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## Does an integrated approach lead to better outcomes? The youth volunteers supporting peace and recovery in Darfur

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# **Does an Integrated Approach Lead to Better Outcomes?**

## **The Youth Volunteers Supporting Peace and Recovery in Darfur**

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## About UNRISD's DEEPEN Working Paper Series

This paper is part of a series of outputs from the UNRISD research project on the Development-Environment-Peace Nexus (DEEPEN) in Borders and Borderlands.

The project has the following objectives:

- Facilitate the exchange and co-production of knowledge and experiences on development, environmental protection and peace-making in borders and borderlands
- Contribute to setting an agenda for an integrated and transformative approach to borders and borderlands
- Deepen understanding and enrich discussions around the dynamics and synergies between development, environment and peace in borders and borderlands
- Help policy decision makers and practitioners imagine and design development cooperation programmes and projects that respond to the specificities of borders and borderlands.

The working papers in this series present case studies selected to reflect diversity in terms of geography, culture, history and political systems. In addition to incorporating gender as a key lens of analysis, the series features case studies specifically dealing with women and girls in borders and borderlands.

Lessons drawn out from the case studies through comparative analysis highlighted the successes and difficulties of implementing integrated approaches and helped to identify opportunities and challenges for policies and practices that integrate the development, environment and peace dimensions in borderlands. Findings and lessons from the case studies were synthesized to produce the Guidelines on the Integrated Approach to Development Projects in Borderlands—the main publication output of the project.

Series Editor: Ilcheong Yi

## **Abstract**

In recent years, scholars have paid more attention to an integrated approach, which entails identifying and addressing cross-cutting issues beyond an initiative's policy field, domain or sector, as a means of enhancing the performance of development projects. However, few studies offer a theoretical understanding of the integrated approach when used with real-world examples. Based on existing studies, this study identified conditions under which an integrated approach is likely to generate performance gains or synergistic outcomes. From this identification, the Youth Volunteers Supporting Peace and Recovery (YoVoReD) project in Darfur was selected as a case that meets the conditions. The study then explored the mechanisms thorough which synergy is generated in the project. Field research was conduction through key informant interviews with multiple stakeholders, including Korea International Cooperation Agency as YoVoReD funder, the United Nations Development Programme as implementing agency, local non-governmental organizations, and local governments. Focus groups were also held with project beneficiaries and an analytic hierarchy process (AHP) was conducted with all interviewees. The study revealed that an integrated approach created synergies in YoVoReD, enabling multiple goals to positively influence each other (complementarity), positive outcomes to reach beyond the goals set by the project (spill over), and ownership of the project to vest in a broad base of stakeholders, particularly local beneficiaries (enhanced ownership).

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# 1. Introduction

Development projects are designed to improve the socioeconomic conditions of local people in various sectors in developing countries. There is not currently a consensus on whether or not they have been effective in achieving the intended outcomes (Diallo and Thuillier 2005; Hermano et al. 2013). Many projects have failed or been ineffective in achieving intended outcomes since they have solely focused on one or two specific sectors without addressing other sectors that significantly influence those specific sectors. To overcome this limitation, the concept of the integrated approach has been developed.

While practitioners in the field of development increasingly adopt an integrated approach for enhanced performance, whether and how integrated approaches influence the outcome of development projects have not been theoretically articulated or empirically investigated. Our study seeks to address this research gap. We identify conditions under which an integrated approach is likely to generate performance gains or synergistic outcomes. We selected the Youth Volunteer Supporting Peace and Recovery in Darfur (YoVoReD) project as a case utilizing an integrated approach that meets these conditions. The YoVoReD aims to achieve peace, social cohesion, and economic recovery of the conflict-affected Darfur area, where the systemic killing of ethnic Darfuri people occurred in 2003, and a peaceful resolution has not been reached until now.<sup>1</sup> The YoVoReD trained Darfur youth to be politically, socially, and economically empowered. It then dispatched these trained youths to their communities to share their knowledge with villagers and educate them to apply it to village life.

