



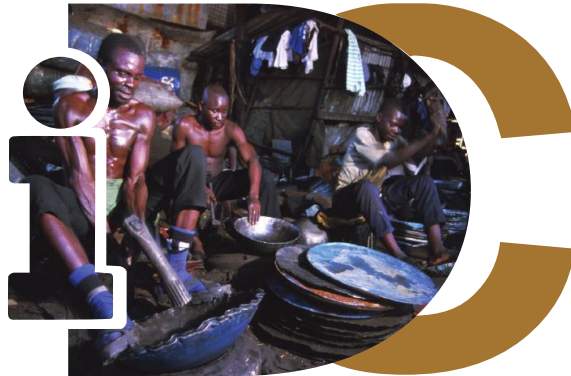
Thematic Review of ADRA
Denmark's Approach to Working Within the
Humanitarian-Development Nexus

Report

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Abbreviations

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AU	African Union
CAP	Community Action Plan
CEIRC	Countering the Economic Impact of Covid-19 in Refugee Camps
CWDS	Clean Water Distribution System
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EU	European Union
FMS	Farmer Market School
FFS	Farmer Field School
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPDO	Friendship Peace and Development Organisation
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
iDC	Intermedia Development Consultants
IGA	Income Generating Activity
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development.
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLAE	Ministry of Local Administration and Environment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoWR	Ministry of Water Resources
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for European Cooperation and Development
ReDSS	Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat
SCEED	Strengthening Community Engagement and Empowerment in Darfur
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sudanese Pound
TMP	Tamkeen Al Muzarein Project
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VCD	Vulnerable Communities Live With Dignity
VCF	Value Chain Forum
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WGG	Women's Goat Group
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

Executive Summary

This is a study of ADRA Denmark's approach to working within the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. It is based on a documentary review and an evaluation of one project in Syria and three in Sudan:

In Syria:

'Vulnerable Communities Live With Dignity' (VCD), with envisaged results that communities in Homs are employing positive coping strategies, are more self-reliant, and live with increased dignity.

In Sudan:

'Strengthening Community Engagement and Empowerment in Darfur' (SCEED), in West and Central States in Darfur, focusing on improving and sustaining livelihood opportunities for conflict-affected communities and enhanced community engagement in development and resilience;

'Countering the Economic Impact of Covid-19 In Refugee Camps' (CEIRC), in Jabalein and Alsalam localities of White Nile State, focusing on the reduction of food insecurity among vulnerable refugees and host community households through provision of life-saving cash assistance in the camps;

'Tamkeen Al Muzarein Project' (TMP), mitigating the effect of El Niño for the host, IDP and returnee populations in White Nile.

The ToR set out two main objectives:

- To capture outcome-level results of ADRA Denmark's approach to working within the nexus in Syria and Sudan, with a particular focus on the contribution to improved resilience and improved livelihood strategies;
- To stimulate learning based on recommendations from evidence of achieved results to improve the quality of the ADRA Denmark's approaches and programming when working within the triple nexus.

This has involved assessing how effective the nexus approach has been in the projects in both countries; how relevant are the livelihood strategies and resilience building activities in the context of protracted crises; how can existing MEAL practices be improved.

The Nexus Concept

It is not a new concept. For a long time, there has been a concern to link humanitarian and development interventions. But, instead of a linear continuum as envisaged in LRRD (linking relief, rehabilitation and development) the nexus entails a contiguum – aid interventions occurring simultaneously and in a complementary fashion. The image is of a parallel rather than a series electrical circuit. That kind of linked humanitarian and development aid we might call a 'double nexus'. The argument is that, when a country or a region has suffered from natural shocks or conflict, there is no need for development initiatives to wait until relief activities have finished. In this report, there is a clear example of simultaneous relief and development assistance happening in Homs in Syria – the urgent restoration of basic services, along with training in business skills, followed by grants, for people who want to restart their enterprises.

It is this concept of the nexus – the simultaneous implementation of humanitarian and development interventions that is seen in the projects reviewed.

The ‘triple nexus’ idea – the inclusion of peace along with humanitarian and development assistance – arose first in the UN; understandably, because in conflict-affected countries it is the UN that has its peace-restoring and peace-maintaining agencies that can work alongside its aid-giving and capacity-building agencies.

Whereas, for INGOs such as ADRA Denmark, there is no challenge to the argument that humanitarian and development interventions need to be implemented together when relevant, there is less clarity about how INGOs could, or should, engage in the triple nexus. It is an issue taken up in this study.

The Projects

Both Syria and Sudan are war-torn countries; both are in urgent need of humanitarian and development assistance. This study has been a reminder of how long ADRA Denmark has supported its ADRA country partners in implementing double nexus projects – long before that term was coined.

Two of the projects in Sudan – SCEED in West Darfur and TMP in White Nile State – have a strategy that has been well-tried in a number of countries. It involves a mix of farmer field schools (FFS), farmer market schools (FMS), and village savings and loan associations (VSLA). In the SCEED project, the community action plan (CAP) approach was implemented, whereby groups from the participating communities carry out their own needs assessments and prioritisation of local and small-scale development initiatives – projects supported by ADRA but more firmly owned by the communities. For the TMP project, there was also a clean water distribution scheme being implemented and a ‘revolving’ scheme for women’s groups involving the care and breeding of goats.

From a project design perspective, the humanitarian-development linkage between the components of both projects is clear. When re-designing SCEED in 2019, the project document states, ‘The dire and protracted needs in the area necessitated sustainable and community-based actions that align to strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus’.

With regard to external coherence, as with all INGO-supported projects in Sudan, both the ADRA projects had to get the approval of the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), which ensures coordination with government plans and also, presumably, anything of a ‘political’ nature in project activities would be checked. This, in itself, is a likely restriction on any peace-building interventions by INGOs operating in the country. And so, as with all ADRA projects, the situation analyses in both project documents show an awareness of the Arab/African historical tensions, the recurrent disputes over land and water resources between farming and pastoralist communities, the possible tensions between displaced and host communities – but any peace initiative is limited to ensuring that resources brought by the projects are equitably distributed.

For the evaluation of both projects, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held, separately, with beneficiary groups of women and men. For SCEED, in general, there was a confidence expressed that the project has made a significant difference to the way farming is carried out – in the adoption of more ‘modern’ practices and in the greater awareness about the marketing of produce. There have been particular benefits especially for women, too. Their involvement in the VSLAs has not only meant increased incomes but also a greater sense of dignity and independence – something recognised by men as well.

For the TMP, there was the same kind of response – about improvements for the farmers and for the women beneficiaries. ‘The project has changed our way of doing things,’ one FGD participant said. The ‘change stories’ from beneficiaries of both project – and from the other two projects evaluated – are graphic examples of how a project can have a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of the participants.

The third project reviewed in Sudan – the CEIRC project in White Nile State – is a reminder that sometimes there needs to be a swift and direct humanitarian intervention in response to an emergency situation. For CEIRC, it was a recognition that something needed to be done about the risks refugees were facing in their three camps – risks associated with the Covid pandemic. Apart from living in the cramped conditions of the camps, many of the refugees had stopped going outside for work because of the possibility of infection. And so their families were not able to afford food. The response needed to be quick and simple: unconditional cash transfers were made to the most needy families, who were also given advice about nutrition and how to protect themselves against infection. It should also be noted that other ADRA-supported projects in the camps were addressing needs related to access to water and to livelihood opportunities.

With regard to impact, the beneficiaries in the two FGDs expressed their strong appreciation of the cash assistance that had helped them through a particularly difficult time. Some of them also talked about the continuing need for them to find secure livelihoods; reinforcing a point that has been highlighted in this study – that having a livelihood not only means living with dignity, it also can solve the problem of food security and access to basic services.

Of all the four projects, the VCD project in Syria makes perhaps the sharpest distinction between its humanitarian and development components. On the one hand, it is ‘building-back’ some basic service structures destroyed by the civil war; on the other hand, it is ‘building-back-better’ business enterprises by offering entrepreneurial training and grants to those who can make good use of this assistance.

The views expressed in the FGDs for beneficiaries and, especially, the stories to be found in this report, all show appreciation of the help that they have received. It is as if their lives, as well as their businesses, have been restored.

Conclusions

Two main issues have emerged from the study:

- Given that ADRA Denmark sees the achievement of resilience for the target communities of the projects it supports as critical, should it encourage its implementing

ADRA partners to join with other NGOs in projects executed by consortia that can address a wider range of resilience factors than they can do on their own?

- Given that NGO involvement in conflict resolution activities not only calls for a high degree of negotiation skill but also entails risks of either failing to honour humanitarian principles or falling foul of government agencies, how far should ADRA Denmark address the peace element of the triple nexus?

All four of the reviewed projects are operating in regions that have experienced protracted conflict, and all four of them are relieving human suffering – one of the four focus areas ADRA Denmark identifies as important in achieving resilience. All of them, in different ways, are strengthening basic services. Three of them are concerned with securing and improving livelihoods, especially through promoting more productive agricultural practices. None of the projects campaign directly for equal rights for women, but, as said above, they do enhance women’s dignity and their sense of independence. None of the projects reviewed work directly on strengthening civil society, in the sense of working through civil society organisations that focus on participation, sustainable change and holding duty bearers accountable. They do, however, enhance empowerment through establishing self-help groups. And those projects that promote the community action plans (CAP) approach to involve project beneficiaries in planning their own development initiatives.

Another, more fundamental and triple nexus perspective on what makes for resilience, one more comprehensive than the four focus areas discussed above, is that there are five key factors – and ones that can be the basis for formulating collective outcomes in multi-sectoral resilience programmes:

1. Safety – being free from conflict and natural shocks;
2. Shelter – having a place to live;
3. Food security – having enough to eat;
4. Basic services – having access to education, health, water and sanitation services;
5. Livelihood – having employment or a business that can help secure all of the first four.

These can be seen as the foci in broad-based resilience programming, especially in societies emerging from conflict. No single humanitarian or development agency can effectively address all five of the factors. That is why – particularly for displaced or poverty-stricken communities – there is an increasing promotion of area-based and consortium-implemented projects. The advantage is obvious: each agency brings to bear its own strengths on the achievement of all five of the above resilience factors. However, there are also possible downsides: a lack of coherence in project design, staff with split loyalties, and opportunities lost for strategic adjustments in implementation – unless investment is made in establishing a project management unit with the requisite range of project planning, management, M&E and communication skills.

But ADRA could make an important contribution to such consortia projects, especially with regard to its experience of strategies for improving agricultural practices and supporting VSLAs for women.

With regard to the involvement in conflict resolution or peace maintenance components that is assumed in a triple nexus approach, each NGO has to reflect on the ‘elbow room’ it has in any country where it operates – the extent to which it is free or safe to get involved in any initiative that can be seen as ‘political’. In Sudan and Syria, it would have no elbow room at all for directly addressing the peace element of the triple nexus.

However, in any country ADRA – especially in the many countries where it has operated for a long time and earned the respect of government agencies and, more importantly, the trust of communities – could play the part of ‘honest broker’, facilitating discussions if tensions arise or conflicts break out between communities it is engaging in a project.

Recommendations

Here, the recommendations made in section 5.3 are brought forward.

1. Recognising the case for an area-based and multi-sector strategy, implemented by various humanitarian and development agencies with different areas of specialism, where the objective is to build the resilience of poor, displaced or conflict-affected communities, ADRA Denmark should support the engagement of country ADRA partners when it is seen that they could make an important contribution to a consortium of implementing partners.
2. Consideration should be given to joining a consortium and making a contribution related to its own areas of expertise, even when there is a conflict-resolution component in the project’s strategy, especially if the consortium is supported by the UN or the EU operating with a mandate agreed with the relevant government agencies – as ADRA Sudan has done in the Darfur Peace and Stability Fund led by UNDP.
3. Apart from possible inclusion in such consortia implemented projects, the ADRA country partners, rather than designing direct conflict resolution components of their resilience projects, should be prepared to take the ‘honest broker’ role if tensions develop between beneficiary groups.
4. It is hoped that this study will assist ADRA Denmark in elaborating its interpretation of what adopting a triple nexus approach would mean for its programming, and it is recommended that ADRA Denmark should do what it can to engage in discussions about nexus strategies with the ADRA country partners it supports.

