



South Sudan

Participatory review and learning exercise of selected humanitarian, development and peace nexus initiatives

Identifying good practices and addressing challenges pertaining to humanitarian, development and peace actors' coordination efforts to more effectively tackle the root causes of food emergencies and protracted crisis in South Sudan



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Summary

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDPN) is the term coined at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit to express the interlinkages between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors and their attempts to work together more effectively towards collective outcomes to meet peoples' needs, while at the same time reducing risks and vulnerabilities, and adopting new ways of working to this end. Operationalizing the HDP nexus has become a shared commitment and ambitious endeavour, while recognising it is still a nascent process with grey areas and challenges, and consequently, with major learning opportunities. Enhancing cooperation and coordination between humanitarian, development and peace actors is an ongoing challenge. Providing spaces to learn from experience and evidence on how to address such challenges is thus an integral part of the collective efforts to strengthen HDP nexus ways of working. This paper provides key results, lessons learned and practical recommendations based on the Participatory review and learning exercise (PRLE) undertaken in South Sudan in the end of 2022. The PRLE was aimed at enhancing knowledge on good practices, challenges and opportunities for strengthening the coordination, collaboration, and communication amongst the humanitarian, development and peace actors in South Sudan and subsequently improving the coherence of HDP nexus programming and its impact on the population.

Context

The food security situation in South Sudan is alarming, as more than 7.4 million people (about 63% of the total population) faced severe food insecurity in 2022. Around 108,000 people are expected to be in a catastrophic phase (IPC 5), and an estimated 1.4 million children under 5 are suffering from acute malnutrition. The state of food insecurity in South Sudan results from a combination of multiple drivers such as economic slowdown, climatic shocks, including unprecedented flooding and drought, as well as sub-national conflicts. All these drivers caused disruption in livelihoods and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of affected people.

The country has been one of the largest recipients of humanitarian assistance since its independence in 2011. The complex systemic approach that would bridge the gaps between humanitarian, development and peace actors is expected to not only respond to the existing needs, but address the mentioned underlying drivers of food insecurity to reduce humanitarian needs over time.

In South Sudan, the Government finalized the revised National Development Strategy (2021-2024) which calls on humanitarian actors to use the triple nexus framework. The UN Cooperation Framework and Humanitarian Response Plan also call for the use of the triple nexus approach in assistance delivery. The Partnership for Peace, Recovery and Resilience (PfPRR) and Reconciliation Stabilization and Resilience Trust Funds (RSRTF) are the main UN triple nexus platforms in South Sudan.

Effective coordination between HDP actors is an enduring challenge. Humanitarian response is aimed at relieving pressing needs to save lives and protect livelihoods, while well-designed development and peace programmes may help address drivers of food insecurity and sustain agrifood systems. For example, interlinkages between HDP activities and drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition could be observed in a competition between individuals and communities for natural resources, especially grazing land and water sources for livestock. There is also a correlation in local, regional and national dynamics in terms of peace, security and socio-economic development.