To understand whether and how the integrated approach has influenced the outcome of the YoVoReD, the authors undertook field research in selected project sites in Darfur and conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with multiple stakeholders, focus group interviews (FGIs) with beneficiaries, and an analytic hierarchy process (AHP) with all interviewees. Through AHP analysis, we show that the weights of challenges and problems in different sectors are perceived by project managers and implementers as equal in the target areas. Our case study confirms that there have been synergistic effects of the integrated approach regarding the outcomes of the YoVoReD. We identify synergistic effects in three forms. First, the *complementarity* of the intended major goals contributes to the generation of better outcomes. Second, positive *spillover* has occurred in related but not directly targeted major goals. Third, the local *ownership* of the project has increased as the process of integration has involved more diverse local stakeholders, including beneficiaries, in multiple ways.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides the theoretical understanding of the integrated approach. We conceptualize the integrated approach as a strategic interaction and identify key

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<sup>1</sup> Genocide in Darfur has led to approximately 300,000 deaths and 2.5 million internally displaced people (Alzazeera, April 7, 2021: [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/7/death-toll-in-darfur-tribal-violence-rises-to-87#:~:text=The%20vast%20Darfur%20region%20was,%20Bashir's%20Arab%20dominated%20government](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/7/death-toll-in-darfur-tribal-violence-rises-to-87#:~:text=The%20vast%20Darfur%20region%20was,%20Bashir's%20Arab%20dominated%20government).)).

conditions for the approach to generate synergistic outcomes. Section 3 explains the case selection and methods used. Section 4 discusses the findings from our field research. We conclude in Section 5 by discussing the limitations of our research and key policy implications of our findings.

## **2. Theoretical Understanding of the Integrated Approach**

### **2.1. The Integrated Approach as Strategic Interaction**

The integrated approach to development projects refers to “actions to identify and address cross-cutting issues that transcend the established boundaries of policy field, domain or sector.” (Yi and Nassali with Lee 2022, 7). Thus, by definition, the integrated approach concerns strategic interaction; actors from various policy fields (project team managers, members, and stakeholders) cooperate amid challenges to devise an integrated solution to development problems (the Guideline, p. 8). More specifically, cooperative interaction can take the form of knowledge and skill transfer and information sharing. By drawing on all available relevant information and skills, experts and practitioners are expected to grow their capacity beyond their respective domains (the Guideline, p. 8). Ultimately, the integrated approach aims to create synergy (the Guideline, p. 9) or objective performance gains attributable to group interaction (Larson 2007, 2013).

### **2.2. Synergistic Effects of the Integrated Approach**

The integrated approach to development does not always generate synergistic effects. On the contrary, there might even be trade-offs (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006; Pinkse and Kolk 2012). For instance, an attempt to integrate climate change and sustainable development through multiple stakeholder partnerships has resulted in more funds being allocated to “projects with an optimal overlap between both issues but [that] do not have the highest potential impact on either the development issue at stake, such as poverty reduction or universal primary education (Michaelowa and Michaelowa 2007) or the climate change issue, such as mitigation or adaptation (Klein et al. 2005)” (Pinkse and Kolk 2012:180). The integrated approach might also involve conflicts due to different priorities among actors. Private sector actors such as corporations involved in multiple stakeholder partnerships do not always seek to advance the official mission of a partnership but may focus more on maximizing the market potential of developing countries (Pinkse and Kolk 2012:201). Such projects might yield only a mediocre impact for both climate change and sustainable development that is no better than what an average single-sector project would have produced.

When would cooperation and synergy outweigh conflict and trade-off? Reviewing the extensive literature on collective problem-solving in cognitive science and the more nascent studies on collaboration synergy in development studies, we identify several conditions conducive to synergy-making. The literature on collective problem-solving suggests that diversity among members is a salient factor shaping groups’ potential for achieving synergy (Hong and Page 2004). Some empirical findings show that informational (i.e. differences in knowledge bases, often associated with different educational backgrounds and training experiences) and cognitive (i.e., different perspectives and heuristics with which people approach a problem) diversity help to achieve synergy (Jehn et al. 1999; Page 2007). When diversity is too low, there is not a sufficient novelty to benefit actors in



collaboration; “factors such as decreased motivation, free-riding behaviors, and early consensus are likely to block the emergence of synergy,” although excessive diversity might also undermine effective communication and learning (Meslec and Curşeu 2013).

On the other hand, value diversity has been suggested to undermine groups’ potential for achieving synergy. Value diversity “occurs when members of a workgroup differ in terms of what they think the group’s real task, goal, target, or mission should be.” Value differences can lead to conflicts over both task content and task processes, whereas similarity in group members’ goals and values enhances interpersonal relations within the group and decreases conflict (Hackman 1990; Jehn 1994). Informational diversity would offer little benefit to a group if the value of diversity prevents its members from working together to capitalize on it (Nonaka and Takeuch 1995). Others, however, suggest that task conflict from value diversity can be productive if the conflict motivates more communication and brings the team more information, thereby promoting the group’s problem-solving capability (Liang et al. 2012). These studies together suggest the importance of communication among actors with value diversity.

Other research has found that the type of task can affect group synergy. Strong synergy is more likely to be achieved when the task at stake is information-rich and complex while also being divisible into several intellectual subtasks. For such a task permitting complementary divisions of labor, individual members can contribute to different subtasks and complement each other’s abilities (Stasser and Abele 2020). According to the authors, “a likely corollary” is “diversity in competencies,” which means that members do not overlap in their expertise but excel at different subtasks (Stasser and Abele 2020).

