



NAVIGATING THE NEXUS  
in the  
**Democratic Republic of Congo**

World Vision 

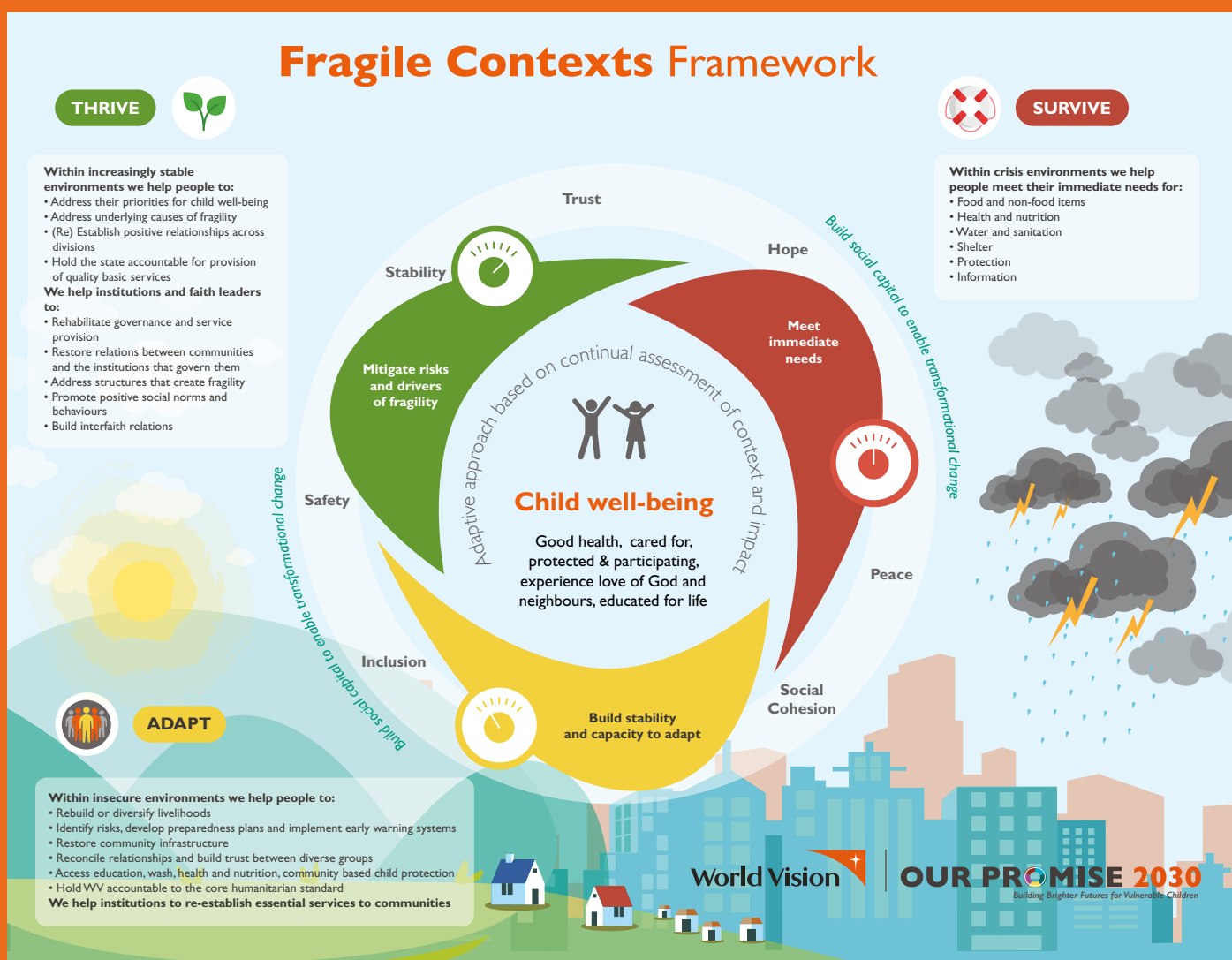
**Our approach**  
to fragile contexts

CASE STUDY

# A brighter future for children: World Vision's Fragile Contexts Approach

Two billion people live in countries where development outcomes are deeply affected by fragility, conflict and violence, and which are some of the most dangerous places in the world to be a child. In these fragile contexts, children face extreme levels of abuse, exploitation, deprivation and violence, often for generations.

Through its global strategy, *Our Promise*, World Vision is aligning its humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and advocacy efforts to address fragility. Based on more than 70 years of experience working in fragile contexts, the organisation has developed a Fragile Contexts Programme Approach (see diagram below) to support its efforts to expand and deepen its impact. Its approach has informed global frameworks, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) *Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*<sup>1</sup>, and in turn, is informed by them. World Vision's Fragile Contexts Programme Approach (FCPA) has been piloted in multiple countries with more planned in the future.<sup>2</sup> The organisation's goal is to make a sustainable difference in the lives of the most vulnerable girls and boys so they can survive, adapt and thrive now and in the future despite fragility. At the heart of our FCPA is the agility to shift from meeting immediate humanitarian needs to addressing root causes, even in the context of continued fragility, in order to support transformative change whenever possible, so that communities can build resilience to shocks over the long term.



In 2017, through its global strategy, *Our Promise*, World Vision made a commitment to direct 27% of its global funding to fragile contexts by 2020. In 2018, World Vision directed 28% of its funding to ten of the most fragile countries in the world where it operates and reached 10.1 million of the most vulnerable people. Almost 60% of those it reached were children. The organisation is committed to continue to grow this commitment through diverse funding, partnerships and knowledge sharing.

1 OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019

2 FCPA pilot countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iraq, Mali, Mexico, South Sudan

## Executive summary

Based on extensive experience in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and specifically in Rutshuru in the east, World Vision has accumulated lessons learned and recommendations around how agencies can sustainably programme across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus in an integrated way in fragile contexts. The aim of this work is to enable communities to survive, adapt to challenging situations, and thrive, while at the same time ensuring World Vision and others respond quickly and safely in environments that are inherently volatile.

