



UNDP COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

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# Operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in Ukraine



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This case study forms part of a broader series on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus, drawing on UNDP experiences to illustrate how Nexus approaches have been applied in different contexts to generate practical lessons and insights.

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<b>AAWG</b>	Assessment and Analysis Working Group
<b>CPDSR</b>	Community Planning for Durable Solutions and Recovery
<b>CPDRWG</b>	Community Planning for Durable Solutions and Recovery Working Group
<b>DFIs</b>	Development Finance Institutions
<b>DSID</b>	Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement
<b>DRC</b>	Danish Refugee Council
<b>ER&amp;L</b>	Early Recovery and Livelihoods
<b>FTS</b>	Financial Tracking Service
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GIZ</b>	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – German Corporation for International Cooperation
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>HDP</b>	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IFIs</b>	International Financial Institutions
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>NGCA</b>	Non-Government-Controlled Areas
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PBF</b>	Peacebuilding Fund
<b>PDNA</b>	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
<b>RDNA</b>	Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment
<b>RPP</b>	Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme
<b>R4</b>	Reconstruction, Returns, Recovery, and Reform
<b>SCORE</b>	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
<b>UCRF</b>	Ukraine Community Recovery Fund
<b>UHF</b>	Ukraine Humanitarian Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>URC</b>	Ukraine Recovery Conference

# Executive Summary

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**A**fter 2014 and following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine has faced massive humanitarian needs alongside extensive damage to infrastructure, livelihoods, and institutions. Ukraine is a unique scenario with national and local authorities that remained functional and engaged during the war, strongly involved international community, substantial development-focused aid and high humanitarian funding.

Engagement with HDP actors has allowed to invest early in recovery, protecting institutional and human capital in Ukraine while responding to urgent needs and maintaining the social fabric. Ukraine's experience shows that the HDP Nexus can gain traction during an active, high-intensity conflict when state institutions remain functional and recovery is embedded early.

Progress has been most visible in recovery- and solutions-oriented coordination. The Durable Solutions architecture enabled evidence-based prioritization and alignment across national, oblast, and Hromada levels. Large-scale joint assessments, such as Rapid Damage and Needs Assessments and the Human Impact Assessment, and the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index, opened the analytical landscape beyond immediate humanitarian needs toward recovery and resilience. The UN Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme, EU4Recovery, and subsequent recovery frameworks, demonstrated how livelihoods, governance, service delivery, and social cohesion can be addressed simultaneously during wartime.

The financing landscape has led to opportunities to preserve development gains and provide space for future peace dividends, but financing streams have largely remained siloed between humanitarian and development. HDP coordination efforts also remained confined to specific agendas and their long-term institutionalization and scalability are still uncertain.

Ukraine illustrates the potential of the HDP Nexus to move beyond crisis response toward recovery and resilience during active conflict. By linking humanitarian assistance with recovery, governance, and social cohesion, the Nexus can reduce dependency, support returns and reintegration, and protect development gains. The case also highlights that without aligned financing, shared metrics, and sustained coordination, even well-resourced contexts risk fragmented responses that fall short of transformative impact.

UNDP has been a key actor in translating Nexus principles into recovery-oriented action. By supporting government-led frameworks, convening coordination around solutions, engaging in joint assessments and data sharing, and pushing for the mobilization of financial support for recovery, UNDP has played a strong

role in driving a transition from emergency-focused intervention to recovery and a path to development and peacebuilding. Its engagement in recovery programming, social cohesion, displacement solutions, and energy sector rehabilitation have positioned UNDP as a key peace actor and a bridge between emergency response and long-term investment.

# 1 Background: the Humanitarian-Development- Peace Nexus in Ukraine

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**T**he evolution of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus in Ukraine has been shaped by various phases of the war since 2014. Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 has caused significant civilian casualties as well as damage to infrastructure and institutions, leading to a reversal of development gains while severely affecting the economy, livelihoods, and access to basic services. As of November 2024, the full-scale invasion had claimed 12,162 civilian lives<sup>i</sup> (the actual number is likely to be much higher) and disrupted nascent Humanitarian-Development (HD) Nexus coordination structures developed between 2014 and 2021.

Efforts to promote collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, particularly to address the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities along the contact line, were thwarted because of the war. However, pre-invasion inter-agency collaboration laid the foundation for applying an HDP approach post the 2022 invasion.

**The start of the conflict in 2014 initially resulted in extensive humanitarian needs.** Ukraine's GDP contracted by 10.1 percent in 2014 and a further 9.8 percent<sup>ii</sup> in 2015 due to the loss of industrial capacity in the east and the annexation of Crimea. Donetsk and Luhansk regions experienced significant economic decline, with an IDP population numbering 1.8 million in 2014 that reduced to 1.4 million by 2021.<sup>iii</sup>

However, The full-scale invasion again displaced millions more, with a peak of 8.03 million IDPs in May 2022,<sup>iv</sup> of which 3.56 million remain as of October 2024.<sup>v</sup> An additional 6.6 million Ukrainians now live as refugees, primarily in Europe.<sup>vi</sup> Women have been disproportionately affected as they constitute the majority of those displaced.