The second objective of this evaluation was to make recommendations about improving the quality of ADRA Denmark’s M&E approaches when working within the nexus:

5. ADRA Denmark, in the design of country programmes and individual projects, should put more emphasis on formulating collective outcomes related to the elements that make for resilience in the targeted communities – evidence that marginalised or minority beneficiaries feel secure and accepted within their communities; families have security of tenure; people are enjoying food security and have access to, and are satisfied with, the provision of basic services; the proportion of young people having access to vocational training opportunities; participating women who have a greater sense of

independence and dignity; the proportion of beneficiary families having livelihoods that provide an adequate income that means less dependence on aid. This would mean putting more emphasis on impact studies and the application of lessons learnt.

6. In all the projects supported by ADRA Denmark that iDC has evaluated, the monitoring of outputs (trainings conducted, facilities established, and services provided) has been very efficient. To improve the monitoring of outcome indicators, it is suggested that projects should establish a few focus groups (each representative of one of the project's components) which would be engaged at six-monthly intervals, in order to explore the participants' views about the project's achievements at the envisaged outcome level.
7. Such FGDs would also be occasions for identifying individuals who have something of particular significance to say about the way in which a project has affected their lives and livelihoods. And such people could be invited for an extended interview in order to record the 'stories of change' of the kind included in this report.
8. As iDC has recommended before, ADRA Denmark could make a significant contribution to discourse within the aid community – and now, particularly in relation to its experience of nexus approaches – by producing occasional 'policy briefs' on, for example, the challenges of implementing farmers' market schools, the success factors in establishing VSLAs, or 'honest brokering' when tensions arise between target groups within a project. Such briefs would be intended for humanitarian and development practitioners; they could also be good material for ADRA Denmark's advocacy work.

1. Introduction

1.1 Objectives

As stated at the very beginning of the ToR for this consultancy assignment, a focus on the humanitarian-development nexus has become 'ever more pertinent... as crises are becoming increasingly complex and protracted, more holistic and coordinated approaches are required to adequately prevent and address issues of vulnerability, poverty and displacement'.

It is certainly the case that, across the international aid community, there is now an emphasis on achieving a nexus – this coordination of humanitarian and development interventions – in order to ensure that projects really measure up to the conventional evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. A third element of the nexus is sometimes added these days – peace-building – which makes for a triple nexus, comprising humanitarian, development and peace-building initiatives.

The ToR state that the objective of the review is 'to assess the extent to which ADRA Denmark's understanding and approach to working within the nexus contributes to improved resilience among communities affected by the protracted crises in Sudan and Syria'. It is indicated, too, that there should be a particular focus on the livelihood and income generating strategies that are deployed in the projects under review.

More specifically, the two objectives in the ToR are:

- To capture outcome level results of ADRA Denmark's approach to working within the nexus in Syria and Sudan, with a particular focus on the contribution to improved resilience and improved livelihood strategies.
- To stimulate learning based on recommendations from evidence of achieved results to improve the quality of the ADRA Denmark's approaches and programming when working within the triple nexus.

And so the review has involved noting outcome-level results (changes in behaviours and attitudes) leading to the enhancement of community groups and the improvement of livelihoods; identifying lessons from both good practice; making recommendations based on these lessons.

1.2 The Projects

Four projects have been reviewed: three in Sudan and one in Syria.

In **Sudan**:

Strengthening Community Engagement and Empowerment in Darfur (SCEED), in West and Central states in Darfur, focusing on improving and sustaining livelihood opportunities for conflict-affected communities and enhanced community engagement in development and resilience;

Countering the Economic Impact of Covid-19 In Refugee Camps (CEIRC), in Jabalein and Alsalam localities of White Nile State, focusing on the reduction of food insecurity among

vulnerable refugees and host community households through provision of life-saving cash assistance in the camps;

Tamkeen Al Muzarein Project (TMP), mitigating the effect of El Niño for the host and IDP populations in White Nile.

In Syria:

Vulnerable Communities Live With Dignity (VCD), with envisaged results that communities in Homs are employing positive coping strategies, are more self-reliant, and live with increased dignity.

1.3 The Team

The team leader was John Fox of the iDC consultancy based in Nairobi. The fieldwork in Syria was carried out by Wafaa Darbouli, Area Manager of Homs for ADRA Syria, assisted by Lana Salameh and Qutiba Jahjah. In Sudan, the fieldwork was conducted by Dr Abdelmoneim Bakheit, Founder and President of Economic Expert for Agricultural Consultations in Sudan, who in West Darfur was assisted by Eng'r Yagoub Soliman, General Manager of the Agricultural Research Station in Algenina.

1.4 Review Activities

Desk Study

The first research task was to understand more clearly the origin and nature of the nexus concept, as it is being applied in aid programmes and projects across the world. Then, there has been a focus on how ADRA Denmark has interpreted the concept, why it is seen as important, and how it has affected the choice of projects to support. The second task has been how the reviewed projects in Sudan and Syria are designed in a manner that envisages a nexus approach – one that has both humanitarian and development objectives – and also a peacebuilding objective, in line with those who argue for a triple nexus in conflict-affected locations. And so the desk study has laid the groundwork for assessing the extent to which the projects are being implemented in a manner that is in line with the values and processes of a nexus approach.

The list of documents consulted is given in Annex A.

Key Informant Interviews

Since, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, travel to Sudan and Syria was not possible, John Fox engaged via Zoom interviews and WhatsApp calls with ADRA staff in Denmark, Sudan and Syria. In the main, these interviews focused on the way the staff have interpreted the key concepts of nexus and resilience; how the supported projects coordinate humanitarian and development components; whether there is a need to engage with other aid agencies in order to address a wider spectrum of needs; whether it would be expedient for ADRA to engage more explicitly in peace-building initiatives in the conflict-affected countries where it works.

The list of ADRA staff interviewed is given in Annex B, and the checklist for these interviews is given in Annex C. For the interviews with ADRA Sudan and ADRA Syria representatives

and project managers, it was also a matter of going through the DAC themes and questions in the analytical framework, which is given in Annex D.

Fieldwork in Sudan and Syria

The field researchers and ADRA field staff talked with project staff at the locations and also held FGDs with beneficiaries – the aim was for two in each location – one for women and one for men. The checklist for these FGDs is given in Annex E.

When holding the FGDs with project beneficiaries, the field researchers identified individuals who clearly had something significant to say about the influence the project has had on their lives and livelihoods. A number of these ‘stories of change’ are presented in the report.

1.5 Limitations

One major limitation was that, as team leader, John Fox was not able to conduct fieldwork in Sudan and Syria because of Covid-related travel restrictions. Also, it was not able to find an independent researcher in Syria, so the FGDs with beneficiaries were conducted by ADRA Syria staff.

However, it should be noted that this was not intended as a thorough evaluation of the projects in Syria and Sudan, which would have also included an analysis of the DAC evaluation themes of Efficiency and Effectiveness. The focus was on the extent to which a nexus approach was taken, in order to inform the broader study of ADRA Denmark’s alignment with the current application of triple nexus programming and practice.

2. The Nexus: Origins and Interpretations

2.1 Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development

The need for linking humanitarian and development interventions has been recognised for decades. Its first prominent articulation was the EU's LRRD – linking relief, rehabilitation and development. The origin was back in the 1980s, when development practitioners and academics began to talk about the funding gap between humanitarian emergency assistance, rehabilitation efforts and development activities surrounding the food crisis in Africa.

So LRRD was a matter of linking short-term relief interventions with longer-term development programmes in order to create more sustainable solutions in crisis situations. As stated in a policy briefing to the European Parliament in July 2012¹, humanitarian assistance should be provided in 'ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development'. Vice versa, well-designed development cooperation programmes should reduce the need for emergency relief. Therefore, it was argued that LRRD development activities should include measures for conflict prevention, disaster risk reduction, disaster preparedness, and the development of early warning systems.

At first, LRRD was perceived as a linear continuum sequence: rehabilitation would follow relief activities, and would lead to development programmes. However, it came to be realised in the 1990s that treating relief, rehabilitation and development as separate and distinct processes, was an inadequate strategy, particularly in protracted or post-conflict situations. In such situations, the problems to be addressed are too complex and intertwined that it is difficult to tackle them separately and in turn. Consequently, the continuum approach has been gradually abandoned in favour of a contiguum approach – a simultaneous and complementary use of humanitarian and development interventions. To use images from electricity, LRRD is like a series circuit, where all components are connected end-to-end, forming a single path for current flow. What was needed was a parallel circuit, where all components are connected across each other.

2.2 The Nexus Concept

So, a contiguum approach is one where humanitarian relief and development aid work together, in the same context and simultaneously. The common term now for such an approach is 'nexus'. The origin of the term as applied to aid can be traced back to the World Humanitarian Summit held in May 2016². It was there that the UN's New Way of Working was introduced, and a central concept in the 'new way' is the 'triple nexus' – an interlinkage between humanitarian, development, and also peace actors, who are expected to work towards collective outcomes over multiple years.

¹ Linking relief, rehabilitation and development: Towards more effective aid, a policy briefing for the European Parliament, July 2012.

² World Economic Summit: Commitment to Action, 2 May 2016.

An OCHA report of April 2018³ claims that the notion of collective outcomes is central to the New Way of Working, in that it offers a way for humanitarian, development and other actors to ‘align efforts around clear and jointly shaped goals, helping to ensure collaboration in protracted crises is effective and delivers results for the most vulnerable’.

2.3 ADRA Denmark’s Nexus Approach

In the current global strategy document⁴ ADRA Denmark states that its focus ‘will have a strengthened emphasis on working within the humanitarian-development nexus, with the goal of strengthening the resilience of the communities with whom we work’. It argues that this will mean encouraging complementarity between approaches, in order to address the various challenges that occur within a protracted crisis. It will mean ensuring that there is a thorough analysis of the needs, opportunities and actors relevant in the local contexts. ‘Working in the nexus is not a linear process,’ the strategy paper states. There is a recognition that it ‘requires us to work with a high degree of flexibility, agility and effectiveness, quickly adapting from one situation to the other’.

Resilience is seen as ‘the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks, including familial, natural, economic, social and cultural shocks’. The concern is to support people’s capacity to cope better in the face of a crisis and to ‘bounce back’ when the crisis is over.

In order to enhance such resilience of people or communities living in poverty or affected by conflict, ADRA has four interconnected main objectives:

- Relieve human suffering during times of crisis and conflict, where the focus is on promoting protection strategies – promoting the right to safety and dignity and fostering safe environments;
- Promote equal rights and opportunities for women and girls, where a key strategy is improving their livelihood options towards economic empowerment;
- Improve the livelihoods of the poor and those affected by crisis, being done especially by promoting more productive farming approaches, climate smart agriculture and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs);
- Strengthen civil society to promote participatory and sustainable change, entailing supporting people, particularly in community-based groups, to understand the rights and enabling them to hold duty bearers accountable.

The rationale behind ADRA Denmark adopting a nexus approach is clear: to achieve the above four objectives entails promoting both humanitarian and restorative ‘bounce back’ and developmental and capacity building ‘bounce back better’ approaches, where the main collective outcomes are that people enjoy their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, have more choices about the way they live their lives and engage in livelihoods.

³ Collective Outcomes: Operationalizing the New Way of Working, OCHA, April 2018.

⁴ ADRA Denmark’s Global Strategy 2020-2024, February 2020.

However, in section 5.1 below, we suggest a more fundamental and comprehensive perspective on resilience, analysing the kind of contribution ADRA can make in achieving resilience within nexus programming.

