

Intersections

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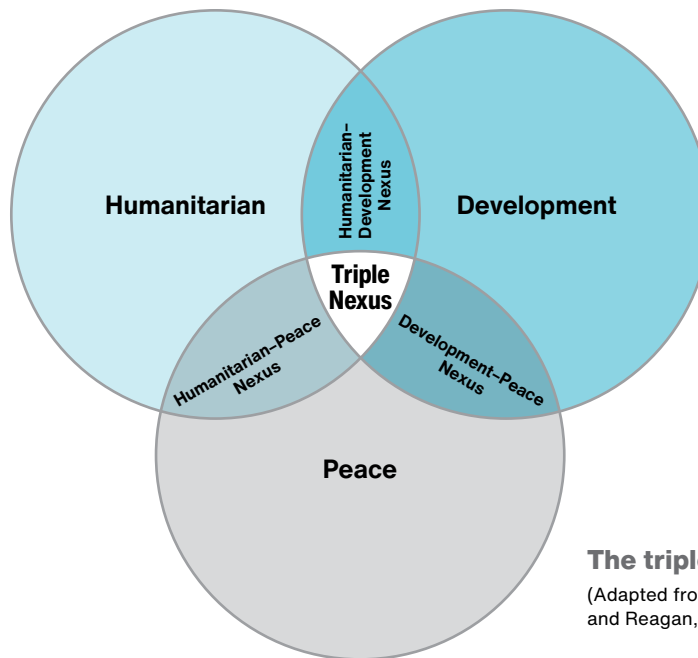
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The humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus, often referred to as the *triple nexus*, has in recent years emerged as a framework to understand and promote interconnectedness between the humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding sectors. The triple nexus approach aims at enhancing coherence and collaboration among organizational actors, attempting to leverage synergies for more effective programming and outcomes. This vision is reflected in recent multilateral commitments, including the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit's call for "A New Way of Working" through increased coordination and cooperation between actors working in crisis- and conflict-affected contexts and the 2019 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) *Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*. This recommendation aims to foster greater coherence among actors working to strengthen resilience in fragile contexts and address the root causes of humanitarian challenges—31 OECD DAC members embraced the recommendation, along with seven United Nations agencies (OECD, 2024).



The triple nexus
(Adapted from Caprini and Reagan, 2019)

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more

Caparini, Marina and Anders Reagan. “Connecting the Dots on the Triple Nexus” November 29, 2019. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Available here: <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2019/connecting-dots-triple-nexus>.

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“MCC advocates for a holistic systems approach to responding to human needs, for breaking down funding and programming silos and for responding comprehensively to today’s complex challenges, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.”

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is a multi-sectoral, faith-based organization working across the three pillars of the triple nexus, carrying out humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding program in partnership with local partner organizations. MCC’s commitment to peacebuilding is rooted in MCC’s identity and mission to address root causes of conflict as integral to humanitarian and development work. MCC has worked to integrate peacebuilding as an equal and essential intervention in response to urgent humanitarian needs that are often directly caused by conflict.

“Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ” is more than just a tagline. It is a foundational part of MCC’s organizational history and identity in response to conflict, violence and injustice globally. MCC had identified the integration of peacebuilding with other programming sectors as a strategic priority. MCC has commissioned a study of its *integrated peacebuilding* programming to assess the effectiveness and coherence of MCC’s efforts and will use these learnings to inform future work. MCC’s strategic commitment to integrated programming positions MCC to promote the triple nexus approach in its advocacy efforts to mobilize international assistance through governments and multilateral organizations. In various sectoral working groups and policy spaces, MCC advocates for a holistic systems approach to responding to human needs, for breaking down funding and programming silos and for responding comprehensively to today’s complex challenges, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Its programming, MCC has for decades reflected a commitment to localization, looking to long-term church and community-based partners to identify desired outcomes and contextualized programming approaches, with flexible funding that can shift across sectors. Many MCC partners do not see their work as confined to a specific sector and are able to nimbly respond to rapidly shifting contexts. During shocks and crises, development and peacebuilding organizations often shift into undertaking emergency humanitarian assistance through various modalities depending on the needs and context, while aligning with core humanitarian principles and standards, later transitioning from emergency response to early recovery programming to build resilience and a foundation for longer-term sustainable development (Sphere, 2018).

MCC’s deep commitment to localization embraces learning and information and experience sharing between MCC and its partners. MCC supports and encourages its partners as they design projects with objectives and outcomes that span the triple nexus. MCC also works strategically with multiple partners whose humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding initiatives complement each other. This issue of *Intersections* features several examples of how MCC and its partners locate their work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and examines opportunities for greater coherence and impact. Authors from a variety of perspectives consider how to implement the triple nexus approach effectively to address the realities of complex challenges around the globe. May this issue spur further conversations among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors about how their efforts might be better coordinated and integrated.

Laura VanderGriendt is an MCC external grants coordinator, based in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, situated on land within the Haldimand Treaty within the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Chonnonton and Haudenosaunee people. This review draws on collaborative writing with MCC colleagues Grace Hercyk, Melody Musser and Samantha Coelho.

A network approach to humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding in Chiapas

In Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state, MCC partners with six civil society organizations that each addresses different dimensions of the spectrum of humanitarian relief, sustainable development and peacebuilding programming. While each of these six organizations has its respective specialty, they work together in close collaboration, complementing and reinforcing each other's work. This network of complementary organizations together addresses a situation of complex, low-intensity conflict in a way that reinforces a triple nexus approach more effectively than any one organization could do alone in the Chiapas context. The state of Chiapas is today marked by an ongoing humanitarian crisis driven by migration pressures, persistent development challenges and a three-decade long history of violence and militarization.

Humanitarian crisis: Chiapas is the first point of crossing for most migrants traveling towards the Mexico/U.S. border from South and Central America. The border between Chiapas and Guatemala has been increasingly militarized as Mexico has acceded to pressure from the United States to prevent migrants from reaching the U.S. border. Between these migrants and those internally displaced by conflict, humanitarian needs have become intense.

Sustainable development challenges: Chiapas is Mexico's poorest state, as well as one of the states with the highest Indigenous population (28.2%). Despite its rich natural resources—Chiapas provides 55% of Mexico's hydroelectric energy—Chiapas suffers from pervasive development challenges, systemic marginalization and government neglect.

Violence and militarization: The 1994 Zapatista uprising is the historical event for which Chiapas is best known internationally. In that revolution, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (National Zapatista Liberation Army, or EZLN) briefly took over several municipalities in the region, demanding recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples. While the uprising itself was brief, state and paramilitary repression ensued for years. Since then, while state and paramilitary violence has diminished, low-intensity armed conflict has persisted, now with the involvement of the transnational armed criminal groups (cartels) active in the rest of Mexico and Latin America, as well as local armed groups and community self-defence groups. This violence has led to internal displacement and humanitarian crises for uprooted people and can undermine the social cohesion necessary for community agriculture projects.

