



# Doing Nexus Differently

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CARE Regional Applied Economic Empowerment Hub in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

[Anan Kittaneh: Anan.Kittaneh@care.org](mailto:Anan.Kittaneh@care.org); [Antoinette Stolk: ee-learninghub@care.org](mailto:Antoinette.Stolk@care.org)

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*“This process stands on deep engagement with and expertise of over 30 regional and global CARE practitioners and thought leaders from a wide range of departments.”*

*Doing Nexus Differently Paper, 2018*



## Doing Nexus Differently

CARE’s Regional Applied Economic Empowerment Hub in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region uses evidence from the ground, research, regional experience, and global thought leaders’ know-how to contribute to organizational and sectoral knowledge and innovation. The Hub is examining the challenges around efforts to bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance, development, and peace, to effectively eradicate poverty and achieve social justice, with a particular emphasis on empowering women and girls. The team is undertaking this process with two fundamental objectives;

- 1) To strengthen the evidence of delivering impactful Nexus programming and contribute to collective voice and constructive discussion among (I)NGOs and donors.
- 2) Promote organizational and programmatic innovation both internally and externally, through opportunistically advancing Doing Nexus Differently at several levels (Country Offices (COs), program leaders, regional offices, donors, national governments, etc.) and through exchanging lessons and best practices in the sector.

## How did CARE reach this summary?

- This process began by clarifying some of the common approaches adopted to combine humanitarian assistance and development, and quantifying the challenges attached to their application; as indicated in the full research paper developed by the Regional Applied Economic Empowerment Hub in MENA. The paper provided a starting point to establish an initial set of programmatic Guiding Principles, framing the most important messages for programmers and practitioners, complementing the significant advocacy work done by CARE in relation to the nexus.

- The research paper was initially convened during a reflection session at the MENA Regional Leadership Team (RLT) in May 2018 where the position of 16 regional leaders was evaluated and insights from combined approaches in the region were captured.
- The results of the research and the initial Guiding Principles were shared with a selected group of global CARE thought leaders from across the organization as a next step forward. This paper's message is strongly shaped by the thought leaders' feedback and stands on their knowledge and experience with these challenges in the organization and globally.
- In short, this process stands on deep engagement with and expertise of more than 30 CARE colleagues from country offices, Secretariat, Humanitarians and Development staff- in addition to leveraging examples and learning from the ground, which are also discussed in the case studies.

### Case Study 1 - CARE Jordan

Since 2014, CARE Jordan has been merging its humanitarian assistance and development activities for both Jordanians and displaced people. This new approach required programmatic and organizational shifts, which impacted job descriptions, local partnerships and donor contracts. At the organizational level, some donors provided flexible "bridge" funding and a few development proposals allowed for emergency budgets to be integrated. At the country level, support systems were merged to a large extent, saving resources but improving impact. The teams are exchanging knowledge, learn from each other and even rotate jobs at times to keep staff engaged and informed. On the ground, a critical step in the Nexus shift was the focus on livelihoods, with gradual implementation of economic empowerment activities for refugees through the application of practical tools. These tools include Village Saving and Loans Association's (VSLAs) combined with social cohesion activities for hosts and refugees, vocational training together with small business grants for refugees, and support to community centers. Together these form a suite of social protection tools, which can be utilized as part of CARE's ongoing efforts to combine humanitarian response with long term goals of development, justice, gender equality and peace.



Figure 1 Syrian women in Jordan supported by CARE Jordan

## This paper is produced in collaboration with the following CARE champions and thought leaders:

Heather Van Sice (CARE International (CI) Secretariat)  
Tim Bishop (CARE USA)  
Gareth Price-Jones (CI)  
Emily Janoch (CARE USA)  
Christel Bultman (CARE Syria)  
Richard Hamilton (CARE MENA)  
Sarah Ralston (CI Secretariat).  
Mirjam Sorli (CARE Norway)  
Hiba Tibi (CARE WBG)

Salam Kanaan (CARE Jordan)  
Susannah Friedman (CARE USA)  
Fidaa Haddad (CARE Syria)  
Amr Lashin (CARE Egypt)  
Waleed Rauf (CARE Tanzania)  
Jameel Dababneh (CARE Jordan)  
Rene Celaya (CARE WBG)  
Jay Goulden (CI Secretariat)  
Rolf Herno (CARE Denmark)

More than 16 CARE regional leaders in MENA RLT have also contributed to this learning and reflection process, including representatives from the Regional Management Unit and several country offices.

