



FOOD SECURITY  
AND CLIMATE MIGRATION.  
MULTILATERAL APPROACHES  
TO COMPLEX CRISES



FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE MIGRATION.  
MULTILATERAL APPROACHES TO COMPLEX CRISES.

January 2023

Photo credit: Riccardo Venturi

Front cover: View from above of the village Niassanté, Senegal, home to the only school in the area and one of the few places that has not been abandoned due to the scarcity of water and resources.

Back cover: View from above of the Diama dam, which makes part of the border between Senegal and Mauritania.

## CONTENTS

---

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	9
1. THE CHALLENGE OF INCREASING COMPLEXITY	13
2. MULTILATERAL RESPONSES TO COMPLEX CRISES	19
3. TAKING STOCK OF EVOLVING NEXUS RESPONSES: KEY LESSONS AND CHALLENGES	25
3.1 FORGING NEW WAYS OF COLLABORATION TO ENSURE MULTI-SECTORAL AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	26
3.2 INVESTING IN (COMPOUND) RISK ASSESSMENT AND PREVENTION	28
3.3 THINKING AND ACTING OUT OF THE BOX: OVERCOMING INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS	29
3.4 INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES AND FUNDING APPROACHES	32
4. THE WAY FORWARD: BUILDING ON BEST PRACTICE, OVERCOMING CHALLENGES	35
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	42

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Times are changing. The intersecting challenges of climate change, migration, and instability present a unique problem for many local and regional actors in fragile contexts and a mounting concern for multilateral governance institutions, including European and US foreign policy.**

Numerous regions of the world face a blend of security, governance, developmental, and environmental challenges, compounded by rising inequality, inflation, resource scarcity, weak governance, and fragile social contracts. Multidimensional and multi-causal in nature, these “nexus” challenges intersect in complex ways, providing fertile ground for complex crises, and generating far-reaching adverse effects that often extend beyond borders.

Recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown how existing and emerging risk factors interlock, allowing for the rapid spread of crises in a hyper-interconnected world. The cascading effects of the war on Ukraine on food and energy security, migration, and political instability in distant regions is a clear example of how quickly nexus challenges can spin out of control. To counter the weaponization of food, multilateral efforts must rapidly be rolled out while revisiting deeply ingrained policy siloes of diplomacy, development, and defense.

By mapping the terrain on multilateral policy thinking and development vis-à-vis nexus challenges, this report seeks to emphasize a forward-looking and multidisciplinary debate to rethink international cooperation in the face of complex crisis scenarios. It traces the evolution of nexus approaches over the past two decades, highlighting key areas of progress and pending limitations. The idea is to stimulate a broader policy conversation on moving towards multifaceted, multi-sectoral, and integrated approaches to address the nexus between climate change, migration, and various facets of insecurity more effectively.

How can nexus challenges be defined? First and foremost, such challenges entail multiple dimensions – spanning a diverse set of issues such as climate

risks, displacement, conflict, political instability, livelihoods, food security, and energy access. Nexus challenges also inform and are informed by fragilities already present within a context like inequality, lack of opportunity, societal grievances, institutional weakness, or contested legitimacy. At the same time, they generate impact simultaneously at local, national, regional, and global levels and play a role as both causes and consequences of the vast and exponentially growing scale of collective action needs.

Given the complexity of such challenges, it is not surprising that multilateral actors have been and still are interrogating themselves on the most appropriate way to address them. Following the post-Cold War proliferation of humanitarian crises in contexts of violent conflict and institutional breakdown, initial discussions focused on the humanitarian, development, and security spaces. The work across the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus has gradually evolved thanks to growing engagement by key stakeholders, including the World Bank, the UN, and regional actors like the EU.

More recently, it has become apparent that the nature of crises is constantly evolving, acquiring new layers and higher degrees of complexity. Recent policy discussions have been paying attention to the broader spectrum of policy challenges and the multi-directional interconnections between them. As a result, there has been a greater appreciation that conflict, peace, and development are entangled with climate risks, unequal access to resources, or migration. This has led to growing cross-fertilization between different issue areas that previously were dealt with in distinct policy spaces: efforts to link up humanitarian responses and development interventions to address the causes and consequences of migration and displacement have recently intensified, while climate change has been increasingly considered as a threat multiplier hindering sustainable peace and security outcomes, interlocking with displacement, and affecting food security worldwide.

While much has been achieved toward integrating nexus thinking in multilateral action, the path has also been marked by significant challenges. Actors have understood the need to rethink compartmentalized approaches, forge new ways of collaboration, and ensure constant political engagement. Integrated approaches and joint action are vital to comprehensively delivering responses that address the nexus.

Yet, achieving such a level of integration is easier said than done, as nexus thinking compels actors to reconsider how they interpret their mandates, set priorities, and engage with beneficiaries. In the future, greater emphasis should be placed on devising appropriate incentive structures that can effectively yield inter-sectoral collaboration and synergetic impact; and leadership plays a crucial role in setting up these incentives. Developing and delivering nexus responses requires considerable investment in institutional capacities, cross-cutting expertise, and mechanisms that can catalyze exchange and information flow between policy communities.

The importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for delivering nexus responses is now evident, while experience shows ample room for progress. Beyond sporadic collaboration at stages of implementation, multi-sectoral cooperation needs to depart from commonly defined collective outcomes and continue throughout the policy cycle to generate transformational impact. Further investment in data integration and joint need and risk assessment exercises interlinking, for example, conflict, disaster, and displacement, are necessary to inform the definition of collective outcomes better.

Funding is an important aspect. Since nexus projects are intrinsically complex, allocating resources to address their many facets poses a challenge, while compound risks and cascading crises often make it difficult to identify priorities. Flexible, multifaceted financing tools are thus needed. Greater engagement by international financial institutions (IFIs) has been important for developing innovative funding approaches. Yet, in a context where humanitarian funding is reaching its limit and official development aid has stagnated, and with a debt crisis looming for developing economies, securing adequate support remains a fundamental challenge.

A key lesson derived from more than two decades of work across the nexus landscape is that understanding and addressing the root causes of complex crises at an early stage is of the essence, while the interconnected nature of nexus challenges demands innovative and complex analytical tools. In the future, investment in compound risk analysis and better risk management will help identify viable and timely solutions in the face of complex crisis scenarios and develop preventive measures that can be implemented even in fragile or violent contexts. Creating vertical (i.e., at international, national, and local levels) and horizontal (i.e., between different organizations)

partnerships is critical to ensure that the context in which nexus challenges play out is considered. From now on, defining expected results through closer engagement with national and local actors and designing funding in closer alignment with these jointly defined results would be significant.

Nexus challenges are a reality of our interconnected world. During the past three years, the reverberating effects of initially localized crises like the outbreak of Covid-19 or the Ukraine crisis served as a decisive wake-up call. At the same time, multilateral initiatives have had to navigate a complex policy landscape and a demanding geopolitical context. While much has been achieved towards integrating nexus thinking in multilateral action, several challenges lie ahead to make progress in effectively delivering integrated responses to the interconnected and transnational issues of our times. Therefore, key actors and alliances committed to multilateralism need to build on past progress and accelerate joint efforts to better understand and respond to nexus challenges through innovative approaches and strategic partnerships.





## INTRODUCTION

Times are changing. The intersecting challenges of climate change, migration, and instability present a unique problem for many local and regional actors in fragile contexts. They also represent a mounting concern for multilateral governance institutions and European and US foreign policy. In decades to come, these concerns are poised to broaden and intensify. These issues are beginning to overlap in ways that *undermine traditional notions of security and development policy*. Think of the implications deriving from the Ukraine invasion: the cascading effects of the crisis for food security, migration, and security dynamics in distant regions stand as a clear example of how quickly nexus challenges can escalate, while the weaponization of food and hunger illustrates the challenging geopolitical context in which multilateral efforts need to be rolled out, and adds urgency to revisiting deeply ingrained policy siloes of diplomacy, development, and defense. Integrated approaches to intersecting challenges represent the only viable, sustainable peace and development solution.

Numerous regions of the world face a combination of security, governance, developmental, and environmental challenges, compounded by rising inequality, inflation, resource scarcity, weak governance, and fragile social contracts. These challenges intersect in complex ways, generating adverse effects that often go beyond borders. Once again, the *Ukraine war* represents a very recent example of a *relatively localized crisis with global reverberations* which have been threatening the lives of millions, forcibly displacing millions more, and destabilizing the political and economic order of not only neighboring Europe, but also distant countries like Sri Lanka, Egypt, and Afghanistan.

The Ukraine war has also exacerbated the effects of what experts call “the largest cost-of-living crisis of the twenty-first century” at a time when both people and nations were already struggling with limited resources and capacity to cope due to their efforts to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. Public debt levels in developing countries increased by nearly 10 per cent between 2019 and 2021 to reach 65.1 per cent of GDP, and these economies require an estimated 311 billion US dollars in 2022 to service public external debt, equivalent to 13.6 per cent of government revenues.<sup>1</sup> The debt crisis compounds existing risks and sources of fragility, while constraining the already limited fiscal space for many developing countries to address nexus

<sup>1</sup> This is according to the United Nations’ Global Crisis Response Group, set up by the UN Secretary-General in the immediate aftermath of the war in Ukraine to tackle the interconnected challenges of food, energy, and finance. See UN Secretary-General, *Remarks to the Press on the War in Ukraine*, 14 March 2022, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/262376>.

challenges, providing fertile ground for escalation of complex crises.

