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Evaluation of FAO's role and work on the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus constitutes an important addition to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) efforts to develop an effective and innovative Strategic Framework, centred on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda and 'leaving no one behind' - through *better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life*. The evaluation draws its vision from the first session of the FAO Conference, where it was stated that “...*the Food and Agriculture Organization is born out of the need for peace as well as the need for freedom from want. The two are interdependent. Progress towards freedom from want is essential to lasting peace.*” (FAO, 2016).
- Over the decades, FAO has been active in more than 90 countries, working towards food security and nutrition for all, across conflict, fragile and crises contexts as well as in more stable development ones. Over the years, evaluations have provided evidence and recommendations on how FAO could better address the short- and long-term causes of malnutrition and food insecurity across different contexts and provide solutions and support to Members in identifying sustainable pathways to inclusive and equitable development and food security.
- The starting point for this report is the 2014 Evaluation of FAO's Contributions to Crisis-Related Transition - Linking Relief to Development (FAO, 2014), which explored the progress FAO had made on linking its emergency and development work to better respond to the needs of countries in crises. The current evaluation picks up the analysis from 2014 but importantly overlays explicitly the peace dimension to the humanitarian and development ones as well as extending the analysis beyond crises contexts, to cover contributions to peace in development settings.
- A key perspective which underpins the analysis of the evaluation is that the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus is not a new area of work or a particular type of programme, but instead it is a mindset, a systemic way of thinking, and a new way of working. Its main features are about joined-up, multi-partner, flexible and adaptive programming across the three HDP pillars that is anchored in context analysis and evidence, and is people-centred and inclusive. Likewise, the leadership required for effective HDP approaches needs to be innovative, principled and transformative, as well as enable dialogue across disciplines, sectors and pillars of the aid architecture and provide a vision that uses the technical expertise and mandate of agencies such as FAO to promote dialogue, collaboration and longer-term sustainable results. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus is one of the key texts spelling out this approach.
- The external drivers for the evaluation are the evolution of the aid context, where there has been a call by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General for all of the UN to address peace as a centre-piece of its work (UN, 2016), and ultimately to work to this triple humanitarian–development–peace nexus; the internal drivers are both the development in 2018 of FAO's Corporate Framework for Sustaining Peace (FAO, 2014), the establishment of the Conflict and Peace Unit (CPU) and the growing body of FAO's work engaging with conflict dynamics, and an ongoing ambition to better link its development and humanitarian work. The evaluation revisits and brings together in a coherent narrative the many approaches of conflict management and peace-sustaining work carried out over the years on natural resources management and rights-based frameworks. At the same time, it analyses the body of work developed through emergency activities, in crisis and conflict contexts – shaped by the ever-stronger recognition of the need to focus on longer-term resilience.
- The evaluation recognizes that the heart of FAO's work in prioritizing and implementing an HDP approach has been at country level. The evaluation has pieced together a number of examples from across countries to inform the narrative and provide lessons. Nevertheless, the corporate understanding of the HDP nexus as well as the programmatic coherence and

consistency across teams and countries remain fragmented: for example, there is little consistency in the scale of FAO's humanitarian offer, or in its engagement with conflict dynamics. The main overarching message from the evaluation is that FAO is ideally placed to invest in a major corporate effort to learn from its years of experience and successful examples, to mainstream and adopt HDP nexus ways of working as part of its organizational DNA, making deliberate and informed use of approaches and practices such as technical diplomacy, information systems and context analysis to inform conflict-sensitive programming, rights-based frameworks and people-centred approaches to achieve inclusive and peace-sustaining results. At the same time, FAO should step-up its footprint in, and contributions to, coordination and multi-partner fora and policy dialogues at country, regional and global levels. FAO has a comparative advantage deriving from its technical expertise and knowledge, but it should ensure this is sustained by skilled, well-informed and well-supported leadership at all levels, and by an enabling organizational system and culture, so it can deliver innovative and long-lasting results on peace to its membership, no matter whether in crisis or development settings.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

- The Programme Committee is invited to review the contents of the document and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.

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Summary report

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Abstract

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A key perspective that underpins the analysis of the evaluation is that the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus is not a new area of work or a particular type of programme, but instead it is a mind-set, a systemic way of thinking, and a new way of working. Its main features are about joined-up, multi-partner, flexible and adaptive programming across the three HDP pillars that is anchored in context analysis and evidence, and is people-centred and inclusive.

The evaluation revisits and brings together in a coherent narrative the many approaches of conflict management and peace-sustaining work carried out over the years on natural resources management and rights-based frameworks. At the same time, it analyses the body of work developed through emergency activities, in crisis and conflict contexts – shaped by the ever-stronger recognition of the need to focus on longer-term resilience. The evaluation recognizes that the heart of FAO's work in prioritizing and implementing an HDP approach has been at country level and has pieced together a number of examples from across countries to inform the narrative and provide lessons.

The main overarching message from the evaluation is that FAO is ideally placed to invest in a major corporate effort to mainstream and adopt HDP nexus ways of working as part of its organizational DNA. It needs to make a deliberate and informed use of approaches and practices such as technical diplomacy, information systems and context analysis to inform conflict-sensitive programming, rights-based frameworks and people-centred approaches to achieve inclusive and peace-sustaining results. At the same time, FAO should step-up its footprint in, and contributions to, coordination and multi-partner fora and policy dialogues at country, regional and global levels. FAO has a comparative advantage deriving from its technical expertise and knowledge, but it should ensure this is sustained by skilled, well-informed and well-supported leadership at all levels, and by an enabling organizational system and culture, so it can deliver innovative and long-lasting results on peace to its membership, no matter whether in crisis or development settings.

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The evaluation team was composed of Margie Buchanan-Smith (Team Leader) and evaluation team members from OED: Marta Bruno (Evaluation Manager), Jenin Assaf, Paul Neuman, Morwenna Sullivan and Claudia Martinez Mansell; with guidance by Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin (Senior Evaluation Officer).

Executive summary

1. The Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus constitutes an important addition to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) efforts to develop an effective and innovative Strategic Framework, centred on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda and 'leaving no one behind' - through better production, nutrition, environment and life. The evaluation draws its vision from the first session of the FAO Conference, where it was stated that "*...the Food and Agriculture Organization is born out of the need for peace as well as the need for freedom from want. The two are interdependent. Progress towards freedom from want is essential to lasting peace.*" (FAO, 2016).
2. Over the decades, FAO has been active in more than 90 countries, working towards food security and nutrition for all, across conflict, fragile and crises contexts as well as in more stable development ones. Over the years, evaluations have provided evidence and recommendations on how FAO could better address the short- and long-term causes of malnutrition and food insecurity across different contexts and provide solutions and support to Members in identifying sustainable pathways to inclusive and equitable development and food security.
3. The starting point for this report is the 2014 Evaluation of FAO's Contributions to Crisis-Related Transition - Linking Relief to Development (FAO, 2014), which explored the progress FAO had made on linking its emergency and development work to better respond to the needs of countries in crises. The current evaluation picks up the analysis from 2014 but importantly overlays explicitly the peace dimension to the humanitarian and development ones as well as extending the analysis beyond crises contexts, to cover contributions to peace in development settings.
4. A key perspective which underpins the analysis of the evaluation is that the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus is not a new area of work or a particular type of programme, but instead it is a mindset, a systemic way of thinking, and a new way of working. Its main features are about joined-up, multi-partner, flexible and adaptive programming across the three HDP pillars that is anchored in context analysis and evidence, and is people-centred and inclusive. Likewise, the leadership required for effective HDP approaches needs to be innovative, principled and transformative, as well as enable dialogue across disciplines, sectors and pillars of the aid architecture and provide a vision that uses the technical expertise and mandate of agencies such as FAO to promote dialogue, collaboration and longer-term sustainable results. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus is one of the key texts spelling out this approach.
5. The external drivers for the evaluation are the evolution of the aid context, where there has been a call by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General for all of the UN to address peace as a centre-piece of its work (UN, 2016), and ultimately to work to this triple humanitarian–development–peace nexus; the internal drivers are both the development in 2018 of FAO's Corporate Framework for Sustaining Peace (FAO, 2014), the establishment of the Conflict and Peace Unit (CPU) and the growing body of FAO's work engaging with conflict dynamics, and an ongoing ambition to better link its development and humanitarian work. The evaluation revisits and brings together in a coherent narrative the many approaches of conflict management and peace-sustaining work carried out over the years on natural resources management and rights-based frameworks. At the same time, it analyses the body of work developed through emergency activities, in crisis and conflict contexts – shaped by the ever-stronger recognition of the need to focus on longer-term resilience.
6. The evaluation recognizes that the heart of FAO's work in prioritizing and implementing an HDP approach has been at country level. The evaluation has pieced together a number of examples

from across countries to inform the narrative and provide lessons. Nevertheless, the corporate understanding of the HDP nexus as well as the programmatic coherence and consistency across teams and countries remain fragmented: for example, there is little consistency in the scale of FAO's humanitarian offer, or in its engagement with conflict dynamics. The main overarching message from the evaluation is that FAO is ideally placed to invest in a major corporate effort to learn from its years of experience and successful examples, to mainstream and adopt HDP nexus ways of working as part of its organizational DNA, making deliberate and informed use of approaches and practices such as technical diplomacy, information systems and context analysis to inform conflict-sensitive programming, rights-based frameworks and people-centred approaches to achieve inclusive and peace-sustaining results. At the same time, FAO should step-up its footprint in, and contributions to, coordination and multi-partner fora and policy dialogues at country, regional and global levels. FAO has a comparative advantage deriving from its technical expertise and knowledge, but it should ensure this is sustained by skilled, well-informed and well-supported leadership at all levels, and by an enabling organizational system and culture, so it can deliver innovative and long-lasting results on peace to its membership, no matter whether in crisis or development settings.

1. Purpose of the evaluation

1. This report summarizes the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, covering the period from 2014 to 2020.
2. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) made a corporate commitment to work to the humanitarian–development (H-D) nexus at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016. FAO's Director-General endorsed the Commitment to Action (FAO, 2016a). In line with FAO's mandate to ensure 'humanity's freedom from hunger' (FAO, 2017), linking the 'H-D' has long been an organizational ambition. Exploring how FAO was linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) was at the heart of an evaluation of FAO's contribution to 'Crisis-Related Transition' carried out in 2014 (FAO, 2014). More recently, in 2018, FAO developed a 'Corporate Framework to Support Sustainable Peace in the Context of Agenda 2030' in response to the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's 2016 call to all UN entities to regard sustaining peace as an important goal to which their work can contribute (UN, 2016), and to integrate this into their strategic planning (FAO, 2018). In the last couple of years, the double nexus has been replaced by the triple 'humanitarian–development-peace' (HDP) nexus, with a plethora of documents and key messages in the wider sector about what this means.
3. FAO's Programme Committee requested this evaluation to contribute evaluative learning to FAO's strategy development on the HDP nexus, and to provide lessons for programming at country level. It is a formative evaluation. It 'takes stock' of the extent to which FAO is currently addressing the 'H-D' part of the nexus, and implicitly or explicitly engaging with the peace dimension of the HDP nexus recognizing that the latter is a more recent commitment for FAO. The evaluation sets out to address three broad topics: i) the relevance of the HDP nexus to FAO's mandate and work and FAO's *strategic positioning* for addressing the HDP nexus; ii) the *results of FAO's programme contribution* to address the interface between humanitarian, development and peace interventions, as well as examples of contributions to sustaining peace; and iii) *organizational performance*, and the factors that have facilitated or constrained FAO in working in an integrated way in line with the HDP nexus.

