

Integrating the of the HDP nexus in Ukraine

WeWorld experiences and reflections
integrating social cohesion and peace-oriented
activities within its programme in Ukraine



Forewords

For WeWorld, integrating the peace dimension of the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus in Ukraine is not a branding exercise and not a departure from humanitarian principles. It is a practical responsibility in a protracted war where the way assistance is delivered can either reinforce trust and social cohesion or unintentionally deepen exclusion, frustration, and mistrust. In Ukraine, humanitarian needs remain acute. At the same time, displacement and return, widespread trauma, and uneven access to services are reshaping community dynamics and testing the social fabric in both frontline and de-occupied areas. In this context, integrating the “P” means making deliberate operational choices that reduce avoidable tensions, support inclusion, and strengthen the relationships and institutions that recovery depends on.

WeWorld’s approach is grounded in a simple idea: peace integration is best understood as a practice that runs through the entire programme cycle. It begins with integrating sensitivity as a minimum standard and is expressed through how and what we prioritise target, communicate, partner, and adapt. It is strengthened through psychosocial support as a cohesion enabler, through accountability to affected people and transparent feedback loops, through localisation and subgranting that place communities and civil society in the lead, and through practical collaboration with Ukrainian peacebuilders, dialogue practitioners, and trusted local actors. WeWorld does not seek to substitute Ukrainian leadership but to support the vibrant Ukrainian civil society. Our contribution is to ensure that humanitarian and early recovery work is delivered in ways that are fair, safe, and conducive to sustainable recovery.

Integrating peace is, ultimately, about protecting people’s right for the future: their ability not only to survive the war, but to live with dignity, agency, and the possibility to rebuild. It is about safeguarding the social conditions that allow people to imagine something beyond emergency, to keep dreaming and hoping, and to trust that recovery is possible. In practical terms, this means designing assistance that does not leave behind resentment, exclusion, or weakened trust, but instead strengthens relationships, supports locally accountable institutions, and creates space for communities to shape their own path forward. This report is therefore an invitation to peers and donors to treat peace integration as a shared standard of quality and accountability, grounded in local realities and informed by Ukrainian expertise.

WeWorld in Ukraine staff

Content

<i>Executive Summary</i>	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Why the HDP Nexus Matters	6
3. How to integrate the P component	9
4. Conclusions and recommendations	14
<i>Core Bibliography</i>	18

Executive Summary

This report provides practical guidance on integrating the peace dimension (the “P”) of the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus in Ukraine. It is grounded in a peer-learning and consultation roundtable convened by WeWorld in December 2025, which brought together Ukrainian peacebuilding and dialogue practitioners and international humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors working in Ukraine. It is written for a mixed audience of donors and peer organisations and is intended as a practice-oriented contribution.

The starting point is simple: in protracted crises, humanitarian assistance remains urgent and life-saving, but the way aid is delivered can either protect or undermine social cohesion and trust. In Ukraine, displacement and return, widespread trauma, uneven access to services, and chronic stressors are reshaping community dynamics. Groups such as internally displaced people (IDPs) and host communities, returnees, veterans and their families, persons with disabilities, minorities, and communities in frontline and de-occupied areas may face distinct needs and experiences of the war. These differences can become fault lines if programmes are not designed and communicated with care. Integrating the “P” in Ukraine therefore means maintaining principled, needs-based assistance while deliberately reducing avoidable tensions, preventing exclusion, and strengthening the social and institutional foundations that recovery depends on.

The report argues that integrating the “P” is less about adding a new thematic strand and more about changing how humanitarian and early recovery work is planned, delivered, and adapted. It also recognises constraints. In Ukraine, it can be difficult or politically sensitive to speak explicitly about “conflict” and “peace,” and many organisations are concerned about politicisation and risks to acceptance and access. Coordination and funding remain siloed, and the peace dimension is often under-resourced. For these reasons, the report frames peace integration primarily as “small p” practice centred on social cohesion and trust, operationalised through conflict sensitivity and context sensitivity, and aligned with a humanitarian mandate.