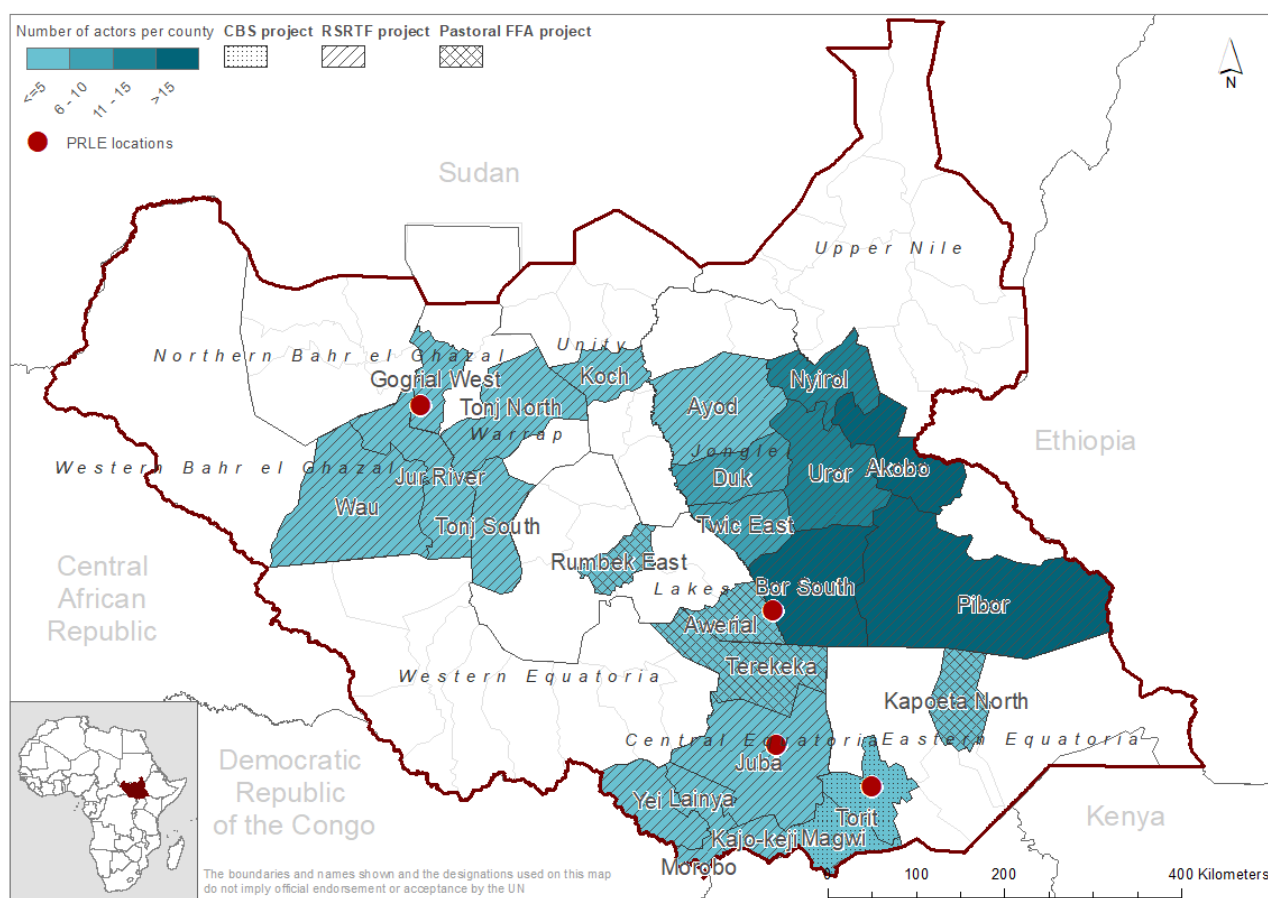
The international community is calling for a comprehensive and interconnected approach to address the underlying causes of humanitarian needs. This is in response to mounting pressures on the already overburdened humanitarian aid system, especially during times of escalating conflicts, worsening crisis, and increasing numbers of displaced population. In addition, the recurrence of natural hazards, climate extremes and protracted conflicts underscores the need to simultaneously address recurring

humanitarian emergencies, widening development gaps, and persistent drivers of conflict and violence. To improve outcomes and respond to these challenges, there is a high demand for more coordinated, effective, and efficient efforts.

The Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster (FSL) is active in South Sudan since 2004 and has been supporting national coordination of food security and livelihoods response plans. With a goal of strengthening relationships and collaborations between humanitarian actors and development and peace coordination platforms and actors, the FSL requested technical and financial support from the global Food Security Cluster to conduct the Participatory Review and Learning Exercise of HDP nexus initiatives.

In this context, the gFSC has piloted this exercise at the request of the South Sudan Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster to enhance the HDPN coordination in South Sudan and extend this practise and lessons learned to other countries where actors and communities are willing to operationalize the HDPN approach, in practice.

Geographical locations of PRLE exercise and HDP nexus projects in South Sudan



Source: mapping of HDP actors and activities in South Sudan

Actors and beneficiaries

Key stakeholders of this initiative include community leaders, beneficiaries of targeted communities, local actors, government representatives, private sector, donors, international and national NGOs, UN agencies. The PRLE has direct and indirect beneficiaries and actors depending on their level of involvement in the exercise.

Direct participants of the PRLE # of people involved



Direct beneficiaries include the actual participants involved in the PRLE. Overall, 156 individuals directly contributed to PRLE through various methods (see methodology part):

- 5 government representatives at national level and 9 government representatives at subnational level;
- 14 personnel of Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster at national level and 8 at subnational level;
- 13 project staff at national level and 13 at subnational level;
- 41 beneficiaries from targeted communities from different socio-economic and gender groups;
- 8 community leaders and 7 other local actors;
- 4 representatives from private sector;
- 5 civil society representatives;
- 8 representatives from donor agencies;
- 8 UN personnel;
- 13 individuals representing other HDP actors.

