

**The Triple Nexus
and Local Faith Actors
in South Sudan:**

Findings from
Primary Research



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List of abbreviations

CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
DCA	DanChurchAid
FBOs	Faith-based Organizations
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
LFAs	Local Faith Actors
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PoC	Protection of Civilians
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from field research conducted in South Sudan on the intersection of operationalizing the triple nexus (humanitarian-development-peace nexus), localization and, the particular role of local faith actors (LFAs). The report is based on twenty-one interviews with NGO staff. The organizations included DCA, five local faith actors, and three local non-faith actors. Two focus group discussions were also carried out with beneficiaries in Kapoeta. The first FGD was composed of nine respondents while the second included twelve respondents. The interviews and FGDs were conducted in March 2019 in South Sudan. This report is the second of two reports. The first report focuses on a review of literature on the intersection of the triple nexus, localization, and local faith actors and is entitled, *The Triple Nexus, Localization, and Local Faith Actors: The intersections between faith, humanitarian response, development, and peace.*

Findings

- From an overview of programming areas, we found DCA's local partners particularly involved in peacebuilding work, with education, livelihoods, and food security programming appearing as the second, third, and fourth most active areas respectively. **Almost seventy percent of the local actors interviewed work in multi-sectoral, integrated programs, often incorporating humanitarian, development, and peace activities** that constitute the Triple Nexus approach.
- Siloed approaches continue. Humanitarian-only approaches remain particularly common. Humanitarian-development, as well as development-peace programs also occur. Humanitarian-peace work is conceived to be more difficult as humanitarian principles are sometimes perceived to be at odds with the potentially political nature of peacebuilding. However, **peace was highlighted as the factor most crucial to making the Triple Nexus work as it helps to tackle root causes, rather than merely responding to them.** Peace is the added value element of the Triple Nexus approach but also constitutes the most challenging element to integrate in humanitarian projects.
- The main value of localization and working with local actors for the Triple Nexus approach stems from their understanding of local contexts and their proximity to local communities, as well as the sustainability of their operations thanks to their commitment to their surroundings. Although local actors advocate for their greater involvement at every stage of the project cycle, they focused particularly on context analysis and project inception to help with community participation. Doing so will solidify the aims of a triple nexus program. **Local actors' sustainability is eroded by the silos existing in the aid system and local actors have had to navigate ways to work across humanitarian, development, and peace areas using short-term funding from different partners, which has placed extra pressure on these local actors.**
- **As they have professionalized, local actors have been asked to work in silos, leading to the implementation of humanitarian-only, development-only, or peace-only projects.** After adapting

their ways of working and following a siloed approach, local actors are now viewing the Triple Nexus approach as a new trend modeling the way in which they previously worked. **International humanitarians risk losing the added advantage of engaging local actors (their contextual knowledge, proximity to communities, and sustainable presence) in the process of professionalizing them to fit the existing humanitarian system.**

- **All local actors noted an improvement over the past few years in how international actors involve them in decision-making processes. Nevertheless, many still felt they were highly restricted in the area of independent decision-making. The involvement of local actors in decision-making processes is also extremely fluid and most interviewees explained their involvement depended on the trust they had with their international partner.**
- **Greater involvement of local actors in decision-making processes was one of the most requested changes from interviewees in terms of operationalizing the Triple Nexus approach.** Local partners prioritized mutual understanding and dialogue with international partners. They advocated for their greater involvement at every stage of the project cycle and, particularly in the areas of context analysis and project inception, as well as with a clear and connected chain of implementation.
- **The role of local faith actors was particularly notable in work related to peacebuilding** where their national and local presence as trusted, honest, moral, and respected leaders helps to galvanize their authority and legitimacy. They are not only peacebuilders. They also work across the triple nexus. Local faith actors already work within a “holistic approach” that aims at responding to human dignity and the needs of the person as a whole. While this means they implicitly understand the Triple Nexus approach in many ways, it also means **local faith actors add elements not otherwise incorporated in the aid sector’s current definition of the triple nexus, such as the spiritual aspects of life and the need for spiritual support across humanitarian, development, and peace sectors.**
- The research participants offered their ideas for operationalizing the Triple Nexus approach. These included:
 - **Multi-year funding arrangements** to break away from the disadvantages of short-term funding that only allows for siloed approaches.
 - **Capacity sharing** (as opposed to capacity building, capacity sharing recognizes local actors hold many

capacities international actors do not have such as contextual awareness).

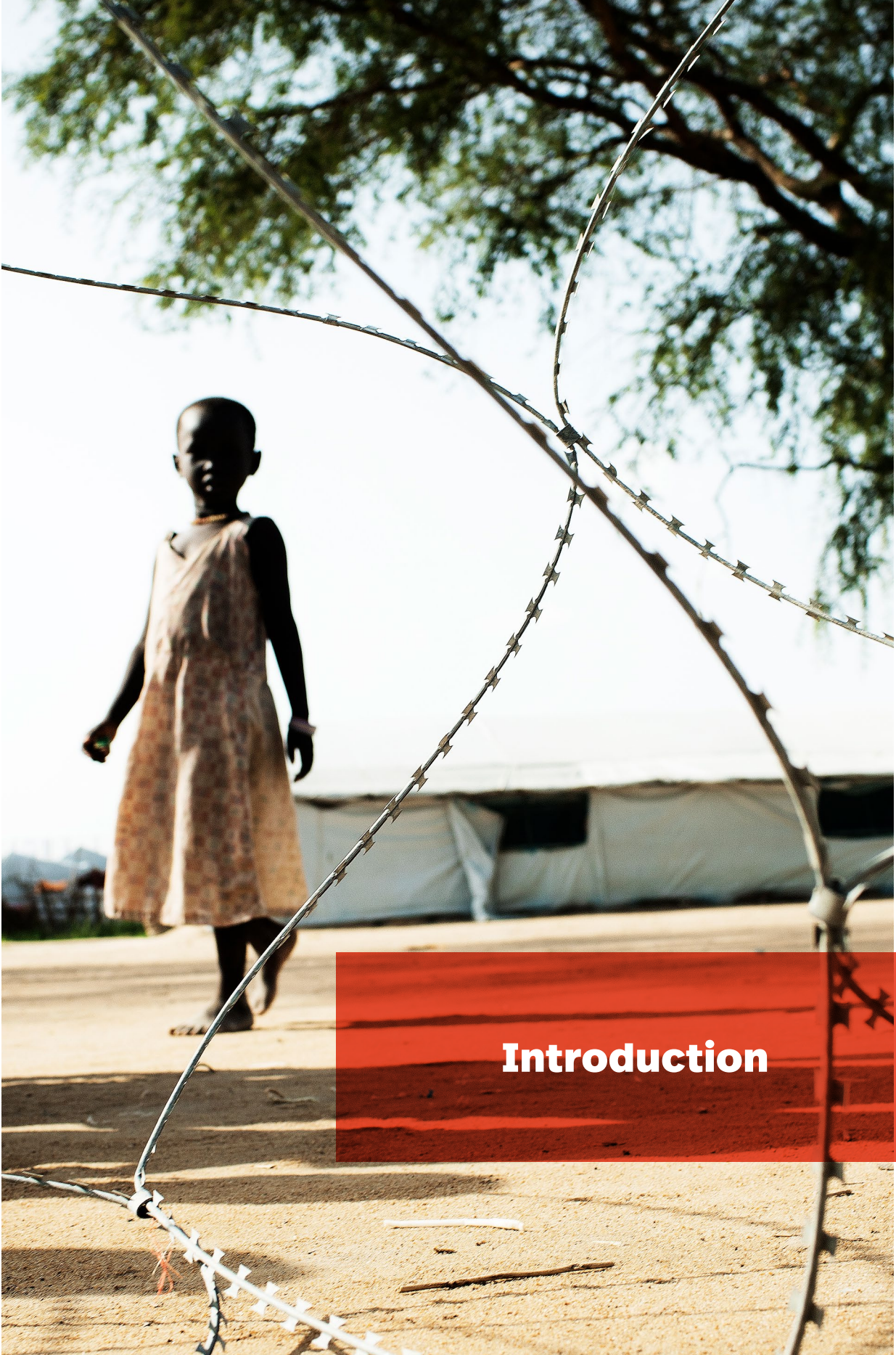
- **Consortia**, in which local actors are equitable partners and able to bring their specific expertise, such as peace work with local faith actors, to a capacity sharing space that builds upon complementarities, rather than sub-contracting, in order to implement triple nexus programming.