## Long story short:

### Optimism about the opportunities of the Nexus, when careful guidelines are in place - “Doing Nexus Differently”.

The Nexus (integrating humanitarian assistance with development -Double Nexus - and with peace/security -Triple Nexus- in analysis, planning, and implementation) is here to stay. Faced with increased needs, limited resources and the need to cut down costs, global organizations (e.g. UN and EU) are already rolling out pilots and reforms to integrate humanitarian assistance with development, to various degrees. Most importantly, this is how many of CARE’s country offices (COs) are already building and implementing their programs, including at CARE Jordan and CARE West Bank and Gaza (WBG). This paper also acknowledges many examples of CARE’s humanitarian assistance contributing to women’s economic empowerment (WEE) and gender-transformative resilience. In addition, nexus programming is already happening in countries leveraging VSLAs linked with social cohesion, market based approaches and private sector engagement, community-wide socio-economic hubs which can play a critical role in responding to emergencies, contributing to local development, and easing social tensions, to name a few.

Especially dual-mandate organizations have the strategic position to influence Nexus discussions while integrating the voices, needs, and aspirations of our target groups (especially women) and other localized ecosystem actors (including civil society, private sector, and local government structures). **In short, organizations can be opportunistic about the double and triple nexus if certain conditions and guidelines are put in place.** To really benefit from the opportunities of the Nexus, we stress the need for a Nexus that is grounded in local realities (using e.g. immediate and root causes analysis) and adopts local responses to local challenges. This means utilizing localization, local ownership, and local participation as core drivers of nexus programming; and not being limited to national, donors or multilateral organizations’ agendas.

CARE is in a strong position to advance women’s empowerment throughout all phases of the Nexus. There is a growing body of evidence showcasing significant opportunities to tackle root causes of gender inequity, including in times of emergencies (e.g. as gender norms become fluid). **A Nexus approach enables us to cease these opportunities!**

CARE International has been documenting Nexus programming globally and Mozambique is an excellent demonstration of the global relevance of this discussion.

#### Case Study 2: Mozambique

Mozambique knows high vulnerability to shocks with frequent occurring natural disasters as well as social tensions arising from civil conflict. CARE, also as part of a consortium, has taken a highly integrated approach where Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is part of longer term programs that keep high flexibility to respond to shocks. CARE Mozambique’s recent work shows good examples of the impact of this integrated Nexus approach. Emergency tools could be integrated into existing “development” programs; e.g. in their Early Childhood Development program that started to monitor and address child malnutrition during the worst drought in years. Also, other humanitarian programs continued to address longer term development needs; e.g. in their response to the 2015 drought where water committees were set up and trained to continue to serve their communities and run water facilities over the long-term, as well as promote good water and health practices.

This thinking and process are deeply grounded in the local realities of the MENA region, and in the understanding of the current crises and trends visible in the different countries (these trends are discussed with more details in the full Research paper). The ongoing and reoccurring needs and vulnerabilities in the region underline, again, that our target and impact groups are often to be found in phases of relief, development and peacebuilding. This reality requires our responses to be more effective and impactful on all fronts.

*“To really benefit from the opportunities offered by the Nexus, we stress the need for a Nexus that is grounded in local realities and adopts local responses to local challenges - utilizing localization, local ownership, and local participation as core drivers of Nexus programming, one not limited to national, donor or multilateral’s agendas.”*

**CARE’s Doing Nexus Differently paper, 2018**

## Key Findings from the Reflection Process

We highlight some of the significant outcomes of this collaborative reflection process building on the Regional Hub’s interaction with global CARE thought leaders, while more results are presented in the full Research paper published by the Hub in September 2018.

- Within the sector, there still exists a lack of clarity regarding the theory and concepts behind Double and Triple Nexus. Most notably, there is a lack of in-depth knowledge on their implications at practical levels. There is a big gap for country offices, peer organizations, and other stakeholders regarding how humanitarian action, development and peace/security can be effectively brought together, without doing harm or losing impact.
- Most practitioners and thought leaders indicated the frequent application of an approach that separates relief from development or a primary Linking Relief with Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) approach - which is a linear sequencing of phases. Respondents went on to concur that these two approaches should be the exception as opposed to the norm in the future, for humanitarian and development actors.
- The most relevant approach selected by CARE colleagues for the next five years is the Double Nexus approach, followed by the Triple Nexus and the Contiguum approach (which is joint humanitarian action with development in frameworks/strategies but not necessarily translated into the business and operational model such as funding, organizational structure, etc.).
- At CARE, we collectively recognize the need to stress a very careful implementation of the Triple Nexus; ensuring that positive opportunities are grasped, and pitfalls are avoided through a very localized, locally-owned definition of problems and solutions.



