

## Unpacking and Operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development- Peace Nexus in North East Nigeria<sup>1</sup>

### Background and Context

There is a growing body of literature wherein the notion of 'nexus' is used to highlight and underpin the complexities and nuances attendant to emergency situations; whether they be man-made or the consequence of natural disasters. A 'nexus' simply refers to a connection or series of connections linking two or more things; a central or focal point. In the context of crisis situations, the nexus is seen as the tool for reinforcing the links between at least two sectors increasing the complementarity of their actions in order to address the root causes of the crises and reduce needs (ALNAP, 2018).<sup>2</sup> With reference to the present Policy Brief and, specifically, the humanitarian and development crisis currently ravaging the North East region of Nigeria as a result of the decade-long *Boko Haram* insurgency

however, we define here the 'nexus' as *"the continuum of inter-connections and inter-relationships between humanitarian and development, as well as the security crises characterized by, on the one hand fairly nuanced conceptual, analytical and operational challenges; and on the other hand, emerging opportunities for durable positive change and sustainable development"*.

Indeed, the notion of nexus is central to the United Nations' (UN) New Way of Working (NWOW) wherein the vision is to "work towards collective outcomes across the humanitarian and development community and wherever possible, those efforts should reinforce and strengthen the capacities that already exist at national and local levels; whilst ultimately working towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals" (International Council of Voluntary Agencies - 2017).<sup>3</sup> This vision

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<sup>1</sup> This Policy Brief is produced by the Strategic Policy Advisory Unit of the UNDP Nigeria Country Office. The opinions expressed in this Brief however, are those of the author (Ojijo Odhiambo) and do not represent the views of UNDP, the United Nations or any of its affiliate organizations.

<sup>2</sup> See: The "nexus" explained: How and when do humanitarian, development, and peace action come together? Available at <https://phap.org/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=437>

<sup>3</sup> The "New Way of Working" Examined: An ICVA Briefing Paper September 2017. Available at [https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/ICVA\\_NWoW\\_Briefing\\_paper.pdf](https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/ICVA_NWoW_Briefing_paper.pdf)

was reinforced by the UN Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez when he introduced efficiency and temporal dimensions to the nexus discourse and emphasised that, this “New Way”, “... is about recognizing common goals and optimizing existing resources and capabilities to help all people in situations of risk, vulnerability and crisis; it is about working better together to reduce humanitarian needs over the medium to long-term” (Quoted on January, 28, 2018).

## The Crisis in the North East in Perspective

It is a well-established fact that whereas the latter day (early 2000s) calls for universal *jihad* following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States of America and, especially, the economic hardships and political instability witnessed during the 1980s, coupled with the diminishing capacity of government to deliver basic services, jobs and prosperity for a vast majority of the Nigerian people are all important causal and/or exacerbating factors of the *Boko Haram* insurgency, the root causal factors of the insurgency and the crisis can be traced back to the more distant past-early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is also to be noted that the peculiar geo-political setting of the North East Nigeria at the confluence of east-west and north-south trade corridors of illegal arms trade and human trafficking are equally important contributory factors. Moreover, due historical asymmetry in access to education and skills acquisition for

the labour market between the northern and southern Nigerian ethnic nationalities, many people in the north have always felt a sense of structural inequality and systematic exclusion manifest in the form of lack of job opportunities, high levels of poverty and inequality and, more worryingly, conspicuous consumption in the midst of great deprivation. All these factors, together with increasing population pressure, desertification, land degradation and deforestation, loss of grazing lands and diminishing agricultural production and productivity leading to erosion of the main sources of livelihoods, as well as climate change whose effects are evident in the reported 90 percent reduction in the waters of the Lake Chad over the past three decades have served to nurture a fertile ground and socio-economic environment for the *Boko Haram* insurgency and the resultant crisis in North East Nigeria.