2. The humanitarian–development–peace nexus

4. The idea of strengthening the links and connections between humanitarian action and aid for development is not new. This agenda dates back at least to the early 1990s (Buchanan-Smith & Maxwell, 1994). It has been expressed in various forms such as linking relief, rehabilitation and development or disaster risk reduction (DRR), and is a central tenet of the resilience aid paradigm that has gained momentum in the last decade. The motivations behind all of these efforts are in large part due to the division of the aid sector into a development and humanitarian arm. While these two sub-sectors may have different objectives, are underpinned by different frameworks and guiding principles, have different modus operandi, and work to different time frames, in practice they have often faced difficulties working in complementary ways. At times their objectives may conflict, the two sub-sectors may be in competition, and they are usually characterized by very different working cultures.
5. And yet, reducing the impact of protracted crises on affected populations requires meeting immediate humanitarian needs and also investing in medium- to long-term development to address the systemic causes of poverty and to reduce chronic vulnerability and risk. Long-term solutions and sustainable development, in turn, are not possible without peace. Activities aiming at sustaining peace and conflict prevention are essential to end protracted crises, and need to be planned and started at the onset of a crisis, in close coordination with humanitarian actors and mindful of humanitarian principles. Hence the HDP nexus, which can be interpreted as: *'prioritising prevention, mediation and peacebuilding, investing in development whenever possible, while ensuring immediate humanitarian needs continue to be met'* (OECD-DAC, 2019).
6. The institutional dimension dominates many discussions of the HDP nexus. The approach to the HDP nexus is seen as going beyond previous programmatic or conceptual approaches. From an institutional perspective, it encourages more fundamental structural shifts within the aid system that relate to how aid is planned, financed and delivered (Oxfam, 2019). This has implications for how different actors – humanitarian, development and peace actors – work together. The 'New Way of Working' (NWOW) is an expression of efforts to operationalize the HDP nexus, principally by removing barriers to the humanitarian, development and peace silos (OCHA, 2016). Humanitarian, development and peace actors are expected to work more closely together towards 'collective outcomes', underpinned by joined-up multi-year funding, and involving more closely international financial institutions. The widespread buy-in to the institutional dimension of the HDP nexus is promising in terms of the potential for bringing about real institutional change that has evaded earlier linking efforts.¹
7. More joined-up programming is a cause of concern to some humanitarian actors, fearing that closer integration and association with peace and development actors will dilute and compromise humanitarian principles that guide their work and are key to negotiating access. This is a hotly debated topic.² How this plays out in practice will depend on how the HDP nexus is operationalized - still very much work in progress.³

¹ See, for example, the Joint Statement from the OECD-DAC UN High Level Roundtable on 'Partnership for Peace' in early October 2020.

² For example, Du Bois argues that the nexus offers an opportunity to find common ground between different actors around the principle of humanity and its implications for human dignity, development and peace, and may enable humanitarian actors to focus more on their core business. Dubois, Marc. 2020. "Searching for the nexus: Why we're looking in the wrong place." The New Humanitarian <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2020/1/7/triple-nexus-international-aid-Marc-DuBois>

³ Some current thinking in relation to the crisis in the Sahel usefully refers to three themes: i) humanitarian access and principles while at the same time ii) responding to the developmental crisis of a structural gap in basic social services, and

8. The above approach to the HDP nexus is characterized by some as an overly top-down and institutional approach, driven from agency headquarters, that will do little to address the power dynamics inherent in the sector. Instead, local context and people must be the central organizational principle, in a 'silo-free whole of society response' (Dubois, 2020). This is reinforced by the UN's commitment to 'leaving no one behind' through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2019). An ALNAP study makes the point that this is where development actors need to be in the driving seat as they '*already have the mandates and skill-sets for longer-term partnerships, are likely to take a more central role in ensuring more profound commitments to localisation and inclusion across the nexus.*' (Christoplos & Hassouna & Desta, 2018). Yet development actors have been largely 'out of the loop' on the HDP nexus which has been driven from the humanitarian side, not least coming out of the WHS (Christoplos & Hassoun & and Desta, 2018).
9. In many of the HDP discussions, there is an understandable focus on the relevance and application of the nexus to fragile states. NWO, launched at the World Humanitarian Summit, focuses specifically on protracted and repeated crises. And the OECD-DAC (2019) recommendation refers to the need for complementary and collaborative HDP actions, 'particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations' (OECD-DAC, 2019). In recognition of these trends some development actors and agencies, like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Bank and some of the regional banks and international financing institutions (IFIs), have been paying much greater attention to working in fragile contexts.
10. The relevance of the HDP nexus to other contexts is less well-explored, although there is a need for more integrated and systemic ways of thinking in contexts and countries before they become 'fragile' to address some of the underlying structural drivers of fragility, and to anticipate crises rather than wait for them to happen. Weishaupt (2020) makes the case that contextual factors and contextual differences need to be better acknowledged and taken into account in configuring an HDP nexus approach or response, and this includes the presence and capacity of government authorities. So far there is little guidance on this, but joint analyses could provide the entry point to assessing the most appropriate HDP nexus configuration in a particular setting.

What the HDP nexus is, and what it is not

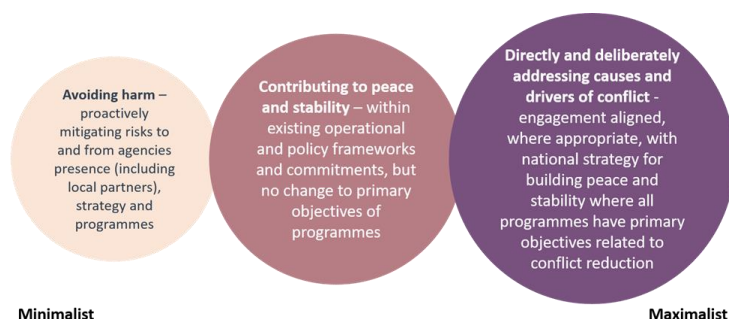
11. The HDP nexus is fundamentally about encouraging a different way of thinking which will, in turn, result in different ways of doing things. Du Bois describes this as requiring a shift from focusing on structures to a focus on how people in the three sectors think: '*Structural nexus programme linkages should never become mandatory. Nexus-inspired programme thinking, however, should*' (DuBois, 2020). Weishaupt warns against the conceptualization of the HDP nexus as a blueprint, but instead sees its potential in encouraging thinking beyond distinct spheres of competence and intervention. He usefully distinguishes between 'bridging silos', in other words making connections between different sectors, and 'breaking silos' where the silo itself is the problem in terms of constraining thinking and imagination. The HDP nexus is thus predominantly about the 'how' which may, in turn, impact the 'what'.

iii) recognizing that this is fundamentally a crisis of protection, also addressing the root causes of the conflict (OCHA. 2020, Responding to Humanitarian Challenges in a Long-Term Perspective. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Track%20%20Protection%20EN.pdf>)

3. FAO and the peace component of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus

12. The different peace interventions of the UN range from conflict prevention, mediation and social cohesion activities to peace-making, peace-keeping, peace-enforcement and peace-building although the boundaries between them have become increasingly blurred. Peace operations are rarely limited to one type of activity.⁴ Within this landscape and the areas of its mandate, FAO is an actor in the peacebuilding component of the UN peace architecture. While it may indirectly contribute to the other components, this will only happen at country level, mostly under the aegis of the UN resident or humanitarian coordinator as part of the UN country team/humanitarian country team, and is usually limited to activities such as the provision of information for areas covered by its mandate, for example conflict over access to natural resources, or coordination on security and logistics for operational aspects. At the global level, FAO contributes through providing periodic informal briefings, jointly with the World Food Programme (WFP), to the UN Secretariat and thereby UN Security Council on the links between conflict and hunger.
13. The reference points for the evaluation in terms of FAO's role and engagement in the peace architecture are set out in the Organization's 2018 'Corporate Framework to support sustainable peace in the Context of Agenda 2030', and building on the Committee on World Food Security 2015 'Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises' (CFS-FFA). The momentum for the CFS-FFA was in turn prompted as a measure to address the issues raised in 'The State of Food Security in the World: Addressing Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises' which brought to the forefront the clear link between peace, conflict and food security.
14. For the purpose of the evaluation, it is important to note that FAO favours the use of the term 'contributions to sustaining peace' (rather than peacebuilding) to describe the focus of its activities and that it unofficially distinguishes between activities that contribute to the 'big P' and the 'small p' (where P and p stand for peace), although in reality the two are usually inextricably linked.⁵ In terms of defining the measure and modalities of intervention around peace-sustaining activities, the FAO Conflict and Peace Unit (CPU) has identified a scale of progressive requirements and interventions, from foundational minimum requirements of ensuring conflict sensitivity and doing no harm in all interventions, to identifying where its activities may contribute to positive effects in terms of conflict prevention and social cohesion, to proactively addressing conflict drivers and designing interventions aimed at contributing directly to peace (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Minimalist and maximalist approaches



Source: IASC Issue Paper: Exploring Peace within the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus. October 2020

⁴ This is recognized by the UN. See: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>

⁵ The small p refers to contributions to sustaining peace at the local level, often with communities, local and subnational institutions that foster local peace, while the big P involves central government and traditional peacebuilding actors.