Figure 3 More resilient families in the West Bank through local-led socio-economic hubs. CARE WBG



Figure 2 Syrian and Jordanian female entrepreneurs. CARE Jordan

## What we call for: Guiding Principles

The Hub, in collaboration with global and regional CARE thought leaders, accepts there are **challenges** surrounding a highly integrated approach (especially if this is a top-down one from the global level). It therefore calls for the development of stronger awareness and a more explicit **evidence base**, to avoid **negative consequences** of the instrumentalization and politicization of aid, as well as any reduction of **programming impact**. Mostly, however, we are enthusiastic about the **many opportunities** the Double/Triple Nexus offers for **greater and more sustainable impact**, including: integrating social cohesion and self-reliance; addressing root causes of conflict and inequity; calling for ceasefires to allow flows of humanitarian aid; support women's political participation and role in peacebuilding; promoting and stimulating investments in underserved sectors or areas; and strengthening grass-roots civil society and social-economic hubs (e.g. CSOs) that play a role in local peacebuilding and reducing social tensions.

In cooperation with over 30 CARE thought leaders and practitioners and building on evidence from the field, we want you to join our partnership in presenting, implementing, and advocating for the type of Nexus we hope to see in the future - what we call Doing Nexus Differently:

- **Localization:** Empower and utilize local actors and structures (civil society, private sector and more) rather than replacing them. Our impact groups and local partners should take the driver's seat!
- **Participation and local ownership:** our impact groups, especially women and girls, should hold critical positions in the analysis and design of concrete project actions as they will be the ones leading their own recovery and resilience process.

### Case Study 3: CARE WBG

CARE WBG made a major shift in 2012, from a delivery oriented agency towards a partnership approach that takes a localized, participatory and sustainable method towards the empowerment of our target groups. The team has evolved from using Contiguum approaches to Double and Triple Nexus in the last four years. CARE WBG has used an integrated and complementary view of both humanitarian action and development, aspiring to utilize tools that will build local social and economic structures and use local partners as much as possible. This changed the way CARE responded to the crisis in the Gaza Strip significantly. During the war in 2014, CARE mobilized mobile health teams, while also rehabilitating local health structures with robust emergency preparedness mechanisms. In addition, CARE applied resilient food market systems approaches to resume food supplies after major destruction and improve food availability in addition to taking part in food distributions. Besides, the team has been integrating gender transformative approaches in all of its work. These shifts also turned around other aspects of CARE's work – for example developing socio-economic hubs that are now capable of serving community needs and responding to farmers' vulnerabilities during droughts or floods, poverty and, social tensions. Almost all local partners (CBOs, localized authorities, local implementing NGOs, and even the private sector) engage in humanitarian responses, development, and even in grassroots peacebuilding! CARE WBG has also been active through its advocacy strategy by joining others to promote ceasefires, enable better flow of material into Gaza, and improve the security situation. Advocacy complements CARE's work; it is a way to continuously address root causes of injustice and poverty (e.g. occupation, access restrictions, ineffective markets).

It is interesting that most of the two-year livelihood/emergency projects include elements of humanitarian assistance, development (private sector development and engagement, entrepreneurship, gender transformative programming) and sometimes protection and peacebuilding. Interestingly enough, the same teams play a role during spikes in emergencies as well as development. CARE WBG believes that Double and Triple Nexus have a significant role in achieving a gender responsive/transformational strategy that will ensure women's equal (political/social/civil/economic) participation and contribution at any time.

## Guiding Principles continued

- **Evidence-based analysis:** building on root cause analysis (and sometimes rapid analysis), gender analysis, and power analysis will strengthen our project choices and avoid doing harm or adding to (social or political) tensions - even when quick action is needed rapid analytical tools are available or can be built in along the way.

- **Politically smart:** complementing our knowledge of immediate needs and root causes of injustice and their interrelations with sound understanding of local and global power dynamics. Depending on context, organizations can then decide whether work should be done with OR around state actors, while also being aware of social tensions and aiming to reduce them.

- **Women's empowerment and strengthening their voice** throughout the Nexus (in humanitarian action, development, and peace), presents a great opportunity and niche for CARE and others. CARE's 'Women, Work, and War' study (2016), as well as many other program/project assessments and evaluations, have stressed the interlinkages between these phases to advance women's empowerment. Humanitarian and development actors can, indeed, view the nexus in light of gender transformative action to trigger/achieve impact not only for women but for all.