There remains a dearth of studies that systematically explore the nature and dynamic of synergies of collaboration in development studies. Evans (1997:8) conducted one of the few studies that raised the question of “how are synergistic [state-society] relations structured?” He noted that “complementarity creates objective grounds on which cooperation between government and citizens can be built”, but “embeddedness generates the normative and interactional basis for realizing the potential joint gains” (Evans 1997:8). This emphasis on complementarity and a shared normative base can echo the collective problem-solving literature, which identifies value similarity and competence diversity as key to achieving synergy.

Similar lessons are drawn from the literature on partnership synergy in community development. In their investigation of what enables partnerships to achieve a high level of synergy, Lasker and Weiss (2003:124) found that “who is involved in the partnership” is important as “partnerships with a broad and diverse array of participants have a greater variety of knowledge, skills, and resources with which to create synergy than partnerships with a few homogeneous partners.” Collaboration among a broad group of community stakeholders that goes beyond the “usual suspects” allows the partnership to “obtain more accurate information,” “see the big picture,” “break new ground,” and “understand the local context” (Lasker and Weiss 2003:125). Also important is “how” partners are

involved. In partnerships that achieve a high level of synergy, the participants “own” an intervention that makes sense to them and develop “a strong incentive to contribute their tangible and intangible resources to continue the effort after external funding runs out” (Lasker and Weiss 2003:129).

Recent studies have explored the dynamic of synergies in the context of multiple stakeholder initiatives of donors that aim to promote sustainable development goals in interaction with local public actors in developing countries. Wijaya et al. (2018), for instance, identified several challenges in the search for synergy in cocoa partnership projects in Indonesia. Challenges included tensions over the framings of a problem (environmental, social, or economic), the allocation of responsibilities between initiators or donors of projects and local public actors, and differences in values and moral judgments among stakeholders (Wijaya et al. 2018).

Table 1 summarizes the key takeaways by linking the literature on collective problem-solving and studies on collaboration synergies in multiple stakeholder partnerships. An integrated development project has the highest potential for generating synergy when the project involves a diverse range of actors beyond the “usual suspects” (Informational and Cognitive Diversity) and when these actors make specific contributions to the project based on their distinct competencies (Competence Diversity and Task divisibility). There should also be a broad-based consensus on project goals based on shared values (Value Proximity).

As discussed in the following section, the YoVoReD meets the four conditions identified in Table 1. We thus believe the case can serve as a most-likely case to generate synergistic outcomes.

**Table 1. Conditions for an Integrated Approach for Generating Synergistic Effects**

Conducive Conditions	Ground for Generating Synergistic Effects	
	Collective Problem-Solving in General	Integrated Approach to Development
Informational and Cognitive Diversity	Informational gains	Benefits from information sharing and knowledge and skills transfer among project members and stakeholders
Competence Diversity	Permits the complementary division of labor	Sub-tasks are allocated to different sub-teams and stakeholders with distinct expertise Clear responsibility and ownership
Task Divisibility		
Value (Normative) Proximity	Facilitates interpersonal relations and communication Reduces the risk of miscommunication	A shared understanding of the project goals Effective communication among project members and stakeholders

Source: Authors' own creation

### 3. Case Selection and Methods

#### 3.1. Case Selection

Among many development projects that claim to have adopted an integrated approach, we chose the YoVoReD as a most-likely case to generate synergistic outcomes. The YoVoReD is a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) flagship project on youth empowerment in conflict and post-conflict settings that is being implemented in the Darfur area in the borderlands of Sudan. The project was initiated by UNDP in coordination with the Government of Sudan and the Embassy of South Korea. The project is funded predominantly by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), while the implementation side of the project is led by State Ministries in partnership with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Importantly, the YoVoReD is a multiple-phase project. The first phase of the project occurred between January 2012 and June 2014, with a budget of USD 1,685,380, mainly funded by the South Korean government. At the time, the South Korean Embassy was fully involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project. The budgets for the second (June 2015 to December 2017) and third (March 2017 to June 2018) phases were USD 1,420,737 and USD 1,412,095, respectively. While the South Korean government funded the second phase, the third phase was mainly funded by the Japanese government.<sup>2</sup> During Phase III, KOICA in Ethiopia began to monitor the project. The fourth phase of the project was carried out between November 2017 and October 2019 with a budget of USD 2,375,000. The fifth phase is currently underway (June 2021-June 2024) with a budget of USD 3,350,000.

