



THE HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT - PEACEBUILDING NEXUS IN COLOMBIA

LOCAL COORDINATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AS A PLATFORM FOR A NEXUS APPROACH

THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACEBUILDING NEXUS

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) identified the importance of strengthening the humanitarian–development nexus as a top priority in crisis-affected countries. This has evolved in some contexts to include peacebuilding as part of a triple nexus. This paper includes peacebuilding when referencing ‘the nexus’. The nexus, or the *New Way of Working* as it is also called, recognizes that greater coordination, coherence, and operational flexibility is needed between humanitarian, peacebuilding and development actors to capitalise on the added value that each brings to the operational environment where humanitarian, peacebuilding and development issues are often similar or linked.

A number of inter-agency groups are still working on the details of the nexus terminology and defining what it means operationally. And while this is on-going, humanitarian operations around the world are setting up systems to establish a way of working that brings the humanitarian and development agenda to be mutually reinforcing, while recognizing the distinction between principled humanitarian operations and recovery and development work that is underpinned by a strong relationship with the national government and local authorities.

PEER-2-PEER LEARNING MISSION: COLOMBIA

LOCAL COORDINATION, INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND THE NEXUS

Local coordination and information management platforms were established in Colombia in 2015 and have evolved into a functioning system whereby the humanitarian operation and development work are planned and coordinated in a complementary manner in an area-based approach to operations.

The Peer-2-Peer Project was invited to Colombia by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for a learning mission to capture the positive aspects of their nexus approach. The case study which follows is intended to provide inspiration to other HCs, Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) members and other leaders in nexus contexts around the world, that are looking for concrete examples to guide their work on this issue.

MISSION METHODOLOGY AND TEAM COMPOSITION

The Peer-2-Peer Project organised a light mission to look at the nexus model that has been established in Colombia in recent years. The team included two core members of the project and a senior colleague from InterAction, the US-based NGO network.

The purpose of the mission was to document the field practice that the HC and HCT had put in place regarding a coordinated approach towards the nexus. The team organised a series of individual consultations and group meetings during the mission with the HC, HCT members, donors, the Colombian Foreign Ministry, individual clusters and the inter-cluster coordination group.

The mission also included a field visit to Quibdó (Chocó Department in the Pacific Coast region) to meet with the municipal authorities, the Local Coordination Team (LCT), and to witness the joint needs overview exercise for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding operations in the area. Chocó Department was one of the areas most affected by the conflict before the peace agreement was signed. The people in Chocó still suffer substantially from insecurity, humanitarian concerns, limited presence of local authorities, and various development gaps.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HCs AND HCTs TO STRENGTHEN THE NEXUS

CREATE A CLEAR VISION FOR HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

- Senior leadership builds consensus with all relevant actors in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding community – both UN and NGO actors- to support a nexus vision.
- Articulate a commonly agreed vision that reflects the views and inputs of HCT and UNCT members and clearly identifies what the nexus means in the operational context and what is required to ‘make it work’ i.e. coordinating humanitarian and development plans and programmes that are distinct but are mutually reinforcing.
 - HC leverage his/her role as the head of the humanitarian operation and as the Resident Coordinator (RC) of the development system to build consensus across the humanitarian and development community on a nexus vision.
 - Keep the vision simple, practical and useful.
- Maintain concerted advocacy with HCT and UNCT members (and others as required) to retain their support and commitment to making the nexus approach work, in-line with the vision that has been identified.

ESTABLISH A COORDINATION SYSTEM THAT CONNECTS HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND OPERATIONS:

BRING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS TOGETHER IN THE SAME ROOM AND FOCUS THE CONVERSATION AROUND HOW TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE AFFECTED POPULATION

- Establish a coordination system that meets regularly with humanitarian and development actors in the same room, with a humanitarian and development organization in a co-coordination function:
 - Ensure humanitarian and development issues are considered equally, and neither are omitted in the agenda.
 - Follow an area-based approach with coordination structures in proximity to communities to understand humanitarian and development needs and use that as a basis for program design
 - Ensure delegated authority for area-focused coordination teams to plan and operate effectively.
- Build on existing structures such as Local Humanitarian Teams or the Area Humanitarian Team to create Local Coordination Teams that include development actors for a more comprehensive agenda that discusses issues which communities face, of a humanitarian and developmental nature.
- Joint coordination teams engage in joint planning activities, including identifying humanitarian priorities and development priorities to lay the foundations for complementary approaches to the situation that communities are faced with.
 - E.g. align or overlay the Humanitarian Needs Overview with a Development or Peacebuilding Overview, and subsequently, humanitarian and development plans.