This is not new. There are multiple examples of the concurrence of factors in a complex crisis. One example is the *Arab Spring uprisings*, where rising commodity prices, drought, and poor access to water, as well as urbanization and internal migration, contributed to the pressures that underpinned a transformational political upheaval. These were by no means isolated crises, nor were the adverse effects limited to the affected regions: climate-driven disruptions contributed to drought and dramatic increases in wheat prices, exacerbating the political disorder in Egypt, Libya, and Syria.<sup>2</sup> Overlapping pressures of climate change, migratory pressures, and conflict created powerful stress multipliers, feeding into discontent, population movements, and social upheaval. The effects did not remain localized; the massive displacement from Syria caused by the civil war reshaped European politics, played a role in the rise of authoritarian movements in Hungary and Poland, and insulated Turkey's undemocratic government from EU pressures.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Caitlin E. Werrell and Francesco Femia (eds), *The Arab Spring and Climate Change. A Climate and Security Correlations Series*, Washington, Center for American Progress, February 2013, <https://www.americanprogress.org/?p=47918>.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: Christoph M. Michael, *Migration and the Crisis of Democracy in Contemporary Europe*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Max Hoffman and Ana I. Grigera, *Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict in the Amazon and the Andes. Rising Tensions and Policy Options in South America*, Washington, Center for American Progress, February 2013, <https://www.americanprogress.org/?p=47920>.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Michael Werz and Lauren Reed, *Climate Change, Migration, and Nontraditional Security Threats in China. Complex Crisis Scenarios and Policy Options for China and the World*, Washington, Center for American Progress, May 2014, <https://www.americanprogress.org/?p=47595>.

Other examples where multiple risk factors combine in complex ways include the tropical savannahs of Brazil and Bolivia and the Andean highlands of Peru and Bolivia, impacted by the often-overlooked interactions of climate change, environmental degradation, migration, and conflict; and the arid coastal plain of Peru, which has become a new heartland of the continent's illicit economies, including the globalized cocaine trade.<sup>4</sup> In another corner of the world, several climate security and climate migration flashpoints are developing in China, including the greater Beijing region, the Yangtze and Pearl River Delta regions, and Chongqing or Xinjiang.<sup>5</sup> Other areas, such as the *Sahel and South Asia*, have been exposed to complex crises generating border-crossing effects for extended periods and have drawn varying levels of international attention in the recent past.

Nexus approaches have been a part of the policy discourse for the past decades as an attempt to break a seemingly endless cycle of conflict and crisis. As conversations evolve, multilateral approaches improve to capture the deep interconnections between nexus issues. Stakeholders – growing in number and diversity – are, however, also confronted with new challenges in the face of augmenting needs, an increasingly complex policy landscape, and an often-adverse geopolitical context. At the same time, the urgency of the current far-reaching global transformation is often underestimated. There is

a growing but still nascent appreciation of complex crisis scenarios and the need for responses effectively *leveraging multi-sectoral capacities* to address them. Mobilizing this sort of action to address *the nexus between climate change, migration, and insecurity* will be the political litmus test of our time.

This report seeks to emphasize a broader policy conversation as part of the Nexus<sup>25</sup> project, suggesting the need for a nuanced and multifaceted reconceptualization of security to better account for its complex interplay with climate and migration, particularly against a background of institutional and societal fragility. For this much-needed conversation, it is vital to apply a nexus perspective cross-fertilizing policy thinking on security, diplomacy, development, climate, and migration. After looking at how multidimensional and transnational challenges become increasingly complex, the report traces the evolution of nexus responses in the multilateral sphere, paying particular attention to the diversification of the issue areas and stakeholders involved in the debate. Drawing on lessons learned, key areas of progress, and pending challenges related to institutional approaches as well as coordination and funding mechanisms, the report suggests a forward-looking and integrated debate on multilateral approaches that can match the complexity of the overlapping and transnational problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



# THE CHALLENGE OF INCREASING COMPLEXITY

Efforts to better understand and respond to complex crises date back to the mid-1990s. As early as 1994, the UN highlighted the importance of *the convergence between humanitarian emergencies and alarming levels of institutional fragility* (i.e., breakdown of authority linked to conflict), as well as the need for extensive coordination between multiple UN agencies with different mandates and capacities to respond to such crises.<sup>6</sup> While this early approach already presents some core characteristics of complex crises, it mainly focuses on their humanitarian consequences. Yet, the international context and the challenges faced by the multilateral system have significantly evolved since then, and not for the better. Over the past three decades, violent conflicts and displacement have not only peaked but also become increasingly protracted, all while climate change acts as a massive threat multiplier.<sup>7</sup>

How then can the nexus challenges of today be defined? And what factors underpinning complex crises should be better understood by multilateral actors? A core element is the interconnection between multiple dimensions – spanning a diverse set of issues such as *climate risks, displacement, conflict, political instability, livelihoods, food security, and energy access* (see Box 1 on South Asia). This makes it more challenging to identify and disentangle the root causes and, consequentially, to address them. This is also why siloed approaches remain ineffective vis-à-vis overlapping challenges.

## 1. THE CHALLENGE OF INCREASING COMPLEXITY

<sup>6</sup> See Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Definition of Complex Emergencies*, Working Group XVIth Meeting, 30 November 1994, [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy\\_files/WG16\\_4.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/WG16_4.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See World Bank, *World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence, 2020–2025*, Washington, World Bank, 2020, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/34858>.

## 1. South Asia: A forgotten nexus test case<sup>8</sup>

The impacts of climate change, human mobility, and stability in the world's most populous region are already manifesting in complex and multidimensional ways that have the potential to affect the rest of the world. Over the past decade, recurrent weather and food crises and political instability have led to uncoordinated coping and survival strategies among local populations, including mass migration to urban centers. Three countries in particular – Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and India – embody the complicated and interlinked nexus challenges and the urgent need to address them comprehensively.

In Myanmar, the February 2021 coup and the military's heavy-handed crackdown on unarmed protesters unleashed an armed resistance that has already displaced more than one million people within the country and another million across the border,<sup>9</sup> further pressuring the already stressed services in Myanmar and neighboring countries. A previous episode of large-scale displacement in 2017, due to state-sanctioned attacks against the Muslim Rohingya minority, pushed them from the poor and disaster-prone Rakhine State towards Cox's Bazar, another poor coastal area in Bangladesh where local communities already live with extreme weather events.

In import-dependent Sri Lanka, nearly a third of the population is food insecure and struggling with record-high food price inflation. According to the UN, almost two in three households have had to adjust their food intake due to a loss in income. The effects of years of economic mismanagement and conflict – such as the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide bombings – have been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis. Nearly 300,000 people have applied for passports in the first five months of 2022 alone, compared to 91,000 in the same period last year.<sup>10</sup>

Yet India, despite having some of the highest disaster risk levels in the world,<sup>11</sup> seems very conservative in making these nexus connections. Issues such as climate-induced migration are not being discussed at the policy level, either domestically or internationally. India has primarily opted to deal with these issues bilaterally, for example with Bangladesh and Myanmar, instead of strengthening transnational cooperation through existing regional mechanisms.

South Asia is a prime example of the cross-border, interconnected risks of climate change and its potential to affect displacement, conflict, and food security, with state fragility acting as a cause and a consequence. At the same time, the inability to enact adequate prevention strategies due to weak governance makes climate shocks all the more catastrophic. Yet Europe and the US, preoccupied with the war in Ukraine, have largely left this critical region to fend for itself. Given the strategic importance of this densely populated region, a much more consistent and expansive transatlantic coordination on nexus challenges is not only necessary to address current challenges – but it is also in the best interest of a transatlantic community that wants to rebuild transparent and viable global governance structures in a contested environment.

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed discussion of nexus challenges in South Asia, see: Michael Werz and Thin Lei Win, *And Then Things Got Complicated: Addressing the Security-Climate-Migration Nexus in South Asia*, Rome, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), February 2022, <https://www.iai.it/en/node/14657>.

<sup>9</sup> See UNHCR, *Myanmar Emergency Update (as of 3 October 2022)*, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/3316>.

<sup>10</sup> See Uditha Jayasinghe, "Battered by Economic Crisis, Sri Lankans Seek Passport to a Better Life", in *Reuters*, 16 June 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/battered-by-economic-crisis-sri-lankans-seek-passport-better-life-2022-06-16>.

<sup>11</sup> See World Bank, *Climate Risk Country Profile: India, 2021*, <https://reliefweb.int/node/3837708>.

Further complicating the picture, nexus challenges inform and are informed by *fragilities* already present within a context such as inequality, lack of opportunity, societal grievances, institutional weakness, or contested legitimacy (see Box 2 on the Sahel). At the same time, *nexus challenges simultaneously operate at local, national, regional, and global levels* and act as a cause and consequence of the vast and exponentially growing need scale.