Section 4 sets out entry points that humanitarian actors can integrate within existing programmes. These include: mainstreaming conflict sensitivity approach across the programme cycle; treating mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) as a cohesion enabler through trauma-informed approaches and strong referral pathways; building partnerships with local organisations and Ukrainian peacebuilding practitioners to ensure complementarity rather than substitution; localisation and subgranting designed to strengthen community-led initiatives and civic space; accountability to affected populations through transparent criteria, accessible feedback channels, and responsive communication; staff care and burnout prevention as a condition for respectful, trust-building delivery and duty of care; and, where appropriate and locally led, light-touch community dialogue and dispute management linked to tangible “early wins.” The report also highlights peace education with children and families as a relevant entry point at the intersection of protection, education, and cohesion, when designed with safeguarding and conflict sensitivity

WeWorld’s own positioning is clear throughout: WeWorld is a humanitarian and development actor integrating peacebuilding, not a standalone peacebuilding organisation. WeWorld does not do political mediation, does not replace Ukrainian peacebuilders, and does not label activities as “peacebuilding” when this creates risk. Its contribution lies in disciplined conflict sensitivity, cohesion-aware delivery, localisation through partnerships and subgranting, psychosocial support as a cohesion enabler, and practical peer learning. The report closes with a short action agenda focused on feasible next steps, including follow-up learning products and collaboration pathways to support more coherent, locally grounded, and peace-responsive practice across Ukraine’s aid response.



1. Introduction

This report provides practical guidance on integrating the peace dimension (the “P”) of the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus in Ukraine. It is grounded in a peer-learning and consultation roundtable convened by WeWorld in December 2025, which brought together Ukrainian peacebuilding and dialogue practitioners and international humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors working in Ukraine. It is designed for a mixed audience of donors and peer organisations. Across Ukraine’s humanitarian response, many actors are seeking practical ways to connect short-term assistance with recovery and longer-term resilience, recognising that the way aid is delivered can either strengthen or undermine trust and social cohesion.

WeWorld has been active in Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, launching an emergency response in March 2022. Early operations focused on life-saving assistance for civilians fleeing conflict, including NFI, safe water, and essential household items. As the crisis became protracted, WeWorld established a sustained presence and expanded programming that links emergency response with early recovery, with a strong emphasis on supporting women and children. WeWorld operates from offices in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Mykolaiv, working with local organisations and communities in conflict-affected areas and with returnees to previously occupied zones. Current programming priorities include WASH, shelter, protection and education, with additional work on humanitarian demining.

In addition to the roundtable of December 2025, the report draws on WeWorld’s experience integrating conflict sensitivity within all its projects, piloting social cohesion activities within our programmes, and ongoing consultations with peers humanitarian INGOs, national organisations and donors.

Methodologically, the approach for developing this report is a structured synthesis: we identify recurring themes from the roundtable discussion, consultations and WeWorld’s experience, extract actionable implications, and translate them into practical guidance for integrating the “P” within humanitarian and early recovery work.

The report is organised as follows: after the executive summary and this introduction, in Section 3 we explore why the HDP nexus matters in general and why it is particularly relevant in Ukraine, including key implementation challenges highlighted by practitioners. Section 4 How to integrate the “P” in Ukraine provides the core guidance, drawn from the roundtable: entry points, minimum practices, and common pitfalls to avoid. Finally, Section 5 proposes a short, realistic action agenda, including the kinds of follow-up learning products and collaboration pathways that participants identified as most useful.

The full roundtable notes are annexed to this report for transparency and for readers who want additional detail beyond the synthesised guidance.

2. Why the HDP Nexus Matters

Humanitarian aid, Peacebuilding and Development are often viewed as a linear sequence, where short-term relief is followed by separate processes of peace-related recovery efforts and then long-term development. However, experiences since the 1990s demonstrated that treating these as separate, sequential processes fails to respond to the complexity of modern crises, leading to the transition toward a more integrated approach.

The modern formalisation of the Triple (Humanitarian-Development-Peace) Nexus began around the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, which launched the "New Way of Working". This initiative aimed to remove the "unnecessary barriers" that traditionally siloed humanitarian and development actors. While early iterations focused primarily on the Double Nexus (Humanitarian-Development), UN Secretary-General António Guterres called in December 2016 for "sustaining peace" to be integrated as the "third leg of the triangle".¹ This evolution reflects a global recognition that siloed interventions are ineffective in addressing the interconnected drivers of protracted crises and that sustainable development is impossible without peace.