The following case study examines World Vision's experience of adapting one of its programmes in eastern DRC as one of several pilots of a new World Vision programme approach in fragile contexts. The following factors should be considered as critical for successfully navigating the nexus:

- common goals and more coordinated ways of working, underpinned by international law and reinforcing norms and behaviours in line with child rights-based approaches by formal, informal, national, regional, and international actors
- interventions designed and implemented based on regular impact-focused, people-centred joint context analysis and context monitoring at multiple levels, both for specific project areas and beyond
- projects with a strong, long-term, community-based and participatory approach
- flexible operating parameters to anticipate and address new/unmet needs identified through regular vulnerability, context and root-cause analyses
- emphasis on staff retention and capacity building as well as senior leadership buy-in and support for an adaptive management approach
- donor understanding of the complexities of fragile contexts and the need for sustainable, flexible, multiyear and multi-sectoral funding, and ways of working
- space for actors to coordinate interventions by means of a variety of partnering approaches, from formal consortia to informal information sharing in order to maximise impact and ensure a holistic approach working towards collective outcomes

- acceptance of the increased risk of implementation in these situations and correspondingly an increased investment in security risk management and flexibility in planning and operations
- investment in long-term political will and technical and financial resources to support dispute resolution, ideally before it leads to, but also during, violence and conflict.

This work builds on World Vision working paper *A Brighter Future for Children: Our approach in fragile contexts*<sup>3</sup> and links to the principles set out in the OECD's *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*.<sup>4</sup>



Children outside a newly built and equipped school in Rushuru.  
Hélène Franchineau/World Vision

3 World Vision working paper: 'A Brighter Future for Children: Our approach to fragile contexts' (May 2019). The paper outlines four areas for more collective effort: (1) working towards people-centred, child-focused collective outcomes; (2) ensuring context-specific action; (3) strengthening protective systems for children at multiple levels; and (4) building a better future for the next generation by engaging in positive politics.

4 OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019. Section 3 of this case study refers to OECD principles IV #2, IV #1, III #2 and IV #4. Section 4 links to principles III #3, V #2, and V #1. Section 5 links to principles III #1, III #1a, IV #3 and III #1a ii.

# Introduction

For decades the international community has wrestled with the challenge of addressing fragility whilst the number of complex and protracted crises grows, and demand outstrips capacity to respond. Current conversations around necessary solutions centre on the need to strengthen collective work across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus (or the interlinkages between these approaches). There is growing agreement within the international community that it is necessary to achieve greater complementarity across efforts and to work towards a set of shared collective outcomes in fragile contexts. Questions remain, however, about how this can be operationalised, both within and between different stakeholders, and how decision makers can support and scale up best practice.

World Vision, a multi-mandated organisation spanning the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, has committed to expanding and deepening its presence and impact for the most vulnerable children and families in fragile contexts. A component of this commitment is to advocate for policy and practice changes that strengthen the enabling environment to realise transformational change for children and families living in fragile contexts. This case study examines World Vision's experience with working across the nexus in eastern DRC and identifies promising practice and key challenges in operationalising the nexus at the field level. This country-level experience is also mirrored in World Vision's working paper 'A Brighter Future for Children: Our approach in fragile contexts'<sup>5</sup> and the OECD's DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.<sup>6</sup>

*Since 2015, World Vision has implemented a multi-sectoral Area Rehabilitation Programme (ARP) in Shinda and Nyarukwangara health areas, Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, in eastern DRC.*



5 World Vision, 'A Brighter Future for Children'.

6 OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

An ARP farmer co-operative sorts their onion harvest.  
David Amani/World Vision



Built on World Vision's [community-based programming approach](#),<sup>7</sup> which is normally applied in more stable settings, the ARP uses a multi-sectoral approach to integrate activities across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors to meet the multiple needs of children and their families over a 15-year period. Over 2018/19, this ARP was the testing ground for World Vision's recently launched Fragile Context Programming Approach (FCPA). The FCPA proposes a people-centred, agile, responsive and integrated approach, including advocacy and community empowerment. Whilst the Rutshuru ARP was already demonstrating many of the FCPA principles, World Vision DRC staff were keen to look at how they could further improve the project in terms of reviewing its agility, responsiveness and integration.<sup>8</sup>

This case study outlines the lessons learned from this pilot of the FCPA and provides policy recommendations for donors and implementing agencies on how to create an enabling environment for the replication and scale up of such work by World Vision and others. It explores the key internal and external factors enabling and/or challenging programme implementation, based on the findings of interviews with communities and World Vision staff. It also has some wider reflections on how the design and implementation of the ARP can further improve and incorporate aspects such as social cohesion, context monitoring and partnering. Each of these factors and reflections tackles a different challenge of working across the nexus. A mixed-method research methodology was used for this case study which included a desk review of internal and external literature and field-based research conducted in June 2019. World Vision researchers held 20 key informant interviews and eight focus group discussions over the course of a week, speaking to 118 people including World Vision, peer NGO and UN staff at the local, subnational, and national levels, as well as men, women, girls, and boys from the local communities. Data collection took place in Rutshuru and Goma.

<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of this study community-based approach is defined as a long-term programming presence in a community with full community involvement in all parts of the programme including design, context analysis, implementation, monitoring, learning and evaluation.

<sup>8</sup> World Vision DRC took this programme through a one-week workshop in order to review how adaptive it was in relation to the current and future contexts. As a result of this process, including further context analysis, it integrated further elements of water and sanitation into the programme to make it more holistic.

