



# Ethiopia's Nutrition Centric Triple Nexus Approach: A Summary

## WHY A NEXUS APPROACH IS NEEDED

Complex and protracted crises have existed in Ethiopia for decades. The number of people needing humanitarian assistance has seen a 10-fold increase in 10 years with billions spent in response. In 2024, 15.5 million people needed humanitarian support with a funding requirement of US\$3.24 billion. Rates of malnutrition remain high, however. Levels of stunting and wasting between 2019 and 2023 increased from 37 percent to 39 percent and from 7 percent to 11 percent respectively.

Longer-term resilience building and multisectoral nutrition programmes have yielded significant improvements such as lowering rates of mortality and poverty. However, humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programmes often run in parallel and thus, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) is seeking a fundamental change to current ways of working in order to maximize the collective impact of available resources that can build community resilience, mitigate risks and prevent malnutrition.

## STEPS TAKEN TO EFFECT CHANGE

A Nutrition Centric–Humanitarian, Development, Peace Triple Nexus (NC–HDPTN) approach (referred to as the Nexus approach) was launched by GoE in May 2023 as the blueprint framework to guide change. An Implementation Roadmap (IR) and an Operational Guide (OG) have been developed and disseminated in July 2024 to support this.

## SUMMARY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

The IR provides a strategic framework for addressing the interconnected challenges of food insecurity, malnutrition and conflict over three phases.

**Phase 1: The Inception Phase (2023-2024)** includes a situation analysis, development and launch of the OG/ IR; clarity on the governance and coordination structures as well as a funding landscape analysis and the sensitization of stakeholders including donors, for securing funding.

**Phase 2: The Implementation Phase (2025-2029)** includes strengthening institutional capacity, developing tools, detailed implementation plans and the monitoring and evaluation framework.

**Phase 3: The Dissemination Phase** will take place in 2030, once lessons learned about the successes and challenges can be synthesized to inform better design for the expansion phase.

The IR sets out time-bound deliverables and identifies the actors responsible for delivery. The outcomes targeted are as follows:

- ◉ Reduction in stunting prevalence among children under five years old
- ◉ Increase in household dietary diversity score
- ◉ Enhanced community resilience in conflict-affected areas
- ◉ Decrease in the incidence of conflict-related displacement within the targeted areas
- ◉ Sustainable increase in the participation of women and youth in local peacebuilding initiatives
- ◉ Decline in inter-communal violence incidents reported within the targeted areas

## SUMMARY OF THE OPERATIONAL GUIDE

The OG makes the case for the Nexus approach, summarizing the data and information that underpins the urgency for change. The (to-be-established) Food System and Nutrition Council (FSNC) is pivotal to Nexus coordination and governance. Also, key are the Food and Nutrition Policy and Strategy, the Seqota Declaration (SD), Productive Safety Net Programme and other programmes that tackle the root causes of malnutrition. A Theory of Change sets out the core activities, strategies and collective outcomes for achieving impact and is the basis for monitoring and evaluation.

Parameters to assess whether a programme can be considered 'Nexus compliant' include:

- ◉ The presence of a functional coordination, governance and leadership structure
- ◉ Periodic joint assessment and needs analysis informing decision-making and planning
- ◉ Scalable multisectoral and multi-year resilience programming to address the root causes of humanitarian need and ensure multisectoral convergence and system strengthening
- ◉ Multi-year and flexible financing providing at least three years funding timeframe
- ◉ Context specific and harmonized monitoring and evaluation system
- ◉ Engagement and support of local actors and communities to advance the localization agenda
- ◉ Conflict sensitivity analysis and risk informed design

An organogram sets out the necessary coordination structures, with the FNSC providing strategic oversight. Four ministries will oversee operationalization: the Ministry of Health, the Disaster Risk Management Commission, the Ministry of Peace and the Ministry of Planning and Development.

A minimum funding package is outlined for target woredas in the operationalization phase. Principles underpinning financing include harnessing national, sub-national and donor resources; ensuring financing is flexible and multi-year; and the localization of actions and resources. The focus on investing in early actions and 'right-sizing' humanitarianism to enable longer term, resilience focused, and developmental approaches is emphasized. Cost efficiencies are envisaged as convergent actions mitigate risks.

An estimate of cost per woreda to initiate Nexus operationalization is US\$1.5 million per annum.

Details on the envisaged monitoring and evaluation requirements are provided. Existing systems and platforms such as the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN), the Unified Nutrition Information System for Ethiopia (UNISE), the District Health Information System2 (DHIS2) will be harnessed, and wherever possible, Nexus relevant indicators will be integrated.

### **KICKING OFF OPERATIONALISATION**

The GoE is focused on operationalizing the Nexus approach; in recognition that a 'learning by doing' approach is needed, is seeking the resources to establish the approach in six SD woredas in crisis prone Afar, Somali and Tigray regions.

Integrating the Nexus approach within SD woredas makes sense as it provides fertile ground to harness existing multisectoral arrangements and allows for the co-location of activities in a programme that has demonstrated impressive annual rates of stunting reduction, amongst other impacts.

The estimated cost of this initial operationalization is roughly US\$ 27 million over three years. Compared to the 2023 humanitarian budget at US\$1.3 billion, it is a tiny fraction at 2.1 per cent.

The nutrition centric Nexus approach has been developed by GoE at a time of growing pressure on resources against the backdrop of increasing population needs. Securing pledges that deliver the required multi-year and flexible financing from domestic and international sources is a major priority. At the same time, advocacy and sensitization to the Nexus approach will continue at all levels and across all stakeholders to ensure collective understanding of the imperative for transformation – and that the roll out of the approach is a truly collective endeavor.



1. Government and stakeholders shall engage and support the establishment of a principled HDP Nexus coordination and governance structure tailored to the country context to institutionalize the HDP Nexus approach.
  - Building on the Food System and Nutrition Council (FSNC) structure (which is under establishment). A dedicated HDP Nexus Steering Committee will be established under the council to lead on all Nexus for Nutrition issues.
  - Representation will ensure the right balance to foster the efficiency and agility of the HDP Nexus coordination and governance structure.
2. Donors shall revise their funding strategy, align it with a HDP Nexus programming approach and support financing for the implementation of the strategies and packages reflected in the Operational Guide and Implementation Roadmap to reach crisis vulnerable population with lasting solutions, generate practical learnings and drive locally led innovations and solutions.
  - Donors shall fund multi-year, multi stakeholder and multisectoral HDP Nexus Programme with defined common/collective outcomes which are sufficiently risk informed and shock absorbent.
  - Donors shall finance the HDP Nexus through multiyear, less earmarked and flexible financing conditions.
3. Government, donors and stakeholders shall support the implementation of the localization agenda as the foundational component of the HDP Nexus approach.
  - Donors shall increase the proportion of funding to local actors to foster the localization agenda, build their capacity, empower them to boost their power, influence and capacitate to engage in decision making processes and lead local coordination platforms.
  - Government shall support and lead on the local resource mobilization efforts through the development of the 'Domestic financing strategy' to leverage external funding.
4. All actors shall invest their capacity and excellence; and contribute to the technical and financial commitments for effective application of the nutrition centric HDP Nexus programming approach.