

BACKGROUND PAPER

# Enhancing Integration and Strategic Coherence in Peacebuilding

## ABOUT THE EVENT

The Challenges Annual Forum 2024 (#CAF24Berlin) will gather partners and key stakeholders to discuss how to strengthen international peace and security and lay the foundation for the next generation of peace operations. The event is co-hosted by the Challenges Forum's German partner Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), in Berlin on 3-4 December.

Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.

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**At the end of 2024, all parameters point to the urgent need for sustainable peacebuilding. The number of conflicts is once again on the rise while the international order is challenged. In a multilateral crisis management toolbox, that has come under strain in recent years, peacebuilding is a versatile yet underutilised tool.**

**The New Agenda for Peace, the Pact for the Future and the upcoming Peacebuilding Architecture Review offer unique opportunities for making peacebuilding more coherent, impactful and adequately resourced.**

The inclusion of **peacebuilding tasks into peace-keeping mandates** since the early 1990s was one of the most significant adaptations peace operations underwent since their inception. Multidimensional operations combining both peacekeeping and peacebuilding functions became the preferred model for stabilising conflict affected states in the post-cold war era. Concurrently a number of special political missions and peacebuilding offices were deployed.

*“Integrated planning processes can deepen integration through the identification of joint objectives.”*

Peacebuilding policy has evolved significantly with five milestones standing out: the **1992 Agenda for Peace and its 1995 Supplement**; the concept of **Integrated Missions**; the creation of the **UN Peacebuilding Architecture**, the twin resolutions on **Sustaining Peace**, and the concept of the **HDP-Nexus**.

Peacebuilding coherence, integration and the HDP-Nexus is widely recognised as key, but implementation continues to encounter obstacles. Five areas where practitioners have highlighted barriers – as well as opportunities – are explored below.

#### **Peacebuilding, Integration and Nexus in the Field: Building Blocks and Stumbling Blocks**

*Integration: strategic vision and leadership*

**Structural changes and policies** can be integration enablers when and where fully implemented. **Integrated planning processes** can deepen integration through the identification of joint objectives, collective outcomes and ways to achieve them. The Integrated Offices under the DSRSG/RC/HC are also a catalyst for integration particularly with a view to overall strategic planning.

**Joint assessments** – such as the UN Sudan peacebuilding assessments – are team-exercises. They provide a shared understanding of root causes and needs as a basis for joint programming across entities.

However structural adjustments and joint assessments alone will not automatically advance integration. A **leadership at field level** that promotes a **common strategic vision** is considered by some as the most critical integration driver. Leadership in integrated settings<sup>1</sup> – meaning the SRSG, the DSRSGs and the Reps/Deputy Reps of Agencies Funds and Programs (AFPs) – need to live integration with conviction and invest in a vision and strategic framework shared by the entire UN presence in the country.

Separate or even **incompatible systems** across entities – whether it is data systems or funding streams – have disincentivised cooperation and hampered integration and joint vision.

While reforms have naturally focused on the integration between the mission and a UNCT, coherent peacebuilding requires **integration with a wider set of actors**, including government (national and subnational), civil society, and donors.

**Transitions** are litmus tests for integration and key to the sustainability of peacebuilding gains. Recent examples of rushed exits illustrate that transitions rarely happen along pre-planned timelines. Essential success factors include a clear joint vision and early transition plan between mission leadership and UNCT, a realistic assessment of capacities and a joint funding strategy.

#### *The “P” in the Nexus*

The **“Peace”** segment of the H-D-P Nexus **remains its weakest link** for various reasons: a) While humanitarian and development collaboration has been practiced much longer, the more recent link to the peace component is still work in progress. b) It is often not fully understood what the “peace” in the nexus constitutes or means for implementation. c) Finally, the “P” is frequently underfunded.

If the “P” is to be fully integrated within the UN system, each entity has to **understand it as a cross-cutting task**. This would mean moving beyond the application of conflict sensitivity to core mandates to identifying which concrete contributions to peace the own mandate can make. Nexus advisers in AFPs and Peace and Development Advisors in integrated settings can support this task.

*“Transitions are litmus tests for integration and key to the sustainability of peacebuilding gains.”*

#### *The Nexus during crisis: hardest to implement when it is most needed*

The concept of the Nexus has a better chance of being implemented **where clear priorities of an uncontested government, generous donor funding and UN system capacity (peace operation plus AFPs) align**. However, in most contexts such ideal conditions do not exist. Difficulties in implementing the nexus following unconstitutional changes of government (UCGs) are a case in point. In **Sudan**, for example, conditions changed drastically with the October 2021 military coup. Funding for development and peacebuilding dropped for political reasons, leaving the Nexus lopsided and underfunded while needs at community level remained high.