Further programming recommendations

- Beyond the three recommendations proposed by research participants directly, we find the following, additional guidance, may be useful for international actors seeking to operationalize the triple nexus with local partners:
 - Sharing good practice examples.
 - Guidance to help bring a Triple Nexus approach to needs assessment and contextual analysis with local partners so that interrelated issues are uncovered and not forced into siloed categories.
 - Guidance on identifying key strengths of partners for triple nexus consortia.
 - Guidance on capacity sharing approaches and building equitable partnerships, with local actors involved in decision-making.
 - Context specific research/assessment, and targeted communications/advocacy to international partners, on how local faith actors conceptualize their holistic approach and its links, or differences, to the triple nexus to help international partners understand how to approach this topic in their relationship building, and ultimately partnership, with local faith actors.
- Replicating this study in other contexts will help uncover the similarities across cases, but also the specifics of South Sudan, which can help isolate the emphasis needed for the operationalization of the triple nexus in the country.

Further advocacy/awareness raising recommendations

- Use this research to highlight the need for:
 - Commitment to further triple nexus research.
 - Commitment to joined up thinking between prioritizing local partnership and the Triple Nexus approach.
 - Understanding the specific roles and perspectives of local faith actors in their ability to work holistically across the elements of the triple nexus. ■



Introduction

South Sudan has not been left unscathed by humanitarian crises over the past years. After years of civil war, the new State of South Sudan became independent in July 2011. Following its independence, further conflicts erupted and another civil war began in December 2013. The last peace agreement was signed in September 2018,¹ but “the cumulative effects of years of conflict, violence and destroyed livelihoods have left more than 7 million people or about two thirds of the population in dire need of some form of humanitarian assistance and protection in 2019.”² An estimated 4.2 million South Sudanese are displaced, including 2 million IDPs.³ South Sudan is ranked 187 out of 189 in the UN’s Human Development Index⁴ and is the first out of 178 states in the Fund for Peace’s Fragile States Index.⁵

Humanitarian crises, such as the one in South Sudan, result from the interaction of multiple factors affecting people already facing various vulnerabilities, and humanitarian actors can no longer respond to these crises on their own. Consequently, humanitarians must work with peace and development actors to prevent and address the root causes of crises, while meeting humanitarian needs, supporting resilience, and building long-term development for affected people. This is what is known as the *Triple Nexus or the Humanitarian – Development – Peace Nexus* (HDP nexus).

This report is based on interviews with local actors, staff of DanChurchAid (DCA), and focus group discussions in South Sudan. It should be read in conjunction with its associated report that reviews background literature: *The Triple Nexus, Localization, and Local Faith Actors: The intersections between faith, humanitarian response, development, and peace*. This report aims to examine the intersection of the triple nexus and the role of local actors (in line with increased localization) and, particularly local faith actors (LFAs)⁶ in the South Sudanese context. Following a discussion of the methodology employed in this research, the findings are presented. This discussion of the findings flows from a brief presentation of the programming of the organizations involved in this research and the ways in which siloed and double nexus programming remains prevalent. This is done before moving to a more detailed discussion on operationalizing the triple nexus. Within the section on the triple nexus, we detail the similarities for all local actors interviewed (both faith-based on non-faith based) and then the specifics for LFAs. The final section focuses on recommended solutions that arose from the research, before the conclusion and final, overarching recommendations are presented. ■



Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach using interviews and FGDs as the primary methods of data collection. This methodological approach was chosen due to its appropriateness for exploratory research into new topics (triple nexus and local faith actors), as well as on areas requiring in-depth responses from participants, such as the role of religious beliefs and practices or the relationships built in the course of partnerships.

This report is based on twenty-one interviews with NGO staff and two focus group discussions with beneficiaries (with nine respondents in the first FGD and twelve respondents in the second FGD) conducted in March 2019 in South Sudan. Among those, sixteen interviews were conducted with staff members of eight different local organizations: five local faith actors and three local secular organizations (for comparative purposes). Every local organization is a registered national organization in South Sudan. They range from grassroots organizations created locally in South Sudan to more regional organizations created outside of South Sudan but anchored at the local level and self-identifying as local organizations. Some also work in neighboring countries. Some left Sudan in the twentieth century because of their faith-inspired status and operated from outside the country for a time, moving their operations back once South Sudan became independent. Most of these organizations were created in the last twenty years, including some organizations that were created because they had to split from counterparts in Sudan at independence. They are usually well-represented at the local level and some have up to a few hundred members of staff.

Five interviews were conducted with staff members from DCA in South Sudan. Most of the interviews took place in the capital Juba (seventeen of the twenty-one interviews). Two interviews were conducted in Bor and two interviews were conducted in Kapoeta, as well as the two focus group discussions. Of the interviews, three were with women and nineteen were with men, which reflects the majority male staff make-up of many NGOs in the country. This sample size is not, however, representative of local, national, or international staff

in the country. The sample was purposively selected to represent key informants with knowledge of humanitarian response, partnership with DCA, and views on the Triple Nexus approach. Consent was sought from all research participants.

To maintain confidentiality and in recognition of the precarious nature of local actors' partnerships, we do not name the organizations involved. This not only serves to protect their funding status, but allows them to voice complaints and discrepancies. DCA is named as the funder of this report and the main organization through which this research was organized. Likewise, however, we do not name individual DCA staff members to allow them to speak openly.

The analysis of the interviews was completed using the qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose, to code the transcripts. The interviews and the focus group discussions were read multiple times and coded following a coding frame to facilitate the analysis of results.

Limitations

As with any field research, there were several limitations. Given political dynamics in-country, several interviewees did not consent to being recorded, so detailed notes taken during the interviews had to be the common denominator across all interviews. In line with standard qualitative practices, detailed notes are sufficient sources of data and we proceeded with this information. Given the limited time period for this research, we were not able to conduct more focus groups, which would have been beneficial to add more perspectives from beneficiaries in other locations and different projects. It would also have been interesting to add interviews with other INGOs. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the power dynamics present in this analysis. This research is not an evaluation of DCA or its partners, but an exploration of the role of local faith actors in operationalizing the triple nexus. However, local actors were contacted by DCA to participate and they knew DCA had commissioned this research. As DCA is one of their funding partners, it could be expected they would not be overly critical of DCA. ■



