

# TOWARDS THE TRIPLE NEXUS

Toolkit on Afghanistan's NPP, SDGs, and Triple Nexus

DACAAR

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## GLOSSARY

<p><b>Development</b></p>	<p>“Lacks a clear definition but is often linked with human development and international efforts to reduce poverty and inequality and improve health, education, and job opportunities around the world” (Devex 2011).</p> <p>Sustainable Development Goals – “also known as the Global Goals – were adopted by all United Nations Members States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030” (UNDP).</p> <p>The Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDGs) are the Government of Afghanistan’s strategy to meeting the SDGs. Since 2015, the Ministry of Economy (MoEc) is the lead ministry responsible for all coordination, planning, and reporting on the SDGs.</p>
<p><b>Humanitarian</b></p>	<p>Action aims “to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of crises, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations” (OECD 2012)</p>
<p><b>Peacebuilding</b></p>	<p>An “activity that aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the cultural and structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict. (...) Human security is the central task of peacebuilding. In this sense, it includes a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society at the community, national, and international levels to address the root causes of violence and ensure civilians have freedom from fear (negative peace), freedom from want (positive peace) and freedom from humiliation before, during, and after violent conflict.” (Wikipedia)</p>
<p><b>New Way of Working (NWoW)</b></p>	<p>Set up by the UN and the World Bank to deliver the triple nexus approach.</p>
<p><b>Nexus</b></p>	<p>Double nexus – also referred to as the dual humanitarian-development nexus – refers to “the continuation of long-running efforts in the humanitarian and development fields, such as disaster risk reduction (DRR), linking relief rehabilitation and development (LRRD) or the resilience agenda” (Oxfam 2019).</p> <p>Triple Nexus is “an operational imperative where the development, humanitarian and peace-related actors need to take account of each other’s actions – and possibly collaborate – to be efficient and effective because their activities have impact on each other and each actor is affected by the broader context where peace, development and humanitarian action interacts as well” (ICVA 2016).</p>

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ADB	Asia Development Bank
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANPDF	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
A-SDG	Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals
CEO	Chief Executive Office
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FP	Facilitating Partner
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LRRD	Link Relief Rehabilitation and Development
MoEc	Ministry of Economy
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	National Priority Programme
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSIA	National Statistics and Information Authority
NWOW	New Way of Working
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCIA	Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSED	Small-Scale Enterprise Development
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WE	Women's Empowerment
WFP	World Food Programme

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## Why this study now?

### Adapting programming to global standards *and* to the Afghan context

“We are in a war situation, and we cannot get out of it without development and peace”. This statement – by an NGO staff member interviewed for this study – summarises the state of play for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Afghanistan today. While the peace processes remains fragile, and as COVID-19 continues to spread across Afghanistan further testing fragile value chains and service infrastructure<sup>1</sup>, the aims and objectives of humanitarian and development actors are outlined in various national priority programmes (NPPs) and commitments to global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet it is not clear where and how synergies can happen.

The NGO community is essential to the implementation of the Government of Afghanistan’s sustainable development plans. While the Government is showing leadership, it still lacks operational capacity to deliver basic services to its people, at scale, requiring support from donors as well as implementing partners who have access to communities across Afghanistan and can deliver on national aims at a local level. This confirms the essential role that NGOs have to play in this context – a role that is recognised, but often not valued to its full extent.

While voices are heard from the NGO community, there is a lack of a collective vision and common language that can unite humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors in Afghanistan. This is a challenge in many contexts globally and is the reason behind the importance of global calls for action, such as Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Peace Agenda, put forward by the United Nations (UN) Secretary General.

The Triple nexus, ASDG and NPP implementation processes all need strengthening. The first step requires to move beyond a three-way conversation between donors, UN agencies, and the Government and to include the NGO community. This will ensure that the ASDGs are not forgotten, that communities can play their part in the processes that affect them, in the midst of political changes. Only then can a way towards collective outcomes be identified to ensure that “we leave no one behind (...) Despite everything, this is something we all need to be working towards the same goals<sup>2</sup>”.

### Key Questions

In this context, engagement is vital, but the terms of engagement have to be strategically planned to align with national priorities, but also with what NGOs want to achieve and what they can realistically plan for. The key research question guiding this reflection is as follows: **To what extent, where and how should DACAAR align its strategy with the ASDGs, NPPs and the triple nexus?**

DACAAR has a dual humanitarian and development mandate. Given this, a **first line of questioning** looks at whether, through this dual mandate, the organisation is able to effectively deliver on the double nexus.

A **second line of questioning** tests of the pros and cons of engagement with peacebuilding actors. To transition into the next stage of DACAAR’s strategic vision, this assessment will look into whether and how the organisation can be more strongly engaging with the peacebuilding agenda.

A **third line of questioning** will be on the parameters of alignment with the ASDGs and NPPs through the lens of the principles of neutrality and impartiality.

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Hall (2020), [COVID19 in Afghanistan : Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices](#).

<sup>2</sup> Key informant interview (July 2020), Kabul.



## II. ENGAGEMENT – TOWARDS THE TRIPLE NEXUS

### Context, Background and Foundations for this Study

#### Where does the term Triple Nexus come from?



Image Source: ICVA

The discussion on the triple nexus is not new: the nexus is a continuation of long running efforts to link relief rehabilitation and development (LRRD), going a step further to link these with the aim to end conflict.

In December 2016, upon taking office, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for peace to be considered “the third leg of the triangle”<sup>3</sup>. The approach reflects the long-standing dictum that ‘there can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development’. In Afghanistan, this has been presented by the Special Representative as the connection between the UN’s efforts on humanitarian response planning, the one UN model for development planning, and the peace aspects under the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA).

**The shift from the double nexus of humanitarian-development aid to the triple nexus, which now integrates peacebuilding, as aligned with two global frameworks:** the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Peace Agenda. Together, these two agendas aim to propose a common vision of society, globally, and a commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict, especially in protracted conflict settings such as Afghanistan.

UN Secretary General Guterres marked a global shift from the double to the triple nexus, as a roadmap for stakeholders to follow and align themselves with. However, the nexus as a policy concept still largely remains centred on the UN and has not yet translated into concrete operational or programming frameworks<sup>4</sup>. Yet, given that “people do not experience humanitarian and development needs in a compartmentalised manner”<sup>5</sup>, and given that conflict can jeopardize sustainable gains in these fields, this conversation requires an operational approach. More specifically, the nexus has been defined as “an operational imperative where development, humanitarian and peace-related actors need to take account of each other’s actions – and possibly collaborate – to be efficient and effective because their activities have impact on each other and each actor is affected by the broader context where peace, development and humanitarian action interacts as well.”<sup>6</sup> This is an opportunity and a basis on which non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as DACAAR can build on to engage and apply, from a top-down perspective, the tenants of the triple nexus approach.

*“People do not experience humanitarian and development needs in a compartmentalized manner” - ALNAP.*

<sup>3</sup> ICVA 2017 [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ICVA\\_Nexus\\_briefing\\_paper%20%28Low%20Res%29.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ICVA_Nexus_briefing_paper%20%28Low%20Res%29.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> ALNAP 2019

<sup>6</sup> IASC and UN Working Group on Transitions (2016). Background paper on Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

## Grasping the Triple Nexus in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, movement towards this way of working has been broadly initiated through two steps:

1. Afghanistan's adoption, with the rest of the world, of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in 2015, which were further endorsed by the Key Messages shared by the country during the 2017 High Level Political Forum, and may provide a key framework for better implementing triple nexus approaches.<sup>7</sup> These offer not only a structure for the specific development agenda, but also a wider framework through which to address global humanitarian, development, and peace efforts.<sup>8</sup> In recognition of these linkages, the Afghan government has taken the lead in coordinating, implementing, and monitoring these through the leadership of the Ministry of the Economy and the High Council of Ministers, and has nominally sought to align national planning processes with the **Afghanistan SDGs (ASDGs)**.
2. The Citizens' Charter – one of the **National Priority Programmes** – launched in 2016, alongside the Urban National Priority Programme to address service delivery for all. Reintegration of displaced groups has been a core component of the discussion that has been happening to inform the Citizens' Charter, leading actors such as the World Bank to integrate it as a secondary outcome of their area-based programming with the government, notably through the EZ-Kar programme launched in 2019.

In spite of these initial steps and this acknowledgement, however, implementing actors and governments have struggled to effectively link the three nodes in ways that are coherent and implementable at programme and strategic levels. Even the humanitarian-development linkages remain difficult to implement in practice. Past research has highlighted the need to practically improve implementation of the dual humanitarian-development nexus when it comes for instance, to urban services in areas of return<sup>9</sup>. Key informant interviews (KIIs) with DACAAR staff further highlighted some of the practical difficulties of implementing coherent programming between the two sectors, with limitations in donor flexibility and restrictions on geographic locations for programming.

Beyond this recognition and the challenges of double nexus approaches, the third node of the triple nexus - peace - has been even less discussed and thought about strategically. Interviews with DACAAR staff confirmed this gap, noting that "any contributions we have done [to this point] have been either single or double nexus -- the triple element has mostly been ignored. Peace might happen as an unplanned result in some cases, but we are not thinking about this strategically or systematically." The full impact and tangibility of what a triple nexus approach might look like strategically and programmatically remains unexplored from many institutional and organisational perspectives, leaving 'triple nexus approaches' incomplete, even on paper.