4. Methodology and constraints

15. The team developed an evaluation framework based on three key UN/sector-wide documents on the HDP nexus: i) the NWOW (Agenda for Humanity, 2016), to which FAO is a signatory; ii) 'Key Messages on the Humanitarian–Development nexus and its Links to Peace' by the UN Sustainable Development Group and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (UNSDG, 2019) which unpacks the NWOW four priority areas; and iii) the 'OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus' (OECD, 2019) which provides a framework for its Members which, although not legally binding, is regarded as holding 'a strong moral force' (SIPRI, 2019a). While these three documents, and especially the OECD-DAC Recommendation, are the main reference points for the sector on the HDP nexus, they describe nexus ways of working as general statements. There are no specific benchmarks nor indicators against which to evaluate.
16. FAO's evaluation against the HDP nexus is the first to be carried out in the sector so is breaking new ground. After exploring the relevance of the HDP nexus to FAO the evaluation team has therefore had to interpret what the nexus means for FAO's mandate and portfolio of work. This has been done in close consultation with FAO personnel through interviews, and with input from external stakeholders.
17. There is both an internal and an external element to the HDP nexus. The internal element explores the extent to which FAO is working in more joined-up and connected ways within the Organization, for example through changes in its programming approaches, putting local people and actors at the centre of its programming, and through its organizational culture, for instance engaging in adaptive and flexible management, and systemic thinking. The external element explores the extent to which FAO is collaborating with other actors across the three pillars of the HDP nexus, for example through strategic partnerships to achieve a different degree of joined-up programming and inter-connectedness.
18. Eight thematic areas have been the main focus of the evaluation. These are: i) food security and security; ii) resilience; iii) climate change adaptation; iv) land and natural resources management; v) food chain crises; vi) pastoralism; vii) social protection; and viii) forced displacement. The thematic areas were selected through a consultative process with FAO personnel and served as a way of grounding the HDP approach to priority areas of policy and programmatic work. This was instrumental to facilitate an understanding of what an HDP approach would look like in practice, in FAO's work.
19. A source for the evaluation was a review and synthesis of over 100 FAO evaluations conducted since 2014. Few evaluations contained findings of direct relevance to the HDP nexus, as the nexus is a relatively new concept and had not been used as a reference point for project or programme design, nor for the evaluations. This meant that findings relevant to this HDP nexus evaluation often had to be inferred.
20. The team carried out over 120 interviews. FAO personnel were selected to cover headquarters, regional and country offices, as well as the eight thematic areas. External informants included representatives of UN agencies, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, and multilateral institutions. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews were conducted over voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Through interviews and the review of evaluations, the team covered over 25 countries where FAO has a presence. Of the total, four FAO country programmes were explored in more depth as mini case studies. In addition, a wide range of secondary documentation was reviewed and a survey was conducted and answered by 55 FAO personnel.
21. A virtual validation workshop was carried out towards the end of the analysis phase, at the end of September, bringing together 30 selected FAO personnel members (from headquarters, regional

and country offices) covering FAO's major areas of work. This assisted the evaluation team in refining recommendations.

5. Main findings

5.1. Relevance of humanitarian–development–peace nexus to FAO’s mandate and FAO’s strategic positioning

Finding 1. There is widely varying understanding of the HDP nexus and perceptions of its relevance amongst FAO personnel, particularly of the peace component, including at senior management level. There is greatest engagement from the humanitarian side, and it is generally seen as most relevant to programming in fragile contexts.

22. Although FAO is regarded by many (personnel and external stakeholders) as primarily a development organization, most thinking about the HDP nexus has been done from the emergency end, and particularly by Strategic Programme (SP) 5 personnel. Understanding of the HDP nexus from the development side of FAO is mixed, but there has generally been much less engagement with the concept from development personnel. Amongst some – probably a minority – there is a resistance towards FAO’s emergency work, implying that even the covering of ‘H’ and ‘D’ in its mandate has not yet been accepted by all. FAO’s substantial investment in resilience programming in recent years has helped to break down some of this conceptual and programmatic resistance. The ‘peace’ component of the nexus is the most contentious, and generates the widest range of interpretations, from those who stress the technical essence of FAO which they interpret as inherently neutral and are therefore uncomfortable with an explicit commitment to promoting and sustaining peace, to those who interpret it as FAO being ‘conflict sensitive’ in all that it does, to those who see it as a critical opportunity to proactively address underlying conflict and power dynamics which may be present in apparently peaceful contexts as well as in acute emergencies. The range of different ways in which the HDP nexus is understood by FAO personnel is as apparent amongst FAO’s senior leadership as it is amongst personnel at other levels.

Finding 2. The HDP nexus is highly relevant to FAO in its efforts to defeat hunger; the peace component is highly relevant as i) conflict is the main driver of chronic and acute food insecurity; ii) common drivers of conflict relate to FAO’s mandate, for example land disputes and access to natural resources; and iii) development is not a purely technical process at any level, especially a rights-based approach to development that, for example, takes account of the right to food.

23. The case for FAO to engage in both the ‘H’ and the ‘D’, and to connect them, is clear, even if this is not yet fully acknowledged by all personnel. FAO is now accepted as an important actor in the international response to humanitarian crises with its emphasis on supporting and protecting livelihoods, especially agricultural livelihoods. In the last few years, the Organization has clearly made the case for engaging with peace and conflict dynamics as they relate to its technical mandate. The analysis provided by the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) reveals that conflict is the main driver of both acute and chronic food insecurity, in 2019 affecting 77 million people (Global Network Against Food Crises, 2020). Humanitarian needs are rising and development efforts are undermined as a direct consequence of violent conflict. FAO must therefore understand and engage with conflict dynamics, especially as a number of common drivers of conflict specifically relate to FAO’s mandate and areas of technical competence. These include competition over natural resources and the breakdown in governance to manage the natural resource base, disputes over land rights and issues of land tenure, neglect by governments of marginalized areas and/or environmental mismanagement.

24. FAO has been taking these dynamics into account for many years in its work at community level, for example where it has been working with pastoralists and settled communities dependent on the same natural resource base. But only recently and in a handful of cases has this conflict/peace

dimension to FAO's work been explicit. In addition, a number of 'technical' threats to agriculture, food production and livelihoods, such as pest infestations, plant and animal disease, do not respect borders. The same goes for the management of watersheds, rivers used for irrigation, and marine areas and lakes shared and sometimes contested across countries. Although FAO may see itself as predominantly engaged in finding a technical solution, that solution may require engaging in diplomatic negotiations between actors (including between governments) that may otherwise be hostile towards each other. There is thus also a political and non-technical dimension with which FAO is ideally placed to engage, from the entry point of its technical convening role.

Finding 3. Although the most recent FAO Strategic Framework encouraged greater inter-disciplinarity and systems-thinking on the development side, linkages between the humanitarian and development components of FAO's work are still weak, despite progress made under different Strategic Programmes and SP 5 in particular. FAO's ambivalent (until recently) engagement in humanitarian work has resulted in an inconsistency between FAO country programmes: some have large humanitarian portfolios, others very limited, regardless of the scale of humanitarian need.

25. FAO's Strategic Framework for the period 2014 to 2017 aimed to bring greater coherence and alignment to FAO's work, bridging and breaking down silos. Office of Evaluation (OED) evaluations against FAO's Strategic Objectives conclude that the Strategic Framework has made a significant contribution and that it better prepare the Organization to engage with the 2030 Agenda which requires such inter-disciplinarity, cross-sectoral thinking and collaboration with diverse partners. This is very much in line with HDP nexus ways of working, even if that terminology was not being used at the time. However, the lack of coherent institutional messaging on FAO's role in emergencies, impacting the 'H-D' component of the nexus, has resulted in a further fragmentation and inconsistency of approach at country level.

Finding 4. There is a lack of coherence and alignment between FAO's corporate commitment to sustain peace and work in conflict environments on the one hand, and the absence of policies and guidance for senior leadership in-country in highly politicized conflict contexts on the other hand.

26. Following the UN Secretary-General's call in 2016 to all UN agencies to contribute to peace, FAO has made substantial progress at corporate level in exploring and clarifying why this is important and what it means to the Organization, especially through the 'Corporate Framework to Support Sustainable Peace in the Context of Agenda 2030'. This has been driven by the small but dynamic Conflict and Peace Unit (CPU) in headquarters since 2018. However, little was invested in the rollout of the new Framework, and there is a sense of disconnect and lack of alignment between global and country levels. At headquarters, linkages with those working on the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), the right to food, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and other human rights approaches need to be strengthened, making use of the body of work and experiences they have garnered.
27. Where FAO appears to have faced its biggest challenges is working in highly politicized conflict environments. This is where there is least coherence and clarity in its policies and approach. FAO personnel working at country level in such politicized conflict environments are very much aware of these dilemmas and of how any programming interventions, however 'technical', can be perceived as partial, can inadvertently fuel tensions as a result of conflict insensitive targeting, and can be manipulated for political purposes. So, while FAO has made a corporate commitment to sustain peace and work in conflict environments, it lacks policies and practical guidance for its senior leadership working in highly politicized conflict contexts, as further explored in Finding 29. Instead, it is left very much to individual FAO Representatives (FAORs) to navigate this difficult territory. What is particularly surprising is the Organization's lack of clear commitment to humanitarian principles and the absence of a Protection Policy given its engagement in conflict environments and protracted crises.

Finding 5. FAO is well-positioned strategically on resilience, although its leadership role has waned as other actors have developed capability and programming experience. It plays a critical leadership role in food security and nutrition analysis and has a high profile through the Global Network Against Food Crises, bringing humanitarian and development actors together and promoting a systemic approach to understanding and strengthening food systems. Most progress so far is at global level, and needs to be grounded and stronger at country level.

28. One of the more recent expressions of FAO's leadership role is in the Global Network Against Food Crises, an alliance of humanitarian, development and peace actors working together with the aim of tackling the root causes of food crises, gives it strategic prominence. The systemic approach to understanding and responding to food systems promoted by the Global Network is very much in line with HDP nexus ways of thinking. In addition, FAO's evolving work on Early Warning Early Action (EWEA), now renamed "anticipatory action", is also establishing FAO in an important leadership role in this area of work that is key to operationalizing the HDP nexus.
29. Since 2014/15, FAO has played a leading role in relation to the resilience paradigm, which is key to the 'H-D' part of the nexus.⁶ FAO's contributions include its conceptualization and promotion of the resilience agenda at the global level, collaboration with other UN agencies to develop joint resilience strategies at country level, and its pioneering work on resilience measurement (FAO, 2016b). However, the SO5 evaluation noted that FAO's leadership role at regional, subregional and country levels was constrained by lack of capacity (FAO, 2016b). In Somalia, where FAO played a prominent strategic leadership role on resilience a few years ago, a number of interviewees felt that it had since lost this positioning as other agencies, especially NGOs, have really developed their capabilities, experience and insights in resilience programming. The recent evaluation of the INFORMED programme has highlighted limitations in the application and take-up of RIMA, FAO's signature econometric resilience measurement tool. Adaptations are needed for FAO to regain and then maintain a leadership on resilience measurement.