## 2. The Sahel: Where nexus challenges and fragility mutually reinforce one another<sup>12</sup>

In the Sahel, security, developmental, and environmental challenges interact with existing state and societal fragilities, turning the region into a significant policy concern for national, regional, and international actors. State fragility often shows in the failure of public authorities to protect communities from adverse events like climate shocks, loss of livelihood, or food crises, in a region where climate change–enhanced or man-made land degradation cause competition over natural resources. During the past two years, coups d'état in Burkina Faso and Mali are testaments to such institutional weakness. Governance flaws, in turn, preclude Sahelian countries from implementing effective, long-term climate adaptation and mitigation policies requiring sustained political will and institutional capacities. Countries in the Sahel – as other developing countries – despite bearing little responsibility for causing the climate crisis are the ones most impacted by its consequences, while they are also more unlikely to secure funding for climate action. The politics of injustice and the call by developing countries for funding on loss and damage therefore continue to dominate global climate negotiations.

The combination of nexus challenges and existing fragilities has also contributed to shaping an overall increase in internal and international migratory movements over the past decade.<sup>13</sup> The area has become a key transit point for northbound migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa and across the Mediterranean.<sup>14</sup> The impact of migratory patterns reverberates beyond the region and strains states' capacities in neighboring areas (e.g., North Africa), where countries already struggle with instability, non-state armed groups, weak governance, and the effects of climate change. While migration has long been a coping mechanism in these regions vis-à-vis food and livelihood insecurity, it has also exacerbated existing governance shortcomings and instability outside the Sahel, for instance in Libya, Algeria, and Morocco.

Despite the rising volume of inter-regional and transcontinental movements, mobility remains mainly intraregional, with over 90 per cent of migrants moving within the Sahel.<sup>15</sup> The links between food security, climate, population movements, and conflicts are multi-directional and complex. While food shortages and natural disasters drive displacement mainly internally and regionally, the growing volume and intensity of movement within and between countries contributes to depleting already scarce food

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed discussion of nexus challenges in the Sahel, see: Francesco Iacoella et al., *And Then Things Got Complicated: Addressing the Security-Climate-Migration Nexus in the Sahel*, Rome, IAI, February 2022, <https://www.iai.it/en/node/14656>.

<sup>13</sup> See Jean-Marc Pradelle, "Rapid Population Growth of the Sahel Region: A Major Challenge for the Next Generation", in *Identification for Development (ID4D)*, 17 June 2021, <https://ideas4development.org/en/population-growth-sahel-challenge-generation>.

<sup>14</sup> See Erol Yayboke and Rakan Aboneaj, "Peril in the Desert: Irregular Migration through the Sahel", in *CSIS Commentaries*, 21 October 2020, <https://www.csis.org/node/58568>.

<sup>15</sup> See the website of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration: *Sahel and Lake Chad*, <https://www.migrationjointinitiative.org/countries/sahel-and-lake-chad>.

and energy resources, magnifying the effects of climate change and, in some cases, exacerbating enduring conflicts, such as that between marginalized northern Tuareg communities in Mali and Niger and central governments.<sup>16</sup>

The Lake Chad basin is also a case in point regarding how nexus challenges intertwine with fragility. The area has long been caught in a “conflict trap,” interfacing climate, mobility, fragility, and security risks.<sup>17</sup> Governments struggle to tackle poverty and provide adequate security and access to essential services. Consequently, societal grievances grow.<sup>18</sup> This implies fertile ground for non-state armed groups to capitalize on discontent and ethno-religious divisions in their struggle for territorial control and competition over the allegiances of local populations. Further complicating the picture, resource scarcity can often act as a driver of conflict, displacement, and loss of livelihoods, especially when combined with the inability of governments to manage land and resource use rights. As such, weak governance may reinvigorate political instability by hampering the development of sustainable food systems, increasing environmental risks through uncontrolled resource extraction, and marginalizing social groups that are deprived of access to natural resources.

<sup>16</sup> See Michael Werz and Laura Conley, *Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict in Northwest Africa. Rising Dangers and Policy Options Across the Arc of Tension*, Washington, Center for American Progress, April 2012, <https://www.americanprogress.org/?p=48113>.

<sup>17</sup> See Janani Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability. Addressing Climate and Fragility Risks in the Lake Chad Region*, Berlin, adelphi, May 2019, <https://shoring-up-stability.org/?p=15>.

<sup>18</sup> See Boubacar Ba and Signe Marie Cold-Ravnkilde, “When Jihadists Broker Peace. Natural Resource Conflicts as Weapons of War in Mali’s Protracted Crisis”, in *DIIS Policy Briefs*, January 2021, <https://www.diis.dk/en/node/24542>.

Developments with global reverberations, such as the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic or the shockwaves of the current Ukraine crisis, are cases in point. These – initially localized – crises illustrate the hyper-connectivity between seemingly distant geographies and policy problems, while both have exacerbated already existing risk factors combined in several regions around the world. Think of *Ukraine* (see Box 3): the humanitarian consequences in the country were severe, but within an incredibly brief timespan, this localized event caused far-reaching ripple effects, merging crises of displacement, food security, and climate risks across the globe. The shockwaves of the crisis have destabilized the global political and economic order, with fragile states and vulnerable populations being hit the hardest. Direct and indirect effects on food security will likely generate broader political challenges. Responses to short-term exigencies ensuing from the energy crisis can slow the pace of climate action – which could further exacerbate climate risks, instability, conflicts, socioeconomic marginalization, and displacement.



### 3. Ukraine, a complex crisis of global dimensions

The attack on Ukraine illustrates how a localized event rapidly transcends borders and exacerbates existing global risk factors. Within days, the crisis generated far-reaching ripple effects. The war has caused nearly seven million internally displaced people (IDPs) and over seven million refugees, displaced mainly in Europe.<sup>19</sup> Beyond the region, the war has severely impacted import-dependent countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East since Ukraine and Russia account for 29 per cent of wheat, 17 per cent of corn, and 80 per cent of sun oil exports worldwide.<sup>20</sup> The Russian blockade of crucial Black Sea ports prevents exports, while unilateral export limitations on products such as wheat, corn, and cooking oil spreading across the world further pressure global food markets.

The effects of the war are not limited to exported food. Russia produces about 25 per cent of the world's raw materials for fertilizers, exports of which the Kremlin has now restricted. The impact on food systems is apparent, as almost half of the world's population depends on food produced with the help of fertilizers.<sup>21</sup> Food prices are also experiencing the most dramatic rise since the 2007 recession.

With all its collateral damage, the Ukraine war comes at a time of worsening climate and food crises disproportionately affecting different regions of the world: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) documented that by 2021, prices had already risen by 28 per cent, reaching their highest level in a decade.<sup>22</sup>

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) predicts that the number of hungry people worldwide has risen to 222 million people in 53 territories in 2022.<sup>23</sup> In affluent Europe, rising food prices are a ubiquitous but manageable issue, but elsewhere, the consequences are devastating. For example, Yemen, at war since 2014, imports almost all of its wheat needs, with a third coming from Ukraine and Russia – bread there provides half the calorie needs of an average household. Within weeks of the initial invasion, southern Iraq witnessed street protests against high food prices; the government argued (unsuccessfully) that the war in Ukraine was the reason. The political implications of the crisis are apparent – one only needs to remember that high wheat prices accelerated the Arab Spring.

The direct and indirect effects on food security in distant regions of the world, which have often been underestimated, are far-reaching and will last for a long time. While the FAO expects that in the short term, major growing countries will be able to offset some of the grain shortfall,<sup>24</sup> the expected crop failure in Ukraine, and continued weaponization of food and hunger by Russia as part of asymmetric warfare,<sup>25</sup> are likely to exacerbate existing problems.

<sup>19</sup> See UNHCR website: *Ukraine Emergency*, <https://www.unhcr.org/ukraine-emergency.html>.

<sup>20</sup> See Joseph Glauber and David Laborde, "How Will Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Affect Global Food Security?", in *IFPRI Blog*, 24 February 2022, <https://www.ifpri.org/node/65656>.

<sup>21</sup> See Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), *Fertilizers in Russia*, accessed 2 December 2022, <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/fertilizers/reporter/rus>.

<sup>22</sup> See FAO, *FAO Food Price Index*, release date 2 December 2022, <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en>.

<sup>23</sup> See Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) and Food Security Information Network (FSIN), *Global Report on Food Crises 2022 Mid-Year Update*, Rome, September 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/node/3885401>.

<sup>24</sup> See FAO, *FAO Cereal Supply and Demand Brief*, release date 2 December 2022, <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/csdb/en>.

<sup>25</sup> See Michael Werz, "Hunger als Waffe", in *AufRuhr*, 26 July 2022, <https://www.auf-ruhr-magazin.de/?p=12462>.



# MULTILATERAL RESPONSES TO COMPLEX CRISES

## 2. MULTILATERAL RESPONSES TO COMPLEX CRISES

For over two decades, multilateral actors have been interrogating themselves on the best approach to address nexus challenges. Both the growing complexity of these challenges and a greater appreciation of the interconnections between them have been reflected in the policy conversations. Having witnessed the post–Cold War proliferation of humanitarian crises in contexts of violent conflicts and institutional breakdown, initial discussions focused on the need for linking up actions in *the humanitarian, development, and security spaces*. Since the turn of the century, it has increasingly become clear that the nature of crises and their causes and consequences have continued to evolve, acquiring new layers and higher degrees of demand. Only recently, the nexus has started to be conceived as something much more complex, encompassing policy challenges related to *migration, displacement, food security, and threat multiplier components like climate change*. The following pages trace the evolution of how the nexus has been understood by multilateral actors, paying particular attention to the proliferation and diversification of issue areas and stakeholders comprising this increasingly complex policy landscape.