There is a more detailed analysis of what ADRA Denmark understands by the nexus in its recent specific position paper on the approach.⁵ In it, there is a reference to the ‘Grand Bargain’, which is a commitment made by a number of the largest donors and humanitarian agencies to become more efficient and effective in the aid interventions they supported or implemented.⁶ In particular, it is a commitment to improve joint needs assessments by humanitarian actors and to increase collaborative multi-year planning and funding. Clearly, along with the UN’s ‘New Way of Working’, this has had a strong influence on aid agencies such as ADRA in their adoption of a nexus modality in the design and implementation of the projects they support.

ADRA Denmark’s position paper on the nexus approach reaffirms the overall objective to ‘relieve human suffering, build resilience and support the capacities of people living in conflict or poverty to be active agents in their own development’. The paper states that the strategic focus in coming years will be on ‘working within the nexus, and with the goal of strengthening the resilience of people in the communities with whom we work’.

The paper sets out three ways for operationalising the nexus:

Building resilience through designing collective outcomes for projects

These outcomes would be derived from the four main objectives presented in the global policy paper:

- Human suffering relieved in times of crisis and emergency;
- Equal rights and opportunities promoted for women and girls;
- Livelihoods improved for the poor and those affected by crisis;
- Civil society strengthened to promote participatory and sustainable change.

Adopting multi-year funding frameworks

Working within multi-year frameworks is seen as a key aspect of working successfully with a nexus approach – development and peace-building interventions need time. Fortunately, as stated in the paper, ADRA Denmark does currently have access to multi-year funding cycles with Danida – a factor enabling predictability, consistency and flexibility in programming.

Working through local partners

This is a matter of working primarily through the well-established international ADRA network of country partners – capitalising on their understanding of the local contexts and their ability to access remote and insecure areas. They have a continuing presence: ‘As they

⁵ ADRA Denmark’s Approach to Working in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, undated.

⁶ As part of the preparations for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing sought solutions to close the humanitarian financing gap. Their report made recommendations to shrink the needs, deepen and broaden the resource base for humanitarian action, and to improve delivery.

are in place before, during and after a crisis, they are the best placed to link humanitarian and development efforts’.

The following chapter analyses how far the nexus principles and strategies are realised in the design and delivery of the projects under review in Syria and Sudan. And then, in Chapter 5, after a review of the projects in Sudan and Syria, the ADRA Denmark nexus approach is analysed in terms of its comprehensiveness and, in particular, the extent to which it can, or should, engage in peace-building initiatives.

3. Syria Case Study

3.1 Situation Analysis

According to the latest Humanitarian Needs Overview by OCHA,⁷ ‘Syria remains one of the world’s most complex humanitarian emergencies characterized by ongoing hostilities which have killed hundreds of thousands of people, triggered one of the worst displacement crises of our time, and led to the widespread destruction of civilian and agricultural infrastructure, including homes, schools, health facilities, water supply and irrigation systems.’ The report notes that 13.4 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance – a 21% increase compared to 2020. It states that the decade-long crisis has inflicted immense suffering on the civilian population: massive and systematic violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, with more than 1,350 attacks on education, and medical facilities and bombardments that have caused over 12 million people to flee their homes. Almost 12,000 children have been killed or injured since 2011, and 47% of young people have had a member of their immediate family or close friend die.

The OCHA report also describes the ‘irreparable’ economic harm since the crisis began, with the gross domestic product having declined by 60% and the government increasingly unable to raise sufficient revenue to subsidize essential commodities such as fuel and bread. The Syrian pound is in ‘virtual freefall’, having lost 78% of its value since October 2019, while price increases for staple goods are at an all-time high. More than 90% of the population is estimated to live below the poverty line.

There are continued civilian casualties and forced displacements. There is extremely poor access to the degraded basic services. Much housing and basic service infrastructure – water, health and education facilities – has been destroyed.

Homs was chosen as the target area for the VCD project because it is government controlled and relatively stable. However, as the ToR state, despite the positive signals sent by a growing number of returnees, the situation there is also one of ‘grave humanitarian need’, with destroyed or damaged infrastructure, depleted services, and lost livelihoods. Water and sewerage networks were in disrepair at the start of the project, as well as homes, schools and health centres.

Many returnees were finding that not only their homes had gone but also the assets on which their livelihoods had depended: livestock, irrigation infrastructure, damaged shops and stolen stock. After six or seven years of displacement, many could not afford start-up costs.

Hence, the two-track strategy of the VCD project: the medium to long-term support to regenerating livelihoods for individual families, and the rehabilitation of public services infrastructure.

⁷ Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic, March 2021, OCHA, posted 6 May 2021.

3.2 The VCD Project

The project in brief

Title:	Vulnerable Communities Live With Dignity (VCD)
Overall objective:	Vulnerable communities in Homs employ positive coping strategies, are more self-reliant, and live with increased dignity
Change areas:	A: Economic self-reliance among vulnerable and productive households in Homs is strengthened B: Access to basic services, potentially including water, sewerage, education, health and electricity systems in areas damaged by conflict or facing increased pressure due to the influx of IDPs/returnees, is enhanced
Location:	Homs Governorate
Project period:	1 January, 2018 to 31 December, 2021 (Project document covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020)
Annual budget:	DKK.3,000,000
Donor:	Danida (Strategic Partnership Agreement)

Relevance

The extent to which the project is designed to improve the resilience of the target community, addressing a range of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs

From a design perspective, there can be no doubt about the relevance of the VCD project – and the link that is made between humanitarian and development components. The above situation analysis will have shown the extent of damage that needed repair in order to restore a range of basic services. And the stories told by beneficiaries in five FGDs held in urban and rural Homs show how relevant the grants have been in securing and developing their businesses.

‘I was displaced in 2012 and when I came back in 2017 our house badly needed rehabilitation,’ said Fatima, the owner of a small bookstore. ‘There was no electricity here in Al Bayada and no land phone network; the water and sewerage networks were in a bad condition and the shops were all closed.’ Hassan, the owner of a grocery shop in the Karm Alloz neighbourhood, said, ‘This is a poor neighbourhood that suffered a lot of bombing and destruction during the war years. But, despite this, it was better off than many of the neighbourhoods in Homs. That is why there are so many IDPs here now.’ Another member of Hassan’s group agreed: ‘So the population doubled; rents and food prices went up. In fact, the prices tripled. For example, a litre of oil went up from SP.2,000 to SP.10,000. It has been such a burden.’ ‘I had to take my children out of school,’ someone chipped in. ‘And even food – I had to borrow from people’.

FGDs were also held in rural Homs. This was said by Mayada, a sheep farmer participating in a group in Qadesh: ‘This is an agricultural area. The people here used to depend mainly on growing seasonal vegetables like potatoes and carrots that they used to sell in the city market. They had livestock, too. Things were good before. There was water and electricity. And there were schools. But the situation is very different now. The destruction of buildings also destroyed the livelihoods of the people. The land dried up and the livestock died. The

irrigation system stopped working, and so the plants died, too. There were no schools and no clinics. The city is seven kilometres away from this village, and there was no transport.'

Coherence

The extent to which the different components of the project are complementary, with regard to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding processes, and the extent to which there is coordination with other projects being implemented in the target areas

Internal coherence

In both the ADRA Denmark policy papers discussed in the previous chapter – the 'Global Strategy' and the 'Approach to Working in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus' – the link is made between having a resilience objective and using a nexus approach in order to achieve it. The argument is that to achieve the four collective outcomes identified in the global strategy – relief of human suffering; promotion of equal rights for women and girls; improvement of livelihoods; strengthening of civil society – a nexus approach is necessary. Well, the VCD's twin-track strategy certainly addresses three of these. It is designed to relieve human suffering through the rehabilitation of basic services infrastructure, and also to improve livelihoods through training in business skills and making income generation grants. And a significant proportion of the grants have been made to women – though the criteria for awarding the grants was that the recipients, whether women or men, should have experience of running a business. The impact of these grants on families is illustrated in the change stories that follow.

In as much as rehabilitation of infrastructure is a key objective of the project (a bounce back objective) and even the selection of grant beneficiaries could be said to be rehabilitative, in that households were targeted that had previously had businesses, the capacity building programme does move the project towards having a development objective (bounce back better objective). Moreover, with regard to ADRA Denmark's strategies for operationalising the nexus, as well as building resilience through working towards collective outcomes, the project has also benefited from multi-year funding, and its implementation is through the local partner, ADRA Syria.

With regard to peace-building, there is no reference to this in the project document. Any humanitarian or development agency working in a conflict-affected country needs to assess its 'elbow room' (how free or safe it is to engage in any activity that could be seen as political) before becoming involved in designing a peace-building component. Given the complexity of the protracted conflict in Syria, and the close oversight exerted by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and relevant ministries, key informants have, understandably, argued that there would be no elbow room at all for attempting a triple nexus approach in present circumstances.

External coherence

These days, a case is often made – especially when designing projects for displacement-affected communities – for coordinated interventions that are area-based and implemented by consortia of aid agencies, in order to address the wide range of needs. In the VCD case, ADRA Syria has operated alone in rehabilitating basic service-delivery structures and supporting the start-up of small businesses.

However, as stated in the ToR, the project is in line with the Syrian 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan⁸ developed by the UN, which sets out the framework within which the humanitarian community should respond to the large-scale humanitarian and protection needs in the country, on the basis of the prioritization undertaken across and within sectors.

This response plan is anchored by three interlinked ‘nexus’ objectives: saving lives and alleviating suffering, enhancing protection, and increasing resilience. To realise these objectives and to achieve positive outcomes for the affected people, the plan argues that concerted action is required. Also, ADRA has signed an MoU with SARC, which has the responsibility for coordinating all humanitarian work in Syria. And ADRA involves the target municipalities and also relevant line ministries – the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MoLAE), which is responsible for support to IDPs; the Ministry of Education (MoE); the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR).

Impact

The extent to which the project is making a difference to the lives and livelihoods of its direct beneficiaries and the wider community

What comes through the conversations in the FGDs is an appreciation of the grants the participants had received and the business training they had experienced. There were many stories of success. Taking up an account made by Fatima, who was one of the three beneficiaries mentioned above, she says: ‘The bookshop where my husband and I used to work was destroyed in the crisis. But we were able to reopen it because of the help ADRA gave us. Its location is convenient because it is close to the schools. Also, we managed to buy a small copying machine, and this has expanded our business’.

Then there was Hassan, who owns a grocery store in the Karm Alloz neighbourhood. ‘I am the breadwinner’, he said. ‘I have nine orphan siblings to look after. But we now have some income, so I can pay the school fees. All of them are still in school. I can also pay the rent, the electricity bill, the water and phone bill – and other bills too!’

The third person we have already been introduced to is Mayada. She is the farmer who received a grant for raising sheep. ‘After a short period,’ she said, ‘the business started providing food for my children and all the things they needed for their schooling. The first thing I bought was a beautiful nylon school bag for one of them, so she could put her books in it.’

The three longer ‘change stories’ included in this report – stories from Khadija, Bushra and Mohammed – show very graphically the impact the VCD project has had on the lives and livelihoods of the beneficiary families.

⁸ Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Response Plan January-December 2019.

Sustainability

The likely chances that the effects of the project will continue after the life of the project

There are three key factors that lead to sustainability in any project:

- Government support;
- Capacity building;
- Funding.

Of the first of these – government support – this, for any humanitarian or development project, could be said to be inevitable in Syria at this time because, as discussed above, every project is screened for approval by relevant government agencies. Also, in the case of VCD, rehabilitating facilities for delivering basic services and assisting small businesses to restart are not politically sensitive activities.

With regard to capacity building, assets should be included. And so the service delivery facilities rehabilitated by the project will last beyond the life of the project – a significantly long time if maintained properly.

And it is also significant that a selection criterion for the restart business grants was that recipients should have had experience of running businesses before the crisis brought them down. So, the business skills training can be seen as an enhancement.

As for funding, the damage done through the years of crisis in Syria, in Homs as elsewhere, was so extensive that financial support will be needed from ADRA or other humanitarian and development agencies for years beyond the end of the VCD project on 31 December 2021.