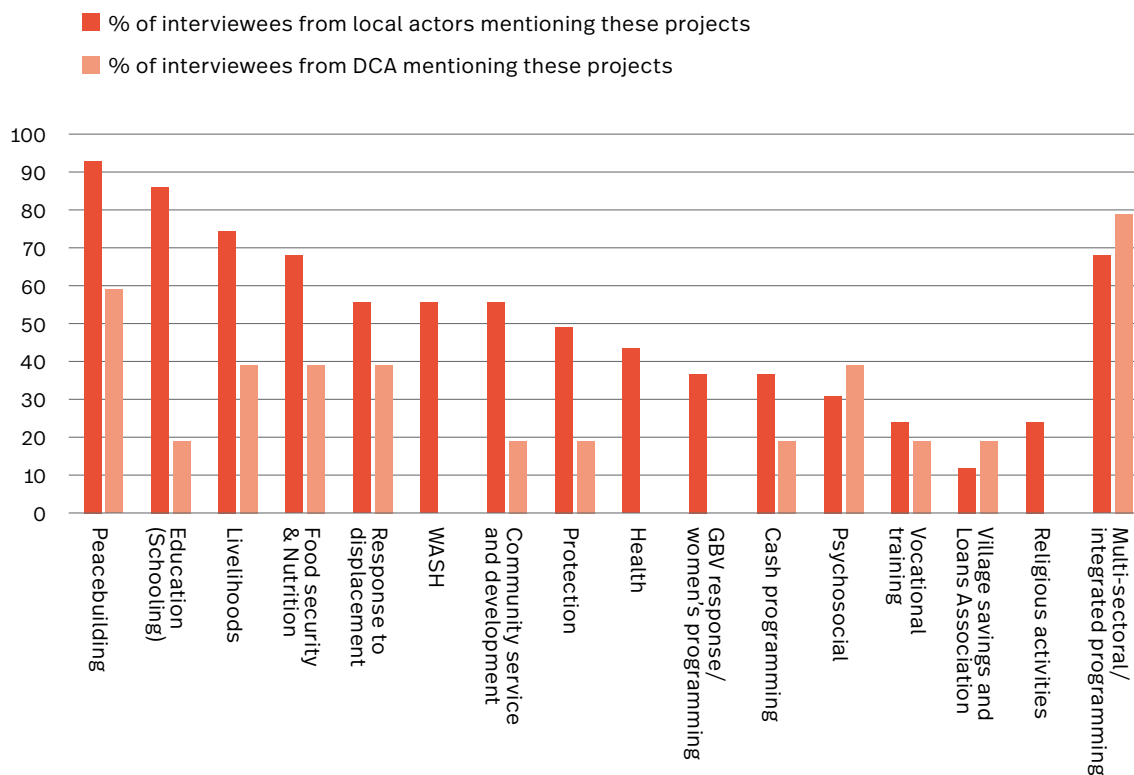
Findings

Overview of programming among participating organizations

Each interviewee was asked what kind of programs their organization implements. The following graph⁷ shows the percentages of interviewees, by type of actor, who mentioned the different programs implemented by

their organization. The following categorizations were developed from the interview data and they are not necessarily exhaustive of all programs implemented by these organizations. DCA operates according to its international strategy, which does not include all areas mentioned below.

Figure 1: Program areas covered by research participants



Local actors receive funding from partners other than DCA, which allows them to implement activities DCA does not currently cover. Local actors are particularly involved in programming related to peace (peacebuilding) and development (education, livelihoods, and community development), but also more traditional humanitarian areas such as food security and responses to displacement. Projects considered as multi-sectoral/integrated were categorized separately as they demonstrate examples where a Triple Nexus approach is particularly apparent, although these do not necessarily cover the triple nexus. An interviewee gave the following example.

[organization's name] is implementing nutrition and as we implement nutrition activities, we realized [the] need for integrating other activities that are for WASH, education, health, livelihood and peacebuilding since [the] same beneficiaries need all these services (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Local actors are present in most sectors. Peacebuilding is the most common program type among local actors participating in this research. This aligns with the fact that interviewees also most frequently cited issues resulting from conflicts as a pressing need. Both local actors and DCA implement psychosocial projects (mainly trauma healing from the LFAs in particular). Local actors and FGD participants highlighted the need for GBV programming, in particular, and this is represented in the program activities of some of the local actors.

Siloed and double nexus approaches to programming

Based on the interviews with local actors, half of them already knowingly work within the triple nexus through the ways in which they implement humanitarian, development, and peace activities simultaneously. This is aligned with the findings presented in Figure 1, highlighting almost seventy percent of local actors implement multi-sectoral/integrated programs. Alongside a Triple Nexus approach, programs delivering humanitarian-only responses are common among local actors in South Sudan. Some development-only or peace-only programs were also observed, while humanitarian-peace programs were rare.

Humanitarian-development (a double, rather than triple, nexus) projects were common among local actors.

Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development (LRRD) is something humanitarian and development actors have been trying to do over the past two decades. This means the addition of peace to the triple nexus represents a new approach in comparison to humanitarian-development nexus projects. A DCA staff member highlighted the established humanitarian-development dynamic by explaining the humanitarian silo is strong but adding resilience building components help link to development work, whereas “the peacebuilding aspect is not adequately addressed” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Other examples of the double nexus included cholera response with combined HIV awareness raising activities or responding to the immediate needs of displaced populations while also working to build their resilience and ability to cope with future shocks.

On the other side of the Triple Nexus approach, local actors are implementing joint development-peace projects. As explained by an interviewee, the only way to have development and end poverty is to have peace. Peace is the basis of development. An interviewee from a local non-faith-based organization gave an example of a development-peace program that links peace and livelihoods work by focusing on inter-community trade.

Across the two extremes of the Triple Nexus, humanitarian-peace programs were rare. Humanitarian actors should, nonetheless, adopt a conflict sensitive approach in projects and may choose to speak out against conflicts and for peace, especially in extreme circumstances. Likewise, LFAs, in their commitment to those in poverty, can take positions that speak out for the marginalized. As one LFA noted, “faith actors are expected to be neutral but to achieve the triple nexus some political affairs should be involved in the process” (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019). This recognizes a strict interpretation of humanitarian neutrality may hinder some of the elements related to peace in a Triple Nexus approach. A DCA staff member pointed out they are currently trying to incorporate “peacebuilding in humanitarian projects” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019), with another interviewee giving the example of the integration of peacebuilding techniques in psychosocial support as an effective way to work across silos.

Finally, local actors thought peace to be central to the Triple Nexus approach. Indeed, the long-term perspective that a Triple Nexus approach aims to

bring is not achievable without peace. As a DCA staff member explained, “integrating components of peacebuilding as... cross cutting activities can make it possible to operationalize triple nexus since most of the humanitarian projects have components of development... (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). This illustrates peace can add value to the nexus approach but also constitutes the most challenging element to integrate into humanitarian projects.

Focusing on the triple nexus

Even though some interviewees explained they lacked a full understanding of the triple nexus, all the local actors interviewed were enthusiastic about the approach. They showed a clear interest and willingness to implement this way of working because “this helps in realizing the impact of the project (staff member of local non-faith actor in South Sudan, 2019). The interviewee added that it is not realistic to expect impact after a six month project. Moreover, “it helps in solving problems once and for all, helps speed up development, and this ensures consistency in programing” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Most DCA staff also seem enthusiastic and receptive to the idea of the triple nexus. As one explained,

with triple nexus, it involves the implementation of humanitarian, development, and peace activities under a project. For humanitarian, it saves lives after and during a disaster. Once lives have been saved after a disaster, the community is to be supported with activities that recover their lost livelihoods; and of course, if the disaster is related to conflict amongst the communities, there should be an aspect to get to know the root causes and try to solve them through peace initiatives through dialogues and conflict resolution initiatives for the conflicting communities to peacefully co-exist and concentrate on development projects once again (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

An LFA perfectly summarized the Triple Nexus approach by noting “the triple nexus components are not new, it is just a matter of integrating them to go together” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). This approach focuses on the articulation of humanitarian, development, and peace activities in order to address the full range of people’s needs at the same time.

Interviewees explained a Triple Nexus approach is particularly important in South Sudan due to the

protracted nature of crises people are experiencing. Indeed, as an interviewee noted,

I think [the] triple nexus is important because protracted crisis is the norm in South Sudan. Hence, the current aid architecture and mindset must be geared to address insecure environments and complex situations while planning for long term comprehensive solutions to the emergent challenges (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

As an example of needs requiring triple nexus responses and, which cannot be limited to emergency responses alone, an interviewee explained that due to food insecurity, cattle raids take place, which leads to conflicts among communities. As an integrated solution to address these issues, this local actor informs and trains people in alternative coping mechanisms for food security and how to mediate conflicts. It enables them to improve their food and livelihood issues, as well as maintain peace in communities. A second example relates to the short and long-term impacts of cash programming. In contrast to temporary food distribution that tends to increase food prices, cash transfers can improve economic stability and, consequently, the resilience of communities. An interviewee observed how cash transfers enable people to pay off their debts and reduce violent and negative coping mechanisms, such as prostitution and child enlistment, while also supporting the long-term resilience of communities.