**Targeted attacks on infrastructure affecting housing, transport, energy, and agriculture<sup>vii</sup>** compounded economic and social challenges, with direct damage to buildings and infrastructure estimated at US\$ 152 billion as per the third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA3), while 1.8 million additional Ukrainians fell into poverty.<sup>viii</sup> Energy infrastructure destruction caused widespread power outages and created environmental risks such as the Kakhovka Dam breach and attacks on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.<sup>ix</sup>

**The war has deepened gender inequalities,** with 72 percent of unemployed persons in April 2023 being women, many burdened with unpaid care work equivalent to \$72.5 billion since the invasion.<sup>x</sup> The risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and war-related sexual violence has increased as response services remain insufficient.<sup>xi</sup>

**Despite these challenges, Ukraine’s national government and local authorities have remained functional, leading recovery and development efforts.** Since 2022, the government has received substantial support from international partners to maintain its key functions such as security provision and social services. In 2024, it received about \$42 billion in aid. Decentralization and localization of reforms has enabled humanitarian, development, and peace actors to engage directly with Oblast-level administrations and communities, while Ukraine’s active civil society has played a critical role in providing humanitarian assistance.<sup>xii</sup>

**The “P” in the HDP Nexus, focusing on restoring the social fabric,<sup>xiii</sup> has been a sensitive issue in Ukraine amidst an ongoing war.** Before 2022 full-scale invasion, UN efforts centred on supporting IDPs, veterans and residents in non-government-controlled areas (NGCAs). Since 2022, this became an issue of national security in the context of maintaining national unity and counteracting activities that might fuel internal tensions. Initiatives such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund’s (PBF) project, initiated by UNDP, UNFPA, and OHCHR, to engage youth in social cohesion and dialogue, had to be reevaluated and eventually discontinued in light of the political sensitivities.<sup>xiv</sup> In 2023-2024, social cohesion regained momentum as a government priority, encouraging return of refugees and developing human capital in general.<sup>xv</sup>

## 1.1 2014-2022: the Inception of the Nexus in Ukraine Before the Full-Scale Invasion

**From the 2015 ceasefire till February 2022,** the armed conflict in Ukraine significantly de-escalated. During this period, several efforts were undertaken to advance the HDP Nexus.

**Formal discussions on the HDP Nexus began in 2017-2018 with the creation of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus Working Group by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).**<sup>xvi</sup> In March 2018, the first Humanitarian-Development Nexus (HDN) workshop was held in Kyiv, bringing together representatives from national authorities, UN agencies, donors, international NGOs, and local NGOs.

While three collective outcomes<sup>xvii</sup> were drafted during subsequent workshops, these efforts had limited impact on programme design or implementation. This was due to a lack of shared understanding of the Nexus, including its definition, practical application and cost-benefit analysis, as well as the absence of dedicated financial tools.<sup>xviii</sup>

**The 2018-2022 Government of Ukraine and United Nations Partnership Framework aimed to enhance coherence among humanitarian, development, and resilience efforts, with resilience encompassing recovery, stabilization, reconstruction, and reconciliation.** It emphasized gender equality, leaving no one behind, and upholding human rights as central to achieving these goals.<sup>xix</sup>

Other efforts to integrate the HD or HDP Nexus into strategic frameworks included the 2021 Common Country Analysis,<sup>xx</sup> the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and its subsequent updates, which prioritized increased collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in conflict-affected, government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

**In June 2021, a workshop on operationalizing the HDP Nexus in Ukraine brought together 300 participants from diverse organizations and institutions, highlighting broad interest in the approach.** The workshop proposed joint assessments, programming and mapping to mainstream the Nexus, identifying decentralization as a critical entry point. However, this engagement did not manifest strong commitments as it appeared to be too complex and cumbersome.<sup>xxi</sup> Due to the February 2022 escalation of the war that fundamentally altered the context, these efforts were halted.<sup>xxii</sup>

## 1.2 2022-2024: a Reset of the HDP Nexus During the Full-Scale Invasion

**The full-scale invasion in February 2022 drastically altered Ukraine’s priorities and disrupted ongoing efforts to transition from humanitarian aid to development and solutions for IDPs.** The war created uncertainty, necessitating short-term planning and significantly limiting the access and the scope of interventions, particularly during the initial months of the war.

**The 2023<sup>xxiii</sup> and 2024<sup>xxiv</sup> Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) emphasize increasing complementarity between humanitarian efforts, including early recovery and solutions-focused interventions.** These plans align with the priorities of the development-oriented UN Transitional Framework and bridge the gap with the HRPs, promoting local-level coordination, shared analysis, and assessments. Both HRPs also aim to reduce humanitarian caseloads through early recovery initiatives. Additionally, the 2023 Common Country Analysis highlighted Durable Solutions as a priority area for implementing the HDP Nexus.<sup>xxv</sup>

**The UN Transitional Framework for Ukraine (2022–2023),<sup>xxvi</sup> later extended till 2024, was developed to bridge the gap between the 2018-2022 UN Partnership Framework and the 2025-2029 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).** Fully aligned with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (Strategic Priority 1), the Transitional Framework addresses early recovery needs using an HDP Nexus approach (Strategic Priority 2), while supporting the government’s longer-term policy reform priorities, which include gender equality and women’s empowerment as a guiding principle.

