



‘LINKING THINKING’

WHY IS IT SO HARD AND
WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

*Reflections on current debates on the humanitarian,
development and peace nexus*

Joanna Macrae June 2019



KUNO is an initiative of ten NGOs and seven knowledge institutes from the Dutch humanitarian sector, supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. KUNO's goal is to strengthen the humanitarian sector in the Netherlands. KUNO is a platform for joint learning, reflection and debate. We organize expert meetings, working sessions for professionals, webinars, training and public debates. All our events are cross-sectoral and organized in cooperation with our partners.

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Executive summary

This paper was commissioned by KUNO, a Dutch initiative to promote dialogue within the Dutch humanitarian community. It aims to inform current debates regarding the 'nexus' between international humanitarian, development and peace efforts. Specifically, it asks whether this latest round of 'linking thinking' has overcome the hurdles encountered by similar efforts over the past three decades.

Why does 'linking thinking' matter?

Poverty is increasingly concentrated in countries that are politically or environmentally fragile or both. By 2030, it is estimated that 80% of the world's poorest people will live in fragile states (OECD, 2018). Between 2009–2016 aid to fragile states increased by 26%. Ensuring that it delivers good results for those living in extreme poverty will mean rethinking the way in which aid works in the most fragile contexts. In particular, it will mean finding new ways to respond to growing demand for support in protracted crises - and to strategically support access to basic services and support income over many years.

- Between 2005 and 2017, the number of active crises receiving internationally-led response almost doubled from 16 to 30. In the same period, the average length of crises with an active inter-agency appeal rose from 5.4 to 9.5 years.
- The effects of climate change, layered on top of increased conflict, could generate an unprecedented increase in poverty and vulnerability, stretching the humanitarian system a potential breaking point.
- Aid is particularly important in financing basic services and income support in these contexts, but those living in extreme poverty cannot have confidence that support will be sustained over time nor what their entitlements are.

What have we learned from previous efforts?

The early iterations of 'linking thinking' focused on natural hazards. It recognised that disasters are not acts of God, but that the risk of disasters arises because of people's vulnerability and exposure to hazards. Vulnerability and exposure can be reduced through development. Risk-informed development will become increasingly important as the impacts of climate change accelerate. More

challenging has been the idea that development assistance can be similarly invested in ways that reduce the risk of conflict.

Prior to the idea of the 'nexus', developed at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, previous iterations of 'linking thinking' have yielded four key lessons.

First, the problem of problem states remains unresolved: 'linking' initiatives have not resolved the problem of how official aid interacts with states that are warring parties and/or whose legitimacy is fundamentally challenged.

Development assistance has been designed to reinforce states, working with and through government institutions. Humanitarian aid is designed to work around states and to support individuals.

Second, and relatedly, the implication of 'linking thinking' for humanitarian principles has also not been resolved. Development actors don't seem to have fully understood why humanitarian principles are important, and humanitarian actors haven't always been honest regarding the challenges they face in operationalising them.

Third, there is a need to reform the legal and administrative arrangements governing humanitarian and development aid. Increased emphasis on 'linking thinking' did not drive significant reform of the existing architecture.

Finally, the feasibility of better linking humanitarian and developmental work varies considerably between contexts and needs to be grounded in empirical analysis, not simply wishful thinking.

Can Linking Thinking 3.0 overcome the challenges?

The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, agreed a series of commitments to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development work. These commitments built on the foundations of the 2030 framework, and particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In contrast with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs focus not only on reductions in the numbers of people living in extreme poverty, but on those most left behind, potentially providing a unifying narrative for both development and humanitarian actors. However:

- *Predominant models of development remain state-centric, with little systematic discussion as to how and whether they need to be adapted to support citizens in contexts where their governments are part of the problem.* Equally, humanitarian aid actors have been slow to set out how they might be better support local and national institutions. **There is an opportunity to shift aid debates to better support those most left behind - i.e. towards people-centred, rather than state-centred, aid. That does not mean ignoring states; it does mean ensuring that they are working for the poorest.**
- *Humanitarian and development communities continue to talk past each other on humanitarian principles.* Development actors have yet to internalise how concepts such as impartiality could be used to inform resource allocation in favour of the poorest. Humanitarian actors tend to overclaim their ability to truly deliver principled aid. **Rooting 'linking thinking' in closer dialogue about what principles are, why they matter - and, importantly, in data - to track adherence, particularly in relation to impartiality, will be crucial.**

There has been some innovation in terms of new instruments and coordination arrangements. In spite of these, however, the aid architecture remains bifurcated between humanitarian and development aid. Development aid is adopting some of the strategies used by humanitarian actors, allowing it to work more independently of states. Equally humanitarian aid is adopting some of the features of development aid, for example, being programmed over multiple years. While these adaptations offer opportunities for humanitarian and development actors to 'meet in the middle', they do not overcome the structural challenges posed by the fact that humanitarian and development aid are financed and delivered through parallel institutions, and distinct coordination and planning systems. Without structural changes in the aid architecture, stronger links will remain difficult to deliver.

Because of its roots in natural hazards, 'linking thinking' has not systematically investigated the limitations or the scope for securing development outcomes in highly insecure, poorly governed spaces. Situations such as those in Hodeidah, besieged Aleppo and Yade province in Central African Republic are essentially anti-developmental. More attention needs to be paid to developing systematic analysis of the quality and quantity of developmental space.

1. What is this paper about?

This paper was commissioned by KUNO, a Dutch initiative to promote dialogue within the Dutch humanitarian community. It aims to inform current debates regarding the 'nexus' between international humanitarian, development and peace efforts.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines the nexus approach as:

'...strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity [between humanitarian, development and peace actors]. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar—to the extent of their relevance in the specific context—in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict.' (OECD, 2019)

8 Quite a mouthful.

The nexus approach is the latest iteration of 'linking thinking'. For over three decades, the international aid community (and to a lesser extent the diplomatic community), has recognised the importance of working more closely together in order to get better outcomes for people affected by 'natural' disasters and conflict-related crises. But achieving this in practice has proved remarkably difficult.