For this article, I interviewed three of MCC's six local partners in the region—Acción Social Samuel Ruiz (ASSR), an Indigenous organization that works on agroecology through ecclesial base communities; Serapaz, a national-level peacebuilding organization with a primarily Indigenous team in Chiapas; and Voces Mesoamericanas-Acción con Pueblos Migrantes (Mesoamerican Voices-Action with Migrant Peoples, VM-APM), a civil society organization focused on assisting migrants of all kinds, including international migrants, seasonal labourers and the internally displaced. MCC's other partners in the region include SiPaz, an international monitoring and observation organization; IESII (Institute of Intercultural Studies and Investigation), another agroecological organization; and CORECO

Learn more

Centre for Humanitarian Action. *The Triple Nexus in Practice: Challenges and Options for Multi-Mandated Organizations*. October 2020. Available for download at: <https://www.chaberlin.org/en/publications/the-triple-nexus-in-practice-challenges-and-options-for-multi-mandated-organisations-2/>.

Sphere Association. *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*. Fourth edition. Geneva, Switzerland. 2018. Available at: www.spherestandards.org/handbook.

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“The state of Chiapas is today marked by an ongoing humanitarian crisis driven by migration pressures, persistent development challenges and a three-decade long history of violence and militarization.”

“The concept of *buen vivir*, or good living, contributes to an understanding of aid, development and peace as interlocking elements of a dignified life.”



In October 2022, Fausto Rodríguez Gómez of Llano Bajo, Chiapas, Mexico, demonstrates the use of an A-frame level, a technique he learned from a training with MCC partner Institute of Intercultural Studies and Research. A.C (IESII). This simple tool helps farmers construct level fields on hill-sides to prevent soil erosion and increase water infiltration. (MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht)

(Commission for the Support of Community Unity and Reconciliation), which works on gender, peace and reconciliation.

These six organizations participate in a tight-knit network of international, national and local ecclesial and civil society organizations that closely collaborate, formally and informally, to address the interconnected needs of communities in Chiapas. Several key factors contribute to the unusual strength of the network of these civil society organizations in Chiapas:

Shared origin: Many of these organizations share a common origin story, belonging to what they call “the family of Samuel Ruiz.” The Catholic bishop of the Diocese of San Cristobal from 1959-1999, Ruiz was a champion for Indigenous peoples and a proponent of liberation theology. During his tenure as bishop, he founded several organizations to respond to the complex set of needs in the region, addressing poverty, conflict, ecumenism, human rights, mediation and international observation. Several of MCC’s partners belong to this “family,” which maintains close ties with the diocese of San Cristobal and embraces a shared set of values that facilitates their common work. Some joke that even organizations not formed by Bishop Ruiz have been “infected” by the values of liberation and solidarity he promoted.

Context: The complex conflict situation in Chiapas makes working in networks not just advantageous, but necessary. Different organizations have different contacts in different areas, and the need for information sharing and monitoring of the political and security situation serves to strengthen coordination and communication between organizations. I discuss the benefits of information sharing for risk management more below.

Culture: Many of the organizations in Chiapas are led by or have significant participation from Indigenous people from the various Maya groups in the region. Indigenous communities have a tradition and culture of solidarity and community decision making that inform the practices of these community-based organizations in Chiapas. The concept of *buen vivir*, or good living, contributes to an understanding of aid, development and peace as interlocking elements of a dignified life. “Peace isn’t just the absence of problems between people, but being in peace because we have food and our basic needs are met,” members of the ASSR team explained.

Coordination: The organizations in San Cristobal—both of the Samuel Ruiz family and others—participate in regular meetings to coordinate activities and analyze their shared context. These wider coordinating bodies include: the Diocese of San Cristobal; Slamalil K’inil (*peacebuilding* or *peace in the land* in Maya Tzeltal), a space for context analysis among peacebuilding organizations in Chiapas; and a San Cristobal-centered security network. The organizations also participate in networks specific to their respective mandates: VM-APM participates in migration networks at national and regional level, Serapaz in peacebuilding networks and ASSR with ecclesial base communities. In addition to these formal and ongoing coordination spaces, organizations collaborate on an ongoing, informal basis and as emergencies arise.

Participation in networks yields multiple benefits for MCC’s partners in Chiapas, including:

Risk management: The insecurity created by the conflict in Chiapas affects the operations of all humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding organizations. Anyone leaving San Cristobal for rural communities requires up-to-date information on the political climate in order to carry out workshops, monitoring visits and mediations safely and effectively. Organizations distributing aid, like VM-APM, or doing agroecological development work, like ASSR, benefit from the rigorous context analysis provided by peacebuilding organizations like Serapaz and SiPaz. At the same time, organizations like VM-APM and ASSR can reinforce this conflict analysis by providing valuable information from migrant and *campesino* communities where those organizations have a stronger on-the-ground presence. Organizations also support each other when issuing communiqués or participating in other advocacy actions that might be too dangerous to do alone. A communiqué signed by multiple, diverse organizations provides safety in numbers and a visible show of widespread support.

Increased capacity: The needs in Chiapas are immense—no one organization can address them all. The organizations interviewed for this article described being able to respond to a wider variety of situations by coordinating among several organizations, assigning different tasks to different organizations according to their strengths. One example highlighted by all three organizations was the case of Frontera Comalapa, a region on the Mexico/Guatemala border that had been experiencing displacement and humanitarian crisis as armed groups fight over the territory. Aid, development and peace organizations met together several times to evaluate how they could respond, carefully analyzing the risk of venturing into this dangerous territory. Organizations with contacts in the diocese were able to use that connection to send representatives for a monitoring visit and to distribute clothing and food basics. Organizations that decided the situation was too dangerous contributed vehicles or sourced food aid from the communities. In terms of advocacy, smaller local organizations can benefit from the reach offered by organizations with national and international connections like Serapaz or VM-APM.

VM-APM identified flexible funding as something that enabled them to quickly respond to emergency situations. While they do not necessarily specialize in emergency relief, they work with migrants and often find themselves needing to respond to quickly escalating crises. Having flexible funding not committed to specific sectors or projects allows VM-APM to respond to emerging needs in a timely fashion.