Indirect beneficiaries were not involved into the exercise itself, but they are expected to benefit from this initiative in the longer-term as a result of more effective and consolidated HDPN activities. Those include cluster coordination teams and cluster members, clusters' lead agencies, programme officers among those actors implementing HDP activities, representatives and members of multistakeholder platforms, the government, etc. who may want to use it as a model and learning approach to replicate to improve HDPN coordination.

The end beneficiaries are local communities and their members, and governments, who not only benefit the effects of better coordinated HDP actors, but also through their involvement into such learning process, take control of their own development, foster a sense of collective responsibility, and promote sustainable change. This implicates active use and development of accountability and feedback mechanisms.

About the initiative

Implementation framework

The Participatory review and learning exercise (PRLE) aimed at supporting HDP coordination by contributing to the pool of knowledge on good practices, challenges and opportunities for strengthening the coordination, collaboration, and communication amongst the HDP nexus actors in South Sudan, and subsequently improving the coherence of programming along the HDPN and its impact on the population. It sought to:

- -review the extent of existing collaborations from selected projects implemented in South Sudan,
- - identify perceptions of the triple nexus by gathering the views of implementing partners at national and local levels, beneficiaries, and aid donors,
- - document achievements, good practices and lessons learnt so far, providing HDP implementing partners in South Sudan with more context-specific orientations on implementing the HDP nexus.

Finally, the PRLE identified the intersectoral drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition and explored potential entry points outside of humanitarian domain that could contribute to sustainable solutions to improve food security and nutrition status of the affected population.

Five projects incorporating the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation principles for the Humanitarian Development and Peace (HDP) nexus approach were selected as a result of a call for proposals to all FSLC partners to submit HDP projects. The main criteria included working in consortium and implementing activities from more than one of the HDP pillars. Based on a mapping of HDPN actors and activities in South Sudan (see the map), the following actors and actions were selected for the PRLE:

- 3 Reconciliation Stabilization and Resilience Trust Funds (RSRTF) projects implemented in 19 counties in states of Central Equatoria. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) launched the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund for RSRTF.
- 1 Pastoral Food for Asset (FFA) project implemented by WFP with CERF funding in 4 counties of Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria and Lakes states.
- 1 BMZ-funded project “Cross-border strengthening of the resilience of South Sudanese refugees and host communities in Uganda and South Sudan” comprising transitional development assistance has been implemented in Eastern Equatoria state in 2 counties.

The PRLE was conducted in four locations in South Sudan: Juba, Torit, Bor and Kuajok. These locations were identified in order to engage partners from all the five above mentioned projects incorporating HDPN approach in South Sudan.

About the learning

Learning framework and generation process

This PRLE dealt with the question of how to strengthen coordination, collaboration, and communication amongst the actors of HDP nexus in South Sudan from the perspectives of every stakeholder, including community leaders, beneficiaries, with due consideration of gender and socioeconomic groups, local actors, government representatives, private sector, donors, international and national NGOs, and UN agencies. Stakeholder engagement was an integral and fundamental component of the review and learning process.

This review and the learning exercise adopted a participatory approach to addressing the proposed questions, giving space to hear the voices of a variety of stakeholders, and bringing them together through facilitated dialogue and peer learning, and providing an enabling platform for open exchanges, trust building and effective collaboration. The review focused on three key aspects: relevance/coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability of the coordination of the five selected HDPN projects. It aimed to identify gaps to address and solutions to take forward at country level.

The PRLE was aimed at revealing key patterns, good practices and challenges within the following topics:

- Understanding the concept of HDPN by actors and stakeholders, including local organizations, government, civil society and community leaders.
- Bridging together HDP coordination mechanisms and platforms.
- Joint context, risk and needs analysis, expected to lead to coordinated responses to meet existing needs and reduce emerging ones.
- Joint planning and joint implementation for enhanced synergies and preventing duplications of efforts.
- Joint monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning including adoption of collective outcomes, joint data collection, sharing, monitoring and learning systems, effective feedback mechanisms and accountability.
- Joint financing, including to overcome funding obstacles, through HDP pooled funds, donor working groups to coordinate funding of HDP projects, increased funding flexibility and duration of programmes.