With regard to the views of the beneficiaries in the FGDs, there was a good deal of confidence expressed that their benefits would last. In the Al Bayada group, someone called Shahinaz said: ‘Four other people, as well as me, got grants to open small businesses in the same year – a grocery, a pastry shop, a clothes store, a dressmaker. All of us are still running’.

In the Karm Alloz group, one of the participants was Ahmed, a university graduate with a qualification in Commerce and Economics. ‘Things were so difficult and I needed any kind of work. So I learned about car repairs and I became a car mechanic. I received a set of tools and other equipment from ADRA. As I began to make a profit, I bought more tools in order to develop the business. Because of the grant, I was able to get married. I know I can provide for a family.’

There was a blacksmith called Amer in the Qadesh group. ‘My work needed electricity, and since it was not available, I bought a generator. This helped me carry on and I got a good number of customers. My business has expanded even beyond the Qadesh region. Now, I can meet all the expenses of my family. I have money to fuel my motorbike as well as the generator.’

In the Albayada group, Merry had a salon. 'After a year working from home, the clients increased, so I decided to rent a place', she said. 'I started to run training courses in cutting, dyeing, and so on. The project worked. I can now afford to pay the fees for my son to study at university. There have been difficulties, like having to pay all the bills even during the Covid period. But the salon is still doing well.'

Finally, in the Bab Alsebaa group, a woman who owns a toy shop emphasised that the grant was not the only benefit. For her, the training was very important, too. 'It broadened my horizons', she said. 'I learned how to attract customers. I learned about branding and how to expand a business. It is this kind of support that gives people hope who have lost their homes and have lost their incomes. A project like this can bring life back to a whole neighbourhood.'

All 26 of the participants in the FGDs had managed to sustain their businesses.

Khadija Dalati

Khadija is 46, but her struggles in life sometimes make her look much older. She has four children, one of whom is disabled. She is an extraordinary example of a woman who stood tall against all odds to continue to be a strong supporter of her family – a family that has endured a great deal of suffering.



'With the outbreak of the crisis in Homs, life became very hard for us. It became almost impossible to find work and to earn money. The first and the most tragic loss was my daughter getting wounded in an explosion. We were grateful she survived, but she lost her left eye, and her spleen was damaged. Then our house was destroyed by a missile, and it was completely burnt out. That, on top of our daughter's injury, made me utterly depressed. I lost all hope.

'After our house burnt down, we moved to the Midan neighbourhood in Homs City. It was during this time that my husband's health deteriorated, and he couldn't work anymore. Our expenses increased; we were in debt, and we became dependent on aid. Because of all this, I went looking for a job, and I found one in a kitchen that was doing food deliveries. Though I was able to make some income for my family, the money wasn't enough to meet all living expenses – especially the medical care my husband and my daughter needed. Then, we heard that ADRA was providing grants for small businesses. Encouraged a lot by my husband, I registered and was selected to participate. I attended a training course on small business management, and I prepared a business proposal to open a candy store. I chose a candy store project because my husband and his family have experience in this field, and they know merchants and sources. I was so excited when my project was accepted, and we were very enthusiastic to start our little business!

'The project has given me the much-needed support for my family. The income covers our expenses, especially the medical ones. And I was able to pay off most of my debts. I feel like a more competent parent now. I can meet all our daughter's medical needs. My children are now able to live their normal childhood lives. They no longer feel a burden on me or on anybody else. The Ramadan season is just around the corner, and I am looking forward to increased sales.'

Thank you, ADRA!

Bushra

Bushra, is a 35-year-old widow. She is a woman who has experienced all kinds of life's hardship at such a young age. But her story is one of resilience. She seized the opportunity that the ADRA project offered her.



'The grant from the project has helped me greatly. My children and I, we had no money. I felt helpless. But I now have a stable source of income. I am no longer looked at with pity. I have found my voice and I have recovered my strength.

'My husband died and left me with two young children – a one-year-old girl and a four-year-old boy. I left my house and went to my brother's at Allsmaalialia village. I had no job, and I had to rely on my brother who now had to support three families – his own, mine and our mother and sister. I felt ashamed to be such a heavy burden, and I prayed for a glimmer of hope.

'Until one day I heard about ADRA's small-business livelihood project. I was hopeful but I was also anxious. I might not be accepted and I might not get the grant. And even if accepted, I might not be able to handle the work. But I decided to try, because I had been trained in hairdressing before. Anyway, I was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

'When I eventually attended the small-business management training, I was so excited. I found that the training was broadening my horizons, and I knew just how to start. I handed in my work scheme and it was accepted. I prepared a room in the house to receive customers, and I received the hairstyling kit and got to work. I now had a decent source of income.

'Through this project, women are no longer helpless, vulnerable beings who have to depend on a man in order to live. As for me, I am an independent person, who is able to buy food for my children, look after them, and even to help my brother in the heavy burdens of life.'

Mohammed Farhan Alahmad

Mohammad is a 37-year-old married man with four children. He has a severed left foot. And he was displaced from Qamishli in Homs. He is a man determined not to be hindered by his disability. A beneficiary of the ADRA project, he opened a mobile phone and accessories shop, where he also provides phone maintenance, in Al-Bayada of Homs city.



‘I was a long-time resident of Qamishli, but when the crisis intensified and the area became insecure, my family and I were forced to flee to the city of Homs, where we had to live in a collective shelter. I had experience of mobile phone maintenance, but because of my disability, it was difficult to find a stable job.

‘After a while, I moved with my wife to the house of her elderly parents in the Al-Bayada neighbourhood. The house had been damaged and it had no doors or windows. Fortunately, not long after we moved in, ADRA rehabilitated the house. This was such a blessing, but the best was yet to come!

‘We heard that ADRA was planning to finance small businesses for people in need of a job and who already had experience. So, we registered and attended a project management training course for seven days. After that, my project for selling and maintaining mobile phones was accepted.

‘In 2018, I was excited to receive the grant! This small business has become an important milestone in my life – and my family's life. It is both a financial and a psychological milestone. It has given us hope for the future. With the money from my work, I was able to buy a prosthetic leg. I am also capable of providing for my family, securing their food, clothes, health care, and anything they might need. I will be always grateful for this opportunity. It has made me feel alive again.

‘Three years after starting my business, my customers increased, and I was able to expand my inventory. Right now, the situation is a bit difficult because of price and market fluctuations, but I am continuing with my project because I know the market well and I have been able to adapt. I am hoping to develop even more in the future. I hope this kind of support continues, because there are many who need the same opportunity, especially in the difficult economic situation the country is going through.’

4. Sudan Case Study

4.1 Situation Analysis

The latest OCHA report for Sudan⁹ sounds a note of optimism. It argues that 2021 is ‘a year of transformation’, because the transitional government that was formed back in September 2019, after months of protest, is pursuing ‘a new social contract with the people, prioritizing peace and economic reform’. But the report also recognises that these reforms will take time, and it warns that the situation could worsen in the short term, especially for the most vulnerable. The report states that, across the country, over 9 million of the 43 million population require humanitarian support. This is because of the fragile economy, and pockets of conflict, leaving so many people unable to meet their basic needs.

The years of conflict have impacted millions of people. 1.9 million are displaced. ‘They face protection risks and threats,’ the OCHA report says, ‘even as they attempt to rebuild their livelihoods or return to their homes. Disease outbreaks, malnutrition, food insecurity, and climatic shocks, continue to affect the lives and livelihoods of many Sudanese.’ Compounding this dire situation, Sudan has over a million refugees, who also need protection and basic services. The flare-up of fighting in Tigray has led to over 61,000 Ethiopian refugees fleeing across the border into Sudan.

As stated in the SCEED project document – one of the three projects in Sudan reviewed for this study – the food insecurity situation in Sudan has continued to worsen in recent years, with, at the time of designing the project, over 6 million people in need of food assistance, and over a quarter of the population under-nourished. And yet, with two-thirds of the people living in rural areas, Sudan’s economy is heavily dependent on agriculture. But the agricultural productivity across the country is low. The reasons are, as stated in the SCEED project document, the unstable climate, the recurring outbreaks of conflict in a number of areas (particularly in the two project locations, West Darfur and Central Darfur states), poor farming methods, and consequent major post-harvest losses.

4.2 The SCEED Project

The project in brief:

Title:	Strengthening Community Engagement and Empowerment in Darfur
Overall objective:	Increased resilience of conflict-affected to future shocks
Immediate objective:	Improved and sustainable livelihood opportunities for conflict-affected communities and enhanced community engagement in development and resilience
Location:	El Geneina and Kerenik in West Darfur State and Azoom locality in Central Darfur
Project period:	1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021
Annual budget:	DKK.-2,941,555
Donor:	Danida

⁹ <https://www.unocha.org/sudan>

Relevance

The extent to which the project is designed to improve the resilience of the target community, addressing a range of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs

West Darfur, where the SCEED project is being implemented, has been – and still is – particularly insecure. For almost two decades, conflicts between the many Arab and indigenous African groups have simmered and broken out again and again. The last serious outbreak was in April 2021, just after Abdelmoneim Bakheit had arrived to begin the fieldwork. He had to be evacuated, and the fieldwork was taken up again by Eng'r Yagoub Solimon, when the situation calmed down in May.

In its design, the project clearly adopts a Nexus approach. Commenting on the evolution of the project in Darfur since 2011, the project document notes a sequential LRRD approach: 'The project had transcended its relief focus, gradually shifting into early recovery and development'. However, the document goes on to argue that, at the time of its re-design in 2019, the case was strong for a contiguuum approach that meets both humanitarian and development needs: 'The dire and protracted needs in the area necessitated sustainable and community-based actions that align to strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus.'

Two 'change areas' were identified of the project:

Communities are capable of envisioning and participating in building their own future,
and
Financial resources are well managed for resilience building.

The theory of change for the first of these envisages, on the one hand, structures by which the target communities prioritise their own needs and, on the other hand, receive the required technical support. And the structure for identifying needs is the Community Action Plan (CAP). It brings together diverse local communities to negotiate and agree on a vital need for intervention. The technical support would come from ADRA staff, who have had many years' experience of establishing and guiding CAPs.

With regard to the second change area, the theory of change is that if the targeted farmers and agro-pastoralists gain knowledge on improved agricultural methods – through Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Farmer Market Schools (FMS) – and are provided with needed farming inputs, then their income will increase, especially if they become members of Village Savings and Loan Associations.

In relation to maintaining peace or promoting peaceful co-existence, the project document recognises that, apart from the persisting tensions caused by the racial divide between Arabs and Africans across the country, many local conflicts over the years, particularly in Darfur, have been disputes between the very many ethnic groups over land and other resources. Therefore, the designers of the project were concerned to ensure 'equitable and efficient division and utilization' of the resources brought by the project – through equal representation of different beneficiary tribal groups.

The question to be explored in the following sections is whether this two-pronged strategy has been enough to build the resilience of the beneficiaries.

Coherence

The extent to which the different components of the project are complementary, with regard to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding processes, and the extent to which there is coordination with other projects being implemented in the target areas

Internal coherence

The linkage between the different components of the project – the community action plans, farmer field and market schools, and the village savings and loan associations – has been made clear in the discussion above about the two change areas and the two theories of change – all designed to achieve resilience for the target communities. Of ADRA’s four key factors leading to resilience – relief of human suffering; promotion of equal rights for women and girls; improvement of livelihoods; strengthening of civil society – the emphasis in this project is on two of these. Three of the components focus on improving livelihoods, and there is a special concern to include women – especially in the VSLAs. Also, village exchange visits of farmer groups can reinforce peaceful co-existence.

External coherence

All agencies wanting to implement projects in Sudan have to get technical agreements signed off by the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), in order to get access to the project areas. In this way, there was coordination with the government. It, perhaps, also ensures the government that anything of a ‘political’ nature in a project’s components could be checked – in both senses of the term.