*"Any contribution we have done (to this point) have been either single or double nexus – the triple element has mostly been ignored. Peace might happen as an unplanned result, but we are not thinking about this strategically or systematically" -  
DACAAR*

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<sup>7</sup> Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform (2017) Afghanistan Voluntary National Review

<sup>8</sup> Lanzer, T. (2019) "Triple Nexus: The Case of Afghanistan" *Presentation for the Humanitarian Congress, Vienna, March 2019.*

<sup>9</sup> DACAAR/Samuel Hall (2015) Agency and Choice Among the Displaced: Returnees' and IDPs' Choice of Destination in Afghanistan

## Core Components of the Triple Nexus Approach

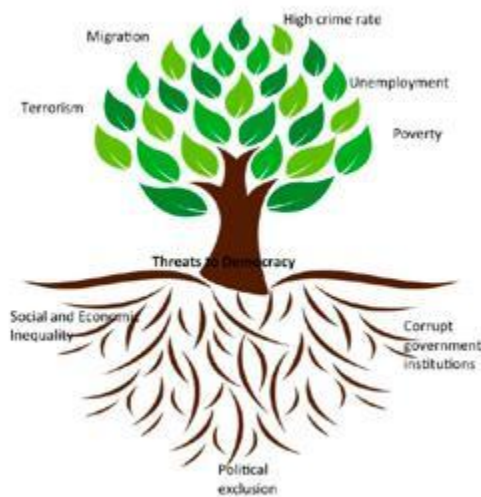
While there are still differing definitions and interpretations of the triple nexus concept, generally, it is understood to have three core characteristics<sup>10</sup>:



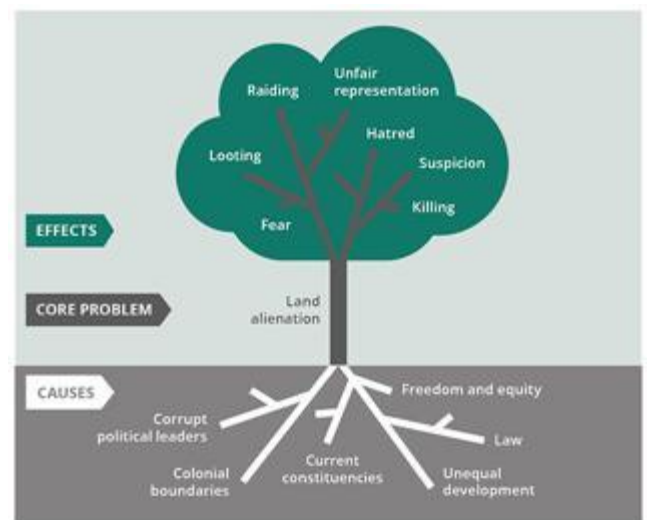
*"When the basic needs of a community have been met, they will be willing to live in peace. Most of the root causes of conflict are economic. There are also factors related to power, beliefs, religion, and recognition. If the community owns the development projects, if they are the ones to decide on it, it will lead to peace" – DACAAR*

### 1. ROOT CAUSES

The root cause can be understood as the core issue, or the highest-level cause, that is at the source of a problem. In other words, it is the one factor – or mix of factors in the case of multiple root causes – that set in motion a cause-and-effect reaction that leads to a problem. It is a planning concept and tool used in various industries to identify what changes are needed to bring an end to a problem. In the case of DACAAR's field of practice, people's forced displacement and migration is a **consequence** of a **problem**, which might be for instance the lack of access to water resources, which has its original (or root) **cause** in corrupt systems of resource management resulting in gaps in water sharing.



Source: USIP Global Campus



Source: Fisher, et al. (2000: 29)

In the triple nexus setting, what matters is to identify **the root causes of conflict** – at a local or community level to be able to resolve **the core problem** (e.g. under-development) and **the consequence** (e.g. forced displacement). Major root causes are known to include political, economic and social inequalities, extreme poverty, poor government services or sharing of resources, among others. Each context will have its own specific cause, problem, and consequences to address through a mixture of humanitarian, development and peace programming.

The essential component for DACAAR is to bring this to a local, bottom-up, people centred approach. **It is crucial not to confuse peacebuilding with state-building or stabilization**, as the latter concepts can impact the independence and neutrality of NGOs, while the former protects humanitarian principles.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

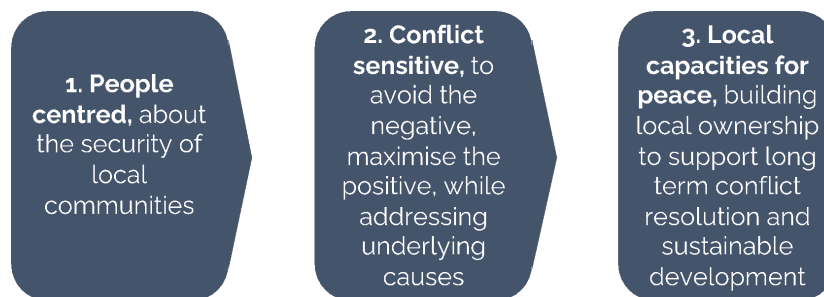


While stabilisation is a “political endeavour (...) to manage conflict and prevent conflict<sup>11</sup>”, it remains a top-down, state-led agenda. Stability can be a priority for donor governments, to enhance their own national security, while peacebuilding centres on people’s perspective to resolve conflicts. State-building is about national level, high level peace processes and political diplomacy, and may include the need to preserve peace through peacekeeping missions. Very differently, **peacebuilding is about the security of local communities, about transforming social relationships so that they are more inclusive, equal and equitable** in their treatment of various minority groups and in the recognition of equal rights for all. The confusion between the two is part of what makes peacebuilding, humanitarian and development challenging in practice.

In the triple nexus, and in a root cause analysis, conflict resolution and prevention become central to ending humanitarian need, reducing poverty and most importantly ensuring sustainable development outcomes. Such a peace-building approach happens on a spectrum:

- Starting with **conflict sensitivity**
- Addressing **underlying drivers of conflict**
- Supporting **local capacities for peace**.

The ultimate outcome then of the nexus approach, and addressing needs and root causes, is to empower people and their communities to take action. For outcomes such as economic well-being, gender justice, addressing inequalities, supporting governance and access to basic services, local capacities for peace are essential. One example – highlighted in the graph below – is to work, for instance, with religious leaders to encourage them to support women’s role in conflict mediation in Afghanistan, as highlighted by Oxfam. Other options include setting up water sharing agreements and co-chairing water committees between members of different ethnicities. The mechanisms, in any of these situations, are community-based. They can start with external support, but sustainability is linked to these mechanisms’ independence.



## 2. NON-LINEAR PROGRAMMING

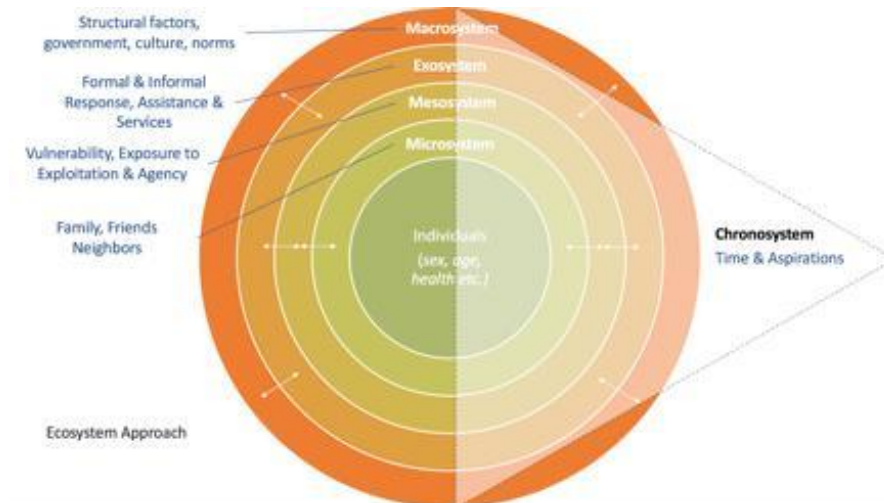
Conflict is known to be complex, and nonlinear, resulting from a host of factors. In a 2017 study<sup>12</sup>, Knox Clarke writes about the need to shift the way organisations work to address root causes, and the way results-based management processes, for instance, have normalised linear planning, considering that the path to solutions can be predictable. He highlights specifically **the need to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches for effective change to take place**. Taking the example of the World Food Programme (WFP), which in an evaluation reveals that only 17% of changes at the field level happened through top-down planning and decision making. Most happened due to innovations suggested by staff or to local circumstances, rather than top-down organisational decisions. **This is why triple nexus approaches emphasise the need to have staff who can go a step beyond traditional programming to:**

- Think long term
- Feel empowered to make changes to the way programmes have been structured
- Establish effective reporting systems to track and anticipate change.

<sup>11</sup> USAID

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/alnj5622-transforming-change-report-web.pdf>

Furthermore, instead of thinking of steps or stages of programming, the triple nexus invites practitioners to **think of the cycles of events and factors that need to be undone to avoid repeated rounds of conflicts and layered vulnerabilities. The ecosystem model is central to non-linear programming:** it recognises a system that needs to be understood, that involves interactions between stakeholders and between different levels, from the state to the citizen. The system exists without external interference and therefore any intervention has to take into account the existing system. Instead of thinking in terms of stages of programming leading to one specific outcome, Knox Clarke encourages us to think about an ecosystem model (pictured here) where interventions need to align on different levels of interaction and influence within specific communities, to bring about change. This confirms the need to profile, understand, and plan interventions in communities, with its members.



