

Transition and Recovery: The “Missing Middle”

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Introduction

Within the United Nations (UN) system there is a clear architecture which guides strategies and programmes during the emergency response provided through the humanitarian cluster approach¹ and how to implement programmes in post-conflict or development contexts, such as through the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).² However, in the middle, between emergency and development where transition is required to bridge policies, programming, and action (also known as the Transition & Recovery or Early Recovery phase), there is no clear globally agreed UN “architecture” or operational framework to guide the response of the UN to support host governments in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations who have been affected by conflict or a natural disaster. This “transition gap” can be problematic as, in this post-crisis period, coordinated action by the UN is critical to ensure that countries don’t slip back into crisis, instability, or socio-economic decline.

The discussion on this Humanitarian Development Nexus (HDN) is not a new one, the debate around how to link relief, rehabilitation and development has been going on for the last few decades.³ There is a general recognition that responses across the nexus are complex with a need for non-linear and simultaneous humanitarian, recovery, development interventions to respond to the different needs following an emergency.⁴

In recent years the debate on the HDN has gained momentum. At the World Humanitarian Summit (2016), under the leadership of UN Secretary General (SG) Ban Ki-moon, the largest UN agencies, 30 of the largest donors and aid providers agreed to a “Commitment to Action” and a “New Way of Working”⁵ in crisis situations, to transcend the humanitarian-development divide. This commitment was reinforced by UN SG Antonio Guterres in his 2017 report to reposition the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁶, in which he called for the removal of unnecessary barriers between

Author’s Note: The author works for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN’s Migration Agency, in Iraq. The paper presents the personal views and experiences of the author and doesn’t represent the views of her employer. The paper is not meant to offer a comprehensive overview and analysis of the humanitarian development nexus or the workings of the UN system, but should be read as a personal reflection based on her direct experiences.

¹ Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics. They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and have clear responsibilities for coordination. <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/about-clusters/what-is-the-cluster-approach>

² The UN Country Team (UNCT) prepares the UNDAF through a fully inclusive interagency process as well as with the government, partners and other stakeholders from the inception. The UNDAF identifies key actions and the division of labour among UN organizations. It outlines how resources will be mobilized for UNDAF preparation, including the diverse expertise available within the UNCT.

³ For example, HDN was previously referred to as Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD). E.g Overseas Development Institute (2014) “Remaking the case for linking relief, rehabilitation and development.” <https://www.odi.org/publications/8319-remaking-case-linking-relief-rehabilitation-and-development>

⁴ UNDP, Guidance Note on Inter-Cluster Early Recovery, January 2017

⁵ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2016/05/24/commitment-to-action-moving-from-delivering-aid-to-ending-need-.html>

⁶ “Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet”, 21 December 2017, <http://undocs.org/A/72/124>
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humanitarian and development actors to jointly work towards collective outcomes at country level.

This paper will review what frameworks are in place within the UN to collectively address the needs of crisis-affected populations, illustrated by the current context in Iraq, and will discuss the need for a global UN framework for the transition and recovery phase.

1) The Post-Crisis, Transition and Recovery Phase

There are two main UN frameworks that guide its work in this phase, the UN's Early Recovery approach and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons.

UN Global Cluster for Early Recovery

In 2008, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the principle of early recovery to improve the delivery of humanitarian aid by linking it to post-conflict activities.⁷ Early recovery is both an approach as well as a set of specific programmatic actions to help people move from dependence on humanitarian relief towards development. The approach aims to generate self-sustaining, nationally owned, resilient processes for post crisis recovery and put in place preparedness measures to mitigate the impact of future crises.⁸ Specific programmatic actions of the Global Cluster for Early Recovery (GCER) focus on four areas related to Livelihoods, Basic Infrastructure & Rehabilitation, Governance, and Capacity-building.¹

IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs

Whether a crisis is man-made or the result of a natural disaster (i.e. floods, earthquake etc), it is usually accompanied by large numbers of forcibly displaced persons, either crossing their international borders (to become asylum seekers or refugees) or staying within national boundaries (to become internally displaced persons (IDPs)). The 2010 IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs⁹ details the process and conditions necessary for achieving durable solutions to displacement following a crisis. The framework¹⁰ operationalizes the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998)¹⁰ which identified three durable solutions: Return to areas of origin; Local integration; and Settlement elsewhere in the country.

When comparing the UN GCER and the IASC Framework, it is clear that there are quite a few programmatic overlaps between the two, however neither are a silver bullet. The IASC Framework is a tool to support displaced populations and is not effective to support changes in programming from humanitarian to transition assistance. The GCER has not been widely recognized as an effective tool to facilitate transition and recovery programming in an emergency context.

To date, there is not one agreed global UN framework for the transition and recovery phase which clearly organizes priority sectors by humanitarian actor (similar to the humanitarian cluster system) or divides up the roles and responsibilities of the different UN agencies for each programme area (similar to the UNDAF).

