



FORWARD TOGETHER: EXPERIENCES OF NEXUS IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING AT THE HORN OF AFRICA

TECHNICAL BRIEF

January 2022



Malka Mari earth pan de-silted and lined with high density polythene paper to hold water for four months to support the community and nomadic pastoralist from Ethiopia.

BACKGROUND

The aid sector is typically characterised by humanitarian, development or peacebuilding actors, expertise, funding and outcomes. Even in the post-Grand Bargain¹ era, the necessary bridge building required to cross the great humanitarian-development-peacebuilding divide has been limited, with very few practical examples of implementing the nexus available. Where efforts have been made, and success stories exist, they remain isolated examples usually forced by the context on the ground (for example, large-scale displacement into an area of operation of a development project). Evidence shows that communities served by aid interventions prefer a more coordinated and joined up approach to meeting their humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs².

BORESHA Project

The overall objective of Building Opportunities for Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BORESHA) project is to promote economic development and greater resilience, particularly among vulnerable groups in the Mendera Triangle. The project adopts a community-driven approach to address the shared nature of the risks and opportunities in this border area. The project is implemented through a consortium led by Danish Refugee Council in partnership with Care International and World Vision.

- 1 The Grand Bargain, launched in May 2016, is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations who have committed to get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action.
- 2 Field perspectives on the Grand Bargain – Ground Truth Solutions.

The cross-border area between Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, also called, 'The Triangle' is a chronically fragile region. It is characterised by cyclical drought, displacement and cross-border conflict, which make mobility and displacement, key resilience strategies for the borderland communities. Additional stressors include concurrent plagues of desert locusts, the COVID-19 pandemic, and regular outbreaks of livestock diseases all leading to varying adaptations towards resilience for borderland communities.

The inter-connectedness of communities across international borders throughout The Triangle (and in a wide range of borderland areas across the world), and the practice of 'movement' as a coping mechanism in the event of various shocks and stresses, is less understood leading to suboptimal contextual response. Whilst 'movement, often across borders,' is often a sign of a resilient/adaptive community, this can reach such a level that can be considered displacement³. In that case, displacement intensifies a range of vulnerabilities within the hosting communities such as increased inter-communal disputes over access to limited natural resources. These experiences bring to fore the need for a holistic nexus approach in aid. This means intentionally **building humanitarian response and peace-building considerations into development or resilience programming.**

This brief shares lessons from implementation of the BORESHA project within The Triangle with a nexus lens, and provides recommendation to donors and practitioners for more adaptive and sustainable programming.

BORESHA APPROACH

BORESHA project was premised on the change model that strengthens capacity of cross-border communities to identify their own priorities, plan and advocate for measures to help them withstand shocks; promote the development of inclusive cross-border environment for livestock and non-livestock trade and business, and foster

private sector opportunities for women and young people; and, support for the equitable and conflict sensitive management of natural resources in the cross-border area. The project developed the capacity of communities to become more resilient and self-reliant; individuals, including women and young men, will have the skills and opportunity to take up a more diverse range of employment and livelihoods options; natural resources will be used more rationally, and with less conflict; local governments will be more accountable to their constituencies; and fewer people will be displaced within, or migrate out from, the cross-border region.