As one of the products of the PRLE, a video featuring some of the key stakeholders and capturing their feedback was produced: <https://fscluster.org/global-network-against-food-crises/document/participatory-learning-exercise-hdp>

Overall objectives

- Assess the nature and extent of collaboration and coordination between actors at local and national levels including explicit efforts in promoting the HDP nexus and maximizing the coherence, impact, and sustainability of programmes across the different kinds of assistance;
- Support the identification of an HDPN community, including the main actors among community leaders, beneficiaries, local authorities, central government representatives, private sector, donors, international and national NGOs, coordination platforms and UN agencies etc.;
- Identifying lessons learned from experience, good practices, challenges and opportunities, guiding the development of a common roadmap to enhance the operationalization of the HDP nexus in South Sudan.

Specific objectives

- Assess the coherence and alignment between HDP nexus actions and the needs and priorities of beneficiaries and key stakeholders;
- Assess the effectiveness of HDP nexus actions in bringing together and building trust among key stakeholders;
- Identify existing gaps in terms of financial resources, human capacity, shared narrative and joint understanding, organizational and administrative challenges, etc.;
- Identify collective solutions and strategies to close the identified gaps and strengthen the HDPN coordination at country level;
- Promote synergies and coordinated complementary responses across humanitarian, development, and peace interventions in pursuit of common agendas in South Sudan;
- Identify, reflect on, document, and disseminate strategic and programmatic lessons learned, good practices, challenges, and opportunities for enhanced coordination of humanitarian, development and peace partners in South Sudan and beyond.

Methodology

To perform this PRLE, the gFSC recruited a consultant responsible for methodology elaboration, coordination with HDP actors in South Sudan, data collection, analysis and formulation of outcomes and lessons learned, supported by dedicated knowledge management and learning methodological and technical advice by FAO/OER KORE at every stage of design, roll-out and capitalization of this learning exercise.

Methods of data collection

- **Primary data collection** was performed through open-ended focus group discussions (FGDs); key informant interviews (KIIs); in-depth interviews (IDIs); other methods such as gathering of success stories, photography and video shooting. A participatory approach was adopted in all phases of the process by engaging and giving voice to all concerned stakeholders including male and female beneficiaries of the projects under review, decentralized government's representatives, donors, local authorities, community leaders, implementing partners, and other non-beneficiaries among the local population. The collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data was performed using KOBO Collect platform for the KIIs and FGDs.
- **Desk review of secondary data** covering a number of existing project documents and reports for the five projects under review and other relevant coordination platforms operating in South Sudan (e.g., annual work plans, implementation review, progress reports, backstopping missions, meeting minutes of active clusters, fact sheets and bulletins, webpages, lessons learned documents, frameworks, and indicators, as well as the available M&E data).
- **Other methods:** Two workshops at national level – the first one was held at the initial stage focusing on methods and tools validation; the second one was held at the final stage to validate the results of PRLE; 1 workshop at subnational level.

Data analysis

- **Analysis of qualitative data** collected through the interviews entailed the grouping of collected information by themes that were guided by the review's objectives, questions, and agreed indicators. The review team used dedicated software MAXQDA 2020 for qualitative data analysis and mixed methods research to minimize researcher bias in interpretation and for reliability of results and conclusions.
- **Triangulation of data** and collection methods allowed ensuring the validity of this participatory review. The data was triangulated with the information provided by project staff, published research studies and alternative explanations for the findings. Preliminary findings were validated and substantiated at subnational and national workshops with key stakeholders. This added to the robustness and credibility of the findings.

Results and impacts

Area Reference Groups

One of the success stories of coordination in operationalization of the HDPN in South Sudan is certainly the creation of Area Reference Groups (ARGs). ARGs bring together implementing partners and stakeholders to coordinate and harmonize their activities in their respective areas of intervention. ARGs have also been highlighted as accountability tools that enable partners to update each other and local communities on the progress made against programming milestones. For example, the establishment of an ARG in the Koch and Jonglei and Greater Pibor Administrative Areas (GPAA) area-based programme (ABP) has enhanced strong coordination, information-sharing and close collaboration at the implementation level through separate working groups operating across the reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience programme components. The ARG in Koch also adopted a three-layered system of operation: day-to-day cooperation, area-based coordination, and senior-level strategic surveillance, enabling partners in Koch to link their efforts from the grassroots to the county and state levels, and finally to the Juba level. The ARG approach, though initiated at Koch, has been widely adopted across other ABPs such as the Jonglei and the GPAA.

Understanding the concept of HDPN. The level of adoption of an innovation or intervention is greatly influenced by its knowledge and understanding. The exercise allowed to reveal the partners' perceptions of the HDPN as a collaboration between the humanitarian, development, and peace actors; as a holistic approach bringing organizations together and promoting joint work towards collective outcomes.

