localization, UN agencies must shift from project-based approaches to governance-led frameworks that empower local institutions to lead crisis response and recovery efforts (Wilkinson & de Wolf, 2019). Greater investment in capacity-sharing initiatives is needed to ensure that national and community-based actors play a central role in program design and implementation (Plesner Volkdal, 2024a). Additionally, decentralized governance models should be reinforced to enable adaptive management and context-sensitive solutions that reflect local needs and priorities (Amukhobu & Apollos, 2024; Coetzee et al., 2016; Van Stralen et al., 2022).

### *Addressing Bureaucratic Rigidities and Enhancing Adaptive Programming*

Rigid bureaucratic structures and slow decision-making processes significantly constrain the ability of UN agencies to implement adaptive programming within the Triple Nexus framework (Howe, 2019; Volkdal, 2024). While anticipatory action models employed by WFP and WHO have demonstrated the potential for early intervention in fragile contexts, institutional barriers, such as donor-driven

mandates and complex approval processes, often delay timely responses to emerging crises (FAO, 2023a, 2023b).

To improve agility and responsiveness, UN agencies must embed real-time monitoring and scenario-based planning within their operational strategies (Patton, 2021b). The integration of digital platforms, such as WHO's Health Resources Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS), can enhance data-driven decision-making and facilitate the rapid adaptation of interventions based on evolving crisis dynamics (WHO, 2020). Furthermore, streamlining administrative procedures and enhancing inter-agency knowledge-sharing will be critical in fostering a more flexible and responsive Triple Nexus approach.

### *Strategic Priorities for Strengthening Triple Nexus Implementation*

To ensure a more effective operationalization of the Triple Nexus framework, the following strategic priorities should be pursued:

- *Institutional Coherence*: Establish dedicated inter-agency coordination mechanisms to improve strategic alignment and operational synergies.
- *Flexible Funding Mechanisms*: To overcome financial fragmentation, UN agencies should establish a multi-donor Nexus Fund—a coordinated financing mechanism that consolidates humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding resources under a unified framework. This fund should prioritize multi-year, flexible funding models that support adaptive, cross-sectoral programming and long-term resilience.
- *Locally Led Implementation*: Strengthen the role of national and community-based actors in decision-making and governance structures.
- *Agile and Adaptive Programming*: Invest in real-time monitoring systems and streamline bureaucratic processes to enhance operational flexibility.

By addressing these institutional barriers and operational challenges, UN agencies can significantly improve the effectiveness of the Triple Nexus framework, ensuring that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions are better aligned to foster sustainable, context-sensitive responses in crisis-affected settings.

## Political Economy and Institutional Constraints in Triple Nexus Implementation

The operationalization of the Triple Nexus framework is shaped by the political economy of aid, where donor-driven priorities, state governance capacities, and geopolitical interests significantly impact how UN agencies coordinate humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. The political and financial structures underpinning international aid influence funding modalities, governance frameworks, and inter-agency collaboration, often reinforcing fragmentation rather than enabling integrated programming. This section critically examines the ways in which donor conditionalities, governance constraints in fragile states, and institutional inefficiencies hinder the ability of UN agencies to effectively implement the Triple Nexus approach.

### *Donor Conditionalities and the Politicization of Aid*

Despite the increasing emphasis on integrated programming, donor financing mechanisms remain highly sector-specific, reinforcing institutional silos within UN agencies (Barakat et al., 2023). Bilateral and multilateral donors frequently impose conditionalities that prioritize short-term emergency relief over long-term development and peacebuilding, limiting the ability of UN agencies to adopt multi-year, adaptive strategies that address underlying structural vulnerabilities (Gulrajani & Lundsgaarde, 2023; UNICEF, 2023; WFP, 2021).

The securitization of aid is particularly evident in conflict-affected regions, where funding allocations are often influenced by national security interests

rather than needs-based assessments. For example, in Yemen and Syria, donor commitments have been shaped by geopolitical alliances, leading to inconsistent and politically motivated funding streams that hinder the effective coordination of Triple Nexus interventions (Mena & Hilhorst, 2022). Addressing these constraints requires greater donor flexibility, including the expansion of pooled funding mechanisms that enable cross-sectoral collaboration and long-term resilience-building (FAO, 2021; NRC et al., 2021).

### *State Fragility and Governance Constraints*

In fragile and conflict-affected states, weak governance structures further exacerbate the challenges of Triple Nexus implementation. Political instability, corruption, and limited institutional capacity prevent national governments from integrating humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions into coherent policy frameworks (Pritchett et al., 2013).