Knowledge sharing: Many of MCC's Chiapas-based partners collaborate to offer workshops on subjects about which they are not themselves experts—VM-APM has invited CORECO to facilitate workshops on gender, one of CORECO's specialties, and VM-APM also works closely with Serapaz, both in Chiapas and in Mexico City. Through cultivating these relationships, MCC's partners naturally find that humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding efforts strengthen and reinforce each other. Jorge Hernandez from Serapaz's Chiapas team observes that "there's not peace with development." He continues: "we're living in a humanitarian crisis that affects peace," and that crisis "crosses all these 'concepts' we have as human beings."

This close-knit network of humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding organizations in Chiapas certainly faces challenges. Development and peace initiatives typically require medium- to long-term commitment,

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“ In Chiapas, civil society organizations feel as if they are in a constant state of emergency, making it difficult to set aside time and resources for long-term planning when they are constantly overwhelmed by crisis after crisis.”

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Serapaz website (Spanish).
Available at: <https://serapaz.org.mx/>.

Voces Mesoamericanas (VM-APM) website (Spanish).
Available at: <https://vocesmesoamericanas.org/>.

Reports and context analysis in English and Spanish from SiPaz.
Available at: <https://www.sipaz.org/?lang=en>.

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“Protracted conflicts in turn generate prolonged humanitarian needs, displacement and instability. Seeking to identify sustainable solutions to protracted conflict requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach to address dynamics that exacerbate and fuel conflicts.”

taking time and dedication to come to fruition. In Chiapas, civil society organizations feel as if they are in a constant state of emergency, making it difficult to set aside time and resources for long-term planning when they are constantly overwhelmed by crisis after crisis. In these situations, communities often ask for immediate humanitarian aid, which can be difficult for development and peacebuilding organizations to provide. The need for thorough risk analysis sometimes means that urgent humanitarian aid is delayed as organizations determine the safest way to respond. Successful collaboration with other organizations can sometimes overcome this challenge, but when a humanitarian crisis is so widespread, almost all organizations find themselves in similar positions.

A change in the political climate in Mexico over the last presidential administration has taken a toll on network unity. Networks of largely left-wing civil society and ecclesial organizations were once united against a “common enemy:” first the repressive dictatorship of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) which governed Mexico from 1930 until 2000, and later the militaristic, right-wing PAN administrations that ruled from 2000-2012. Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador’s populist center-left government (2018-2024) was granted a certain amount of legitimacy among some branches of Mexican civil society, leading to rifts in some the networks between those who support the current administration and those critical of its populist and authoritarian tendencies.

Despite these challenges, MCC’s partners in Chiapas continue to collaborate and coordinate their humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding initiatives. Such complementary programming reflects the triple nexus understanding that these different forms of response are interconnected and must shape and inform each other.

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Enhancing resilience through the triple nexus in DR Congo

In the last decade, global conflicts and related crises have surged, with prolonged conflicts and increased displacement. Since 2014, the number of displaced people has nearly doubled from around 60 million to 120 million in May 2024 (UN, 2024). Today, over 700 million people worldwide live in extreme poverty, of which 300 million need humanitarian assistance due to conflicts and climate emergencies (UNOCHA, 2024). Trends suggest that conflict will continue to drive displacement and poverty. By 2030, 86% of people in extreme poverty are expected to live in fragile and conflict-affected areas (OECD, 2022).

While conflict continues to drive humanitarian needs, factors such as gender and economic inequalities, discrimination, political instability and migration shape vulnerabilities before, during and after crises, with climate and conflict risks overlapping to create complex needs. The traditional humanitarian responses are driven by immediate needs assessment and short-term funding cycles. This short-term approach overlooks underlying

causes of crises and the necessity for long-term resilience. Local stakeholders have limited involvement in decision making, hence limiting the sustainability of interventions and the ability of local communities to recover independently and resiliently.

Given these challenges, integrated programming is crucial for addressing protracted conflicts and maximizing impact, efficiency and sustainability. MCC's recent participation in the Humanitarian Early Recovery and Development (HERD) project in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) exemplifies the importance of integrated programming. Funded by Global Affairs Canada through Canadian Foodgrains Bank, HERD involved multiple CFGB members and their partners. MCC joined HERD in partnership with Eglise du Christ du Congo-Ministère des Réfugiés et des Urgences (ECC MERU) in North Kivu, adapting a multi-dimensional approach that integrates humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts.

Context: Recurring conflicts in the eastern DR Congo have resulted in waves of internally displaced persons (IDPs) for years. These protracted conflicts are characterized by their long duration, complexity and interplay of several factors that engender, exacerbate and sustain these conflicts. Protracted conflicts in turn generate prolonged humanitarian needs, displacement and instability. Seeking to identify sustainable solutions to protracted conflict requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach to address dynamics that exacerbate and fuel conflicts. Weak conflict resolution mechanisms fuels conflicts in eastern DR Congo, leading to increased violence. These trends highlight the link between the immediate needs of people and pre-existing inequalities. A striking example is the quest for justice between women and men. These inequalities are amplified by recurring crises. Humanitarian initiatives frequently neglect analyzing gender relations and ensuring women's participation.

Humanitarian response efforts are generally conducted by different organizations through segmented and specialized approaches, focusing primarily on immediate relief and short-term needs. These responses are often characterized by distinct phases such as emergency relief, early recovery and longer-term development, with each phase managed independently by different actors. Each actor operates with its own objectives and strategies, leading to fragmented and overlapping efforts. Coordination between sectors is limited, reducing overall efficiency and effectiveness. By fostering collaboration among all stakeholders (including civil society organizations, local authorities, the Congolese government and displaced persons and others affected by conflict) and by integrating humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts, nexus programming provides a more cohesive and effective response to prolonged and dynamic crises.

The HERD initiative in eastern DR Congo integrated humanitarian, development and peacebuilding elements:

Humanitarian: Given the ongoing conflicts in their places of origin, the HERD project implementation in North Kivu began with emergency, life-saving food assistance for both displaced households and host families in extremely vulnerable situations classified as phase 4 in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) model. This initiative ensured immediate needs were met while also laying the foundation for long-term recovery and self-resilience. In-kind food distribution ensured that women, men, girls and boys had immediate access to nutritious food.

“By fostering collaboration among all stakeholders (including civil society organizations, local authorities, the Congolese government and displaced persons and others affected by conflict) and by integrating humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts, nexus programming provides a more cohesive and effective response to prolonged and dynamic crises.”



In this 2021 photo, Furaha Kabale, a farmer in Shasha trained by ECC MERU in new agricultural skills with support from MCC, transforms her small plot into a source of food security for her family. This initiative was part of the CFGB HERD project in DR Congo. (ECC MERU/Prince Mangala Mutoka)

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“Worldwide Levels of Forced Displacement Hit New High.” June 12, 2024. UNHCR. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/06/1150981>.