This, in itself, is a likely restriction on any direct and proactive peace-building interventions, unless they are of the kind that ADRA Sudan engaged in from 2016 to 2019, when it was one of the agencies involved in the UNDP-funded Community Peace and Stability Fund – tracking the causes of local disputes and conflicts in Darfur – cattle rustling, crop destruction, and the like.

Otherwise, the field work report notes the close coordination that the project has had with the line ministries, for example, the Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Energy Resources, Environment, the Humanitarian Aid Commission of Sudan (HAC) and, at a less close level, with the FAO. The report also cites the coordination between SCEED and another ADRA project being implemented in the area – BRIGHT (BReaking barriers, Improving Girls Education, Hope and Totality). Staff of the two projects hold weekly meetings to discuss common issues and build synergies. Also, the cluster meetings, bringing together UN agencies and INGOs implementing projects in West Darfur, are potential structures for identifying collective outcomes in resilience interventions.

Impact

The extent to which the project is making a difference to the lives and livelihoods of its direct beneficiaries and the wider community

The project staff, in the discussions held as part of the evaluation, expressed a confidence that SCEED has made a significant difference to the lives of the beneficiaries. They pointed to the strong social bond that has been created through participation in the VSLAs – through engaging in ‘collective thinking’ and making ‘agreed decisions’. They, particularly, noted the increased confidence of women participants who have become more confident in ‘speaking out for themselves’ and having their views about public issues respected. Some women have also, for the first time, taken responsibility for managing the family budget.

A similar communal spirit was seen in the manner in which farmers participated in the farmer field and market schools – in the sharing of ideas and equipment and in creating marketing networks. And, following the *nafeer* practice, many of the farmers volunteered to help others, free of charge, in weeding and harvesting crops. This volunteering spirit was also seen in providing labour for any construction works related to CAPs – such as the paved roads, water facilities and health centres.

Another indicator of positive impact is the way neighbouring villages not targeted by the project are asking to be involved.

However, the most important views about impact are those of the project’s beneficiaries. For the women’s group in Dorty Village where an FGD was held – in an area that had experienced serious food insecurity over recent times – the most important impact has been the change in farming practices that have increased productivity. They were appreciative, of course, that this increased productivity has meant increased family income, as well as more self-produced food on the table.

Another FGD was held with men in Bajbaj Village. They, too, put emphasis on the way in which their traditional agricultural methods had become more ‘modern’ – and agriculture is the main source of income for most of the community. They were very appreciative, too, about the way ADRA has helped the community with improved basic services – the water pump, improvements to the health centre and the primary school. On a less basic level, the villagers are working on solar energy for lighting their homes. And a literacy centre has been established through a CAP activity.

There was an interview with the State’s Director General of the Ministry of Production and Economic Resources, Ibitsam Omar Al-Doma. He, too, saw the most important impact of the project as the increased productivity on the farms. ‘It has addressed the food shortages,’ he said. ‘It has lifted the economic status of the people – by creating a more profitable agricultural value chain. The people are more reliant and more independent.’

The following two change stories illustrate the kind of impact such a project can have on the lives and livelihoods of those who have been engaged by it.

Munira Sharif Abdel Karim

Munira lives in Dorty Village. She is 41, and she has a large family of ten. And she is a participant in a VSLA.



‘Before this project, we used to hear about a traditional savings groups for women. Money was collected from the participants and then distributed on each week or month to the members on a rotation basis.

‘The VSLAs are different. The members contribute weekly, but the fund cycle is a full year. There is a written constitution. Also, there is training for the members. There is an investment fund and also a social aid fund – for emergency cases such as when there is sickness in a family, a birth or a death.

‘My own experience with the VSLA is that I took a loan two months before the month of Ramadan this year. I used it for buying clothes that had been brought from Khartoum markets at reasonable prices. I sold them here in the village during Eid al-Fitr. I made twice what I had paid for them. So, I could pay back the loan and I invested my profit in buying a hundred small bags of charcoal and some other forest products from the big market of Morni Village. I then sold these products here in the Dorty Market. Again, I was able to sell at a good profit.

‘So I am now a village merchant! I advise women to set up VSLAs by themselves. They don’t need to wait for help. The approach is easy to understand. Here, in this village, the VSLA has changed our lives.’

Adam Khalifa Shugar

Adam is a volunteer teacher in Bajaj Village. He is 39, married, and with two daughters.



‘I am a member of the health, water and education committees in the village. I also joined the VSLA set up by ADRA.

‘After contributing my shares, I borrowed a loan from the fund, and I used it in a project to manufacture red bricks in the village. After processing, I sold the bricks – with a return three times the money borrowed. I returned the loan to the fund and used the profit for buying bulls and calves for fattening and selling in the market. ‘I have found this work very profitable. Fattening bulls and calves has become a new profession for me!

I thank God.’

Sustainability

The likely chances that the effects of the project will continue after the life of the project

When asked about sustainability, the ADRA staff focused particularly on the CAPs in increasing the self-reliance of the beneficiaries. They also mentioned the lasting effects of the training, whether for the farmers, the members of the VSLAs, or village leaders. The third reason for confidence was the good relationship established with the state and local authorities.

One of those authorities, the Director General of the State's Ministry of Production and Economic Resources, commented that he thought the farmers would keep using the improved seed varieties and carry on with more diverse crops. He said that these new practices would be carried on because the benefits are so obvious.

4.3 The TMP Project

The project in brief:

Title:	Tamkeen Al Muzarein (To mitigate the effect of El Niño for the host and IDP population in White Nile State)
Overall objective:	To strengthen the resilience of vulnerable people - including host communities, returnees, and refugees - and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks in White Nile State
Immediate objective:	1.1 Improved access to and availability of water for human agriculture and livestock use and consumption 1.2 Increased crop production and income opportunities related to drought resilient agriculture and sustainable IGAs
Location:	Al Salam and Al Jebelain communities
Project period:	Initially, a three-year project, started 1 August 2017 and to end 31 July 2020 – then granted a one-year extension
Annual budget:	Euro 4,053,367
Donor:	EU/Danida

Project Actions

The components of the project are similar to those of SCEED in West Darfur – with Farmer Field Schools (FFS), Farmer Market Schools (FMS) and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA). But the project has also been implementing a Clean Water Distribution System (CWDS) and, to improve agricultural practices, there have been Value Chain Forums (VCF) and Women's Goat Groups (WGG).

5,000 farmers were to be trained in both the FFSs and FMSs; 40 WGGs were to be established; three VCFs were to be held. Three CWDS was to be implemented in a village in Al Jebelain, Al Salam and Migenis villages. According to the fieldwork report for this study, the VSLAs and the WGGs have been implemented by a local partner, Friends of Peace and Development Organisation (FPDO), and all the other components have been implemented

by ADRA Sudan, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Extension Department provided technical support for facilitating training, especially with regard to the FFS and FMS.

Relevance

The extent to which the project is designed to improve the resilience of the target community, addressing a range of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs

An interim narrative report submitted in 2020 noted that there had been a ‘severe’ depreciation of the Sudanese pound. The result was ‘skyrocketing’ inflation.

This had meant food prices went up – badly affecting the people in the targeted host community villages and IDP camps. Also, Covid-19 had reached the area, and the shutdown and restrictions had had a serious impact on people’s livelihoods.

FGDs were held with women and men from Said Mahdi Village. The main occupation in the area is farming, and the women are farmers, alongside men. This is subsistence agriculture, from which the families can, even in the best of times, barely satisfy their basic food requirements – and they had suffered over recent years by the alternating periods of floods and droughts. So they saw the project’s focus on improving agricultural practices as needed. The women also saw how the VSLAs were designed to help them boost their family incomes. And both groups saw access to clean water as vital for the health of their families. Also, it has been reported that young girls are now protected and can go to school instead of walking risky long distances to fetch water.

Coherence

The extent to which the different components of the project are complementary, with regard to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding processes, and the extent to which there is coordination with other projects being implemented in the target areas

As was the case for the SCEED project, the internal coherence is clear: the complementarity between those components designed to improve farming practices and to support alternative income-earning possibilities made possible by the VSLAs and FMS. The same factors also make for external coherence: registering with the HAC and coordinating closely with the state authorities.

The Deputy Director General of the State’s Ministry of Production and Economic Resources (MoPER), Mrs. Summia Abu Elgasim, was interviewed. She said, ‘I am well acquainted with the TMP project and its objectives, as our ministry is the main partner and has played a basic role in the implementation of its action plan.’ She also referred to the technical agreement signed with the HAC, which ‘strictly monitors’ the project.

Abdelmoneim, the field researcher, also interviewed Eng’r Mohamed Yahya Mohammed Imam, the manager of the Projects and Research Department of the Drinking Water Corporation. He commented that ADRA is ‘delivering projects that complement the government’s role of enhancing the socio-economic development of the rural communities’.

Impact

The extent to which the project is making a difference to the lives and livelihoods of its direct beneficiaries and the wider community

When interviewed, the project staff expressed a confidence that the project has made a significant difference to the lives of the target beneficiaries in Al Jebelain and Al Salam. They claimed that farmers have increased their income from the greater variety of crops grown, and they have had a better interaction with the markets. And they feel that these farmers will be better able to withstand the kinds of environmental shock that the area has suffered in previous years.

They see that the farmers have made a shift to more modern and more efficient farming practices, and they appreciate the greater empowerment of women, who have become more financially independent.

In fact, an FGD was held with some of the beneficiaries. All the members agreed that the project has led to an improvement in their incomes. 'It has changed our way of doing things,' one of the participants said. They also talked of the way the project has encouraged people to take collective actions.

There was also a men's FGD in the Said Mahdi Village. The participants were of the same mind as the members of the women's group – especially valuing the transformation of agricultural practices. In particular, they singled out the encouragement to use the wheat seed variety, Bohain, that 'made a productivity boom' – producing 10 sacks of grain rather than the two to four sacks they had harvested previously. There had been a change of mindset, too, because it had been thought that the southern part of the White Nile State was not suitable for growing wheat.

The transformation of farming practices is something emphasised in the following story:

Mekka Ibrahim Adulla

Mekka lives in Said Mehdi Village. She has three children, all below school age.



‘Before this project came, I was assisting my husband in using traditional methods of farming. We produced just enough for our family food needs. But the project has made us know about modern practices. We have been trained and now we use modern methods, with improved seeds and other practices.

‘We have started growing new crops such as peanuts. We have had good crop yields with them. We have also learned things from the value chain discussions and have had better returns from what we have produced. I started to process peanut paste – locally, it is called *dakwa*. We sell it the village. It is used in many fresh or cooked foods, and it is well liked by many families – especially because it can make quick meals.

‘One kilogram of peanut paste can fetch 800 SDG. This is a good amount. I and my husband have continued growing peanuts, and I have become a well-known processor and distributor of it. My new profession has been a great help in supporting our family. If there are any surpluses, we invest it in our farming business.

‘We gave thanks to almighty Allah and to ADRA Sudan.’

A second story, from a men’s FGD, was also recorded in Said Mehdi Village:

Alballa Aldawaha Mohammed

Alballa is a farmer from Said Mehdi. He has three wives. His children have grown up and are pursuing independent lives with their own families.



‘Basically, I am a traditional farmer. My livelihood has been rearing and fattening sheep. But trading in animals has become unattractive because of two main reasons. First, I have grown old and I can’t afford the labour I would need for managing the herd. Second, there is little grazing land in this area, and the cost of animal feeds is very high.

‘When ADRA brought this project to our village, I participated in the VSLA. It suited me, because of my age. After contributing my share in the fund, I took a loan of 15,000 SDG. I used it in buying wood used for the roofing of houses. I sold it in the village.

‘There is a good demand for these products. Before, people had to travel to Kosti, the state capital, to buy what they needed. I found this a profitable activity. I made 8000 SDG the first time I did it, and so I decided to expand. I opened a wood shop in the village. My personal income has grown by 50%. I gave up sheep trading. I have become more capable of supporting my three wives and meeting their household requirements. Thanks to almighty Allah and, of-course, to ADRA Sudan.’