Adopting the nexus approach strengthens the effects of aid in protracted crises and makes it more sustainable and efficient. In a context like Ukraine, humanitarian action remains essential and urgent for saving lives and respond to the needs of the people affected by the Russian invasion, the nexus approach brings development and peace perspectives into the frame so that immediate relief can be paired with reconstruction and efforts to reduce grievances, acknowledge trauma and sufferings and strengthen social relations and institutions.

Humanitarian "early wins" can meet urgent needs while building trust that enables more sensitive "small p" peace integration such as community dialogue and inclusive problem-solving.² Inclusion itself becomes a peace-relevant practice, because addressing the exclusion of marginalised groups can reduce drivers of fragmentation before they escalate.

Social cohesion is in fact a growing concern within this humanitarian crisis, where trauma and chronic stressors are widespread, and population movements continue to reshape community dynamics. The pressure is particularly visible among groups with distinct experiences of the war and different access to services, such as internally displaced people and host communities, returnees, veterans and their families, persons with disabilities, minorities, and communities in frontline and de-occupied areas. These are not only vulnerability categories. They represent potential fault lines where exclusion, stigma, or competition over resources can harden into mistrust and fragmentation.

In protracted crises, humanitarian work can become more difficult to sustain when communities perceive aid as inconsistent or unfair, or when rumours and narratives start to question the

¹ Land, Tony, e Volker Hauck. HDP Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities for Its Implementation. On behalf of European Commission. European Commission, 2022.

² Brown, Summer, Rodrigo Mena, e Sylvia Brown. «The peace dilemma in the triple nexus: challenges and opportunities for the humanitarian–development–peace approach». *Development in Practice* 34, fasc. 5 (2024): 568–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2024.2334774>.

legitimacy of aid actors. Without overstating the risk in Ukraine, experience from other contexts shows that “aid fatigue” and rising scepticism can grow when interventions are perceived as opportunistic or externally driven, rather than locally grounded and accountable. A nexus approach helps prevent these dynamics by reinforcing transparency, participation, and local partnership as core operating principles.

The approach is also an answer to scarce resources and rising needs. In a global environment of record-high conflicts and diminishing funding, the nexus finding synergies across sectors may be the only option available to reach communities.³ Moreover, by planning across the three pillars, rather than sequentially, actors can reduce duplication and design complementary interventions that reinforce each other.

The nexus shifts thinking from reactive response to building absorptive and adaptive capacity.⁴ It encourages approaches that help communities withstand shocks, recover, and make more independent decisions over time. In Ukraine, this means ensuring that humanitarian and early recovery interventions sustain social cohesion and help create a fertile ground for peace over time. This includes strengthening local institutions and service delivery during crisis, so that external assistance supports self-reliance rather than locking communities into long-term dependency. It also creates space to pursue durable solutions, recognising that safe and dignified return or local integration for displaced people depends on conditions linked to security, services, livelihoods, and social acceptance.

Finally, the nexus is designed for complex, non-linear realities. Protracted crises evolve unpredictably, often shaped by “threat multipliers” where different pressures converge and amplify each other.⁵ The contiguum logic reflects this: different instruments must operate simultaneously as contexts shift.⁶ The nexus also provides a shared analytical lens, helping actors align their understanding of context and their narratives, and keeping human security at the centre through a people-focused view of protection, livelihoods, and rights as interconnected requirements.

Some of the challenges when trying to integrate the “P” of the HDP nexus in Ukraine are conceptual, political, and operational. A first challenge is language and framing. In Ukraine, it can feel difficult, or sometimes unacceptable, to speak explicitly about “conflict” and “peace.” Humanitarian organisations are often particularly concerned that linking assistance to “peace” objectives risks politicising aid, creating perceptions of partiality, or undermining acceptance and access. Moreover, the operational ecosystem is not equally developed across the three pillars. Coordination mechanisms for humanitarian assistance are relatively strong, but structured spaces to connect

³ Biehler, Nadine, Barbara Kobler, e Amrei Meier. «Interlinking Humanitarian Aid, Development Cooperation and Peacebuilding in Displacement Contexts: The Added Value of the HDP Nexus’ Peace Component». SWP Comment, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.18449/2023C58>.

⁴ Volkdal, Christina Plesner. «A Literature Review on the Triple Nexus Model: Developing a Comprehensive Framework». *Journal of Sustainable Development Issues* 2, fasc. 2 (2024): 129–62. <https://doi.org/10.62433/josdi.v2i2.30>.