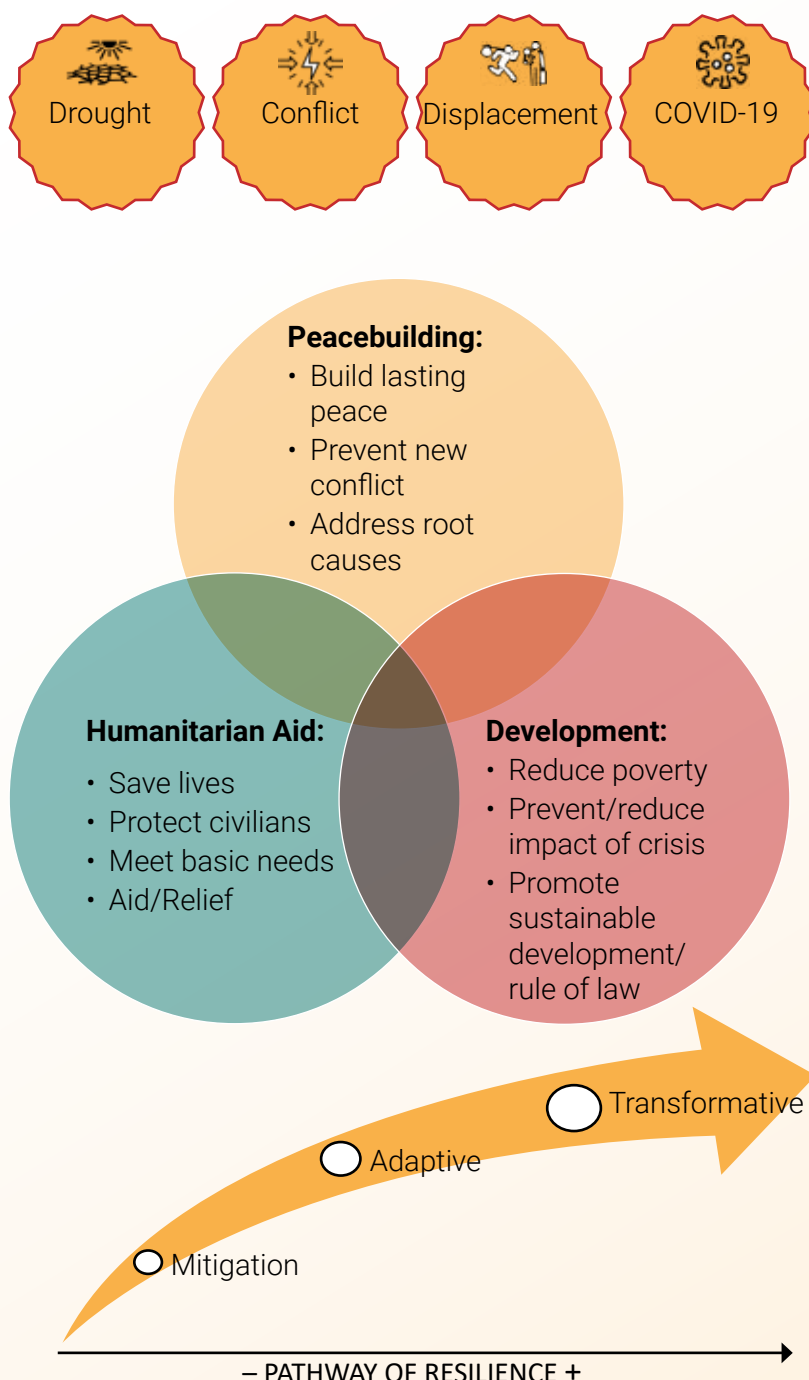


Figure 1: Resilience framework used in BORESHA and linked to NEXUS Framework in light of numerous stressors in the intervention area

3 It can be difficult to distinguish among voluntary nomadic movements, less voluntary migration and displacement (...) These represent different points along a continuum of human movements "with a particularly grey area in the middle, where elements of choice and coercion mingle." (Ginnetti and Franck, 2014)



BORESHA team introducing the Project to the community in Banisa sub-county.

The consortium partners each led key components of the strategic approach. The DRC led livelihood and mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity, coordination, and facilitated cross-learning within The Triangle. World Vision led disaster risk reduction and community-owned vulnerability and capacity assessment; and, Care International led natural resource management through participatory rangeland management. The project was implemented along the resilience framework presented in Figure 1.

The BORESHA project was not initially designed to follow the nexus approach, but the various components of nexus approach are integrated

into BORESHA interventions. These are discussed using the experiences shared in this brief.

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

BORESHA's resilience intervention provided the platform to facilitate early response (detect early, mobilise resources, and deploy timely response). We share some examples which shed light to fundamental considerations in future programming within cross-border environments.

RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Displaced populations in Mandera

When more than 50,000 people were displaced from Ethiopia due to conflict, the EU Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) contributed to the early response of humanitarian needs. During the initial stages of the emergency, BORESHA partners participated in a rapid needs assessment that mapped out areas where displaced persons resided. This was complemented with information and data drawn from various partners, including the County Government. From the initial assessment results, ECHO mobilised EUR 200,000 to address protection and community safety needs, shelter, water and hygiene sensitisation, nutrition as well as distribution of multi-purpose cash. In addition to the ECHO assistance, the emergency displacement response was also supported by the Ole Kirk Foundation which contributed EUR 175,000 complementary funding to the multisector assistance covered by EU Humanitarian Aid.

Desert locusts invasion

In January 2020, areas within the Horn of Africa, including BORESHA project areas, were affected by swarms of desert locusts. Severe crops as well as vegetation losses were reported, and to mitigate further environmental damage, BORESHA initiated resource mobilisation efforts yielding EUR 130,000. Through the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs funding (DANIDA FLEX), locusts preparedness and control measures were reinforced, and affected communities were assisted through livelihoods recovery linked to the resilience project components. Of these, over 800 households were provided with fodder and nutrients assistance for their livestock.

Effects of COVID-19

In 2020, following the rapid spread of COVID-19, control measures such as restriction of movement and business operations led to a decline in economic activity. Instant effect was on reduction of savings and credit repayments in savings groups established through the support of the resilience project. In response, BORESHA supported the affected communities by cushioning vulnerable households from adverse socio-economic effects of COVID-19 through unconditional cash transfers while contributing to COVID-19 awareness in the wider community. DANIDA FLEX funded EUR 100,000 disbursed to 1,753 vulnerable households and Voluntary Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs).

Early response to 2021 drought

In Mandera, below average performance of the April–June 2021 rains coupled with reduced access to water following a prolonged drought severely affected over 35,000 individuals. During joint partners and government assessments, BORESHA identified 35 strategic boreholes which, if rapidly serviced and repaired, would improve access to water for humans and livestock. DANIDA FLEX provided EUR 90,000 for the repairs of strategic boreholes in severely affected areas, installation of water storage tanks, and training of community operators on management and maintenance of the water infrastructure. The rehabilitation of the water points and their management was then integrated in the ongoing resilience intervention.