### 3. CONTEXT DRIVEN AND FLEXIBLE

Peacebuilding efforts are **context driven, and highly localised**, which makes the process well adapted to the work of NGOs who have the access to and trust of communities. It also requires **flexibility** in order to provide communities with the opportunity to influence decisions made and outcomes of programming. Multi-mandated agencies are increasingly in the need to develop and deliver more intentional flexible approaches in fragile contexts. These can include:

- **Anticipatory strategies:** taking into account change that can reasonably be expected to occur and the corresponding response needed to meet such change. These may include predictive methodologies and scenario planning; and
- **Adaptive strategies:** when changes are difficult to anticipate. This approach may take into account more holistic approaches that address a set of needs simultaneously, and across sectors. In this case, flexibility comes hand in hand with the need for partnerships.

Anticipation is to a large extent done by humanitarian actors, if we refer to processes such as the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) which details and foresees risks across a multi-year timeframe. For example, the 2018–21 HRP foresaw the risk of additional emergencies such as drought having a substantial impact on humanitarian planning. The 2019 HRP went on further to identify the delays experienced by development partners in delivering on the promises of the Brussels conference and of the One UN programme. This led to a “temporary widening” of the humanitarian response to fill in some of the gaps of development programmes and of state-led response in areas affected the most by crises. While such flexibility happens at a centralised level, similar processes are required at local level. In order for programmes to be flexible, they require three sets of indicators:

- **Context indicators:** monitoring trends on the ground, tracking progress on a regular basis

- *Accountability indicators*: whether NGOs such as DACAAR are working with communities/partners
- *Programme indicators*: outcome and output level.

## Beyond Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitivity to Peacebuilding

The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)'s strategy now includes the triple nexus, recently voted in the strategy. It also has a **peacebuilding working group** to better identify what is meant by peace and how to ensure it at a local level. The work being undertaken is built on the humanitarian principles of Do No Harm and conflict sensitive programming. ACBAR's members will now be going a step beyond, having just started off the peacebuilding side of their work.

*"We do not work on peace projects directly, but we have been working for peace indirectly through our projects" – DACAAR staff*

DACAAR has built in its strategy and modus operandi on the importance of community-based programming, working directly with the community to promote peace and coexistence. Community mobilisation is a key part of DACAAR's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programme, which requires that communities agree 100% with the projects prior to their implementation. As one staff explains, "we ensure that there is not even one single household that is unhappy with how we set up that system". This is a conflict sensitive approach, and an integral part of DACAAR's Do No Harm principle and overall strategy. **Yet, peacebuilding requires to take programming a step further.** Let's take an example.

*"We are playing a vital role in bringing peace as we work on programs that lead to job creation especially for youth/women, that leads to welfare. For example, if a community has access to clinics, security, road, electricity, livelihood opportunities, it will bridge the gap between people and the government. This will lead to peace and stability" - MRRD*

- **A conflict sensitive WASH programme** will consist of building a borehole in an area shared by and acceptable to two competing groups, that often resort to conflict over resources, to avoid any sense of bias or discrimination which could exacerbate existing tensions;
- **A peacebuilding approach will take the same WASH initiative a step further.** To target the root causes, and build local capacities for peace, a peacebuilding approach would consist of facilitating discussions between the two groups, so that they can identify a mutually agreeable location for the borehole. The approach then goes a step beyond: critical to the sustainability of any solution will be the development of collaborative arrangements between the two groups, which not only build capacities to address conflict and access over resources, but can become a platform for the community to open up discussions and dialogue to other issues: such as shared gardens, access to markets and so forth. A peacebuilding approach then addresses the immediate need – or the consequence as seen in the tree diagram, i.e. lack of access to water – as well as creating a locally led system of dispute resolution that can reinforce positive relationships among groups.

**These discussions on sustainability are central to planning in Afghanistan.** The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is structuring a new pillar system on peace, prosperity and sustainability. UNDP is considering more strongly the political economy, considering that without political stability, development activities do not provide favourable results. An NGO like DACAAR will need to build relationships with development actors who work closely with the government – such as UNDP and the World Bank (WB). In 2019, the World Bank started a conversation with UN agencies and NGOs because of the concerns over the drought. The voluntary working group met regularly over the course of a year, working jointly and producing a proposal that was endorsed by the High Poverty Council. This process informed both the development and humanitarian NGO space, helping different institutions to develop a common language and vision. "People were tackling the problem from different perspectives" according to one WB representative. Since then the WB team has been worked on specific financial support, much of it on budget, and has sought to continue its engagement with NGOs that have specific roles, such as DACAAR on food security and drought response.

With COVID-19, such partnerships and collaboration are critical to saving lives, within the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) but also by being flexible and adopting new modalities, without formal coordination structures but

with sustained dialogue. As the WB points out in an interview conducted for this study, “the year we had spent working on the prototype gave us a basis to work together with the COVID crisis. A lot of collaboration in these last few months. While it has not resulted in joint work, because of limits set on financing, what we have ended up with on that is to align programs, work out joint solutions, learn from the experience of the humanitarian community...which has informed our emergency operation, which is meant to provide a social protection style transfer to 93% of the population across Afghanistan.”

## INSIGHTS: What more can DACAAR to do align itself with the triple nexus?

### Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) Tool – See Annex 2 / 3

As previously noted, **strong reporting systems are essential** for bringing together the lessons learned from the triple nexus approach – and its focus on root causes, non-linear and context-driven programming. No two contexts are alike and as a result understanding the potential, constraints, and enablers for sustainable development and peace in each context matter. Donors have increasingly shown interest in assessing the role – or impact – of development cooperation on the root causes of violent conflict. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have centred their rationale on the need for development aid to contribute not only to rebuilding and rehabilitation, but also to conflict prevention. The OECD-DAC criteria which include assessing six criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and coherence – have been built with this rationale in mind, and to allow for planning to respond to complex environments.

Reporting tools are necessary as programming may have intended and unintended consequences. One example relevant to DACAAR is the following: the installation of water points (a key output for WASH programming) may fulfil project requirements, but may create problems for women who previously benefited from longer walks to water points to meet other women, socialise and speak about their lives, and who instead find themselves spending more of their time at home alone and without sufficient social connections. If outputs are evaluated, the programme would be delivering; however, women may feel the intervention marginalises or discriminates against them. This is why a clear link between WASH programming and women’s empowerment would be needed in such a community to find ways to transfer the time spent by women and girls fetching water into other productive activities that would bring them together (for instance group-based livelihoods, self-help groups etc).

**To assess the impact of programming on peace, a specific tool has been developed: the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) tool. It anticipates and evaluates the impacts of projects on:**

- Strengthening prospects for peaceful coexistence
- Decrease the likelihood of conflict
- Address structures and processes that increase the likelihood of conflict through violent means<sup>13</sup>.

While the full PCIA tool may not be immediately endorsed and integrated in DACAAR programming, this study provides suggestions of add-ons to include in needs assessments tools. Only then will DACAAR be able to anticipate and mitigate risks of conflict, but also invest in building local capacities that can solve root causes of conflict in the communities where it works. The PCIA tool’s objectives are briefly summarised in the graph below – with clear steps to be taken at the onset, and at the end of a project. However, this tool can also be applied during an intervention, if staff recognise that programming is not addressing root causes and requires further thinking and flexibility.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

**PRE-ASSESSMENT:**

- **Community profile** (structures in place, infrastructure, opportunities)
- **Project profile** (resources, comparative advantage, added value)
- **Conflict & Peace Profile** (root causes, peace efforts)
- **Adaptations:** Once an assessment is made, decide whether to alter the project.

**POST PROJECT:**

- **Changes** produced on peace / conflict
- **Impact on tensions/conflict** between or within communities
- **Impact on economic capacities & vulnerabilities** (poverty, food security)
- **Changes in systems -** political, economic or social (e.g. gender norms)

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

Strengthening peaceful coexistence in communities – to enhance the sustainability of action.

It has to be part of a learning approach, e.g. for donors to be more conflict & peace-minded.

**It aligns with and informs the OECD-DAC rationale.**

### III. ALIGNMENT WITH THE A-SDGs

#### Background – What is the overall objective of the SDGs? An indivisible system

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2016, and of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), scientists have underlined the indivisible and intertwined nature of each of the goals. The goals broadly fall under three areas critical to development: economic prosperity, social justice and environmental protection, with all three dimensions being embedded within the goals, targets, and indicators of the SDG framework.



As spelled out by the UN Resolution: “The interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized.” The principles of the SDGs aim to:

- **Adopt a common language** – “No one left behind” is the motto adopted which requires a strong vulnerability lens, to identify who is the furthest left behind and support them specifically; while prioritising participation is a second element of the common language: involving beneficiaries in all stages, linking with community based monitoring, understanding social and power structures in order to hear all voices and work for the benefit of all, and last but not least, gender-balanced participation.
- **Aim for collective outcomes** – back to the triple nexus considerations of joining up efforts to address root causes, and linking humanitarian, development and peace work under a human security agenda.





**WASH PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT HORIZONTAL SOCIAL COHESION**  
**ENGAGING IN & BETWEEN COMMUNITIES WHILE DELIVERING WASH SERVICES**

*Community-level programming entry points:*

1. Implement joint collaborative water development projects that facilitate constructive and safe contact between divided groups and help transform past sources of conflict, or 'dividers' into new 'connectors', linking people across conflict lines.
2. Create incentives for joint action and providing platforms for collaboration that allow for trust and social cohesion to grow at the community level.
3. Understand, value, recover, utilize, strengthen and leverage informal and indigenous systems for managing water as potential connectors.
4. Strengthen the role of women, across communities, in water management.

Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), and Community Approaches to Total Sanitation (CATS), can produce notable peacebuilding outcomes. CLTS provided space for community collaboration in Afghanistan, for example in the village of Surkh, where close and inclusive collaboration between households was observed for latrine construction.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has developed a methodology that has allowed the identification of one SDG in particular – SDG6 on Clean water and Sanitation – as the cobweb of the other 16 SDGs<sup>14</sup>. It specifically found that SDG 6.3 to have the highest number of causal relationships to other targets. This emphasises the centrality of water to ending poverty and conflict globally, and confirms the relevance, importance, and the strong potential of DACAAR’s WASH programme in Afghanistan. For least developing countries, resources can be channelled through:

- Addressing access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (6.1 and 6.2), then move on to
- Improving water quality, use and scarcity (6.3 and 6.4).
- Considering access and efficiency as the steppingstone to systemic change in addressing one of the most critical roots of conflict in Afghanistan.

One of the reasons why, in Afghanistan, a nexus approach is required is due to the financing needs of sustainable water resource management. As most of Afghanistan possesses saline water, technology is required to supply potable water to populations. This technology is expensive, and requires advocacy and resource mobilization, and joint planning between humanitarian, development and governmental partners, as well as donors. More efforts are needed in the country to map areas where better groundwater management can be conducted, and to also map and select locations where internally displaced persons (IDPs) can settle with the support from the government and other institutions. International support (SDG 6a), capacity building and transfer of technologies are needed to address these issues. Financial flows and community participation (target 6.b) are core components to meet SDG targets.



<sup>14</sup> ESCAP 2017

## The Afghanistan SDGs or A-SDGs

In Afghanistan, all of the 17 SDGs have been taken into account, except for SDG 14 (life under water). In total, Afghanistan counts :

- 16 ASDGs
- Across eight (8) sectors
- Counting 134 national targets, and
- 189 national indicators

*"DACAAR has a very good experience working with grassroots communities in addition to their traditional WASH activities. They can promote the ASDGs. It is a very good framework for DACAAR to contribute to."*

*NGO representative*

For the past five years, the focus has been on nationalising the global goals, while the next 10 years are dedicated to the implementation of the ASDGs and the alignment with programming. In Afghanistan the additional ASDGs around solutions for the displaced can be put forward as a collective outcome – and a clear link between DACAAR’s programming and the ASDGs going forward.

## DACAAR AND THE ASDGs

What A-SDGs are directly linked to DACAAR's work? The responses received to this e-survey question, filled out by DACAAR staff, were varied. While some of the links were the most obvious, for instance to ASDG 6 in recognition of DACAAR’s work in supplying clean water, and building the capacities for better sanitation and hygiene, other goals were not systematically selected. Among the most commonly selected responses were:

- No poverty (ASDG 1)
- Zero Hunger (ASDG 2)
- Good Health and Well-being ASDG 3)
- Gender Equality (ASDG 5)
- Clean water and sanitation (ASDG 6),
- Decent work and Economic growth (ASDG 8)
- Partnership for the goals (ASDG 17).

Yet, as relevant to DACAAR’s strategy and operational presence in Afghanistan are the following goals, which tend to be under-reported by staff:

- Quality Education (ASDG 4)
- Reduced Inequality (ASDG 10)
- Sustainable Cities and Communities (ASDG 11)

Finally, one goal directly relevant to the sustainability of impact, was not reported by staff members although it features in DACAAR’s current strategy:

- Partnerships (ASDG 17)

*"NGOs have thematic areas of intervention, with specific goals, targets and indicators outlined in the ASDG framework. It is simple for them to match up their current programming with our mechanism, and more importantly, they can design their programming based on the targets and indicators of the ASDGs." –*

*Government representative*

Overall our assessment shows that DACAAR’s work is directly linked to 11 of the 16 ASDGs (see graph below, broken down by each of the four DACAAR programmes). This places DACAAR in a strong position to align its strategy and operations with these goals, and behind each of these goals, specific targets and indicators.

AFGHAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (ASDG)	WASH	NRM	SSED	WE
Goal 1. No poverty	✓	✓	✓	✓
Goal 2. Zero hunger	✓	✓	✓	✓
Goal 3. Good health & well-being	✓			✓
Goal 4. Quality education			✓	
Goal 5. Gender equality			✓	✓
Goal 6. Clean water & sanitation	✓			
Goal 7. Affordable & clean energy				
Goal 8. Decent work & econ. growth			✓	✓
Goal 9. Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure				
Goal 10. Reduced inequalities		✓	✓	✓
Goal 11. Sustainable cities & communities	✓	✓		
Goal 12. Responsible consumption & prod.				
Goal 13. Climate action				
Goal 15. Life on Land				
Goal 16. Peace, justice & strong institutions				
Goal 17. Partnerships	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Priorities in Afghanistan

The Government of Afghanistan has prioritised key ASDG targets and indicators (as seen on the right). The scoring system uses 5 to indicate the most urgent targets and indicators<sup>15</sup>. Green arrows show an improving trend, red arrows a worsening trend. Key to DACAAR’s strategy and position is the fact that many of the priorities, or the most urgent needs, mirror DACAAR’s four programmes:

- **WASH.** SDG 6.3 is highlighted as an urgent target, with a red downward trend marker.
- **SSED and WE.** Skills for employment (both full and for youth) are singled out
- **NRM.** Integrated disaster risk management, development-oriented policies and national poverty are among the highest priorities, and finally,
- **Migration and mobility policies** also among the highest priorities, which goes back to the core of DACAAR’s mandate to support returnees, IDPs and displacement affected communities.

ASDG Target	Indicator	Target Description	Trend	Ass. Score
<b>1.2.</b>	<b>1.2.1</b>	<b>National poverty</b>	↘	5
1.5.	1.5.1	Resilience of the poor	-	2
2.3.	2.3.1	Agricultural productivity	-	4
2.4.	2.4.1	Food production systems	-	4
3.3.	3.3.2	Communicable diseases	↘	3
4.3.	4.3.1	VET and University		3
<b>4.4.</b>	<b>4.4.1</b>	<b>Skills for employment</b>	↘	5
4.5.	4.5.1	Gender disparities in education	↗	3
5.1.	5.1.1	Gender discrimination	-	4
5.5.	5.5.2	Leadership opportunities	↗	3
6.1.	6.1.1	Safe water	↗	3
6.2.	6.2.1	Sanitation and hygiene	↗	3.7
<b>6.3.</b>	<b>6.3.1</b>	<b>Water quality</b>	↘	5
6.4.	6.4.1	Water-use efficiency		
6.5.	6.5.1	Integrated water resource management	↗	3
6.b.	6.b.1	Community participation in water and sanitat	↗	3
7.3.	7.3.1	Energy efficiency	-	4
<b>8.3.</b>	<b>8.3.1</b>	<b>Development-oriented policies</b>	↗	5
<b>8.5.</b>	<b>8.5.2</b>	<b>Full employment</b>	↗	5
<b>8.6.</b>	<b>8.6.1</b>	<b>Youth unemployment</b>	↗	5
10.1.	10.1.1	Growth bottom 40	-	4
<b>10.7.</b>	<b>10.7.1</b>	<b>Migration and mobility policies</b>	↘	5
11.5.	11.5.1	Disaster impact reduction	↘	3
11.a.	11.a.1	Links urban and rural	↘	4
<b>11.b.</b>	<b>11.b.1</b>	<b>Integrated disaster risk management</b>		5
17.3.	17.3.1	Mobilize additional resources	↗	3
17.17.	17.17.1	Public, public-private and civil society partner	↗	3
17.18.	17.18.1	Capacity building for data	↗	3
17.19.	17.19.1	Measurements of progress	↗	3

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Economy (2019) *Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals – Prioritization Report – First Draft*

## Policy Gap Analysis

**Shifting leadership – CEO/Executive committee, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, UNDP.** The governance structure around the ASDGs is rapidly evolving. An Executive Committee for SDGs was formed under the Unity Government of Afghanistan and fell under the Chief Executive Office (CEO). With the last election outcomes, and new power-sharing agreements, the committee has been dissolved. The executive committee consisted of all the sectoral and non-sectoral ministries, representatives for independent bodies of the government, and donors. By decision of the Afghan Ministers' cabinet of October 2015, the Ministry of Economy (MoEc) has been designated as the lead ministry and focal point to take lead in coordinating, planning, monitoring and reporting on SDGs; working closely with the Ministry of Finance.

**Political transition and the ASDG Executive Committee.** While many trends are worsening and indicators marked as in need of urgent attention, a political transition since the last elections has led to the ASDG Executive Committee being disbanded. A new structure will be put in place to replace the Executive Committee. It is not yet clear whether the same unit will be re-established or whether another set-up will take over and proceed with the activities.

One of the pending tasks of the Executive Committee was to go to at least 10 provinces for localization of the ASDGs, targets and indicators on the district and village level, and also how they should design projects/programs on the village/district level based on the priorities. This remains a key opportunity for NGOs such as DACAAR to support the process of the ASDGs at the sub-national and local levels.