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While humanitarian and development activities were critical in achieving improved food security and resilience, these outcomes would have been difficult to achieve sustainably without the support of peacebuilding activities.”

Development: While food assistance played a critical role in improving short-term food security, the HERD project also sought to provide sustainable solutions for displaced individuals. HERD recognized the significance of development initiatives such as village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) and agriculture programs aimed at empowering communities and promoting resilience among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in eastern Congo. A total of three hundred individuals participated in VSLAs set up by the HERD project and, thanks to VSLA loans, established income generating activities to diversify their income. The VSLAs provided regular loans to their members, emphasizing financial inclusion and empowerment within communities. In addition, both displaced families and the host community benefited from agricultural training, boosting food availability and access through increased yields and diversified crop production. Together these activities not only helped displaced households address their basic needs, but also served to boost food systems and economic activity in their host communities.

Peacebuilding: While humanitarian and development activities were critical in achieving improved food security and resilience, these outcomes would have been difficult to achieve sustainably without the support of peacebuilding activities. The reemergence of armed groups and the expansion of their territory exacerbated conflicts at the community level and household level. Underlying conflict dynamics such as fragile social cohesion, gender-based violence and land conflicts could have easily derailed all progress made by humanitarian and development activities. However, with the integration of peace infrastructure through Women Situation Rooms (WSR), the HERD initiative was able to maximize community ownership of peacebuilding initiatives.

Women Situation Rooms are women-led, multi-ethnic, grassroots peacebuilding groups composed of both men and women that organize themselves with the objective of addressing conflict in their communities. They support important community conversations on gender-based violence, organize activities that promote social cohesion and address conflicts ranging from household disputes to mediation with armed groups. To this end, MCC and ECC MERU have organized training on the WSR model as well as peacebuilding skills such as mediation, reconciliation and conflict analysis. The WSR model has played a significant role in supporting local leaders in peacebuilding initiatives that ensured improved integration of displaced families into the host community, promoted better collaboration and economic planning within the household and protected progress made in food security and livelihood diversification made possible by humanitarian and development activities.

Recent trends suggest that displacement and humanitarian needs will continue to be driven by complex, recurring and protracted conflicts in eastern Congo and beyond. Where traditional programming approaches have been too siloed, returning limited sustainable peace and development outcomes, the triple nexus approach provides an alternative. The HERD project in eastern DR Congo demonstrates that when coordinated effectively, integrated triple nexus programming can adapt to and address the unique and complex challenges that conflict-affected communities face and can better deliver the outcomes vulnerable communities deserve.

Prince Mangala Mutoka is program manager for ECC MERU NK, based in Goma, DR Congo. Saramba Josphine is MCC DR Congo humanitarian coordinator and Jacob Yoder is MCC DR Congo representative, with both based in Goma.

Integrated impact: strengthening a nexus-based humanitarian approach in Syria

Every few years, new trends emerge in humanitarian and development work. Over the last decade, donor governments and humanitarian actors have increasingly focused on localization of humanitarian and development work and the empowerment of local actors, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), protection and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and crisis response and preparedness for future shocks. Recently, the conversation around the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, or triple nexus, has also gained momentum.

MCC's highlights that it works at "relief, development and peace in the name of Christ." That would seem to imply that MCC undertakes that work in an integrated way. However, we must go beyond the surface to examine what the triple nexus means in practice and what MCC and other organizations need to further reflect on in order to implement an integrated approach. More than just a mandate to work in these sectors, nexus programming means that program design should include intentional outcome-level program planning with an integrated approach for effective long-term impact.


The past decade has witnessed a surge in global conflicts, unprecedented displacement and an increase in natural disasters, often linked to climate change. In 2023, a record 339 million people required humanitarian assistance and protection, marking a significant increase from previous years (OHCA GHO, 2023). Additionally, many crises have become protracted crises, such as the Syrian conflict, now in its fourteenth year with no end in sight. These conditions highlight the urgent need for integrated approaches that address root causes and promote long-term human flourishing.

Despite the apparent simplicity of the triple nexus, several challenges hinder its implementation:

Funding constraints: Donor funding remains siloed, with NGOs often needing to apply for separate grants for emergency response, development and peacebuilding projects. Institutional donors have historically maintained rigid funding streams, limiting flexibility for a holistic response.

Government policies: Political agendas often clash with humanitarian work. For example, Western governments' policies towards Syria, including heavy sanctions, prevent a shift from humanitarian response to development, keeping the country in a chronic cycle of humanitarian aid. Similarly, host countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Türkiye, which accommodate over seven million Syrian refugees, are reluctant to discuss durable solutions, fearing further integration of refugees into their societies.

Peacebuilding sensitivities: Peacebuilding efforts must not cause further harm or compromise impartiality, neutrality and independence, especially in conflict zones. Governments may be suspicious of NGO agendas, fearing they might favor one group over another or promote supposedly "Western" values like democracy and human rights. Local actors must navigate these complexities, including language around "peacebuilding," to gain trust.

 **More than just a mandate to work in humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding, nexus programming means that program design should include intentional outcome-level program planning with an integrated approach for effective long-term impact."**

Visible damage from the February 2023 earthquakes in the streets of Jabli, a remote city in Latakia Governorate, Syria, on September 27, 2023. (FDCD Photo)



Additionally, humanitarian aid can be manipulated to serve local political agendas, exacerbating conflicts. NGOs and donors must conduct thorough conflict analyses to understand these dynamics better. Furthermore, partners may have expertise in a specific area (such as peacebuilding) but lack the capability or positioning to respond more holistically. Despite these challenges, MCC is uniquely positioned to adopt a stronger integrated approach due to several factors:

“MCC’s funding from diverse sources (including churches, individual donors, fundraising sales and social enterprises, alongside government and institutional funding), allows for greater flexibility in program design.”

Flexible programming: MCC’s funding from diverse sources (including churches, individual donors, fundraising sales and social enterprises, alongside government and institutional funding) allows for greater flexibility in program design. With these diverse funding streams, MCC can implement longer-term projects and think strategically about the triple nexus approach. Even with a standard three-year project cycle, MCC can design programs with an eye toward longer-term impact. The possibility of extending project cycles can be part of a comprehensive, integrated strategy established from the outset. True transformation takes time and thoughtful planning from the very beginning.