Yet, not every interviewee considered the operationalization of the Triple Nexus approach as a new and different concept. This is relevant, not least because they felt they already operated in this way. As an example, a local actor explained how their activities

...are already structured to address immediate needs while addressing the root causes of the conflict, therefore there is no need to change the current partnerships apart [from] ensuring that financial control powers are fully devolved to [organization’s name] (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

DCA is still piloting a Triple Nexus approach in South Sudan, where donor funding has allowed. Several staff commented on the difficulties of operationalizing the triple nexus, including the volatility of the situation in the country and the divergence of geographic areas

and funding streams, with one staff member noting, “most activities/funding for humanitarian assistance are concentrated in protracted humanitarian crisis areas, while... peace and development projects are focused more in certain areas which are more stable” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Why involve local actors in the operationalization of the triple nexus?

Local faith and non-faith actors shared some areas in common. The section below details the roles of local actors, in general, in the operationalization of the triple nexus. Thereafter, a discussion on the specific role of local faith actors in operationalizing the triple nexus is presented.

Understanding of context and participation of communities

Interviewees underlined how the triple nexus is advantageous for communities: “the triple nexus empowers the community’s mechanism[s] and capacity to cope and survive alone even without the intervention of actors or NGOs” (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Another local actor confirmed the triple nexus could limit the dependency of communities on external aid, but insisted on the importance of integrating peace-oriented activities in humanitarian and development projects.

[The Triple Nexus] is important because it consolidates efforts of conflict transformation and peacebuilding initiatives among communities in conflict and post-conflict situations. It also helps conflict/disaster affected communities not to be dependent for [a] long time in post conflict situation (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Local actors pointed out how their position as community members enables them to see communities’ needs holistically and not compartmentalized as is often the case in the international aid sector. A duality between international and local actors was also highlighted by the interviewees. International actors are said to have resources and capacities, but “lack context understanding or analysis” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Participants in FGDs also explained how,

...most times, international NGOs may not know the needs of the community. And... over concentrate their response or programming in one particular

place and ignore other communities that could be in dire need (FGD participant, 2019).

Targeting issues appeared repeatedly in the two FGDs and rarely in the interviews with local actors or DCA staff. Targeting represents an area in which participants in the FGDs felt that international actors did not sufficiently understand the local context and created more harm than good as a result. This issue results directly in the creation of more harm, conflicting with one of the primary principles of humanitarian action to “Do No Harm.” As one FGD participant explained,

...it targets few members [most vulnerable groups] and in this area many people are equally vulnerable and need support too. This created conflicts within the family and community and most times have resulted into threats on chiefs of the area (FGD participant, 2019).

Chiefs are not the only victims of attacks resulting from conflicts created by targeting some groups over others for humanitarian assistance. A couple of participants in the FGDs made reference to this, with one interviewee noting, “this has always caused communities to... attack partners when they go to implement their activities” (FGD participant, 2019). A DCA staff member echoed this issue, stating that in order to implement the triple nexus, it is essential to adopt an approach that encompasses “a large area of coverage to target the conflicting communities – inter-county, state, and/or country” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). This recognizes the need to support host communities, those who are displaced, and the ways in which humanitarian action implemented without a conflict sensitivity lens can undermine peace.

The lack of community involvement in projects and awareness raising activities results in these activities not being “informed from the community point of view.” (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Local actors pointed to this lack of community involvement as a typical approach adopted by international organizations. International actors were also said to lack skills and local knowledge to solve local problems because they “bring international theories that do not work for the local problems” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). As a consequence, projects are ineffective or, even worse, projects can create tension and conflict. FGD participants reported the problem of international organizations

implementing “unguided and misinformed awareness” [projects], emphasizing how these activities overlook “realities on [the] ground.” FGDs raised the further issue of international organizations “forc[ing] their programming” (FGD participant, 2019). Conversely, research participants underscored the reality that is local actors tending to spend more time talking to communities. They said local actors are the ones meeting with the local communities before any response, including meeting them at every stage of the program cycle and especially in the assessment phase. This contextual understanding enables local actors to work across silos and better implement a Triple Nexus approach that tackles both short-term and long-term needs, while preventing conflict.

This tension between international and local priorities was traced back to donor demands, and their subsequent effect on the project’s success and overall impact. As one local actor explained, “at the end of the day, the effect goes back to the beneficiaries. For instance, if the donor pushes for [a] project that is not within [a] priority area of the beneficiaries, they will definitely reject [the project], or the impact will not be realized” (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019). DCA staff suggested local actors “should [be] highly involved in [the] decision- making [process] of any project since they understand [the] root causes of their problems and can provide tailor made solutions” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). DCA wants communities to be more involved at every stage because “a community led action plan is an important aspect of operationalizing [the] nexus” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). According to interviewees, therefore, a high level of community engagement is necessary for the Triple Nexus approach.

Greater involvement of local actors in decision-making processes was one of the most requested changes proposed by interviewees for the operationalization of the Triple Nexus approach.

Based on these observations, local actors, DCA staff, and FGDs’ participants all emphasized that local actors are the most suited to implement informed and contextualized projects that positively impact communities and are in line with their realities. These local actors “have [a] better understanding of the context because they are part of the community” (FGD participant, 2019). Most DCA staff recommended deeper involvement of local partners in decision-making processes as their involvement also helps align local

actors’ efforts with DCA aims. As a DCA interviewee noted, “the involvement of the partners... makes them aware of the longer-term strategic objectives of the organization and [they] can prepare projects documents which are in line with that strategy” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Local partners prioritized mutual understanding and dialogue with international partners. They advocated for their greater involvement at every stage of the project cycle, but especially in context analysis and project inception, as well as with a clear and connected chain of implementation. Consequently, a Triple Nexus approach should be operationalized “by planning projects in an integrated way... and explain[ing] to donors the benefits that come with integrated implementation of activities” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Moreover, when considering how best to operationalize the triple nexus, emphasis needs to be placed on advocacy work around funding localization and the triple nexus.

Sustainability

Local actors are present in communities and are therefore “key in [the] sustainability of activities when the project cycle comes to an end” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Indeed, their long-time presence in communities allows them to understand root causes and long-term development prospects, as well as humanitarian needs, all of which is needed for a Triple Nexus approach. Many FGD participants mentioned local actors as efficient partners for the interventions in comparison to international organizations that take more time to implement their projects. FGD participants said, “[the LFA] is the main NGO that is reliable and timely in its support,” and “[the LFA] is reliable, transparent, and timely.” Conversely, “INGOs have bureaucracy and are not timely in their assistance.” Efficient interventions, as an attribute of local actors, was also reported by a DCA staff member who explained that

partnership is the best approach, in any intervention that would like to address nexus – they know the community, have access to the community, interact with the community at close range. Local partners are efficient because of their presence and base within the community that give them [a] hand in implementation of timely activities (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Being timely in their response builds their rapport

with communities and ultimately affects community ownership. DCA also “believe[s] in [a] rights-based approach where project activities are identified by the rights holders according to their needs to gain ownership of the project” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). **LFA**s are particularly relevant for sustainability as they “look at their engagement in the communities as a process requiring long term engagement beyond life spans of projects” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Sustainability can be hard to maintain for local actors because “short term partnerships make it difficult to sustain impact and undertake follow-up” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). With more long-term partnerships, “the triple nexus empowers the community’s mechanism and capacity to cope and survive alone even without the intervention of actors or NGOs” (staff member of a local non-faith actor in South Sudan, 2019). Long-term agreements are discussed in the final section of this report.