Bridging HDP coordination mechanisms and platforms. This topic revealed good practices to promote (Area Reference Groups ARGs, mapping and integration of already existing coordination mechanisms) and challenges to tackle (siloed humanitarian centric coordination, weak knowledge-sharing due to conflicting priorities and policies and lack of time for collective learning, lack of little or no involvement of the government).

Joint context, risk and needs analysis in the Triple nexus is essential for a shared understanding of the drivers of conflict and fragility as well as identifying drivers of resilience and peace. These activities help the adoption of commonly agreed priority with a measurable impact, sometimes developed through an official process led by the Resident Coordinator Office known as collective outcomes. There is a need to ensure that collective outcomes and common priorities are strategic, specific, and developed in a more inclusive manner, with indicators monitored across humanitarian, development, and peace-building dimensions and complemented through context monitoring tools.

The joint needs analysis would allow to maintain the “leave no one behind” commitment, which in South Sudan was mainly established through Area-Based Programmes (ABP) through which participants conceive and carry out needs assessments that enable the establishment of action plans with clear and measurable collective outcomes. The inclusion of community members at the inception phase ensures a shared vision among partners with prospects of extending beyond RSRTFs interventions.

Joint needs analysis is expected to promote inclusion of government in coordination. For instance, to promote government commitment in Jonglei/GPAA (Greater Pibor Administrative Area), state officials have been included in the validation of findings from Community Based Participatory Learning (CBPP) to ensure planned activities and interventions are in line with priorities within the State. Through CBPP approach, participants conceive and carry out needs assessments that enable the establishment of action plans with clear and measurable collective outcomes. The inclusion of community members at the inception phase ensures a shared vision among partners with prospects of extending beyond RSRTFs interventions. Still in Jonglei/GPAA, partners in coordination with ARGs jointly undertake mapping activities of on-going interventions to identify potential for cooperation.

Join needs analysis focuses not only on immediate drivers of conflicts and fragility, but look at long-term and intersectoral systematic drivers. Immediate drivers of conflicts are the more direct and proximate factors that contribute to the outbreak of a conflict. In South Sudan, these immediate drivers could include resource scarcity, tensions between ethnic groups, political instability, disputes between communities. Long-term drivers of conflict are more underlying and structural factors that create conditions that make conflict more likely, including poverty and inequality, political exclusion, environmental degradation etc.

Joint planning. The adoption of collective outcomes or priorities and possible action plans are some of the key components of joint planning as they ensure inclusiveness and alignment of activities to priority needs, drawing on the comparative advantages of different actors. Among key challenges identified for joint planning were limited access to some locations and the need to advocate for more flexible financing.

Joint implementation was explored through the following aspects:

- Discussion on the role of consortium in implementation, which enables more complementary response to the complex and constantly changing contexts, environments and needs. For example, the establishment of the UNMISS Civil Affairs Division (CAD) has significantly contributed to peace building efforts within the country. This consortium brings together selected group of South Sudanese researchers, leading academics, and civil society representatives. Owing to the role of national members in facilitating discussions, this Core Group is able to shape the design and implementation of peace efforts. The CAD has equally taken up the commitment of training young actors in peace and “Youth and nation building” to ensure scale up of their activities.
- Coordination with actors already present in the geographical location, that could allow both local and international actors already present in the affected communities have exiting and tested mechanisms of how to better reach persons needing urgent aid. For example, the NPA, which has been implementing Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in South Sudan since 1995, is the lead implementing agency for the Food for Asset (FFA).
- Prioritizing prevention always and development wherever possible. In HDPN programming, there is still a challenge on shifting from responding to needs to ending these needs. Several examples of high impact development related projects have been successfully implemented. For example, some of the explored projects included construction of water yards and boreholes, education on storage and saving, training for community members on flood prevention and climate change.

Good practice example from RSRTF project

Drawing on lessons from previous programming and context, the RSRTF has adopted stringent and transparent measures for the call of proposals as was the case with the Jonglei and Greater Pibor Administrative Area - Area Based Programme (Jonglei/GPAA ABP), which brought together a broad range of implementers with the WFP as the lead organization. The annual cross-partner workshops among different ABPs also serve as an accountability and experience sharing tool by different partners and gives room for transparency and feedback. The RSRTF equally adopted a dedicated knowledge management strategy in early 2021 that aims at strengthening the fund's processes, to capture and share knowledge. Two RSRTF cross partner workshops were conducted in 2021 and brought together 40 and 65 participants respectively. These workshops aimed at a shared understanding of the RSRTF and gave participants the opportunity to share experiences on good practices and challenges in their various programmes.