This paper aims to understand what is new in the latest round of 'linking thinking' and assesses whether it has a greater chance of success than previous efforts. Having set out why these apparently arcane debates matter (Section 2), the paper then reviews earlier iterations of 'linking thinking', identifying four key obstacles to its delivery in practice (Section 3). Section 4 asks how far the current iteration of 'linking thinking' has overcome these barriers, concluding with ideas as to what could be done.

2. Why does 'linking thinking' matter?

From the perspective of those living in crisis contexts, and indeed the general public in donor countries, it would surely seem extraordinary to think that thousands of pages of text had been written and hundreds of meeting hours spent on discussing how to better 'link' international humanitarian, developmental and peace initiatives. Surely, they might argue, these are all part of the same system?

So why is it so hard, and why does it matter?

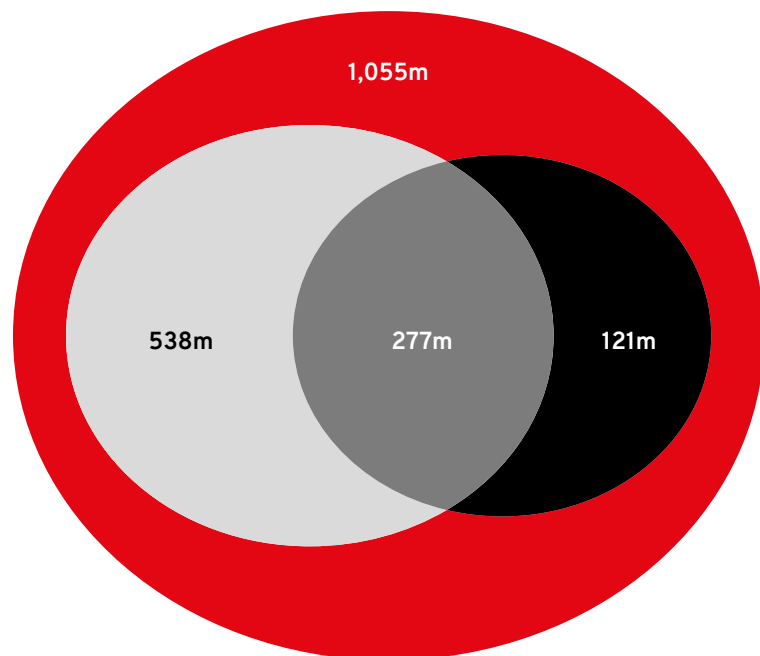
2.1 Poverty and vulnerability: a changing landscape

The task of poverty reduction is increasingly concentrated in the most fragile states. For decades, the focus of development aid actors was on reducing the absolute numbers of people living in extreme poverty. The vast majority of these people lived in largely stable countries, such as China, India and Bangladesh. As these countries radically reduce the number of people living in poverty, so the geography of poverty, and of aid, is changing. Extreme poverty is now largely concentrated in countries that are politically or environmentally fragile or both (see Figure 1). By 2030, it is estimated that 80% of the world's poorest people (some 2.3 billion women, men and children) will live in fragile states (OECD, 2018).

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Figure 1: Number of people living in extreme poverty in environmentally and politically fragile countries

\$3.20 poverty line / People in poverty: 1,991m



Fragile
 Both fragile and environmentally vulnerable
 Environmentally vulnerable
 Other

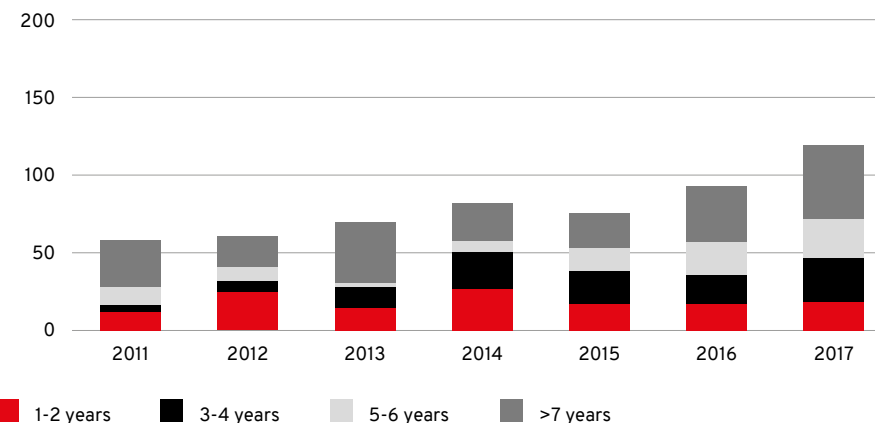
Source: Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2018.

The aid machine as a whole is now pivoting from focusing predominantly on more stable countries to more fragile states, once the near sole preserve of humanitarian actors. In other words, humanitarian and development actors are now more aligned in terms of their geographical focus.

This context of political and environmental fragility is associated with a larger number of crises and they are lasting longer. Between 2005 and 2017, the number of active crises receiving internationally-led response almost doubled from 16 to 30. In the same period, the average length of crises with an active inter-agency appeal rose from 5.4 to 9.5 years (see Figure 2). Nearly three quarters of people targeted received humanitarian assistance for five years or more. Since 2015, appeals for crises lasting five years or longer have spiked and now command most funding received and requested (80%) (OCHA, 2018).

Figure 2: Trends in the duration of crises

People targeted by appeal length (million)



Source: World humanitarian data and trends 2018 (OCHA, 2018)

Climate change will dramatically increase crisis risk, including in the most fragile states. Climate change is involved in most of the shocks that keep or bring households into poverty, notably natural disaster (such floods, which cause a loss in assets), health shocks (such as malaria that results in increased expenditure and reduced earning opportunities) and crop losses and food shocks (due to drought/crop disease) (World Bank, 2016).

Climate change could push a further 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030, and displace at least 135 million by 2050. Declines in crop yields are

expected to contribute to a growing child malnutrition, with an additional 4 million children expected to suffer from severe stunting by 2030, rising to 10 million by 2050 (World Bank, 2019). Half of those affected by natural hazards live in fragile states (ibid).