Moreover, elite capture - where local power holders manipulate aid distribution for political or economic gain - remains a critical barrier to effective localization of the Triple Nexus. UN agencies must adopt conflict-sensitive governance strategies that prioritize transparency, accountability, and local participation to mitigate these risks and ensure that Triple Nexus programming does not reinforce existing power asymmetries (Joireman & Haddad, 2023; Schmeidl et al., 2023; Smith, 2012; UN Sustainable Development Group, 2022; UNICEF, 2016; WFP, 2023).

### *Institutional Inefficiencies and Bureaucratic Barriers*

Within the UN system, institutional inefficiencies and rigid bureaucratic structures continue to hinder the operationalization of the Triple Nexus. The parallel mandates of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding agencies create silos that make cross-sectoral collaboration slow and cumbersome (Howe, 2019). Coordination challenges between agencies such as UNDP,



UNHCR, and WHO are further exacerbated by differing accountability frameworks, financing mechanisms, and reporting structures (Roberts, 2020).

Although initiatives such as the UN's 'New Way of Working' have sought to promote integrated responses, implementation remains uneven due to the absence of harmonized strategic frameworks and flexible operational modalities (Center on International Cooperation, 2019; Photo & Asad, 2019; Redvers, 2017; Wilp, 2020). Addressing these constraints requires a shift toward more agile and adaptive institutional arrangements, including real-time data-sharing, joint programmatic planning, and streamlined bureaucratic processes (Patton, 2021a).

### *Bridging Governance and Financial Gaps: Aligning Political Economy Realities with Triple Nexus Implementation*

The effectiveness of Triple Nexus implementation is significantly constrained by institutional fragmentation, donor-driven priorities, and governance deficiencies, particularly in fragile states. The politicization of aid and the persistence of rigid, sector-specific funding streams limit the ability of UN agencies to develop adaptive, cross-sectoral programs that respond to complex crises in a coherent manner. Despite commitments to more flexible financing, donor priorities frequently reinforce siloed approaches, hindering inter-agency collaboration and long-term strategic planning.

These structural barriers necessitate a fundamental shift toward financing models that promote adaptability, sustainability, and enhanced coordination. UN agencies must advocate for pooled, multi-year funding mechanisms that move beyond rigid sector-based allocations, fostering more holistic and resilience-focused programming. By restructuring financial flows and strengthening governance frameworks, agencies can better align humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts under a unified strategy. The following policy recommendations propose institutional, financial,

and governance reforms to address these systemic challenges and advance the operational effectiveness of the Triple Nexus approach.

The systemic challenges outlined above necessitate a paradigm shift in how UN agencies structure their governance frameworks, financing models, and localization strategies. Addressing these political economy constraints requires institutional reforms that enhance inter-agency coordination, promote sustainable funding mechanisms, and empower local actors in decision-making. The policy recommendations provide targeted solutions to strengthen the operational effectiveness of the Triple Nexus framework.

### **Measuring the Impact of Triple Nexus Interventions**

The lack of standardized monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks poses a significant challenge to assessing the effectiveness of Triple Nexus programming. Traditional evaluation methodologies, which are often sector-specific, fail to capture the complexities of integrated approaches and the dynamic interactions between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions (Howe, 2019; Plesner Volkdal, 2024b).

Existing impact assessment tools, such as the OECD-DAC criteria for development aid, do not fully account for cross-sectoral synergies. New M&E methodologies should incorporate resilience indicators, conflict sensitivity metrics, and measures of social cohesion to evaluate Triple Nexus interventions effectively (Howe, 2019). For example, WHO's HeRAMS system monitors health system resilience in fragile contexts, while FAO's Food Security and Peacebuilding Framework assesses the intersection between food security and conflict prevention (FAO, 2022; WHO, 2020).

Longitudinal studies are essential for tracking the sustained impact of Triple Nexus interventions over time. Adaptive learning methodologies, such as

developmental evaluation and real-time monitoring, allow agencies to adjust interventions dynamically in response to evolving needs. Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into data analysis presents new opportunities for predictive modeling of crisis trajectories and program effectiveness.

Ensuring that affected populations play a central role in evaluating Triple Nexus interventions is critical for enhancing local ownership and sustainability. Participatory evaluation mechanisms, such as community scorecards and citizen feedback systems, provide valuable insights into program effectiveness while fostering accountability (Alshawawreh, 2021; Cornwall & Aghajanian, 2017; Douthwaite et al., 2007; Neufeldt & Janzen, 2021). In post-conflict settings, reconciliation indicators and trust-building measures should be included in evaluation frameworks to assess the peacebuilding impact of integrated interventions.

### *Policy Priorities for Strengthening Political Economy Considerations in Triple Nexus Implementation*

To address the institutional and political economy constraints outlined above, the following policy priorities should be pursued:

- *Flexible and Multi-Year Funding:* Donors should shift toward pooled funding mechanisms that enable integrated, long-term planning across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors.
- *Conflict-Sensitive Governance Approaches:* UN agencies should strengthen local engagement through transparency and accountability mechanisms to mitigate the risks of elite capture and aid politicization.
- *Institutional Reform for Enhanced Coordination:* Inter-agency bureaucratic barriers should be reduced through the adoption of streamlined joint programming

models and real-time data-sharing platforms.