BACK THE COORDINATION INFRASTRUCTURE WITH AN INCLUSIVE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS SYSTEM

EVIDENCE TO ACTION

- Build on existing structures such as the humanitarian information management system and the 4Ws tool that already provide a comprehensive platform for humanitarian activities.
 - Expand the existing humanitarian information system to include peacebuilding and development activities to form a complete picture of humanitarian and development activities.
- Introduce a common analysis component into the information management group
 - Capitalise on humanitarian and development expertise to establish a solid evidence-base for decision-making at the HCT and UNCT, and in local coordination teams that takes into account the humanitarian and development situation and can highlight areas of humanitarian and development responses can be mutually reinforcing.

BACKGROUND: CONFLICT AND THE HUMANITARIAN OPERATION IN COLOMBIA

The humanitarian operation in Colombia provides essential assistance to communities affected by internal conflict. This was predominantly between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Government of Colombia, although other armed groups have also been, and continue to be active. The conflict lasted for more than five decades and has had a huge impact on people's lives: approximately seven million people have been displaced from their homes, more than 200,000 people have been killed, and around 15,000 people are still missing.

The Peace Accord that was signed towards the end of 2016 between the National Government and FARC officially ended the conflict, and significantly changed the humanitarian, peacebuilding and development context in the country. Humanitarian concerns still exist as armed groups and paramilitary groups continue to engage in violent conflict, particularly in areas where the FARC used to be active. However, there was a belief that the peace agreement would provide the foundation for a transition from a humanitarian operation to a peacebuilding, recovery and development agenda to gain traction. Furthermore, there was an expectation that local authorities would become more established in previously inaccessible areas, and would provide a level of security, peace and basic services to communities.

While the context could be described as challenging, the situation has also been described as the perfect laboratory to look at creative solutions to overcome the artificial separation between humanitarian and development work and implement a nexus approach to bring humanitarian, peacebuilding and development operations to be mutually reinforcing.

1. BUILD CONSENSUS WITH THE HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

ESTABLISH A CLEAR VISION AND JUSTIFICATION FOR IMPLEMENTING THE NEXUS

a. Colombia as the perfect laboratory for the nexus

- The Nexus in Colombia is born from a momentum and a necessity in the country and at the field level. There was a recognition, even before the end of the conflict, that humanitarian concerns were decreasing in Colombia and the Government had a responsibility to provide assistance to its own people. Additionally, there was confidence that the negotiations between the Government and FARC would deliver a peace agreement which, in theory, would further reduce the need for humanitarian assistance. It would then open up opportunities for the Government to establish its presence in previously inaccessible parts of the country and deliver on a recovery and development agenda.
- The HC at the time recognised the dynamics and took pro-active steps to put in place a transition plan where the humanitarian operation would continue to deliver assistance as required but also transition roles, responsibilities and activities to longer-term recovery, peacebuilding and development. But, during the transition it was clear that the humanitarian operation and development work would be necessary in areas that were affected by the conflict, working on a complementary way.
- These specific dynamics presented the perfect laboratory for the humanitarian and development community to implement a new way of working even before the topic gained wider attention at the World Humanitarian Summit.

b. Changing a mindset, establishing trust, and bringing the humanitarian and development community together

- The HC in 2015 established a clear vision for a nexus approach based around information management and coordination. Information and analysis would be crucial to inform humanitarian and development decision-making, and the vision outlined a joint coordination platform that would support mutually reinforcing humanitarian and development plans, without jeopardizing the core principles of humanitarian work, or diluting the role of development. The two approaches would remain distinct, but complementary. Crucially, the vision and nexus approach would build on an already-existing system that was in place for humanitarian information and coordination. i.e. it was an evolution of a structure that was already in place. However, the successful implementation of this approach would still require collective support from the broader humanitarian and development community.
- The RC/HC leveraged his position to encourage colleagues in the HCT and the UNCT to commit to the vision. The RC/HC had the crucial support of OCHA on the humanitarian side, and UNDP and the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) on the development side, and together they engaged in a prolonged advocacy effort to build support for a 'nexus' approach across the broad humanitarian, development and peacebuilding community. *"This was not easy"*,

commented OCHA’s Head of Office, in reference to the effort that was required to shift the mindset of humanitarian and development practitioners, and build acceptance and trust in this new way of working.