Disaster response to early recovery programming: MCC’s long-term partnership approach has meant that when a humanitarian response is required, existing local partners are quick to pivot from existing programming areas (e.g., education, peacebuilding, food security, etc.) to responding to critical needs. This approach also means that MCC’s local partners are uniquely placed to continue responding to the needs of affected communities to get them back on track with long-term development objectives. Examples can be taken from MCC responses to earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal, where partners quickly pivoted to providing food assistance and shelter support in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes, and then pivoted again to a secondary response phase of providing community mental health supports, improved housing reconstruction planning and addressing earthquake affected livelihood infrastructure in efforts to mitigate long-term impacts of the initial shocks.

Advocacy: MCC’s public policy advocacy in Ottawa, Washington, D.C. and at the United Nations plays a crucial role in pushing for more inte-

grated, long-term funding opportunities from institutional donors and UN platforms, addressing the current disconnect in the triple nexus discussion with siloed funding and short-term projects. They also advocate for policy changes when it comes to durable solutions that facilitate the transition from humanitarian aid to early recovery and development work, particularly in protracted crises like Syria.

Case study: MCC's response to the 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake illustrates its potential for integrated approaches. MCC had a long history of programming in Syria, predating the current crisis. Since the crisis began in 2012, MCC has programmed over US\$47 million through various humanitarian response projects, including emergency food assistance, WASH and non-food items (NFIs). When the earthquake hit, MCC and partners were ready to respond quickly to the disaster in Aleppo, Tartous and Latakia governorates.

As with most MCC emergency responses, an initial phase included responding to immediate food, hygiene, shelter and winterization needs, with multi-purpose cash assistance being one key element of the response. Due to the past decade of conflict in Syria, many buildings had previously been impacted by war and neglect, making them vulnerable to shocks from the earthquake. Many families had also been displaced by conflict and were living in unfinished and unsafe buildings creating higher risk for collapse. MCC staff in the region were able to travel affected areas, both in the immediate aftermath and in the months following, to meet with partners and assess needs and capacity for response.

Based on these partner assessments, the MCC Lebanon, Syria and Iraq team outlined a longer-term strategy which incorporated ongoing emergency response efforts alongside early livelihoods recovery programming and capacity strengthening with partners. This response aims to promote long-term resilience through the implementation of livelihood recovery programs and infrastructure restoration which prioritizes the repair and rehabilitation of homes damaged by the earthquake to support the longer-term recovery process. It also provides psychosocial support programming to address the well-being of affected individuals, including trauma counseling and community resilience building activities.

This integrated response strategy, based on a triple nexus approach, required time and deliberate planning, highlighting the necessity of intentionality in responding to large humanitarian crises and the importance of taking the time to assess the needs highlighted by affected communities alongside partner strengths and capacities for response. The availability of designated response funding was critical, allowing for an integrated, multi-sectoral response. However, even smaller disaster responses can and should be shaped by a focus on sustainable impact beyond the humanitarian assistance phase, guided by the question, "How do we build back better?"

With MCC's diverse range of partners and programs, the Türkiye-Syria earthquake response leveraged partners' expertise across various areas, contributing to a comprehensive integrated strategy. This approach acknowledges that while individual partners may not be equipped to address multiple areas independently, they can collaborate effectively as part of a broader response that addresses both immediate and long-term needs. A nexus approach to programming in humanitarian settings does not necessarily need to be confined to a single project or partner but can take a

“ MCC’s long-term partnership approach has meant that when a humanitarian response is required, existing local partners are quick to pivot from existing programming areas . . . to responding to critical needs. This approach also means that MCC’s local partners are uniquely placed to continue responding to the needs of affected communities to get them back on track with long-term development objectives.”

“ While individual partners may not be equipped to address multiple areas independently, they can collaborate effectively as part of a broader response that addresses both immediate and long-term needs.”

broader approach to ensure partners can utilize their strengths and capacities in ways that are complementary. This approach requires that MCC must not only be responsive to emerging needs, but actively engage with partners on forward-facing strategies for medium- and long-term response planning.

The triple nexus conversation is complex, involving challenges related to funding, government policies and political sensitivities related to peacebuilding initiatives. MCC's flexible funding, strategic long-term thinking, strong local partnerships and advocacy efforts position it well to advance this integrated approach. By stepping back and asking how we can help communities move from merely surviving to thriving, MCC and other organizations that share this outlook can lead the way in promoting sustainable, interconnected humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts.

Garry Mayhew was formerly MCC representative for Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, based in Beirut, where he lived from 2017–2024. Annie Loewen is program manager in MCC's planning, learning and disaster response department and is based on Treaty One territory in Winnipeg.

Cultivating and consolidating peace in Colombia

“ Weapons can be silenced, and agreements can be reached between the state and non-state combatants, but if the conditions that generated violent conflicts are not transformed, the goal of lasting peace will not be possible.”

Sembradopaz is an MCC partner located in the Caribbean region in the north of Colombia, working in the 15 municipalities of the sub-region of Montes de Maria. In programming designed to cultivate and consolidate peace and to silence the guns in Colombia, Sembradopaz has found it necessary to satisfy the fundamental needs of citizens. Talking about peace when people are hungry is difficult. As the popular saying goes, “Peace with hunger does not last.”

Weapons can be silenced, and agreements can be reached between the state and non-state combatants, but if the conditions that generated violent conflicts are not transformed, the goal of lasting peace will not be possible. Poverty, injustice and hunger pose significant challenges to peacebuilding efforts. In 2016, Colombia's national government signed an agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia FARC-EP, entitled “Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace.” This agreement represented a major achievement, winning President Juan Manuel Santos the Nobel Peace Prize. However, as the improvements to Colombia's socio-economic conditions specified in the agreement, such as the right and access to food, health, work and security, have not been realized, the root causes of conflict remain present, jeopardizing stability.

Addressing the basic shelter, food and protection needs of people is essential in transforming armed conflict. Humanitarian assistance is required to meet basic needs. However, for conflict-affected communities to heal and to reestablish themselves psychosocially and economically, we need to help these communities to cultivate strategies and tools that help them survive without depending on humanitarian assistance. Longer-term development focused programming, or what Sembradopaz terms *economy for good living*, fosters that independence. In cooperation with the state, civil society organizations such as Sembradopaz can influence the creation of new production,

housing and security projects that help citizens improve their economic situation. The movement from vulnerability to sustainability is the transformation of a survivor who has suffered the ravages of armed and structural violence into one who is liberated to become an informed, empowered citizen.

Sembrandopaz works with communities in Montes de María which have been affected by the social, political and armed conflict to restore individual and community lives. To illustrate the work Sembrandopaz does in communities, one may think of the flight of a bird. The bird has two wings, which must be equal and move together harmoniously. One of these wings is *political culture*, where communities must learn to organise, dialogue, transform local conflicts, learn about the state and how it works and develop initiatives for the betterment of the community. Sembrandopaz's model of citizen empowerment employs the *Citizens' Agoras* method, which consists of organising the different sectors that exist in a particular municipality, such as community action councils or neighbourhood councils, the education sector, young people, women, ethnic groups, LGBTQIA+ people and churches, in such a way that they are integrated in order to be able to present proposals and be “watchdogs” of local administrations, monitoring progress toward sustainable peace and development.