**Gap in alignment between ASDGs and National Priority Programmes (NPPs).** The Ministry of Economy alongside a task force also composed of UNDP, had conducted a preliminary assessment of the alignment between NPPs and ASDGs. It found that, out of 111 assessed ASDG targets, 28 were fully covered by the policies and strategies of the Afghanistan government entities, 74 ASDG targets were partially covered by the national plans and policies and 8 ASDG targets had no or limited coverage. The latter include: 1.3 (Social protection), 5.5 (leadership opportunities), 7.3 (energy efficiency), 11.2 (transport services), 15.3 (desertification and land degradation), 15.9 (Mainstreaming ecosystems and biodiversity in national planning), 16.4 (combat organized crimes), 16.a (Institutions to prevent violence, terrorism and crime).

**Financing.** Internal SDG financing is limited and with the decrease in international assistance, prospects are on the decline. The priority is to look at alternative financial sources, potentially involving the private sector and possible innovative sources. NGOs can play a role here in terms of funding that can be driven from foundations globally, from foreign donors, or from private sector suggestions. There is with the transition period a bit of uncertainty with donors – with on budget funding – how much are they going to back the government, is it going to be steady support? It will be interesting to see how they will find out where they are with the indicators, and how they will make it a bigger priority for them? In addition, the other pending issue is cost estimation for ASDGs and what mechanism should be used where UNDP promised in bringing in international experts who have worked in south/central Asian countries on the same matters. Also, resource mobilization/financing strategy for the ASDGs has yet to be done.

*"This is a really critical time for the SDGs, politically and reporting wise. NGOs have much more potential to be involved, as part of the MoEc system. What kind of access will we have to the SDGs if it is moved from the CEO side of the government, to the president's side?" –*

*NGO representative*

**Prioritisation.** There are 110/111 targets and 177 indicators in the ASDGs, which will not all be within reach in the allotted time. An exercise around prioritisation of the SDGs will be needed, to know which targets are "lower hanging fruits", which can contribute to other targets. UNDP will be tackling this approach through an economic model.

**Standard Reporting.** The next phase will need to include - according to UNDP - a framework for Afghanistan to have reporting and monitoring structures for the SDGs both inside and outside the government, with development partners as well as NGOs. The long term goal will be to set up integrated systems to make sure that SDG monitoring and evaluation are in place.

**UNDP’s lead role.** UNDP’s sustainable development goals project provides direct support to the Government of Afghanistan. The initial phase of the project was the preparation for targets to reach the SDGs, the second phase is practical work/implementation phase with the government, to reach the goals by 2030. These include specifically - advocacy and communications, mainstreaming and integration of the SDGs in the planning and implementation of development activities - such as the NPPs - of the government.

**New phase actors – Ministry of Finance (MoF), National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH).** These actors will start playing a more prominent role in the future, although agreements for support have not yet been officialised or documented.

## Entry points for DACAAR

### Entry point 1. Existing Working Groups

The ASDG coordination system is built around four working groups, with responsible ministries co-leading the effort over specific indicators. While DACAAR is part of working group 2 on agriculture and rural development, based on the gaps and areas of current work, DACAAR should also be an integral part of working group 3 on health, education and social protection.

*“There was a usefulness to having people with field and community experience with the government people. We have not taken this to the provincial level and have not had those discussions in the same way.” - ACBAR*

### Entry point 2. ASDG’s Focus on Migration and Integration

SDGs Executive Committee WGs				
Groups	Sector	Responsible Ministries		No of Indicators
Group 1	Governance and Security	Ministry Interior Affairs,	Administrative office of the President	13
		Ministry of Justice	Attorney General	
		Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Civil Registration	
Group 2	Agriculture and Rural Development	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development	15
Group 3	Health, Education and Social Protection	Ministry of Public Health	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs	94
		Ministry of Education	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations	
		Ministry of Higher Education	National Disaster Management Authority	
		Ministry of Women Affairs	Academy of Sciences	
Group 4	Economy and Infrastructure	Ministry of Finance	National Environmental Protection Agency	56
		Ministry of Economy	Ministry of Transport	
		Ministry of Energy and Water	Ministry of Industry and Commerce	
		Ministry of Urban Development and Land	Da Afghanistan Bank	
		Kabul Municipality	National Statistic and Information Authority	
		Ministry of Communication and Information Technology		

One of the specificities of the ASDGs, and the result of the process of nationalising the global goals, has been the integration of a number of indicators (10 in total) that are not part of the global SDG indicators but that have been added in recognition of the Afghan context specificities. Among these are, for example, the inclusion of indicator 10.7.5. on the *Percentage of returnees and displaced people who benefit from employment and livelihood opportunities*. Integrating such an indicator in all of DACAAR’s reporting and evaluation would allow for a concrete example of DACAAR’s contribution to the ASDGs.

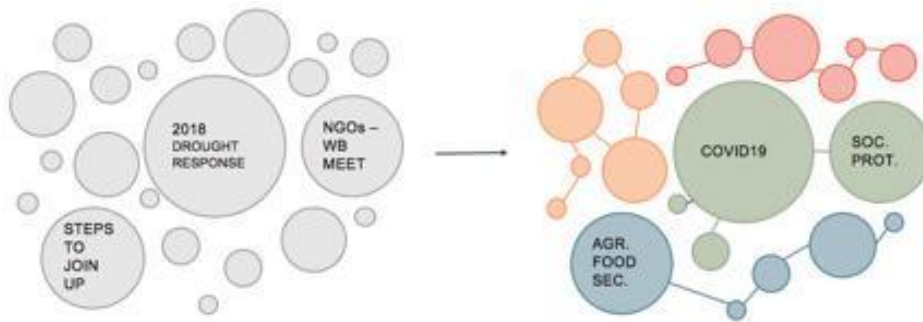
*“The opportunity presented by the new social protection programme are huge for DACAAR for 2021.”*

*– NGO representative*



### Entry point 3. Upcoming Policy / Development Linkages – Social Protection

The policy gap analysis showed that, among the ASDG targets which have very limited or no coverage in Afghanistan's national policy and strategies are social protection (1.3.), leadership opportunities (5.5.) and energy efficiency (7.3). It is recommended that DACAAR builds its future strategy taking these specific targets in mind. This is especially relevant in a context where the WB will be finalising and signing off on a new Social Protection Programme in Afghanistan during the fall 2020. The *ENETAF* (resilience in Dari) project will provide the foundation for a social protection system which can be shock responsive. It will follow a similar model as the Citizen Charter, working at the community council level, and implemented with NGO partners. Aligning now DACAAR's strategy with the social protection working group, as well as the ASDG target 1.3 and finally with the WB initiative, will ensure DACAAR's impact on a key aspect of the COVID19 and of the triple nexus response. With the COVID response, the WB program is dominated by agriculture, water, food security and social protection – in the mainstream of what DACAAR does in Afghanistan.



Opportunities for dialogue, information exchange, collaboration will become ever more important in a changing policy and pandemic context. This graph shows the potential to move from the 2018 discussions to a 2020-2021 dialogue with the WB.

#### The WB has identified areas of synergies and potential engagement with DACAAR:

- Emergency agricultural water operation to help with water supply and keeping the food supply chain open during the pandemic.
- Establishing a conversation between key NGOs that work on the development space to engage with key development actors such as the WB but also the Asia Development Bank (ADB), among other larger development actors. Such meetings could serve as an opportunity to provide updates, but also discuss possible joint work. The WB would welcome regular meetings on a more programmatic basis to identify opportunities to collaborate and address challenges on the ground. By having a regular engagement, the process could become institutionalised.

The need to set up a dialogue between development NGOs and development actors is clear for all respondents interviewed for this study. DACAAR's support and leadership was underlined and would be welcomed. This process of institutionalisation was highlighted by several actors who see the need to be more forthcoming on dialogue between partners, from informal conversations and meetings without set agendas, to slowly turning these into more formal meetings with specific objectives and outputs to be aimed for. The process can begin with DACAAR leading on the NGO side and the WB for the development actors. The opportunity presented by COVID and the new social protection programme can be key for DACAAR. By working together, even when funding may seemingly be blocked and dedicated to on-budget programmes, there will be an entry point carved out for other funding streams to be developed to fund specific ideas for collaboration.

#### Entry point 4. Addressing Gender Inequalities through Gender Transformative programming:

DACAAR has an opportunity to define its approach to women's empowerment, in the same vein as other UN and NGO actors have detailed their approaches in Afghanistan and globally. It can learn from other initiatives such as:

- CARE's gender transformative agenda. CARE defines women's economic empowerment as a process whereby which women increase their right to economic resources, as well as their power to make decisions that benefit themselves, their families and their communities. This is based on three

conditions – increased individual capabilities, decision-making power and an enabling environment. These relate directly to the triple nexus and the focus of the nexus on the importance of changing societal norms on gender equality.

- WFP Afghanistan has also adapted gender transformative approaches to the Afghan context. In WFP's programming, gender transformativity refers to positive changes in gender relations, with a focus on supporting girls' growth to their full potential, delaying marriage, increasing their schooling and livelihood opportunities, and a greater role in decision-making in the household. As part of its peacebuilding approach, WFP has set in motion a process to anticipate such changes as programming can also worsen gender inequalities if placing pressure on communities and on women for instance. To better control and mitigate such risks, WFP has put in place analyses of protection and gender considerations *before* interventions are implemented, similar to the PCIA tool previously mentioned.