⁵ McCandless, Erin. «Critical Evolutions in the Peacebuilding-Development Praxis Nexus: Crisis and Complexity, Synergy and Transformation». *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 16, fasc. 2 (2021): 131–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166211017832>.

⁶ Land, Tony, e Volker Hauck, 2022

humanitarian action with recovery and peace-related practice are often limited. The same applies to donor incentives, which lag behind nexus ambitions. Funding is extremely siloed, and the peace dimension is often the least resourced. Taken together, these challenges do not make peace integration impossible, but they require careful framing, clear boundaries, and realistic, mandate-appropriate entry points that can be embedded within humanitarian and early recovery work.



3. How to integrate the P component

In this chapter, we explore practical ways to integrate the peace component within our programmes in Ukraine. We rely on our experience piloting activities within WeWorld's humanitarian programmes and information gathered in the Roundtable we organized in December 2025.

A consistent point raised in every consultation we held is that **integrating peace does not necessarily mean adding new thematic strands to our interventions; it means changing how we design, deliver, and adapt them in a high-pressure context.** In practice, this means strengthening social cohesion and trust while maintaining principled, needs-based assistance, and doing so in ways that support, rather than substitute, Ukrainian leadership and local peacebuilding capacity.

A practical way to integrate the HDP nexus approach in Ukraine is to treat conflict sensitivity as the starting point for reflecting on the effects of our interventions, and social cohesion and trust as the intended direction of travel. This starts with the recognition that even in a context of external aggression, internal tensions can still emerge and evolve, often shaped by displacement, return, trauma, uneven access to services, perceptions of unfairness, and the stress of prolonged uncertainty. Peace integration in this report therefore means first of all ensuring that the way aid is delivered reduces avoidable tensions, doesn't hinder peace efforts, supports inclusive access, and strengthens the relationships and legitimacy that makes recovery sustainable. It also includes institution strengthening and support to civic space as part of a longer-term pathway, because trust and cohesion are reinforced when local institutions and civil society can credibly respond to people's needs.

For INGOs and humanitarian actors, the most realistic entry point is mainstreaming conflict sensitivity across the programme cycle and country strategies. Practitioners stressed that this should not be treated as a one-off assessment, but as a repeatable discipline that influences everyday decisions: who is targeted, how selection is communicated, what grievances might be triggered, how partners are chosen, how staff behave, and how feedback is handled. In Ukraine's fast-moving environment, the objective is not perfect analysis. It is sufficient, timely analysis that leads to practical choices and course correction. Peace-oriented work begins where teams routinely ask: what tensions could this intervention unintentionally aggravate? Which relations can we strengthen? Which groups might experience exclusion or stigma? What rumours are already circulating? And, what would a fair and transparent process look like here? In WeWorld's case, mainstreaming conflict sensitivity means first of all running participatory workshops with project staff and partners, during which the staff is trained on conflict sensitivity while risk of doing harm and opportunities to strengthen relations are identified. WeWorld's Conflict Sensitivity toolkit, recently translated into Ukrainian, contains a series of exercises and practical tools for adopting conflict sensitivity at different organisational levels.

BOX 1

INTEGRATING THE P: WHAT THIS DOES NOT (NECESSARILY) MEAN

It does not mean political mediation, negotiation, or work on ceasefire or peace talks.

It does not mean replacing Ukrainian peacebuilders, dialogue practitioners, or local civic leaders.

It does not require branding activities as “peacebuilding” when that language creates operational, reputational, or community-level risk.

It does not mean shifting away from principled, needs-based humanitarian assistance.

It does not mean forcing consensus or “reconciliation narratives” in ways that are not locally led or context-appropriate.

It does not mean adding a standalone project component by default.

It means improving how existing programmes are designed, delivered, and adapted so they reduce harm and strengthen trust.

By integrating conflict sensitivity into our programmes, we learned that a variety of mutually reinforcing practices can strengthen social cohesion while remaining consistent with a humanitarian mandate.