Joint monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning implies:

- Adoption of collective outcomes or priorities. How well joint monitoring is implemented depends on the quality of joint analysis. This diagnosis based on needs allows for the identification of context specific collective SMART outcomes. The Koch ARG for example was able to bring together over 60 participants from 10 organizations together through an online workshop during the COVID-19 situation. Participants jointly came up with Terms of Reference (ToRs) outlining “project vision, purpose and objectives, membership, roles and responsibilities of the ARG members, decision making practices and key activities within each of the RSRTF pillars”. The adoption of ToRs facilitates the evaluation’s expected outcomes based on set objectives.
- Joint and shared data collection, finding a way to make different MEAL systems comparable, but at the same time able to capture the specific indicators for each of them. For example, respondent noted that data was not jointly collected because partners have different tools, and continue facing competition for funds.
- Third party evaluation is aimed at enabling a bias free evaluation, thus HDP programmes are adopting third party assessments in their monitoring and evaluation activities. For example, the South Sudan multi-partner RSRTF projects have adopted an independent third-party strategy for their on-going ABPs. This was the case with the RSRTF early term evaluation by the Detroit Advisory Group, a research division of the University of Michigan, in charge of supporting the UN’s mission of research, education, and service within Detroit. The report, which has been made available to all implementing partners and stakeholders in HDP activities, provides pivotal insights on lessons learnt, best practices and challenges in the nexus journey.
- Use of feedback mechanisms together with increased accountability. For example, lead implementing agencies and RSRTF face challenges to hold partners accountable for deliverables and timelines.
- The existence of learning platforms for local actors has also played a key role in expanding the learning framework for partners and projects. The COVID-19, which initially presented a challenge for coordination across the Triple nexus, later appeared as an opportunity for adaptations and innovations through virtual work to increase participation from multiple stakeholders and expand more voices. The UNMISS-PAD adopted hybrid events formats that allowed the participation of state-level actors who could not physically attend.



By using a joint MEAL approach, stakeholders can work together to ensure that programmes are effective, efficient, and accountable, and can continuously learn and adapt to improve future programmes. This can lead to better outcomes for programme beneficiaries and more sustainable, long-term impact.

Financing. The need for strengthened collaboration across humanitarian, development and peace sectors in terms of joint funding was identified during the World Humanitarian summit in 2016. Overcoming funding obstacles through resource mobilization for predictable financing and gearing towards collective impacts was one of the key commitments to support [the New Way of Working \(NWow\)](#). According to OECD report “[Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries 2023](#)”, total disbursement for South Sudan within Official Development Assistance increased from 1.7 billion USD in 2019 to 2.1 billion USD in 2021. Humanitarian requirements also increased from 1.5 to 1.7 billion USD. Rising funding needs are explained by the increase in population in poverty, food insecurity, conflicts and climate crises.

Financing of humanitarian and development activities in South Sudan in 2019 - 2021

Year	Humanitarian financial requirements, million USD (OCHA)	Coverage, %	Development disbursement, million USD (OECD)
2019	1,510.0	75.5	1,684.8
2020	1,900.0	64.9	1,814.9
2021	1,680.0	73.5	2,100.0

Source: [OCHA](#) and [OECD](#)

Therefore, the strengthened collaboration for joint funding is crucial successful implementation of HDP programming. During this PRLE in South Sudan, the opportunities of joint financing were explored through:

- **HDP pooled funds.** By combining funding mechanisms, area-based programming can link humanitarian, development, and peace-building efforts in the field. The UN Multi-Partner Fund in South Sudan for reconciliation, stabilization and resilience has been instrumental in maintaining peace and building sustainable communities through the combined efforts of donors, INGOs, LNGOS, civil societies, state and local government, local authorities, and community members. Another major pooled fund programme is the Health Pooled Fund (HPF) implemented in South Sudan since October 2012; at present, it has run in three phases with a total pooled fund of 120 million Euros, covering multiple states of the country. Nevertheless, despite the gains observed with pooled funding, siloed and donor driven projects still dominate the scope of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.