Among standard indicators that DACAAR can integrate, directly linked to the ASDGs as well, are the following set of nine indicators that link the WASH, natural resource management (NRM), small scale enterprise development (SSED) and women's empowerment (WE) programs. **Sample indicators that can be included to strengthen DACAAR's approach to women's empowerment can include:**

- Percentage of communities and families supporting enterprises with women as main players
- Number of women reporting improvements in the access they have to agricultural services/inputs/resources
- Women reporting improvements to the terms and conditions of their work in agricultural value chains
- Positive changes in perception of private sector actors towards women's economic roles
- Positive changes in perceptions of women and men towards the economic and social roles of women in value chains
- Women's participation in and influence on public decision making
- Number of women using technologies and innovative productive assets
- Number of women reporting greater mobility within agricultural value chains
- Percentage of targeted households reporting joint decision-making involving women

## Operational Insights: How can DACAAR align its programming to the ASDGs?

### PRIORITISATION

Similar to the exercise conducted at a national level by the Government, DACAAR will need to hold a series of internal workshops to go beyond references to the ASDG goals, to make a priority list of targets and indicators to be integrated in its programmes and monitoring processes. This study provides DACAAR with a toolkit – an excel spreadsheet including all relevant ASDG goals, targets, and indicators – for DACAAR to base its selection on. It is organised by each of DACAAR's four programmes, and presents where each can contribute to specific goals, targets and indicators. The prioritisation of targets has to mirror 1) what we know of the key gaps and priorities in Afghanistan, at a national level, and 2) what DACAAR can realistically achieve – looking at elements of DACAAR's strategy and programming that can most easily align with the ASDGs. This should be done in three steps:



The choice of priority targets will have an impact on strategy and vice versa. As a result, these cannot be made without thorough internal conversations. Based on the preliminary discussions held during the two-day workshop with DADCAAR staff, the following agreements were reached:

- **Under the WASH programme**

The aims of WASH programming can be centred on building the resilience of the poor (1.5), providing equitable access to water, as well as sanitation and hygiene (6.1 and 6.2), and participation of local communities (6.b). Further discussions are needed to discuss the integration – whether immediately or phased ) of the health components (3.3) as well as the resource management aspects (6.5). As seen in this report, WASH has impacts on broader elements and other goals; in addition the discussion on WASH is one of access as well as quality and efficiency. For instance, water quality (6.3) is a key priority of the Government of Afghanistan and could be considered as a priority for DACAAR.

- **Under the NRM programme**

The aims of the NRM programme can be linked to targets on resilience (1.5), agricultural productivity (2.3), sustained income growth for the poorest (10.1), sustained food systems (2.4) and resource efficient communities (11.b). Other core components to be discussed are the links to markets, and the involvement of beneficiaries and communities in the programme decisions, similar to the participatory approach above.

- **Under the SSED programme**

There is an opportunity to prioritise targets on gender and youth specifically, as well as a strong component on migration and mobility. Target 10.8 includes for instance indicators on the percentage of returnee settlements with basic services and infrastructure (10.7.4), or the percentage of returnees and displaced people benefiting from employment and livelihood opportunities (10.7.5). The SSED programme can not only be related to economic aspects but to a durable solutions objective, with a multi-dimensional focus on jobs, services, settlement conditions.

- **Under the WE programme**

The targets under WE can provide an aspirational roadmap towards the integration, for instance, of information, communications and technology (ICT) as well as development-oriented policies that can include access to financial services – if possible through mechanisms that are aligned with the local context and customs. A reflection on these targets will be a reflection on the strategy.

#### **Next steps – Internal Workshops and ASDG Prioritisation Exercise**

Each of the four programmes at DACAAR will require a dedicated internal workshop to agree on targets, and match those with indicators that can be integrated within M&E frameworks used by the organization – both when working independently, as well as when working in consortia.

The process should consist of the following:

- Agree on the ASDG goals
- Prioritise and colour code ASDG targets for adoption in the short, medium to long term
  - One colour for targets that correspond to the current strategy
  - One colour for targets to be included in the next strategic plan
- Identify ASDG indicators
  - Already in the M&E frameworks (existing)
  - To be included in the M&E frameworks (additional)
- Communicate back on the results with other staff members and with governmental counterparts.

## IV. COLLABORATION ON THE NPPs

### Background

A commitment has been made, as part of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), to empower Afghan institutions, improve service delivery, invest in and create jobs as well as invest in sustainable development. This is aligned with the sustainable development agenda of the ASDGs reviewed previously. The main foundation for Afghan development efforts and goals remains the 'Strategy Towards Self-Reliance – Strategic Vision for the Transformation Decade.' Launched in 2012, the strategy identifies 15 key areas for development, meant to be operationalised through 22 National Priority Programmes (NPPs).<sup>4</sup> These were subsequently reviewed, with a final shortlist of 10 NPPs that now government national development planning in Afghanistan.

While alignment of these NPPs with the A-SDGs is intended as per the ANDS, a 2019 report jointly assessed this alignment and found that, in practice, many programmes remained largely unaligned, although degrees varied along specific themes – only about 40% are aligned.<sup>16</sup> While the wider concept of the triple nexus might have a way to go before being strategically streamlined and coherent across the three nodes, the status of ASDGs and NPPs provide more tangible insight into minimum progress on development programming (and to a certain extent, to humanitarian and peace sectors).

This approach further highlighted several weaknesses within NPPs, including programmatic operationalisation occurring in silo and not within the structures of cross-cutting NPPs, as well as inadequate M&E frameworks and indicators.<sup>17</sup> While this reveals current gaps and dissonances between broad national priorities, official NPP priorities, and ASDGs, efforts are being made to fill these gaps and ensure better coherence across programmes and actors. DACAAR, as an organisation that works closely with humanitarian, development, and civil society actors, is well positioned to be a part of these alignment efforts.

### Principles

The World Bank, through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) – a multi donor trust fund – and through technical expertise, directly supports the government's NPPs. While the ASDGs are part of the UN system's support to the Government, the World Bank and development actors more broadly focus on NPPs. They play a key role in government's development processes.

There are three key principles of engagement with the NPPs:

1. **Reinforce** – not replace – national and local systems
2. **Localise** – from the outset – looking for opportunities to shift tasks and leadership to local actors and reinforcing local capacities. The aim is to work at remote, community levels, to enhance the coverage of development and access to services as broadly as possible.
3. **Scale** – Afghanistan will need to expand national and local social protection systems to be able to meet the needs of its population, especially at a time of increasing volatility caused by peace processes, insecurity and the global COVID pandemic.

These are all principles to which an NGO like DACAAR can subscribe as they are aligned with its mandate. It requires an NGO to think and act beyond the government to think instead of providing access to adequate resources and services in a context where the Government is not able to take that on. In cases such as Afghanistan where government displays a leadership role but lack capacity, or legitimacy, to deliver services, such standards can be set by NGOs within a national system strategy.

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<sup>16</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Economy (2019) *Aligning National Priority Programmes (NPPs) with Sustainable Development Goals*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

## Status update

This study's conclusion is to wait until key elements of NPPs' status are clarified, and that key constraints (listed below) are recognised and addressed for NGOs to be able to align their work with the NPPs, and join the implementation effort. DACAAR teams will need to monitor these constraints over time.

### Constraints

**Decentralisation.** "The political situation makes the implementation difficult in the field", reports a NGO staff. In the absence of sufficient control by the central government, the local (subnational) government often ask NGOs to design the programs as they want irrespective of the SDGs/NPPs. Such gaps – between national and sub-national levels – in Afghanistan are known to be a key constraint of any long-term work.

**Unclear status: gaps in results frameworks.** According to the MoEc, the challenges faced with the NPPs are their different degrees of progress, and some remain a work in progress. While it is an objective to align NPPs with the ASDGs, the problem remains that most of the NPPs do not currently have a results framework or action plan to help the MoEc align. The Ministry of Finance has not been able to provide such documentation to the MoEc. As the NPP process has been delayed, some NPPs have progressed while others have not. As a result, *certain* NPPs are better aligned than others, leading to greater synergies between policies and programmes.

**Financing.** Key informants point to the fact that NPPs' budget has not been reflected in the national budget. Hence, when speaking of alignment, NPPs have to be aligned technical and financially. The next steps include the alignment of NPPs with the 2021 fiscal budget. Other informants, on the NGO side, have highlighted that working as implementing partners of NPPs comes at a high cost – and may not be financially sustainable for them. Clarifying financial alignment at a national level, but also at an operation level, is a dual priority to ensure visibility and sustainability of the effort.

**Lack of integration.** NPPs are referred to often as distinct programmes, with a lack of cross-fertilisation of experiences and targets. The way ASDGs are considered as being indivisible and interlinked, so are NPPs. However, in practice, silos remain. One of the areas that NGOs can actively promote is the need to create integration and linkages between the NPPs.

**Tensions to resolve.** The Government of Afghanistan is not capable of implementing these programmes on its own. The role of NGOs in the implementation process is essential. Without NGOs, vital services would not be delivered, and the NPPs could not be rolled out nationally, and at scale. While some humanitarian NGOs can stand separate and apart – to focus on their emergency mandate – dual mandated NGOs such as DACAAR cannot and do not need to take such a stance. For NPPs to be implemented, NGOs have a central role to play. However, tensions remain when NGOs are the implementers, and not involved on the planning aspects. There is a need for more vocal NGO leadership to highlight this tension and resolve this contradiction. On the one hand, the Government of Afghanistan is working on a new NGO law to ensure that donors align their resources with national priorities. However, at the same time, NGOs remain responsible to fundraise in the sectors relevant to the ASDGs and NPPs. In other words, NGOs become responsible for implementation and fundraising, which is too big of a role.

