

# A read out of the Dakar workshops by a few NGOs

Action Against Hunger, Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE, International Rescue Committee

Last week in Dakar (28 May to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018) two workshops took place, organized respectively by the IASC Task Team on the Humanitarian Development Nexus based in Geneva, and OCHA and UNDP policy teams based in New York. 50 participants took part in the first workshop, including around 40 UN and 10 NGO participants. The second gathered around 80 participants from the UN, 20 from Governments, and 18 from NGOs.

Two years post WHS and more than two years into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, commitments to transcend the humanitarian-development divide, strengthen development and prevent crises, including famines, conflicts and forced displacement are driving reforms in the eco-system of aid. The reforms include a joint UN and World Bank Commitment to adopt a New Way of Working; the UN Secretary General's proposed Reform of the UN on Prevention and Development (the latter being adopted on 31 May 2018 by Member States), a whole-of-society approach in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF); the World Bank entering contexts of fragility and conflict; and the Commitments by donors to multi-year, better coordinated humanitarian and development funding, in the Grand Bargain.

The Dakar workshops focused specifically on the New Way of Working and the process leading to "collective outcomes" meant to be guiding humanitarian, development and peace actors in countries where humanitarian needs, low development indicators and violence coexist simultaneously. Initially presented as boosters of UN performance, these initiatives could drastically change the landscape of aid for all actors involved, including NGOs, in terms of objectives, coordination structures, methods, leadership and funding, which is why several NGOs follow these processes closely at country, regional and global levels.

- **The missing pieces of the "collective" of collective outcomes**

Both workshops strongly highlighted the need to "de-UNize" the process, so these outcomes would indeed be collective at country level. All actors emphasized the absolute necessity for the inclusion, participation and shared ownership of the process by affected people and civil society. Additionally, while only 10% of development funding goes through the UN (and even less through NGOs), the major part of development actors, important parts of Governments, the private sector or diasporas, remain outside the current scope of these global efforts. This begs the question of whether, despite Grand Bargain commitments, the private sector and branches of governments such as Defense and Economy Ministries, are ready to embrace a new way of doing business in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Yet sharing an analysis of the root causes and drivers of poverty and crises is essential to foster a collective vision of development for the most vulnerable. The workshop therefore highlighted that using a large variety of existing analyses, including from local experts and more neutral brokers, like the academia, would be key to successful collective outcomes. However, the Dakar workshops somewhat failed to provide concrete recommendations on the "how" to harness local knowledge and use this opportunity to encourage the localization agenda, beyond the support to national/federal Governments.

- **Towards a common vision of the nexus around the SDGs**

The SDGs were generally acknowledged as an adequate framework for collective outcomes. Some Governments present, like Burkina Faso or Mauritania, gave examples of how their first “collective outcomes” were in line with the SDGs identified as priorities for their countries. Nevertheless, several actors, including Governments and NGOs, emphasized the need to focus on the impact of development programs for citizens on the ground, in addition to state-building. In that regard, humanitarians were noted to have experience and expertise to contribute, not only in conflict and crisis settings, but also in targeting the furthest behind. All aid actors, by showing what development, resilience, recovery or peace building initiatives, programmes and approaches have shown good results, would contribute to fostering a common vision of development for communities. Lessons learnt from what has or has not worked in the past should inform discussions on development investments for the reduction of risks and vulnerabilities. More generally, the workshops showed there was no common interpretation of the nexus and of what shape and scope collective outcomes should take. Encouraging a shared understanding of the nexus within the aid community, and with affected populations, host Governments, donors, security, economic, local actors and parties to conflict, may be necessary to shape a system that better deliver on its commitments to support development, while saving lives remains the corner stone of leaving no one behind.

- **Clarifying the peace element of the “triple nexus”**

The workshops showed that different actors have different perceptions of the “peace” component of the triple nexus. Yet, meanwhile these discussions on better linking humanitarian, development and peace are happening, other governmental actors are also pushing their political agendas, including counter-terrorism, counter-violent extremism or anti-migration, especially in the Sahel region. While the nexus promotes joined up approaches, concepts of “stabilization”, “security” or “counter-terrorism” should not be used interchangeably for “peace”. In the absence of clear definition of the nexus’ scope, the door is however currently open and already allowing some Governments to use the nexus as a justification to link up aid with military or security objectives. NGOs’ vision of peace, through development at community level, a rights-based or people-centered approach, could inspire other actors setting red-lines or taking into consideration other actors’ specific policies and practices that do not directly aim at peace and development for the most vulnerable people.

- **Humanitarian space: what can NGOs contribute?**

The Dakar workshops recognized the need to preserve a principled humanitarian space and the centrality of protection. In that sense, humanitarian NGOs can provide expertise and operational experience of program, advocacy and funding cooperation improving on the existing structure and good practices of humanitarian and development settings. Country-level frameworks should ensure that saving lives remains a priority, that civilians in crisis situations are protected and can access principled humanitarian aid, through funding but also through respect for International Humanitarian Law and a quick, flexible, context-based and effective response to their basic needs so they are not left behind. However, the nexus could also be an opportunity to make comparative advantages clearer and to better understand each other, recognizing that humanitarian and development needs often coexist simultaneously. For humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, more collaboration and non-competitive coordination is needed, bearing in mind that in a world that is fundamentally different from what it was only 10 years ago, humanitarian principles are vital to keep humanitarians distinguished from parties to conflict, and safeguard acceptance and access to populations in need.