

Brief Analysis Report

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THE “TRIPLE NEXUS” APPROACH IN THE VENEZUELAN MIGRANT CRISIS

*Applying the “Triple Nexus”; between Humanitarian,
Development, and Peace in the Context of Migration
Flows from Venezuela*

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

The study sheds light on how the Nexus between Humanitarian-Development-Peace can be considered as an appropriated approach in the context of Migrations flows from Venezuela. There is a general agreement on the necessity of having a more coherent and complementary response among actors and across countries.

While the conclusions and recommendations provide more detailed findings, the following considerations emerged from the opinions of all actors involved:

Promoting a “triple nexus” approach paves the way to address root causes more systematically and achieve a more **effective, coordinated and enduring response** to the threats and risks communities face. An **integrated response** is needed to address basic needs, through a **systematic long-vision** approach that recognize **peacebuilding** activities to prevent and mitigate violence.

Operationalizing the “triple nexus” approach can facilitate migrants or marginalized groups’ inclusion in **territorial human development plans**, through **joint analysis and programming** within a broader operative framework. Preliminary agreement on measurable and feasible **collective outcomes** will facilitate financial, institutional and legal instruments adoption in a more coherent way. However, it is necessary that all actors involved collaborate, promoting **socioeconomic integration**, providing **legal support** and supporting **advocacy mechanisms**.

Incorporate the use of specific tools of **do no harm** is essential to guarantee a rightful humanitarian response. However, it is not enough to deliver effective, safe and coordinated humanitarian action. All actors must **move beyond the “do no harm”** principle adopting a **conflict sensitivity approach to minimize risks, maximize opportunities and address root causes**. This approach requires expertise, trainings, innovative tools, good practices and comprehensive guidelines. Following a **conflict sensitive approach**, the humanitarian-peace nexus gap will be reduced, laying the foundation for further **peacebuilding roadmaps**, toward the full operationalization of the “P” pillar of the triple nexus.

Adopting **conflict-sensitive, area-based** and **evidence-based** operational approaches, actors may have stronger tools to fight **xenophobia** and mitigate possible manifestations of violence, since they acknowledge **risks, opportunities** and **threats**. That will also facilitate the elaboration of **social cohesion** patterns, opening the discussion for further **peacebuilding roadmaps**.

1. INTRODUCTION

The recently launched study, *Applying the "Triple Nexus"; between Humanitarian, Development, and Peace in the Context of Migration Flows from Venezuela*, addresses the challenges arising from framing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus in the context of migration flows from Venezuela. It has been published by WeWorld and the Institute of Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action (IECAH) within the EU-funded project "Responding to forced displacement in Latin America through capacity building and certification on EU Aid Volunteers- INPLACE".

The scale of the Venezuelan migration crisis with its impact across numerous countries, and the limited prospect of it receding in the near future, requires a coordinated response, beyond humanitarian assistance to work with displaced populations, incorporating medium and long term planning that includes development activities and conflict sensitive strategies.

The study drew on mixed research methods (qualitative and quantitative) that included semi-structured interviews, surveys, and a literature review. The interviews were conducted with 22 organisations across seven countries working with Venezuelan migrant populations in the region: six international NGOs, three NGOs and local networks, four UN agencies, five European Union bodies, one diaspora organisation and three national cooperation agencies.



The main objective of this study is to analyse the challenges involved in a Nexus approach, and whether it is appropriate given the context and the range of different actors involved. Being a practical study, ideas and recommendations are provided to improve the medium and long-term actions of the actors involved in the response.

More specifically, the study aims to:

1. Investigate the operational approaches of the various organisations in this crisis while analysing their vision in the medium and long term.
2. Understand the extent to which the three components of the nexus are addressed: humanitarian, development, and peace.