### Opportunities

*"We are 13 facilitating partners (FPs) in total – from my attendance at these meetings, a third want to be more aggressive, a third want to lay low, and the other third is in the middle (...) DACAAR has certain personalities that could rally all of us together, to get on the same page." –*

*NGO representative*

Despite these constraints, opportunities also exist – specifically on leadership and learning from existing experiences (such as the Citizen's Charter programme, of which DACAAR is one of the implementing partners),



to be able to strategically plan any future involvement. There are certain hurdles that, if taken on as opportunities, can pave the way for a stronger positioning of NGOs within the NPP framework.

**Leadership and Support.** The common feedback is the need for a greater voice by NGOs, in recognition of the work done by NGOs as facilitating partners for the NPPs. NGOs currently feel that they had to fight their way to become partners of the NPPs, but still receive both criticisms from the government, and a call to do more – especially in terms of expansion to new areas. NGOs require more support to avoid having to remain in a position where they have to prove themselves, while supporting the government and development actors. The conversation will need to move towards a stronger system of support to NGOs as well. Establishing an informal forum with the World Bank could serve this purpose.

**Learning from the Citizen Charter (CC) experience.** DACAAR will need to take stock of its CC experience. Internally, three aspects need to be evaluated before deciding on further engagement. These are:

- Financial sustainability
- Impact on local capacities for peace: Is the CC experience allowing DACAAR to scale its work? Is there a positive impact on peacebuilding at the local level and addressing root causes? Through CC, many community level interventions are being provided by the Government through NGOs. These remain a unique opportunity to address the root causes agenda and work towards the triple nexus.
- Opportunities for building a common language and platform with development actors: is the experience showing a stronger collaboration with development actors? Can mutually beneficial terms of engagement be outlined, agreed upon and with time, institutionalised? Can there be a common mechanism for information sharing and advocacy?

**In the future, beyond Citizen Charter.** There are six NPPs that DACAAR can contribute to. These are the:

1. Urban Development NPP with its links to ASDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16
2. Comprehensive Agriculture Development NPP with its links to ASDG 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 15
3. Women’s economic empowerment NPP with its links to ASDG 1, 2, 5, 8, 10
4. National Infrastructure NPP with its links to ASDG 1, 2,3, 4, 6, 7,9
5. Effective Governance NPP with its links to ASDG 16
6. Human Capital NPP with its links to ASDG 1, 3, 4

NPP / DACAAR	WASH	NRM	SSED	WE
Private sector				
National Infrastructure Plan	X			
Effective Governance				
National Justice				
Citizen’s Charter	DACAAR is a Facilitating Partner in three provinces (Kunar, Laghman, Nuristan)			
Comprehensive Agricultural Dev.		X		
Urban Development				
Extractive Industries				
Human capital dev.			X	X
Women’s economic empowerment			X	X

## V. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that DACAAR can and should plan to:

1. **Fully align its strategy and programming with the Triple Nexus**, by integrating a more systematic approach to peacebuilding at a community level, addressing and documenting progress on root causes, and learning from methods to apply them in other settings. This approach can be taken forward in any new programming and consortium activity, as well as in ongoing projects. As a first step, elements of the PCIA tool can be integrated in assessments on the ground to ensure that all staff are sensitised, and with time, systematise the peacebuilding approach.
2. **Prioritise alignment with key ASDG goals, targets, and indicators**, to ensure that its commitment to the ASDGs takes on concrete actions and steps, from programming to monitoring and evaluation. Prioritising the selection of targets and indicators should be done on the basis of existing national priorities, to ensure alignment, but should also be part of an internal reflection on the type of programming that DACAAR has today, and the strategy it would like to develop for the future.
3. **Learn and take stock of the CC experience to reinforce its approach to collaborating on the NPPs**. It is still too early to say whether DACAAR can and should take part in other NPP implementation processes as many NPPs remain 'a work in progress', in need of more clarity in terms of results, as well as financing. There is an opportunity through the CC partnership for DACAAR to address current gaps on NGO leadership and advocacy. DACAAR can become a more vocal member of the CCNPP facilitating partners, rallying others to speak with one voice with the Government and WB.

Among the recurrent themes of this analysis are three priorities for mechanisms for collaboration, leadership and localisation. Each of these themes is interlinked and carries concrete recommendations:

- a. **Aiming for stronger institutional mechanisms for information sharing, advocacy and communications** between NGOs such as DACAAR and development actors such as UNDP (on the ASDGs) or the WB (on the NPPs), in strong collaboration with the Government. While there are many civil societies for a that DACAAR is a part of, none of these has provided for the right space for such engagement. In other words, engagement has to be rethought and started from scratch. One of the recommendations is to start with informal yet regular meetings, that will build relationships and trust, and with time become an institutional reality. Building on the collaborations between NGOs and the WB during the 2018 drought response, there is today an opportunity for DACAAR to lead at that level and remain one of the key – if not the main – NGO counterpart in discussions with the WB, given the importance of DACAAR's thematic areas at a time of COVID19.
- b. **Integrating DACAAR in key working groups and coordination groups**. This study recommends the involvement of DACAAR in the ASDG working group on health, education and social protection especially during the COVID pandemic, and the heightened focus on social protection systems at national and local levels. Similarly, once the ASDG executive committee is revitalised, DACAAR can play a role in showing its support and leadership to key national priorities. Finally, DACAAR can join the newly established ACBAR peacebuilding working group as a core member.
- c. **Rally CCNPP facilitating partners around a learning and advocacy agenda**. The CC should be seen as a test run for NGOs' engagement with NPPs, and one that can set the basis for stronger collaboration. This is the time to ensure NGOs speak with one voice with the Government and the WB. This requires a more strategic approach and leadership by DACAAR.
- d. **Commit to localisation**: At the heart of the triple nexus approach is a discussion on joining up forces and building on actors' comparative advantage to build local capacities for peace. For DACAAR to be able to scale up its effort and gain access, it will have to systematically work with local partners (with a focus on community-based organisations or CBOs) who can support the Nexus agenda. DACAAR is already involved in building the capacity and training these organisations, lessons learned from this experience would benefit widely the triple nexus, ASDG and NPP priorities.

# ANNEX 1. METHODOLOGY

## Research Phases and Tools

### Phase 1: Desk and Programming Review

#### *Step 1: Collection and Analysis of NPP, A-SDGs and development policies*

In Step 1, collection of documents pertaining to the A-SDGs, NPPs, the triple nexus in Afghanistan, and Afghan policies developed in the past and currently in progress will occur. These documents will be systematically categorised in a Desk Review Tracking matrix (example in Figure 4), which will organise these by type, content, specific related SDG, and whether the document relates to the national level or to a specific province. This will later inform the analysis phase of DACAAR documents in step 2. Documents to be collected include the following:

- **Review of official documents** pertaining to the A-SDGs, NPPs, and triple nexus in Afghanistan, including government actions, documents from relevant ministries, MoUs, and National Coordination Commission (NCC) documents. In addition, national statements and other documentation related to Afghan national development objectives will be collected.
- **Academic literature** pertaining to these elements, including those examining coordination, gaps, or funding of triple nexus approaches in Afghanistan in relation to SDGs/ NPPs.
- **Media articles, documents, or press releases** which may describe national reactions or awareness of these goals, policies, and objectives.
- **Grey literature** published by international organisations, NGOs (international or national), and other organisations.

#### *Step 2: Summary and Mapping of Alignment and Gaps – Building a Resource*

The final step of the policy process model will form the culmination of the two above steps, creating key resource outputs for the capacity building training workshop:

1. A brief **summary factsheet of key findings** of the above desk review and analysis, including clear summary of sub-goals and indicators for both ASDGs and NPPs
2. A **visual mapping of key DACAAR and other programming** to identify, describe, compare and contrast how NPPs, triple nexus approaches, A-SDGs and DACAAR programming link to each other. Visualisations of these findings, through tools such as tables or Venn Diagrams, will make clear the connections (or lack thereof) across these different dimensions.

#### *Step 3: DACAAR Strategic Programming*

Step 3 will examine how and where DACAAR programming fits into the policy process model, and where this programming could be better leveraged in future. This will happen first through **internal review of DACAAR's programmes**, including review of project ToRs, institutional documents, M&E reports, and other relevant programming documents, as well as discussions and formal KIIs with DACAAR staff. This internal review of DACAAR programming will result in an initial table and visual highlighting where current strategy and programming aligns with findings and priorities on NPPs, A-SDGs, and triple nexus.

### Phase 2: Complementary KIIs

Initial inception discussions revealed the value and relevance of this research not only for DACAAR but also for the wider stakeholder landscape in Afghanistan. As such, while the initial proposal had suggested a minimal number (5-10 KIIs), the research team will expand on this, seeking to interview actors from a variety of stakeholder contexts, including NGOs, UN, government, and donors. Table X presents a non-exhaustive list of KIIs to be targeted, including KIIs spoken with during the inception phase.

TABLE 1: Sample KII List for Study on NPPS, A-DSGs, and Triple Nexus

Type of Stakeholder	Actor
NGO	DACAAR - Head of Programmes
	DACAAR - M&E
	DACAAR - Director
	NRC
	DRC
	ACBAR
UN	UNDP
Government	Ministry of Economy
	MoRR
	Ministry of Finance
	A-SGD Coordination Unit
	MRRD
	MAIL
Donor	World Bank
	Embassy of Denmark

### Phase 3: Learning Toolkit and Capacity Building Workshop

The capacity building component forms a key element of the study outcomes. While the initial proposal and ToR put this forth in the form of a learning workshop, initial KII discussions have highlighted the need for ongoing and expanded learning that goes beyond a one off event and which can be adapted to a wider range of stakeholders, positioning DACAAR as a key actor in leading on alignment with A-SDG, NPPs, and triple nexus. In addition, in order to further identify and establish most relevant capacity tools and needs for DACAAR staff -- including both staff in Kabul and field staff -- the **Samuel Hall research team sent an E-Survey to DACAAR staff during the inception phase**. The results of this survey will inform the development of learning tools along with the outcomes of the desk review.