**Table 2. Multiple Phases of the YoVoReD**

Phase	Period	Budget (USD)	Funding Sources (USD)
Phase I	January 2012-June 2014	1,685,380	ROK-MDG: 478,380, UNDP: 207,000
Phase II	June 2015-December 2017 (extended from January 2016 to bridge the gap)	1,420,737	ROK-MDG: 800,000, UNDP: 500,000, UNV: 120,737
Phase III	March 2017-June 2018	1,412,095	Japan: 740,500 UNDP: 492,332 UNV: 179,263
Phase IV	November 2017-October 2019	2,375,000	KOICA: 2,000,000, UNDP: 375,000
Phase V	June 2021-June 2024	3,350,000	KOICA: 2,850,000, UNDP: 500,000

Source: Authors' own creation with the information from UNDP

<sup>2</sup> The period of overlap between Phases II and III was due to funding transition. The funding from the South Korean government ended in December 2015, however, the UNDP decided to continue the project with internal funds for another year to consolidate outcomes, bridge the gap, and hold momentum until Phase III began.

The main goal of the project (and the focus throughout all five phases) is to accelerate peace, social cohesion, and economic recovery in Darfur by empowering the youth in the area. At its outset, the project's main activities included training youth volunteers from the local villages. During Phase I, youths were the primary beneficiaries of the project. As the project has developed through multiple phases, however, youths became the project's stakeholders who are actively involved in the project's implementation. Youth volunteers who received training regarding economic capacity and political empowerment were deployed to their villages. By Phase III, 379 trained youth volunteers were deployed to 122 communities. During Phase IV, 200 youth volunteers were deployed to 50 targeted villages. Youth volunteers not only disseminated basic knowledge about small business, income-generating activities, village loans, and saving activities but also encouraged peace resolutions to avoid protracted conflict between and within villages. and between two main competing livelihood activities (sedentary farmers and nomads). Moreover, the Youth Volunteer Coordination Unit, which mainly consists of government officials who support the implementation of the project, has helped youths to have their voices heard in their communities. In this way, the project evolved to engage the "unusual suspects" as stakeholders. This process illustrates how the YoVoReD has ensured over time, informational and cognitive diversity, which we expect to have created the ripe ground for synergistic development outcomes.

Additionally, in seeking to empower youth, the YoVoReD cross-cuts the domains of development that are conventionally treated as distinct: the economic development sector, which tends to involve economists and practitioners specializing in promoting income and employment via vocational training and financial transfer, and the political development sector, which tends to involve political scientists and practitioners specializing in promoting political participation and civic engagement and peace processes. This is different from many multi-stakeholder partnerships that still focus on one core domain, such as labor rights or climate change partnerships. Compared to these single-domain partnerships, the YoVoReD features greater diversity regarding stakeholder expertise.

While the project cross-cuts across the traditionally defined sectoral boundaries, the overarching goal of the project has always been youth empowerment, and this has been firm and clear. Both the economic and political sides of the project aim to empower the Darfur youth via either increased access to skills, employment, and productive assets or increased participation and engagement in civic duties, political and peace processes and decision-making at local and state levels. This project identity helps ensure value proximity between stakeholders.

**Table 3. YoVoReD: Ripe Ground for Observing Synergistic Effects**

Conducive Conditions	Ground for Generating Synergistic Effects
	YoVoReD
Informational and Cognitive Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth volunteers as unusual stakeholders</li> <li>• Information and knowledge transfer from youth volunteers to project managers and community members</li> </ul>
Competence Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-teams at UN and local NGOs with distinct expertise in economic and political domains</li> <li>• Collaboration with clear responsibility</li> </ul>
Task Divisibility	
Value (Normative) Proximity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared understanding of the overarching project goal of youth empowerment</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' own creation

Based on the above discussion, we suggest that the YoVoReD has good potential to generate synergistic outcomes through the design of the multiple components of the project. Its outcomes are expected to be more positive than what we would expect from a stand-alone youth economic or political empowerment project. Taking the YoVoReD as a most-likely case, we conducted a case study that explores whether the project has been able to achieve synergy and, if so, in what specific forms.

### 3.2. Methods

The methods of this study have four main components, which are mostly qualitative approaches: field observation, AHP, KIIs, and FGIs. For field observation, we visited two cities in South and North Darfur, Nyala and El Fasher, and two villages near Nyala and El Fasher. In these cities and villages, we observed the facilities of social services such as youth sports centers and health centers. Figure 1 shows the map of Darfur, which is the main target area of the project. Darfur is located in the west of Sudan<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Boundaries drawn along Sub-national ethnic identities such as African farmers and Arabic nomads have been a source of various forms of conflict and violence in Darfur region (and Sudan). Conflicts, including full scale civil wars between the governments in central Darfur and rebel groups such as Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and their consequences are the establishment of boundaries between regions and villages in Sudan Darfur. Conflicts between sub-national ethnic identities established de facto borders between peoples and regions which created multiple "Sudans" (Calkins, Ille and Rottenburg 2014). In this sense, Darfur can be described as nested border areas with multitudes of ordering practices and complex negotiations. For more detailed explanations about different kinds of borders, see 3.2 Definition and typology of borders and borderlands in Yi and Nassali with Lee (2022).