- **Resilience-based programming:** which represents a significant connection between the different approaches, but should not only look at the capacity of individuals and communities to absorb and adapt but also *transform* in the face of emergency, conflict or poverty.

- **Adaptive management** as an agile management approach can facilitate flexible (Nexus) programming and should be integrated throughout the organization, to allow for managers' capacity to responds to changes and new information swiftly.

- Experimentation and **piloting** e.g. cross-sectoral teams is encouraged to test new (management) structures that enable Nexus programs, as organizational-wide restructuring is not an easy/quick option.

- **Re-invest in program quality** and accountability, including in impact, learning, and knowledge management systems. High program quality is what will ultimately ensure sustainable and resilient impact regardless of the approach applied.

### CARE MENA's Social and Gender Justice Framework

You cannot separate Nexus discussions from your organizational objectives and niche. During the reflection process, it became crucial to connect CARE MENA's Theory of Change with the Nexus to unravel the possibilities of connecting humanitarian action with Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) to contribute to development and peace.

### Case Study 4: CARE Syria

Given the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis, CARE recognizes the great need to move to more sustainable action and planning for livelihoods for the affected populations. In one of its project, CARE Syria has therefore chosen to complement humanitarian components with resilient food market system approaches. These holistic approaches support local entrepreneurial initiatives via cooperatives and entrepreneurs, applying market-oriented approaches building on market assessments, recovery and rehabilitation of social and economic structures (e.g. roads, markets, etc.). This is to ensure that Syrians do not only meet their immediate needs but also to enable them to secure their long-term needs (e.g. recover their livelihoods and improve food availability for food items such as dairy and vegetables).

Besides, CARE has taken the lead in the Syrian Resilience Consortium that brings together six INGOs working in the region. The Syrian context is still marked by quickly changing frontlines, huge destruction and movement of people, rendering long-term planning very challenging. The Syrian Resilience Consortium has significant learning about how partnerships and consortia structures can be leveraged to enable the design and implementation of Nexus programming in the future – especially if local actors are core contributors in these structures.

## Now... Call to Action!

The CARE Regional Applied Economic Empowerment Hub, the MENA regional management unit, CARE's thought leaders, advocacy experts, and practitioners, call upon you to take action and join the Doing Nexus Differently movement by engaging in any of the following:

- Contribute to the ongoing discussion by taking [the following short survey with your own views and insights on the Doing Nexus Differently approach](#). Your input (anonymously treated) will be valuable to continue to build a Nexus approach that is deeply rooted in practitioners' experience and views from the field.
- If your team or project has been learning about how to link Humanitarian action with Development and/or peacebuilding, [please share with us your lessons through this short survey!](#) The Hub is eager to hear stories from the field regarding the implementation of these Guiding Principles and what works or does not work in implementing a locally-rooted Nexus.
- Take an internal learning and reflection process within your organization, strategy, or unit on what Doing Nexus Differently means for your team in light of your mandate and strategic niche/objectives. How can you customize/implement the Guiding Principles with an eye for your specific impact groups; producers, youth, women, girls, refugees? [Share with us your findings and project/programmatic stories!](#)

*For more information on the full research paper, the process, or this summary paper, please contact:*

*Anan Kittaneh, Sr. Director,  
Economic Empowerment  
and Innovation*

[anan.kittaneh@care.org](mailto:anan.kittaneh@care.org)

*Antoinette Stolk, Research  
and Learning Analyst*

[ee-learninghub@care.org](mailto:ee-learninghub@care.org)

*Tim Bishop, Sr. Director,  
Innovation Hubs*

[tim.bishop@care.org](mailto:tim.bishop@care.org)

### CARE International - Regional Applied Economic Empowerment Hub in MENA

The Hub works with practitioners and thought leaders to produce and advocate for practical learning and applied innovation in proximity to our impact groups. In October 2017, CARE International members, MENA regional management unit, and several country offices supported the establishment of the Regional Applied Economic Empowerment Hub in the MENA region, focused on three core pillars:

- 1) Ground-up thought leadership on nexus programming; women's economic empowerment; leveraging market and business forces for social impact (e.g. through resilient market systems in fragile settings, social entrepreneurship); etc.
- 2) Applied innovation, building on the diverse expertise of COs in the region and beyond.
- 3) Technical support with project design and capacity building on specific themes (demand-driven).

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