- *Improved Impact Measurement:* UN agencies should develop standardized multi-sectoral M&E frameworks that incorporate resilience, social cohesion, and peacebuilding indicators.

By addressing these political economy constraints and strengthening institutional coordination, UN agencies can enhance the effectiveness of the Triple Nexus framework, ensuring that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions are better aligned to support sustainable and context-sensitive crisis responses.

### **Climate Change and Environmental Dimensions of the Triple Nexus**

Climate change is increasingly recognized as a multiplier of humanitarian crises, exacerbating food insecurity, forced displacement, and conflict over natural resources (Mena et al., 2022). Integrating climate adaptation strategies within the Triple Nexus framework is essential for ensuring resilience in vulnerable regions.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is a critical component of the Triple Nexus, aligning with sustainable development objectives and humanitarian response priorities (UNDRR, 2021). Initiatives such as anticipatory action programs, which use early warning systems and predictive analytics to mitigate climate-induced crises, are gaining traction in humanitarian settings (WFP, 2023). Linking DRR efforts with long-term climate resilience planning ensures that short-term emergency responses contribute to broader sustainability goals (FAO, 2022).

The intersection of environmental governance and peacebuilding efforts is an emerging area within the Triple Nexus discourse. Resource scarcity and environmental degradation are key drivers of conflict in fragile contexts, necessitating integrated approaches that promote sustainable land use, water management, and biodiversity conservation

(Igarashi, 2021). The role of community-based natural resource management programs in fostering cooperation and reducing conflict over scarce resources has been documented in regions such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa (FAO, 2023).

## Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Triple Nexus Implementation

The operationalization of the Triple Nexus requires a departure from fragmented, sector-driven approaches toward a system-wide, coordinated response. Drawing on the comparative analysis and political economy assessment, this section outlines targeted recommendations to address governance inefficiencies, financial fragmentation, and localization gaps. These proposals are designed to move beyond rhetorical commitments by offering concrete policy solutions that UN agencies can adopt to enhance institutional coherence, adaptive financing, and community-driven implementation.

### *Institutional Coherence and Inter-Agency Coordination*

The absence of a unified governance structure across UN agencies has led to duplication, inefficiencies, and gaps in coordination. A more systematic approach is needed to align mandates and operational strategies.

- *Operationalize Inter-Agency Nexus Coordination Units:* Establish dedicated Nexus Coordination Units at the global, regional, and national levels to ensure structured engagement between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors. These units should serve as focal points for joint planning, strategic alignment, and implementation oversight.
- *Develop a Triple Nexus Implementation Framework:* A UN-wide implementation framework should be created to define clear roles, mandates, and responsibilities for each agency within the Nexus, ensuring

operational consistency and minimizing overlaps.

- *Institutionalize Joint Decision-Making Mechanisms:* UN agencies must adopt synchronized planning processes by embedding joint decision-making mechanisms into their governance structures, particularly at the country level. This should include inter-agency committees mandated to approve and oversee integrated programming.

### *Advancing Flexible and Sustainable Funding Mechanisms*

Short-term and sector-specific funding continues to hinder the effective implementation of Triple Nexus programs. A reformed approach to financing must emphasize flexibility, multi-year commitments, and cross-sectoral resource allocation.

- *Establish a Multi-Donor 'Nexus Fund':* UN agencies should operationalize a centralized Nexus Fund, pooling resources from multiple donors under a shared financing structure. This fund should explicitly support integrated humanitarian, development, and peace initiatives, breaking away from rigid sector-specific funding streams.
- *Adopt Outcome-Based Financing Models:* Donor contributions should be tied to resilience-building and long-term impact rather than short-term outputs. Adaptive funding models must allow agencies to dynamically reallocate resources based on evolving needs and contextual shifts.
- *Facilitate Cross-Sectoral Pooled Financing Initiatives:* Expand existing pooled funding models to explicitly integrate Nexus objectives. This should include the establishment of financing mechanisms that enable joint programming across UNDP, UNHCR, WHO, WFP, FAO, and ILO to sustain multi-sectoral interventions beyond the emergency phase.

### *Strengthening Localization and Context-Sensitive Implementation*

Despite global commitments to localization, power asymmetries persist, limiting the meaningful engagement of national and community-based actors in decision-making. A shift from externally driven projects to locally led governance structures is imperative.