The decade long insurgency has led to a humanitarian and development crisis clearly manifest in all spheres of life but is perhaps more pronounced in terms of violence against people, loss of lives and destruction of property; displacement of people within local communities and even beyond international borders; loss of livelihoods, food insecurity and malnutrition; provision of basic services (health, education and water sanitation and hygiene) and the lack of shelter and accommodation, especially for those in Internally Displaced Persons

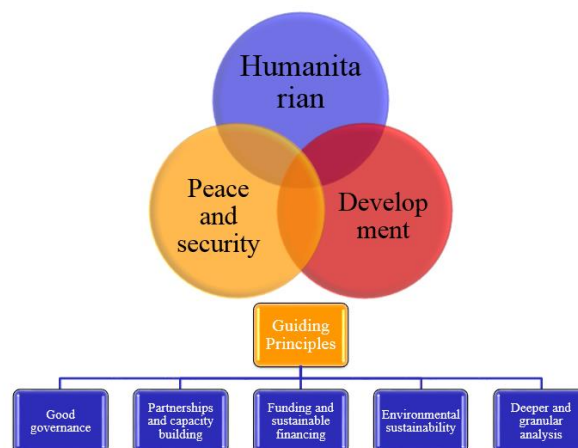
(IDPs) camps and those facing secondary displacement.

A clear unpacking and deeper understanding of the 'nexus' would, logically, provide the basis of credible and effective mitigation strategies against the adverse multi-faceted effects of the insurgency and the attendant humanitarian and development crisis.

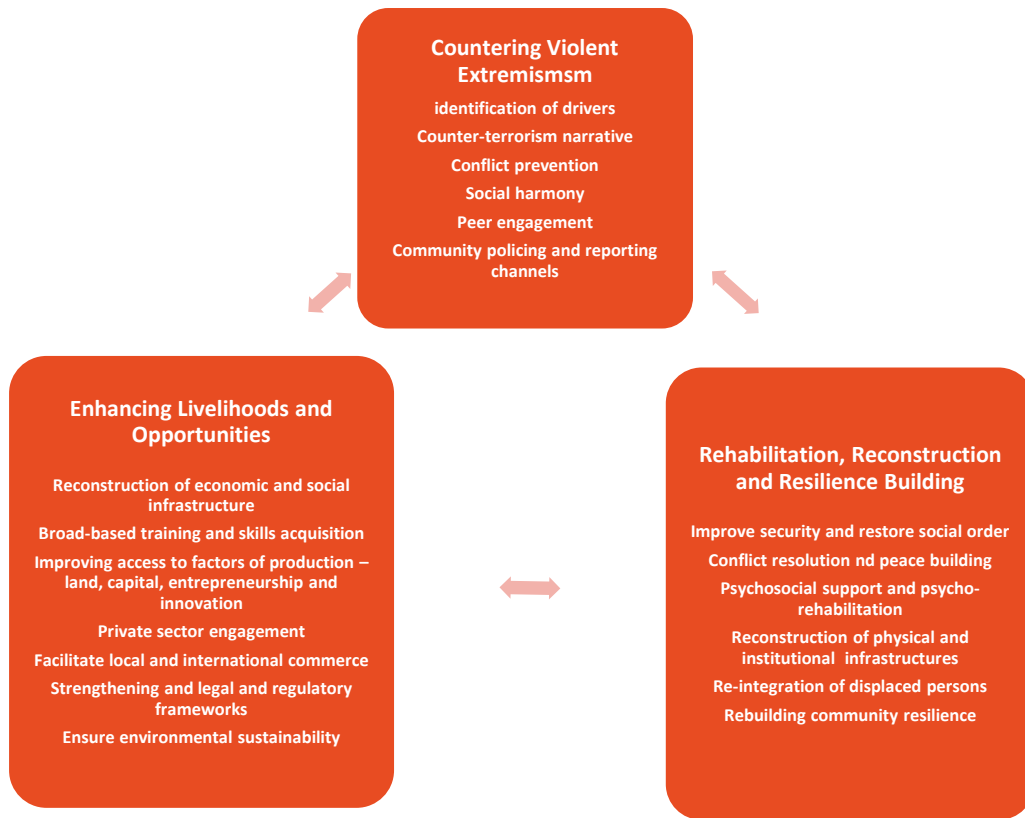
## A Proposed Integrated Framework for Unpacking and Conceptualising the Nexus

