

Module 11: Background Reading From Humanitarian Aid to Human Rights Based Community Development

A brief background

The difference between Humanitarian and Development Aid has and continues to be the source of debate in academic literature and in policy and practice. For some-time the so-called humanitarian–development nexus has been increasingly been cast as the solution to humanitarian concerns, new and protracted crises, and to manage complex war-to-peace transitions. More recently this has become known as the Triple-Nexus Approach, linking - humanitarian, development and peace approaches. How to apply these insights and approaches are explored in this module.

“The concept of linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) emerged in the 1990s when practitioners identified a funding gap between humanitarian assistance, relief, and development activities. Since then, agencies, academics and practitioners have attempted to find ways of reconciling the humanitarian-development nexus to provide both effective humanitarian relief, and sustainable medium- and long-term development action. The basic premise of LRRD is the need to link and create synergies between short-term relief measures, with longer term development programmes” (Hinds 2015:1).

However several scholars and practitioners have identified numerous challenges in bringing the two approaches together. For example Lie (2022) has argued that they *“represent two distinct discursive and institutional segments of the international system that are hard to juxtapose”* (p.1). Fox (2001) argued that *“rights-based approaches would lead to the abandonment of core humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality”*. On the other hand Slim (2002) argued that an HRBA would in fact enhance the legitimacy of Humanitarian work moving it *‘beyond a dysfunctional philanthropic mindset’* (in Borgrevink and Sandvik 2022).

Despite these debates it is clear that in recent years both Humanitarian and Development Aid have adopted the language of HRBA, however as many scholars point out what is far less clear is the extent to which this has positively, or consistently influenced practice, particularly in the Humanitarian sector. What is important to remember is that both humanitarian and development aid are both provided in deeply political contexts and are always impacted by donor and geopolitical interests. Both positively and negatively. In practice INGOs and NGOs will often use a range of different strategies and approaches based both on their own mandates, organisational philosophies, the nature of the crises and political contexts.

For a deeper analysis of the key issues we have provided links to several excellent articles.

References and Additional Reading

Hinds, R. (2015). *Relationship between humanitarian and development aid* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1185). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

Kaja Borgrevink & Kristin Bergtora Sandvik (2022) The afterlife of buzzwords: the journey of rights-based approaches through the humanitarian sector, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 26:2, 285-305, DOI: 10.1080/13642987.2021.1916476.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13642987.2021.1916476>

Lie, L 2020 **The humanitarian-development nexus: humanitarian principles, practice, and pragmatics** *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* volume 5, Article number: 18 (2020) <https://jhumanitarianaction.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41018-020-00086-0>