# I.

## Context

DRC is the second-largest country in Africa, extremely rich in natural resources but mired in conflicts for decades. Much of its population is considered extremely poor, living on less than \$1.90 a day.<sup>9</sup> Roughly 12.8 million of the 81 million people living in DRC need humanitarian assistance and protection, including 5.6 million children. More than 800,000 people live in neighbouring countries as refugees,<sup>10</sup> and 4.5 million are internally displaced.<sup>11</sup> The country is fraught with political instability, armed clashes, and human rights and child rights violations. It is estimated that more than 130 armed groups operate in eastern DRC, where constant conflict and insecurity have hampered the humanitarian response. In 2016, conflict erupted in Kasai, a region which includes five provinces in the centre of the country,<sup>12</sup> and the insecurity continues to this day. In mid-2018, an Ebola<sup>13</sup> outbreak began in northeastern DRC and was subsequently declared a public health emergency of international concern<sup>14</sup> by the World Health Organisation in 2019.

DRC is divided into 26 provinces, with individual territories within each. Rutshuru territory, where the case study project is located, is one of six territories in the North Kivu province in the east. It has suffered long periods of instability, including the presence of armed groups and insurgent attacks. This often leaves villagers unable to access their livelihoods and basic social services including water, education and social protection. The area has high rates of poverty, a low standard of living, high unemployment and experiences social unrest. Given the size of the area, this instability does not affect all parts of the territory equally. In March 2019, for example, it was reported that 443,872 people returned to Rutshuru, many of whom had fled the violence from 2012/13.<sup>15</sup> These returnees settled in various villages in hopes of improved security. In Busanza, in a 'groupement' of villages within Shinda and Nyarukwangara health area that is a specific focus of most of the FCPA activities, communities are currently experiencing relative stability, with the target population including both displaced and host community members. This has provided World Vision with an opportunity to pilot an adaptive management approach. The current context enables more long-term activities, but the situation in the wider area is a reminder of the need to be able to continue to respond and shift activities if the context deteriorates at any time.

9 World Bank, 'The World Bank in DRC', <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>

10 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/drc>

11 World Vision, 'DRC conflict: Facts, FAQs and how to help' (2019), <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/drc-conflict-facts>

12 World Vision, 'Top 5 Things to Know about the Violence in the Kasai Region' (2018), <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/top-5-things-know-about-violence-kasai-region>

13 World Health Organization, 'Ebola Situation Reports: Democratic Republic of Congo' (2018), <https://www.who.int/ebola/situation-reports/drc-2018/en/>

14 UN News, 'DR Congo Ebola Outbreak Now an International Public Health Emergency, UN Health Agency Declares' (17 July 2019), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/07/1042681>

15 Rapport de la réunion Commission Mouvement de la Population (14 March 2019).



A meeting of the women's savings group network committee  
David Amani/World Vision

# 2.

## World Vision's work in DRC

World Vision has implemented relief and development programmes in DRC since 1984. Today, World Vision operates in 14 of the 26 provinces with child-focused programming in protection; health; nutrition; cash; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); education; food assistance; food security/livelihoods; and peacebuilding. Most of the work in these 14 provinces is long-term, community-based development. World Vision's humanitarian work is focused mainly in eastern DRC and in the Kasais, as well as a response to the ongoing Ebola outbreak in northeastern DRC.<sup>16</sup> Despite the main focus on humanitarian needs in the eastern part of the country, because the protracted conflict is characterised by spikes of volatility and relatively stable periods, World Vision made a decision in 2002 to introduce longer-term programmes in parts of Rutshuru, focusing on building community resilience through livelihoods, health, nutrition, WASH, education, and school-feeding programmes. World Vision has two such projects in the area, including the Rutshuru ARP which was launched in 2015.

The Rutshuru ARP is designed to improve the well-being of children and families affected by conflict through a 15+ year commitment to support increased agricultural production and income for vulnerable households, improved commercialisation of agricultural products for smallholder farmers, decreased morbidity and mortality due to WASH-related diseases, and child protection activities. It has a core base of private funding of US\$300,000 which has been supplemented by several institutional grants. The core funding covers activities including agricultural trainings and inputs, community WASH improvements, creation of farmer business associations, savings groups and interpersonal therapy groups<sup>17</sup> in schools, as well as child protection activities and other integrated activities for adolescents. With additional institutional grants World Vision has also incorporated activities such as cash for assets, education, literacy boosts and food voucher projects. Since its inception the ARP has served more than 36,000 people including 12,600 with better food security, nearly 22,600 with improved WASH services, and more than 500 children supported through child protection activities. Its unique approach, not only for World Vision working in DRC but also for longer-term programming in fragile contexts, includes strong community participation during design and implementation.

In 2018, World Vision selected the Rutshuru ARP as a FCPA pilot. The ARP was selected because of its existing long-term commitment to multi-sectoral, adaptive programming, and its flexible and adaptable private core funding base from World Vision. The FCPA process for DRC consisted of context analysis and a workshop in November 2018 to analyse three possible scenarios for the context – getting better, worsening or staying the same<sup>18</sup> – for the coming 6 to 12 months, with costed programme and operational adaptations corresponding to each. World Vision International made additional private funds available to World Vision DRC to enable flexibility to adapt as the context demanded. The team developed a new FCPA monthly context monitoring framework to help test assumptions, analyse trends, and ensure the project remained responsive to changes and any evolving needs. To do this, World Vision intentionally increased consultation and participation of the local community in context analysis during the FCPA pilot period, which led to strengthening community trust.

When the context in eastern DRC did not significantly change and therefore did not require a major shift in programming, World Vision DRC followed the plans for the 'staying the same' scenario. This scenario included integrating WASH activities to improve hygiene and waste management into local schools as an unmet need identified by the local community.