One of the most consistent pathways discussed by practitioners **is treating mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) as a cohesion enabler**, not only as an individual service. In Ukraine, repeated trauma, chronic stress, and grief affect households and communities at scale. When distress remains unacknowledged, it can contribute to interpersonal conflict, polarisation, and breakdown of trust, including mistrust toward institutions and responders. MHPSS integration matters because it strengthens people’s ability to cope, communicate, and participate in community life, and it can reduce the intensity of daily friction in families, schools, and public spaces. This does not mean that MHPSS equals peacebuilding. It means that trauma-informed programming and referral pathways can protect and reinforce the social fabric and relationships that recovery depends on. WeWorld’s experience piloting cohesion-oriented elements within a psychosocial support project in Kharkiv reflects this logic: practical, needs-driven MHPSS can also contribute to safer relationships and more constructive community dynamics when it is connected to protection principles, inclusion, and community engagement.

Partnerships and referral pathways are another critical entry point. Integrating peace is a team effort, not achieved by any one actor or project. It is achieved through complementarity. Roundtable’s participant highlighted that humanitarian actors add value when they build functional relationships with local organisations that hold community trust, including civil society groups and Ukrainian peacebuilding practitioners, and when they establish clear referral pathways that connect service delivery with protection, psychosocial support, legal aid, and community-based dispute management. In practice, this can mean mapping local capacities, agreeing safe referral protocols,

and coordinating around who is best placed to do what. It also means recognising civic space and local institutions as part of the enabling environment. When local service providers, local authorities, and civil society are supported to function, communities can rely less on external actors and more on locally accountable systems over time.

Localisation and subgranting can make this real, if designed carefully. Practitioners underlined that integrating peace dimension within the nexus in Ukraine depends on locally led initiatives and Ukrainian agency, and that international actors should avoid approaches that sideline local knowledge or reduce local organisations to subcontractors. Subgranting is not only a financing modality. It can be a cohesion tool when it empowers credible local actors to respond to community priorities, reach groups that INGOs struggle to reach, and work in ways that are culturally and politically legible. It can also support civic space by resourcing initiatives that strengthen participation, community problem-solving, and inclusive local service models. The peace integration value comes from how subgrants are structured: transparent selection criteria, fair geographic and group coverage, risk-aware due diligence, and ongoing accompaniment that strengthens capacity rather than extracting compliance.

Accountability to affected populations, including feedback loops and complaints mechanisms, is another foundational entry point that directly shapes social cohesion and trust. Practitioners emphasised that perceptions of unfairness and exclusion can escalate quickly when communication is weak or when communities do not have a safe way to raise concerns. Peace integration therefore includes simple but disciplined practices: communicate selection criteria clearly, explain constraints honestly, make decisions traceable, and create accessible channels for people to ask questions and report concerns without fear of retaliation. In Ukraine, this is also about protecting the legitimacy of the response over time. When communities feel heard, even imperfect assistance is less likely to generate resentment that damages trust in responders and local institutions.

Staff care and burnout prevention is often overlooked in nexus discussions, but it matters for peace integration in protracted crises. Practitioners consistently noted that stressed teams have less bandwidth for nuance, empathy, and careful communication. Under chronic pressure, teams may default to speed, rigid routines, and transactional engagement, which can unintentionally increase friction with communities and partners. Protecting staff wellbeing is therefore not only an internal human resources concern. It is part of maintaining a quality response that remains respectful, transparent, and relationship-aware. This includes realistic workloads, supportive management, and basic training that helps staff handle sensitive conversations, stigma, and community frustration without escalating tensions.

Peace integration can also include **carefully facilitated and locally led community dialogue**, where feasible and appropriate. Humanitarian actors should not position themselves as mediators of political disputes. However, there is often a role in enabling safer community problem-solving around practical issues that can become flashpoints, especially when resources are scarce or when different groups hold different war experiences. Practitioners highlighted that in Ukraine, such work is most credible when locally led, linked to one of the many trusted local actors, and connected to

tangible “early wins” that meet urgent needs. The sequencing matters: visible, fair service delivery can create the trust that makes more sensitive dialogue and relationship repair possible.

A related entry point in Ukraine is supporting **the inclusion and reintegration of veterans and their families in community life**, in ways that are safe and locally led. Veterans are not a homogeneous group, but many face distinct stressors linked to injury, loss, disability, stigma, and shifting family roles. These pressures can affect household wellbeing and wider community dynamics, especially where services are stretched and frustration is high. Humanitarian actors can contribute without stepping into political work by ensuring programmes do not unintentionally exclude veterans, by linking veterans and families to appropriate MHPSS and protection referral pathways, and by supporting community initiatives that reduce stigma and rebuild everyday relationships. Where appropriate, this can connect to education and child protection programming, recognising the ripple effects on children and caregivers.