3. Analyse the challenges posed by this approach in this specific context, especially in terms of coordination, coherence, and complementarity.
4. Provide training elements for discussion amongst organisations.
5. Propose some elements that can improve work with the migrant population in the future.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT IN THE VENEZUELAN MIGRATION CRISIS

Since 2012, Venezuela has been immersed in a political, institutional, and economic crisis that has worsened living conditions, leading to a large-scale migration crisis. As of October 2021, the so-called Regional Interagency Coordination Platform (also known as Response to Venezuelans or R4V) estimates that around 5.9 million Venezuelans are living abroad, of which 4.8 million are in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹

As of 2015, the migratory flow increased exponentially, the vast majority of which are individuals with limited resources who seek to escape difficult living conditions. However, it should be noted that these migratory flows are mixed as they do not consist of a single category of migrants but are made up of refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants, as well as other categories of migrants.² According to R4V figures, around 3.84 million Venezuelan migrants in destination countries have unmet needs and difficulties in accessing basic services.

As the second largest mobility crisis in the world after Syria, and due to the political ramifications for the region, the Venezuelan migrant crisis has been the subject of great international attention. However, the massive arrival of Venezuelan migrants and refugees to other countries of the region overlaps with other migratory dynamics in Latin America and the Caribbean, driven by various socioeconomic, political and environmental factors.

3. INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Initially, the response to the Venezuelan migration crisis was quite disjointed at the regional and global levels, due to the absence of joint coordinated action, with both hosting countries and donors acting independently of one another. The governments of host countries created ad hoc regularization mechanisms for Venezuelan migrants based on the Cartagena Declaration.³ However, the extent of the Venezuelan migration crisis, its impact on the entire region and its progressive aggravation, amongst other factors, propelled the setup of international and regional mechanisms to address worsening conditions.

This culminated in the First Declaration of the Quito Process, a mainly political affair, though with undeniable aspects of assistance and protection, signed in September 2018 by 11 countries. The main objective of the Declaration was to "exchange information and good practices, with a view to articulating regional coordination with respect to the migration crisis

¹ R4V. Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela. Obtained from R4V: <https://www.r4v.info/es/refugiadosymigrantes>

² IOM. (2019). *Glossary on Migration*. Geneva: International Organisation for Migration.

³ Chaves, D., Amaral, J., & Mora, M. (2021). Socioeconomic integration of Venezuelan migrants and refugees The cases of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Washington, DC and Panama City: Migration Policy Institute and the International Organisation for Migration.

of Venezuelan citizens in the region". Since then, seven "Joint Declarations on human mobility of Venezuelan citizens in the region" have been approved and is currently made up of 13 countries.

It was not until 2018 that the Secretary General of the United Nations, recognizing the urgent need to provide a coordinated and regional response to the migration crisis in Venezuela, proposed the creation of the R4V led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to coordinate response efforts in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a particular focus on achieving coherence and consistency of actions. Its configuration is mindful of the context and the operational capacities of governments and the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response (RMRP) partners, taking into account existing coordination structures.

Coinciding with this, the first International Solidarity Conference on Venezuela Refugee and Migrant Crisis took place in Brussels on October 2019. The aim of the event was to raise awareness about the Venezuelan migrant crisis and the efforts being made by host countries and communities. The second International Donors' Conference was held on May 2020 and the last one was held in Canada in June 2021 with financial commitments of around \$1,5 billion, both in grants and loans.

As for political efforts to negotiate a the resolution to the crisis, the Lima Group, a multilateral body was established after the so-called Lima Declaration during August 2017, where representatives of 14 countries met with the aim of accompanying the Venezuelan opposition to seek a peaceful solution to the crisis in Venezuela. Other political processes followed, such as the International Contact Group (ICG), in January 2019, which the European Union launched together with various Latin American countries. Conversely, the Organization of American States (OAS) has launched various proposals and welcomed the creation of the Coalition for Venezuela, within the framework of the 49th OAS Assembly in 2019.