Riding a chukudu, popular in eastern DRC.  
Hélène Franchineau/World Vision

<sup>16</sup> World Vision, 'Democratic Republic of the Congo', <https://www.worldvision.org/our-work/country-profiles/democratic-republic-congo>

<sup>17</sup> Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Groups (IPTG) consists of eight sessions on a weekly basis in groups led by a trained lay adult community facilitator. The sessions are designed to provide participants with opportunities to learn and practice interpersonal skills for resolving distress, and to facilitate the provision of emotional support amongst group members.

<sup>18</sup> This context analysis included looking at multiple drivers of fragility including economic, political and social factors.

# 3.

## Enabling factors for successful work to strengthen the nexus

Based on staff and community interviews, four factors were identified that enable the ongoing success of the Rutshuru ARP: (1) a strong, people-centred, community-based approach, (2) flexible project parameters and flexible funding, (3) strong leadership and staff retention, and (4) a willingness to take on and manage risk. Each of these factors tackles a different challenge of working across the nexus.

### 3.1. Tackling the nexus challenge to ensure a strong, people-centred, community-based approach

World Vision's approach is one of accountability. Before they start the project, they come and meet with community members; when they have extra budget they also come and talk to the community. During project implementation there is collaboration; you can discuss what is going well and what is not going well. If we fail, we then share the responsibility.

#### Farmer co-operative representative

Staff and communities equally highlighted that the Rutshuru ARP was anchored in a community-based approach, one which empowers disaster-affected children and communities as agents of change and development in their own right. Key aspects of this community-based approach were (1) its long-term approach to building trust and acceptance through local partnerships, including with local authorities; (2) its focus on accountability and inclusion; and (3) its sustainability through specific capacity building activities.

First, World Vision's 17-year presence in the programming area was seen as integral and a key reason for the strong, trusting relationship between World Vision and the communities, local leaders and government authorities. This has been a key enabler for relevant, effective and sustainable programming and for acceptance of an ongoing presence. It also contributed to staff safety. Local authorities highlighted the fact that they

had a direct relationship with World Vision, were consulted in advance of programme decision making, were empowered to lead in mobilising communities and were able to engage in problem-solving for issues they themselves highlighted to World Vision. Local relationships led to regular involvement in the ARP, with communities demonstrating leadership in voicing their needs and the needs of others in the area. They appreciated that World Vision went beyond just asking for 'agreement' for a project. Peer and UN agencies interviewed also highlighted community participation and leadership and the involvement of local authorities as key to effective programming.

What challenged World Vision, however, was (1) how to move forward when different parts within the community presented conflicting priorities and (2) how to set expectations around meeting needs in light of finite resources, especially because World Vision is the only agency operating in the area. World Vision was able to overcome these challenges by having open conversations with the community about prioritisation. These conversations were enabled by World Vision's strong relationships with the communities which had been developed through its long-term presence, its commitment to remaining in the face of security risks to staff and the relevance of World Vision's work to community members' lives. Maintaining this positive relationship also enabled World Vision to have conversations around its exit strategy for the area, and some in the community now acknowledge that these conversations helped them prepare for continuing activities themselves should World Vision leave. Some even challenged World Vision to consider that their area may no longer be the most vulnerable place for support.

Second, World Vision staff reported that they saw community involvement as a core part of their accountability to affected populations and helped ensure their work was relevant to the community; this meant better impact. They highlighted that this was a unique and flexible way of working in a fragile context. The ARP now has an overarching community-endorsed vision, with the ability to fit multiple projects and grants underneath it. Community involvement during context analysis, including scenario planning and context monitoring, as well as in project design/proposals/implementation and conversations around exit strategies, has improved programme effectiveness. World Vision confirmed input either validated existing and/or provided new information, aiding decision making. From a sustainability perspective, communities reported feeling a sense of joint ownership of the projects, as well as transparent two-way communication with World Vision in relation to the organisation's work and/or if there were any issues to be discussed.

Third, communities felt that the community-based approach was sustainable due to its mix of both collaboration and capacity building, shown in World Vision's choice of modalities within each sector. For example, the emphasis on developing skills through training, building networks and reinforcing local community and authority structures/institutions was highlighted as a key contributing feature in the ARP's livelihoods, WASH and savings groups work, bridging across humanitarian and development work.



The factor driving World Vision's success has been the consultation and involvement of community members in the implementation of projects.

### Busanza village chief

### 3.2. Tackling the nexus challenge to ensure a holistic response to fragility through flexible project and funding parameters

ARP parameters highlighted as enabling the programme's successes included (1) being impact driven in order to respond to unmet needs, using a multiyear, multi-sectoral and geographically focused approach; (2) focusing on integration across activities; and (3) being increasingly anticipatory through context monitoring and scenario planning.

First, this Rutshuru ARP design is unique in its multi-sectoral, integrated approach. Led by an overarching goal and vision rather than a grant, the ARP's private funding<sup>19</sup> provides a core anchor for the project covering operations, security and core sectors. World Vision then aligns institutional grant-funded projects under this vision and overarching goal as they become available to complement and fill any unmet needs. The additional private funding that was made available for the FCPA pilot allowed the office to review the project again with communities to check if there were still any unmet needs.

In Rutshuru, World Vision intentionally prioritised depth over breadth, working in 15 villages for the four years to date of the project. World Vision staff acknowledged that therefore other areas did not receive any support and that this could present potential Do No Harm issues, but felt this local, multi-sectoral and long-term approach resulted in stronger, more sustainable impact.