Coordination and peer learning spaces are a fundamental enabling condition. Many actors coordinate intensively on humanitarian delivery, but far fewer spaces exist for connecting humanitarian response with recovery logic and peace-relevant practice. Practitioners repeatedly underlined that peace integration improves when organisations can exchange experience, align language, and identify complementary roles without forcing uniformity. For INGOs, this can be as simple as convening practical peer exchanges, developing shared minimum practices for conflict sensitivity, and supporting learning products that translate complex ideas into usable operational habits.

Peace and civic education with children and families is an additional entry point that WeWorld is increasingly interested in piloting in Ukraine. When designed in a trauma-informed and context-sensitive way, supporting and strengthening children’s social and emotional skills, can reduce bullying and stigma, and support safer relationships in schools and households. The intent is not to promote abstract reconciliation narratives, but to support resilience, non-violent communication, and inclusive behaviours that help communities cope and remain cohesive under strain. Practitioners stressed that with children and youth, language, safeguarding, and cultural sensitivity are essential, and that programmes should work through trusted local education and protection structures where possible.

Taken together, these entry points show what integrating the P looks like for humanitarian actors in Ukraine: disciplined conflict sensitivity, trust- and cohesion-aware delivery, stronger local partnerships and referral pathways, localisation through subgranting, meaningful accountability to affected populations, care for staff wellbeing, and selective support to locally led dialogue and peace education when it is safe and appropriate. The common thread is modesty and practicality. Peace integration is not achieved by declaring peace objectives. It is achieved by operational choices that reduce harm, strengthen legitimacy, and protect the social and institutional foundations that Ukraine will rely on for both continued resilience and future reconstruction.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Integrating the peace dimension of the HDP nexus in Ukraine is not an optional add-on. It is a practical response to the realities of a protracted war where humanitarian needs remain acute, while social cohesion, trust, and institutional legitimacy are under sustained pressure. Across the roundtable and subsequent consultations, a consistent message emerged: the “P” is best integrated through how aid is delivered, not through ambitious labels. In the Ukrainian context, careful framing and clear boundaries are essential to protect humanitarian acceptance and access and to avoid politicisation.

This report has therefore framed peace integration as “small p” practice centred on social cohesion and trust, operationalised through conflict sensitivity and context sensitivity. The implications are concrete. Programmes need to anticipate how assistance can shape local relationships, perceptions of fairness, and trust in institutions. They need to reduce avoidable tensions and exclusion, strengthen community coping and connection through psychosocial support, and build complementarity with Ukrainian peacebuilders and trusted local actors rather than substituting them. They also need to take seriously the sustainability of the response itself. In long emergencies, fatigue and scepticism can grow when communities perceive aid as inconsistent, opaque, or externally driven. Investing in transparency, participation, local partnership, and staff wellbeing is part of sustaining a credible response.

The roundtable also highlighted a structural challenge: while coordination is relatively strong within the humanitarian system, spaces to connect humanitarian delivery with recovery and peace-relevant practice remain limited, and donor incentives often lag behind nexus ambitions. This makes it even more important to focus on realistic, mandate-appropriate entry points that can be embedded within humanitarian and early recovery work, and to strengthen peer learning so that organisations do not reinvent the wheel in isolation.

In order to integrate the peace dimension in a nexus approach, we recommend:

1) Treat conflict sensitivity as the minimum operational standard

Peace integration starts with disciplined conflict sensitivity across the programme cycle, as a repeatable practice rather than a one-off analysis. This includes joint context analysis with staff and partners to identify potential negative effects and realistic entry points for strengthening social cohesion within humanitarian and early recovery work. Because Ukraine is fast-moving, the goal is not perfect analysis, but timely analysis that shapes decisions and enables course correction.

To make this operational, organisations should integrate light, continuous monitoring into routine project reviews. Simple tools like monthly context notes, risk logs, or short reflection check-ins can help teams track shifts in local tensions and assess whether programme decisions are aggravating or reducing friction. Monitoring should include qualitative signals, not only outputs, for example perceptions of fairness, rumours, trust signals, and patterns of exclusion.