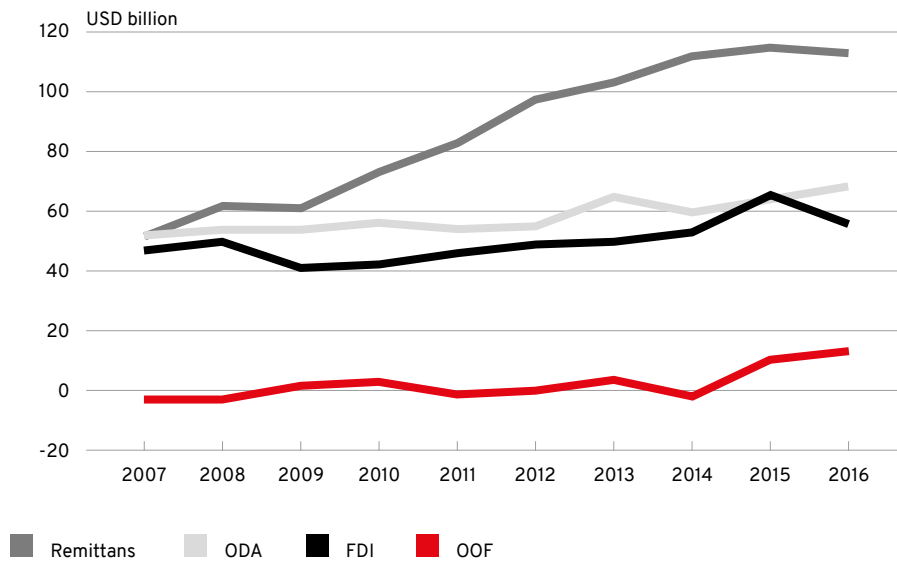
It will become increasingly important to distinguish between those contexts where national and local authorities are willing and able to manage the risk of natural hazards, and where an internationally-led response is required. When thinking about the 'nexus', it will be important to include climate programming and financing in the equation.

2.2 Aid in fragile and conflict-affected states

Fragile states, particularly the most fragile states are highly aid dependent, especially to finance basic services and income support measures.

Figure 3 shows the different sources of external finance to fragile countries.

Figure 3: External financial flows to fragile countries, 2007-2016

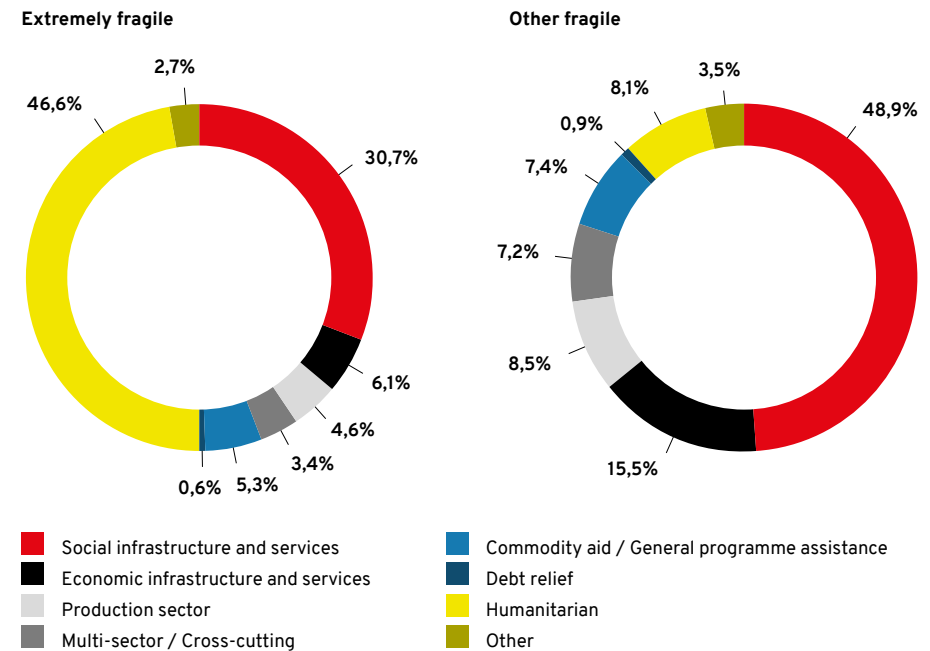


FDI = Foreign Direct Investment; OOF = Other official flows; ODA = Official Development assistance
Source: States of fragility 2018 (OECD, 2018).

It shows that globally, remittances are a very important source of international finance in fragile states compared to aid. However, when these global totals are disaggregated, they show that these flows tend to be lower in the most fragile states: less than 10% of this went to the most fragile countries. This is in part because of the growing legal constraints on transferring remittances to countries such as Sudan, and in part because large new diasporas, such as that from Syria, have yet to fully establish themselves (OECD, 2018).

Low income fragile states are particularly dependent on aid flows, particularly to support investment in basic services and social spending - see Figure 4 (OECD, 2018). This underscores the importance of maximising the impact and value of aid used to support social services and social spending in these contexts.

Figure 4: Sectoral allocation of aid in fragile states, 2016

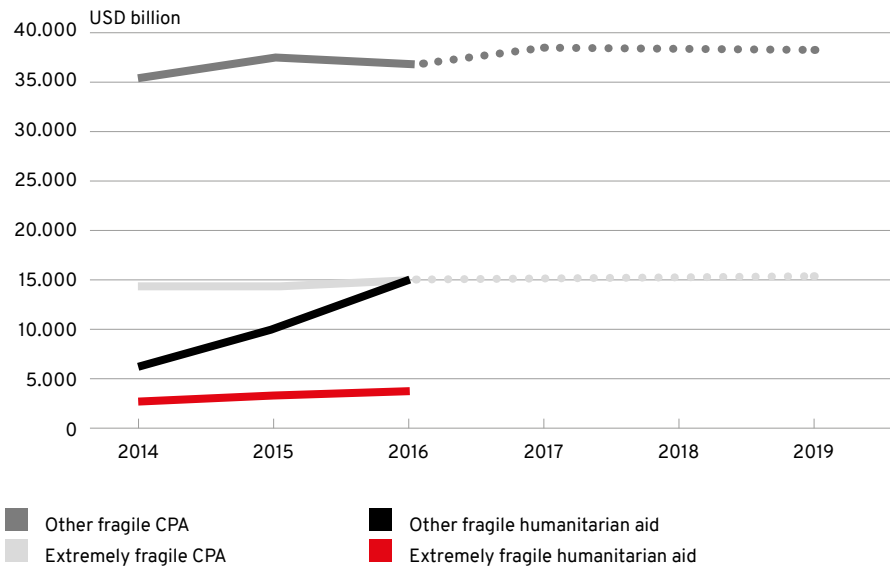


Source: States of fragility 2018 (OECD, 2018).