Photo: ©FAO

- **Donor working groups.** The creation of the FAO Technical Steering Committee on Food and Nutrition Security Resilience Programme (FNS-REPRO) brought together different stakeholders including the Ministry of Infrastructure, Cooperatives, the Ministry of Agriculture and other partners. This is a 4-year project (October 2019–September 2023) funded by the Government of the Netherlands and implemented under the leadership of the Wageningen University & Research, a key partner in FAO global learning programs.
- **Overcoming limitations of short-term funding and lack of flexibility.** The Thematic Grant Windows (TGW), formerly known as the Small Grant Windows (SGW) has been very instrumental in responding to short term needs such as high-risk conflict and climate unstable areas. In March 2022, a call for proposals was made for the evaluation of the three TGW projects within the South Sudan RSRTF. Despite the progress made, limitations still exist in terms of insufficient, too short-term and inflexible funding.

Sustainability

Based on the obtained results of the PRLE, a road map for next steps was suggested as a main deliverable of the whole learning exercise and of the national workshop in particular, to stimulate reflection and dialogue between aid actors in South Sudan, and strengthen collective action and impact. Based on the analysis of challenges and opportunities, the road map provides practical recommendations and suggested key actions on how to improve coordination between HDP actors, and lists the required resources, personnel and estimated timeline for each of the key actions. The road map is structured against the five key processes of HDPN coordination explored as part of this exercise, that include i) bridging HDP coordination mechanisms and platforms, ii) joint diagnosis, iii) joint planning, advocacy and targeting, iv) joint MEAL and v) HDP nexus financing.

The last segment of the national workshop's agenda was dedicated to prioritization, with participants responding to a survey to rank by order of priority the actions on where to focus collective efforts and attention to strengthen HDP coordination and collaboration in South Sudan. The actions that came out more consistently were the following: map out HDP structures within the country, storing and sharing data, information and knowledge through common platforms, strengthen and bridge/use existing platforms to make them more HDP-friendly coordination platforms/actions/mechanisms at all levels, strengthen collaboration with governmental coordination structures.

An HDPN approach is fundamental to the successful implementation of a graduation approach at community level that is designed to assist households and communities escape from vicious cycles of poverty and hunger.

Replicability and upscaling

The suggested PRLE approach could be adapted to and used in contexts with a similar set of challenges, opportunities, where the HDP community put the priorities on bridging actions, coordinating humanitarian, development and peace actors, and joining efforts to address the existing needs in a more efficient and sustainable way to prevent the emergence of further humanitarian needs.

The PRLE aims at supporting HDP operationalization by embracing the principles at the heart of HDP nexus ways of working, in a spirit of collaboration, coherence, complementarity and consensus building. Indeed, the PRLE contributes to: facilitating discussion and building understanding about what the nexus means and looks like, in practice; enabling joint learning across the HDP spectrum of actors,

leading to a comprehensive and context-specific picture of what a successful HDP-N approach looks like; providing space to engage with local people and national and community institutions and actors to build ownership of problem solving and transformational change processes at all levels; as well as breaking down silos to identify practical solutions and actions that tap into the variety of knowledge, experiences and expertise.. The PRLE can contribute to enhancing and scaling-up HDPN programming in South Sudan and informing on relevant ways of working and learning together, beyond this specific initiative.

Apart from this, the further rounds of PRLE and its replication in other contexts would allow to improve early warning system and needs analysis, strengthen coordination between HDP actors and therefore improve prevention and response, promote sustainable solutions to food crisis, contributing to changes in policies that would lead to addressing the root drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition.



Photo: ©FAO

Key learning and recommendations

Participatory review and learning exercises serve as joint evaluations and offer space to pause, reflect and do better together with communities and stakeholders involved. Findings from the interviews and workshops identified good practices as well challenges encountered while initializing the process of coordination of the HPD actors in South Sudan, including fragmentation and duplication, competition for resources, diverse mandates of actors, unequal capacities, etc.

In order to overcome siloed coordination, stimulate bridging HDP coordination mechanisms and platforms, collaborative, joint programming of HDPN actors, we can formulate the following lessons learned and actionable recommendations for HDPN programming and coordination based on the results of this learning exercise within the key identified areas:

Bridging HDP coordination mechanisms and platforms

One of the major challenges faced in many countries is the weak involvement, ownership, and leadership by local structures, including the government. To address this challenge, there are key ***recommendations regarding the actions to be taken:***

- Firstly, it is important to map out existing structures within the country. This will help to identify areas where there is a need for support and where local structures can be strengthened.
- Secondly, efforts should be made to build and strengthen existing government structures at all levels. This will help to create a more sustainable framework for development and ensure that local structures have the capacity to lead and manage projects.
- Thirdly, facilitating the linkage of local plans to national plans is important. This will help to ensure that local priorities are aligned with national priorities and that resources are effectively coordinated. Encouraging community contribution in all projects is also essential to promote ownership and sustainability. This can be achieved by involving community members in project design, implementation and monitoring.
- Finally, it is important for partners to adopt a common approach in supporting communities. This will help to ensure that there is consistency and complementarity in the support provided, and that efforts are effectively coordinated towards achieving common goals.