The framework includes a dedicated chapter on the HDP Nexus, identifying key sectors where the approach should be applied, namely shelter and housing; heating, power and energy infrastructure; livelihoods; social protection; mental health and psychosocial support; and social cohesion.<sup>xxvii</sup>

# 2 UNDP's role in the HDP Nexus

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**F**rom the outset of the crisis, UNDP has championed the integration of humanitarian, development, and peace efforts in Ukraine. UNDP sustained close collaboration with the government and local authorities, providing basic services and alleviating humanitarian needs.

**The full-scale invasion in February 2022 necessitated a shift in UNDP's focus to emergency response.** In April 2022, UNDP launched its Recovery Framework, aligning humanitarian, development, and peace outcomes. The framework prioritized restoring access to social and administrative services, strengthening community security, supporting livelihoods, and promoting social cohesion.<sup>xxviii</sup>

UNDP's Crisis and Recovery projects continued, leveraging the government's functionality and commitment to reforms despite the full-scale war. These efforts delivered critical outcomes, including support for return and reintegration of IDPs and refugees, and contributing to the recovery of Ukraine's human capital and economic prospects.

## 2.1 HDP Nexus Coordination: Solutions for Internal Displacement, Area-based Approaches and Clusters

**Since 2014, UNDP has been a key partner of the Ukrainian government in crisis response, serving as the coordinator for the Early Recovery and Livelihoods (ER&L) Cluster<sup>xxix</sup> to transition toward recovery and development.** In 2018, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, who also served as UNDP Resident Representative, UNDP launched the Eastern Recovery Team/ Platform in eastern Ukraine.<sup>xxx</sup>

This platform facilitated coordination between donors, humanitarian and development actors, businesses, social impact investors, and local government counterparts. However, the closure of the Early Recovery Cluster after the onset of war in 2022 removed a critical mechanism for UNDP to coordinate with humanitarian actors.

**To strengthen international coordination, the Sector Working Groups on Recovery and Reintegration held their first meeting in 2020, co-chaired by the Government of Ukraine and the UK.** Focused on eastern Ukraine, the Working Groups included five thematic sub-groups, with the governance and service provision subgroup co-chaired by UNDP and OCHA.<sup>xxxi</sup>

These groups made notable progress in advancing the HDP Nexus locally, developing a joint analysis for a common results framework, and creating a data portal to track projects and socio-economic indicators with support from the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership Facility.<sup>xxxii</sup> However, the momentum waned due to changes in political leadership within the Ministries.

**Following the full-scale invasion, the Resident Coordinator requested UNDP, IOM and UNHCR to establish the Durable Solutions Working Group in November 2022, in alignment with the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.**<sup>xxxiii</sup> In 2023, the Resident Coordinator expanded this initiative with the establishment of the Community Planning for Durable Solutions and Recovery (CPDSR) Steering Committee and Working Group. The Steering Committee provides strategic guidance, while the national Working Group, co-chaired by an NGO, facilitates cross-sectoral collaboration.

The coordination architecture also includes oblast- and Hromada-level platforms, which have proven effective for coordination, information sharing, joint planning, and community engagement (see figure 1). Hromada Profiles (community-level) and area-based plans were developed collaboratively with local authorities and communities to address Solutions and recovery priorities. These platforms leverage pre-existing coordination structures to avoid creating redundant layers.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

In 2024, UNDP co-chaired these efforts, developing a joint work plan to establish a coordination architecture at national and sub-national levels, and an inclusive, gender-sensitive assessment methodology to evaluate current needs and priorities. This methodology is being piloted in 12 Hromadas across Ukraine to identify activities for joint programming.<sup>xxxv</sup> As of end-2024, the Durable Solution structure is being reviewed by the UNCT.

**Beyond these initiatives, UNDP actively engages with humanitarian and dual-mandate coordination platforms and fora to share information, align local recovery efforts with humanitarian activities, and complement ongoing interventions.** Regular participation in oblast-level General Coordination Meetings enables collaboration between humanitarian actors and local authorities.

UNDP also contributes to technical sub-working groups, such as the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support group under the Health Cluster and coordinates the Mine Action Area of Responsibility under the Protection Cluster. Through the CPDSR platform, UNDP helps coordinate Solutions with local authorities and partners. UNDP also leads the Energy Coordination Group, which develops joint risk assessments,<sup>xxxvi</sup> data collection,<sup>xxxvii</sup> and programming proposals.<sup>xxxviii</sup> This group has set shared priorities, informed by national and local authorities' needs, which contributed to the UN Ukraine Winter Response Plan.

## 2.2 UNDP's Role in Joint Assessments and Joint Data Collection

**Collaboration on humanitarian data collection and analysis in Ukraine has primarily been coordinated through the Assessment and Analysis Working Group (AAWG), led by OCHA.**<sup>xxxix</sup> However, its activities have largely remained within the humanitarian scope. UNDP has presented a set of data, detailed below, to integrate humanitarian assistance with development and conflict-sensitive intervention within the group. However, IOM's data on displacement has been more influential in setting the agenda.<sup>xl</sup> Still, the group has been guiding joint

assessments and initiatives that have influenced the UN Transition Framework and the Durable Solutions for Displaced People agenda – two key frameworks implementing the Nexus approach.

The Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments (RPBAs),<sup>xii</sup> led by the EU, UN/UNDP, and the World Bank, have been instrumental in harmonizing analyses of the war's impacts, involving diverse stakeholders and supporting governments. In 2015, the Eastern Ukraine RPBA expanded beyond immediate humanitarian needs to include recovery and social cohesion requirements.

**Since February 2022, UNDP has actively led assessments and analyses with UN agencies, shifting the focus from purely humanitarian data to include development and peace perspectives.** The Rapid Damage and Needs Assessments (RDNAs), published by the World Bank, the EU and Government of Ukraine that later included the UN, have estimated damages, losses, and recovery needs across its four iterations. These assessments incorporate findings from complementary analyses,<sup>xiii</sup> including the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for the Kakhovka Dam crisis,<sup>xiii</sup> led by the Resident Coordinator's Office, and the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE),<sup>xiv</sup> developed by UNDP, SeeD, and USAID. SCORE has monitored social cohesion, intergroup relations, and institutional trust from 2016 to 2024.

**UNDP has also led the 2023 Human Impact Assessment<sup>xv</sup> in collaboration with 12 UN agencies, which evaluated the war's impact on living standards, health, education, livelihoods, food security, gender equality and women's empowerment.** In partnership with the World Bank, UNDP prepared the Ukraine Energy Damage Assessment in 2022,<sup>xvi</sup> which evaluated energy infrastructure damages and winter needs. This assessment was updated in 2024 as the *Towards a Green Transition of the Energy Sector in Ukraine* report,<sup>xvii</sup> emphasizing the importance of rebuilding Ukraine's energy sector sustainably.

**Despite these efforts, challenges remain in fully integrating the HDP Nexus approach across analyses, strategic frameworks, budgeting, and programme monitoring.** The Ukrainian context has favored the development of indicators that indirectly strengthen HDP coherence over dedicated Nexus indicators, reflecting variations in definitions, priorities, and operational methods among organizations.

**To address data-related challenges, the Resident Coordinator's Office tasked the Data Task Force (DTF) with developing a Joint Analytical Framework for Durable Solutions.** This framework will include indicators to measure progress in standards of living, employment, basic services, and conditions for return, and situating Solutions within the Transition Framework.

**Under the Community Planning for Durable Solutions and Recovery (CPDSR) framework, the Data for Solutions and Recovery Working Group (D4SR) was established to support the development of this framework and conduct data mapping for selecting 12 pilot locations.**<sup>xviii</sup> Co-chaired by UNDP, IOM, and REACH since spring 2024, D4SR enhances evidence-based coordination and effectiveness among recovery actors, including UN agencies, NGOs, and government ministries. While both the CPDSR and D4SR are in their pilot phases, their long-term impact on programming and humanitarian-development coordination remains to be seen.

## 2.3 UNDP's programmatic entry points to the Nexus: recovery and resilience

**In February 2015, the UN/UNDP, the European Union, and the World Bank Group, with support from the Government of Ukraine, conducted a joint *Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPA)*.** This effort led to the launch of the UN Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme (UN RPP) in 2016, an area-based program integrating HDP Nexus components, including economic recovery and infrastructure restoration; local governance and decentralization; and community security and social cohesion. Between 2014 and 2024, the UN RPP delivered \$173 million across 36 projects implemented by UN agencies, including UNDP.<sup>xlix</sup>

**A mid-term external evaluation<sup>i</sup> highlighted the UN RPP as a driving force in transitioning from emergency humanitarian response to development and peacebuilding.** Notably, UNDP and UNHCR collaborated on two projects in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts to establish sustainable models for transitioning service delivery from humanitarian response to recovery.<sup>ii</sup> These early Nexus initiatives paved the way for enhanced collaboration after the full-scale invasion. The evaluation also recognized the UN RPP's effectiveness as a coordination platform for development partners and UN entities. From 2019 to 2023, the UN RPP operated with a USD 128 million budget, of which USD 116 million was managed by UNDP.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Expansion During the War: The RBR Framework**

In April 2022, UNDP launched the *Resilience Building and Recovery (RBR)* framework to address the consequences of the war and safeguard development gains. The UN RPP, originally designed for low-intensity conflict in eastern Ukraine, expanded under the RBR framework to include collaboration with humanitarian and dual-mandate agencies.

Efforts under this framework include a joint UNDP-UNHCR project for IDP reintegration in western Ukraine (Mukachevo, Zakarpattia Oblast),<sup>iiii</sup> and a UNDP-UNFPA initiative to create an anti-crisis hub providing shelter, services, and livelihood opportunities for displaced individuals through local NGOs.<sup>lv</sup>

### **Continuation and Evolution: The EU4Recovery project and R4 Framework**

To advance recovery efforts, the EU has partnered with UNDP, UNFPA, and UN Women on the EU4Recovery – Empowering Communities in Ukraine project (2022-2024). This initiative aims to strengthen essential services and promote social cohesion by supporting healthcare facilities, social and administrative services, IDP management, and infrastructure rehabilitation, while enhancing the capacities of emergency responders and local authorities to improve public safety and address gender-based violence.<sup>lv</sup> Implemented through an area-based development approach, the project coordinates with national authorities, humanitarian and development partners, relevant Clusters, and with bilateral partners such as the EU and GIZ ensuring complementarity and preventing duplication of efforts.