Second, the different ARP activities are not only multi-sectoral and designed to be implemented over time, but World Vision and the communities highlighted how the activities were layered and sequenced in a way that they complemented and built on each other, intentionally maximising impact for the local community. For example, as a result of livelihoods activities, farmers report they are growing more crops. This means a better diet for them and their children, particularly enabling their children to attend school. They store and sell the crops which results in more income to be able to provide for their families. They link into savings groups with this income, which is resulting in more women saying they are able to run their own businesses, save money and in turn pay for their children's school and health fees. The child protection activities are being

linked to reports that more people in the community now send their children to school. As the children's learning spaces are seen to improve as a result of educational projects, teachers also say they feel better equipped from training to support the children in schools, and the community perception is that the quality of education is improving. This is alongside installation of toilets in the schools and hand-washing sessions which the community reports has contributed to the reduction of water-borne diseases, including achieving zero cholera cases. Installation of wells closer to the community means women report walking shorter distances to access water; with less personal risk to themselves. The social cohesion value of the project was an unplanned positive result. It is reflected on in point 5.1 on page 10. The emphasis of this work is not on a linear process of one sector at a time but rather on the ability to move back and forth among sectors and modalities according to what the context requires and what funding and other resources are available.

Third, the FCPA enabled World Vision DRC to be more anticipatory to new needs. During regular context-monitoring exercises, communities were able to voice concerns about ongoing climate change as well as deforestation and its consequences – including more frequent drought or too much rain – during scenario planning and regular context analysis. They felt needs were rising because of these issues and asked for activities such as food distributions, improved seed quality and a monitoring of social cohesion because of possible tensions due to rising food prices or incidents of communities stealing from one other. They said issues around food security were also being compounded by the fact that they lacked sufficient money to rent land. Although this was not initially anticipated, several months later findings by the organisation [ALNAP](#)<sup>20</sup> showed that in anticipation of the September/October planting season, World Vision had held further joint-planning sessions in June and August 2019 and planned seedling distributions to help prevent soil erosion and provide shade in order to stop crops from being washed away or dying in the sun. ALNAP applauded this as an illustration of how context monitoring with communities had enabled World Vision to respond rapidly to changing needs within a programme cycle.



Umaja Primary school handwashing kit, Rutshuru, Gilbert Ndigbami /World Vision

<sup>19</sup> In this instance private funding refers to money donated by World Vision supporters with the mandate to use these funds as necessary to respond to the needs of children and families affected by fragility in Rutshuru.

<sup>20</sup> World Vision worked closely with the Active Learning Network for Accountability and performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) in development of the FCPA. This collaboration led to World Vision DRC being chosen as one of the case studies for the ALNAP report on flexible approaches to deliver nexus programming entitled "[Ready to Change? Building flexibility into the triple nexus](#)".



Rutshuru Area Rehabilitation Programme (ARP) visit.  
Matthew Scott/World Vision

### 3.3. Tackling the nexus challenge to empower leadership, retain staff and build local capacity

World Vision staff noted that the ARP has had strong leadership and staff retention over the years, with several members having worked on the project since its inception and with key staff increasingly showing a change in mindset towards more flexible ways of working. ARP staff have both strong institutional knowledge and experience and very good community relationships built on trust.

This level of staff retention is unusual in the eastern DRC context, including within World Vision. World Vision DRC management believe this could be the result of the stability of the ARP multiyear funding and also the fact that the project approach provides an opportunity to go deeper and have real impact, journeying with a community over a longer period and watching how programme interventions build on one another. These factors may have incentivised a desire to facilitate the success of the project, with staff staying despite challenges, including major security incidents at certain points. Implementing staff also highlighted the buy-in and interest of leadership, both in agreeing to implement such a project and by allowing it to adapt as needed, as well as empowering frontline staff to make necessary decisions as and when needed, including decisions to adapt or not and to learn by doing.

By piloting the FCPA, World Vision attempted to go a step further in promoting an adaptive management mindset so staff felt they were empowered to be flexible, to reflect regularly on what they were doing and why and to make the case for needed changes. This was seen as a helpful ongoing journey for many staff interviewees, and they recommended cascading this approach to other staff as well. A recent focus on context analysis/monitoring with communities, which came through adoption of the FCPA, also helped World Vision staff to remain alert to possible needed changes and to be more confident and active in making the case for when these changes were (and were not) needed. It also helped to clarify what is meant by adaptation across the nexus, in that it not only includes changes across sectors but also smaller changes within sector activities and/or ways of working. An example of this could be changes in ways of working in relation to risk management or other support systems.

### 3.4. Tackling the nexus challenge to be willing to take on and manage risk in fragile contexts

Many community members reported that the ARP's success was in part enabled by World Vision accepting to take on and manage the risk of working in the area over the long term, despite the insecurity. Although villages like Busanza, where the FCPA activities primarily took place, enjoyed a degree of stability, it was not typical of the wider area, and community members interviewed were always aware of the potential deterioration of the situation due to the presence of armed groups. Communities also recognised insecurity as a potential barrier to their development. World Vision being willing to take the risk to work in the area was said to be a contributing factor in building the communities' trust and acceptance.

World Vision's global policy and approach to risk management aims to (1) ensure staff, communities and programmes have good security and risk management in place to protect their safety and organisational assets by building a strong, positive security culture, and (2) to work actively to enable programmes through creating access and acceptance in fragile and conflict areas by having the right resources, systems and people. In line with global policy directives, World Vision DRC is charged with implementing a core set of security requirements and identifying and managing its risks, including provision of suitable training for staff. This includes the Rutshuru ARP, which has an assigned security focal point for staff and programmes, and a security risk assessment (SRA), which was updated in May 2019. The staff recognised the need for the security procedures for risk management and highlighted that working in such fragile contexts is expensive and requires investment and a greater level of risk tolerance, both in terms of taking on and managing risk.

The FCPA pilot helped to strengthen risk management through its ongoing context monitoring, which also led communities to share security information more quickly with World Vision staff. This helped to anticipate changes in the context, adjust programming and take early action.

# 4.

## Barriers to successful work to strengthen the nexus

World Vision, peer and UN agencies and communities identified several barriers to successful work to strengthen the nexus, some of which were external to the project. These are challenges that many working across the nexus are grappling with, and they include insecurity, restrictions on funding and needs outstripping resources.