Sustainability

The likely chances that the effects of the project will continue after the life of the project

The TMP staff expressed a confidence that most of the project's interventions would have a lasting effect. The only exception they noted is the Women's Goat Groups. This, they said, is because the participating women did not like the revolving nature of the scheme. They preferred to have full ownership rather than share the goats' young with other participants.

From a government perspective, the Deputy Director General of the State's MoPER, said that she thought the beneficiary farmers would be very keen to continue applying what they had learnt from the project's various interventions. And the members of both the women's and the men's FGDs had no doubt that they would be not only willing but also able to carry on with the more modern farming methods, and those from the VSLAs said they would continue with the meetings.

4.4 The CEIRC Project

The project in brief:

Title:	Countering the Economic Impact of Covid-19 in Refugee Camps in White Nile State
Principal objective:	To contribute to reduced food insecurity among vulnerable refugees and host community households through provision of life-saving cash assistance in camps in White Nile State.
Specific objective:	To target 3,000 South Sudanese Refugees (SSR) and host community households (15,000 individuals) in three of the most vulnerable refugee camps in White Nile, with five cycles of unconditional cash assistance, which will help them meet their basic emergency needs – integrating awareness raising on nutrition, particularly for pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and children under five years.
Location:	The refugee camps of Khor Alwarel, Al-Kashafa and Al-Jamiya.
Project period:	Eight months, from 1 September 2020 to 30 April 2021
Budget:	Euro 1,456,994
Donor:	ECHO

Relevance

The extent to which the project is designed to improve the resilience of the target community, addressing a range of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs

CEIRC is clearly a humanitarian project: short, needed – counteracting an emergency situation in the three refugee camps, particularly in the light of the Covid-19 threat.

As described in ADRA's request document to ECHO in August 2020, Sudan's economic crisis, caused by accelerating inflation and compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, was having severe consequences for those in White Nile's refugee camps, as well as for their host communities.

At that time, 169,323 South Sudanese refugees were living in camps in White Nile; about 76% of the households were female headed; 60% of the targeted population were children under 18 years. Because of the limited livelihood opportunities and low incomes – a situation made worse by restrictions of movement due to the pandemic – food security was a dire problem for most of the households. Whatever employment opportunities in the informal sector had existed before the outbreak of Covid-19 had mainly collapsed. Also, the risk of infection was high in the camps, as the living spaces were mainly cramped, there was little or no access to water, and there was limited access to latrines. So, refugees were heavily dependent on aid, because the previous government had imposed restrictions on their access to jobs.

According to a World Food Programme (WFP) security monitoring report of January 2019, the purchasing power of the refugees in the camps was already very weak: only 10% were found to be able to afford the indicated minimum food basket. Since then, the high inflation rates, the deteriorating value of the Sudanese pound, and the hikes in prices, had made the situation so much worse.

ADRA's own rapid market assessment made in June 2019 for the three targeted camps, found that 90% of the respondents indicated that their priority need was food – and 87% reported that they were unable to afford the minimum food basket.

The relevance of the CEIRC project is clear. The response to the request needed to be quick – the implementation started little over a month following the request was assessed. The implementation strategy needed to be simple – the unconditional cash transfer to the neediest families was seen to be not only simple but also effective.

Coherence

The extent to which the different components of the project are complementary, with regard to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding processes, and the extent to which there is coordination with other projects being implemented in the target areas

With regard to internal coherence, the three implementation strategies – cash transfers, nutrition awareness and advice on protection against Covid-19 – are not spread across a humanitarian and development nexus as seen in the three other case study projects, but they are certainly complementary.

As for external coherence, there is a synergy with ADRA Sudan's TMP project, which focuses, in the same area and in a longer-term way, on improving the much needed access to water and on increasing income generation activities for out of camp populations. In a project funded by WFP, ADRA Sudan is providing fuel efficient stoves to the communities' vulnerable households. The local partner, FPDO, is also working on other livelihood and protection projects in the camps.

In designing the project, ADRA benefitted from needs assessments carried out by other humanitarian agencies such as WFP, and it keeps closely in touch with UNHCR for data on refugee arrivals and their specific needs. Finally, ADRA Sudan is an active member of the UN

clusters, such as the Food Security, Agriculture Cluster, Nutrition Cluster and the national Cash and Voucher Working Group.

Impact

The extent to which the project is making a difference to the lives and livelihoods of its direct beneficiaries and the wider community

As with the other two case study projects in Sudan, the field researcher conducted two FGDs – one with women and the other with men beneficiaries. The general view, as expressed in both FGDs, was that participants certainly appreciated the cash assistance that helped them through a particularly difficult time. But they also talked about their continuing need to secure livelihoods that would give them sustainable incomes and an independent lifestyle.

The following two brief stories were collected from members of the FGDs. They actually show that, though, in the main, CEIRC was designed as a short-term relief project, it could also lead to some beneficiaries engaging in small trading businesses.

Merry Maya

A South Sudan refugee.



‘I am a citizen of South Sudan, and I fled to Sudan. My husband died in the civil war. After peace agreements between the fighting military groups in South Sudan, I moved my family to neighbouring towns but we still felt the need to find places where we could feel safe and secure – with enough supply of food and, if possible, a livelihood.

‘So we fled across the border to Sudan, and we have been placed here in Al Jamiya camp. We got assistance from UN agencies like WFP and also from charity organizations we contacted through UNHCR. Our needs are only barely met.

‘I am looking after the children of my daughter and son, who also died in the war. I am the only one responsible for them. There are seven of us – me and the children.

‘This project, with its cash assistance, has inspired me to think about setting up some kind of trade, to help me look after myself and these children. I have started buying vegetables and peanut paste. I put them in packs and sell them to households in the camp. I need to do this in order to buy the food we need – and the clothes and the medicines.’

Roman Akol

Another refugee from South Sudan.



'I am from Malakal, which borders White Nile. I came here to escape the war in South Sudan. Although there was the peace agreement there, I still felt vulnerable. And, with no employment, I was struggling to get food.

'When we arrived we were put in the Al Jamiya camp, getting help from UNHCR and other aid organizations. After we settled in the camp, we used to get work outside in farms, harvesting sugar cane and field crops like sorghum. We would spend some months outside the camp, working on the larger farms after they got permission from the camp authority.

'When we got to know about the ADRA project and its cash assistance, we welcomed the idea, as it was a good opportunity compared with the outside work. We could get food for our families. It was also life-saving. We learnt about the death risk of the Covid disease, if we were going outside for work, where we could be in direct contact with infected persons.

'I was able to make some savings from the money I received. I bought a manual cart, called here a *dardaga*. It's the kind of cart used for moving luggage and materials from one place to another. I used it inside the camp and in the nearby markets. It cost me 1,500 pounds and I could earn something between 800 to 1,000 pounds a week.

'I can now look after the household necessities. I can even pay schools fees for my children.'

Sustainability

The likely chances that the effects of the project will continue after the life of the project

Sustainability is not a priority concern in a short humanitarian intervention such as this. The job was done – the distribution of the cash allowances to help the beneficiaries ride out a difficult time. Maybe, the advice given about nutritious food will have a lasting effect. This was the view of Mahdi Babikir Awad Elkarim, the Manager at the Almashrig Bank that dispensed the money for the local vendors to distribute: 'I think the beneficiaries will have now got a new attitude about health. It should stand them in good stead in the future.' Also, as said above, the project has stimulated some beneficiaries to begin small trading enterprises.

5. Conclusions

This chapter addresses the two objectives for the study given in the ToR:

- To capture outcome level results of ADRA Denmark's approach to working within the nexus in Syria and Sudan, with a particular focus on the contribution to improved resilience and improved livelihood strategies;
- To stimulate learning based on recommendations from evidence of achieved results to improve the quality of the ADRA Denmark's approaches and programming when working within the triple nexus.

5.1 ADRA and the Double Nexus

The projects

Clearly, in both Syria and Sudan, ADRA is working across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. This is the case with three of the four projects reviewed. The exception is the CEIRC project in Sudan's White Nile State – a short and needed relief intervention, involving cash assistance for vulnerable IDPs, so that they could buy food when their chances of finding paying work was restricted because of the Covid pandemic.

The most fundamental distinction between restorative humanitarian and capacity building development components can be seen in the VCD project in Homs Governorate of Syria: between the 'building back' some basic services, especially water systems, and the 'building back better' business skills training for those beneficiaries about to restart their businesses.

Otherwise, the SCEED project in West Darfur and the TMP project in White Nile State of Sudan both deployed a double nexus strategy that is well-trying by ADRA in a number of countries: a combination of training in more modern methods of agriculture, rehabilitating water systems, and promoting income generation through VSLAs.

Developing resilience

As stated in its Global Strategy, ADRA works to achieve resilience outcomes among people living in poverty or affected by conflict and crisis. All four of the reviewed projects are implemented in regions of conflict and crisis. And, in relation to the four focus areas for achieving resilience indicated in the strategy paper, all the projects are relieving human suffering and three of them are focusing on improving livelihoods. As in all ADRA's work, there is an emphasis in all the projects on including women in the activities, especially in order to improve their income generating prospects. Although none of the four projects directly campaign for equal rights for women, as indicated in the case studies and especially with regard to the VSLAs, the women's participation has given them a greater sense of independence and has earned the respect of men. It should also be noted that CAPs require women representatives, and communities are coming to terms with accepting women as part of the decision-making process of the community initiatives.

With regard to strengthening civil society, none of these projects focus on building the capacity of formal civil society organisations. However, there is evidence that the

establishment of groups for the CAP initiatives and the VSLAs has demonstrated the value – and the potential – of such community-based organisations.

From another, a more comprehensive and triple nexus perspective, the achievement of resilience for an individual, a family or a community, and the basis for defining collective outcomes, would depend on addressing the following five factors:

1. Safety – being free from conflict and natural shocks;
2. Shelter – having a place to live;
3. Food security – having enough to eat;
4. Basic services – having access to education, health, water and sanitation services;
5. Livelihood – having employment or a business that can help secure all of the first four.

The four ADRA projects do contribute to all five of these factors. However, any aid programme seeking to ensure the attainment of a more comprehensive resilience would need to have resources beyond what ADRA has – beyond what any individual international NGO has. And it is this recognition that led to Nexus thinking.

Early in 2021, OECD published its DAC Recommendation on Nexus approaches.¹⁰ It argues that at the centre of strengthening the coherence between humanitarian, development and peace efforts, is the aim of effectively reducing people’s needs, risks and vulnerabilities, supporting prevention efforts and, thus shifting from delivering humanitarian assistance to ending need – and so reducing the ‘humanitarian caseload’.

‘This requires the engagement of a diverse range of actors,’ the OECD paper argues, ‘based on their respective comparative advantage, a shared understanding of risk and vulnerability, and an approach that prioritises prevention always, development wherever possible, humanitarian action when necessary.’

This is an approach that has been taken especially in projects that seek a durable solution for displacement-affected communities – area-based and implemented by a number of agencies. iDC has evaluated two such projects in Somalia as part of the EU-funded RE-INTEG programme. Both involved a consortium comprising four international NGOs and one local NGO. Both had envisaged similar collective outcomes: displacement-affected communities able to influence policies impinging on them, improved access to basic services, personal safety, improved access to adequate livelihoods through gainful employment.

As stated in a ‘Lessons Learnt’ publication of ReDSS (Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat), ‘Working as a consortium enables agencies to deliver comprehensive, multi-sectoral responses to displacement, and implement area-based approaches in displacement affected communities.’¹¹ However, it was found in the evaluations that there can also be a number of disadvantages: a lack of coherence in management, staff with split loyalties, and opportunities lost for strategic adjustments in implementation – unless investment is made

¹⁰ OECD, DAC Recommendations on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019, 2021.