In order to take the maximum advantage of defined coordination and communication, it is crucial to ***contextualize and harmonize plans and HDP actions, building on different planning mechanisms*** and ensuring they address HDP consistently through context-specific elements. This can be achieved by identifying and mapping existing data resources available across HDP actors. By doing so, it will be possible to identify areas where data is lacking, and to ensure that all actors have access to the same information, reducing duplication of effort and improving coordination.



Another common challenge in HDP coordination is the siloed coordination mechanisms and platforms. To address this, it is important to **establish a comprehensive HDP coordination platform or development/peace actions/coordination mechanisms at all levels**. Each level should have a coordination committee with all actors involved, including government and implementing partners. It is also important to establish terms of reference (ToRs) for each level, outlining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.

Regular meetings between people from different types of actors (INGOs, NNGOs, donors, government, UN etc.) are crucial to ensure effective coordination and collaboration among actors, to discuss progress, challenges, and solutions.

Effective knowledge management is also key to promoting coordination and collaboration among HDP actors. This can include the **sharing of good and promising practices, lessons learned, and analyses findings** to improve decision-making processes and ensure that resources are allocated effectively.

In the area of **Joint HDP diagnosis** we can identify the following key challenges and action to overcome. In order to tackle poor data sharing, competition and distrust between partners, it would be worth gathering store and share relevant knowledge and information related to overall context through common platform, and work with existing government structures.

Lack of inclusiveness in context analysis, especially related to communities and local actors, could be overcome through using **harmonized approach to the analysis, participatory methodology and effective analytical tools**, including on systematic drivers of protracted crisis and food insecurity.

Joint planning, advocacy and targeting could be enforced through the following actions:

- **Enhancing HDP Approach** and sectorial objective in Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) through adaptive programming;
- **Supporting design and implementation of local development plan** through accountability reporting (stakeholder meetings and actions);
- Strengthening and updating **local and national development plans**, including through establishment of dedicated taskforces that feed into the national development plan.

Achieving the goal of **joint MEAL** would implicate the following actions:

- ***Working more in a consortium*** to avoid siloed MEAL systems and datasets sharing, that would include agreement on unique mechanism to target communities, infrastructures etc. as well as to compare and consolidate various data, and strengthen granularity (e.g. GPS coordinates); development of common HDP monitoring indicators; linking with local development planning and financing issues: this can help funding allocation and assess impact.
- Poor MEAL capacity and resources could be addressed through strengthening UN Collaborative M&E Working Group and ***increased resourcing for dedicated MEAL officer on HDP nexus*** both at national level and for HDP existing project consortiums.

In terms of **financing of HDP programmes**, the key issues are short-term horizon of funding, lack of flexibility of budget allocation, low level of accessibility by local actors and disconnect from local development plans. To overcome or at least minimize these challenges, we could suggest:

- ***Developing a joint advocacy paper*** to highlight the fact that humanitarian funding should be better linked to local development plans (in part of flexibility, local action plans), and also advocating for flexible budget allocation for HDP programmes.
- Hold regularly national donor trust funds meetings.

While replicating such learning exercise or HDPN programming in general, we should make sure that this initiative is sensitive to needs of different groups, are adjusted to their priorities and capacities according to gender, age, and other socio-economic markers. It could be achieved through gender and social inclusion analysis, active involvement of community members into the design and programme implementation process, using participatory and inclusive methods, the programmes should be monitored and evaluated regularly against developed indicators designed to track progress for these different groups.

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For stakeholders' testimonies and beneficiary feedback [see the video](#) produced within this exercise.



This Learning Brief template was developed by the Knowledge Platform on Emergencies and Resilience (KORE) in FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience. This original template belongs to KORE and was designed to document learning processes and outcomes emanating from emergency and resilience programming. KORE provides normative and methodological guidance and supports the generation of learning, documentation of good practices and dissemination of evidence-based knowledge to inform strategic and programmatic decision-making.

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