### 4.1. Tackling the nexus challenge of how to work effectively in the face of insecurity

While communities appreciated World Vision's work in the area despite the dangers, many were concerned that insecurity might cause delays or force activities to cease. World Vision also acknowledged that insecurity, even though not immediately in the area, was and had been a barrier for operations. Peer agencies also confirmed this as one of the biggest barriers to operations. For World Vision, operating with set curfews and driving longer distances due to the inability to have a base in the programme area resulted in less programming time in the communities. It was acknowledged by both World Vision and the communities that tackling insecurity in the programme area is a political issue outside World Vision's operational control.

World Vision staff did, however, suggest engaging in relevant advocacy towards the national government and other decision makers to help address this issue (as well as others). Some peer agencies interviewed were already working in these areas and could be natural partners for this work.

### 4.2. Tackling the nexus challenge of working with restricted funding in fragile contexts

While World Vision has maintained a presence in Rutshuru for several years, a single, integrated funding source for a complete multiyear, multi-sectoral ARP project has never become fully available. As a result, the ARP has been funded with a mix of sources, the majority coming from private sources and some smaller institutional grants. World Vision has managed to blend this funding under one programme vision to fill gaps and meet needs, while at the same time being able to pilot approaches such as the FCPA. But this lack of funds to cover all identified needs has resulted in more complex administrative arrangements, especially related to smaller institutional grants, which, whilst useful, because of the high number are at times administratively burdensome and expensive.

Furthermore, World Vision has found separate sector and funding silos between institutional humanitarian and development donor funding have left a notable gap in funding sources for fragile contexts. These contexts do not fit neatly under either the humanitarian or development label but require flexible, multiyear resources to make sustained change. The onus is put on implementing agencies to determine how they can blend funding from different sources to fill gaps and meet needs; this adds administrative costs and burdens.

World Vision sees the overall funding challenge for working in fragile contexts not only as one of quantity, but also of flexibility in terms of what it is spent on and how. As shown in section 3.2, World Vision staff enjoyed some flexibility to move private funds within the existing core ARP budget in order to accommodate the adaptations coming from FCPA pilot. World Vision has been able to adapt and find funding for climate-change activities from savings in other areas of the programme. However, the team acknowledged there was still a challenge with activities related to procurement or construction if they had already been committed to with suppliers, as these were harder to change in spite of new needs. World Vision remains acutely aware that the ARP set up and flexibility of private core funding is unique and that most other projects funded predominantly by institutional grants do not have such flexibility, even in the event of a crisis.

### 4.3. Tackling the nexus challenge of effective work when needs outstrip resources

The FCPA process unearthed several gaps in the ARP's interventions. The funding provided for the pilot, whilst covering much-needed WASH activities in schools, was not enough to cover everything that was identified for the current scenario, let alone preparations that might be needed if the situation deteriorated or improved. Strong community relationships helped World Vision with prioritising needs when they outstripped resources and gave communities a sense of ownership to self-organise (for example, some savings groups are outside those set up by World Vision). Nevertheless, communities still pointed out that the area was lacking a maternal health clinic and that there were high needs in neighbouring areas that they felt World Vision should examine. One identified solution was a focus on social accountability, enabling communities to acquire skills to hold to account other key stakeholders for the needs World Vision is unable to meet. Investing in this skill set for communities could also help to strengthen linkages to longer-term peacebuilding activities if communities then choose to use these skills in holding decision makers to account to jointly tackle some of the root causes of fragility.

World Vision is the sole agency operating in the examined programme area and is often approached by community members with needs outside its remit. In such instances World Vision – and other organisations in a similar situation – should explore further partnerships, either with local or international NGOs, as well as involving authorities.

# 5.

## Other key reflections

### 5.1. Tackling the nexus challenge to proactively address the root causes of fragility in order to increase social cohesion

Although the ARP did not explicitly conduct peacebuilding activities, several interviewees commented on the cohesive value of the project – in particular, how it brought people together in networks, making connections amongst networks (for example, savings groups and farmers' associations) and providing training and common activities. These were especially helpful for returnees to the area.



Mwamba water spring, Rutshuru.  
Gilbert Ndigbami /World Vision

The FCPA pilot roll out in 2018/19 required World Vision to conduct root-cause analysis<sup>21</sup> of the various needs in the community. The goal was to push the project to reflect on whether it could go further to both protect lives and to ensure survival of the most affected, while also building resilience and addressing the root causes of fragility, especially given the long-term nature of the project and relative stability in the area. Although peacebuilding activities were highlighted as possible if the situation improved, they were not considered for the current context. Some felt this could be due to a tendency to fall back on familiar humanitarian/development activities where there is more available expertise and/or it is seen as less 'political' or contentious.

The challenge, therefore, remains around how peacebuilding activities can at least be started and/or integrated into multi-sectoral projects (or as standalone initiatives) when there is a degree of uncertainty and/or volatility. One enabler for this programming is strong community relationships. In the case of Rutshuru, World Vision staff felt these relationships could create an opportunity to safely go deeper and tackle the more contentious root causes of fragility, such as land rights, governance issues and ethnicity, if done in a sensitive manner and with a good risk assessment. This programming could include local social accountability<sup>22</sup> activities to continue to build communities' capacity to strengthen their relationships with decision makers and in turn advocate for their own needs and issues (with NGOs playing more of a facilitation role). Another option is working with faith leaders to empower them to play a role in addressing such issues and/or in wider development activities or through other peacebuilding approaches. Integrating such activities into multi-sectoral programmes would widen the scope of the project in working across the nexus and would also bolster sustainability. Sustainable, multiyear, flexible donor funding is needed to clearly reflect and increase this part of the nexus in multi-sectoral programmes. There should be clear guidance and sufficient timelines for such programme development, as well as allowances for bringing in the right technical support to ensure good quality.