¹¹ Lessons Learned from the EU RE-INTEG Durable Solutions Consortia, (2017- 2020), ReDSS, 2020.

in establishing a project management unit with the requisite range of project planning, management, M&E and communication expertise.

ADRA could make a valuable contribution to such consortia implementing multi-sectoral interventions addressing the full range of resilience factors. But, it is assumed, this would be a difficult choice. ADRA has had long experience of working mainly with its own ADRA country offices in fragile and conflict-affected countries; its work in these countries is founded on a clear set of values; it has forged close and effective relationships with beneficiary communities and local government agencies. There is a risk that some of these strengths could be diminished in a consortium modality. And the visibility that comes from leading an assistance initiative would be dimmed. As one head of a UN agency said in a workshop with UN colleagues, when asked about the Nexus approach: ‘We all believe in coordination, don’t we? But none of us want to be coordinated, do we?’

However, from the interviews conducted with ADRA staff, in Denmark, Sudan and Syria, there is an awareness of the merits of a consortium approach in resilience projects. For example, though ADRA is strong in the agricultural sector – as demonstrated by this review – a fully developed livelihood programme would entail support to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes across a wide range of vocational training, including, for example, construction, engineering, IT and the hospitality industry. Even in the agriculture sector, there is a growing recognition of the need to focus more on rural and peri-urban food-processing industries.¹² With regard to basic services, ADRA has experience in water and sanitation, and also in primary education, but it lacks strong experience in health.

In relation to security – perhaps the most urgent of the five resilience factors – the UN, where the Triple Nexus approach originated, has the kind of mandate for engaging in peace-building, with its agencies working to prevent conflict, helping warring parties to make peace, deploying its peacekeepers, and creating conditions for maintaining peace. No NGO has such a mandate. But how ADRA does, or could, get involved in peace-building is the theme of the following section.

5.2 ADRA and the Triple Nexus

The case for the triple-nexus is unchallengeable. According to the latest figures published by UNHCR (18 June 2021), at least 82.4 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes (1 in every 95 people on earth). Among them are nearly 26.4 million refugees, around half of whom are under the age of 18. There are also millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and lack access to basic rights such as education, health care, employment and freedom of movement.¹³ With regard to the two case-study countries, UNHCR reports that there are 6.7 million people displaced in Syria (more than the population of Denmark!); IDMC reports that there were 2.3 million people displaced in Sudan at the end of 2020.¹⁴

¹² The Durable Solutions Initiative in Somalia, Evaluation Report, John Fox and Mohamed A Mohamud, iDC/SDC, October 2020.

¹³ <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance>.

¹⁴ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/sudan>.

In one of its Discussion Papers, Oxfam has explored the role of what it calls 'multi-mandated organizations' in triple nexus interventions.¹⁵ The paper begins by noting that conflicts are increasingly protracted and climate-related shocks are more intense and frequent – and both of these contribute to vulnerability. 'Sustainable development and durable solutions to displacement are not possible without peace,' it argues. 'Humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding are not serial processes: they are all needed at the same time.'

There is a need for a more coherent approach, the Oxfam paper goes on. It argues that meeting immediate needs at the same time as ensuring longer-term investment addressing the systematic causes of conflict and vulnerability – such as poverty, inequality and the lack of functioning accountability systems – has a better chance of reducing the impact of cyclical or recurrent shocks and stresses, and supporting the peace that is essential for development to be sustainable.

The paper argues, 'In order to develop a nexus approach, colleagues must be brought together... the nexus cannot "belong" to any one discipline – an ongoing conversation on the basis of complementarity and equality is essential'. From the ADRA staff interviews conducted for this evaluation, it is clear that there would be general agreement about this Oxfam conclusion – as far as the double nexus is concerned.

There was less consensus in the staff interviews – and less clarity in the ADRA Denmark's paper on approaches to working with the nexus – about involvement in the peace element of the nexus. First, there are different interpretations about what a peace intervention means. On the one hand, it could be a matter of avoiding conflict, being conflict-sensitive, upholding 'do-no-harm' principles and processes. All humanitarian and development agencies subscribe to this. On the other hand, it could mean being involved in conflict resolution work – and those staff members interviewed were quite wary about this.

The Oxfam paper states that including peace in the nexus 'acknowledges the importance of conflict resolution and prevention in ending humanitarian need, reducing poverty and ensuring sustainable development'. It also recognizes that a right balance has to be struck between having a good relationship with governments and upholding an obligation to address violations of human rights. For NGOs, here is the rub. Engaging in peace-building is a risky business. Each NGO wanting to be engaged in triple nexus programming has to work out what 'elbow room' it has in every country it is working in. For ADRA, a Christian organisation, when working in a Muslim country such as Syria or Sudan, there is no elbow room at all to be involved in any peacebuilding activity that is critical of authorities, whether at a national or a local level.

In ADRA Denmark's paper on approaches to the triple nexus, the only explicit reference to what it calls 'the peace element' in the triple nexus, apart from upholding the principle of do-no-harm and being conflict sensitive in project design, is that it should be 'centred around social cohesion and conflict sensitivity at community level'.

¹⁵ The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: what does it mean for multi-mandated organizations, Oxfam, June 2019.

This is in line with what we found when reviewing how other international NGOs have addressed ‘the peace element’. For many of them, counterpointing the concern that involvement in conflict resolution activities could politicise their humanitarian and development work is the worry about the consequence of offending authorities. And, in the main, they, like ADRA Denmark, maintain that improving services and supporting livelihoods will strengthen social cohesion – and they focus on conflict only at the community level.

For example, Caritas in Ghouta in Syria, in partnership with a local Muslim organisation, Hifz al Neema, has been distributing food and non-food items. According to David Berocchi, the Caritas Adviser on Interfaith Partnerships, this initiative has given ‘a powerful message of hope for the future of this country’ by playing a role in peacebuilding between communities while delivering humanitarian aid.¹⁶

In South Sudan, DanChurchAid has been implementing the ‘Generating Sustainable Livelihoods and Leadership for Peace’ project in South Sudan. As well as supporting food security and livelihood activities, the project aims to address root causes of conflict at the community level by reinforcing local mechanisms for conflict management.¹⁷

In Yemen, Mercy Corps has used humanitarian aid to help in resolving local and protracted tribal conflicts and bringing villages together in the Haymah Dakhliyah District. Unarmed villagers have distributed humanitarian aid ‘across lines of division’, with the objective of building trust and reducing outbreaks of violence.¹⁸

iDC has evaluated a project of the Life and Peace Institute being implemented in Somalia in collaboration with the Somali ZamZam Foundation. Its objective was ‘To contribute to a stable foundation for the peace and state-building process, through community-based reconciliation processes that restore trust between communities and address root causes of conflict and longstanding grievances’. The project successfully established cross-clan and inter-community peacebuilding platforms for working on community-led reconciliation efforts. The focus was on resolution of issues such as cattle rustling and access to water sources and grazing land. There was no way that the Life and Peace Institute could have engaged in the long-lasting conflict across the country between Somali Government forces with the AU support forces and the Islamic militant group, al Shabab. Similarly, none of the projects noted above could have engaged in conflicts in Syria, South Sudan or Yemen between the governments and rebel groups.

A number of the ADRA Denmark staff interviewed for this study expressed the view that it should not be involved at all in conflict resolution interventions. Given that ADRA does not have the mandate for any direct peace-building engagement of a political nature in any

¹⁶Caritas Internationalis, Interfaith Partnership Helps Displaced Families in Syria, November 20, 2018, <https://www.caritas.org/2018/11/interfaith-partnership-helps-families-syria>.

¹⁷ DanChurchAid, Using a Nexus Lens to Evaluate Sustainable Livelihoods and Leadership for Peace in South Sudan, 2018, internal document.

¹⁸ Rebecca J. Wolfe and Dominic Graham, Before, During, After: Sustaining Peace in the Face of Armed Conflict in West Asia and North Africa (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2017), http://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/WANA_report.pdf

country where it works; given the risks involved in such engagement; given its commitment to non-confrontational advocacy, it makes good sense that it should steer clear of such conflict resolution activities.

However, ADRA has been working in countries such as Sudan and Syria for decades. It is respected for the quality of its humanitarian and development work; it has a good relationship with the local authorities where it is implementing projects; it has earned the trust of the beneficiary communities. And so, there is one way ADRA could be significantly involved in conflict resolution. If tensions arise between beneficiary communities (between IDPs and their host community, say, or between farmers and pastoralists) then ADRA could be an ‘honest broker’ in facilitating dialogue between those communities in dispute. This, we suggest, is the only way that an NGO such as ADRA should be directly involved in the peace element of the triple nexus, especially when the conflicts are of a political nature.

As moderators in such dialogue sessions, it would be important that the ADRA staff do not take sides with either party to the dispute. Their role would be to arrange the occasion, bring the parties together and, from a neutral perspective, facilitate a discussion which explores possibilities of a resolution of the problems that had led to friction or conflict.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Recognising the case for an area-based and multi-sector strategy, implemented by various humanitarian and development agencies with different areas of specialism, where the objective is to build the resilience of poor, displaced or conflict-affected communities, ADRA Denmark should support the engagement of country ADRA partners when it is seen that they could make an important contribution to a consortium of implementing partners.
2. Consideration should be given to joining a consortium and making a contribution related to its own areas of expertise, even when there is a conflict-resolution component in the project’s strategy, especially if the consortium is supported by the UN or the EU operating with a mandate agreed with the relevant government agencies – as ADRA Sudan has done in the Darfur Peace and Stability Fund led by UNDP.
3. Apart from possible inclusion in such consortia implemented projects, the ADRA country partners, rather than designing direct conflict resolution components of their resilience projects, should be prepared to take the ‘honest broker’ role if tensions develop between beneficiary groups.
4. It is hoped that this study will assist ADRA Denmark in elaborating its interpretation of what adopting a triple nexus approach would mean for its programming, and it is recommended that ADRA Denmark should do what it can to engage in discussions about nexus strategies with the ADRA country partners it supports.

The second objective of this evaluation was to make recommendations about improving the quality of ADRA Denmark’s M&E approaches when working within the nexus:

5. ADRA Denmark, in the design of country programmes and individual projects, should put more emphasis on formulating collective outcomes related to the elements that make for resilience in the targeted communities – evidence that marginalised or minority beneficiaries feel secure and accepted within their communities; families have security of tenure; people are enjoying food security and have access to, and are satisfied with, the provision of basic services; the proportion of young people having access to vocational training opportunities; participating women who have a greater sense of independence and dignity; the proportion of beneficiary families having livelihoods that provide an adequate income that means less dependence on aid. This would mean putting more emphasis on impact studies and the application of lessons learnt.
6. In all the projects supported by ADRA Denmark that iDC has evaluated, the monitoring of outputs (trainings conducted, facilities established and services provided) has been very efficient. To improve the monitoring of outcome indicators, it is suggested that projects should establish a few focus groups (each representative of one of the project's components) which would be engaged at six-monthly intervals, in order to explore the participants' views about the project's achievements at the envisaged outcome level.
7. Such FGDs would also be occasions for identifying individuals who have something of particular significance to say about the way in which a project has affected their lives and livelihoods. And such people could be invited for an extended interview in order to record the 'stories of change' of the kind included in this report.
8. As iDC has recommended before, ADRA Denmark could make a significant contribution to discourse within the aid community – and, now, particularly in relation to its experience of nexus approaches – by producing occasional 'policy briefs' on, for example, the way it has addressed the challenges of implementing farmers' market schools, the success factors in establishing VSLAs, or 'honest brokering' when tensions arise between target groups within a project. Such briefs would be intended for humanitarian and development practitioners; they could also be good material for ADRA Denmark's advocacy work.

Annex A: List of Documents Consulted

Policy Documents of ADRA Denmark

Global Strategy 2020-2024, February 2020.

Approach to Working in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, undated.

Approaches to Livelihood Development, January, 2021.

Project Documents, Sudan

Project Document, Countering the Economic Impact of Covid-19 in Refugee Camps in White Nile States, August 2020.