Finding 6. There are two areas where FAO plays a leadership role directly related to its technical mandate, that are highly relevant to the HDP nexus. First, in developing guidance and codes of conduct for negotiated access to natural resources. Second, FAO plays an important role in technical diplomacy at regional level, for example using its technical mandate as an entry point to build relationships between countries, regions, and even at times parties to conflict within a country, to address common challenges such as pest management, but the significance of this role is not fully acknowledged by the Organization.

30. The rights-based global instruments that FAO has developed, such as the VGGT and CCRF with the related Small-scale Fisheries guidelines, are directly relevant to the HDP nexus. Even if the agreements are non-binding, the fact that an increasing number of Members are signatory, provides an important basis for progress. Providing guidance and codes of conduct for natural resources management, these instruments have conflict management embedded in them as well as taking into account the gender differentiated access to tenure and rights. This is an area where FAO has played a leadership role directly related to its mandate.
31. In some parts of the world FAO has used its technical mandate as an entry point to make a significant contribution to building relationships between countries at regional level to address common challenges – for example between India and Pakistan over locust control. This has given it an important strategic role in technical diplomacy at regional level. FAO's technical mandate can give it preferential access to contested geographical areas and population groups because its work to promote agriculture, food production and livelihoods is prioritized, whether by governments or by armed non-state actors. But for FAO to sustain and build upon its strategic positioning at global and regional levels it is crucial that its programming work catches up, and

⁶ It is also highly relevant to the peace component of the nexus, although this dimension has been less developed.

more explicitly contributes to conflict management and sustaining peace, supported by a solid evidence base that can inform and give credibility to its global and regional work.

Finding 7. FAO continues to play a leadership role in food security and nutrition analysis, building on years of work in this area and many different initiatives. This is reinforced by FAO's custodianship for tracking SDG indicators on food insecurity. Yet, FAO's positioning and engagement in high-level debates and decision-making in New York and Geneva, that relate to the HDP nexus, is weaker than it should be (although improving), and has not been strategic. The importance of this level of engagement has been historically undervalued by FAO which has been overly Rome-centric, although recent progress on building FAO's position in New York in particular, has provided opportunities for increased visibility and influencing of humanitarian, HDP nexus and climate security policy and processes. FAO's positioning on the IASC has strengthened although is still constrained by limited HR resources.

32. FAO has recently played an important role in partnership with WFP in raising the issue of conflict and hunger with the UN Secretariat and thereby Security Council. However, despite some positive examples of FAO's strategic positioning on the nexus at global level, the Organization's contribution to, and positioning on high-level debates and decision-making in New York and Geneva that relate to the HDP nexus are generally weak. FAO is often missing from engagement in key processes, for example discussions on the HDP nexus in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) guidance, and the opportunity to promote food security and nutrition when the terms of reference for UN missions are under discussion. FAO could and should occupy a much stronger and more influential position at both the New York and Geneva levels, based on its mandate, experience and knowledge of livelihoods and food security, ensuring high-level discussions around UN reform are sufficiently grounded in the realities and challenges from the community level upwards.

Finding 8. At the global level, FAO has broadened its partnerships in ways that contribute to the HDP nexus, through multi-stakeholder initiatives and with other UN agencies, but often these do not translate into strategic partnerships at regional and country levels.

33. FAO's most recent strategic framework is credited with having encouraged the expansion and diversification of FAO's portfolio of partnership at global, regional and country levels (FAO, 2019a). However, partnerships that FAO has developed at global level have not always extended downwards, with many country offices unaware of them and therefore not taking advantage of them. Instead, the range and nature of FAO's collaboration at regional and country levels is overly dependent on the approach and personality of FAO's senior leadership at these two levels. Collaboration has been ad hoc through project development rather than strategic.

Partnerships

Finding 9. FAO has developed an exemplary strategic partnership with Interpeace at headquarters level, and is developing a promising relationship with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Its engagement with big 'P' actors such as peacekeeping missions is limited to a few countries, but FAO has valuable knowledge and experience to offer from its small 'p' engagement and there are examples where it has regular informal exchanges with peacekeeping actors.

34. The partnership with Interpeace has supported the FAO Conflict and Peace Unit (CPU), in developing FAO's capabilities to engage with the 'p' component of the HDP nexus. Its relationship with the PBF has resulted in a portfolio of small-scale projects that at times have played a catalytic role, for example allowing FAO to pilot initiatives on the role of women in water conflict resolution in Yemen, or improving social cohesion in Liberia through the promotion of rural employment for youth in conflict-prone areas. With UN partnerships as a main requirement, PBF funding has been important in encouraging FAO to widen its base of UN agencies with whom it works, for example partnering on land tenure with UN Habitat in South Sudan or on pastoralism with the International

Organization for Migration (IOM) across the Chad and Central African Republic border. There are a few examples of FAO's collaboration with big 'P' actors, such as FAO Sudan partnering with the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Sudan and FAO Mali with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). While FAO is clear that its comparative advantage is in the small 'p', its country offices may have knowledge and experience to offer to peacekeeping missions, for example on land tenure and natural resources management, where it may also be able to play a technical brokering role between groups and communities competing for access to natural resources. Coordination and negotiation with big 'P' actors, however, in some contexts must be done through the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator.

Finding 10. Governments remain the main partner in many FAO operations. The role played by the FAO Partnership and Liaison Office in Colombia during its peace process implementation is a positive example of the potential of FAO's contribution, beyond the Ministry of Agriculture, when backed with strong leadership and vision.

At country level, FAO's main partnership is with government. On the one hand this technical offer and close relationship with government gives FAO a comparative advantage. On the other hand, this relationship can be challenging to manage in highly politicized conflict environments, particularly where government is an actor in the conflict. The last Strategic Framework necessitated a broadening of FAO's engagement beyond its traditional counterpart, the Ministry of Agriculture, to include other ministries, parliamentarians and sometimes even non-state actors (FAO, 2019b). This is important for more systemic and integrated programming in future, better aligned to the HDP nexus. The FAO Partnership and Liaison Office in Colombia is an interesting example to follow, as detailed in Box 1. A new dimension where country offices are increasingly being asked to intervene, is with cross-border issues. In Central Asia, FAO was requested to support watershed management issues that crossed borders. Through its technical mandate FAO has the ability to bring otherwise hostile governments together, to discuss cross-border matters, sometimes out of the limelight such as through Commissions on Fisheries and management of fish-stocks and fishing rights or Commissions on Locusts or other technical intergovernmental working groups.

Box 1. FAO Colombia's role in the implementation of the Peace Process

In 2016, the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) asked FAO to collaborate in the implementation of the first point of the peace agreement that focuses on fighting hunger and promoting rural reforms and development. FAO Colombia played an important role in the peace process – a politically savvy leadership, a technical mandate and a strong programme in the country allowed FAO to take on this role. They were backed by an SP3-led workgroup at headquarters dedicated to Colombia that provided technical support, and they received the visits and support of the Director-General over an extended period of time. In addition, FAO partnered with a wide range of organizations explicitly and implicitly, including press organizations, academia, civil society and the different branches of the Colombian government. This is a powerful example of the critical and more expansive role that FAO can play, when there is the will, leadership and support from headquarters.

Finding 11. FAO needs to expand on the range of partnerships it seeks and promotes across the three pillars of the HDP nexus. Strategic partnerships with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have been strengthening, in particular in Africa in ways that relate to the HDP nexus, for example with the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), but this requires engaging at the policy level as well as programming, especially to address constraints to development at the more political level. More can be done to build and strengthen partnerships with international financial institutions (IFIs) and the private sector in fragile contexts, following the example of the

engagement in the Famine Action Mechanism (FAM).⁷ Academia and research institutions have an important role to play by contributing much-needed analytical skills and supporting efforts to build an evidence base to FAO's work across the HDP.

35. FAO has some positive examples of partnerships from which to build: in Afghanistan, FAO now has its first Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) project partnering with the Asian Development Bank. FAO Yemen is implementing a programme in partnership with the World Bank that supports smallholder farmers resume production in seven of the country's most conflict-affected provinces. These remain more of an exception than the norm, but the time is ripe for FAO to develop a strategy for a more systematic approach to developing partnerships with multilateral development banks in fragile states. Similarly, there is scope for FAO to build its relationship with regional organizations: FAO's relationship with IGAD is a good example (see Box 2).

Box 2: FAO's strategic partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority for Development and the humanitarian–development–peace nexus

FAO and IGAD co-chair the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG), a collaboration that is key to raising the alarm about deteriorating food insecurity, advocating for the timely release of funds, including the release of contingency funds from IGAD Member States, and developing joint response plans. While FAO's partnership with IGAD has a strong foundation on food security and resilience analysis, it has expanded into other areas including pastoralism. FAO and IGAD have established a resilience partnership programme in the Mendera Cluster: the border regions between Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. FAO provides technical support to IGAD and to governments, training and help with community mobilization in each of the three countries, whereas IGAD handles work in the policy, coordination and funding domains of the programme as well as the cross-border dimension, thus playing to each agency's comparative advantage. This builds on another FAO/IGAD partnership in the Karamoja region supporting pastoralists and transhumance across borders with livelihood support, while also emphasizing conflict and early warning analysis. FAO and IGAD partnership have been extended to cover issues related to animal feed inventory and feed balance; the two institutions developed an action plan involving all IGAD Member States, NGOs, development partners, private sector and the International Livestock Research Institution (ILRI). Most recently in the desert locust response FAO and IGAD are working in close partnership to promote a regional approach. While this strategic partnership between FAO and IGAD is not without its practical challenges (e.g. related to contracting), it is a good demonstration of the HDP nexus in practice, ranging from preparedness and response to humanitarian crises, addressing longer-term systemic challenges to pastoralist systems of production while at the same time engaging with the political dimension of cross-border movement and conflict early warning at both local, national and regional level.

36. Despite the 2013 FAO Strategy for Partnerships with the Private Sector there is little evidence of FAO developing partnerships with private sector actors that contribute to HDP nexus way of working. One of the most relevant recommendations for the HDP nexus from the private sector strategy evaluation relates to the '*Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems*' and encouragement to build those into strategic private sector partnerships, for example in the development of agribusinesses and value chains through investment projects funded by international financial institutions (FAO, 2019c). This could play an important role in fragile states, especially if guided by a political economy analysis that explores how private sector development and investment in human capital can contribute to sustaining peace, for example by training and employing youth that may otherwise join militias. This will also be key to operationalizing the Global Network's second pillar on leveraging strategic investment in food security and nutrition. As FAO gains experience from implementing programmes in fragile contexts under GAFSP, this could inform future strategic engagement with the private sector in such contexts.
37. FAO's partnerships with NGOs tends towards a service-delivery/implementing relationship with larger NGOs, a relationship that does not play to the NGO's comparative advantage. Recent

⁷ The Famine Action Mechanism (FAM), set up in 2018, is a global partnership dedicated to scaling up anticipatory and early action to protect lives and livelihoods from emerging food security crises. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/famine-early-action-mechanism>

experience in Yemen illustrates a different way of working and the benefits of strong partnerships with local NGOs as a way for FAO to gain a better understanding of the local context and conflict dynamics (FAO, 2020). The COVID-19 response has amplified the importance and the need to partner more closely with local NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs). There are some examples of FAO developing strategic partnerships with academia and think tanks, for example with the Feinstein International Centre of Tufts University on Anticipatory Action. These can play an important role in supporting FAO's analytical work, and in developing an independent evidence base to support components of FAO's work that contribute to the HDP nexus, but are still few and far behind, especially at regional level.