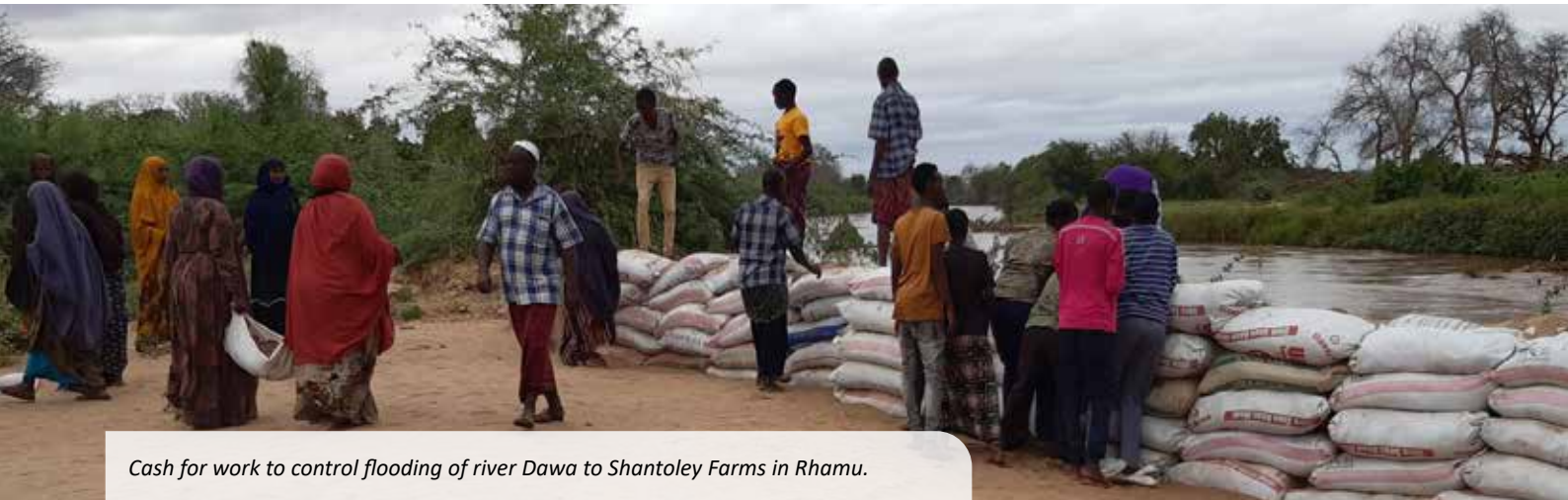




Camel drinking water from Kiliweheri earth pan. The pan burst its banks and was repaired through cash for work, to retain water for livestock and human use. It was the only community water source.



Graduation photo for TVET students in Dolow Somalia.



Cash for work to control flooding of river Dawa to Shantoley Farms in Rhamu.

Emerging lessons on linking emergency response to resilience programming

Donor mechanism to monitor how the emergency interventions contribute to resilience outcome or objectives are generally lacking. Development donors are not equipped with the necessary modalities to enable flexible and adaptive programming when operating in fragile areas where shocks are frequent and vulnerabilities are high. In BORESHA, the lack of a crisis modifier was particularly challenging during fast onset crisis like floods that affected the area in November 2020 causing loss of assets and displacement. At the time, the Government did not have an integrated plan of response and BORESHA had no instrument to quickly respond. On the positive side, quick emergency interventions could be delivered at a relatively low cost anchoring their work on the existing structures and systems of the longer-term resilience project.

CASH AND LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

BORESHA has mainstreamed Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), strengthening of policy and organisational structures and knowledge management in all its interventions. As such, DRR lens helps to strengthen the disaster management system, develop appropriate information systems for coordination and early warning, promote adaptive learning, create DRR awareness, and initiate community-based DRR programs. BORESHA adopted cash for work approach as part of community-based DRR programs to hasten recovery from drought, floods, persistent insecurity and invasion of desert locusts. This injected timely and in a conflict sensitive manner, the much-needed income for a community that was affected by complex and multiple disasters in a short span of time. The following are Cash-for-Work (CfW) initiatives.

Improved health Services

BORESHA supported infrastructural improvement initiatives through CfW. Following community-owned vulnerability and capacity assessment (COVACA), communities identified their hazards, their capacities and developed measures to prepare and mitigate the effects of the main hazards.

“We had a big challenge. We used one dilapidated room for maternity, immunisation and general ward. The maternity accommodated only one mother per delivery and when more than one was admitted, the nurse in-charge used a semi-permanent house to deliver the mothers. The semi-permanent structure made of sticks was transparent and had no privacy. The existing structure then, had limited lighting and conducting child deliveries at night was a challenge. World Vision installed solar system for lighting and for powering the cooler box used to store pharmaceutical drugs. The limited water storage also hampered operations, especially ante-natal and post-natal care services. World Vision installed a 24,000-litre tank that has solved the water problem. The piping is connected to the mains and is used both in the facility and in the afforestation program by the health management committees. The old facility has been rehabilitated, and a new one constructed, thanks to BORESHA who granted our request for support through the DRR committee,” says Mr Ngaile, the Health Facility In-charge.

Livelihood opportunities

BORESHA project identified Tarama Pastoralist group, a Livestock Common Interest Group (LCIG), for training and support to promote better livestock management practices. BORESHA engaged with this LCIG through the Pastoral Field School Approach, enabling them to gain interest in farming. The group planned to expand their farm land and open up uncultivated land and requested BORESHA for support in the form of CfW activity to clear the uncultivated lands for farming. As a result, they cleared 3 acres of land which they use partly for farming and partly enclosed for fodder production.