Aid to fragile states is growing, with new actors entering the field. However, humanitarian aid remains the primary instrument driving that growth, particularly in the most fragile states.

Between 2009 and 2016, the amount of aid spent in fragile states grew by 26% (OECD, 2018). Most of this growth can be attributed to a very significant (144%) increase in humanitarian aid. While there has been relatively little growth in development aid (or rather, country programmable aid (CPA)), it still outstrips the volume of humanitarian aid in fragile states (see Figure 5). This underscores the importance of ensuring that all aid is used effectively to support those living in extreme poverty in the most fragile states.

Figure 5: Humanitarian and development (CPA) flows to fragile states 2014–2019



Notes: Dotted lines are projections for country programmable aid (CPA). CPA and humanitarian aid are each presented in US\$ constant prices. Source: States of fragility 2018 (OECD, 2018).

Combined, these trends in poverty, crises and the environment mean that aid, particularly humanitarian aid, is coming under pressure in countries at risk of

crises. More people depend on it and for longer. Different types of aid are operating alongside each other. The question is whether aid as a whole is delivering in these difficult environments and whether there is the right division of labour between different instruments.

3. 'Linking thinking': a brief history

3.1 Linking Thinking 1.0: Establishing the framework for coherence mid-1980s - 2000

Historically the aid system treated disasters as aberrations from an otherwise positive and steady trajectory towards progress. That is why relief budgets were initially designed to have short frames - the assumption was that they would not be needed for long because 'normal' development would be resumed quickly once the storm/earthquake/war was over. Under this approach, the links that need to be made between humanitarian and development are purely sequential, mechanical ones.

During the 1980s, however, a strong body of work developed, making it clear that rather than interruptions of development, disasters were symptomatic of its failure. During the 1980s and 1990s, social scientists mapped the relationship between poverty and disasters. They argued that it was no accident that the poorest were at greatest risk of the effects of natural hazards. Poverty and exclusion make people vulnerable, and the poor tend to be more exposed to hazards because of where and how they live. It is this combination of a hazard with exposure and vulnerability that defines the extent of disaster risk.

This approach underscores the importance of linking humanitarian and developmental approaches conceptually and operationally. Development efforts should be informed by an analysis of disaster risk and actively work to reduce it (Wisner et al., 1994). Equally, Anderson and Woodrow (1991) argued that relief aid could be provided in ways that might help to reduce the risk of future crises. For example, food for work could be used to increase environmental protection. While the literature was clear, practice lagged somewhat behind. The incentives for development actors to take risk seriously were limited, while disaster risk reduction typically remained the poor relation within humanitarian budgets.

In the mid-1990s, an important thread of work emerged, which sought to understand how conflict and violence created crises. This work made clear that the most lethal crises were not caused by natural hazards, but were created deliberately as part of the tactics of war (de Waal, 1990; Keen, 1994). It also highlighted how warring parties manipulated aid for political advantage

(Duffield, 1994). This analysis underscored the fact that humanitarian aid, accompanied by a risk-informed approach to development would not be enough to prevent and respond to crises. Political action was needed.

In 1996, these different threads were being pulled together to shape the first generation of 'linking thinking'. The European Commission's 'Linking relief, rehabilitation and development' policy was published in 1996 and was among the most influential of these efforts.

In common with broader thinking at the time, the policy took the principles of 'linking thinking' that had developed to improve the management of natural disasters and applied them to crises associated with conflict. For example, it argued:

'Disaster prevention and preparedness measures are difficult to apply, and increasing prominence needs to be given to conflict prevention, through early and coordinated intervention at both political and developmental levels with the ultimate goal to reach a situation of 'structural stability' (European Commission, 1996, emphasis added).

The approach, echoed across the western-dominated aid and diplomatic landscape, gave aid a role alongside diplomacy in conflict prevention. In situations of active conflict, growing understanding of how aid was being incorporated into conflict dynamics, gave rise to the tantalising proposition that it could equally be leveraged for peace (Macrae and Leader, 2000).

In the post-cold war period, marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was possible to end the pretence that development was distinct from geopolitics. Instead, it could be incorporated into the narrative of 'human security', in which political action is always a benign act, sat above party politics or geopolitical concerns. In an apparently unipolar world, it was no longer necessary to ask whose politics humanitarian and development aid were being linked to.

The assumption of benign politics made sense in many ways. Much of the learning about the difficulties of linking humanitarian and development aid had come about in countries where the end of the cold war resulted in largely UN-backed political settlements in the early 1990s. From Angola to Cambodia

to Ethiopia to Mozambique, aid actors were asked to accompany what was anticipated to be a linear transition from war to peace. They were required to shift from their humanitarian mode of working around governments and to start to invest in them. The UN-led transitional approaches were designed to deliver legitimate governments through internationally monitored elections. If there was a problem of governance, it was now largely one of technical capacity, rather than whether it was politically legitimate. The task of aid, then, was to build governmental capacity and not to worry about its position in relation to it.