The acknowledgment that humanitarian emergencies do not happen in a vacuum and that crises are intrinsically connected to economic development led to growing dialogue among international institutions, civil society, and policy actors operating across the humanitarian-development nexus.<sup>26</sup> The expansion of this bilateral dialogue to the trilateral conversation across *the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus* has been a reaction to the fact that often violence and conflict are closely linked to development processes and play very relevant roles in shaping humanitarian intervention. One current example is the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria or Yemen, disrupting food security and livelihoods. These initial discussions, taking place mainly within the UN system, have helped clarify some of the critical elements of nexus responses: the nexus is more than the sum of its constituting parts, it implies a non-linear relationship, and it is about collaborating and ensuring complementarity and synergies, and not about shifting resources or capacities from one pillar to another.<sup>27</sup>

The early 2000s saw other multilateral actors join the debate and engage in strategic rethinking, aiming to better bridge security and development activities when responding to crises and supporting reconstruction in their

<sup>26</sup> Filipa Schmitz Guinote, “Q&A: The ICRC and the ‘Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus’ Discussion”, in *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 101, No. 912 (November 2019), p. 1051–1066, <https://international-review.icrc.org/node/109271>.

<sup>27</sup> UN, *Background Paper on Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee and UN Working Group on Transitions Workshop, 20–21 October 2016, [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/peace-hum-dev\\_nexus\\_150927\\_ver2.docx](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/peace-hum-dev_nexus_150927_ver2.docx).

aftermath. The *World Bank's* initial engagement in post-conflict reconstruction processes in the early 2000s constitutes an example. Over time, this work has led to a greater appreciation of *the close links between security, justice, and development*.<sup>28</sup> A key takeaway is the importance of understanding and acting upon the two-way interplay between development and peace. It has also informed the Bank's 2020 Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy: peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development, while development is crucial to address FCV drivers and impacts.<sup>29</sup>

Regional actors playing critical roles in multilateral governance, such as the European Union (EU), engaged in similar rethinking in the early 2000s. Greater appreciation of the need for responses "that combines civil and military instruments and that puts into practice the conceptual link between security and development" culminated in the EU's "comprehensive approach."<sup>30</sup> Driven by the objective of making better use of the bloc's comprehensive set of military, political, and economic tools in EU crisis-management missions, the comprehensive approach guided the development of policies, funding mechanisms, and monitoring tools aimed at enhancing civil-military coordination (CMCO). Greater *collaboration with other multilateral actors like NATO and the UN* in crisis response soon emerged as necessary. The security-development nexus was set out in the 2003 European Security Strategy and soon spilled over into EU development policy, leading to the recognition of insecurity and conflict as crucial obstacles to achieving internationally recognized development goals.<sup>31</sup>

This work across the security-development nexus has gradually evolved into the "*Integrated Approach*" identified in the EU's 2016 Global Strategy. Capturing the growing complexity of nexus challenges underpinning crises, the Integrated Approach calls for joined-up action in the face of problems and conflicts that requires: leveraging coherent effort between multiple sectors (diplomacy, security, defense, financial, trade, development cooperation, and humanitarian aid), engagement at various levels (local, national, regional, global) and multiple phases of crises (prevention, crisis response, stabilization, peacebuilding), as well as enhanced multilateral partnerships with regional and international stakeholders.<sup>32</sup>

Policy conversations evolving in different spaces over the past 20 years have also paved the way for the proclamation of the *SDGs* in 2016, which stands

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the Bank's flagship report on Conflict, Security, and Development: *World Bank, World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, Washington, World Bank, 2011, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/4389>.

<sup>29</sup> See World Bank, *Updated Bank Policy: Development Cooperation and Fragility, Conflict, and Violence*, 12 August 2021, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/498771628797344998/updated-bank-policy-development-cooperation-and-fragility-conflict-and-violence>.

<sup>30</sup> See Eva Gross, "EU and the Comprehensive Approach", in *DIIS Reports*, No. 2008/13, p. 9, [https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/44388/R2008\\_13\\_EU\\_and\\_the\\_Comprehensive\\_Approach.pdf](https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/44388/R2008_13_EU_and_the_Comprehensive_Approach.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> See Martin Holland and Mathew Doidge, *Development Policy of the European Union*, Basingstoke/New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 108-109.

<sup>32</sup> See European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, June 2016, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/36116>.

as a clear example of appreciating the need for integrated approaches in the face of overlapping and multidimensional challenges. Besides providing a global and transversal look at related policy issues, the SDGs' explicit emphasis on climate and human mobility and their links to sustainable development and peace helped draw increasing attention to multi-directional inter-linkages previously considered to a relatively lesser extent. Other key stakeholders, like the EU, have embraced the SDGs and are increasingly moving towards approaches that holistically tackle poverty, fragility, conflict, displacement, and climate change, as illustrated by the *European Consensus on Development*.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the SDGs proclamation was part of a process that led international actors to move beyond a narrower understanding of the nexus primarily linking peace and development. Recent policy discussions have been increasingly paying attention to the entire spectrum of policy challenges. There has been a greater appreciation that *conflict, peace, and development are entangled with climate risks and unequal access to resources or migration*. All these challenges overlap in deeply complex ways, acting both as drivers and consequences of crises. All this has been driving growing cross-fertilization both in conceptual terms (e.g., aimed at better understanding the climate-migration or climate-security nexus and their connections to development and security) and in the emphasis on delivering multilateral responses that capture such interconnections more effectively and promptly.

Such cross-fertilization has been increasingly shaping policy thinking on migration and displacement. Moving beyond an understanding of displacement as a consequence to be dealt with mainly as a humanitarian emergency, multilateral conversations increasingly focus on its causes and effects in closer connection with the conflict, fragility, security, and development processes. This shift is reflected in the overall SDGs framework and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). It has translated into the prioritization of ensuring the transition from short-term humanitarian assistance to long-term development in refugee responses, guiding the work of the UNHCR increasingly through collaborations with development partners. *Reflections on the climate-migration nexus have also been intensifying in recent years*. For instance, the UNHCR sees climate change as a risk multiplier, driving displacement and protection needs worldwide, and accounts for climate risks and resilience in its – still nascent – strategy development.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See Council of the European Union and Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, "The New European Consensus on Development. 'Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future'", in *Official Journal of the European Union*, 30 June 2017, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:42017Y0630\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:42017Y0630(01)).

<sup>34</sup> See UNHCR, *Strategic Framework for Climate Action*, 29 April 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/environment/604a26d84>.

As its effects grow in frequency and intensity interfacing with diverse phenomena, climate change has been increasingly featuring as a transversal factor cross-cutting the nexus, particularly in its relation to security. While *the visibility of climate risks in conversations focusing on peace and security has been growing in recent years*, integrating climate change into discussions beyond those with a clear environmental and developmental focus has also proven challenging. This has been partially informed by the difficulty in establishing direct causal mechanisms linking climate change to broader conflict and security dynamics. While measuring the direct impact of climate shocks is more manageable, it is more challenging – and highly context-specific – to identify causal links between the broader phenomenon of climate change and migration, security, or political instability.<sup>35</sup> Difficulties also arise when it comes to whether climate change should be considered a security threat and hence as forming part of the international peace and security agenda – a debate conditioned mainly by geopolitical realities and colliding state interests.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, in academic and policy debates, a consensus has been *growing to understand climate change more generally as a threat multiplier*, intrinsically linked with human well-being and security – and as an essential factor that compounds risks and exacerbates conflict, especially in fragile contexts.<sup>37</sup>

In past years, positions of critical actors forming part of overall multilateral governance on climate change and its links to human, national, and international security have increasingly aligned. As a result, they are presenting opportunities for strengthened partnerships among a broader set of multilateral stakeholders. The EU has been advocating for climate ambition in multilateral fora for a long time and increasingly *mainstreaming climate action* into its foreign policy – both as part of the external dimension of the *Green Deal and its nascent Team Europe approach*, and as illustrated by the earmarking of 30 per cent of the EU's external action budget, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), for climate action and the energy transition. The eye-opening Covid-19 experience has clarified that transnational phenomena with far-reaching effects, such as pandemics and climate change, should be considered risk factors contributing to eroding human security. Similarly, key EU member states, like Germany, have been increasingly vocal in recent years about the urgency of embedding *security implications of climate change* into the agenda of the UNSC, advocating institutional reforms to mainstream climate risks into

<sup>35</sup> See Beatrice Mosello, Lukas Rüttinger and Liesa Sauerhammer, *The Climate Change-Conflict Connection. The Current State of Knowledge*, Climate Security Expert Network (CSEN), November 2019, <https://www.adelphi.de/en/publication/climate-change-conflict-connection>.

<sup>36</sup> See Security Council Report, "The UN Security Council and Climate Change", in *Research Reports*, No. 2 (21 June 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/node/3760005>.

<sup>37</sup> See adelphi, *10 Insights on Climate Impacts and Peace. Key Facts*, June 2020, <https://berlin-climate-security-conference.de/en/node/108>.

conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts within the UN system.<sup>38</sup> While climate change increasingly features in top-level discussions centered on the international security and peace agenda through such efforts, gaining further traction remains a major challenge in the face of complex geopolitics that manifest in the UNSC.