4. INTRODUCTION TO THE TRIPLE NEXUS APPROACH

The Humanitarian- Development- Peace Nexus (HDP) has emerged in recent years as a response to better address the new realities of protracted crises, as man-made and natural disasters, conflicts and transnational migration of peoples, with long-term and uncertain durations, have become more commonplace. This global shift from a policy and operational standpoint recognizes the need to go beyond the immediate nature of a crisis and challenge the root causes to the vulnerabilities of populations, as well as the threats and risks they face. From a conceptual perspective, but with practical implications, the triple nexus takes aim at the sectors of response for humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actions, encompassing all relevant actors involved. It strives to improve greater coherence, coordination and complementarity of actions between the different sectors, over a longer timeframe, with commitments to joint analyses and programming, with collective outcomes as a measurable result or impact agreed jointly and reinforced by a combined effort across the different actors according to their mandate.⁴ Amidst the complementarity of humanitarian, development, and peace actions, respecting humanitarian principles and addressing immediate needs must also be guaranteed.

⁴ OECD. (2021). DAC Recommendation on the OECD Legal Instruments Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. OECD.

The triple nexus continues to stir up a debate amongst the members of each sector, particularly within the humanitarian field. There are fears that including this approach in certain crises could aggravate potential conflict and hinder humanitarian assistance by diminishing the perception of neutrality if politically sensitive issues are considered. Given this preoccupation, it is important to note that the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) recommendation states that the coordination of the nexus must respect the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. An assessment of each crisis or situation in a fragile context is advised to ensure that activities apply a "conflict-sensitive" approach and do not lead to unintended negative consequences.⁵

However, as an effort to change global policy, the operational reality of its impact is still being explored and understood. Efforts are being made away from the high-level, political engagements to the programmatic scope of realising a Nexus approach. It is essential in this process that, as stated in the WeWorld Nexus principles, any approach seeks "a commitment from communities, authorities, local and regional and national, and the private sector".⁶ This move not only implies bolstering the ongoing efforts of local actors, often overlooked by the international aid sector, but not replacing local responses and having such actors directly involved in decision-making processes from the beginning.

5. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Faced with the prolonged nature of the Venezuelan crisis, **98% of interviewed organisations deem it essential to incorporate medium and long term plans, even if, so far only 40% of them have incorporated a medium/long term approach into their programmatic design.** This decreases to 30% with local NGOs. The difficulty of incorporating medium or long term activities is directly linked to financing mechanisms; donors generally offer resources for short-term projects (from three months up to a year), not allowing for interventions with a longer timeframe. However, the interviews have also demonstrated that some international donors are making efforts in this direction.

There is widespread agreement that the institutional architecture to cope with the Venezuelan migration crisis has been enhanced. The leading role of the R4V platform in elaborating the RMRP is recognised as a positive sign. At the same time, the national platforms (GTRM) have promoted coordination with various actors working on these issues, while R4V has become the reference mechanism in that coordination. **However, there is still the risk of confusion with other pre-existing coordination mechanisms and the risk of a mechanism directed solely by international agencies, potentially reducing the participation of national actors.**

Challenges have been identified regarding the need to better define common objectives. The "siloing" caused by the various sources of donor funding continues to present difficulties for organizations that want to work within a triple nexus approach. For this reason, **it is necessary to move from an overly sequential, *continuum*-type logic (first humanitarian aid and then development and peace) to a *contiguum* type in which work around the three components of the nexus can converge, overcoming a linear vision.**

⁵ OECD. (2021). DAC Recommendation on the OECD Legal Instruments Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. OECD.

⁶ WeWorld. (September 28, 2020). WeWorld-GVC Principles on the Humanitarian, Development & Peace Nexus. Retrieved from ReliefWeb: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/weworld-gvc-principles-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus>

In terms of localisation, the response to the Venezuelan migration crisis shows that the participation of local communities, religious institutions and diaspora organisations has been varied. Some interviewed argued that the interest of international agencies in involving communities and civil society in the response to the crisis has grown, as well as the participation of local organizations in coordination mechanisms such as R4V. The adoption of longer-term perspectives has led to a greater consideration of the role of local governments and host communities in the design and execution of the strategies applied. However, the relationship between IOM, UNHCR and larger international NGOs with smaller communities and organizations remains vertical in nature. **The lack of participation of local actors in the strategic planning of responses prevents the reinforcing of locally-driven strategies, instead side-lining the actors for more favoured approaches from INGOs.** This rings especially true in how funding is distributed by donors, far often channelled through UN agencies or trusted partners, rather than to local actors.