### 5.2. Tackling the nexus challenge to ensure interventions are context specific by putting context analysis/context monitoring and early action at the heart of programming

The ARP's context monitoring with the community was identified by World Vision as a highlight of the project, providing the headspace with communities to look at needs and deem what interventions are relevant while helping with risk management and community acceptance. This reinforces one of the key recommendations from World Vision's 'A Brighter Future for Children' working paper.<sup>23</sup> However, World Vision highlighted several factors to be considered for this to be properly embedded. One factor is donors supporting implementing agencies' efforts to establish mechanisms for

21 Root-cause analysis is a component of context analysis that looks at the root causes of issues of fragility.

22 World Vision has already done some work on adapting its social accountability to fragile contexts. For an example of CVA (Citizen Voice and Action) in DRC, see World Vision, 'Scaling Social Accountability' (2019), <https://gpsknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Scaling-Social-Accountability-Jan-8-2019-2.pdf>, p. 22.

23 World Vision, 'A Brighter Future for Children'.

quickly communicating changes in context to the right decision makers, whether donors or others, so that activities can be adapted in a timely manner. Implementing agencies also need donor backing to ensure that there are the right incentives in place for local World Vision or other NGO decision makers to have a stronger appetite for risk and to be empowered to act on information without fear of reprisals from other internal or external decision makers (especially if anticipatory/taking early action). The other recommendation was for a way to assess vulnerabilities at the programme level rather than just at the macro level. While programmes normally have basic needs assessments or there might be overarching country-level vulnerability assessments, a missing element is often data that is specific enough to capture context and needs assessments and monitoring at the local level.

World Vision staff felt they often needed more time to collect and analyse data to support better decision making around whether activities and ways of working were still relevant. They wanted to continue consulting with communities for their feedback, but also to have a decision-making framework to guide them on issues such as differences of opinion amongst the community(ies) over what is required; underlying issues that are not being sufficiently raised (for example, issues over land rights, ethnicity, governance); and what level of reduced vulnerability will trigger implementation of an exit strategy.

### 5.3. Tackling the nexus challenge of working towards collective outcomes through cultivating partnerships for the future

Peer agencies saw World Vision's ability to work across the nexus with a multi-sectoral approach as attributable to both its size and mandate. Even with this mandate, consistency of interventions over time was a challenge, primarily due to funding constraints. Whilst many agencies in DRC have endorsed the concept of working across the nexus, it is challenging for single sector/mandate agencies and/or those that are the only international NGO working in an area. In such situations, World Vision staff recommended international and national NGOs/community-based organisations opt to work in consortia or according to common objectives, bringing together each agency's comparative strengths to maximise impact and work holistically. Interviewees also reflected that working across the nexus does not require implementing activities from all sectors in one project at the same time, but rather, with thinking ahead and planning, being enabled to anticipate needs, respond where possible and bring in additional support as needed. Previous discussions of the nexus have not always been inclusive of all actors working in geographic areas, so coordination to ensure a holistic approach to programming has been a challenge.



*A member of an ARP savings group.  
David Amani/World Vision*



*Community farming in Rutshuru. H el ene Franchinneau/World Vision*

# 6.

## Conclusion and recommendations

For World Vision, working at the nexus is in our DNA; we don't always do it well and there are reasons, but we know what we should do. So, there isn't a debate on whether this is a good direction but more on how.

**Anne-Marie Connor, National Director, World Vision DRC**

Working at the nexus of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding action is a vital act of solidarity with highly vulnerable children, women and men living in fragile contexts. World Vision has committed to increasing its impact, investment and presence in these most difficult places. People-centred, agile, responsive, and integrated programming across the nexus, combined with advocacy and community empowerment, is both possible and urgent to achieve positive change for the most vulnerable children and their communities.

World Vision believes that if taken to scale, the Rutshuru ARP approach with its FCPA adaptations will address critical challenges to greater sustainable human development outcomes in the DRC, namely, how to programme sustainably in an integrated way which enables households and communities to survive, adapt and thrive, whilst at the same time responding quickly and safely in an environment that is inherently volatile. If the enablers outlined above are replicated and supported by donors and decision makers as a standard way of working, this approach will contribute towards more effective and transformative programming across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus.

World Vision will continue to develop its fragile contexts approach, as outlined in 'A Brighter Future for Children',<sup>24</sup> through piloting it in other countries and sharing its learning process with donors, peer agencies, communities, governments and other stakeholders. The following recommendations are offered from these experiences in DRC as a contribution to the wider nexus conversation, including on how there can be collective work towards achieving the principles outlined in the *OECD's DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*.<sup>25</sup>

- **Donors and implementing agencies** should ensure programming in fragile contexts has a strong underlying community-based and participatory approach centred on the communities' own inputs, perspectives and aspirations throughout the programme lifecycle, including during context analysis. This enables a more sustainable response, strengthens accountability to communities, and empowers communities to take a leading role and participate in interventions across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus.
- **Donors** should provide opportunities for actors operating across the nexus to coordinate interventions by means of a variety of partnering approaches, from formal consortia to informal information-sharing meetings focused on ensuring a holistic approach in a specific geographical area working towards collective outcomes.
- **Donors** should provide for – and implementing agencies should incorporate – regular impact-focused, people-centred joint context analysis and context monitoring at multiple levels, both for specific project areas and beyond. This can be through referencing it as a key principle in calls for proposals/tenders and funding application guidelines or having it as a criterion for assessment of project proposals. This should include root-cause analysis and will help to integrate conflict sensitive approaches across nexus activities and develop a shared understanding that equips operational staff to make and implement principled, evidence-based decisions.
- **Donors** should require and implementing agencies should build root-cause analysis into all programmes working across the nexus. Root-cause analysis helps ongoing context adaptation for individual NGO programmes, but it can also be useful for wider conversations amongst donors, UN agencies, and NGOs on how to work collectively towards addressing fragility in DRC. Donors should increase the number of multi-sectoral programmes with social cohesion and peacebuilding activities explicitly integrated and based on evidence from root-cause analysis.