Figure 1. Map of Darfur. Source: Final synthesis YoVoReD IV project report, 2020.

First, we designed and conducted AHP to understand the multifaceted challenges and problems of target areas, which might explain why an integrated approach was necessary. AHP is multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) method that helps a decision-maker face complex problems involving multiple, conflicting, and subjective criteria or alternatives (Chen 2006; Ishizaka and Labib 2009; Ghimire and Kim 2018). Generally, AHP structures a problem hierarchically, descending from a goal to criteria, sub-criteria, and alternatives at successive levels. The hierarchy provides users with an overall view of the complex relationships inherent in the context and provides a framework for comparative analysis (Liu et al. 2020). AHP minimizes the complex characteristics of other methods based on nonlinear forms and employs complex mathematical models (Ishizaka and Labib 2009; Singh and Nachtnebel 2016; Kim et al. 2015; Ghimire and Kim 2018). In AHP, multi-criteria analysis is based on pairwise comparison. Its high performance is enhanced by its ease of use, systematic problem structuring, and calculation methodology designed to handle imprecision (Liu et al. 2020). Thus, we chose AHP as the framework of the survey to understand the perceptions of multiple stakeholders. The AHP method is commonly applied in “three basic steps: (1) decomposition, or the hierarchy construction, such as a hierarchical tree structure; (2) comparative judgements, or defining and executing data collection to obtain pairwise comparison data on elements of the hierarchical structure; and the last step (3) constructing an overall priority rating or compare the factors’ priority (Chen 2006).”

To understand the complex challenges and problems in Darfur, we first set up defined criteria elaborated in terms of “Challenges and Problems.” The criteria were selected based on the need assessment of areas, including (i) lack of youth economic empowerment, (ii) lack of youth political empowerment, (iii) lack of community economic empowerment, and (iv) lack of community political empowerment, as shown in Figure 2. The hierarchical structure was formed around classifications and specific topics identified within each category. Through this process, issues were broken down into a hierarchical tree structure. In framing the problem, we established categories regarding challenges and problems.

AHP respondents were divided into three groups. Group 1 (9 respondents) consisted of implementing partners and UNDP staff in the YoVoReD, Group 2 (6 respondents) consisted of local government officials, and Group 3 (22 respondents) included the beneficiaries of the YoVoReD. Surveys were conducted through direct meetings with respondents. We formulated comparison questionnaires for respondents to provide their judgments based on a 9-point scale. For the pair-wise comparison, we asked respondents which option was the most important. If they believed both to be equally important, they chose 1. If they believed one to be much more important than the other, they chose 9. The questionnaires can be found in Appendix 4.

With the collected data from the survey, a pairwise comparison matrix was constructed concerning challenges and problems in each category. As respondents were asked to compare two issues simultaneously, it was important to understand whether respondents had maintained consistency when answering the questions. Two methods can be used to check for consistency: consistency index (CI) and consistency ratio (CR). Ishizaka and Lalib (2009) emphasized the importance of a consistency check for valid AHP answers. Saaty (1982) postulated that a CR of 0.1 or less is satisfactory, while Kim et al. (2015) posited that a range of 0.2 or less is sufficient to show consistency. This study adopted a CR of 0.2 or less, following Kim et al. (2015). Responses with a CR higher than 0.2 were not included in calculating the weight as respondents had not consistently compared categories. Out of 37 respondents, only 20 respondents’ answers were included in the analysis for the first layer of questions regarding challenges and problems. For the second layer of questions, 14, 18, 16, and 18 respondents’ answers were consistent. We also provided a standard deviation (SD) to assess the degree of variance between each category’s weight to understand the level of dispersion of weights relative to their mean.



Figure 2. Challenges and Problems. Source: Authors' own creation.