⁷ UNDP, Policy on Early Recovery, 2008.

⁸ UNDP, Guidance Note on Inter Cluster Early Recovery, 2016

⁹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. April 2010

¹⁰ United Nations, OCHA, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998



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2) The Iraq Context

Iraq is an example of a post-crisis country entering the transition and recovery phase. Between 2014 and 2017, 5.7 million civilians were displaced inside Iraq due to conflict. From October 2016 to July 2017, the longest urban battle since World War II took place when the Iraq military reclaimed the city of Mosul from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).¹¹ Since December 2017, when the war was declared over by Iraq’s Prime Minister, the Government of Iraq (GoI) was faced with the urgent tasks to ensure security and stability, fast-track reconstruction plans for cities like Mosul, and implement reconciliation programmes to build trust between the country’s different ethno-religious communities.

Aside the humanitarian situation, the country is heavily divided along sectarian lines, is facing an economic crisis, is in the process of demobilizing combatants, and preparing for the parliamentary elections expected in May 2018. Displacement remains an issue (2.2 million IDPs in March 2018).¹²

While over 3 million IDPs have returned to their place of origin since the start of the crisis,¹³ conditions in these areas lack the preconditions to achieve durable solutions. The sustainability of IDP returns continue to be compromised. While the long-term intention of IDPs is to return home, over 55% of them would rather stay in their current location of displacement in the short-term.¹⁴

In 2017, while still fully occupied with the humanitarian response to the displacement crisis, the UN Country Team (UNCT) developed the Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP) (2018-19).¹⁵ The RRP aims to fast-track the social dimensions of reconstruction in Iraq and focuses on: helping people who have suffered the most; restoring confidence in the Government; revitalizing the areas at the highest risk of violence; and advancing broad political participation and inclusive social harmony. The RRP is envisioned as a nexus framework as it builds on the work that has been done by humanitarian partners to support displaced and host families during the conflict and on efforts made by the Government and development partners to stabilize newly liberated areas.

At the recent International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq (Kuwait, February 2018),¹⁶ the UNSG launched the RRP with an appeal for \$482 million for the first year of stabilization efforts in high-risk areas.

3) Challenges with Transition Programming

Operational Framework

While the establishment of the RRP, a comprehensive transition and recovery programme, can be applauded, there has been criticism on the part of donors, INGOs and Iraqi Government that there has not been broad consultation or coordination in the

¹¹ The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), February 2018. <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq>

¹² IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix, see <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/IDPsML.aspx>

¹³ IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/>

¹⁴ IOM Iraq, Integrated Location Assessment, 2017, <http://iomiraq.net/reports/integrated-location-assessment-thematic-overview-and-governorates-profiles>

¹⁵ <http://creapix.info/rrp/>

¹⁶ The conference was co-chaired by Iraq, the European Union, Kuwait, the United Nations and the World Bank and focused on the physical and human dimensions of reconstruction, e.g. infrastructure, private investment and societal issues such as humanitarian needs, social protection, good governance and accountability, and mobilized nearly 30 USD billion of additional international support.



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process of developing the programme. Currently only UN agencies are set to lead or co-lead the 9 RRP components and some perceive the programmatic areas to be overlapping. This is partly due to a lack of an overall UN framework on transition and recovery which would guide programming and coordination.

Government Engagement

During the emergency response humanitarian actors function within the prescribed humanitarian architecture relatively independent from the government. This approach is very different to the development and the transition and recovery phase, where activities are implemented in close collaboration with governmental authorities to ensure ownership and sustainability. In the case of Iraq, while the RRP is aligned with the Government’s commitment to multi-dimensional reconstruction, it seems the perceived lack of government engagement on the RRP could stem from relative low levels of institutional government engagement during the humanitarian phase.

Financing

Questions on how the RRP will be financed have arisen since the Kuwait conference. The UNCT is currently in the process of agreeing on a funding mechanism. To facilitate this, an advisory board is set to be established that will govern a ‘pooled fund’ to oversee how the funds are allocated to the different UN

agencies and actors. It is foreseen that representatives of the donors, GoI and INGOs will sit on this board.

In this critical period there is no time to waste and humanitarian and recovery assistance should be scaled up quickly in at-risk communities, especially those where large numbers of IDPS have started to return. Yet, to date, only a few UN agencies and INGOs are funded bilaterally to implement recovery programmes but no specific funds have been allocated to the RRP, partly due to the lack of coordination, the absence of a funding mechanism, and the length of time it took to develop the RRP.

Flexibility and Collaboration in Transition Programming

While humanitarian and development partners often work side-by-side on the ground, they frequently do not participate in the same coordination meetings, or share lessons learned. This does not allow for optimized synergies in their work, or resources making assistance provided less effective. For example, there is no official mechanism in place where UN agencies and INGOs come together and coordinate their early recovery programmes, nor is there a forum where they share information with humanitarian actors working in the same geographical areas to facilitate transitional programming.