### **Building on the same approach and the experience of the RPP and the EU4recovery, UNDP developed the Reconstruction, Returns, Recovery, and Reform (R4) framework, operational from June 2024 to 2029.**

The framework adopts an area-based approach in collaboration with UN Women, ILO, and UNHCR. It acts as a unified umbrella and collaborative arrangement between UN agencies at the Hromada level to advance the HDP Nexus and provide local recovery, Solutions and social cohesion.

The R4 framework emphasizes joined-up programming between UNDP and UNHCR<sup>lvi</sup> to transition from humanitarian aid to long-term recovery and development. The collaboration is guided by the UNDP and UNHCR Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions (2023–2025),<sup>lvii</sup> which capitalizes on the comparative advantages of both agencies to achieve better outcomes in responding to humanitarian crises.

It aligns with the Government of Ukraine's priorities, the 2024 UN Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, and the 2025–2029 UNSDCF. Coordination is ensured with other UN actors, IFIs and NGOs to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication, emphasize building on synergies with other projects at national and sub-national levels.<sup>lviii</sup> UNDP is also supporting social cohesion through a range of projects including the Civil Society and Youth Support Project to integrate local actors and policy into recovery and resilience building efforts, while reinforcing the social fabric.<sup>lix</sup>

### **Energy Sector Support and Green Transition**

UNDP's *Towards a Green Transition of the Energy Sector in Ukraine* report guided targeted support for Ukraine's energy sector and infrastructure to address urgent humanitarian needs during the winter season, as outlined in OCHA's Winter Response Plans under the HRPs.<sup>lx</sup> Through the *Green Energy Recovery Programme*, supported by multiple donors, UNDP has provided key equipment to ensure a reliable energy supply for essential service providers and institutions. This initiative demonstrates the integration of immediate humanitarian needs with long-term recovery and sustainability objectives.<sup>lxi</sup>

## **2.4 Analysis of the Process: Funding and Financing**

**The financial aid landscape in Ukraine is distinct from other crises and conflicts due to the scale and structure of donor support, which ranks as the second highest ever.**<sup>lxii</sup> Before February 2022, development-oriented Official Development Assistance (ODA) significantly outweighed humanitarian aid, with 90 percent of net ODA directed toward development efforts in 2022. By 2024, the UN Ukraine Transitional Framework was funded at 61%, amounting to approximately \$994 million.<sup>lxiii</sup>

Unlike many other conflict-affected contexts, Ukraine's institutions and economy have not collapsed, allowing essential services to continue and thereby limiting the role of humanitarian actors in filling public service gaps.<sup>lxiv</sup> However, with the escalation of war, humanitarian funding increased sharply (see figure 2), covering 81 percent of Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) requirements over 2022-2023, which was 20 percent higher than the coverage in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Sudan (see figure 3).

Despite ample funding, most resources have been directed towards either pure development-focused activities, such as energy generation, or pure humanitarian responses, driven by high political and strategic interests of donors. With limited flexible, non-earmarked funds available for bridging humanitarian and development efforts, funding to advance initiatives on the HDP Nexus remained constrained. The limited funds available were used to bridge peacebuilding efforts, including initiatives to promote social cohesion.<sup>lxv</sup>

**Bridging humanitarian and development funding streams would have enabled addressing gaps between emergency response and long-term resilience, development and peacebuilding.** However, efforts towards

this goal have been limited. The Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF), established in 2020, included attempts to foster collaboration with development partners and strengthen local authorities' capacity.<sup>lxvi</sup>

Of its \$9.5 million budget, \$3.4 million was allocated to support basic service delivery through area-based approaches in prioritized government-controlled areas. OCHA's strategic guidance, combined with financial allocation incentives, had the intention to support humanitarian actors to broaden their cooperation with development and Government partners. However, this model was not replicated in subsequent years, and UNDP did not access UHF funding.

**Since the full-scale invasion, UNDP has focused on linking humanitarian relief with recovery and stabilization efforts.** It has used the Ukraine Recovery Conferences (URCs) since 2022 to coordinate closely with humanitarian and peace actors, align its efforts with the broader recovery agenda and supported the mobilization of financial support for recovery and reconstruction.<sup>lxvii</sup> Through its engagement, UNDP has emphasized the importance of ensuring complementarity between sustainable recovery, resilience-building and addressing root causes with immediate humanitarian relief.

**In November 2023, the Ukraine Community Recovery Fund (UCRF) was established to complement the UHF by investing in community-level interventions in housing, energy, infrastructure, and private sector recovery.**<sup>lxviii</sup> Overseen by the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) with UNDP as the Secretariat, the UCRF aims to enhance coordination between humanitarian and recovery funding.<sup>lxix</sup> However, challenges such as conceptual ambiguity, and insufficient programmatic direction have resulted in only \$11 million being mobilized to date.<sup>lxx</sup> While the UCRF supports HDP Nexus approaches, including a joint UNDP-UNHCR area-based recovery project,<sup>lxxi</sup> it requires scaling to have an impact at the national level.