Collective outcomes and coordination

Finding 12. Collective outcomes are the way forward at country level and aligned to SDGs and HDP nexus ways of working. FAO has to acknowledge this and invest in its capacity to be an active member, shaping key discussions at country level, as well as influencing global level discussions.

Finding 13. At country level, collective outcomes need to guide future partnerships in line with the HDP nexus. These cannot be developed in an *ad hoc* manner or based solely on projects as has been the pattern so far through Letters of Agreements which limit NGOs to the role of service provider rather than a true partnership where FAO could benefit from their understanding of the local context and needs. The FAO Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM) is a positive development although it requires a lot of investment upfront.

38. The evaluation found a few examples of countries where FAO has started to engage in the process of collective outcomes. The process is broader and more inclusive than the UNSDCF and UN-only exercises, and it reaches out to institutional counterparts as well as to a broad range of stakeholders, such as resource partners, civil society, NGOs and the private sector. In the examples of Burkina Faso and Sudan, FAO's engagement was led by the FAO Representative under the overarching leadership of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and in both cases FAO played an active role in contributing to the acceleration of joined-up planning and implementation processes. Other entry points for collaborative ways of working should be sought and nurtured like FAO's key role in the Platform for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) in South Sudan.

Finding 14. FAO plays a coordination role in a plethora of different working groups and these vary greatly from country to country and are very context specific. Most coordination is led from the humanitarian side, with limited engagement with the development or peace pillars.

39. FAO plays a significant role coordinating technical work in its areas of expertise in close partnership with ministry technical departments and other stakeholders, especially for food security monitoring, early warning, livestock health and policy work. FAO plays a critical role in food security coordination, especially through the Food Security Cluster (FSC), but there is very limited coverage of conflict and peace issues in these coordination fora, with the exception of Chad and Haiti where a context analysis is to be piloted with an FSC joint analysis unit.

5.2. Results of FAO's programme contribution

Context, conflict and information analysis

Finding 15. FAO's capacity for carrying out context/conflict analysis has been strengthened but there is still a long way to go to build and embed this capacity further and more uniformly at all levels, especially at regional and country levels. Context/conflict analysis tends to be done as a one-off rather than as a dynamic ongoing process. It is not yet adequately informing programming. Ongoing conflict and contextual analysis, as well as risk analysis, is essential to equipping and informing senior FAO leadership in-country. While countries in conflict tend to be

prioritized, there is evidence that this is essential to inform programming in a variety of contexts where tensions may arise over access to natural resources or other socioeconomic factors.

40. FAO is not a newcomer to conflict analysis. Guidance documents on conflict management and mediation around natural resources management and community forestry date back to the early 2000s. There are several examples of conflict analysis that offer valuable learning, such as the context analysis in Somalia under the European Union-funded PROACT project, and the regional analysis carried out in the Sahel under FAO's project to strengthen resilience of cross-border agro-pastoral populations to food crises, amongst others. Conflict analyses aim to inform the choice of project activities, access, targeting and adaptive planning through the use of scenario planning. In the case of the Sahel, it also aimed to develop a shared understanding of the context across the three FAO country offices. However, the conflict analyses carried out to date are not yet adequately informing project/programme design nor influencing implementation and access considerations. There is a tendency to look at current dynamics without paying sufficient attention to long-term trends and historical grievances and fault lines that may be critical to understanding current tensions. They are mostly carried out as one-off exercises rather than on an ongoing rolling basis.

Finding 16. There are a number of examples of how FAO has promoted and fostered joint analysis of food security, from country to global levels, based on pooled data and information from different agencies and different sources, e.g. the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Global Report on Food Crises. But within FAO there are weak linkages between data collection and analysis efforts relating to short-term acute food insecurity, and data collection and analysis efforts related to longer-term chronic food insecurity with the following consequences:

- i. the underlying structural causes of food insecurity are often missed and not well understood;
- ii. IPC-based analysis of acute food insecurity tends to be weak on drivers, and especially conflict as a driver;
- iii. there are major data collection gaps on food security;
- iv. incorporation of context/conflict analysis in FAO's food security analysis work is very weak, often mentioned as a cause of acute food insecurity without any in-depth or granular analysis.

Finding 17. FAO's pilot work on Anticipatory Action (previously Early Warning Early Action) makes an important contribution to strengthening predictive capacity and risk analysis, but is weak on conflict early warning and identifying early action to mitigate conflict and social tensions, although there are some positive examples to learn from.

41. Even though this may not currently be an FAO strength, this evaluation identified two examples of Early Warning Early Action paying specific attention to conflict and social dynamics and triggering appropriate anticipatory action in Colombia and the Philippines, respectively. Both of these illustrate how FAO can and should take greater account of tension and conflict.

Finding 18. Resilience measurement is a potentially important tool to the HDP nexus, but requires adaptation to fulfil this potential, including more collaborative and participatory approaches that take greater account of local people's perspectives.

42. While some progress is being made through the development of a resilience index measurement and analysis (RIMA) conflict module, the current evaluation concurs with the findings of the INFORMED evaluation that resilience measurement is still primarily driven by the humanitarian perspective and more could have been done to bring together 'a resilience-food security-poverty nexus to identify policy and programmatic options to address poverty and resilience that integrate risk management into development plans' (FAO, 2021 & Davis, 2018).

Putting people at the centre of programming

Finding 19. FAO has a long and substantive history of developing, promoting and using participatory approaches, including in conflict management processes, in ways that put people at the centre, key to HDP nexus ways of working. But the experience and work carried out to date remains fragmented and on a small scale as it was never institutionalized and raised as ‘THE FAO’ approach to programming. Some approaches, such as farmer field schools (FFS) are better known, more broadly used both in FAO and by other development actors, while others remain limited in terms of uptake and have not been systematically evaluated in terms of results and learning. All of these people-centred approaches originate from the development work of FAO and, over time, a number of them have been adapted and used in humanitarian and fragile contexts. Many of them potentially lend themselves to supporting the conflict and peace dimensions of the HDP nexus but have not yet been applied at scale or integrated into broader interventions.

43. The evaluation identified three broad categories of people-centred approaches being used in FAO: i) approaches/formats with a primarily technical entry point and participatory implementation (such as farmer field schools, community-based forestry management, small-scale fisheries management, participatory land mappings, community disaster risk management plans); ii) approaches/formats with a participatory entry point intended to promote social cohesion and empowerment of marginalized groups, which may or may not encompass technical and/or financial areas of work (such as Dimitra Clubs, Caisses de résilience, village savings groups and junior life and farmer field schools [JLFFS]); and iii) territorial and area-based approaches which include a strong participatory element (negotiated territorial development, watershed management), like the Green Negotiated Territorial Development (GreenNTD) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These people-centred approaches are key to maximize the peace-contributing potential of FAO’s interventions. But the approach and examples remain fragmented and have not been adopted consistently nor at scale.

Finding 20. The evaluation found insufficient articulation on gender in the guidance materials on context/conflict analysis. This was similarly repeated in the country conflict analysis reports. On the other hand, the 54 Country Gender Assessments reported in the 2019 Evaluation of FAO’s Work on Gender, were by large peace and conflict blind. In addition, the evaluation found a large range of guidance and tools on integrating gender through rights-based approaches (such as VGGTs, the gender and land portal, the right to food and the older but still extremely valid Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Toolkit) that could be integrated to support mainstreaming a gender and peace dimension into FAO’s programmes.

Finding 21. The evaluation has found few examples of where there has been an explicit focus on women and peace. Those available show positive outcomes on the ground, both in terms of protection as well as of empowerment. The cases found highlight the importance of including women in participatory processes and putting them at the centre of programming, not just as victims of violence, but as active actors and contributors of sustaining peace at all levels. This needs to be explicit in the pathway - theory of change and programme logic of future FAO programmes, making a stronger link to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

44. Attention is needed on how to implement an HDP nexus approach at programmatic level that could support transformational change in gender equality in both immediate responses and longer-term outcomes. FAO’s efforts to promote women’s active roles and empowerment as contributions to peace and sustainability was found in the case of the Dimitra Clubs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in FAO’s work in Yemen on promoting women as mediators for water conflicts and in Colombia, supporting entrepreneurship amongst women in regions heavily affected by armed conflict.

Joined up planning

Finding 22. There are a number of internal and external drivers that are encouraging FAO to take steps towards more joined up programming and increased engagement in multi-partner country processes. These are resulting in a more proactive approach with increased teamwork across levels in support of a more cohesive corporate dimension. The challenge is turning this into the dominant way of working.

45. FAO has so far engaged in a number of joint resilience strategies and plans. These cover a broad range of countries as well as some regions. The most common partners in terms of planning have been WFP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Nevertheless, evaluations provide evidence that joint strategies and planning do not always result in joint or complementary implementation but rather in parallel ones. This was the case for the Joint Resilience Strategy with WFP and UNICEF in Somalia. On the other hand, the Canadian funded five-year Joint Resilience Initiative to strengthen resilience in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger and Somalia shows high levels of joint implementation, that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo goes as far as having a single interagency implementation team. This programme is using a participatory and inclusive approach, and is combining and sequencing the short-, medium- and long-term analytical, planning, programmatic and operational tools and approaches for resilience of the three agencies.

Finding 23. Regional approaches are key to realizing an HDP nexus approach, but FAO is not set up to manage them easily. FAO needs to formalize and prioritize its work on the regional dimension of conflict that is cross-border and multi country. This needs to become more systematic.