2) Put local agency at the centre and work on power imbalances

Peace integration is more credible and sustainable when local actors are not only consulted, but able to influence priorities and decisions. Humanitarian actors add value when they work in complementarity with local organisations and Ukrainian peacebuilding practitioners, supporting locally led solutions rather than substituting them.

A practical shift is to treat partnership as capacity-sharing rather than capacity-building. This recognises that local organisations hold contextual knowledge, legitimacy, and relationships that international actors often lack. It also requires being attentive to internal power dynamics in partnerships, including how risks, workloads, and resources are distributed. Where feasible, programmes should aim for fair partnership arrangements and transparent decision-making about roles, responsibilities, and resourcing.

3) Use strategic framing and language that protects acceptance and access

In Ukraine, language is not cosmetic. Terms like “conflict” and “peace” can be politically sensitive or interpreted as politicising aid. Organisations can keep the substance of peace integration intact while using resonant, safer language such as social cohesion, inclusion, trust, community resilience, or context sensitivity.

Similarly, when delivering training or consultations, it is often more constructive to focus on community-level disputes and everyday stressors (for example access to services, perceptions of unfairness, and tensions around targeting) rather than broad national-level narratives. This helps staff and partners engage safely and practically.

4) Design for trust: sequencing, early wins, and complementarity

A consistent lesson from practice is that “early wins” matter. Addressing urgent stressors, such as restoring basic services or improving safe access to support, can build the trust needed to engage in more sensitive cohesion-oriented activities.

Subgranting and community-led micro-initiatives can be a strong cohesion mechanism when designed with transparency, fairness, and accompaniment. They help ensure that local priorities shape solutions and allow more politically and culturally legible actors to lead.

MHPSS integration is also critical for cohesion. Trauma-informed programming and functional referral pathways help reduce distress that can otherwise spill into interpersonal conflict and mistrust. This is not about equating MHPSS with peacebuilding, but recognising it as an enabling condition for healthier relationships, safer schools, and constructive community dynamics.

5) Make inclusion a deliberate peace-relevant choice

Targeted inclusion is one of the most practical peace-relevant practices available to humanitarian actors. In Ukraine, groups such as veterans and their families, IDPs and host communities, returnees, persons with disabilities, minorities, and other groups facing stigma or exclusion can become fault lines if assistance is perceived as unequal or insensitive. Deliberate inclusion, accessible design, and careful communication reduce these risks.

Where relevant and safe, organisations can also draw on established global framing that supports inclusion without politicisation, such as Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security, by positioning women and youth as agents of resilience and recovery rather than only recipients of aid.

6) Strengthen downward accountability to sustain legitimacy over time

Transparent, accessible accountability mechanisms are central to peace integration because they directly shape trust. This includes communicating selection criteria clearly, explaining constraints honestly, ensuring decisions are traceable, and providing safe channels for communities to raise concerns without fear.

Where appropriate, transparency can also be demonstrated through simple, locally accessible formats for communicating results and resource use. The objective is not heavy reporting, but practical trust-building that reduces rumours and scepticism and enables communities to flag unintended negative effects early.

7) Invest in collaboration and shared learning spaces

A repeated gap in Ukraine is the limited number of structured spaces to connect humanitarian delivery with peace-relevant practice, especially across different types of actors. Creating peer learning spaces, joint problem-solving moments, and simple practice exchanges can help organisations align language, share workable tools, and identify complementary roles. These spaces should be designed to support realism and learning, not consensus or uniformity.



BOX 2

WEWORLD'S STRATEGY FOR INTEGRATING THE "P" OF THE HDP NEXUS (2026–2027)

Next 6 months (by June 2026):

- 1. Conflict sensitivity as minimum standard:** Every new and ongoing project undergoes a conflict/context sensitivity review, with risks and mitigation actions documented and followed up.
- 2. Consolidate analysis for both risk management and priority setting:** Establish a light, repeatable system for conflict/context analysis that informs (1) conflict sensitivity reviews and risk logs for all active and new grants, and (2) programme priority setting in the areas where WeWorld operates.
- 3. Test and document pilots:** Pilot, adapt, and capture lessons from peace-relevant approaches embedded in ongoing programmes, including MHPSS as a cohesion enabler, support to vulnerable groups such as veterans and their families, and peace and civic education with children and families.
- 4. Build or sustain platforms for exchange and mutual support:** Convene at least peer-learning moments with partners and allies to share challenges, solutions, and minimum practices for conflict sensitivity and cohesion-aware delivery.