- *Institutionalize Local Leadership in Triple Nexus Programming:* Local actors should be embedded into Nexus governance structures at both strategic and operational levels. This requires formalized mechanisms that transfer decision-making authority to national and community-based institutions.
- *Expand Direct Funding for Local Organizations:* Establish financing windows within the Nexus Fund that are specifically allocated for local actors, ensuring that funding reaches grassroots organizations without bureaucratic barriers.
- *Enhance Local Participation in Program Design and Implementation:* UN agencies must institutionalize participatory methodologies, such as co-design workshops and community-driven planning, to align interventions with local priorities and capacities.

### *Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Learning*

The absence of integrated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks hinders the ability to assess the long-term impact of Triple Nexus programming. Standardized approaches must be adopted to measure success across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors.

- *Develop a Unified Nexus M&E Framework:* A common evaluation framework should be adopted across UN agencies, incorporating resilience

indicators, conflict sensitivity metrics, and peacebuilding benchmarks to track cross-sectoral outcomes.

- *Leverage Digital Platforms for Real-Time Monitoring:* Expand the use of predictive analytics and digital monitoring tools, such as WHO's Health Resources Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS), to facilitate real-time decision-making and adaptive programming.
- *Institutionalize Adaptive Learning Mechanisms:* Nexus programming must embed iterative learning cycles, ensuring that feedback mechanisms allow for program adjustments based on evidence and emerging needs.

## The Way Forward

The operationalization of the Triple Nexus across UN agencies remains a complex challenge that requires structural, financial, and institutional reforms. The recommendations outlined above provide a roadmap for achieving greater coherence, efficiency, and sustainability in Nexus implementation. Moving forward, the UN system must:

- Embed Nexus governance structures into institutional mandates to ensure systemic coordination across humanitarian, development, and peace sectors.
- Transform financing models by operationalizing a Nexus Fund that prioritizes long-term, flexible, and multi-sectoral funding.
- Empower local actors by decentralizing decision-making and providing direct financial support to national and community-based organizations.
- Enhance accountability through robust M&E systems that capture the full spectrum of Nexus outcomes.

By addressing these structural barriers and advancing integrated programming, the UN system can foster a more responsive, resilient, and effective

Triple Nexus approach, ensuring that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts are mutually reinforcing and contextually relevant.

## Conclusion

Operationalizing the Triple Nexus across UN agencies necessitates a shift from fragmented, sector-specific interventions toward an integrated, system-wide approach. While progress has been made in aligning humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts, persistent challenges—such as governance fragmentation, funding silos, and limited inter-agency coordination—continue to hinder its full realization. Addressing these structural and operational barriers is imperative for ensuring a more cohesive and effective response to complex crises.

The findings of this policy paper underscore the need for fundamental institutional reforms. First, the UN system must institutionalize inter-agency collaboration through joint coordination mechanisms that facilitate shared strategic planning, resource pooling, and synchronized implementation at global, regional, and country levels. Second, achieving financial sustainability requires the adoption of multi-year, flexible funding models that support long-term adaptive programming and reduce dependence on short-term, sector-specific financing. Third, localizing Nexus interventions by centering the role of national and community-based actors in decision-making and governance structures is essential for ensuring that interventions are contextually relevant and sustainable.

Moreover, enhancing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems is critical for assessing the impact of Triple Nexus interventions. Integrated MEL frameworks should incorporate resilience metrics, conflict sensitivity indicators, and adaptive learning approaches to ensure that programming remains dynamic and evidence-driven. The use of digital technologies and real-time data analytics will further strengthen agencies' ability to respond proactively to evolving crises.

As crises become more complex and protracted, the imperative to implement the Triple Nexus effectively has never been more urgent. Addressing governance fragmentation, financial constraints, and localization challenges will determine the UN system's capacity to deliver integrated and sustainable interventions. The success of the Nexus framework hinges on systemic reforms that embed cross-agency coordination, align financing mechanisms with long-term resilience objectives, and empower local actors in programmatic decision-making. Without these structural changes, the Triple Nexus risks remaining a theoretical ambition rather than an operational reality. As crises become increasingly complex and protracted, failure to institutionalize the Triple Nexus risks perpetuating inefficiencies and undermining long-term resilience. UN agencies and donors must move beyond policy rhetoric toward transformative reforms that embed inter-agency coordination, flexible financing, and localized decision-making at the core of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding strategies. Only through such systemic change can the UN effectively navigate contemporary crises and ensure a more sustainable, inclusive, and conflict-sensitive response.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christina Plesner Volkdal is a PhD Fellow at Copenhagen Business School, affiliated with the Department of Management, Society, and Communication. Her research centers on the Triple Nexus, an innovative intervention approach that bridges humanitarian operations, development programs, and peacebuilding efforts. With a background in the UN, particularly in humanitarian coordination, and an approach as a participant observer, she leverages first-hand experiences to offer profound insights, enriching her contributions to the field.

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