Importantly, from a transatlantic partnership perspective and multilateral governance at large, the US administration and NATO have recently embedded the climate-security nexus in their conceptual and strategic outlook. In a significant shift, the Biden administration formulates climate change as a *national security issue*, while acknowledging the interconnected nature of border-crossing challenges related to climate change, migration, food and energy security, geopolitical tensions, and instability and conflict across the world.<sup>39</sup> The inclusion of climate change as a crisis and a threat multiplier that “can exacerbate conflict, fragility and geopolitical competition” in the recently published NATO 2022 Strategic Concept has been another significant development.<sup>40</sup> *Growing alignment between the EU, US, and NATO* presents an opportunity for progress in overcoming siloed approaches to diplomacy, security, defense, and development. It also is an opportunity to strengthen strategic partnerships at the transnational axis that can significantly contribute to multilateral efforts to address nexus challenges.

<sup>38</sup> See Security Council Report, “The UN Security Council and Climate Change”, *cit.*

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, the US Administration’s updated national security strategy, which includes climate change as well as food and energy security as issues fundamentally linked to national security and as key priorities for international cooperation on shared challenges: The White House, *National Security Strategy, October 2022*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> See NATO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, June 2022, point 19, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept>.



TAKING STOCK OF  
EVOLVING NEXUS RESPONSES:  
KEY LESSONS AND CHALLENGES



Nexus thinking has been increasingly incorporated into multilateral efforts to address complex crises over the past decades, gaining considerable momentum in recent years. Significant progress has been recorded in understanding the conceptual links between seemingly distinct phenomena and outlining the main contours of institutional approaches and structures with greater potential to address such interconnected challenges. However, the problems facing the multilateral actors and the policy landscape they need to navigate have grown in scale and complexity. Significant challenges have also marked the path to developing and implementing nexus approaches. At the same time, essential lessons are being assimilated, promising practices emerge as policy thinking evolves, and new forms of engagement are explored. *What has been learned about the critical elements of a nexus approach, then? Which processes and mechanisms need to be forged? And what challenges that have emerged on the way deserve further attention to make progress?*

As conceptualized by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), adopting a nexus perspective implies strengthening collaboration, coherence, and complementarity, seeking to capitalize on the comparative advantage of each sector and stakeholder to reduce overall vulnerability and address root causes of challenges.<sup>41</sup> As the aim is mobilizing coherent and synergetic action cross-cutting several policy dimensions, *forging new collaboration methods* is both crucial and challenging. Linked to the objective of acting upon root causes, *investing in prevention* is another critical takeaway coming out of over two decades of work around the linkages between fragility, conflict, development, and humanitarian assistance. Prevention requires enhanced risk management capacities and novel approaches to jointly assessing multidimensional risk factors and their combined operation. Integration and cross-fertilization between different policy spaces are thus key to nexus responses. This requires multilateral actors to *think and act out of the box* – which emerges as a significant challenge in the face of different areas of expertise and institutional structures. Ensuring (multi-stakeholder) engagement before, during, and after crises lies at the heart of nexus initiatives. Bringing together capacities that respond to the needs of such multi-phase engagement is a significant objective and a major challenge. In developing nexus responses, stakeholders face trade-offs between reacting to urgent needs and

### 3. TAKING STOCK OF EVOLVING NEXUS RESPONSES: KEY LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

<sup>41</sup> See OECD, DAC *Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus* (OECD/LEGAL/5019), 2022, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5019>.

---

### 3.1 FORGING NEW WAYS OF COLLABORATION TO ENSURE MULTI-SECTORAL AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

propelling sustainable transformation. This also calls for *innovation and flexibility in developing funding mechanisms* to enable collective action that responds to short-term and long-term needs in a balanced manner.

Given the multiplicity and interconnected nature of their drivers as well as effects, addressing complex crises necessitates forging new ways of collaboration that effectively yield to multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement throughout the policy cycle: from the assessment of risks to the identification of shared objectives and the design, programming, funding, operationalization, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of joint instruments. Multilateral actors' experimentation with such approaches has shown that improving coordination mechanisms and *ensuring adequate political engagement* is key to future progress.<sup>42</sup> This work has also increasingly highlighted the importance of partnerships "leveraging the respective comparative advantages of humanitarian, development, peace and security actors".<sup>43</sup>

Multilateral actors have been experimenting with such partnerships recently, with some promising examples emerging. For instance, the *UNHCR–World Bank partnership on social protection*, funded by the World Bank's Regional Sub-Window (RSW) for Refugees and Host Communities in countries hosting large refugee populations – including Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, and Chad – aims to mainstream displacement in the overall development response. The UNHCR provides input and technical support at key stages of the Bank's project cycle to effectively identify and provide sustainable answers to the needs of displaced populations within the long-term development framework.<sup>44</sup> Beyond specific implementation cooperation, the partnership aims to tap into the collaboration between humanitarian and development actors at all stages – from needs assessment and design of the projects to their implementation and evaluation.

Such cooperative initiatives have shown the importance of moving beyond partnerships of a predominantly transactional nature to those that generate collective outcomes with transformational impact by working together and in complementary ways throughout the policy cycle.<sup>45</sup> Yet, making such partnerships deliver collective results also poses challenges, as integration,

<sup>42</sup> See *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> See World Bank, *Updated Bank Policy: Development Cooperation and Fragility, Conflict, and Violence*, *cit.*, point 10.

<sup>44</sup> See UNHCR, *Emerging Lessons from World Bank Group Social Protection Investments in Refugee-Hosting Areas*, August 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/61bb41d24>.

<sup>45</sup> See OECD, *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*, *cit.* This point was also highlighted in authors' conversation with stakeholders, 23 September 2022.

cross-fertilization, and coordination take time and effort, particularly in the face of different organizational structures and capacities and long-standing institutional legacies (see below).

Considering nexus challenges that simultaneously operate at multiple levels, how different factors across the nexus combine and interact is closely tied to global trends and transnational phenomena and the particularities of local, national, and regional contexts. This requires partnerships and cooperation mechanisms to ensure the *effective inclusion of stakeholders at different levels of governance*, where further progress is needed. Yet, a fundamental tension constraining the effective engagement of stakeholders operating at different levels exists between the need for national-level buy-in and commitment and the fact that action requires local knowledge and capacities. Further, critical mismatches in perspectives and priorities still emerge when international actors engage with national or regional stakeholders operating in complex contexts (e.g., in the Sahel or South Asia). An example of such a divergent conceptualization of nexus issues comes from ECOWAS. Its free movement regime attaches great importance to human mobility in diversifying livelihoods, coping with crises, and fostering sustainable development. This perspective differs from the EU framing of migration mainly as a security issue.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See Luca Barana, "EU Migration Policy and Regional Integration in Africa: A New Challenge for European Policy Coherence", in *IAI Commentaries*, No. 18|42 (July 2018), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/9429>.

### 3.2 INVESTING IN (COMPOUND) RISK ASSESSMENT AND PREVENTION

Experimentation with nexus responses has led to a greater appreciation of the importance of assessing and reducing interconnected risks early to address them before they lead to disasters, conflicts, and displacement and generate severe humanitarian costs, eroding security, and endangering developmental gains. The compound nature of risks requires the development of complex analytical tools and necessitates partnerships aimed at *joint risk assessment*. Some initiatives worth developing further and expanding have been emerging in recent years. For instance, the Global Crisis Response Platform established by the World Bank in 2018 aims to build analytical capacity in understanding compound risks interconnecting macro shocks, natural disasters, conflict, food emergencies, and pandemics, with a particular focus on fragile contexts.<sup>47</sup>

Multilateral actors also *increasingly consider intersecting conflict, disaster, and displacement risks* to cross-fertilize institutional responses and coordination mechanisms. This is reflected in the work of the actors responding to displacement: they increasingly go beyond their traditional focus on humanitarian assistance and move towards a more holistic perspective embracing coordinated disaster risk reduction programs, as, for example, in the case of Niger.<sup>48</sup> The need to further pivot towards prevention is thus also evident, although there is ample margin for progress in terms of improving risk assessment tools and gaining a better grasp of what preventive action means in complex situations during disasters and displacement.<sup>49</sup>

The context-sensitive nature of the overlaps between risks and *the lack of standardized and integrated data* in particular countries and regions make this an additional challenging task. However, some promising approaches have been emerging. One example is a South Sudan project funded by the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). The initiative aims to support developing countries in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by holistically tackling the conflict, climate, and disaster response, including initiatives focusing on displacement. The project mapped out spatial data on hazards and exposure to natural disasters and overlaid this with existing country-level data to create a holistic view of compound risks. Results were then used by the World Bank and the government of South Sudan to develop a comprehensive strategy for disaster risk management.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See World Bank, *Global Crisis Risk Platform*, 26 June 2018, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/document-detail/660951532987362050>.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example: Sanjula Weerasinghe, *Bridging the Divide in Approaches to Conflict and Disaster Displacement: Norms, Institutions and Coordination in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Niger, the Philippines and Somalia*, Geneva, UNHCR, 26 July 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/6244008a4>.

<sup>49</sup> Authors' conversations with stakeholders in the framework of Nexus<sup>25</sup> deliberations.

<sup>50</sup> See World Bank, *Updated Bank Policy: Development Cooperation and Fragility, Conflict, and Violence*, cit.