¹¹ The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), February 2018. <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq>

¹² IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix, see <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/IDPsML.aspx>

¹³ IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/>

¹⁴ IOM Iraq, Integrated Location Assessment, 2017, <http://iomiraq.net/reports/integrated-location-assessment-thematic-overview-and-governorates-profiles>

¹⁵ <http://creapix.info/rrp/>

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4) Policy Recommendations

As can be gleaned from above, in “The Middle” there are some gaps in the United Nations’ system, as illustrated with the example of Iraq. To overcome these gaps, three policy changes could improve the effectiveness of the UN system in support of host governments’ priorities in the crucial post-crisis transition and recovery phase:

1) Establish a Global UN Framework

There is a need for a global framework for the transition and recovery phase, with clear guidelines and criteria on the division of labour between UN agencies and how they should work with government authorities, INGOs, private sector and other actors. This framework should have strong links to humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and conflict prevention. The framework can be adapted at country level for post-conflict and post-natural disaster scenario.

The framework needs to be flexible and ensure that immediate life-saving support to vulnerable returnees and crisis-affected host communities is provided in the post-crisis period, while early recovery principles and actions are integrated in the humanitarian response.¹⁷

2) Donor Countries Adopt the “New Way of Working”

Building on the “Commitment to Action” following the World Humanitarian Summit and SG Guterres’ pledge to the UN’s “New Way of Working”, donor agencies need to adapt their funding instruments to allow for multi-year, flexible funding with agreed results that can flex according to the context, allowing for better targeting of needs and priorities.

Many donor countries and agencies keep humanitarian and development funding separate or do not have dedicated funding instruments for transition and recovery activities. Donors are steadily recognizing the need to bridge these silos. A good example is the European Union (EU) who is conducting ‘nexus’ pilot studies in different post-crisis countries to align their different funding instruments¹⁸ along the humanitarian development nexus.¹⁹ It is foreseen one of the pilot studies will be conducted in Iraq.

3) Humanitarian and Development Actors Improve Coordination and Collaboration in Support of Host Governments’ Priorities

Every emergency response, whether in sudden and slow onset, protracted, disaster or conflict contexts, can be conducted in a way to promote national capacities rather than undermining them.²⁰

To implement the UN framework on transition and recovery at country level, the UN should

¹⁷ As displaced persons are increasingly taking refuge out of camp, in informal settlements and urban areas, it is essential that humanitarian partners support existing government services instead of setting up parallel structures for humanitarian assistance, which are unsustainable. For example, in Iraq the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) cluster has supported the government to ensure availability and maintenance of municipal water and waste systems in IDP hosting areas.

¹⁸ Just to name a few: humanitarian assistance is managed by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (ICSP) helps countries cope with crises and maintain peace, security, law and order. The Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) is the Commission’s department responsible for EU policy on development and delivering international aid.

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/january-2018-council-conclusions-integrated-approach-external-conflicts-and-crises_en

²⁰ UNDP, Guidance Note on Inter Cluster Early Recovery, 2016



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institutionalize coordination and consultation mechanisms that include UN agencies working along the humanitarian development nexus, host government’s representatives from national and sub-national levels, INGOs and donor agencies.

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ⁱ Specific Programmatic Actions of the Early Recovery Cluster:

- 1) **Livelihoods** including economic recovery, government recovery, cash and vouchers for seeds, fertilizer, hand tools, rehabilitation of productive assets (e.g. fishing boats, livestock)
- 2) **Basic infrastructure and rehabilitation**, including waste management, utility systems (water electricity), roads, bridges, schools, clinics, local government buildings, Community buildings: prisons, markets, Mine awareness and clearance
- 3) **Governance**, including rule of Law, peace and reconciliation, community stability, social cohesion, local governance, civil society
- 4) **Capacity-building investing in people**, including farmers, health professionals, midwives, community health workers, police, government services, small and medium enterprises, civil society

ⁱⁱ The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions to IDPs sets eight criteria to determine to what extent a durable solution has been achieved. These are:

Enjoyment without discrimination of:

- 1) Safety and security
- 2) Adequate standard of living, including access to adequate food, housing, healthcare and education
- 3) Access to employment and livelihoods
- 4) Access to mechanisms for restitution of housing, land and property or compensation if restitution is not possible.

Depending on the situation, the following may also be necessary for achieving a durable solution for IDPs:

- 5) Access to and replacement of personal and other documentation (e.g. identification cards, property titles)
- 6) Voluntary reunification with family members separated during displacement
- 7) Participation in public affairs (e.g. in elections)
- 8) Effective remedies for displacement-related violations, including access to justice reparations and information about the causes of violation