46. Following recent and current efforts to coordinate regionally on the Sahel, through the Rome-based agencies' Sahel strategy and the Lake Chad crisis, as well as the Desert Locust response which spans the Horn of Africa to Central and West Africa on one side and Asia on the other, FAO needs to fully acknowledge that the regional and multi-dimension of crisis is part of its organizational DNA. Different regional crises responses offer important lessons: i) the Lake Chad strategy was a highly articulate and well-argued document but the strategy failed to get the original support it was counting on, from the World Bank, as the consultative process to design the strategy was not sufficiently inclusive of country teams and institutional counterparts at the national level, resulting in low engagement and ownership; ii) the El Niño response and plan of action for drought management in Southern Africa was closely coordinated and aligned with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) response plan through the joint UN Regional Inter-agency Standing Committee (RIASCO) plan of action. The high levels of involvement and consultation with ministries and national authorities, the support from the UN and the coordination by SADC, resulted in a stronger (if not perfect) capacity for joined planning and coordinated action. The sets of coordinated strategies and plans of action were not as polished as the one developed for Lake Chad but constituted a well-used framework by all stakeholders; iii) despite the development of a resilience strategy for the Syrian regional crisis in 2015 (commissioned by the Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa, RNE), the document remained unused and no further efforts to tackle the regional dimension of the refugee crisis were undertaken.

Finding 24. The evaluation identified four global programmes so far that incorporate HDP nexus elements or approaches to varying degrees. The evaluation found no systematic approach to learning, knowledge management and sharing of lessons and experiences across these programmes on how to embed an HDP approach - with the exception of efforts by the KORE platform of the Global Network.

47. The four global programmes analysed by the evaluation are the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund portfolio of country and transboundary projects, the Global Network Against Food Crises

and the supporting ProAct portfolio of country investments, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) portfolio and the Global Agricultural and Food Security Programme special call for fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Targeting

Finding 25. If FAO wants to put people at the centre of its work, in line with HDP nexus ways of working, it is vital to understand whom to reach, why and with what interventions. So far, targeting in FAO has been left to the preferred approach of individual teams, sometimes with a narrow project focus, and against the requirements of the operating context. Evaluations have found that FAO targeting has been based mainly on vulnerability criteria and has not sufficiently supported households with production potential beyond immediate needs. Analysis across evaluations shows that in order to incorporate an understanding of conflict and peace dynamics, it is better to use an area-based approach as a first point of entry, and then apply differentiated targeting according to the dynamics of different livelihoods groups and households in and across communities. The use and integration of social registries (when existing) or social protection programmes targeting databases is also an important option that can support building (and re-building) trust with the government.

48. Evidence from evaluations shows that, with the exception of the first phases of an emergency response, targeting is more effective when it is differentiated as well as inclusive and there are different levels of activities for different profiles of households (on a vulnerability versus capacity scale). It also shows that whenever groups (pre-existing or newly formed) are included in the targeting of activities as well as in decision-making, the results are more sustainable in the long-term. This can be supported by progressive targeting (pathways for building resilience, or out of poverty). Some activities directed at wealthier farmers and/or production groups have mechanisms of social spillover of benefits, that is the farmers who have been supported by FAO and have improved their income/livelihoods then give back to the community and/or vulnerable households. Evaluations have pointed out how the lack of consultations with implementing partners and local communities have resulted in weaker targeting approaches than those that build on local knowledge and expertise.

Flexibility and adaptiveness

Finding 26. In order to avoid the suspension or cancellation of development activities and programmes because of the outbreak of conflict, FAO has been putting in place mechanisms to ensure the continuation and re-focusing of its development activities and operations when a humanitarian crisis intensifies. This works best if combined with anticipatory analysis, scenario planning and risk analysis. The evaluation found some good examples of adaptive programming but these were not systematically present across all cases. Some of the examples were found in fragile and conflict contexts (Palestine and South Sudan) while others were found in natural disaster settings (Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe).

Programme design and MEAL to guide and inform HDP nexus programming

Finding 27. Interventions tend to be designed through discrete projects and are not necessarily part of a broader and more coherent programmatic approach. As a result, the underpinning logframes and results chain are not sufficiently focused and specific in terms of impact pathways and theories of change that could promote HDP nexus ways of thinking. This weakness is compounded by the fact that logframes and theories of change are seldom developed through multi-stakeholder participatory dialogues and thus are not a useful supporting management and implementation tool that brings a clear line of sight to results.

Finding 28. Investment in learning and evidence across HDP approaches (as promoted in the NWO) is held back by FAO's fragmented and compliance-oriented monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, lack of analytical capacity, and a poor track record in action research inhibited by limited strategic partnerships with research institutions.

49. Significant progress and more robust systems are currently being put in place in a number of countries, mainly through the Global Network Against Food Crises supported MEAL team or in those that have large resilience and emergency portfolios, but this is the case only for a small number of countries so far.

5.3. Organizational performance across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus

Effective and empowered leadership: brokering and consensus-building

Finding 29. FAO's mandate means that it is uniquely placed, and expected to play a leadership role at country level in its areas of technical expertise. However, FAO's senior leadership in-country is inadequately supported by the wider organization, especially in conflict and fragile contexts. Too much is left to the skills and expertise of individual FAO Representatives, who must carry much of the risk, yet with insufficient organizational backing, guidance or delegation of authority, further constrained by an organizational culture of risk aversion. In this respect, FAO compares poorly with the support provided by its sister UN agencies to their in-country leadership.

50. A recurring theme was the lack of appropriate, consistent and measured support to FAORs working in conflict and fragile contexts. Navigating the political landscape is left to the skill and expertise of the individual, with little or no support from headquarters. If problems or issues of a political nature arise, FAORs may inform headquarters. However, the expectation is that the FAOR will resolve the issues on their own. FAORs described the additional hurdles and difficulties in the lack of flexibility in administrative processes and procedures, with insufficient authority or control given to country offices. An additional obstacle is the high level of risk aversion within the Organization. The picture repeats itself whether in low-intensity or high-intensity conflict contexts, regardless of the type of programming or interventions being introduced. The absence of ongoing conflict analysis not only hinders programmatic implementation, but also strategic decision-making by the FAO Representations. FAO Representatives and their senior management team, particularly those in politicized conflict contexts, are left exposed and having to make their own arrangements to keep up to date with political/conflict dynamics, often having to identify alternative sources of guidance and support, via peers in other agencies. At corporate level FAO has not developed policies nor practical guidance for FAORs working in such contexts. The support received was often on problem shooting day-to-day operational issues. Interviews with personnel of other UN agencies provided a stark contrast in terms of the thinking, guidance and support their organizations offer their senior leadership in such contexts that is simply not available to FAORs. The leadership competencies detailed in FAO's competency framework were found to be more internally focused and less outward looking and inspiring than the United Nations System Leadership Framework, as detailed in Box 3.

Box 3. The United Nations System Leadership Framework defines eight characteristics of United Nations leadership.

This should be: norm-based, principled, inclusive, accountable, multi-dimensional, transformational, collaborative and self-applied. It should focus on impact, driving transformational change, systems thinking and co-creation.¹ Two interesting aspects of the framework are: i) its inspiring tone, the framework is both a call to action and a call for change, that repeatedly focuses on values inherent in the UN Charter; and ii) its understanding of leadership not as a competency solely of senior management, but as occurring in '*many contexts and at all levels*'.¹

Funding mechanisms and flows

Finding 30. The current internal funding model in FAO, despite having made progress in certain areas, is still not fit to support the integration of FAO in this new financing landscape. The impermeable divisions between Regular Programme and extra-budgetary resources, the short-term emergency and longer-term development funding, the ear-marking and fixed allocations to the national level do not allow for, nor incentivise up-front and 'no regrets' investments by country offices. These are all set-backs for FAO to become an agile and effective player promoting HDP ways of working.

51. The increased focus on countries as the entry point for funding strategies and resource mobilization needs to be seen by FAO as an opportunity. Internally it can bring together its development and humanitarian arms around the development of blended and integrated HDP financing. This would entail overcoming the internal division of funding streams and roles. The evaluation has picked up some positive progress in this respect from country offices such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and South Sudan.

Finding 31. FAO can build on some promising practices and experiences that promote HDP ways of working, highlighted in this evaluation, with a view to bringing them to scale and institutionalizing them at the corporate level. However, the low number of personnel with strong resource mobilization experience as well as perceptions from some resource partners that FAO is not very cost-effective can be constraining factors to making this happen.

Mindsets and working cultures

Finding 32. Working across the HDP nexus requires an enabling environment, where the corporate working culture of the Organization and personnel mindsets and skills sets are key. The evaluation identified a number of recurrent issues that were flagged as constraints, as well as a number of team and individual profiles that were considered as having the right mindsets to support the HDP nexus. Key informants repeatedly pointed to the need to have an explicit reflection and formalization process on what is required to deliver on the HDP nexus at the corporate level.

52. There is still a lingering dualistic vision of the humanitarian and development mandates of the Organization that does not always facilitate joined-up vision, strategies and corporate efforts. Across these two domains, the peace and conflict components of the work are seen as belonging more to the humanitarian and resilience teams, while personnel working on development programmes are more reluctant to recognize their actual or potential contributions. While some FAO personnel demonstrate 'trilingualism', that is familiarity with the three 'H', 'D' and 'P' pillars, they are a minority in the Organization. The evaluation found some positive examples of systems thinking, but these are not widespread and are more common in FAO's analytical, policy and upstream work rather than on the programmatic side. In general, FAO's working culture encourages personnel to be more compliance-oriented rather than reflective, innovative and flexible to achieve better results.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

53. There is currently little shared understanding amongst FAO personnel of what the broad-ranging HDP nexus means, and of its implications for the Organization. The completion of this evaluation is an opportunity to clarify what the HDP nexus means to FAO, and to reiterate its relevance to the Organization. There are many different dimensions to the HDP nexus as revealed in the burgeoning literature on the topic. What it means for an individual UN agency, like FAO, has to be unpacked, and to some extent customized. The evaluation reveals widely varying understanding of the HDP nexus and perceptions of its relevance amongst FAO personnel, including senior management. However, the commitment of FAO's most senior leadership to all three components of the HDP nexus, and to connecting them, is clear and has gained momentum in 2019-2020. The range of different interpretations of FAO's mandate does however point to the need for a clear corporate statement on the HDP nexus, emphasizing that this is about ways of working with examples of what that looks like for FAO programming drawing on some of the examples quoted in this evaluation, while also clarifying what it is definitely not, that is a new brand of projects or programmes labelled as 'HDP'.

Conclusion 1. The evaluation concludes that the HDP nexus is highly relevant to FAO in its drive to end hunger, recognizing that development is not a purely technical process, and common drivers of conflict relate directly to FAO's mandate, particularly around natural resources management, land and water. FAO has an important role to play in what this evaluation terms 'technical diplomacy' and in promoting a rights-based approach to development.

54. It has a comparative advantage in bringing governments and their technical institutions to the table, using its technical mandate as an entry point, to address common technical challenges such as pest infestation and livestock disease and food security analysis where conflict is a key driver of chronic and acute food insecurity. This is relevant in both fragile states and in more stable contexts. There are a number of positive examples of FAO playing this role, most recently in the desert locust response. This role of technical diplomacy is particularly important where governments may be otherwise hostile to each other. The significance of this role needs to be more fully acknowledged, and regional and country level leadership better supported to fulfil it. FAO also has a key role in ensuring the systematic use of existing rights-based tools and instruments that relate to its mandate, for example the right to food, VGGT and CCRF, further indication that development is more than a purely technical process.