3.2 Linking Thinking 2.0: The Global War on Terror & the discovery of 'fragile states' 2001 - 2015

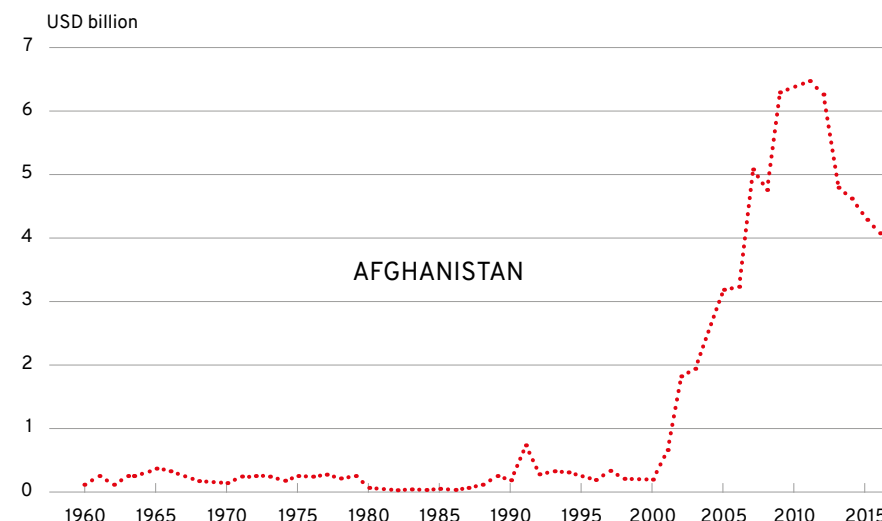
While the learning that informed Linking Thinking 1.0 largely grew out of the rash of post-cold war settlements, the new policy framework also coincided with the aftermath of the brutal conflicts in the Balkans and the genocide in Rwanda. While both cases provided a strong signal that the politics of 'linking thinking' are necessarily very complex, the real wake up call came on a sunny September morning in 2001.

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The attack on the twin towers marked the re-beginning of history. 'If you are not with us, you are against us', stated President Bush as he launched the war on terror¹. The implications of this for 'linking thinking' quickly became clear in Afghanistan. Large volumes of aid flowed into the country in the wake of the overthrow of the Taliban in December 2001.

¹) See: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> [last accessed 25 March 2019].

Figure 6: Aid flows to Afghanistan, 1960–2017 (US\$ billions)



Source: OECD DAC live data.

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The opening salvos of the global war on terror marked a pivotal moment in 'linking thinking' because it made (geo)politics explicit in the aid discourse, with Colin Powell, for example, recruiting it as a 'force multiplier' (Lischer, 2007).

Importantly, the logic underpinning the role of aid was not invented by the military, although the idea of recruiting hearts and minds was hardly new in warfare. Rather, it drew on a growing movement from within the development policy arena. This movement, catalysed by prominent economist Paul Collier among others, was concerned about a group of countries that were performing poorly against the MDGs and were remaining stubbornly poor. Initially, it was a motley collection, with countries ranging from countries suffering from laggardly governance, such as Tanzania, to those in outright conflict, such as Somalia. Over time however, the wide group of 'poor performing countries' was narrowed to focus on fragile and conflict-affected states. If development aid was concerned with poverty, it was argued, it must do more in these countries.

Specifically, it needed to take a more proactive role in building the strong and peaceful institutions required to create the enabling environment for economic growth.

Thus, the early 2000s saw a growing convergence of interest in scaling aid in conflict-affected countries between those in the foreign policy establishment of major powers, and those who were concerned to ensure that aid was targeted to the poorest—an increasing percentage of whom were living in fragile states. Both groups shared the idea that aid could play a valuable role in peace-building and state-building. Providing services to poor people would help to bolster the legitimacy of nascent governments and address long-held grievances. Investing in institutional capacity would build the pillars of the state and political institutions needed to deliver a robust political settlement.

Humanitarian organisations had long called for developmentalists to come and help them address the complex needs of populations in countries affected by long-term crises and by the early 2000s, those calls were beginning to be heeded. According to the OECD/DAC, aid to conflict-affected countries had reached US\$68.5 billion in 2003. The World Bank had over 80 projects totalling US\$5.5 billion in 13 conflict-affected countries—almost equivalent to the entire humanitarian budget for 2001 (US\$6 billion) (Macrae and Harmer, 2004).

During the 2000s, the issue of fragility continued to rise up the aid agenda. A special set of principles was developed by the DAC to guide official development assistance (ODA) in these settings (2005). In 2011, the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States was brokered in Busan. INCAF—the International Network for Conflict and Stability—was formed to iterate policy, providing a forum for bilateral and multilateral actors to work together, across the humanitarian divide.

The only problem was that the frameworks that were being developed to engage in fragile states assumed that, in common with the cluster of countries that had transitioned to peace in the early-mid 1990s, there were robust political settlements in place. However, in the new generation of fragile states political settlements were either not in place and/or were extremely fragile. Aid (including development aid) was being delivered in situations of active conflict, where governments did not control large swathes of territory and/or where

government-backed forces were also routinely implicated in violations of international humanitarian law (IHL).

In this context, the politics of linking humanitarian and development aid became much more complex. For humanitarians the price of 'linking' with development actors was the requirement to contribute to a political agenda of state-building. In a small number of cases, notably Afghanistan and Iraq, this was a high, geopolitical agenda associated with 'liberal' interventionism. In others, such as Somalia and Yemen (until 2015), it was a linkage with counter-terrorism. In countries of less strategic interest to Western donor countries (Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, CAR), the politics were arguably owned by development actors, seeking to deliver on state-building/peace-building objectives (increasingly important in justifying investment in aid budgets).

Put simply, it implied giving up neutrality.

3.3 Lessons from Linking Thinking 1.0 and 2.0

So, what have we learned from these previous iterations of 'linking thinking'?

The two previous iterations of 'linking thinking' brought growing convergence between humanitarian and developmentalists in many ways. Conceptually, there is now a shared understanding that crises are driven by structural poverty, environmental change and, most importantly, failures of governance. These are the meat and potatoes of development practice. There is also a recognition that humanitarian problems cannot be solved primarily or only with humanitarian aid: they require long-term political, economic and environmental solutions.

Practically, these two generations of 'linking thinking' also saw a growing convergence in terms of the geographical and demographic focus of aid efforts: that is, on those living in the fragile states. So, humanitarian and development actors became increasingly close in terms of the desired endpoint. However, there remained four related but distinct challenges in terms of the means of getting there.

First and foremost these iterations of 'linking thinking' did not resolve the problem of problem states.

Developmental paradigms remain reliant on a state-led model of poverty eradication. Humanitarian paradigms remain focused on supporting the individual. Since its inception, development assistance has been designed to reinforce state sovereignty, working with and through government institutions. Which states benefit from aid, and who within those states benefit most, are crucial, but often hidden, questions in development policy. Granting development assistance to a country is to accept the legitimacy of an incumbent regime, and it is no coincidence that humanitarian instruments are used, when, for example sanctions are in place against a country. By contrast, humanitarian aid does not confer legitimacy on the incumbent state: its unit of analysis is individuals, not governments.