Next 12 months (by January 2027)

- 1. Embed and scale across the portfolio:** Conflict sensitivity is applied consistently across the programme cycle, with routine tracking of key perception and trust signals and documented course correction.
- 2. Share lessons and accompany peers:** Systematically share learning with peer INGOs and partners, and provide practical guidance and light accompaniment on embedding conflict sensitivity and peace-oriented approaches within humanitarian and development portfolios.
- 3. Partnerships strengthened:** Collaboration with local organisations, including Ukrainian peacebuilding and dialogue practitioners, is consolidated through clear roles, referral pathways, and complementarity.

Core Bibliography

Angelini, Lorenzo, and Summer Brown. 2023. *'Peace' in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: Good Practices and Recommendations*. Discussion Paper. Brussels: Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN).

Biehler, Nadine, Barbara Kobler, and Amrei Meier. 2023. *Interlinking Humanitarian Aid, Development Cooperation and Peacebuilding in Displacement Contexts: The Added Value of the HDP Nexus' Peace Component*. SWP Comment 58. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. <https://doi.org/10.18449/2023C58>.

Brown, Summer, Rodrigo Mena, and Sylvia Brown. 2024. "The Peace Dilemma in the Triple Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities for the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Approach." *Development in Practice* 34 (5): 568–584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2024.2334774>.

Cochrane, Logan, and Alexandra Wilson. 2023. "Nuancing the Double and Triple Nexus: Analyzing the Potential for Unintended, Negative Consequences." *Development Studies Research* 10 (1): 2181729. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2023.2181729>.

Land, Tony, and Volker Hauck. 2022. *HDP Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities for its Implementation*. Final Report. Maastricht: ECDPM and Particip GmbH.

Lehti, Marko, Denys Brylov, Cedric de Coning, and Tetiana Kalenychenko. 2024. "Winning the Peace: The Role of Agonistic and Adaptive Peacebuilding in Sustaining Social Cohesion in Ukraine." *International Negotiation* 30 (2025): 155–179. Published online December 18, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718069-bja10105>.

McCandless, Erin. 2021. "Critical Evolutions in the Peacebuilding–Development Praxis Nexus: Crisis and Complexity, Synergy and Transformation." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 16 (2): 131–147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166211017832>.

Meininghaus, Esther, Birgit Kemmerling, Boubacar Haidara, and Marie Müller-Koné. 2025. *Good Practice Guide for HDP Nexus Operationalisation*. bicc report. Bonn: bicc – Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies. <https://doi.org/10.60638/kmdm-rt73>.

Meininghaus, Esther, Rodrigo Bolaños Suárez, Boubacar Haidara, Birgit Kemmerling, Marie Müller-Koné, Ahmad Al-Khalil, Riyadh Al-Khadhra, et al. 2024. *How to Decolonise the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus? Policy Recommendations for Donors, the United Nations (UN) and Other International Agencies and (I)NGOs*. bicc policy brief. Bonn: bicc – Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies. <https://doi.org/10.606385tzx-fs68>.

Norman, Julie M., and Drew Mikhael. 2023. "Rethinking the Triple-Nexus: Integrating Peacebuilding and Resilience Initiatives in Conflict Contexts." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 18 (3): 248–263. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166231200210>.

Rogers, Joshua. 2025. "Still Struggling to Give 'P' a Chance? Options for Integrating the Peace Pillar into the Triple Nexus." *Berghof Foundation* (blog), July 28, 2025.

Volkdal, Christina Plesner. 2024. "A Literature Review on the Triple Nexus Model: Developing a Comprehensive Framework." *Journal of Sustainable Development Issues* 2 (2): 129–162. <https://doi.org/10.62433/josdi.v2i2.30>.

Volkdal, Christina Plesner. 2025. "Integrating Peacebuilding into the Triple Nexus: Insights from UNICEF's Dual Mandate." *Development in Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2025.2544902>.

WeWorld. 2025. "Integrating the Peace Dimension in the HDP Nexus in Ukraine." Roundtable Meeting Notes, December 2025.

WeWorld and Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv. 2026. *How Ukrainians Perceive NGOs During Wartime: A Pilot Study on Public Trust, Civic Engagement, and Resilience-Building*. Pilot Study Report, February 2026.