- The tripartite group of the RC/HC (and the RCO), OCHA and UNDP persevered and transitioned Local Humanitarian Teams into Local Coordination Teams (LCTs) in twelve field hubs. The LCTs are jointly chaired by a development and a humanitarian organisation- including both UN and NGO actors serving as equal partners. Similarly, the humanitarian information management system was transitioned into a more comprehensive system - UMAIC - that captures, manages and analyses information on the humanitarian and development situation and provides a common analysis for joint decision making by all actors. UMAIC is the *Unidad de Manejo y Análisis de Información Colombia*.
- The UMAIC and the LCTs proved to be an effective platform for building a humanitarian-development partnership, and the high quality of the information and analysis products helped to build the momentum that was needed to convince the development side of the operation to contribute to the expansion of the humanitarian coordination and information system and work in support of the RC/HC’s nexus vision.

c. Keep it simple, practical and useful

- The vision for the nexus was based around simplicity and building on what already existed on the humanitarian coordination and development side. The RC/HC (and RCO), OCHA and UNDP, as the driving force behind the vision developed something that was simple, practical and useful: a model that could deliver the right assistance to affected people. Information and analysis were seen as the backbone of the proposed system, and a clear coordination system with joint humanitarian and development leadership would bring complementarity to a mutually reinforcing operation at the field level, reflecting the importance of proximity to crisis-affected communities.
- The LCTs are based around a simple idea of bringing different actors that are working on similar issues in the same territory into the same room to collectively identify the needs of affected people and agree activities to address those needs, whether humanitarian or development. The work of the LCTs is underpinned by the information and analysis backbone provided by the UMAIC and a collectively agreed analysis of the situation and issues.
- The LCTs are supported and guided from the leadership of the operation in the capital but are not *directed* by them. The LCTs have sufficient delegated authority to develop humanitarian and development plans based on feedback from affected people. The proximity of the LCTs to crisis-affected communities is critical to understanding the needs, and operationalizing plans to deliver against those needs. It is an effective illustration of a decentralized approach to coordination based on a high-level of trust that is placed in the hands of field staff.

“We wanted to establish a system that was simple, practical, and useful”
Inka Mattila, Deputy Representative, UNDP Colombia

d. Success breeds success

- The initial success of field coordination between humanitarian and development actors, the high quality of UMAIC’s products, and an increasing familiarity between humanitarian and development colleagues helped to build support for the nexus vision and helped change the mindset of different actors to commit to the vision. However, the snowball effect really took shape when all actors recognized the added value which UMAIC and the LCTs brought to their own individual work. The success of the approach served to encourage a more robust commitment and engagement from humanitarian and development actors, and the system continues to gather momentum.

“The more we know about each and our distinct way of working, the better we can work together”
Pontus Ohrstedt, Head of the Resident Coordinator’s Office, Colombia

2. A COORDINATION SYSTEM THAT CONNECTS HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND OPERATIONS

BRING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS TOGETHER IN THE SAME ROOM

a. Build on an existing coordination structures

- The humanitarian operation in Colombia had established twelve Local Humanitarian Teams (LHTs) around Colombia to gather information on humanitarian issues, coordinate needs assessments, and develop local humanitarian response plans. The system was a well-functioning humanitarian coordination forum.
- The RC/HC proposed a coordination system that would build on the existing humanitarian structure and integrate development actors i.e. transition from *Local Humanitarian Teams* into *Local Coordination Teams (LCTs)*, co-coordinated by one humanitarian organisation, and one development organisation. The co-coordination function helps the humanitarian and development issues to be addressed in a distinct but complementary and mutually-reinforcing manner.

b. Broad and inclusive membership

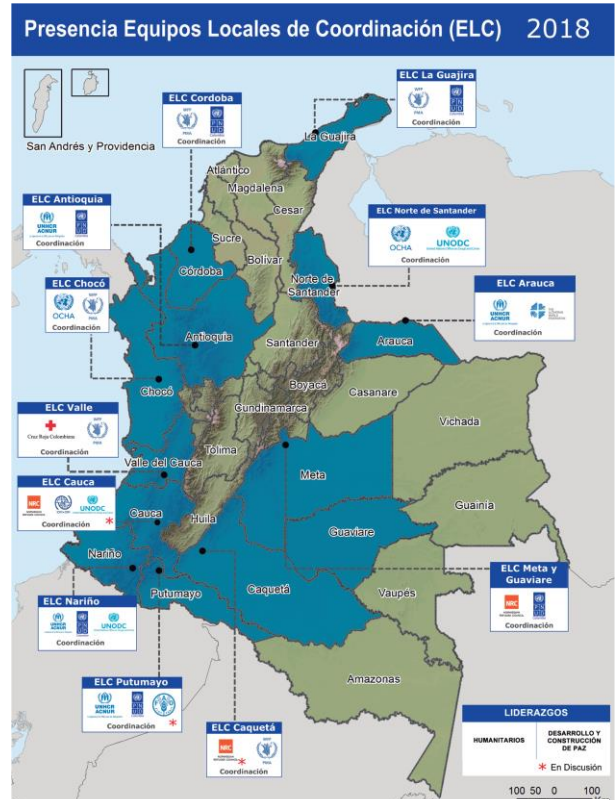
- The LCTs’ membership includes UN humanitarian and development agencies, international NGOs, and local NGOs. The inclusion of NGOs in the LCTs is considered an essential part of successful nexus coordination, as they generally operate with a dual humanitarian-development mandate and are the predominant deliverers of humanitarian and development assistance to communities in the field.