Humanitarian and development aid are not necessarily mutually exclusive: humanitarian actors are the first to emphasise that the primary role of sovereign governments is to protect their citizens. What is worth emphasising, however, is that while the objectives of humanitarian and development aid may be complementary, they are inherently different, and they are different by design. In particular they have a different political meaning vis-à-vis states.

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In the realm of natural hazards, three decades of 'linking thinking' have encouraged governments to take greater responsibility for managing and financing disaster risk. While these efforts will have to be accelerated, and fast, in order to address the dramatically increased risks associated with climate change, they have at least put the issue of risk reduction onto the agenda of states and are providing an increasingly diverse range of tools that can be used to support government-led efforts to adapt to and build resilience in the face of climate change. For humanitarians the opportunity is to consider how they can best relate to these government-led systems. How can they serve as advocates, for example to guide targeting criteria, as scrutineers of delivery and as service providers to support those who fall through the net of government-led systems and/or when they are overwhelmed?

The dilemmas of 'linking thinking' are much sharper where state power is contested and where incumbent authorities are implicated in major abuses of human rights and IHL. Historically, long-term development aid has struggled to operate in contexts where the state has either broken down (e.g. Somalia), and

where its legitimacy is contested internally and externally (think South Sudan, Yemen) because it relied on literally channelling money through public financial systems. By contrast, since the 1980s, the humanitarian ecosystem has evolved to work 'around' the state, if necessary establishing parallel systems which can reach people directly and in areas not held by government.

Linking Thinking 1.0 and 2.0 encouraged development actors to work to reform and strengthen fragile states, but it did not fundamentally challenge the idea that development efforts could and should be government-led. It also assumes that aid can leverage substantive change in the political economy of fragile states. The work of Alex de Waal, among others, makes clear just how challenging this is likely to be. His analysis describes entrenched political marketplaces, with elites able to capture public budgets (including that provided through aid) to maintain their powerbase. For humanitarians, this underscores the risk of engaging with state-based institutions.

This is because of the second core challenge raised by 'linking thinking'—its implications for humanitarian principles. As noted above, closer proximity to development actors is seen to require compromising on neutrality, because it typically implies working more closely with states, including those who are warring parties. These concerns have understandably deepened as the role of development aid in peace-building and state-building has intensified.

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It is important to emphasise it is an artifact of the development system, rather than something inherent in the process of development itself, that makes ideas of allocating resources according to need (impartiality), and of working without taking sides in hostilities (neutrality) inherently challenging. One could imagine a development approach that is comfortable with both—it is just not the system we currently have.

Similarly, it is important to underscore that, just because activities are carried out by an organisation that calls itself 'humanitarian', this does not necessarily make their practice either impartial or neutral. Impartiality and neutrality flow from operational practice, not simply from the labelling of different types of aid or organisation. For example, the UN's operation in Syria came under sustained criticism for bias in the allocation of millions of dollars of 'humanitarian' aid

(Guardian, 2016), a pattern familiar to scholars in the sector down the decades². Similarly, in some cases, they receive funding from governments who are also parties to the conflict and/or have wider foreign policy interests. For example, Saudi Arabia and the UAE account for ~40% of the Yemen HRP and are also parties to the conflict³. It is also worth reflecting that critics argue that humanitarian actors justify reliance on maintaining internationalised response, citing concern that local organisations cannot act impartially and neutrally, despite evidence to the contrary in many contexts.

This is not to say that humanitarian principles don't matter. They do. It is to say that the nexus is not necessarily the only or primary threat to them: poor practice by existing 'humanitarian' organisations, including humanitarian donors, are also significant. So too, is the emerging trend for warring parties to have less interest in enabling populations under their control to access humanitarian aid.

24 Third, because humanitarian and development aid have been designed to serve different political purposes, they have very different legal, administrative and management arrangements. Linking Thinking 1.0 and 2.0 did not deliver significant reform of the architecture and procedures that sustain these divisions. Humanitarian and development aid budgets remained managed by different ministries/divisions in three out of the four major donors (US, Germany and the European Commission). They are subject to very different contracting and procurement rules and each have their own ecosystems of implementing partners and distinctive coordination arrangements.

Finally, there are real questions about the feasibility of addressing the long-term drivers of vulnerability in highly insecure environments and how to do so in contexts where national and local capacity are highly constrained. The many policy papers on 'linking thinking' are rarely grounded in an empirical analysis of the very different operating environments in which it is expected to play out.

²) See, for example, *Without Troops and Tanks: Humanitarian Intervention in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Duffield and Prendergast, 1994), 'Operation Lifeline Sudan review (Karim et al, 1996) and 'The international response to conflict and genocide: lessons from the Rwanda experience. Study 3, humanitarian aid and effects' (Borton et al. (1996).

³) See: <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/248/summary/2018>

The scope for adopting more long term approaches to the design and financing of basic services and developing sustainable livelihoods is very different in long-term refugee camps in Zambia from that of besieged populations in Hodeidah and again from agro-pastoralists in South Sudan.

4. Linking Thinking 3.0: new opportunities, same constraints? (2015 - present)

2015 marked the start of a slew of Summits to frame the next generation of global collaboration.

KEY INTERNATIONAL SUMMITS, 2015-2018

March 2015	<i>Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction</i> (Sendai)
April 2015	<i>Financing for Development</i> (Addis Ababa)
September 2015	<i>Sustainable Development Goals</i> (New York)
December 2015	<i>Conference of the Parties UNFCCC</i> (Climate), Paris
May 2016	<i>World Humanitarian Summit</i> (Istanbul)
December 2018	<i>Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Migration</i> (Marrakech)

This frenzy of global conversation was designed to revitalise the way in which the international community addresses the big issues of our time: extreme poverty, migration, climate change, conflict. It is, of course, impossible to do justice to the richness of each of these processes, let alone to summarise how they interact and reinforce each other. However, some key themes have emerged which will affect the roll out of Linking Thinking 3.0.