The other wing is *economics for the good life*. We start from the principle that *money is not wealth alone*—it is a tool used to buy goods, ideas and services that are necessary to live well. Therefore, if money is not wealth, *the lack of money is not poverty*. Communities must understand that they have a piggy bank made up of social capital, such as the trust that allows them to cooperate, solidarity, skills and individual and communal experiences that give them the opportunity to produce without damaging nature. The promotion of agroecology, which supports environmentally friendly family production, reinforces these understandings. A small farm called Villa Barbara showcases this community work that contributes to food security and at the same time restores the forest ecosystem. The care for and conservation of the tropical dry forest ecosystem is crucial to long-term community well being. With Sembrandopaz's accompaniment, a village in El Salado in the municipality of Carmen de Bolivar is restoring the nature reserve of 410 H through these agroecology methods.

In this metaphor for holistic community well-being, the bird cannot stay in the air, but must eventually land on the earth. For this it has two legs, one of which is *ethics and spirituality*. Ethics is here understood as respect, a commitment to truth, nonviolence and care for the environment. Spirituality, meanwhile, is more than religiosity—it names an understanding that individually and communally we are part of the context of the human race and that in any person we can see the reflection of God and of our shared humanity. The other leg represents *aesthetics and art*. As humans, we need and long to understand beauty, be it reflected in a sunset, a human face or the symbolic language of art, such as music, painting, dance and theater. Beauty in these many forms is key to consolidating peace. Art can bring tranquility and serenity of spirit—it can also help transform the pain of trauma through acts of historical memory can be part of restoring relationships and fostering community well-being.

For more than 20 years, Sembrandopaz has sought to foster holistic well-being for Colombian communities, through work that embraces the interconnectedness of humanitarian assistance, community development and peacebuilding. This work requires faith and hope, the faith reflected

“ The movement from vulnerability to sustainability is the transformation of a survivor who has suffered the ravages of armed and structural violence into one who is liberated to become an informed, empowered citizen.”



In July 2023, Oscar Torres demonstrates how to mix a dry organic fertilizer made from manure, rice husks, and river sand at Finca Villa Santa Barbara. At the finca, Sembrandopaz teaches new farming techniques, including ones that will help farmers adapt to climate change and protect the environment. The farm also rescues and recuperates native seed varieties in danger of being lost and provides water to the surrounding community from the only well for miles around. (MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht)

“Communities must understand that they have a piggy bank made up of social capital, such as the trust that allows them to cooperate, solidarity, skills and individual and communal experiences that give them the opportunity to produce without damaging nature.”



In January 2022, Shila Ranidash shows quail eggs from birds she raises, as part of a food security and livelihoods project carried out by MCC partner Peoples Union of the Marginalized Development Organization (PUMDO) for marginalized households from the Bagjana and Atapur unions of Panchbibi upazila, Joypurhat district. The project engages 1,000 households from primarily ethnic minority communities, with a mix of Muslims, Hindus and Christians. Ranidash sells the eggs for household income. (MCC photo/Dave Klassen)

as one looks at the seed of a tree that one will one day taste its sweet fruit. We extend the invitation for future generations to sit under the shade of the tree that has been planted but has not yet grown.

Ricardo Esquivia Ballestas is director of Sembrandopaz, an MCC Colombia partner. Etel Salas is project coordinator with Sembrandopaz. Both are located in Sincelejo, Sucre, Colombia.

Towards integrated peace and development in Bangladesh

From March through December of 1971, Bangladesh (previously East Pakistan) fought a war for independence from Pakistan. The war broke out when Pakistan’s leaders did not accept the results of elections in which the party from East Pakistan won the majority in parliament. In Joypurhat, in the north of Bengal, Urdu-speaking people that were seen as supportive of the west Pakistani army faced persecution and violence. The civil war compounded existing discrimination towards ethnic minority groups, including those from the Santhal, Urao, Pahan and Malo communities. Peoples Union of the Marginalized Development Organization (PUMDO), a current MCC partner in Bangladesh, has been working in Joypurhat district since that time. The organization was started to combat discrimination and support ethnic minority rights in the region. The legacy of the civil war has implications today in this district, with heightened political and religious violence compared to other areas in Bangladesh.

The area’s climate and environmental challenges led partner PUMDO and MCC to develop the “Better Livelihood and Food Security for the Marginalized” project, referred to below as BLFM. Though not designed as a triple nexus project, this project’s conflict-sensitive design and implementation, or *peace lens*, demonstrates some of the strategies that can be utilized to integrate peacebuilding approaches into sustainable development programming.

First, MCC in Bangladesh works for peace in multiple ways, spanning from the minimum of “do no harm” to targeted peacebuilding programming. Our conceptualization of peace involves holistic peace work with long-term reconciliation between persons, the earth and God, a vision named by the biblical concept of *shalom*. This conceptualization puts *right relationships* at the centre of relief or development project design. This long-term peace outlook informs our sustainable development work in Bangladesh. Thinking about peace in this way can address challenges of including a peace outcome into relief and development projects, as is raised in debates around the triple nexus as a programming approach (DiDijkzeul, D., Addis, A., 2022).

Second, to address and transform root causes of conflict, humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors must have deep knowledge of the project’s target area and community conflict dynamics. PUMDO brings strong community relationships and a deep understanding of the context in Joypurhat district, with 80% of BLFM staff stemming from the communities in which this livelihoods and food security project operates, contributing to strong trust between PUMDO and communities in Joypurhat.

A comprehensive situational assessment plays an important part in the design of a conflict-sensitive project. Through conflict analysis, a rich

understanding of the underlying conflicts can be integrated into the project design. Situational assessments that elicit localized knowledge of communities' distinctive resources, strengths and challenges contribute to the design of sustainable and appropriate activities. For the BLFM project, the bulk of the planning took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, so visits to and interaction with community members was limited by restrictions. Even with those challenges, consultation with key community members still occurred. These consultations highlighted that tensions between the majority Muslim Bengali and ethnic minority communities had deteriorated, with the latter facing racism and lack of access to land. The situation assessment also revealed, compared to Muslim Bengali farmers, ethnic minority farmers had inadequate access to government service providers and received fewer agricultural inputs. Building on this assessment, the BLFM project targeted project participants from both the ethnic minority communities and the Bengali community historically living amongst each other in the Joypurhat region.