The two learning outputs are described in further detail below.

### Remote Workshop

The remote workshop took place over two half days -- on July 22 and July 27, 2020. It included the participation of field and Kabul staff of DACAAR (in total 33 people) who also previously participated in the e-survey. The workshop, conducted over zoom, allowed participants to gain knowledge on the conceptual or theoretical level, and apply the knowledge on specific case studies. A glossary of key terms alongside 1-pager presentations of the Triple nexus, ASDGs and NPPs (in English, Dari and Pashto) were shared ahead of time. The workshop was emphasised as being the start of a conversation, which DACAAR will continue internally.

## ANNEX 2. PEACE AND CONFLICT IMPACT ASSESSMENT (PCIA) TOOL

### COMMUNITY PROFILE

Location:	
Area:	
Natural resource:	
Land use / water use:	
Environmental issues:	
Population:	
Age structure:	
Ethnic groups:	
Language:	
Literacy level: (% who can read and write)	
Local governance structure:	
Type of labour / livelihood patterns:	
Social services available (health, schools, electricity, water)	

### PROJECT PROFILE

Project Name:	
Start date:	
Project objective:	
Current status of the project: (planned, operational, completed)	
Who initiated the project?	
Consortium (Y/N):	
History of community reaction to the project:	

Other projects in the community related to the current project:		
Local ownership of the project:		
Literacy level: (% who can read and write)		
Main benefits / resources generated by the project:		
Has the project generated any conflicts in the community?		
<b>CONFLICT PROFILE</b>		
<b>MANIFESTATIONS</b>	<b>PROXIMATE CAUSES</b>	<b>ROOT CAUSES</b>
<i>What are the easily identifiable occurrences (what you see) that indicate unrest in the community?</i>	<i>What are the factors that accentuate underlying causes?</i>	<i>What are the structural or underlying causes of conflict?</i>
<b>POLITICAL</b> <i>E.g. rising levels of violence</i>	<i>E.g. dissatisfaction with Government</i>	<i>E.g. lack of opportunities for peaceful reconciliation</i>
<b>ECONOMIC</b> <i>E.g. extreme poverty</i>	<i>E.g. economic power vested in elite groups</i>	<i>E.g. imbalance of economic opportunities along group lines</i>
<b>SOCIAL</b> <i>E.g. ethnic divisions</i>	<i>E.g. systemic marginalization of minority groups</i>	<i>E.g. lack of respect for fundamental human rights, socio-cultural attitudes</i>
<b>SECURITY</b> <i>E.g. violent crime and small arms</i>	<i>E.g. organized crime</i>	<i>E.g. ineffective governance, break down in rule of law</i>
<b>PEACE PROFILE</b>		



PEACE EFFORT	PEACEBUILDING GAPS	PEACEBUILDING SYNERGIES
<i>Identify the peace effort, if any, that addresses any aspect of the root causes</i>	<i>What initiatives require attention to sustain peace?</i>	<i>What factors combine to reinforce other peace factors?</i>
<b>POLITICAL</b>		<p><i>E.g. Demand for infrastructure fosters growth in employment and encourages people to migrate back to rural areas and reduces poverty</i></p> <p><i>E.g. increasing commitment to social service programming fosters social stability</i></p>
<b>ECONOMIC</b> <i>E.g. local and national anti-poverty groups; active civil society supported by NGOs</i>	<i>E.g. lack of access to empowering technologies for those in rural areas; gender inequality is an obstacle to women in the fight against poverty</i>	
<b>SOCIAL</b> <i>E.g. budget commitment to social/protection programs: education, health, housing</i>	<i>E.g. exclusion of the poor; people have to pay bribes for services</i>	
<b>SECURITY</b> <i>E.g. basis for an independent judiciary</i>	<i>E.g. low salaries; high levels of corruption</i>	

## IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL IMPACT TOOL		
POSSIBLE IMPACT	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
<i>The project might impact YES / NO</i>	<i>The project might...</i>	<i>The project might...</i>
<b>IMPACT ON ECONOMIC CAPACITIES &amp; VULNERABILITIES</b> YES <i>E.g. equitable sharing of project benefits</i>	<i>E.g. increase number of micro-entrepreneurs</i>	<i>E.g. tensions within families</i>

<p><b>IMPACT ON SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND ON TRADITIONAL COPING MECHANISMS</b></p> <p>YES</p> <p><i>E.g. impact on people's self-reliance</i></p> <p><i>E.g. mutual respect and trust between groups</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. youth skill acquisition</i></p> <p><i>E.g. formation of associations</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. power struggles</i></p>
<p><b>ROOT CAUSES</b></p> <p>YES</p> <p><i>E.g. socio-cultural attitudes</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. leads to growth (financial services, employment)</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. contribute to corruption</i></p>
<p><b>SECURITY IMPACT TOOL</b></p>		
<p><b>POSSIBLE IMPACT</b></p>	<p><b>POSITIVE</b></p>	<p><b>NEGATIVE</b></p>
<p><i>The project might impact...</i></p> <p>YES/NO</p>	<p><i>The project might...</i></p>	<p><i>The project might...</i></p>
<p><b>CONFLICT BETWEEN COMMUNITIES</b></p> <p>YES</p>	<p><i>E.g. contribute to the emergency of community self-help groups / security</i></p>	
<p><b>CONFLICT IN THE COMMUNITY</b></p> <p>YES</p>	<p><i>E.g. contribute to the establishment of coalitions / associations</i></p>	
<p><b>UNDERLYING CAUSES</b></p> <p>YES</p>		<p><i>E.g. upset opposition groups by diverting their resources</i></p>
<p><b>CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND LOCAL FORMS OF COMMUNITY-BSED PROTECTION</b></p> <p>YES</p>		<p><i>E.g. displace elders' circles which deal with disputes</i></p>

## DECISION TOOL

DECISION TOOL		
ISSUE	OPTIONS FOR ACTION	SUPPORT / CONSTRAINTS
<i>Name key unintended impacts. What are the problems or opportunities that require attention?</i>	<i>How can the project address the harm or take a new opportunity to benefit people?</i>	<i>Who / What are the obstacles to your proposed options for action? Who will support your options?</i>
<p><b>POLITICAL</b></p> <p><i>E.g. youth militancy and disrespect for traditional authority</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. offer training for youth in non-violence and leadership skills; invite project manager to provide briefing to youth and to elders' council</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. civil society and traditional elders will support</i></p>
<p><b>ECONOMIC</b></p> <p><i>E.g. Anger due to limited opportunities for economic employment</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. support cooperatives and micro-credit schemes</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. referrals to be arranged for micro-credit schemes</i></p>
<p><b>SOCIAL</b></p> <p><i>E.g. reduced self-reliance and culture of dependence in youth</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. support civic education, peace and non-violence in schools</i></p>	<p><i>E.g. local government which will have to find the money</i></p>
<p><b>SECURITY</b></p>	<p><i>E.g. improve sharing of economic benefits of project</i></p>	<p><i>Constraint - non-state opposition groups</i></p>

<p><i>E.g. project creates tensions which leads to arms proliferation in the community</i></p>		
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## ANNEX 3. PEACE AND CONFLICT IMPACT ASSESSMENT (PCIA) ADD-ON QUESTIONS

If the full version of the PCIA is not adapted to the current operations at DACAAR, it is recommended that a total of six questions be added to existing needs assessments already used by field teams. While such “add ons” can be considered, with time, DACAAR will need to invest in further training and inclusion of the comprehensive PCIA approach.

In the meantime, and upon review of DACAAR’s existing forms, it is recommended that the following additions be made.

### DACAAR VILLAGE PROFILE assessment form

Include the following

- Under “Basic information” add
  - o The nature of the local governance structure
  - o What are easily identifiable occurrences of unrest/conflict in the community?
  - o What are the root causes of conflict in this village?
- Under “Involvement of other Stakeholders” add
  - o What peace efforts have been taken to address the root causes of conflict?
  - o What initiatives are required to sustain peace?
  - o Which actors can support DACAAR’s efforts to address root causes?
  - o Which actors may act as an obstacle to DACAAR’s efforts?

### WASH in community and institutions assessment form

Add a section on governance and ask the following:

- o What is the nature of the local governance structure?
- o What are easily identifiable occurrences of unrest/conflict in the community?
- o What are the root causes of conflict in this village?
- o What peace efforts have been taken to address the root causes of conflict?
- o What initiatives are required to sustain peace?
- o Which actors can support DACAAR’s efforts to address root causes?
- o Which actors may act as an obstacle to DACAAR’s efforts?

## ABOUT SAMUEL HALL

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research in countries affected by issues of migration and displacement. Our mandate is to produce research that delivers a contribution to knowledge with an impact on policies, programmes and people. With a rigorous approach and the inclusion of academic experts, field practitioners, and a vast network of national researchers, we access complex settings and gather accurate data.

**Our research connects the voices of communities to change-makers for more inclusive societies.**

Samuel Hall has offices in Afghanistan, Kenya, Germany and Tunisia and a presence in Somalia, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. For more information, please visit [www.samuelhall.org](http://www.samuelhall.org)



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