<sup>24</sup> World Vision, 'A Brighter Future for Children'.

<sup>25</sup> OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.



A woman takes advantage of a tap, set up using the community led total sanitation approach. Gilbert Ndigbami /World Vision

- **Donors** should visit project sites in fragile contexts regularly to understand the complexities of the contexts and the need for very flexible funding and ways of working that consider growing needs and limited resources. Where visits are not possible, donors should use existing regular exchanges with partners and other key stakeholders to receive situation updates.
- **Implementing agencies** should document existing projects that demonstrate successful and flexible ways of working for future donor support and to promote best practice; donors should allow implementing agencies to revise projects based on this learning.
- **Donors** should provide, and implementing agencies should seek and plan for, sustainable, flexible, multiyear, and multi-sectoral programme funding. This can be done by including context modifiers<sup>26</sup>/contingency funding to allow flexibility for adaption to changes in the context (for worse or better), including to move amongst sectors and/or operating modalities. If crisis modifiers do exist in contracts, implementing agencies should familiarise themselves with them and request them in a timely and straightforward process as needed.
- **Donors** should invest in long-term political will and the technical and financial resources to support dispute resolution in DRC, ideally before it leads to, but also during, violence and conflict. This can be accomplished by building the capacity of state and other key local actors to support peace and reconciliation processes and by increasing mediation capacity and informal diplomacy.
- **Implementing agencies** should ensure senior leadership buy-in and support for an adaptive management approach that empowers frontline staff to make decisions and take on leadership roles.
- **Donors** should allow, and implementing agencies should prioritise, investment in staff retention and capacity building for programmes in fragile contexts. Maintaining and growing the same staff over the long-term increases the ability and likelihood of building strong relationships with communities, supporting a community-based approach, good security management and strong context analysis.
- **Donors** should allow, and implementing agencies should ensure, flexible operating parameters, including space to anticipate new/unmet needs through regular vulnerability, context and root-cause analyses. Programmes in fragile contexts are most likely to succeed when they are well focused geographically, multiyear, take an integrated, multi-sectoral approach (including a stress on peacebuilding/social cohesion when appropriate) and aim to be impact rather than funding driven.
- **Donors** and **implementing agencies** should increase their acceptance of risks for programming in fragile contexts and invest in security risk management which includes an acknowledgement of the role of communities and subsequently builds in flexibility in planning and implementation of programmes. Donors should adequately cover security and capacity building costs in fragile contexts, acknowledging the additional requirements.

<sup>26</sup> DRC's history shows that it is not a linear trajectory of moving from better to worse or worse to better, but rather a context that goes back and forth between stability and instability. Considering this uncertainty/volatility, World Vision advocates for context modifiers rather than crisis or peace/resilience modifiers because they allow flexibility for programme modifications in either direction and in sectors or modalities, depending on what is appropriate based on context analysis/monitoring.

# Note on terminology and definitions

**Fragile contexts (short definition):** Political and social pressure make these contexts vulnerable to conflict and have fractured the institutions that would normally provide protection and security to residents, including children. Fragility can cover one or many states or only a few neighborhoods, and it can change rapidly. In fragile contexts children suffer extreme levels of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

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**Fragile contexts (longer definition):** In fragile contexts political and social stresses result in extreme vulnerability of children to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. In some fragile and conflict-affected contexts the government is unable or unwilling to ensure the basic rights and well-being of its population and lacks the capacity to manage conflict without violence. In extreme cases the state may be either non-existent or actively involved in perpetrating violence against its people. Fragility and conflict are neither fixed nor immutable but move along a spectrum. They can affect entire countries or be contained in particular parts of a country, and they can cross borders to affect neighbouring states that are vulnerable to instability.

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**Protracted crises:** There is not an internationally recognised consensus definition of protracted crises. For consistency's sake, the term is used by World Vision as a means to describe contexts that have a mix of many of the following characteristics: duration, deprivation, displacement, disasters and disregarded. Each protracted crisis is different, but protracted crises usually have some combination of conflict, natural disasters, natural resource pressures, serious climate change impact, inequalities, prevalence of extreme poverty and governance factors as root causes. A protracted crisis may have widespread impact or be limited to a specific geographic area of a State or a territory; it may not affect the entire population. Protracted crises may also have international, regional and transboundary aspects and impacts, including the presence of refugees as defined and recognised under applicable international law, who are often in protracted refugee situations.

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**World Vision's approach to peacebuilding:** As a Christian, community-based and child-focused organisation World Vision 'seeks peace and pursues it'. Violence and conflict affect thousands of communities where World Vision works and jeopardise sustained child well-being. World Vision's peacebuilding seeks to protect children from violence and empower them to participate in promoting peace and loving their neighbour. World Vision's peacebuilding work is both a cross-cutting theme and a technical sector of its own. World Vision's peacebuilding programming seeks to weave a fabric of resilience throughout a community, so that its members can resolve their own conflicts, heal broken relationships and nourish more just systems and structures to prevent conflict. Empowering children as peacebuilders protects them from violence and empowers them to participate in creating greater levels of justice, equity, prosperity, and peace – not simply in the reduction of overt conflict. More specifically, World Vision defines peacebuilding both as programmes and activities and as sustained processes which are relevant to every context and steadily build or restore networks of interpersonal relationships, address underlying causes of conflict and past grievances, contribute toward just systems and continually work with the interaction of truth and mercy, justice and peace.





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to end violence against children

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Cover page: Children at school in Rutshuru, singing and playing during recess. H el ene Franchineau/World Vision