It is also necessary to highlight that, **as they have professionalized, local actors have been asked to work in silos, leading to the implementation of humanitarian-only, development-only, or peace-only projects.** After adapting their ways of working and following a siloed approach, local actors are now contemplating the Triple Nexus approach as a new trend that models the ways they previously worked. One interviewee explained how local actors had changed their way of working from an integrated to a siloed approach in order to fit in the humanitarian system and receive funding. **International humanitarians risk losing the added advantage of local actors (their contextual knowledge, proximity to communities, and sustainable presence) in the process of building their capacity to integrate into with the humanitarian system.**

Local actors, however, have found ways to navigate both – abiding by international demands and working with communities - although it has not been straightforward and has put extra pressure on local actors. Interviewees’ responses underscore how they implement integrated peace, humanitarian, and development projects by using different pools of funding from different partners. As explained by one interviewee, “funding is often related to a specific plan or program and this does not reinforce the nexus” (Local non-faith actor staff member in

South Sudan, 2019). Another interviewee explained, “they [international organizations] need the feedback of the projects - as such it’s difficult to distinguish between the triple nexus” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Donors fund projects within a unique silo and only want reports on that siloed area. This is problematic for local actors and international actors alike working within the Triple Nexus approach because the humanitarian, development, and peace siloes are mingled and the boundaries between them are blurred, making it hard for local actors to isolate the effects of work in a specific silo. DCA staff also pointed out that, “[the] donor requirement of funding only single sectors does not adequately address the triple nexus” and this is “the biggest challenge” of the triple nexus (staff members of DCA in South Sudan, 2019). Even though local actors still have an integrated approach, they must navigate humanitarian, development, and peace silos in order to receive funding.

Why involve local faith actors in the operationalization of the triple nexus?

Many positive things were said about LFAs and their involvement in South Sudan during the interviews. As one interviewee noted, LFAs “are seen as people for all. They are the voice for the voiceless. LFAs are part of the community and understand issues faced in the communities” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Another reported that,

The Church is an ethical and moral beacon, seeking to speak as a voice for the voiceless, articulating their common concerns. Its ability to facilitate confessional spaces where no-one is judged or condemned helps people perceive it as working with all parties, acting in a nonpartisan way, while upholding the dignity of the people. Hence, by working at all levels – local, national, regional, and international – the Church seeks to encourage voices to be heard and dialogue to build the new nation peacefully (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

FGD participants stated the “involvement of faith-based actors is welcome” and “faith-based actors will always support regardless of the location, provided it is something worth supporting” (FGD participant, South Sudan, 2019). From the perspective of DCA, LFAs were said to “understand the context well and they can easily help in empowering the community to take the lead in solving their problems” (DCA staff member in

South Sudan, 2019). LFAs were also praised by another DCA staff member who pointed out that

local faith actors who work closely with the rights holders in needs assessments and implementation of projects, which have created changes in attitudes, saved lives, and supported households and individuals to improve their livelihoods. This enhanced peaceful co-existence at households and community level (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

All these elements highlight the proximity of LFAs to communities as not merely an advantage in their work overall, but can facilitate their implementation of the triple nexus.

Out of the eight local organizations analyzed in this report, five are local faith organizations, all of which are connected to various denominations within Christianity. Faith played an important role in LFAs' work for the values it provides. Indeed, all LFA staff mentioned some version of this, such as godly values, morality, that God is leading the organization's work, they "depend on God for success" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019), they aim for a "Christ centered transformation of South Sudan communities and beyond" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019), or that their organization has a "divine mission to fulfill the great commission through holistic ministry" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). LFAs also noted how faith influenced their staff. An interviewee explained that staff "had a calling to serve the people of South Sudan and beyond" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) and a few others explained that faith enables staff to serve in a faithful manner and insisted on the values of honesty, transparency, and accountability that faith brings to LFAs' workers. Another interviewee from a non-faith actor pointed out that

faith has added courage, confidence, values and morals to staff working on tough, hard conditions, deep field areas, and this has enabled them to reach out to the vulnerable populations, which has greatly improved efficiency and delivery of goods and services hence improving human conditions (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Although all of the participants engaged in this research affirmed the value of faith, it is important to note they

only mentioned this when explicitly asked about the role of faith in their work. They otherwise rarely mentioned faith during their interviews about programmatic activities related to the triple nexus, abiding by, and strictly noting, their understanding of humanitarian principles and the need to separate humanitarian and religious activities. In addition to their proximity and values, other aspects of the involvement of LFAs as humanitarian, development, and peace actors were explained and these elements will be detailed in the following sections.

Trust, honesty, morality, and respect

In more than half of the interviews with local actors and in one of the two FGDs, notions of trust, honesty, moral, and respect were associated with LFAs. Indeed, they were said to have "moral faith" on the contrary to secular actors. In one FGD, "faith-based actors," it was suggested "could be honest partners compared to other non-faith-based partners" (FGD participant, 2019). LFAs are more trusted by communities because of the "transparency and openness in their programming" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) and also because "faith encourages [the] fair implementation of activities" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). The implementation of their activities is understood to be "honest and transparent" because of their "faithfulness" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). They are "mostly respected in South Sudan because they are associated to God and believed to be honest and righteous" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). A local secular actor attributed fairness, honesty, and the "unbiased implementation of humanitarian activities" (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019) as characteristics of LFAs work in their respective areas of implementation. This view of LFAs seems to be based on both experience and a perception of how faith actors should act. Although there are cases of dishonest conduct within LFAs around the world, the overriding perception of research participants in South Sudan is that LFAs are honest and trustworthy.

This trust allows LFAs substantial outreach to communities. "The Church remains a broad channel for reaching hundreds of communities across the country" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) and it enables them to "disseminate information faster through church congregations" (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Moreover, "they typically have a breadth and depth of reach, authority, and a continuity of presence far beyond many international and even

national NGOs” (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Trust is derived from the fact “they are always with the people at the grassroots” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). This endows them with “credibility” because they “are with people in good and bad times” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). As one interviewee explained,

faith actors especially churches are the first place of refuge for all during crisis and therefore it’s important to build their capacity to respond in such situations of crisis and also provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to them to enable them to host those taking refuge at the church premises (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

As trusted actors among communities, projects implemented by LFAs result in a “reasonable level of participation” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). More specifically, trust was mentioned in relation to peacebuilding. Faith actors have been involved at all levels of engagement, the grassroots in South Sudan to the highest.⁸ An interviewee noted,

they contribute so much to the peace process and the church unites the communities, the people also trust them and hence can be utilized as a big platform for peace, reconciliation and conflict resolutions, which they can do at national and grassroots level (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

The role of religious actors has demonstrated “their trust in peacebuilding” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019), their “respect to religions where [the] majority of South Sudanese belong” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019), and their commitment to peacebuilding processes at the national and local level throughout the country.

This gives faith actors “moral authority in South Sudan” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). This can be applied to faith in general and not only to LFAs. As a local non-faith actor explained, “faith has unquestionably helped [their own organization’s name] in peacebuilding” (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019). As faith actors are a central part of peacebuilding and, as previously noted, peace is one of the most difficult elements of the Triple Nexus approach,

it is clear faith actors are particularly well situated and can be critical players in the operationalization of the triple nexus.

The faith-trust paradox

A couple of interviewees mentioned their faith characteristic drive away donors and the “...level of trust...for the local faith actors is low” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). LFAs often try to build trust with donors by insisting on their compliance with international humanitarian standards. A local actor explained how their compliance with humanitarian standards has strengthened the organization’s systems and “has enhanced the credibility of its systems to the donors and partners” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). LFAs referenced some of the organizational changes they had made, such as developing “... policies of humanitarian standards (anti-corruption, anti-bribery, conflict of interest and all other policies)” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) or “various policies like GBV, sexual exploitation policy. All geared toward meeting standards” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) following training from an international FBO.

Changing policies was not only an issue between secular international actors and LFAs. An interviewee also highlighted the existence of,

faith-based partners in the US and UK that support LGBT and when local faith-based partners speak up against what they don’t believe in, and since they mostly get funding from sisterly faith-based partners from US and UK, funding is cut (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

This quote highlights it can be hard for LFAs to navigate the differences of ideals and beliefs between them and their international partners. International faith actors and, especially Christian INGOs are the main funding partners of the interviewed local actors, as will be demonstrated in the final section of the report. Indeed, the dependency of LFAs on transnational religious networks’ funding reduces their programming independence and could potentially affect their implementation of the Triple Nexus approach if this approach is not supported by their donors.