Third, the design of project activities is critical for conflict-sensitive development programming. While the BLFM project's activities and outcomes focused on food security and livelihoods, the project also functions to address community social cohesion. Regular *yard meetings* are a key component of the BLFM initiative, bringing 15-20 women together on a weekly basis to participate in trainings and demonstrations of agricultural technologies. Yard meetings bring women from different ethnic and religious background into regular interaction, building social cohesion in the process. The BLFM project also connects participating farmers with government service providers from health, social welfare, youth development and agriculture departments, giving them not only access to resources but also connecting government departments with underserved communities, establishing relationships that last beyond the end of the project. The project design also planned for the establishment of self-help groups to continue after project completion. The self-help groups bring together women and give them ownership of what they have learned. These self-help groups are seeking national registration, which would give them more options for loans and government support in the future.

The *peace lens outlook* of the BLFM project can provide development projects a stepping stone towards integrated programming. MCC Bangladesh is currently in the process of planning for fuller integration of peace outcomes as we design future food security projects in response to the impact of climate change. In our situational assessments, we have used the conflict tree tool and interviews to understand main conflict drivers. We have found gender inequality and discrimination toward women at the household and community levels, alongside *climate trauma* engendered by repeated displacements by hurricanes and floods of increasing frequency and severity. Building on these assessments, we are designing programming with the outcomes of reduced climate trauma among vulnerable people and increased equity of men and women in households and agricultural roles alongside climate change adaption activities. Through these planned initiatives, MCC Bangladesh and its partners will seek to work towards integrating peace-building into food security and livelihoods programming that holistically addresses the vulnerabilities of communities affected by climate change and legacies of conflict and discrimination.

Chad Stout is the planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting coordinator for MCC Bangladesh, based in Bogura.

“ Through conflict analysis, a rich understanding of the underlying conflicts can be integrated into the project design. Situational assessments that elicit localized knowledge of communities' distinctive resources, strengths and challenges contribute to the design of sustainable and appropriate activities.”

Learn more

Dijkzeul, D., Addis, A. “Humanitarian–Development Integration? Comparing ‘Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development,’ ‘Early Recovery,’ ‘Resilience’ and the ‘Triple Nexus’” In Preuß, H.J., Beier, C., Messner, D. Eds. *Forced Displacement and Migration*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-32902-0_4.

Advocating for the triple nexus

MCC's advocacy efforts actively promote the triple nexus for better coordinated international development policy. These advocacy initiatives reflect the call for the United Nations (UN) and governments, including Canada's, to respond to global challenges through flexible, responsive and integrated policies, programming approaches and funding mechanisms. In multilateral and national institutional spaces, civil society can play a valuable role to promote and advance more effective structures, policy and implementation of the principles of the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding (HDP) nexus.

The United Nations (UN) is a complex system of political, peacebuilding, humanitarian and development agencies. The number of people living in conflict-affected areas globally has increased. As humanitarian crises shift from immediate emergencies toward protracted realities, the importance of the triple nexus approach increases. The UN relies on several agencies to lead its efforts to work at humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding in an integrated way. The Peacebuilding Support Office plays a designated hinge role, responsible for bringing multiple agencies with different mandates together and encouraging cooperation between the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

 **MCC's advocacy efforts actively promote the triple nexus for better coordinated international development policy."**

One major challenge that the UN faces in implementing the triple nexus approach is the lack of understanding from high-level stakeholders around what the triple nexus is and how it is administered. Given the lack of awareness and understanding around the triple nexus at the UN, providing education about the importance of integrating humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding efforts is a vital role that civil society plays. The UN has been critiqued as a bloated humanitarian organization that has lost its founding principle of building peace, instead falling prey to an endless cycle of conflict and providing humanitarian relief. United Nations agencies would do well to embrace the triple nexus, coupling relief and development efforts with peacebuilding initiatives to transition from endless cycles of violence to a durable peace for all.

MCC is uniquely positioned to advocate for this work at the UN, as one of the few NGOs in the civil society space not solely devoted to either relief or development. MCC has remarkable resources in our programs on the ground who have the knowledge and local credibility to work at the grass-roots level and share this expertise at policymaking level. The MCC UN office is a member of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council, where we meet regularly not just with members of the Security Council but also heads of different UN departments, which allows for advocacy opportunities to raise the triple nexus approach as a solution at the highest level.

The United Nations is hosting the Summit of the Future in September 2024, bringing world leaders together to forge an international consensus on building a better present and future. The Summit's anticipated key achievement will be to adopt a *Pact of the Future* as its final product. Effective global cooperation is at a low, with member nations and UN agencies operating within an environment of extreme mistrust, "using outdated structures that no longer reflect today's political and economic realities." Integrating humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding moves beyond outdated approaches, recognizing that coordinated, integrated

action is an essential part of revitalizing global cooperation and of effectively delivering peace, stability and prosperity for all.

In Canada, the triple nexus discourse has gained momentum in international development policy at the level of making commitments, even as implementation of that commitment in practice has proven slower. Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) have long integrated humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding in their work but for the triple nexus approach to be fully realized, the full support of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is needed. Full support includes increased funding opportunities, better collaboration with CSOs and the strategic and intentional implementation of the recommendations for increased commitments by donor governments to integrated programming advanced by the Office for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee. Nexus projects funded by GAC, such as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank-led HERD project, have demonstrated significant impact. Civil society partners eagerly await further opportunities to carry out such integrated initiatives. Collective sectoral advocacy plays an important role in pushing for government accountability, more integrated programming and more efficient funding mechanisms that support the triple nexus approach.

The implementation of the triple nexus, though worthwhile, also presents tremendous challenges for GAC with its siloed approaches and limited resources. A recently announced restructuring process presents opportunities for GAC to be organized in a way that reflects the nexus approach. Civil society hopes that a restructured GAC will place a high value on collaboration, pooling resources, coordination and complementarity.

MCC advocates in coalition with other like-minded organizations. The newly formed triple nexus multi-sectoral working group in Canada, of which MCC is a part, seeks to achieve several objectives. The group aims to engage GAC and work collaboratively to learn about and address the challenges that hinder policymakers from being able to fund and support triple nexus initiatives. In addition to this, the group aims to ensure that the nexus agenda is a priority in the Canadian context. The group worked towards this goal through two main activities in 2024: a triple nexus research project and a session as part of Cooperation Canada's "Futures Festival" in October 2024. The session will engage stakeholders from both the civil society and public sectors to talk about practical solutions and encourage innovative thinking and networking.