In terms of the what, there are some important shifts in focus. Previous iterations of 'linking thinking' focused on natural hazards and then on conflict, climate change is now much more to the fore. Linking Thinking 3.0 will need to take on the additional dimension of climate programming and financing, further complicating the challenge.

There are also some shifts in terms of the who. The MDGs focused on reducing the absolute number of people living in poverty. The SDGs have a focus on reaching those 'most left behind'⁴.

Finally, there are also some important shifts in terms of the how. The World Humanitarian Summit did not deliver a legal, negotiated text. Rather, it provided a set of 'commitments', including the Grand Bargain, which in turn included a commitment to enhanced engagement between humanitarian and development. The Summit also set the vision for a New Way of Working. OCHA defines this as:

'...working over multiple years, based on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors, including those outside the UN system, towards collective outcomes. Wherever possible, those efforts should reinforce and strengthen the capacities that already exist at national and local levels.' (OCHA, 2017)

One of the most interesting elements of the approach is the idea of collective outcomes.

'A collective outcome can be described as the result that development and humanitarian actors (and other relevant actors) want to have achieved at the end of 3-5 years. For example, the reduction of cholera infections in a city commonly struck by cholera from 50,000 today to zero in 2021; or the 'legalization' of housing of an additional 100,000 long-term IDPs in a given city and their integration into municipal services by 2021.' (OCHA, 2017)

The approach is commonsensical in many ways. It recognises that addressing complex problems in difficult environments will require that different actors - humanitarian, developmental/UN, NGO, Governmental - work together over different time-frames and using different sources of finance.

⁴) Paragraph 23 of Agenda 2030 refers to the empowerment of the most vulnerable and includes, among the groups "whose needs are reflected in the agenda", "all children, youth, persons with disabilities (of whom more than 80% live in poverty), people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants" as well as "people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism.

So, does the Linking Thinking 3.0 which is emerging from all of this summitry take us further forward? Where is further talking, and, better still, action needed?

The problem of problem states The 2030 framework could be seen as an opportunity to shift debates to better support those most left behind, in other words towards people-centred, rather than state-centred aid. The focus on those most left behind, could serve as a unifying narrative for both development and humanitarian actors. Developmentalism does not have to be synonymous with statism. Equally, humanitarians could do more and better to forge alliances with progressive national and local institutions.

There are signs that the state-centric approach to development aid is being challenged de facto, but little sign that it is being reformed systematically to deal with the challenges of supporting those living in extreme poverty in the most fragile states.

28 In the most fragile states, a significant percentage (~80%) of aid is delivered outside of state institutions (OECD, 2018). Even that most state-centric of development actors - the World Bank - is starting to find 'get arounds' to the problem of problem states. As a bank, the World Bank's clients are states, governments have to sign agreements to take on debt, albeit on concessional terms. So, it is remarkable that the Bank is now providing more than \$1.5 billion to Yemen, which does not have a recognised sovereign government. These funds are largely being channelled through UN agencies. The Bank's modalities in Yemen are not dissimilar to that of a humanitarian donor.

These are potentially existential shifts, and recognise that delivering 'linking thinking' in the most fragile states will require rethinking relationships with incumbent authorities. It will also require thinking about the governance of development aid. If governments are no longer the primary driver of decisions regarding resource allocation, who is, and who is scrutinising these processes in the interests of the poorest and most vulnerable?

In countries affected by natural hazards where there is stronger governance, humanitarian organisations will need to review how they work alongside

national and local institutions authorities. Responsible governments can and should take primary responsibility for protecting their citizens, humanitarian organisations are likely to play a growing role in helping them to do that, and for holding them to account when they fail to do so (Harvey, 2007).

Linking Thinking 3.0 continues to skirt around the issue of the state. Within the development community there is a need to have a more substantive discussion as to how to govern and finance long-term interventions in the most unstable environments. Within the humanitarian community, the localisation agenda provides an opportunity to consider how to support the efforts of progressive governments to better manage climate and disaster risk.

Rebooting humanitarian principles A consistent feature of policy statements on 'linking thinking' are statements like the following:

Recognising the need to strengthen collaboration, coherence and complementarity across the respective mandates of humanitarian, development and peace actors, at all levels...

Followed by...

Recognising that humanitarian assistance is provided in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, the relevant provisions of International Humanitarian Law and the general principles of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, as well as provisions of international law;

Despite the many thousands of words on the topic, the humanitarian and development communities continue to largely talk past each other when it comes to principles. Too often, development practitioners do not fully grasp that humanitarians' emphasis on these principles is based on an understanding of fieldcraft, not a matter of theological positioning. Meantime, as described above, the ability of humanitarians to deliver principled programming in the field varies significantly.

Addressing this impasse will not be, and should not be, straightforward. These are indeed wicked problems, but they do merit much more frank and informed debate. At a minimum, such debates should allow both 'sides' to better understand the other's view. Even better would be that they start to think what they can learn from each other without sacrificing their respective strengths.

There is a paucity of fora to foster honest, open, even passionate, debate on these issues. So long as these real and legitimate differences remain largely brushed aside, 'linking thinking' will continue to be circular. There are potential synergies between humanitarian principles and the aim of developmental actors to prioritise those left behind.

Administrative and management It is notable, however, that despite its claim to inclusiveness, the agreement on NWOW was limited to UN agencies, with the World Bank and IOM endorsing it. The OECD/DAC is now broadening out the conversation to engage donors. On February 22nd 2019, DAC members, as well as the UN agencies signed a Recommendation - the firmest level of guidance it produces - on the nexus⁵.

There are few signs that despite continued emphasis on 'linking thinking', the major operational and donor organisations are planning substantive changes in the aid architecture itself. Failure to do so will mean that the transaction costs of coordinating across the humanitarian-development divide will remain high.

There is an important opportunity to consider how aid could be better coordinated in the most fragile states, and in particular to ensure that as actors such as the World Bank become more engaged in humanitarian operations, that they are subject to scrutiny and adding real value.

Feasibility Linking Thinking 3.0 remains broad brush, with little distinction between contexts. Perhaps because of its roots in natural hazards, relatively little consideration has been given to the feasibility of delivering more developmental outcomes in highly insecure, poorly governed spaces. There is

⁵) OECD/DAC (2019) Recommendation on humanitarian-development-peace-nexus. OECD, Paris. February.

an emerging body of learning that could be helpful to address this. Crawford et al. (2015) for example, outline a methodology that can be used to test the quality of 'developmental space' and use this to identify the range of programmatic approaches that could be used in different contexts (See Annex 1).