Holistic/integrated approach and the triple nexus

The notion of a holistic approach to development appeared in a few interviews. An LFA was said by

one of its staff to be “...working towards Biblical transformation of South Sudan communities through holistic, integrated approach in partnership with [the] local church” (Staff member from an LFA in South Sudan, 2019). Another LFA mentioned the organization “envisions a just and peaceful South Sudan inspired and transformed by Godly values towards holistic and equitable development for all people” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) or, “joyfully acknowledging Christ’s Lordship, we target needs holistically, seeking Christian distinctiveness and God’s guidance” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

A “holistic approach” was also a term used by three DCA staff. Indeed, according to a DCA’s staff member, the triple nexus is an opportunity because of its “holistic approach to complete community transformation, as there will be no development if the communities are in constant conflict, thus disrupting communities’ activities” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). This same staff member interchangeably used “holistic approach” and “integrated approach” when talking about the triple nexus. Another DCA staff member explained that “DCA supports the changes and achievement of global goals through holistic programming” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). A final DCA staff member affirmed the importance of the triple nexus because it has “a holistic approach... [because] all aspects of the nexus exist in a single community, meaning tackling a single aspect may not bring a permanent solution but having [an] integrated approach digs in to the root causes” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Overall, interviewees thought holistic and integrated approaches were equivalent to the triple nexus, perhaps hinting at a lack of conceptual clarity for these staff, but also affirming the triple nexus fits with existing ideas and ways of working that seek to more holistically understand development needs and work across sectors in integrated programming. Yet, LFAs also had a specifically religious interpretation of a holistic approach that included spiritual aspects of life, such as a relationship with God. To some extent, the notion of the triple nexus therefore aligns with LFAs’ way of thinking about holistic development. Yet, in other ways, a secular take on the triple nexus, as it currently stands, may not fully incorporate aspects of faith-based responses such as spiritual support to help heal trauma.

Humanitarian standards in relation to religious activities

Only a few LFAs said they implement what could be somehow considered as “religious activities.” Implementing such activities can raise concerns among some secular humanitarians regarding proselytization and, by extension, a lack of respect for humanitarian principles and the professionalism of LFAs. However, a more nuanced understanding of these activities demonstrates these activities do not pose a threat to humanitarian principles. These activities can be divided into two categories. First, the activities that are part of standard religious activities and are usually aimed at co-religionists community members. For example, faith actors have other work that is separate to humanitarian and development operations, such as “holistic support to churches in publishing devotional materials, teaching self-reliance, children’s ministry and protection, adult training, and use of media as a tool” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Another one supports “Christian lawyers and chaplains” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) and has a theological college where it trains religious leaders by providing theology certificates to pastors.

At times, religious activities did take on an association with triple nexus activities. An FGD participant explained they had not received assistance from other religious traditions, aside from Christianity as is in line with the demographic majority in terms of religious affiliation in South Sudan, but they would not have a problem with it. They did say, however, that they would reject aid if it had conditions related to conversion, demonstrating the agency of beneficiaries to navigate assistance. Several examples show the added value of faith-based approaches, such as the “...monthly prayer platform for sustainable peace, enhancing the ecumenical fellowship and creating [an] environment of reconciliation and forgiveness” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) that is implemented by an LFA. This activity is a clear element of support for peace initiatives that could be connected to a Triple Nexus approach.

Spiritual support is sometimes offered as part of a psychosocial response. This appeared a few times throughout the interviews. A secular local actor considered “the role of faith actor is to ensure, first there is a spiritual support besides humanitarian supports” (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019). An LFA mentioned “faith actors

address the other side of human being (Soul/Spirit) which other actors don't have expertise in" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). When asked about the role of faith in DCA's work, a staff member noted, "faith-based organizations in South Sudan help in providing psychosocial and moral support to the citizens of South Sudan" (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). The importance of spiritual support for some people affected by crisis was demonstrated many times in the literature and the evidence from the interviews support the idea that LFAs are considered best placed to offer spiritual support, as aligned with psychosocial support that aims to heal the effects of trauma, to beneficiaries. In relation to the triple nexus, spiritual support can work across the three elements of humanitarian, development, and peace work. Immediate psychological first aid in an emergency can and should include spiritual elements if appropriate, as has been argued by some scholars. Longer-term healing that allows people to recover, build resilience, and work on reconciliation and forgiveness must also then include these spiritual supports, as contextually appropriate to the person and community in question.

All the local actors interviewed in South Sudan were keen to underline they are either currently complying with international humanitarian standards (such as the Red Cross Principles, the Core Humanitarian Standards, and the SPHERE standards) or were "trying to learn and adapt to some of these International Standards through DCA mentorship" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). A few LFA interviewees also underlined the fact that their faith enables them to abide by these principles by encouraging them to serve humanity as a whole and to deliver unbiased aid to people in need, without discrimination. Nonetheless, according to an LFA staff member, LFAs in general have a "low level of awareness or compliance to standards," (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019) particularly in reference to Core Humanitarian Standards in this case and not the four main humanitarian principles that are more widely known. A DCA staff member explained that

due to constant and consistent capacity building of local faith actors / partners' staff, they acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to deliver quality work that makes impact on the community they work with and the nation as a whole (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

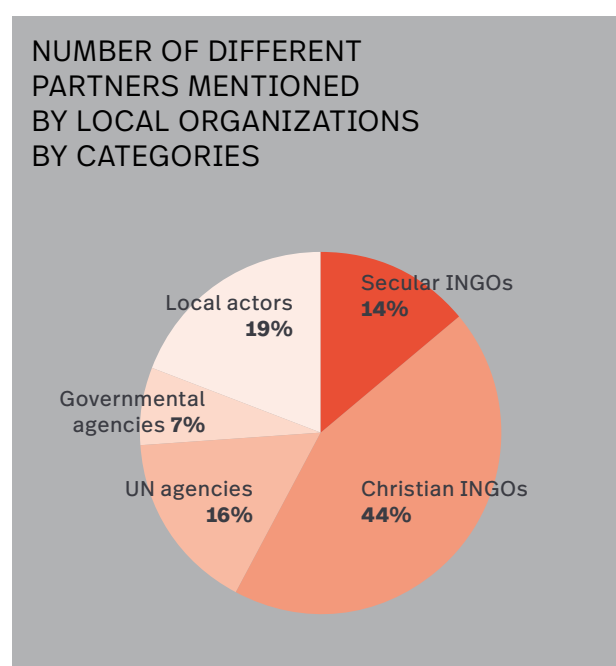
DCA is investing in its local partners to help them broaden their impact and build compliance with humanitarian standards. One interviewee said the shift to humanitarian standards was highly worthwhile and enabled their organization to "work effectively and respond timely to the needs of the communities regardless of their faith" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). LFAs noted that conditions from donors can affect trust building with communities and add distance between LFAs and communities, but that this capacity is also needed in order to contribute to the ability of the organizations to build partnerships with other humanitarian, development, and peace actors.

Possible solutions for increased local faith actor involvement in the operationalization of the triple nexus

Agreements, partnerships, and funding

As shown in Figure 2, international faith-based organizations are the primary partners of the local actors interviewed in South Sudan. They all are Christian FBOs. No organizations with other religious affiliations were mentioned as partners by local actors. UN agencies and other local actors are the second most cited partners. They are followed by secular INGOs and then by governmental agencies.

Figure 2: Partners Mentioned by Local Organizations (organized by type)



Local actors in South Sudan generally have traditional partnerships with official agreements. These partnerships are either short-term and last only a few months or are long-term and last up to five years. Most local actors noted they have more short-term partnerships with international organizations, and, for some, their only long-term partnership is with DCA. Some do not have any long-term partnerships.

Operationalizing the triple nexus starts with multi-year agreements. That was the principal solution and request present in every interview with local actors regarding funding arrangements. Interviewees highlighted a triple nexus approach as an opportunity to focus on a full range of needs and assets in local communities, ensuring they address the root causes and there are no significant gaps. As needs do not manifest sequentially and are multi-dimensional, triple nexus multi-year programming is more sustainable and impactful. Without multi-year agreements, local actors cannot commit to operationalizing Triple Nexus approaches. A DCA staff member pointed out “funding for multi-sectoral approaches is still a big challenge for many organizations” (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Funding is already scarce for short-term projects and local actors have to compete against one another. Conversely, Triple Nexus approaches that work with local actors over a number of years are ultimately more cost effective. This approach does not draw capacity from local actors toward short funding cycles and the need to apply for the next grant.