The research project commissioned by the working group will survey and analyze Canadian CSOs' implementation of triple nexus programming in the past five years, assessing the extent to which organizations were able to implement nexus programming and the challenges, lessons and best practices they learned doing so. Further, the study will assess the impact of nexus programming and its ability to address complex problems and provide sustainable solutions. Perhaps more importantly, the study will provide evidence-based research that will strengthen advocacy efforts and provide specific recommendations that Canadian CSOs can share with stakeholders in order to make Canadian government-funded development projects more impactful.

While civil servants have the knowledge to engage in technical discussions about the triple nexus, the concept can be new for many politicians. When we engage in conversation about triple nexus with policymakers, we can



UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). Available at: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/humanitarian-development-and-peace-nexus>.

UN New Agenda for Peace. Available at: <https://dppa.un.org/en/a-new-agenda-for-peace>.

NGO Working Group on the Security Council, Available at: <https://www.ngowgsc.org/>.

United Nations. Summit of the Future Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>.

Cooperation Canada Futures Festival. Available at: <https://cooperation.ca/international-cooperation-futures-festival/>.



Civil society hopes that a restructured Global Affairs Canada will place a high value on collaboration, pooling resources, coordination and complementarity."

ff **When we engage in conversation about triple nexus with policymakers, we can talk about its effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes and prioritizing the prevention and transformation of conflict.”**

talk about its effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes and prioritizing the prevention and transformation of conflict. Civil society actors can assure members of all political parties that it is in the best interest of all stakeholders to implement the nexus approach, because when stakeholders pool resources and network with partners, funding goes a long way. In our advocacy around triple nexus, MCC asks for the integration of the localization agenda, for long-term flexible funding and for greater support for peacebuilding components that address the root causes of conflict.

As we look towards the future, MCC will continue to engage in the triple nexus policy discussion through the working group and in conversation with policymakers, with the long-term goal of ensuring that peacebuilding is integrated and coordinated within Canadian international development assistance. Rick Cober Bauman, MCC Canada executive director, reflects that, “as a multi-mandate organization, it is truly heartening to see all three sectors—humanitarian, development and peacebuilding—intentionally reaching to each other to collaborate. This is not a small shift; it is one MCC has believed in deeply and practiced for decades. The potential impact of this integrated approach, if adopted more widely, is considerable.”

Victoria Alexander is MCC’s United Nations advocacy associate, based in New York City, the unceded territory of the Lenape. Samantha Coelho is advocacy and networking specialist with MCC Canada’s Peace and Justice Office, based in Ottawa, the traditional land and unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

Summary of findings from an evaluation of MCC’s work in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding (HDP) nexus

From April to September 2024, MCC commissioned Innocent Yekeye, an evaluation consultant based in Harare, Zimbabwe, to carry out an evaluative learning review of its global efforts to integrate peacebuilding into humanitarian and development interventions. The qualitative study included a literature review, 22 focus group discussions with project participants and 47 key informant interviews with community leaders, MCC partners, MCC staff and MCC leadership. Virtual interviews were conducted in each region where MCC supports international programming and in-country data collection was carried out in Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda. The study focused on building MCC’s knowledge base and capturing case studies, good practices and lessons learned to inform future resourcing and support for peacebuilding in multi-sector programming. Below are a few of the key findings drawn from the preliminary study report, findings that MCC will engage and build on in future programming within the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding (HPD) nexus.

- **Differing interpretations of the meaning of peacebuilding may create gaps in coherent implementation of multi-sector programming.** Even when designed coherently with clear outcomes articulated in both peacebuilding and other sectors, projects encounter gaps in implementation and

a tendency for development and humanitarian outcomes to be more prominent than peacebuilding outcomes. Despite a strategic mandate to work in the areas of relief, development and peace, the operationalization of this mandate remains complex on the ground. The study found that respondents hold different understandings of peace in terms of values and peacebuilding as a set of practices. MCC is uniquely placed among humanitarian and development organizations due to its historic commitment to peace and justice rooted in its Anabaptist peace values. While MCC's engagement in peacebuilding has been implicit in much of its humanitarian and development efforts, the more recent shift toward more explicit integration of peacebuilding practices into humanitarian and development interventions remains a challenge at the programmatic level. Efforts to strengthen internal understanding of what peacebuilding means as sets of practices and how it fits within the triple nexus are an important next step for MCC and a continuing conversation more broadly in the peacebuilding field.

- **MCC partners were designing and implementing multifaceted programming in response to the complex challenges they face in fragile and conflict-affected settings long before the term “triple nexus” was coined.** Integrating peacebuilding into other sectors for more comprehensive programming, especially through building trust and social cohesion and strengthening local capacities to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts, is not new. However, rigorous evidence-gathering, learning from and sharing the impact of peacebuilding outcomes in integrated programming remains limited. There is a need to further bridge gaps between how people in the global North and global South conceptualize what HDP programming looks like and how to capture learnings from it. Next steps will involve continuing to reduce sectoral siloing and reinforcing the strength-based approach that builds on the existing efforts of partners in integrated programming. These steps would include improving documentation of learning from different approaches to multi-sector integration and fostering deeper peer-to-peer learning among partners.
- **Evidence drawn from the evaluation found that peacebuilding is predominantly conceived by respondents as an entry point to other sectors and as an enabler for relief, development and resilience-focused interventions.** The contexts where the evaluation found that integration was most effective were informed by a sound conflict analysis and drew from sequencing, layering and integration (SLI) good practices to incorporate peacebuilding activities. In places experiencing historical trauma like the DRC and Uganda, peacebuilding interventions provide platforms for dialogue among community groups that were previously in conflict. Peacebuilding serves as an entry point to address past harms and ongoing conflict and create space for food security interventions within communities. Programming like food assistance for migrants in Colombia and Mexico addresses immediate needs and is layered with peacebuilding activities to strengthen social cohesion and trust between migrants and host communities. In this case, peacebuilding has an enabling effect, contributing to the achievement of key humanitarian outcomes. It will be important to continue to learn from programming that practices strong sequencing, layering and integration and seek opportunities to adapt and apply this learning as applicable in different contexts.

Melody Musser is an MCC peacebuilding coordinator, supporting peacebuilding projects across Africa. She is based in Harrisonburg, Virginia.



A group of displaced women in Mubimbi, Minova, South Kivu, DR Congo met in 2023 as a Women Situation Room (WSR) convened as part of the CFGB-funded HERD project, in which MCC and its partner ECC MERU NK participated. In their weekly meetings, these women discussed how to strengthen social cohesion and conflict resolution in their communities. The women, from left to right, are Fikiri Jeoregette, Furaha Mwambamba, Chance Kamala, Clementina Namukenge, Manizabayo Muhawe and Sifa Mwanzi. (CFGB/ Esther Nsapu)

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