To understand the project outcomes, we conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with various stakeholders who manage and implement the project. The interviewees included staff from UNDP and KOICA, implementing NGOs, and Sudanese governmental officials. The interviews consisted of three stages. In the first stage, interviewees were asked if they were aware of the integrated approach and whether the YoVoReD, at the outset, was designed and implemented with an integrated approach in mind. In the second stage, they were asked to freely reflect on the outcomes of the YoVoReD. Interviewees were encouraged to compare the performance of the YoVoReD to other projects that they had previously participated in or had information about. We did not reveal our expectations about the synergistic effects in the first two stages of the interview. During the third stage, we shared our expectations with the interviewees and asked them to explain their opinions on the expectation. They endorsed or rejected the expectation based on their experience with the project.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews with project managers and implementers, we conducted FGIs with the youths who were the project's intended first-hand beneficiaries. FGIs were



conducted with 6-8 young people; participants were invited to share their experience with and assessment of the project. We did not reveal our expectations in the FGIs. We paid more attention to whether the young participants were aware of the different yet integrated pillars of the project (peace, social service, and more work opportunities) and could make connections between them.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. AHP Results

The AHP results are summarized in Table 4. We report the overall weights and rankings (in parentheses) of the challenges and problems calculated from the survey responses. The overall results indicate that respondents perceive all challenges and problems in the list to be important. This confirms the multifaceted nature of challenges in the target area, which calls for an integrated approach. Moreover, given that the list of challenges and problems included in the questionnaire is closely related to the actual goals of the YoVoReD, our AHP results suggest that the YoVoReD's problem setting indeed well reflects the perspectives of its various stakeholders. This consistency is an important prerequisite for the synergistic effects we expect to observe from the integrated approach.

More specifically, our AHP results indicate that Group 1, consisting of IP and UNDP staff, considered a “lack of youth political empowerment” as the most important challenge and problem. However, they believed that all four challenges and problems were almost equally important as the standard deviation was only 0.03. Group 2, consisting of local government officials, believed the most important challenge and problem in the region to be a “lack of youth economic empowerment.” Interestingly, both Groups 1 and 2 considered youth issues to be more important than community issues. Group 3, consisting of the YoVoReD beneficiaries, considered “lack of community economic empowerment” to be the most important issue. They also believed that all four issues were equally important as the standard deviation was low. These findings together imply that multiple stakeholders of the YoVoReD have a shared understanding of the target area's challenges and a shared belief that the empowerment of youth is key to address the challenges. As discussed above, such ‘value proximity’ among stakeholders is expected to facilitate the synergistic effects of the YoVoReD.

Under the category of a “lack of youth economic empowerment,” Groups 1 and 3 considered all five factors to be equally important for the region, with standard deviations of 0.03 and 0.06, respectively. While Group 1 believed that the lack of youth job opportunities was the most important issue under this category, Group 3 believed that the lack of youth business opportunities was the most important issue. For “lack of youth political empowerment,” respondents believed that all subcategories were equally important, with low standard deviations. This implies that respondents believed that securing a certain level of youth political empowerment through various methods was needed.

For the sub-category of “lack of community economic empowerment,” respondents of all groups considered all issues to be of similar importance, with low standard deviations. Interestingly, the main concern for all three groups concerning this category was the lack of community entrepreneurship. This might be related to the current situation in the communities where there is little entrepreneurship. Regarding the sub-category “lack of community political empowerment,” respondents believed that the lack of government support for community and community involvement regarding decision-making was the most important issue.

**Table 4. AHP Analysis for Challenges and Problems**

Challenges and Problems: weight (ranking)						SD
	Lack of youth economic empowerment	Lack of youth political empowerment	Lack of community economic empowerment	Lack of community political empowerment		
G1	0.27 (2)	0.29 (1)	0.24 (3)	0.20 (4)		0.03
G2	0.46 (1)	0.25 (2)	0.24 (3)	0.05 (4)		0.14
G3	0.31 (2)	0.20 (3)	0.34 (1)	0.16 (4)		0.07
Lack of Youth Economic Empowerment: weight (ranking)						SD
	Lack of youth education	Lack of youth career training	Lack of youth job opportunities	Lack of youth entrepreneurship	Lack of youth business opportunities	
G1	0.16 (5)	0.20 (3)	0.25 (1)	0.18 (4)	0.21 (2)	0.03
G2	0.05 (4)	0.32 (1)	0.28 (3)	0.04 (5)	0.32 (1)	0.13
G3	0.09 (5)	0.22 (2)	0.20 (4)	0.22 (2)	0.27 (1)	0.06
Lack of Youth Political Empowerment: weight (ranking)						SD
	Lack of youth political participation	Lack of youth social inclusion	Lack of government support for youth	Lack of youth involvement in decision-making		
G1	0.26 (3)	0.20 (4)	0.27 (2)	0.28 (1)		0.03
G2	0.19 (3)	0.22 (2)	0.40 (1)	0.18 (4)		0.09
G3	0.19 (4)	0.31 (1)	0.20 (3)	0.30 (2)		0.06
Lack of Community Economic Empowerment: weight (ranking)						SD
	Lack of community education	Lack of community career training	Lack of community job opportunities	Lack of community entrepreneurship	Lack of community business opportunities	
G1	0.17 (5)	0.21 (2)	0.19 (4)	0.24 (1)	0.20 (3)	0.02
G2	0.13 (5)	0.17 (3)	0.19 (2)	0.34 (1)	0.17 (3)	0.07
G3	0.21 (2)	0.20 (4)	0.21 (2)	0.24 (1)	0.14 (5)	0.03
Lack of Community Political Empowerment: weight (ranking)						SD
	Lack of community political participation	Lack of community integration	Lack of government support for communities	Lack of community involvement in decision-making		
G1	0.21 (3)	0.20 (4)	0.31 (1)	0.27 (2)		0.05
G2	0.23 (2)	0.13 (4)	0.17 (3)	0.47 (1)		0.13
G3	0.14 (4)	0.15 (3)	0.37 (1)	0.35 (2)		0.11