One major challenge hindering progress in translating nexus thinking into action is the inherent *tension between the level of integration required by nexus responses and long-standing institutional approaches*. The lack of adequate incentive structures fostering multi-sectoral integration continues to prove difficult, particularly in operational terms.<sup>51</sup> For example, following the momentum for better linking humanitarian, development, and peace actions in the mid-2010s, integrated, multi-sectoral, joint programs involving several UN agencies have been started in 61 countries, including those in the Sahel and South Asia. Despite their ambitious design, the effect of these programs on collaboration and collective outcomes has yet to be proven, and assistance has been chiefly delivered following existing siloed implementation mechanisms.<sup>52</sup>

Implementing nexus approaches interfacing with different policy spaces, organizational structures, and institutional mandates also challenges defining and acting upon a standard set of priorities. The difficulty arises in *ensuring coherence* and striking a balance between different yet interconnected policy priorities. Stakeholders involved in nexus issues often have differing priorities and mandates and operate with separate funding and planning horizons. They also may have variable *delivery and impact timeframes* (e.g., actions aiming at emergency relief, immediate stabilization, or long-term structural change for sustainable development and peace outcomes). This poses a challenge considering that the nexus is built not to prioritize any of its components at the expense of a comprehensive approach meant to produce collective outcomes.<sup>53</sup> Experience shows that actors involved in implementing the HDP nexus encountered difficulties in adapting to the balancing act, especially when faced with situations where they found prioritization necessary.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, different actors have different relationships with partners and donors. For instance, while development actors work with governments, stakeholders in the humanitarian space directly engage with beneficiaries. This might pose a challenge to joint action as it potentially implies differences in terms of various stakeholders' risk margins and planning timelines.

An overall challenge related to balancing off different priorities arises when multilateral actors face *trade-offs between immediate action and sustainable outcomes*. Stakeholders are faced with responding to increasingly connected and protracted crises while pursuing structural changes to be better placed to

### 3.3 THINKING AND ACTING OUT OF THE BOX: OVERCOMING INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

<sup>51</sup> Authors' conversations with stakeholders in the framework of Nexus<sup>25</sup> deliberations.

<sup>52</sup> See Marina Caparini and Anders Reagan, "Connecting the Dots on the Triple Nexus", in *SIPRI Commentaries*, 29 November 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/node/4968>.

<sup>53</sup> See Oxfam, "The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. What Does It Mean for Multi-Mandated Organizations?", in *Oxfam Discussion Papers*, June 2019, <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/handle/10546/620820>.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

respond in the future.<sup>55</sup> A significant challenge lies in ensuring that measures taken to respond to the exigencies generated by today's crises do not thwart long-term objectives aiming to prevent risks from culminating into full-blown emergencies. In the current era, the Ukraine crisis reveals the simultaneous need for urgent action and forward-looking approaches in crisis response and the challenges this entails (see Box 4).

Adopting nexus approaches require organizations to expand on areas of expertise and work towards *policy objectives that fall out of the scope of those originally foreseen by their mandate*. For instance, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has initially found itself in the difficult position of trying to reconcile its mandate to offer immediate humanitarian assistance with long-term prevention and resilience-building objectives.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, incorporating risk reduction and prevention measures – increasingly acknowledged as an area to invest in by actors across the board – requires readjusting and enhancing institutional capacities, particularly for those institutions whose mandate had not previously foreseen this line of work.

This also raises the question of enhancing institutional capacities or *ensuring information flow between policy communities* to ensure the cross-fertilization of knowledge and perspectives. An approach allowing institutions to go beyond their area of specialization has been building in-house institutional capacity in terms of cross-cutting expertise. The designation of special climate advisors or envoys in recent years among the ranks of the UNHCR, IOM, WFP, and FAO serves as an example of institutional readjustments that aim to facilitate the mainstreaming of climate change to migration or food security agendas. Another path is developing institutional mechanisms that can catalyze inter-sectorial exchange to share knowledge and connect different plans – as, for example, the recently established Climate-Security Mechanism interfacing the UN's peacebuilding, development, and environment work, aims to do.<sup>57</sup> These efforts are, however, at a relatively early stage of development, and significant gaps remain when it comes to expanding cross-cutting expertise and mechanisms connecting sectors.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> See IAI, Nexus25 Roundtable Discussion: International Response to Complex Crises, Washington, 22 April 2022, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/nexus25\\_220422\\_memo.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/nexus25_220422_memo.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> See Schmitz Guinote, "Q&A: The ICRC and the 'Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus' Discussion", *cit.*

<sup>57</sup> See UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) website: *Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security*, <https://dppa.un.org/en/node/192701>.

<sup>58</sup> Authors' conversation with stakeholders, 28 July 2022.

#### 4. Ukraine: Rethinking multilateral collaboration in the face of nexus challenges

The cascading risks deriving from the Ukraine crisis are clear, and they are even more destructive when intertwined with the effects of the climate crisis, political instability, weak governance, conflict, food insecurity, migration, and displacement in fragile contexts. The international community has channeled funds and launched joint initiatives to avoid a global food crisis – as exemplified by the G7 Global Alliance for Food Security, the 1.5 billion US dollars African Emergency Food Production Facility launched by the African Development Bank,<sup>59</sup> and the World Bank’s 30 billion US dollars support for existing and new projects until mid-2023.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the FAO has set up a Food Import Financing Facility to help import-dependent countries. USAID has announced nearly 1.2 billion US dollars in new funding to address growing needs,<sup>61</sup> while the EU has re-launched its 554 million euro financial commitment to tackle food and nutrition crises in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region for 2022.<sup>62</sup>

The Ukraine crisis has therefore triggered considerable momentum for collective action. Yet, how the crisis has been approached also points to the continued need for improvement in developing strategic and integrated responses reflecting nexus thinking. Most initial attention was given to challenging security issues – arming the Ukrainian resistance while working towards a ceasefire. International agencies and host countries also support refugees and IDPs, although signs of asylum fatigue have started to appear in Europe, and longer-term integration challenges lie ahead.<sup>63</sup>

Augmented political attention to food security presents a significant opportunity to catalyze strengthened multilateral cooperation. At the same time, coordination needs to increase with the increasing number of initiatives. While it is early to conclude, another risk lies in placing disproportionate emphasis on short-term solutions (e.g., subsidized food imports and fertilizers) at the expense of responses aiming to address root causes underlying food insecurity and building resilient and environmentally sustainable food systems.<sup>64</sup>

Political choices made in the face of the energy implications of the crisis could also potentially impact the fight against climate change in the medium to longer term. Short-term effects on climate action are already visible: an increasing number of countries propose emergency measures that involve greater reliance on fossil fuels to avoid using natural gas imported from Russia. To curb the growing energy costs, the implementation of green transition projects has slowed down in most of Europe. In the medium and longer term, choices made now to address pressing energy security concerns (e.g., new infrastructural projects and long-term contracts with non-Russian suppliers) might prove incompatible with the transition pathway.

<sup>59</sup> See “African Development Bank Approves \$1.5 Billion Emergency Food Facility”, in *Reuters*, 20 May 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/african-development-bank-approves-15-5-billion-emergency-food-facility-2022-05-20>.

<sup>60</sup> See “World Bank Earmarks \$30 Bln to Help Offset Food Shortages Worsened by War in Ukraine”, in *Reuters*, 15 September 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/world-bank-earmarks-30-5-billion-help-offset-food-shortages-worsened-by-war-ukraine-2022-09-15>.

<sup>61</sup> See Adva Saldinger, “USAID’s Power Unveils over \$1B for Global Food Crisis, Calls on Others”, in *Devex*, 19 July 2022, <https://www.devex.com/103663>.

<sup>62</sup> See European Commission, *Food Crisis: The EU Takes Action to Support Africa’s Sahel and Lake Chad Regions*, 6 April 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_22\\_2245](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_2245).

<sup>63</sup> See, for example: Omer Karasapan, “Ukrainian Refugees: Challenges in a Welcoming Europe”, in *Future Development Blog*, 14 October 2022, <https://brook.gs/3MMxFdL>.

<sup>64</sup> See Francesco Rampa, “Russia’s War against Ukraine Should Trigger Structural Solutions to Food Insecurity”, in *ECDPM Commentaries*, 20 June 2022, <https://ecdpm.org/work/russias-war-against-ukraine-should-trigger-structural-solutions-food-insecurity>.

### 3.4 INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES AND FUNDING APPROACHES

Nexus projects are intrinsically complex and allocating resources to address their many facets to achieve collective outcomes poses a challenge. Compound risks and cascading crises make it difficult to identify priorities. Also, funding horizons for the different policy communities responding to emergencies vary. This necessitates flexibility and *innovative financing mechanisms*, while significant funding is needed to achieve structural progress.