"We don't need relief food, we want to grow our own. We plant fodder, vegetables, fruits and sesame seeds. The cleared farmland is now a lifeline for the inhabitants of these villages. Apart from the food production, we have experienced regeneration of natural grass. Although unintended, we have harvested 200 bales to support the community. Each bale is sold between Kes. 300 and Kes. 500," says Mr Suleiman, Chairman of the group.

Emerging lessons on cash and local community participation

Using CfW approach was initially considered unsustainable and inappropriate from colleagues with strong developmental views. However, with dialogue and common understanding, it has yielded sustainable benefits to the community and enhanced their personal resilience. The CfW activities have been used as peace dividend in the same communities.

RESPONSE TO CONFLICT AND INSECURITY

Conflict is one of the major shocks in The Triangle, detected frequently by the project supported community-based early warning mechanisms. Although only partly included in the BORESHA project design due to limitations of funding mechanism, BORESHA mobilised resources and expertise to train staff on conflict sensitivity in programming thus maintaining a conflict-sensitive lens in project activities, providing peace dividends and contributing to social cohesion and peace stability. BORESHA identifies sources of conflict as limited resources, livelihood vulnerabilities, politics and extremism. Responsive interventions and examples are highlighted below.



Water as Peace dividends of resilience programming

BORESHA established 20 community water points in Dolo Ado (Ethiopia), in Dollow (Somalia), and in Mandera County (Kenya) and trained communities on their management. These water points have had one of the greatest impacts in building community resilience to conflict. Water resources related conflicts have significantly reduced. Training and formation of peace committees ensured peaceful coexistence of community members in the project areas. The peace committees quickly resolve arising conflicts through dialogue and ensure equitable sharing of natural resources and through participatory rangelands management.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Conflict Resolution

The DRR committees played a significant role in conflict resolution process and early response during the 2021 clan conflict in Dollow. The committees took lead in the negotiation process in collaboration with local administration, mobilised resources, non-food items, and temporary shelters to the displaced persons. The DRR committees continue to provide early warning information, and oversight on resource utilisation to avert conflict threshold.

Peace Dividends: Resilience and peace projects working together

In 2019, BORESHA participated in a participatory learning and action process organised by RASMI in Malka Mari along the Kenya/Ethiopia border. Access to water was identified as a major driver of conflict between the two cross-border communities. RASMI and BORESHA supported the rehabilitation of Malka Mari water pan that has played a vital role in peace dividend among communities in the areas often clashing over water. The RASMI program referred 65 youths to BORESHA to benefit from the livelihood interventions. Although this was not part of BORESHA design, youth at risk were included in TVET training and business training, equipped with start-up kits, and coached and mentored in readiness for the job market.

“We worked very well with BORESHA. For us as peace builders, we know that you cannot have sustainable peace without giving people alternatives, and giving them a chance to make money or earn a livelihood. That is what in many ways BORESHA is doing in terms of opportunities for young people we referred to them.” KII RASMI⁴



BORESHA team in Ethiopia during a community dialogue.



Community fetch water from an established water point to the animal trough.

Emerging lessons on response to conflict and insecurity

The separation in the EUTF call of Lot 1: peacebuilding, and Lot 2: economic resilience work, has resulted in an artificial division of resources across two intersectional areas of intervention. This has reduced efficiency and effectiveness of response to communities. It is important in future to strengthen the integration of peacebuilding, resilience and, to a certain extent, political components.⁴

ENHANCED COORDINATION FOR NEXUS PROGRAMMING

No single actor implementing a project in The Triangle has the capacity to cover all development, humanitarian and peacebuilding needs, much less have the expertise to universally respond to all potential needs emerging in the area. Nexus programming design should consider the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding lenses as an integrated approach. A study conducted in 2021 found that 'BORESHA's cooperation with other humanitarian organisations working in the target areas increased efficiency and synergy. For example, when World Food Program (WFP) supported community farmers in Somalia with conditional cash transfer to do canal rehabilitation as humanitarian response to a drought, BORESHA supported the same farmers with longer term programming to improve food production, promote climate-responsive agricultural practices, and skills development for extension services. Similarly, BORESHA supported displaced households that had to flee a clan conflict area in Dollow, Somalia in 2021 through DRR and conflict resolution while WFP provided unconditional cash to the displaced households.