Short-term funding does not enable local organizations to guarantee employability to their staff. Yet, staff stability is essential to achieve positive long-term impact as required in a Triple Nexus approach. A few interviewees mentioned they were under-staffed and lacked the resources to hire more staff, even though “their staff are not expensive like expatriates” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Local actors said the main reason local organizations cannot offer professional stability to their staff is because they mostly receive short-term funding. Competition with international organizations can offer them better stability and wages is a second reason. This “staff turnover due to search for greener pastures sometimes affects effective service delivery” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Staff volatility is a central issue and there is a clear need for solutions that would limit this effect.

Local actors wanted more involvement in or, at least, understanding of grant allocations. As an even further step, they suggested direct links to donors rather than through INGOs.

Most international organizations are the ones meeting the international donors and just come later and brief the national NGOs. (...) Once the level of engagement between the national organization and the international donors is increased, it gives more zeal and confidence to the national organization, hence building the capacity to engage confidently with Donors.” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

Local actors also stated they would like funds for emergencies to be available faster and directly to their accounts to avoid long-term consequences with communities resulting from delays in implementation. **Overall, local actors thought there was a lack of willingness from donors to implement a Triple Nexus approach, yet DCA staff tended to think donors were the ones pushing for a Triple Nexus approach.**

Capacity building/capacity sharing

Building capacities of local actors regarding the triple nexus is the most frequently given solution in all the interviews because there is a “lack of experts who are well versed with what a triple nexus is” (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Many local actors requested training in this approach in order to enable them to better implement it. They also asked for mentoring and follow-up on these trainings due to staff volatility – one-off trainings are not enough. More than building their capacities, it would also help answer concerns some might have regarding this new approach. The evidence above has, however, underlined many local actors are already implementing the Triple Nexus approach in several ways. This, therefore, poses the question as to whether the humanitarian system has more to learn (build its own capacity) about the triple nexus from local actors, rather than the other way around.

In general, broader capacity building was also underlined as a pressing need.

There is an assumption from some partners that the local NGOs lack capacity to lead any decision-making process... making it difficult for some international partners to allow local organizations

[to] make decisions on some critical issues... (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

All local actors noted an improvement of their involvement in the decision-making processes in the past few years, but many still felt they were highly restricted in independent decision-making. The involvement of local actors in decision-making processes is also extremely fluid and most interviewees explained their involvement depends on the trust they have with the international partner. For example, an interviewee mentioned his organization was leading the decision-making process to implement a peacebuilding component in projects because this is the organization's expertise, and this was recognized by the international partner. **Again, this reveals capacity building may not, in fact, be the solution, but capacity sharing that understands the existing expertise of local actors, as well as the gaps in international partners understanding, can help build trust and more equitable relationships in partnerships.**

DCA and other ACT Alliance members were mentioned by local actors as the ones that involve them the most in the decision-making processes, even though local actors are, as of yet, not leading decision-making strategies. The partners' platform organized annually by DCA was cited by an interviewee as a great example of the involvement of local actors in decision-making processes.

Coordination and consortia

Local actors highlighted the poor coordination that exists among all actors working in the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors. As an interviewee mentioned, the

South Sudan humanitarian system remains internationally led, consistently recognizing the role of just a few national NGOs. The barriers that prevent national organizations from being more involved are compounded by the difficult operating context (Local non-faith actor staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

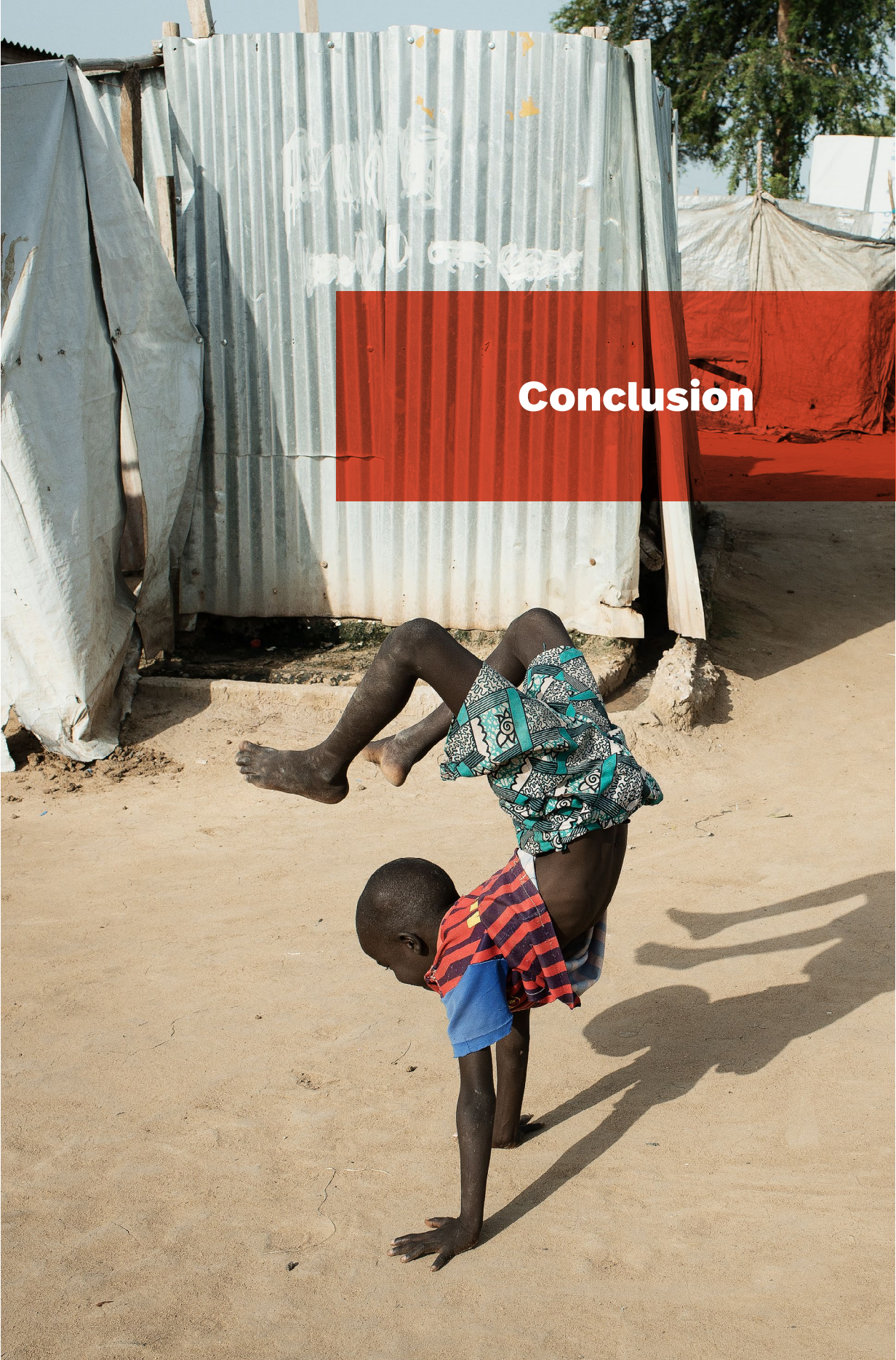
The South Sudanese humanitarian system clearly needs to improve in order to integrate every actor, increase

coordination, and be able to implement the triple nexus. Better coordination would avoid the duplication of activities and loss of resources. A Triple Nexus approach would be reinforced if actors could work together, hand in hand, complementing each other based on their areas of expertise. Some local actors interviewed are already conducting joint projects.