## 4.2. Synergistic Effects

Figure 3 summarizes the findings from the KIIs and FGIs. The findings provide evidence for the synergistic effects of the integrated approach. These effects were realized in the form of complementarity, spillover, and enhanced ownership.

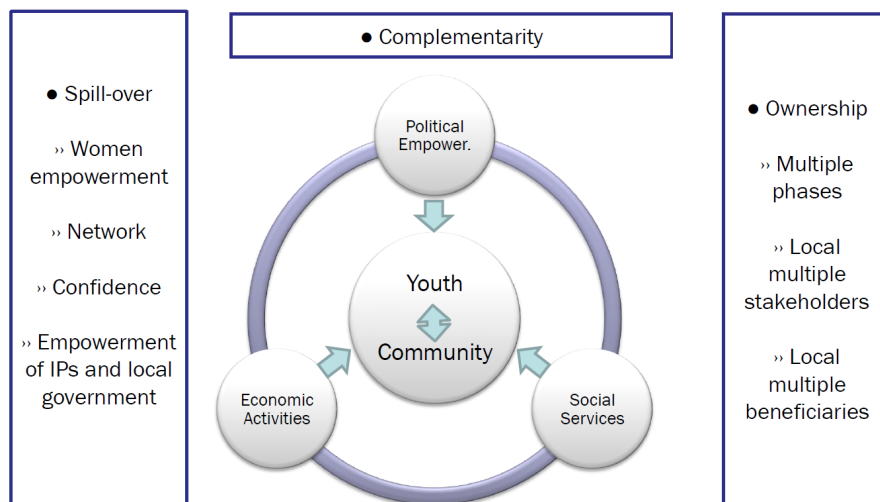


Figure 3. Synergistic Effects of the Integrated Approach in the YoVoReD. Source: Authors' own creation.

### Complementarity

From the KIIs and FGIs, we observed that the main goals of the YoVoReD, including political empowerment for peace, economic activities for higher incomes, and social services for improved living conditions, were complementary. Each of these goals could not be achieved without achieving the others.

This complementarity of the project begins with the components of political empowerment for peace. There has been a continuing conflict in the Darfur area since 2003. While the level of violence has comparatively decreased, local people are still suffering due to the constant conflict. One of the youth volunteers stated that approximately 100 people had recently died due to conflict between villages. Contrary to other project sites of development projects, achieving peace in this area and educating people about peaceful resolutions would be necessary conditions to achieve the other goals of development projects. An interviewee from one of the implementing NGOs explained this:

*“Considering Darfur contexts, there is no way that the goals of development projects can be achieved without having peace in this area. Most people in this area have been severely suffering from the long-lasting conflicts. Having peace is a necessary condition for all other development projects. Without peace, nothing is possible.”*

The youth volunteers were involved in peacebuilding initiatives and learning skills for conflict resolution. Once they received their political empowerment training, they returned to their villages and educated the communities to promote peace in the area. As it has promoted peace in the target

areas, the YoVoReD has allowed for the creation of a more peaceful environment in the target areas, as the other two major goals of the YoVoReD regarding economic activities and social services have also been achieved.

The goal regarding economic activities is also complementary to the other two goals. Through various economic activities such as capacity building, vocational training, enterprise development, financial education, etc., the YoVoReD contributed to the increased income levels of youth and community members. As the income of beneficiaries increased, local people tended to put more effort into peacebuilding and to work for better living conditions. Without financial stability, it might have been difficult for the beneficiaries to maintain peace in the areas. The UNDP staff emphasized that the provision of social services can be more effective when the economic conditions of the beneficiaries are improved. For example, one of the youth volunteers who successfully launched his own farm equipment rental business stated that he could more actively engage in peace-related community activities with an increased income.