**Despite significant donor investment, the separation of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding funding streams and mechanisms continues to hinder HDP Nexus implementation and broader coordination.** The OCHA and the RCO coordinate appeals across UN agencies and NGOs, but a lack of shared understanding of the HDP Nexus has prevented a cohesive narrative to attract funding. Most humanitarian response funding depends on individual organizations' fundraising capacities, reducing incentives for collaborative programming and operational coordination.

**As a result, the funding and financing landscape reflects a typical crisis response scenario where funding is separated and siloed across humanitarian, development and peace streams.** As in other crisis situations, donors have been flexible in allowing re-purposing of existing development funding into crisis response. Despite being a context that has attracted significant investment, the humanitarian and development funding streams remain siloed, leaving agencies to compete for funds while trying to capture activities in the transition from humanitarian to development efforts.

**To advance the HDP Nexus, there is a pressing need for the international aid system to establish or expand flexible, multi-year funding mechanisms.** A combination of dedicated HDP financial tools, including HDP-centric finance tracking, a focus on private sector and private capital, aligning or supporting HDP national budgeted plans, flexible and multi-year funding across the HDP Nexus could provide better context for the operationalization of the HDP Nexus and adapt to an ongoing crisis.

The EU Ukraine Facility provides an example of HDP Budgeted plans, addressing humanitarian, recovery and development needs together.<sup>lxvii</sup> RDNA4 also emphasizes the role of Ukrainian private sector in recovery, through risk mitigation instruments and public-private partnerships.<sup>lxviii</sup> These tools can provide diverse funding streams that align with the setting of an ongoing conflict and a potential post-war recovery setting, fostering coherence across HDP outcomes.

**Given Ukraine’s status as an upper-middle-income country and the government’s active involvement in crisis response, there is an opportunity to better align humanitarian, development, and peace interventions with national and local budgets.** This could be a strong entry point to advance the Nexus. UNDP’s further engagement with International Finance Institutions (IFIs) and Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) could further unlock private sector contributions. Initiatives such as the Impact Investing Study, which explores private capital’s role in achieving development goals in Ukraine, is an example to enhance cooperation.

**UNDP’s efforts to secure funding for Solutions to Displacement through multi-agency dialogue and coordination have yielded few tangible results.** The contextualization of Solutions in Ukraine has struggled to gain UN’s and Ukraine’s leadership support and donor interest, leaving the agenda largely aspirational. However, ongoing collaboration on Solutions, combined with the involvement of national and local authorities, presents opportunities to secure HDP Nexus funding. By building on its localization portfolio to enhance the capacities of local authorities and other local actors, notably through the R4 framework experiences, UNDP can advance a multi-level HDP Nexus approach and access new funding streams to support integrated crisis response efforts.

# 3 Results and Lessons Learned

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**T**he HDP Nexus approach in Ukraine has gradually taken shape, particularly since the full-scale invasion in 2022, despite earlier stalled efforts. While challenges remain, Ukraine presents a unique opportunity to demonstrate the Nexus’s transformative potential in improving the lives of communities.

Since 2014, the conflict has underscored the need for a coordinated approach to address both immediate and long-term needs. Early attempts to operationalize the Nexus, such as workshops and the HD Working Group, were hindered by unclear definitions, insufficient leadership, and a lack of political commitment.

The full-scale invasion in 2022 shifted priorities toward short-term emergency responses, making it difficult to sustain progress on integrating humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. Initiatives on Durable Solutions and Recovery aimed to bridge humanitarian and development efforts with recovery and social cohesion. However, siloed funding streams and lack of consensus among UN agencies hindered effective coordination.

- 1. Solutions for IDPs have been a foundational entry point for fostering collaboration among the HDP pillars.** It has led to the development of joint work plans, gender-sensitive assessment methodologies, and collaborative tools such as Hromada Profiles and data portals. The concerted efforts of IOM, UNDP and UNHCR have enhanced information sharing, strategic planning, and local engagement, contributing directly to coordinated responses. The partnership between UNDP and UNHCR attracted additional resources under the UCRF, demonstrated how agencies attempted to avoid competition to advance the Nexus approach. However, coordination among HDP pillars remains limited when confined to the Durable Solutions framework. As the coordination structure is being reviewed, adopting a comprehensive forum that spans all sectors and incorporates a bottom-up approach would significantly enhance the effectiveness of the HDP Nexus.
- 2. UNDP’s efforts to integrate the HDP Nexus into Ukraine’s data collection and analytical processes have yielded significant progress in broadening the focus from short-term humanitarian needs to long-term development and peace objectives.** Key assessments, such as the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessments, the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment for the Kakhovka Dam crisis, and the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index, have informed strategic frameworks like the UN Transition Framework and the Durable Solutions for Displaced People agenda. Moreover, the 2023 Human Impact Assessment and the updated Ukraine Energy Damage Assessment have provided concrete evidence on the impacts of conflict

and the importance of sustainable energy reconstruction. Despite these advances, the full operationalization of dedicated HDP Nexus indicators remains a work in progress that has not been developed anywhere globally. It highlights the need for more systematic integration of data, strategic frameworks, budgeting, and program monitoring to fully capture the transformative impact of the HDP approach.