Conclusion 2. Although there is evidence of more systemic thinking in FAO, there is scope for greater linking of the 'H' and 'D' components of the HDP nexus, and the need for greater commitment and consistency in FAO's humanitarian offer and programming between countries. FAO's corporate commitment to sustaining peace is relatively recent, although the contribution of FAO's rights-based legal instruments, such as the VGGT, are an important precursor. There are positive examples of the difference the corporate framework has made, for instance in carrying out context/conflict analysis, but much work is still to be done to embed this commitment within the Organization and to move beyond one-off good practice examples.

55. Taking the institutional dimension of the HDP nexus, there is evidence that FAO, which has had a long history of a somewhat siloed way of working, has made some progress in breaking down those siloes, especially on the development side. There are stronger connections between different technical areas, evidence of greater interdisciplinarity, and examples of more systemic ways of thinking. Although the Organization has made some progress in strengthening linkages

between the 'H' and 'D' components of its work, it still has a long way to go despite this having been a long-term ambition encouraged by the 2014 crisis transition evaluation. FAO's resilience programming has played a part, but the Organization's high-level ambivalence to emergency response component of the resilience programme, until recently, has held it back. This has also resulted in inconsistent programming at country level in terms of the scale of its humanitarian programming. The lack of connection between the 'H' and the 'D' of the nexus is evident on the information side, for example, where there are weak linkages between data collection and analysis of short-term acute food insecurity, and data collection and analysis of trends for longer-term chronic food insecurity analysis.

56. An explicit commitment to the 'peace' component of the HDP nexus is new for FAO, with the publication of the 'Corporate Framework to Support Sustainable Peace in the Context of Agenda 2030' in 2018. Although FAO has long experience of working on conflict management at local level around natural resources management, and has made an important contribution to policy and legal frameworks through the rights-based voluntary instruments it has developed (on land, fisheries and forestry), the 'Corporate Framework to support sustainable peace in the Context of Agenda 2030' makes a clear case for FAO to engage more fully with conflict in order to contribute to peace. Much work is still to be done, however, to ensure this commitment is embedded in the Organization, that all FAO personnel buy into it, and that they have the knowledge and skills to make it a reality in terms of programming and policy level work. The FAO Conflict and Peace Unit (CPU) has played an important role in helping to position FAO globally in some key conversations, for example within IASC, but the positioning and engagement of FAO country offices is much weaker; they require substantial support. There are now some strong examples of conflict and context analysis carried out by FAO, but these tend to be one-offs. The Conflict and Peace Unit does not have sufficient resources to cover the needs despite having made very significant progress with what it had. Conflict and context analyses are not yet happening as a regular and frequent process, nor adequately informing programming on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion 3. FAO's presence and strategic positioning on the HDP nexus at the New York and Geneva levels has been undervalued and must be stepped up. At the global level FAO has broadened its partnerships in ways that contribute to the HDP nexus, through multi-stakeholder initiatives and with other UN agencies, for example the Global Network Against Food Crises, but often these do not translate into strategic partnerships at regional and country levels. At regional and country levels, HDP ways of working mean extending FAO's relationship with government beyond the Ministry of Agriculture, and more strategic partnerships with the Regional Economic Communities. At country level, collective outcomes are key to operationalizing the HDP nexus, aligned to the SDGs; FAO's engagement must be stepped up.

57. At global level, FAO's presence and influence in high-level discussions and debates around the HDP nexus is inconsistent and not commensurate with the scale, scope and relevance of the Organization. The informal briefings by FAO's Director-General to the UN Secretariat and thereby the United Nations Security Council on food security in crisis has given FAO's work visibility. It now needs to build on this to more fully and strategically engage in wider debates, particularly at the New York and Geneva levels, bringing its knowledge and evidence base on agricultural livelihoods and the agriculture sector. Achieving the latter requires a strengthened and more learning-oriented approach to M&E across all countries and with greater investment in action research, to better inform programming as well as policy debates.
58. Aligning to the HDP nexus means working in partnership, across the humanitarian, development, peace spectrum. FAO's record of strategic partnerships that contribute to HDP nexus ways of working are strongest at the global level, particularly around food security analysis, for example the Global Network Against Food Crises. So far this is mostly with the 'usual suspects', with UN and other agencies engaged in food security monitoring and programming. Expanding these

strategic partnerships i) to ensure existing partnerships and networks are more inclusive and encompass a range of voices; and ii) reaching out to more 'unusual' partners, particularly peace actors, will be important to FAO fully engaging with the HDP nexus. The partnership with Interpeace is a good example of how partnership can strengthen FAO's capability to engage with conflict/peace dynamics. Replicating this kind of partnership at regional and country levels could accelerate FAO's ability to engage with the 'p' component of the nexus where increasing capability is a priority.

59. FAO's partnerships at regional and country level in support of HDP nexus ways of working are generally weaker, with some exceptions. Indeed, strategic partnerships forged at the global level often do not translate into country level. In countries, partnerships tend to be more ad hoc and project-driven. The last Strategic Framework encouraged FAO to engage with government beyond the Ministry of Agriculture: this is essential to pursue nexus ways of working. FAO's relationship with the Regional Economic Communities is critical to regional transboundary work, but is too often driven by individual projects than by strategy. Opportunities to forge strategic partnerships with international and national NGOs and civil society organizations are severely constrained by the dominance of the contractual service provision arrangement that FAO has with these actors.
60. In a few countries FAO is actively engaging in collective outcome processes. This needs to be stepped up, recognizing the contribution FAO has to make on agriculture, food security and livelihoods. As far as possible, FAO's new Strategic Framework and its Country Programming Frameworks must complement and be coherent with collective outcomes. If not, as is currently the case, country offices end up working to parallel frameworks that are not necessarily consistent.

Conclusion 4. If FAO is to fulfil its corporate commitment to sustain peace and work in challenging conflict environments, it must be better equipped to do so. The evaluation has exposed fundamental weaknesses in the Organization's fitness-for-purpose to work in challenging and highly politicized conflict environments and fragile states.

61. FAO's senior leadership in-country in contentious conflict contexts is inadequately supported, not least in managing the relationship with government which may be party to the conflict, in day-to-day decision-making, and in ongoing analysis of the political economy and conflict dynamics. FAO's support systems for in-country leadership are poor in comparison with those of its sister UN agencies where there is a much stronger sense that 'the agency has your back'. Further evidence of FAO's weakness in this area is the absence of a protection policy and of a corporate statement of FAO's commitment to humanitarian principles. Strengthening FAO's positioning and presence at the New York and Geneva levels, as described above, is also important to promote the two-way flow of information and analysis between this level and country offices.

Conclusion 5. The inclusive 'putting local people and actors at the centre' dimension of the HDP nexus is an opportunity for FAO to re-evaluate and promote its participatory approaches, not only to development but also in its humanitarian and conflict management work. The HDP nexus offers an opportunity for transformational work on gender equity, but this requires mainstreaming gender in FAO's context/conflict analysis work.

62. FAO's participatory approaches originate from the development side of its work, and range from farmer field schools, Dimitra Clubs and participatory area-based approaches. To some extent these approaches have been picked up in its humanitarian work and its programming in fragile states and provided positive results. They are highly relevant to HDP nexus ways of working in terms of understanding, systemically, the needs and rights of local people and communities and the context in which they are living. However, such participatory approaches tend to be fragmented and on a small-scale. If they were to be promoted consistently and scaled up and

integrated into broader interventions, they could play an important role in operationalizing the HDP nexus at programming level, including supporting the conflict and peace component. This would require engaging local people and local actors in the design phase as well as implementation. It would also require a more systemic and strategic approach to targeting that takes the whole community into account, no longer driven by narrow project objectives but by the wider dynamics within and among communities. This is critical to avoid narrow targeting criteria that, if poorly thought through, can fuel grievances and tension within and between communities.

63. Connected HDP nexus programming could play a transformational role in delivering gender equality and empowerment, especially if a sufficiently long-term perspective is adopted. FAO's record in this respect appears mixed. While some short-term Peacebuilding Fund projects have particularly targeted women in an effort to strengthen their role in sustaining peace, FAO's guidance materials on context/conflict analysis tend to approach gender through the lens of gender-based violence rather than also promoting the role of women as active agents of peace. In turn, FAO's Country Gender Assessments are mostly conflict-blind. FAO has a rich seam of guidance and tools on integrating gender through rights-based approaches, such as VGGTs and the gender and land portal that could be drawn upon to support mainstreaming a gender and peace dimension in FAO's programmes. Other aspects of intersectionality, for example age, must be better covered. This and other issues should be addressed through FAO's forthcoming Protection Policy.

Conclusion 6. Addressing some of FAO's well-known organizational constraints, of being procedure-heavy and risk averse are critical to creating an enabling environment for HDP nexus ways of working. In addition, there is important work to be done empowering and fostering effective leadership, especially at country level; promoting more flexible programmatic funding models over short-term projects; building flexibility and adaptiveness into programming; and addressing the organizational culture in FAO, encouraging and incentivizing dialogue across disciplines, breaking down silos and encouraging broad systems-thinking mindsets.

64. Some of FAO's organizational constraints are repeatedly highlighted in evaluations, and fundamentally affect its ability to operationalize the HDP nexus. Addressing these constraints will enhance its appeal and performance as a strategic partner. In addition, the evaluation draws attention to four specific areas to be addressed to ensure FAO is fit for purpose to play a leadership role and to be a committed partner in delivering the SDGs in ways that are aligned to the HDP nexus.
65. The first is effective and empowered leadership. The UN leadership framework calls for principled and visionary leadership. This requires clarification within FAO, particularly in conflict environments in terms of adherence to humanitarian principles while working closely with government, and in terms of clarifying FAO's corporate commitment to the HDP nexus. Empowering leadership at country level to promote an HDP way of working also means strengthening brokering and consensus-building skills, for example to effectively play a technical diplomacy role. Hiring leaders with the necessary skillset and vision is critical.
66. Second, flexible and adaptive management and programming are essential to HDP ways of working. This requires regular risk scanning and monitoring at country level, and designing projects and programmes so that flexibility and adaptiveness are built in and agreed in advance with donors. Fast-track procedures should become the norm rather than the exception, incentivizing innovation, adaptability and a 'can do' attitude. There are examples of such ways of working within FAO that offer valuable learning, but once again, these are the exception rather than the norm. At a minimum, FAO must mirror the agility of its sister UN agencies.