SYNTHESIS OF LESSONS LEARNT

The paradigm shift of working in nexus provides an opportunity to generate learning towards meaningful knowledge. Implementation of the BORESHA project has generated critical questions for humanitarian and development organisation in cross-border interventions. While the EU Trust Fund for Africa cross-border programme distinguishes projects tackling conflict resilience and economic resilience into two lots, with two distinct entities (RASMI and BORESHA) implementing in the same target communities, 'there is consensus among key stakeholders that separating the economic resilience and conflict lots constitutes a major failure in programme design.'⁵ Double nexus programming proved successful thanks to ad-hoc coordination, but it lacked critical success drivers such as joint planning, agendas and M&E frameworks from the inception phase.⁶

Interventions in fragile and conflict-affected settings will benefit greatly from **updated conflict analysis**. This ensures stakeholders fully understand the conflict context, and are able to best adapt planned programmes to meet the needs of affected communities, and that those implementing programmes do no harm. Knowledge and efficiency in response has potential to avert full blown conflict.

BORESHA project used a successful participatory approach to design and implement its objectives. The project involved the community to identify needs and the best ways to address them through consultations with stakeholders. This meaningful engagement of local actor has been a key element in bridging sectors and increasing sustainability.

4 ALTAI – Lessons Learned from the EUTF – Paving the Way for Future Programming – 9 March 2021

5 Economic Resilience and Resilience to Conflict in the Manderia Triangle, June 2021, Bodhi Global Analysis and Danish Refugee Council

6 ALTAI | Ibid



The established water troughs continue to support animals during drought.

The **mainstreaming of DRR into programming** offered a cross-sectoral framework that reflected on how lives, livelihoods, and assets are preserved. Integrating DRR with development, peace building and humanitarian programming makes them more sustainable and better address holistic community and household risk drivers as opposed to standalone programming.

In a multi-year resilience project in a fragile setting, a key assumption should be the anticipation of shocks. There is need for greater flexibility and adaptive programming (crisis modifiers)⁷ to enable rapid and relevant response. BORESHA had no

crisis modifier, and the contingency fund required a long process with limited flexibility eliminating a timely response. However, this situation is not unusual in the current funding system. BORESHA dealt with the numerous shocks that hit the area of intervention by conducting rapid assessments and collecting the evidence necessary to lobby and mobilise new resources. In a number of instances BORESHA was able to attract “emergency funding” and link the response activities to the ongoing resilience approaches.