- 3. UNDP has contributed to delivering recovery efforts while driving the transition from emergency-focused interventions to integrating development and peacebuilding in interventions.** The UN RPP 2015 – 2023 was a success, with the delivery of 36 projects which integrated economic recovery, infrastructure restoration, local governance, and social cohesion. The RBR and R4 frameworks have the potential to foster coordinated, area-based interventions that support durable solutions, social cohesion and integrate long-term development with humanitarian aid. Additionally, targeted initiatives like the Green Energy Recovery Programme have successfully combined immediate humanitarian response with sustainable energy support, underscoring the practical benefits of the Nexus approach. Despite these successes, challenges remain in ensuring continuous funding and fully integrating coordination mechanisms across all levels.
  
- 4. The distinct financing landscape has led to opportunities that need to be scaled up.** While initiatives such as the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund and Ukraine Community Recovery Fund aimed to promote Nexus-supportive funding, they faced barriers due to siloed funding approaches and limited access to flexible, multi-year financing. With significant development-oriented aid and despite relatively high levels of humanitarian funding compared to other crises, limited unearmarked funds have constrained cross-sectoral programming, and the absence of a unified Nexus funding strategy has hampered sustained integration. Nevertheless, UNDP’s multi-agency dialogue and coordinated efforts—through mechanisms like the Ukraine Recovery Conferences and the R4 framework—have laid the groundwork for improved durable solutions and social cohesion, highlighting the potential for flexible, multi-year funding mechanisms and stronger engagement with IFIs/DFIs to unlock additional resources and better align national and local budgets with the HDP Nexus approach. Without a cohesive funding narrative around the HDP Nexus, response has relied mostly on individual agencies’ capacities to fundraise, which reduces incentives for collaboration. Addressing these challenges by fostering better alignment of funding mechanisms and enhancing financial flexibility could strengthen the operationalization of the HDP Nexus in Ukraine.

## Key Lessons Learned

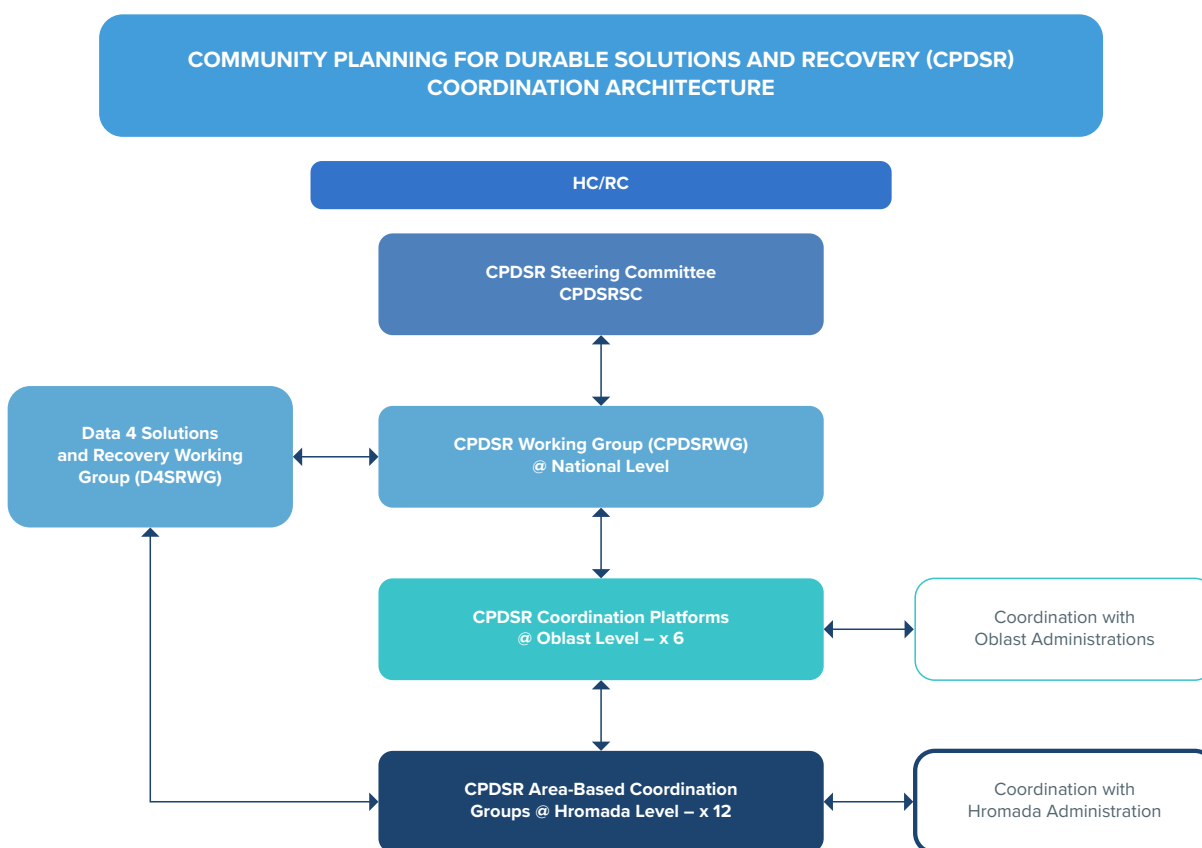
- **The Nexus approach is gaining traction since the full-scale invasion and concerted efforts will help it reach its full potential.** UNDP along with IOM, UNHCR and RCO advocated for the Nexus to anchor coordination efforts across humanitarian, development, and peace actors, but resistance from change and a lack of clarity on Nexus programming led to siloed approaches. Since 2022 the Nexus has become more prominent, presenting an opportunity for UNDP to scale up efforts and pave the ground on the transition from humanitarian aid to development support.
  