Opinions diverged on this topic, but overall, local actors think there is a need for more discussion, dialogue, and prioritization of each of the actors in the country. As an interviewee explained,

because this [Triple Nexus] approach is new, thus, it may require expertise and resources that the national NGOs may not have. Therefore, operationalizing nexus should be a collective effort through contribution of resources, knowledge, and coordination and, by doing so, it promotes triple nexus to be internalized and well understood (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019).

This contribution of resources and knowledge could take place in a consortium approach. Half of the interviewees across local actors and DCA staff mentioned consortia as a solution to operationalizing the triple nexus. Partners would "embrace some level of integration during response or activities implementation to the affected communities" (LFA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). Ideally, actors should work together as equal members of the consortium and create a program where they all handle a component of it, building on comparative advantages, and the expertise of each. According to interviewees, this would avoid duplication, enable integration across sections, and operationalize a Triple Nexus approach. This has already been done on a small scale by some local partners in applying for funding, but it is currently limited. Some local actors went further and stated resource sharing in the areas of staffing and vehicles as the solution to the triple nexus. A DCA staff member also mentioned that "it is important to form a consortium to operationalize the Triple Nexus. In this way, [it] will be easy to mobilize funds for the implementation of projects" (DCA staff member in South Sudan, 2019). ■



Conclusion

- From an overview of programming areas, we found DCA's local partners to be particularly involved in peacebuilding work, with education, livelihoods, and food security programming appearing as the second, third, and fourth most active areas respectively.
- Almost seventy percent of the local actors work in multi-sectoral, integrated programs, often incorporating humanitarian, development, and peace activities that constitute the Triple Nexus approach.
- Siloed, particularly humanitarian-only, approaches remain common. Humanitarian-development, as well as development-peace programs also occur. Humanitarian-peace work is conceived to be more difficult as humanitarian principles are sometimes perceived to be at odds with the potentially political nature of peacebuilding. However, peace was highlighted as the crucial factor in making the Triple Nexus work as it helps to tackle the root causes, rather than only respond to them. Peace is the added value of the Triple Nexus approach but also the most challenging element to integrate in humanitarian projects.
- Research participants were enthusiastic about the possibilities of the triple nexus approach and its applicability to the protracted crisis in South Sudan. Yet, some were still hesitant, claiming the humanitarian needs were still too great to apply a Triple Nexus approach.
- The main value of localization and working with local actors for the triple nexus approach was demonstrated in their understanding of contexts and proximity to local communities, as well as the sustainability of their operations thanks to their commitment to the context.
 - Proximity to communities allows local actors to understand the intertwined nature of their needs and assets and represents an opportunity for communities to fully engage with the interrelated reality of the issues, rather than isolate one issue at a time. Their existing roots in communities and their commitment to stay in communities, particularly with local faith actors, also makes their activities sustainable. This aspect is essential for a Triple Nexus approach to work given its short to longer-term timeline. Local actors advocated for their greater involvement at every stage of the project cycle, but especially in context analysis and project inception, in order to help with this aspect of unraveling the aims of a Triple Nexus program. Their sustainability is eroded by the silos of the

aid system and local actors have had to navigate ways to work across humanitarian, development, and peace areas by using different funding from different partners, which puts extra pressure on local actors.

- The role of local faith actors was notable in work related to peacebuilding, where their national and local presence as trusted, honest, moral, and respected leaders helps to galvanize their authority and legitimacy in this area of work. This was paradoxically compared to trust with international actors, in which their faith identity could act as a barrier both towards secular and faith-based international partners. Nevertheless, this trusted local position means these faith actors should be able to support Triple Nexus approaches with an emphasis on peace.
- Local faith actors also already work with a “holistic approach” that aims to respond to human dignity and the needs of the whole person. While this means local faith actors implicitly understand the Triple Nexus approach in many ways, it also means added elements are not otherwise incorporated in the aid sector’s current definition of the triple nexus, such as spiritual aspects of life and the need for spiritual support across humanitarian, development, and peace areas.
- Research participants offered their ideas for operationalizing the Triple Nexus approach. These included:
 - Multi-year funding arrangements to break away from the disadvantages of short-term funding that only allows for siloed approaches.
 - Capacity sharing (as opposed to capacity building, capacity sharing also recognizes that local actors hold many capacities, such as contextual awareness, that international actors do not have).
 - Consortia, in which local actors are equitable partners and able to bring their specific expertise, such as peace work with local faith actors, to a capacity sharing space that builds upon complementarities in order to implement Triple Nexus programming.

Further research recommendations

- As the role of contextual analysis is highlighted by local actors, we recommend specific research into what this includes, whether and how it is of added value, how it affects local actors, and how to further build upon this for the triple nexus approach.
- As noted in the methodology, more perspectives from

beneficiaries and other international organizations will help build our knowledge of the operationalization of the triple nexus from different perspectives. As this area is relatively new and no extensive research yet exists, there is a clear research gap and need for recommendations.

- Replicating this study in other contexts will help uncover the similarities across contexts, but also the specifics of South Sudan, which can help isolate the emphasis needed for the operationalization of the triple nexus in the country.

Further programming recommendations

- Aside from the three recommendations made directly by research participants, we find that additional guidance may be useful for international actors seeking to operationalize the triple nexus with local partners:
 - Sharing good practice examples.
 - Guidance to help bring a triple nexus approach to needs assessment and contextual analysis with local partners so that interrelated issues are uncovered and not forced into siloed categories.
 - Guidance on identifying key strengths of partners for triple nexus consortia.
 - Guidance on capacity sharing approaches and building equitable partnerships, with local actors involved in decision-making.
 - Context specific research/assessment, and targeted communications/advocacy to international partners, on how local faith actors conceptualize their holistic approach and its links, or differences, to the triple nexus to help international partners understand how to approach this topic in their relationship building, and ultimately partnership, with local faith actors.

Further advocacy/awareness raising recommendations

- Use this research to highlight the need for:
 - Commitment to further triple nexus research.
 - Commitment to joined up thinking between prioritizing local partnership and the triple nexus approach concurrently.
 - Understanding of the specific roles and perspectives of local faith actors in their ability to work holistically across the elements of the triple nexus. ■

Endnotes

1. Roger Alfred Yoron Modi, *Salient Features of South Sudan Latest Peace Deal*, 2018, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article66287>
2. UNOCHA, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2019: South Sudan*. Geneva: UNOCHA, 2018, 4 <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-2019-humanitarian-response-plan>
3. UNOCHA, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2019: South Sudan*. Geneva: UNOCHA, 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-2019-humanitarian-response-plan>
4. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Reports*, 2018, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update>
5. Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index*, 2018, <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/data/>
6. Local faith actors can include local, regional, and national religious leaders, relief and development branches of national religious institutions, local volunteer committees and groups, national religious institutions and their committees and councils, national faith-inspired organizations, inter-religious councils, and others. In this report, the LFAs interviewed are mostly national faith-inspired organizations. For a full discussion of the definition of local faith actors, see this report's accompanying literature review, *The Triple Nexus, Localization, and Local Faith Actors: The intersections between faith, humanitarian response, development, and peace*.
7. This graph is a quantitative representation of answers given in qualitative interviews, rather than a graph from survey results. It is not necessarily exhaustive of all programs implemented by the organizations, as interviewees may have forgotten or left out programs, but it gives an overview of the types of programs implemented by different types of actor. In this graph, response to displacement includes camp management, support for returnees, and other humanitarian activities for displaced people, meaning that it can include other sectors with potential overlap in other categories on the graph, which is a limitation of extrapolating quantitative data from qualitative data sources. Religious activities include those described in the section of this report on "Humanitarian Standards and Religious Activities," p. 20-21. We, nevertheless, believe that this graph is useful in demonstrating the strengths of different actors and the ways in which local-international partnerships can support each other.
8. Philip Pullella, "Vatican tries "retreat diplomacy" as South Sudan peace deal falters," *Reuters*, April 10, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-southsudan/vatican-tries-retreat-diplomacy-as-south-sudan-peace-deal-falters-idUSKCN1RM1XU>
9. Jamie D Aten et al, "The psychological study of religion and spirituality in a disaster context: A systematic review," *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 2019, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Ftra0000431>