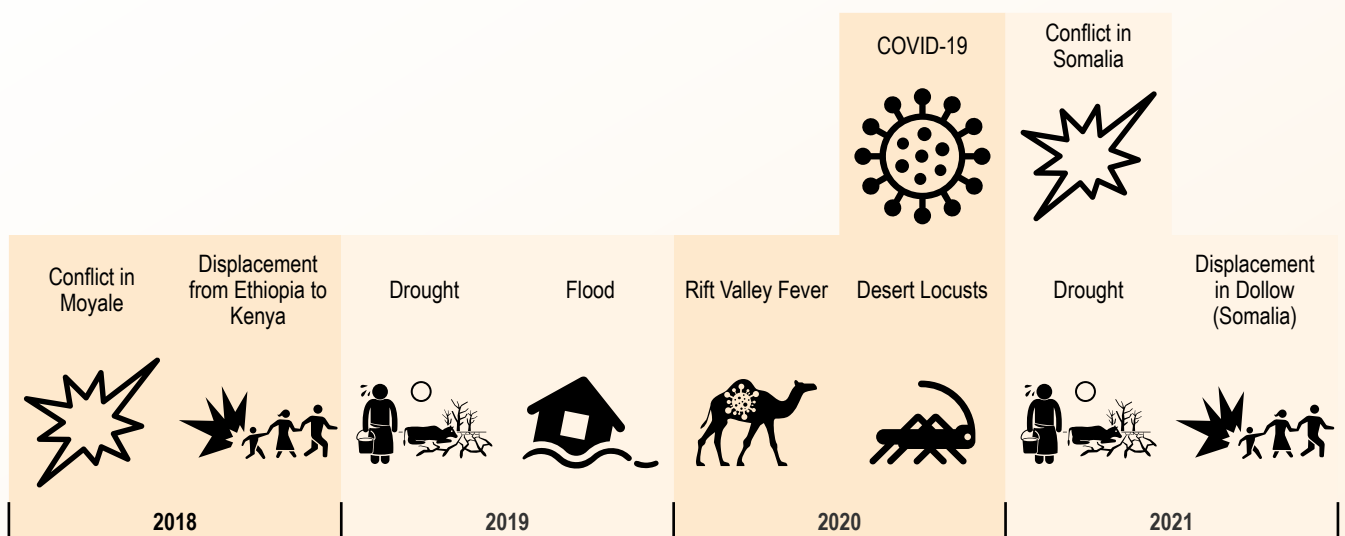


Figure 2: Timelines of shocks in The Triangle

7 ALTAI- Ibid

RECOMMENDATIONS

Funding: Multi-year, predictable, flexible funding can give project staff more control and allow them to redeploy funds as new circumstances and opportunities arise. Adapt funding to address spill overs and contingencies, advocacy for greater support to insurance and contingent financing mechanisms.

Design: The separation of the economic resilience and conflict resilience components into different EUTF Lots was one of the main structural challenges to implement the nexus. Given the often, complex political economy system in areas where conflict occurs and the factors that drive conflict, any future interventions linking economic resilience with resilience to conflict should incorporate peacebuilding goals at the design stage. A crisis modifier including a clear mechanism to manage, activate and monitor this flexible tool shall also be part of the design of the action.

Measurement: While triple nexus reference frameworks such as the New Ways of Working, and the OECD DAC⁸ recommendation on Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus are in place, there was no systematic M&E on how BORESHA was addressing triple nexus as per the frameworks. This is further constrained by lack of evaluative frameworks to evaluate implicit and explicit implementation of triple nexus approaches. There is need for monitoring and evaluation guidelines to monitor and review the extent to which triple nexus approaches are implemented and their contribution to program results/outcomes.

Participation: The nexus approach can start with the meaningful engagement of local actors, as this engagement can bridge sectors and increase sustainability. The participatory approach adopted by the BORESHA programme in the design and implementation of its objectives is considered to have been very successful. The programme involved the community to identify needs, and the best way to address them, through consultations with stakeholders. BORESHA recognised that communities are the first responder and need to be equipped with the skills, resources and capacities to identify, cope, respond and adapt to the stressors that may emerge.

CONCLUSION

The humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus is not new; it is a concept that has existed in various forms in the aid sector for decades. Rather, the focus on the nexus, and the renewed commitments at high level, are an attempt to **change the way we work** to provide communities with a holistic, coordinated and effective response to a wide range of needs.

Whereas commitments have been made at high levels across the aid sector, less work is done to translate the vision into action in the communities that so need it. With a range of competing aid priorities, global economic contraction, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is unlikely to see significant, dedicated resources for implementing the nexus in the immediate future. Yet it is exactly the time when it is most needed. **The impetus, therefore, is with practitioners and implementers 'on the ground' to navigate the theory and make practical efforts towards nexus programming,** demonstrating a more effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding projects. While commitment of high-level leadership in operationalising the nexus is wanting, it also presents a unique opportunity for nexus programming to be designed and operationalised from the ground up. This could allow for nexus programming to be truly community-led and entirely based on the needs, feedback and input from the communities we serve – perhaps for the first time ever in the history of the aid sector.

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8 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee has grouped the world's main donors, defining and monitoring global standards in key areas of development. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/>



TVET trainees show off their tie and dye skills as part of livelihood support system.

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