Other findings show that international actors such as NGOs and donors believe the participation of the Venezuelan diaspora in the crisis response takes on great importance, and some NGOs interviewed have even allocated resources to strengthening diaspora organisations in administrative and organisational matters. On the other hand, it is important to note that several organisations interviewed expressed their concern that humanitarian action could be exploited by diaspora organisations pursuing political aims.

One of the problems identified for implementing the triple nexus and guaranteeing its operability is the creation of mechanisms to agree with all actors involved in the three areas of work. Such mechanisms are necessary to define criteria in order to ensure coherence and complementarity between actors, as well as with donors and recipient communities. **One of the limitations mentioned in the interviews is the risk that implementation will not be done correctly, leading to undesirable competition between agencies or actors to receive funding.** Likewise, the implementation of this approach requires enhancing coordination between the different actors, which implies increasing spaces for sharing with national and local authorities, who may be reluctant to engage with other actors. Finally, although all organisations are committed to the triple nexus, the general vision is clearer in the link between the humanitarian and development components and less evident in relation to how peace-related actions can be incorporated under a joint approach.

The different components of the nexus: humanitarian action, development and peace, have also been examined in the context of the Venezuelan migrant crisis. One interesting result, as far as the peace component is concerned, is that the great majority of the organizations participating in the survey consider that they work in the construction of peace. The peace-related actions are those related to the fight against xenophobia and, in broad terms, for the prevention and mitigation of violence. Fostering a culture of peace is seen as a component of integration that would require a do-no-harm and conflict-sensitive approach.

6.CONCLUSIONS

Based on what has been presented, we collect below some relevant conclusions from the study:

1. All organisations believe that the response to the Venezuelan migration crisis should be planned in the long term, but there are several obstacles to achieving it. **70% of local NGOs do not incorporate a long term vision into their programmes, yet the vast majority consider it to be the right approach to cope with migration flows.**
2. Instruments put in place to respond to the crisis, namely financing mechanisms, are not adapted to the needs of the situation. The duration of these mechanisms is usually periods between three months and a year. **The rigidity of these instruments prevents adaptation to changes in the situation.**
3. Coordination mechanisms have been strengthened over time and greatly improved in terms of information and joint planning. However, from a HDP-nexus standpoint, they have shortcomings with regard to the definition of common objectives and outcomes, particularly in the peace element.
4. The incorporation of recipient states and local and diaspora organisations into coordination mechanisms is still a challenge due to considerations of the risk that their participation entails in terms of neutrality and impartiality. However, there is a widespread perception that it is increasingly necessary to involve these actors as the crisis drags on for years.
5. **Humanitarian assistance continues to be critical to respond to the needs of the Venezuelan migrant population.** Most organisations believe that this cannot be ignored as long as the migratory flow continues, and new migrants and refugees in transit continue to be exposed to violations and threats.
6. The triple nexus approach is considered to be a suitable approach to the crisis, but there are challenges to actively putting it into action. Among these, **the lack of knowledge about the implications and implementation of such an approach by most organisations, especially by local organisations, stands out.** The peace component appears as the element needing more clarity in terms of its scope and implications. Likewise, the absence of coordination mechanisms to organise the programmes and activities of the actors of the three areas in a coherent and complementary manner has been identified.
7. **The unlikeness of migrants returning to Venezuela in the medium term has led actors to support initiatives focused on development and socio-economic integration of the migrant population in the host communities.** This decision brought in challenges in terms of legalisation of migratory status in several countries of the region and incorporation of migrants in markets where informality and precariousness prevail. The lack of access to long term resources impedes working more decisively towards development measures.
8. Integration, as it is being conceived today by most agencies, is an indispensable but not sufficient requirement in development work. **Incorporating the migrant population in sustainable human development plans requires institutional, financial, legal elements, etc. that equalise and protect their rights.**
9. Despite the peace component being less evident in this crisis, most organisations consider it relevant. They approach it from a rationale of combating xenophobia and

mitigating possible manifestations of violence against the migrant population. In addition to this, it is the promotion of a culture of peace.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Along the same line, we provide the following recommendations:

1. **Establish medium and long term planning frameworks** addressing the response to the Venezuelan migration crisis in a more comprehensive manner that set out common objectives and measurable results. This implies incorporating into the organisational countries' strategies for the integration of the Venezuelan population into the host communities, as well as development plans that also take into account the local population.
2. **Improve the articulation between development and peace** while maintaining their autonomy and seeking potential synergies and added values. This coordination has to be context sensitive. In the case of Colombia, peace actions are a fundamental aspect. **The need to continue humanitarian assistance cannot be an obstacle to development and peace actions.**
3. Advance towards the ownership of public and local entities, and civil society in the response to the Venezuelan migration crisis. **This implies that these local actors are not only involved in the implementation, but also more active in drafting strategic plans and in the establishment of common objectives.** Likewise, their participation in coordination mechanisms led by international entities should be encouraged.
4. **Guarantee the migrant population's leadership in the response at each stage in the issues that affect them,** being aware of the diversity of people that make up this group and the pre-existing inequalities of power. It is essential to support women's, LGBTBIQ+ and ethnic minority organisations since their demands and life experiences are different. Their demands run the risk of being relegated if they are not taken into account from the planning stage.
5. Explore funding frameworks by donor agencies that will allow organisations to work with greater flexibility and adaptability in the view of evolving situations. **Extending the funding time frames to multi-year budgets would be essential.** Both the DAC, the EU and the Red Cross Movement have drafted recommendations to promote this type of instrument. Funding mechanisms should allow for better articulation of humanitarian, development, and peace elements. Flexibility in the funds would ensure that resources can be allocated to those priorities identified according to the evolution of the context. At the same time, it ensures that budgets aimed at humanitarian action are kept apart from those used for development and peace activities.
6. Continue to encourage the **greater inclusion of host communities in financing and strengthen their relationship with the Venezuelan migrant population** (through comprehensive development activities) to promote integration and mitigate the rejection and xenophobia to which they are exposed.

7. Produce a compilation of best practices in the implementation of the triple nexus as a way of showing the practical value of the approach and the implementation mechanisms. This guide would include the need to adapt these practices through a contextualised and conscious vision of local realities.
8. Leverage the adoption of the triple nexus and **long term vision to encompass objectives aimed at combating pre-existing inequalities**, including gender, ethnic-racial, disability, religion, age, gender identity and sexual orientation, and systemic barriers in both the host and migrant populations. This point requires adopting a human rights approach, aware of the local context, in all activities carried out.
9. **Analyse the environmental impact of triple nexus activities**: humanitarian action, peace, and development, and incorporate measures to address the vulnerability to climate change of local communities, having in mind that many areas of the region are already being affected. This also involves including disaster risk reduction plans in all programming.
10. Systematise and share knowledge on solidarity economy initiatives and cooperatives among regional countries. It is imperative to promote better development responses in markets characterised by informality and precariousness. This implies that the plans take into account the gender impact on informal labour and the care economy.
11. Consider the regional migration crisis when drafting plans aimed at the Venezuelan migrant population and move towards strategies that include the different migration flows.
12. Urge **host countries to set up regularisation schemes for the Venezuelan migrant population in a homogeneous manner**. The status of administrative irregularity prevents them from accessing essential services including health and education and exposes them to situations of abuse and exploitation. The non-recognition of their presence in the country thwarts the protection of their rights.
13. Continue the political dialogue to tackle this migration crisis, dialogue must be present at all levels, both in international forums and at the national and local level.