This is not to say that the Nexus is a concept for permissive environments only. One encouraging example on how the Nexus can work during crisis offset comes from **Chad**. Here, all the right elements came together – UN data, political attention, World Bank funding, government plans and dedicated coordination formats under the RC at country level – for a timely and comprehensive response to the Sudan refugee crisis.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Locally anchored peacebuilding*

Peacebuilding needs to be **local and locally anchored to be effective and sustainable**. Successive reviews, reports and guidelines have highlighted this from the 2015 Hippos Report to the 2019 DAC Recommendations on the H-D-P Nexus and the 2020 PBSO system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines.

Still, integrated peace operations are **often too focused on state actors, institutions and structures** as well as capital elites. Encouragingly, in the field there is an increasing use of area-based approaches and growing recognition that needs-identification must include local actors from the outset. The UN Sudan integrated peacebuilding assessments are an example of assessments carried out jointly with local actors.

Getting **funding directly to the grassroots**, to actors and networks making a difference in communities, should be part of localisation efforts. The PBF not only **incentivises partnering with local organisations** in its projects and funds civil society organisations. But in many cases, donor’s accountability requirements hamper engagement with and funding of local actors unable to meet that threshold.

### Funding

Peacebuilding, overall, and the “P” in the Nexus are **underfunded**.<sup>3</sup>

The 50 million for the PBF annually from the assessed budget as of 2025 is a welcomed development. However, the funds are insufficient to cover needs and ensure peacebuilding sustainability.

Funding can be a **key incentive for nexus programming** as well as for integration. The PBF incentivises Nexus-programming in the projects it funds; bilateral donors, too, are developing funding modalities to incentivise jointness across the Nexus, such as the German “Nexus Funding Facility” for the Great Lakes region. But such examples are too rare to change a system towards flexible, predictable funding.

### The way forward: Game Changers

As we discuss ways to enhance integration and strategic coherence in peacebuilding, the focus also needs to be on how to remove persistent barriers and how to enable, drive and realise three “game changers”.

An **overall mind shift** in the way we think about peacebuilding and about the peace component of the HDP-Nexus is needed. This means moving beyond limited measures such as Nexus pilot projects or Nexus pilot units to truly understanding sustaining peace as cross-cutting for all UN entities and their mandates in crisis settings. It also means investing in making mandate implementation not only conflict sensitive but also peace positive.

**Collective leadership for integration:** This requires a genuine change in the way the UNCT and missions work together. This needs to rest on a shared strategic vision and plan, joint analysis, and include, crucially, a culture of risk taking and collective risk sharing.

**A systems-change in funding:** Flexible, predictable, multi-year funding could be a game changer for integration, Nexus implementation as well as for locally anchored peacebuilding efforts. This, too, requires risk taking and collective risk sharing and ways of funding that overcome barriers to engaging at the local level, that decrease rather than increase competition and allow for timely and comprehensive response in crisis situations.

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### Guiding questions

- What are the most effective strategies to ensure a mind shift and collective leadership for integration?
- What steps are needed to ensure a systems-change towards flexible, predictable, multi-year funding?
- To ensure sustainable transitions: How can early integrated transition planning be achieved and what role could member states and donors play to support sustainability through flexible, predictable, and multi-year funding for peacebuilding?

1. A integrated UN presence is defined as the UN configuration in conflict/post-conflict settings where the UN has a UNCT and a multi-dimensional peacekeeping mission or an SPM. A structurally integrated presence is when the mission’s DSRSG also serves as RC. See Policy of Integrated

2. See Damian Lilly, Yes, the nexus is real. But it needs a radical overhaul. The New Humanitarian, Opinion, 18 July 2024.

3. This is exacerbated by a broader trend by which the peace proportion (prevention and peacebuilding) of ODA is decreasing; see: OECD (2023), “Peace and Official Development Assistance”, OECD Development Perspectives, No. 37, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/fccfbffc-en>.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wibke Hansen is Senior Advisor to the Executive Board at the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF). Between 2021 and 2024 she was the Senior Peacebuilding Advisor for UNDP Sudan. Wibke Hansen has over 20 years of experience working on peacebuilding and peacekeeping both at the policy level as well as in the field.



**Visiting Address:**  
Drottning Kristinas väg 37,  
Stockholm, Sweden

**Postal Address:**  
Sandövägen 1,  
SE-872 64 Sandöverken, Sweden

**E-mail:** [info@challengesforum.org](mailto:info@challengesforum.org)  
[www.challengesforum.org](http://www.challengesforum.org)  
**Phone:** +46 (0)10 456 23 00



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