- **Improving HDP coordination is an opportunity to deliver key results.** While the Durable Solutions architecture has enabled key achievements, delivering concrete results will require a coordination structure that follows a bottom-up approach, including the strong engagement of local authorities, local communities and donors. While the latter in Ukraine expressed support for the Nexus, their funding structures remain

aligned with siloed project proposals, underscoring the need for donors to reform their approach to crisis funding, making it more conducive to Nexus-aligned initiatives. Additionally, International Financial Institutions and local private companies can play pivotal roles in addressing funding gaps, fostering innovation, and promoting sustainability within the Nexus framework. Moving forward, UNDP can facilitate dialogue to introduce financing instruments that bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and long-term development. Flexible mechanisms such as blended finance, and results-based financing, such as impact bond, can attract private sector participation while supporting Nexus-aligned projects.

- **Area-based approaches and localization are key enablers to accelerate the Nexus.** The Durable Solutions Agenda and area-based programming in Ukraine appeared to be the most promising entry points for operationalizing the Nexus in Ukraine. Localization consists in strengthening local capacities and ensuring that humanitarian, development, and peace interventions are led, owned, and sustained by communities, local governments, and civil society organizations. They include channeling support directly to local actors, designing community-led programming, and partnering with the local civil society and private sector. The Nexus approach has proven more effective at the field level, where national-level coordination often falters or fails to translate into actionable results. In Ukraine, local national implementing partners can deliver programming more cost-effectively by up to 32% compared to international actors.<sup>lxixv</sup> UNDP and UN efforts to reinforce localization through the capacity building of local NGOs, CSOs, and authorities, coupled with decentralization, has facilitated close collaboration with local actors. Capacity-building initiatives for ministries and the development of e-services have also supported government empowerment to adopt strategies that reflect the Nexus approach, even amid conflict. For instance, the Government of Ukraine adopted a Strategy and Operational Plan in 2023 on internal displacement.<sup>lxixv</sup>
- **Guidelines and indicators can support Nexus operationalization.** While the Nexus has been integrated into Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) and UN development plans, the absence of a shared understanding, theory of change, and monitoring framework has limited its impact. The Nexus often functioned as a knowledge-sharing platform rather than a mechanism influencing the design and implementation of crisis responses. Contextualized guidelines and HDP Nexus indicators could be an asset in understanding the impact and transformation the HDP approach is catalyzing. This reflects the lack of shared conceptual clarity of what the Nexus means operationally on the ground in Ukraine.
- **UNDP has a key comparative advantage on the Peace pillar and is among the leading Peace implementing agencies.** UNDP's social cohesion programming in Ukraine demonstrates its potential as an effective entry point for addressing the peace component of the Nexus, especially in sensitive contexts where direct peace programming is difficult. By framing interventions around Social Cohesion, UNDP has been able to address tensions, foster trust, and enhance resilience through inclusive community engagement. By addressing grievances and promoting dialogue and inclusive approaches, such interventions lay a foundation for long-term peace and stability.

# 4 Annex

**Figure 1: Structure of the Community Planning, Durable Solutions and Recovery Coordination in 2024**



**Source:** The Community Planning for Durable Solutions and Recovery architecture, internal document, 2024.

**Figure 2: Evolution of the Humanitarian Response Post Invasion (March 2022 Flash Appeal, HRP 2023 and HRP 2024)**

Year	People in Need (in million)	People Targeted by Humanitarian Plans (in million)	Requirements (in billion USD)	Funding (in billion USD)
<b>2022</b>	17.7	11.5	4.29	3.82
<b>2023</b>	17.6	11.1	3.95	2.88
<b>2024</b>	14.6	8.5	3.1	2.35

**Source:** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2024). Ukraine: Humanitarian funding summary. Financial Tracking Service. <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/234/summary/2024>.

**Figure 3: HRP Coverage (Per Cent) of Selected Conflicts and Crises in the World in 2022 and 2023**

Year of Crisis/ Conflict	Ukraine	Afghanistan	Ethiopia	Myanmar	Sudan
<b>2022</b>	88.6	73.8	51.3	45.8	58.0
<b>2023</b>	74.4	52	36.8	46.4	51.5
<b>Average</b>	81.5	62.9	44.05	46.15	54.75

**Source:** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2024). Financial Tracking Service (FTS). <https://fts.unocha.org>

# 5

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