Project Document, Strengthening Community Engagement and Empowerment in Darfur (SCEED), 2019.

Memorandum of Understanding between Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Sudan and Generations for Social Development (GSD), October 2020.

Baseline Survey, SCEED, December 2020.

Interim Narrative Report (August 2019 – July 2020), Tamkeen Al Muzarein Project (TMP).

MoU between the Ministry of Agriculture and ADRA Sudan, November 2017.

Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund (DCPSF), ADRA Sudan Proposal, 2017

Evaluation Report, More Justice for Peace and Prosperity Project, in West Darfur by ADRA Sudan, Layla Bashir Gamil, Pamoja Sudan, October, 2019.

Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) Technical Agreement for International Non-Governmental Organizations related to Mitigate the Effect of El Nino in White Nile State, 13 September 2020.

Baseline Assessment Report, "Countering the Economic Impact of Covid-19 in Refugee Camps in White Nile State (CEIRC)" project 2020.

Programme Documents, Syria

Project Document, Vulnerable Communities Live with Dignity (VCD), ADRA Denmark and ADRA Syria, 2020.

Vulnerable Communities live in Dignity (VCD), Report, 1 January to 31 December 2020.

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Annex B: List of People Interviewed Online

ADRA Denmark

Ashton Mandrup, Assistant Programme Director;
Helene Ellemann-Jensen, Programme Director;
Pia Jenson, Humanitarian Coordinator;
Karen Ansbaek, MEAL Adviser;
Soren Theilgaard, Rural Business and Private Sector;
Agyedho Bwogo, Programme Coordinator for Sudan and Ethiopia;
Insa Deimann, Humanitarian Coordinator, Syria;
Adriana Ferracin Kleivan, Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan and Yemen.

ADRA Sudan

Maysa Al-Aqil, Programmes Director

ADRA Syria

Sofya Shumko, Programme Director, ADRA Syria.

Discussions were also held with project staff in the field, and the names of Government officials interviewed have been given in the main text of the report.

Annex C: Checklist for Interviews with ADRA Denmark Staff

Assignment	Thematic Review of ADRA Denmark's approach to working within the humanitarian and development nexus
Name	
Position	
Date of interview	
Location	
Name of researcher	

Checklist
1) How does ADRA Denmark understand the nexus concept?
2) What about the triple nexus – does ADRA see peacebuilding as an important component of projects it supports in conflict-affected locations?
3) ADRA resettlement projects in Burundi and Liberia had peacebuilding components – does ADRA have more experience of peacebuilding initiatives?
4) Are peacebuilding interventions taking place only at the community level?
5) What would you say are the difficulties of incorporating peacebuilding components?
6) The Global Strategy puts emphasis on projects leading to resilience – what does it take for a family or a community to be resilient?
7) Is resilience a 'bounce-back' or a 'bounce-back-better' concept?
8) What components should a project have in order to effectively enhance resilience?
9) What capacities should project staff have in order for their projects to take an effective nexus approach – and do ADRA Sudan and ADRA Syria have sufficient staff with these capacities?

Annex D: DAC Analytical Framework

Relevance

Main question: *To what extent is the project designed to improve the resilience of the target communities, addressing a range of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs?*

- What are the current humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs in the target areas?
- What needs of the targeted beneficiaries are the projects addressing?
- How significant are these needs in relation to the resilience considerations of safety, shelter, food security, basic services and livelihoods?
- Are the projects designed in such a way that the envisaged needs are likely to be effectively addressed?

Coherence

Main question: *To what extent are different components of the projects complementary, with regard to humanitarian, development and peace-building approaches, and is there any coordination with other projects being implemented in the target areas?*

- How coherent are the project designs with regard to linkages between the various project components (internal coherence)?
- How well are the projects leveraging support from other agencies working on the same HDP issues in the target areas – and, vice versa, are the ADRA projects providing support to these other agencies (external coherence)?

Impact

Main question: *To what extent are the projects making a difference to the lives and livelihoods of their direct beneficiaries and the wider community?*

- How effectively are the projects' envisaged outcomes being achieved – in terms of changes in attitudes and behaviours of the direct beneficiaries and also the wider communities?
- How effective are the capacity building components of the projects in order to achieve their 'bounce back better' development objectives?
- Are there discernible changes occurring in relation to the five resilience considerations – safety, shelter, food security, basic services and livelihoods?
- Are there signs of gender relations changing in the target communities?
- Are there any unintended outcomes occurring – positive or negative?
- Are the project strategies – actors engaged and actions taken – appropriate for achieving the project objectives; if not, what adjustments should be made?

Sustainability

Main question: *What are the likely chances that the effects of projects will continue after the life of the projects?*

- What support do the projects have from government agencies, local or national?
- Are the capacities being built in those who will be expected to carry on with project activities?
- Will funding be available for those structures and activities that should continue?

Annex E: Checklist for FGDs with Beneficiaries

Assignment	Thematic Review of ADRA Denmark's approach to working within the humanitarian and development nexus
Name	
Position	
Date of interview	
Location	
Name of researcher	

Checklist
1) How would you describe the situation in the area this project is covering – the situation in terms of security, housing, food security, provision of basic services and people's livelihoods?
2) What about you own needs – can you tell us how important this project is to you, and which of your own needs is it addressing?
3) What other projects are operating in this area – and are you aware of any coordination between these projects?
4) What activities have been implemented by this project?
5) What about the project staff – how do you rate their performance?
6) What would you say is the impact of the project?
7) Do you see any changes that you think have been brought about by the project?
8) How important are these changes?
9) How well do you think they will last –after the project has ended?

Annex F: Terms of Reference

Background

At the global level, a focus on the humanitarian-development nexus has become ever more pertinent. As crises are becoming increasingly complex and protracted, more holistic and coordinated approaches are required to adequately prevent and address issues of vulnerability, poverty and displacement. The international aid community now places increased attention on the nexus in order to improve the quality of aid, seeing it as a key tool to address complex and protracted crises which need both humanitarian and development assistance.

In recent years, the nexus concept has been broadened, incorporating the element of peace. There is no common definition or consensus of which elements of 'peace' are considered part of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) or 'triple' nexus. For ADRA Denmark, the peace element of the HDP nexus is mainly centred around social cohesion and conflict resolution at community level and mainstreaming the principle of 'do-no-harm' and conflict sensitivity across project design, rather than working directly on peacebuilding processes.

ADRA Denmark wants to strengthen the link between its humanitarian and development programming with the purpose of improving conditions for affected populations and strengthening their resilience, supporting them to 'bounce back better'. Through ADRA Denmark's Global Strategy 2020-2024, we have aligned our humanitarian and development programming to better build the resilience of affected communities. Emphasis is placed on breaking down the silos of traditional development and humanitarian action, recognising the complementarity needed between actors, funding sources and approaches to address the various challenges and needs within a specific context. Due to the nature of the work that ADRA Denmark has supported and the countries where we operate, working within the nexus has been a natural focus for us, however, we have very little documentation of our approaches and the effectiveness of them.

Aligning more effectively around collective outcomes is a key element of working within the HDP nexus. ADRA Denmark's overall objective for 2020-2024 focuses on strengthening the resilience of people living in conflict or poverty, encompassing both development and humanitarian programming. It is through a common objective that we intend to ensure that our projects, irrespective of funding sources, can contribute to increased resilience. We have a number of different funding sources, primarily funds from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ECHO and EuropeAid, often being utilised within the same intervention area or even a single project.

This review is intended to assess to which extent ADRA Denmark's understanding and approach to working within the nexus contributes to improved resilience among communities affected by the protracted crises in Sudan and Syria, with a particular focus on livelihood strategies, including improving income generation through improved agricultural knowledge and skills, as well as business skills and training. Through examining our programming approach in Syria, as well as our programmes in both Darfur and White Nile, Sudan the review will also contribute with specific recommendations for how we can improve our work within the nexus.

This review will stimulate learning based on evidence of outcome level results achieved across the hum-dev-peace divide. Through case studies, the review will highlight lessons to be learned about strengthening resilience and how to better link our humanitarian and development funding for improving impact. It will also analyse to what extent the current programming approaches are adequate for implementing this linkage in practice.

Objectives of the Review

- ✓ To capture outcome level results of ADRA Denmark's approach to working within the nexus in Syria and Sudan, with a particular focus on the contribution to improved resilience and improved livelihood strategies.
- ✓ To stimulate learning based on recommendations from evidence of achieved results to improve the quality of the ADRA Denmark's approaches and programming when working within the triple nexus.

Scope of Work

The assignment will include, but not be limited to assessing:

1. To what extent have the current approaches used to link the humanitarian and development strategies in programming in both Syria and Sudan been effective and programme objectives been achieved?
2. How relevant/appropriate are the implemented livelihood strategies and resilience building activities in a context of protracted crisis in Syria and Sudan?
3. How can existing result frameworks and MEAL practices be improved in order to measure progress and results within the nexus?

Additionally, the assignment should include an assessment of the extent to which our programming in practice matches our described approach to working within the nexus, and provide recommendations for strengthening this.

Method of Work

Prior to the field work, the team will conduct a desk study of all relevant programme documents, reports, reviews and strategies. Based on this, the team will produce an inception report describing the proposed methodology and the report outline in more detail.

The evaluation approach will predominantly be qualitative, and it is expected that the evaluation will use participatory methods including field visits and interviews with beneficiaries, authorities and other stakeholders and staff, and possibly also a workshop with staff members if relevant. The team will be working in close collaboration with relevant resource persons in both ADRA Denmark, ADRA Syria and ADRA Sudan.

The key findings, recommendations and learning will be shared with ADRA Denmark upon completion of field work.

Outputs

The outputs of the assignment will be (deadlines to be agreed):

- ✓ A brief inception note describing in more detail the methodology to be applied, the time schedule for the review and the report outline.
- ✓ A debriefing note and virtual meeting with main conclusions and findings to be presented to ADRA Syria, ADRA Sudan and ADRA Denmark upon completion of field work

- ✓ A draft review report in English to be submitted to ADRA Denmark
- ✓ Consolidated feedback from ADRA on the draft report will be submitted to the review team
- ✓ A final review report to be submitted not later than 31st March 2020 (or as agreed). The report will include an executive summary and reflect the scope of work of the TOR. It will be clear and concise and not exceed 30 pages excluding annexes. The report should include case stories demonstrating impact, as well as identification of best practices.

Composition of team

The review team will consist of:

- An international consultant (team leader)
- A collaborated effort with staff from ADRA Syria
- A national consultant in Sudan

Representatives from ADRA Syria, ADRA Sudan and ADRA Denmark can act as resource persons throughout the process, as needed.

The team should possess the following skills:

- Local knowledge
- International experience, in particular in working, or assessing programmes within the nexus
- Knowledge on resilience building and livelihood strategies, particularly in the areas of income generation and agriculture
- Knowledge of working within protracted crises
- Experience in conducting evaluations and writing reports
- Fluency in English (oral and written) and Arabic

Timing:

The evaluation will take place in February and March 2021.

	Team leader	National consultants
Task	Days	
Desk study and preparation	5	6
Field work	*	15**
Debriefing with ADRA Syria	0,5 (virtually)	0,5
Debriefing with ADRA Sudan	0,5 (virtually)	0,5
Report writing	5	
Debriefing with ADRA Denmark	0,5	
Total	11,5	22

* Due to current global travel restrictions, it is not expected that the international team leader will be able to travel to the field activities in Syria and Sudan. However, we are willing to agree to a different schedule if this does become possible.

** It is expected that field work will take approximately 5 days in Syria and 10 days in Sudan.

Background information:

The team will be provided with all necessary documents, including:

- Programme documents from all completed and current projects in Syria and Sudan, as relevant
- ADRA Denmark's Global Strategy 2020-2024
- ADRA Denmark's Working within the Nexus Position Paper
- ADRA Denmark's 2019 Performance Report (to Danida, which includes data from monitoring output and outcome indicators)