At the same time, humanitarian funding is reaching its limit, and official development aid has stagnated in recent years, while the private sector is still far from playing a significant role.<sup>65</sup> Coming at a time when national resources have been largely eroded by the Covid-19 fallout, the effects of the Ukraine war put additional strain, particularly affecting developing countries' resources. Shrinking fiscal space constrains the ability of governments to respond to urgent needs deriving from sudden shocks in fragile contexts, or to invest in long-term climate action as well as sustainable development and peace initiatives. And high levels of debt might end up rendering international aid irrelevant. For this reason, the UNDP recently called for urgent debt relief for 54 developing nations, which account for more than half of the world's poorest people and include some of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. Among the proposed actions are debt-for-development policies that also have a clear climate dimension, such as the proposal to allow developing countries to write-off debt in return for a commitment to spend the saved debt service payments on nature conservation or investments in climate adaptation.<sup>66</sup>

Against such background, *increasing engagement by IFIs and international and regional development banks* in addressing complex crises has been a positive trend. The World Bank is one such actor. The Bank's engagement in nexus challenges has significantly grown through its work in FCV contexts, which has translated into its FCV Strategy in 2020 – aiming to enhance the Bank's effectiveness in supporting countries in addressing the drivers and impacts of FCV and strengthening resilience and institutional capacities.<sup>67</sup> The Bank also works towards stronger cooperation in rolling out FCV responses with regional bodies and fora, including other development banks, such as the African Development Bank.<sup>68</sup> More recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also pivoted towards engagement in fragility and conflict contexts, as exemplified by the launch of the IMF Strategy for Fragile and Conflict-

<sup>65</sup> Authors' conversations with stakeholders in the framework of Nexus<sup>25</sup> deliberations.

<sup>66</sup> See Lars Jensen, "Avoiding 'Too Little Too Late' on International Debt Relief", in *Development Futures Series Working Papers*, October 2022, <https://www.undp.org/publications/dfs-avoiding-too-little-too-late-international-debt-relief>.

<sup>67</sup> See, World Bank, *World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence, 2020–2025*, cit.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



Affected States in 2022.<sup>69</sup> While a welcomed step forwards, funding strategies are primarily directed toward other organizations and national governments, leaving sub-national and local actors outside the equation.<sup>70</sup>

Developing funding platforms designed to address overlapping challenges and building the capacity needed for integrated responses constitutes one of the critical contributions by IFIs, while the World Bank's FCV work on partnerships, analytics, and strategy development *demonstrates the vital role these actors could play beyond funding*. An example of financing tailored to nexus responses was the UN–World Bank Fragility and Conflict Partnership Trust Fund (2014–2017), which sought to strengthen the connections between political, security, development, and humanitarian efforts in fragile and conflict-affected countries.<sup>71</sup> The activities supported by the Fund focused on creating diagnostic frameworks, joint problem-solving approaches, collaborative analyses, and joined-up strategic staffing to enhance the capacity of existing programs to match institutional responses to the complexity entailed in nexus challenges. In overall terms, while experimentation with innovative approaches to funding nexus challenges has intensified in the past years, securing adequate funding remains a fundamental challenge, given the massive scale of need.

<sup>69</sup> See IMF, “The IMF Strategy for Fragile and Conflict-affected States”, in *IMF Policy Papers*, No. 2022/004 (14 March 2022), <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2022/03/14/The-IMF-Strategy-for-Fragile-and-Conflict-Affected-States-515129>.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> See World Bank, *UN-World Bank Fragility and Conflict Partnership Trust Fund*, 6 October 2014, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/un-world-bank-fragility-and-conflict-partnership-trust-fund>.



THE WAY FORWARD:  
BUILDING ON BEST PRACTICE,  
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Multilateral approaches to complex crises have gradually but steadily evolved over the past decades. Albeit to varying degrees, there has been a greater appreciation of the need to better understand and respond to nexus challenges on the part of international, regional, and national actors. This has translated into growing interest in a deeper exploration of adequate analytical tools, institutional mechanisms, and policy responses to address the multi-causal and multidimensional drivers and impacts of crises interfacing with migration, conflict, climate risks, development, and different facets of security. Financial organizations have increasingly sought *effective nexus responses*, supporting multilateral initiatives to develop integrated responses to address multidimensional root causes through funding, analytical and technical assistance, and strengthened partnerships.

As these efforts have advanced, the complexity of nexus challenges has grown, the overall need scale has increased, and *the global geopolitical context has become more challenging* for multilateral stakeholders to navigate. The system has yet to develop the necessary structures and frameworks to address the nexus more effectively. As discussed in the previous section, several problems endure even after multilateral stakeholders have evolved their approach to nexus issues. At the same time, there have been promising approaches potentially worthy of enhanced investment and commitment in the future. This section will discuss some of these challenges and, when possible, point out potential ways forward and trends to build on to make progress in overcoming challenges.

The multifaceted nature of nexus challenges and the complex overlap between them is explicit: from the conflict-prone areas of the Sahel, where climate change acts as a threat multiplier and migration is both a necessary coping strategy and an additional stressor, to Myanmar, where state fragility and political instability makes it difficult to plan preventive measures to avoid the ever more violent climate shocks and their impact on food security. In these settings, actors struggle with decisions on whether to act on the *root causes of nexus challenges* with long-sighted approaches or address *immediate needs to avoid current and near-future harm*. A crucial question confronting multilateral initiatives aiming to address the nexus holistically is how to strike a better balance between responding to urgent humanitarian needs and fostering structural change to reduce future vulnerabilities.

#### 4. THE WAY FORWARD: BUILDING ON BEST PRACTICE, OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Experience shows that improving risk assessment and risk analysis is one way to get better at balancing needs. Improving the capacity to analyze compound risks will be essential in the future. The World Bank and other UN agencies are investing significantly in building in-house institutional capacity and supporting countries facing compound risks in enhancing their abilities to assess risks. Early-warning systems that signal floods, droughts, and other climate shocks are currently in place and have been expanded upon and used by different actors. A clear example is the Famine Early Warning System Network, supported by USAID and used by the UNHCR, WFP, FAO, and the EU and the US to plan their nutrition assistance programs for vulnerable populations.<sup>72</sup>

*Better risk assessment means better risk management.* As the old saying goes, knowledge is power. Good examples of risk management derived from more thorough risk assessment strategies include working with host governments and other local actors in the Sahel region to develop transhumance routes that limit the potential for conflict between communities. The same is true for context-sensitive mediation between different groups contesting dwindling resources.<sup>73</sup>

Significant investments have been made toward making data essential for such assessments available and easy to access. However, *collaboration and data integration* between agencies and statistical offices are still largely lacking. The World Bank, UNICEF, and, more recently, WFP have been expanding their data repositories and making them available to external actors. However, most of the data produced by different agencies is rarely transferrable to others, resources remaining mostly unshared.<sup>74</sup> As highlighted in Nexus<sup>25</sup> conversations with experts, current risk assessment approaches would also benefit from a better understanding of the relevance of collecting qualitative data from vulnerable groups facing the impact of nexus challenges. Since the way in which nexus challenges overlap is highly contextual, complementing quantitative data with in-depth insights based on qualitative methods is vital in better identifying the connection between climate, security, and migration and thereby taking evidence-based action adapted to local needs.

Assessing risk, however, cannot represent the ultimate goal of multilateral actors responding to nexus challenges. As the above analysis highlighted, a

<sup>72</sup> For details, see <https://fews.net>.

<sup>73</sup> See Security Council Report, “The UN Security Council and Climate Change”, *cit.*

<sup>74</sup> Authors’ conversations with stakeholders in the framework of Nexus<sup>25</sup> deliberations have pointed out how, sometimes, data used for the production of reports remains inaccessible to external actors, and other agencies cannot take it into consideration in their own analysis and planning in real time.

crucial objective for nexus responses is *translating assessments into preventive action to address the root causes of complex crises*. More importantly, the preventative measure needs to be embedded within projects transversally targeting conflict, disaster, and displacement. Think, for example, of how development has been understood to move in a *contiguum* with humanitarian and security needs in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

A good example of *approaches facilitating the integration of prevention in nexus responses from the onset and throughout the policy cycle* comes from the World Bank's FCV strategy. The Bank has developed diverse prevention tools designed to function in vulnerable settings as part of the strategy. Risk and resilience assessments, which inform on the elements of fragility before any action is taken, are mandatory for FCV countries to be able to engage with the Bank. Recovery and peacebuilding assessments indicate what it takes to build resilience and start reconstruction once a country gets out of conflict.<sup>75</sup> Providing an excellent example of multi-stakeholder collaboration and integrated approaches essential to nexus responses, both risk and resilience, and recovery and peacebuilding assessments are produced in *partnerships with other UN agencies as well as national and regional actors*. For example, in developing recovery and peacebuilding assessments, national governments receive support from the Bank, the UN, and the EU. Following guidelines from such assessments, the Bank can better target funding and support capacity building for preventive measures in beneficiary countries.

Another instrument beyond the FCV framework, which was more recently included in the Bank's risk assessment toolbox, is compound risk assessments. Although these are still at a relatively early stage of development – and are not mandatory for country-level programming in all FCV contexts – they present potential for capturing the interconnections between multidimensional challenges in a timely manner so as to inform preventive action across the nexus.<sup>76</sup> A good example that moves in this direction, and importantly, taps into the potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships, is the Compound Risk Monitor developed by the World Bank Global Crisis Risk Platform, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and the Centre for Disaster Protection following the Covid-19 experience. Working towards identifying the overlaps between (both existing and emerging) risks across different dimensions, e.g., related to environment, food, conflict, Covid-19,

<sup>75</sup> See World Bank, *World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence, 2020–2025*, cit.

<sup>76</sup> Authors' conversation with stakeholders, 23 September 2022.

socio-economic and macro-economic factors, and institutional capacity, the Compound Risk Monitor aims to provide early insights for well-targeted early and anticipatory interventions to reduce future humanitarian needs and ensure sustainable development and peace outcomes.<sup>77</sup>

Such joint assessments of compound risks could potentially be further elevated and expanded so that other multilateral actors could use them in their planning or build their compound risk assessment mechanisms. Stakeholders, however, underline that the *evaluation tools that measure the impact of these preventive measures are still at an early stage of development*, and this stands as an area that deserves growing attention and investment in the future.