This Policy Brief provides highlights of what has been conceived as the '**Three plus Five Integrated Framework**' for unpacking and [re]conceptualising the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (H-D-P) nexus in the particular context of North East Nigeria, but also applicable more generally. The Framework envisages, at the core or apex **Three Foundational Response Pillars** (*Humanitarian, Development and Peace and Security*) which are in turn guided and underpinned by **Five Guiding Principles** (*Good Governance; Smart Partnerships and Capacity Building; Predictable Funding and Sustainable Financing; Environmental Sustainability and Deeper and Granular Analytics*).

Foundational Pillars & Guiding Principles



The Humanitarian Response pillar remains core to the Integrated Framework since it provides the basis for the first line of action particularly in the provision of life-saving interventions in the form of food and non-food items. But as many humanitarian actors have long come to realise, there can never be any effective humanitarian response without the prevalence and guarantee of peace and security. The Development Pillar on its part entails the progressive experience of the people in order to weed themselves out of the primordial lifestyles of poverty, want and deprivation. Beyond these Foundational Pillars, the Integrated Framework envisages the incorporation and interweaving of equally important Five Guiding Principles throughout the crisis response path: good governance as an irreducible minimum for any effective crisis response, in the short-, medium and long-terms; smart and effective horizontal and vertical partnerships and capacity development leveraging the knowledge, ideas and resources from a wide array of stakeholders; predictable funding and innovative and sustainable financing of the



crisis, mobilising resources from many actors including the private sector; integrating the principles of sound natural resource management and environmental sustainability since as already noted desertification, land and environmental degradation, as well as climate change are all important contributory factors; and deeper and granular analysis of comprehensive, up-to-date and reliable data and information to improve an understanding of the dynamics of the crisis and, importantly, target the response to the most affected sectors, segments of society and individuals.

Based on the foregoing, as well as a clear understanding and appreciation of the root causal factors of the crisis discussed earlier, the Integrated Framework is conceptualised to provide a clear understanding of the

parameters and key variables including the key policy and programmatic levers, as well as actors and success indicators that are specifically applicable in the context of North-East Nigeria, but also applicable more generally as presented here below.

## Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Historical and contemporary political, socio-cultural and socio-economic factors, together with the prevalent governance deficits and a host of ideological and ecological factors including land degradation and climate change have been cited as the root causal factors of the *Boko Haram* insurgency which is singularly responsible for the current complex and multidimensional humanitarian and

development crisis in North East Nigeria. There is a need to unpack and re-conceptualise the Humanitarian – Development -Peace nexus with a view to ensuring restoration, rebuilding of institutions and environmental restoration. The **‘Three plus Five’ Integrated Framework** provides for both the theoretical and conceptual analyses as well the necessary evaluation and examination into the root causal factors that various actors can draw from and ultimately, sets the stage for an integrated and holistic approach that leverages on the support and working together by all stakeholders in order to rebuild, rehabilitate and develop the region based on the principles of good governance and environmental sustainability.

The downside of the insurgency is undoubtedly the monumental crisis which is evident in the form of violence against people, loss of lives and destruction of property; displacement of people within local communities; loss of livelihoods, food insecurity and malnutrition; provision of basic services (health, education and water sanitation and hygiene) and the lack of shelter and accommodation. The upside however, is that if properly unpacked and operationalised within the context of a nexus, the crisis presents the North East and Nigeria as a whole, with an opportunity for a new beginning, a beginning of life full of hope and prosperity in line with the Agenda 2030 aspirations.

## Reference

UNDP Nigeria (2018). Human Development Report 2018 – *Achieving Human Development in North East Nigeria: Towards an Understanding of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*. Abuja, Nigeria.