Similarly, the past decade has also seen important innovations which are beginning to show what 'linking thinking' can look like in practice. For example, the advent of shock responsive safety nets exemplifies how to make long-term poverty reduction programmes sensitive to different hazards, such as drought. As cash-based programming grows, including in the most fragile contexts, so there is a growing interest as to how to regularise these investments into basic social protection systems, even while government capacity/legitimacy remains limited. Yemen and Somalia are two cases where this debate is live, for example (Gentilini et al, 2018).

*It is important to go beyond high level commitment to 'linking thinking' and to translate it into linking **doing**, based on an empirical analysis of what can (and can't) be done in different crisis contexts.*

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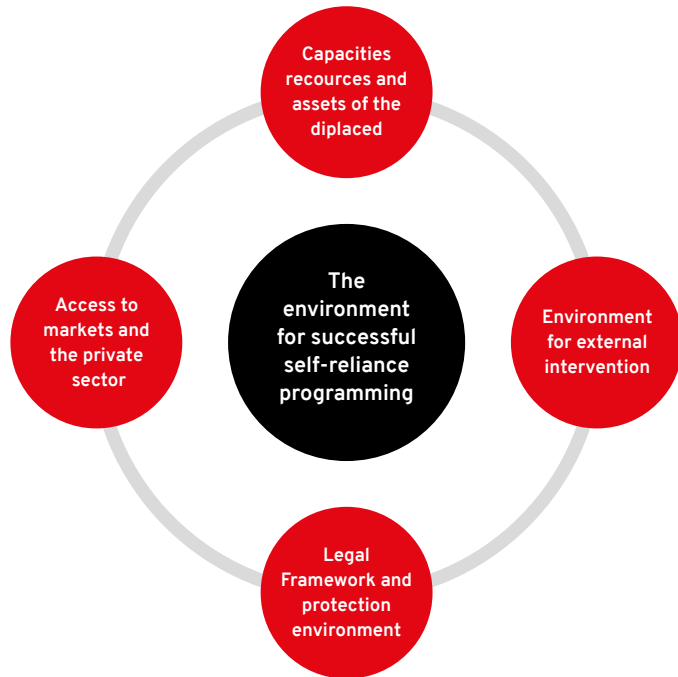
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Annex 1: Assessing the quality of 'developmental space'

Crawford et al (2015) developed a useful tool for measuring the viability of investing in livelihoods in situations of protracted displacement. This is a rare example of a tool that can be used to test empirically the feasibility of moving towards more ambitious goals in terms of building capacity and long-term thinking.

It is based on an assessment of four key dimensions of the operating environment (see Figure 8) below.

Figure 8: Factors affecting the scope for investment in self-reliance



Source: Crawford et al., 2017

For each situation of protracted displacement, each of the four themes is assigned a numerical score ranging from 0 to 60, based on a checklist of questions.

The aggregate score provides an overall estimate, ranging from 'most constraining' (21 or below) to 'most conducive' (above 40), of how receptive that displacement crisis would be to external interventions in support of self-reliance and livelihoods.

The checklist was applied to six refugee contexts (Chad, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Pakistan, Uganda) and six IDP contexts (Azerbaijan, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan). The typology suggests four broad categories of 'receptiveness' for self-reliance and livelihoods in situations of protracted displacement:

1. 'Social Protection Priorities' (score: 0–21) In these scenarios it is likely that little is possible beyond care and maintenance or protection activities, probably because of acute needs among the displaced population, political constraints on livelihoods work, instability in the local environment and weak leverage or interest of the international community, or a combination of these factors. This does not mean that livelihoods should not be analysed and factored into programming, just that resources spent promoting 'self-reliance' are highly unlikely to achieve that result at scale and may detract from core emergency activities.
2. 'Precarious Providers' (score: 22–30) This scenario also displays a range of severe constraints on livelihoods work, though there may be space for small projects to exploit 'grey areas' in legal or political frameworks or engage in work that may reap benefits when conditions change. These scenarios may require humanitarian modalities in the present, though possible links to development programmes or the integration of development approaches should not be ignored where these do not compromise humanitarian space.
3. 'Hopeful Providers' (31–39) In these scenarios there is scope for innovative programming, though perhaps not at scale. There is capacity and willingness in some parts of government to improve the self-reliance of the displaced, though this probably does not enjoy widespread political support. The scope may exist for integration into some development plans. The environment is

probably enabling for spontaneous income generating activities and for some of the displaced to cover basic needs and still have surplus income.

4. 'Partners in Prosperity' (score 40–57) In this scenario there is scope for meaningful collaboration with host governments and an enabling environment for innovative approaches. Dialogue is possible on integrating the displaced into national and local development frameworks. The displaced are free to work or own businesses and property without extraordinary discrimination. With some support, they could achieve economic integration and the ability to invest in the future.

While this approach was developed in relation to livelihoods in situations of protracted displacement, its application could be adapted and tested in other situations.

KUNO provokes cross sector learning, critical reflection, and debate on urgent humanitarian issues for better humanitarian aid.

What we do

KUNO is a platform in the Netherlands, supported by NGOs, academic institutes and governments for joint learning, reflection and debate. We organize expert meetings, working sessions for professionals, webinars, training and public debates. KUNO's thematic focus areas for 2019 will be: localization, the future humanitarianism, the nexus, and innovation.

Why

The Netherlands is one of the biggest global humanitarian players: the Dutch government is the 10th donor worldwide and the Dutch public is a big contributor to humanitarian action. The Dutch humanitarian field is broad and diverse; varied expertise is available coming from academics, policymakers and practitioners. Cross-sectoral exchange of knowledge, however, is modest in the Netherlands, and translating existing knowledge to new actions and policies remains a challenge. KUNO has been founded to facilitate this process of knowledge sharing and reflection. In this way, KUNO helps the Dutch humanitarian sector to further innovate and jointly meet the challenges of the future.

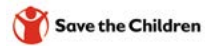
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