From hiring climate experts within traditional humanitarian organizations to developing ad hoc task forces to address sustainable development issues, UN agencies and regional organizations have been working towards *building cross-cutting in-house capacity* for several years. These professional figures have been able to steer internal conversations towards a more integrated nexus approach, although the effects of these mechanisms in terms of leading to substantial changes in the way of working have yet to manifest fully. More importantly, in-house capacity alone is insufficient, as the margin to maneuver for the agencies or regional bodies remains largely shaped and constrained by their mandates. And there is only so much they can do alone when dealing with nexus issues.

Collaboration and dialogue between different entities remain essential in building capacity for cross-cutting expertise. One promising approach to further explore might be developing institutional mechanisms that sit at the junction of distinct but interrelated policy spaces and work towards fostering inter-sectorial dialogue and knowledge-sharing in a coordinated fashion, e.g., the Climate-Security Mechanism. In general, activities that enhance *mutual learning through putting multi-sectoral expertise and perspectives into closer dialogue* need to be implemented at international, regional, and national levels, working towards a shared understanding of what crisis prevention and assistance mean.

<sup>77</sup> See OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Review 2021*, December 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/node/3692232>.

However, the increasing dialogue might not be sufficient. Conversation must lead to *synergetic action that focuses on actors' core capacities and builds*

*on complementarities drawn from each partner's comparative advantage* to address nexus challenges in an integrated way. The use of systems approaches that look at the different ramifications of individual concepts (e.g., social protection systems, food systems) might bear the potential to understand better where and when certain actors can make a real difference. Networking of the networks (e.g., as the Global Network Against Food Crises, built in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, is currently attempting to do) could similarly represent a practical approach to better identify correct complementarities and synergies to enhance coordination. A core element of these approaches remains the communality of goals or at least shared guiding principles, which need to be agreed upon by all partners.

*Working towards a shared understanding of nexus challenges and how to address them* is probably the greatest of all challenges identified in this report. Defining collective outcomes that nexus responses in their entirety and interaction should achieve is key to such understanding. While meta-objectives such as the SDGs might provide broad guidance, international, regional, and national actors must agree on collective outcomes that are based on a more concrete set of shared guiding principles and objectives, which are better integrated into local contexts – also for local actors to take ownership of their goals. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has worked towards a definition of what a collective result entails and described it as: “a jointly envisioned result with the aim of addressing and reducing needs, risks and vulnerabilities, requiring the combined effort of humanitarian, development and peace communities and other actors as appropriate”.<sup>78</sup>

This definition heavily focuses on the HDP nexus but clearly states how collective outcomes must look at needs, risks, and vulnerabilities and require combined efforts to be solved. However, the lack of robust evidence on the root causes of nexus challenges makes it difficult to define collective outcomes that are universally agreed upon. Even when collective nexus outcomes are set, they often do little to shape pre-existing frameworks, and the *leadership necessary to bring forward these outcomes* is often lacking.<sup>79</sup> Having the *right incentives* that can effectively yield multi-sectorial and inter-institutional collaboration, rather than motivating competition, is essential to actually generate collective outcomes and synergetic impact; and the role of leadership in setting up these incentives is key.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> See UN IASC, *Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes*, June 2020, p. 2, <https://interagency-standingcommittee.org/node/42010>.

<sup>79</sup> See Lydia Poole with Vance Culbert, *Financing the Nexus: Gaps and Opportunities from a Field Perspective*, Rome, FAO, Norwegian Refugee Council and UNDP, 2019, <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/financing-the-nexus-gaps-and-opportunities-from-a-field-perspective>.

<sup>80</sup> Authors' conversations with stakeholders in the framework of Nexus<sup>25</sup> deliberations.

The *input of local actors* needs to be integrated to *define context-specific, achievable outcomes and increase collaboration with governments in the design of policy actions*. The role of countries affected by crises remains largely ambiguous within the nexus space, although their commitment and political will are essential to obtain long-lasting results.<sup>81</sup> International actors and regional organizations and donors, like the EU, would benefit from further working towards more balanced and inclusive partnerships with target countries. This makes it possible to establish policy priorities that consider both the needs of vulnerable groups and the political preferences and perspectives of the involved parties.

In this context, the relevance of funding cannot be overstated. The World Bank, other development banks, and the IMF have been financing nexus projects in recent years by developing *flexible, multifaceted financing tools*. For example, the multi-donor State and Peacebuilding projects of the World Bank's new FCV strategy can be adopted to support rapid crisis response and foster resilience-building and conflict prevention programs.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, IDA's Refugee and Host Population sub-window funded in 2020 a large-scale durable solutions program for host and refugee communities in consultation with Cameroon and UNHCR, and presented characteristics that allow actors to access funding to finance different activities within an enormous scope.<sup>83</sup> Even in these cases, however, the question of prioritization remains challenging in contexts where multiple challenges intersect. A clear example of such multi-risk situations is provided by conflict-affected contexts that are prone to climate risks, where coordinated action by humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, and climate actors is needed. While multi-stakeholder action in rapidly changing operational contexts would benefit from pooled resources and flexibility, siloed approaches and rigidities that still inform the international aid architecture stand as barriers to funding mechanisms that can enable cross-sectoral collaboration leveraging the comparative advantage of all relevant actors.<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, collaboration and integration in funding and program development – when present – rarely translate to the operational phase when actions are being rolled out at the national level, while multilateral funding tends not to be aligned with existing national financing instruments.<sup>85</sup> *Incentives for partnerships and results-based funding* are necessary steps toward better nexus funding. It would be essential to *define expected results through closer*

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> See World Bank, *State and Peacebuilding Fund: 2021 Annual Report*, July 2021, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/document-detail/099634507212232671/1du083d81c3a007ad-0450908b3e0831536af25a5>.

<sup>83</sup> See International Development Association (IDA) website: *IDA18 Replenishment*, accessed 2 December 2022, <https://ida.worldbank.org/en/replenishments/ida18-replenishment>.

<sup>84</sup> See International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) et al., *Embracing Discomfort. A Call to Enable Finance for Climate-Change Adaptation in Conflict Settings*, October 2022, <https://www.icvanetwork.org/?p=13024>.

<sup>85</sup> See Lydia Poole with Vance Culbert, *Financing the Nexus*, cit.



*engagement with national and local actors* – better considering their priorities, capacities, and financial instruments – and designing funding in closer alignment with these jointly defined results. At the same time, *monitoring and assessment*, when it comes to the outcomes, should not be limited to results understood mainly in terms of relief provided in crisis responses but should also be able to *measure the impact of preventive action*.

Nexus challenges are a reality of our interconnected world. In the last three years alone, the reverberating effects of initially localized crises like *the outbreak of Covid-19* in Wuhan or *the Ukraine crisis* served as a *resounding wake-up call*. These eye-opening events have led to political momentum, leveraging the contributions of relevant multilateral stakeholders to address risks across the nexus environment to prevent full-fledged complex crises.

At the same time, multilateral initiatives must navigate a complex policy landscape and a problematic and often adverse geopolitical context. And keeping up the momentum requires continued effort and political commitment. Key actors and alliances making up – and believing in – the multilateral system at the international, regional, and national level, as well as the non-institutional stakeholders of multilateral governance, need therefore to continue their work aiming at better understanding and responding to nexus challenges through *innovative approaches and strategic partnerships*. This is a critical moment for the transatlantic partnership, together with the entire spectrum of like-minded stakeholders, to further promote integrated, holistic, and multi-actor approaches for improving multilateral governance mechanisms in the face of complex crisis scenarios.

---

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS		
	CMCO	Civil-Military Coordination
	Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
	EU	European Union
	FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
	FCV	Fragility, Conflict and Violence
	G7	Group of Seven
	GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
	GFDRR	Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
	HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
	IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
	ICRC	International Red Cross Committee
	IDPs	Internally Displaced People
	IFIs	International Financial Institutions
	IMF	International Monetary Fund
	IOM	International Organization for Migration
	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
	NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
	OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
	OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
	OECD DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
	Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
	RSW	Regional Sub-Window
	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
	UN	United Nations
	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
	UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
	UNSC	United Nations Security Council
	US	United States of America
	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
	WFP	World Food Programme



**NEXUS<sup>25</sup>** - Shaping Multilateralism is a project by IAI (Istituto Affari Internazionali) in collaboration with the United Nations Foundation. The project, led by Nathalie Tocci at IAI and Michael Werz at the Center for American Progress, is funded by Stiftung Mercator in Germany.

For more information please consult: <http://www.nexus25.org>.

Authors of this paper are Asli Selin Okyay, IAI Senior Fellow, Francesco Iacolla, IAI Research Fellow, Luca Barana, IAI Research Fellow, Margherita Bianchi, Head of the IAI's Energy, Climate and Resources Programme, Michael Werz, Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress in Washington D.C. and Scientific Advisor at IAI, and Thin Lei Win, journalist and researcher.



Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)  
Via dei Montecatini 17, 00186 Rome (Italy)  
Tel: +39 066976831 - [iai@iai.it](mailto:iai@iai.it)  
[www.nexus25.org](http://www.nexus25.org)