c. Agree a collective understanding of needs from the field

- The LCT provides the forum to develop a collective understanding of the context across all actors from a humanitarian and development perspective, and importantly where the two overlap.
- The teams meet on a regular (usually monthly) basis to exchange information and to discuss operational plans, priorities and activities. The LCT, and particularly its proximity to communities affected by the conflict and continuing insecurity, provides the platform for field-based organisations to provide feedback from communities on their needs and their impressions of the humanitarian and development response, i.e. applying the Accountability to Affected People (AAP) agenda.
- The LCT co-coordinators provide a clear single entry-point for leadership and coordination of humanitarian and development assistance with the local authorities.

“The reality in the field drives the response, and the LCTs are critical to understanding the field reality”

Martin Santiago, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Colombia



Local Coordination Teams in Colombia

3. SUPPORT THE COORDINATION INFRASTRUCTURE WITH AN INCLUSIVE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS SYSTEM

INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS AS THE BACKBONE

a. Build on existing systems and structures

- Information and analysis are critical ingredients for planning humanitarian and development operations. The RC/HC, with the support of OCHA and the agreement of the RCO and other humanitarian and development organisations built on OCHA’s humanitarian information management system to create UMAIC. UMAIC expanded of its humanitarian information management function and started to produce a wider range of products that were relevant to the needs of peacebuilding and development actors.

- UMAIC transitioned into an independent information management and analysis system which is financially supported by a combination of support and funds from OCHA, UNDP, the RCO, and individual contributions from humanitarian and development donors.
- b. Connecting information and coordination: UMAIC IM officers deployed to work with the LCTs**
- UMAIC's information and analysis function underpins the decision-making, planning and coordination function of the LCTs. UMAIC Information Management Officers have been deployed to LCTs around the country to cement the connection between coordination and information, and to allow the LCTs to function effectively as a meeting place and as the platform for delivering a humanitarian operation and a peacebuilding and development agenda.
- c. Distinct and complementary: connecting and overlaying humanitarian and peacebuilding assessment**
- The UMAIC function, and the entire nexus approach in Colombia, recognizes the distinct nature of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work by encouraging individual efforts that relate to, and complement each other. In this regard, the LCTs and UMAIC have supported the development of two distinct products, a humanitarian needs overview (HNO), and a peacebuilding overview (PBO). Each are done separately but in the same timeframe and are brought together in a planning and mapping exercise which overlays similar issues and challenges to be addressed either by the humanitarian operation, or the peacebuilding and development actors, or, frequently by either or both.
- d. Build on existing systems: expanding the 4W tool to include humanitarian and development activities**
- The information management approach also extended the reach of another typical humanitarian coordination tool to include development and peacebuilding issues. This was the simple expansion of the 4W tool which, when hosted under OCHA, maintained a wealth of information on the 'who, what, where, when' for humanitarian activities. The RCO recognized the potential to utilise the 4W tool to include information on development and peacebuilding activities in Colombia and provide the full picture of the humanitarian, recovery, peacebuilding and development environment. Consequently, the 4W tool now provides a comprehensive account of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programmes.
- e. Success breeds success: quality is critical**
- UMAIC's success is a direct result of the high quality of its work. The development community were initially sceptical as to how a humanitarian information management system could support their way of working. However, the development community recognises and appreciates the high quality and relevance of the information products that UMAIC produces. This has created a snowball effect where more and more actors (humanitarian, development, peacebuilding) use the information products that UMAIC provides, and consequently, more and more actors provide information to the project thereby expanding its range of contributions and strengthening its information gathering and analysis function.
 - UMAIC has also become a respected tool for the Government of Colombia who use the information products for their own planning purposes, and also contribute information to the project.

4. CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

There is appreciation and agreement that the humanitarian and development community have provided an effective system for mutually reinforcing humanitarian and development work. However, there are concerns about its sustainability.

- OCHA has been a critical element in the success of the LCTs and establishing UMAIC, and it continues to be a driving force of these two ingredients that support coordination and information management and analysis. However, OCHA's long-term presence in Colombia is unclear and there is a concern within the humanitarian and development community that the system will wither away without OCHA's substantial support, both technically and financially.
- While the project is funded from a variety of sources that reflect humanitarian and development contributions, it is still predominantly reliant on financial support that comes from OCHA.

The Peer-2-Peer Support Project

The Peer 2 Peer Support team (formerly known as the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team - STAIT) was created by, and reports to, the Emergency Directors' Group (EDG). It provides direct peer support to Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams to deliver effective, principled, quality, timely, and predictable collective humanitarian response in field operations. For more information, please visit: <http://www.deliveraidbetter.org/>