67. Third, FAO's funding models with impermeable divisions between different types of funding for different programming purposes (for example, short-term emergency versus longer-term development funding) are currently barriers to more flexible, agile and integrated ways of programming. There are a number of examples within FAO of more flexible funding models, particularly where these represent a shift from the project to programme approach and funding. These must become the norm rather than the exception.
68. Fourth, HDP ways of working require systems-oriented ways of thinking, an ability to navigate complex ideas, and spaces and dialogue that brings colleagues together across disciplines and across the aid architecture. While there are pockets of such ways of thinking and working within FAO, the dominant working culture and mindset does not meet these requirements. It tends to be more driven by FAO's internal procedures and compliance-oriented, than by curiosity and a hunger for knowledge about the context and for evidence of what is working and what is not. While there has been some breaking down of silos, there is still a long way to go.

6.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The HDP nexus must be 'institutionally anchored' in FAO so that it becomes a well understood and used approach at the corporate level in all locations, both fragile states and more stable contexts.

69. This will require an acceleration and change in the organizational culture and acquired knowledge of the Organization so as not to remain the limited remit of a few dedicated units and country teams in crises contexts. Such a change will need to happen through clear leadership, support and messaging from senior managers complemented by a number of practical actions, as follows:
 - i. Ensuring the HDP approach is well reflected across the relevant areas of the new Strategic Framework, currently under development. This should be embedded across outcomes and programmatic components and not 'isolated' as the sole remit of resilience and emergency domains, making the case that this is relevant for stable contexts as well.
 - ii. Joining other UN agencies in signing up to the OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Nexus. Although this is not legally binding, it is a clear statement of intent, and provides a useful set of standards for HDP nexus ways of working against which FAO can continue to monitor its progress, and be peer-reviewed, and a platform for discussion between donor governments and UN agencies on the HDP nexus.
 - iii. With a corporate position paper that clearly states this is an organizational commitment, setting out what HDP nexus ways of working mean to FAO (and what the nexus is not, i.e. not a new brand of projects of programmes), peppered with illustrations from lessons across countries and regions of what HDP nexus ways of working look like in practice.
 - iv. Restate FAO's commitment to humanitarian action as part of its mandate, ensuring that this is well understood by all personnel and clarifying FAO's commitment to humanitarian principles, accompanied by guidance for programme personnel on how to manage this while working in partnership with national government.
 - v. Creating space for discussion and dialogue to bring together FAO colleagues working on the 'H', 'D' and 'P' components of the nexus, to explore how their work can be more complementary. These could be organized around particular thematic areas for which a HDP nexus lens is particularly relevant to keep it grounded, for example social protection, food security monitoring, natural resources management.

- vi. A Director-General bulletin or internal guidance outlining responsibilities, authority and commitments in terms of both strategic positioning and programmatic work at country level and the necessary support requirements for all the other subsidiary levels.
- vii. Developing and implementing a communication strategy for FAO personnel, based on the position paper and Director-General bulletin, to support their understanding of the HDP nexus and its relevance to FAO, for example through webinars, learning from its work so far and building expertise to do so.

Recommendation 2. As a matter of priority, FAO must take urgent steps to become truly 'fit for purpose' to work in challenging and highly politicized conflict environments and fragile states.

70. This includes:

- i. Stepping up, prioritizing and institutionalizing support to senior leadership at country level. This must be provided at a high-level (e.g. Assistant Director-General (ADG) / Deputy Director-General (DDG) level), fully conversant with the context, and readily available.
- ii. Learning more systematically from FAO's experiences (positive and negative) of navigating its relationship with government in such contexts, developing guidance for in-country senior leadership.
- iii. Increasing FAO's capacity to carry out regular context/conflict and risk analysis to support senior leadership in-country (see also Recommendation 4).
- iv. Formulating and rolling out a protection policy to guide FAO's work, especially in conflict environments and fragile states.
- v. Strengthening FAO's presence and engagement in high-level discussions and decision-making at the New York and Geneva levels, with increased resourcing and personnel experienced in working across the HDP nexus, contributing evidence on the linkages between food security, natural resources management, livelihoods and peace. This can foster a systematic two-way flow of information, from country level to feed FAO experience and knowledge into high-level debates and decision-making, and from New York and Geneva back to country level to ensure FAO country offices are fully informed of decisions and analysis that relate to the contexts in which they are working.
- vi. Supporting country offices to engage in its areas of technical expertise (e.g. land rights) with the big 'P' actors, such as UN peacebuilding missions by sharing guidance derived from FAO's participation in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Task Team on Transitions and Peacebuilding and the Peacebuilding Contact Group as well as additional guidance that could be derived from examples from other UN agencies, and learning from examples of FAO's successful engagement with big 'P' actors.

Recommendation 3. FAO must strengthen its partnerships at all levels – global, regional and country levels – so it is better able to engage in HDP nexus ways of working with humanitarian, development and peace actors, in particular:

- i. Broadening its partnerships on food security monitoring, resilience measurement, early warning/risk analysis and anticipatory action, to include a more diverse range of actors that ensure the analysis includes perspectives of affected people as well as more quantitative measurements, and explore underlying structural causes.

- ii. With the private sector such as national and international companies investing and engaged in agriculture, especially in fragile states, promoting 'Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems'⁸ in ways that reduce conflict and contribute to peace.
- iii. Stepping up strategic partnerships with academic and research institutes at global, regional and country levels, to strengthen action research in order to build a credible and rigorous evidence base, for internal FAO learning and to feed into and inform higher level discussions and debates.
- iv. With Regional Economic Communities, guided by longer-term partnership strategies that promote linkages across the nexus, from programming to policy levels.
- v. Exploring more 'unusual' partnerships at regional and country levels that can support and strengthen FAO's engagement with the 'p' component, in the way that Interpeace has done at the global level. FAO should map civil society organizations and networks engaged in contributing to peace (such as the Comités Locaux de Paix in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [FAO, 2020b], the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders [GNWP, 2021] or West Africa Network for Peacebuilding [WANEP, 2021]).

Recommendation 4. In order to ensure that FAO's work at country level matches its global ambitions, the Organization must strengthen its understanding of, and ability to engage in context/conflict analysis and conflict sensitive programming, paying attention to intersectionality and including risk and food insecurity analysis beyond (but including) conflict analysis.

71. This means:

- i. Adapting FAO's guidance materials on context/conflict analysis to promote intersectional analysis and a more holistic understanding of the gender dimension.
- ii. As well as building capacity on context/conflict analysis (see Recommendation 3 (c) above), investment to build capacity in conflict sensitive programming, and programming to manage conflict and sustain peace, especially at country and regional levels. This should be supported through strategic partnerships, as recommended above.
- iii. Strengthening the linkages between data collection and analysis of short-term acute food insecurity with data collection and analysis of longer-term chronic food insecurity, deepening understanding of the structural causes of food insecurity, and analysis of conflict as a major driver of food insecurity.
- iv. Strengthening and mainstreaming context/conflict analysis in its Anticipatory Action work.
- v. Creating a cross-cutting group as a community of practice, to pull together the different initiatives within FAO that explicitly address conflict, the different resources available, and to promote networking between them.
- vi. FAO needs to move beyond the 'proof of concept' phase found in many of its conflict sensitive projects to substantially scale up, built on solid reflection and learning.

Recommendation 5. FAO needs to promote and incentivize people-centred approaches as a critical way of linking its humanitarian and development programmatic work, ensuring that the technical entry points of its interventions are conflict-sensitive and where relevant contribute to sustaining peace.

⁸ Refer to Responsible Agricultural Investment Principles (RAI) and guidance in <http://www.fao.org/in-action/responsible-agricultural-investments/en/>

72. These need to be reflected from strategy frameworks through programme approaches and design to the end results. How to strengthen the HDP dimension in strategies and information analysis have been addressed in Recommendation 3. FAO must strengthen HDP ways of working across the programme cycle in the following ways:
- i. Ensure that conflict, context and food security and resilience analysis and data are systematically used not just at the design stage of programmes but throughout implementation of activities on the ground.
 - ii. Ensure that the design of interventions is conducted in consultation with local actors and partners and that it is underpinned by a collaboratively generated theory of change and identification of shared objectives.
 - iii. Rethink targeting approaches to make them more inclusive as well as diversified, reconsidering the narrow focus on vulnerability in favour of a more strategic approach that includes activities that may contribute to strengthening all aspects of food systems at the local level.
 - iv. Conduct a review of FAO's range of participatory approaches across regions and countries, sharing experiences and the factors that contribute to good practice, to systematize approaches and to facilitate scale-up.
 - v. Ensure that programme cycles are supported by learning and outcome monitoring that are proactively used to flexibly manage and adapt activities to ensure optimal results, react to new risks and crises and protect development gains.
 - vi. Strengthen the design and implementation of regional and cross-border programmes by better supporting coordination and collaborative work across country offices and with regional partners.
73. In addition, the technical/sectoral areas of FAO's programmes should identify and develop guidance on the progressive levels of addressing the peace dimension, across humanitarian and development interventions. These should range from a minimum 'do no harm' and conflict sensitivity requirements to proactive and explicit activities focused on contributing to sustaining peace. Some examples include:
- i. Develop a companion conflict safeguard to the environmental and social safeguards.
 - ii. Systematize conflict-sensitivity as well as contributions to sustaining peace in GEF and other climate-related programmes to address climate justice issues.
 - iii. Stress social cohesion as an important element/entry point in working with social protection programming.
 - iv. Develop lessons-based practical HDP guidance for pastoralism, animal health, fisheries, water, forced displacement, crops and other sectoral interventions.
 - v. Promote the role of women and youth as peacebuilders whenever possible, developing their potential as positive agents of change, not just as victims of violence.

Recommendation 6. Creating an enabling organizational environment for HDP nexus ways of working, including:

- i. Clarifying what principled leadership means to FAO, fostering and empowering leadership at country level, that is sufficiently externally-focused to develop strategic partnerships across the HDP nexus, and that is well-skilled to engage in technical diplomacy.

- ii. Shifting from a project to a programme approach, with adaptiveness and flexibility built in from the design stage, supported by informed risk assessments, and flexible financing negotiated with donors.
- iii. Engaging with UN-wide initiatives that encourage HDP ways of working, for example, the Common Guidance on Resilience and collective outcomes. FAO could also learn from the experience of some of its sister UN agencies, such as WFP or UNICEF, as they promote and adopt nexus ways of working.
- iv. Promoting a working culture that incentivizes and rewards innovative and reflective programming, and a 'can do' attitude, re-balancing the current default of compliance.
- v. Carrying out a light skills assessment to inform a skills-building programme that fosters systems-thinking, interdisciplinarity, consensus-building, and partnership-broking, to promote nexus ways of working.

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