The other major component of the YoVoReD, the provision of social services, has also contributed to the achievement of the other two goals. In addition to political empowerment and economic activities, the YoVoReD also satisfied basic social needs regarding health and youth social cohesion. Health and youth centers were built to satisfy these needs. As basic social needs were satisfied, local people were more likely to embrace a more peaceful environment and attempt to increase their income. Moreover, these health and youth centers sometimes served as a place where people from different villages met and interacted with each other. For example, some villagers participated in a soccer competition. These kinds of interactions and activities can be a bounding force for people to better understand each other. The provision of social services is as important as the other two major goals for the improvement of the beneficiaries' lives.

The complementarity of achieving major project goals in the YoVoReD is derived from the features of the integrated approach. When the YoVoReD began in 2012, the area was much less politically stable than it is currently. At that time, achieving peace was the priority of the project. However, the economic and social aspects of beneficiaries could not be ignored. Therefore, the integrated approach was adopted to reflect the local contexts.

### **Spillover**

The synergistic effects are also realized in the form of spillover. The YoVoReD targets multiple actors, including both youth and community members, with multiple goals of the project, which has generated a spillover. Various unexpected outcomes seem to have been achieved in addition to the three major goals of the project. These relate to female empowerment, youth networking, psychological impact, and the empowerment of implementing partners and local governments. These spillover outcomes as a realization of synergistic effects were not directly intended but have been somewhat achieved as the YoVoReD has implemented the multiple components of the project.

First, female empowerment as a spillover outcome was an interesting finding from the field research. As we interviewed multiple stakeholders and beneficiaries, many interviewees mentioned that female empowerment had, notably, been achieved. While the major activities of the YoVoReD are not directly related to female empowerment, female participation is emphasized in the project. From the beginning, the project was designed to feature approximately 50% female participation (52% of beneficiaries for Phase IV were female). As women have been educated and trained through the YoVoReD, they have realized that their rights are as important as those of men. A local government official from the Ministry of Finance who was previously a youth volunteer and is currently a member of the Youth Volunteer Coordination Unit commented like this:

*“I was a youth volunteer in the first phase of the YoVoReD. It has helped me to get a job in the government. After receiving training, I became very confident in many things. Moreover, people in the village began to show some respect to me and listen to what I said after participating in the YoVoReD. While I am working for the Ministry of Finance, I am also pursuing a Ph.D. degree. I strongly believe that women empowerment has occurred through this project.”*

Second, the local network was established through the YoVoReD and became an important asset that could be utilized for various occasions. As previously mentioned, 579 youths were trained and dispatched to their communities from Phases I to IV; more youths are currently being trained as part of Phase V. In each phase, youths who were trained together became familiarized with each other and a network grew among them. Even youths that were trained in different phases became acquainted. Additionally, UNDP has maintained all the contact information of past and present youth participants. This network of the YoVoReD participants can be mobilized when needed. For example, when we conducted our field trip, it was not difficult for the UNDP to mobilize the past participants for the interviews. A project manager from UNDP stated that this established network can be called upon when needed for the development project. For instance, humanitarian assistance could be easily distributed to remote villages through this network when UNDP needs to respond to humanitarian disasters. More importantly, peer participants from villages became friends, and this network can serve as a mechanism to prevent future conflicts among different villages.

Third, we can also observe how the YoVoReD has increased confidence levels among youth volunteers and community members. For local people in Darfur, participating in the YoVoReD and learning the curriculum regarding, for example, economic activities and political empowerment were experiences that had a positive psychological impact. As the training is comprehensive and covers many areas, from economic activities to conflict resolution, the youths gained more confidence during and after the training. Moreover, as they teach different subjects in their community, they gain more respect within themselves. This psychological impact has led them to pursue better career opportunities and build up entrepreneurship in various business sectors.

The final spillover as one of the synergistic effects is the empowerment of implementing partners like local NGOs and local governments. UNDP established a partnership with local NGOs and governments throughout all phases. As the YoVoReD has multiple goals, implementing partners

such as local NGOs must possess expertise in many areas or seek advice from experts in the sectors where they are lacking knowledge and expertise. Therefore, through multiple phases of the YoVoReD, local NGOs have been empowered in various sectors of development, including conflict resolution. An interviewee from a local NGO explained this:

*“As we have worked with UNDP as an implementing partner for the YoVoReD Phase IV, we have learned a lot in various sectors. Sometimes, it was quite difficult to manage the project due to the multiple components of the project. We had to study and learn more about the sectors in which we did not exactly have expertise.”*

The local governments were also empowered. In the YoVoReD, the local governments from various ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, have been important partners in implementing the project. The features of the integrated approach have allowed these various ministries to maintain constant and regular communications with each other. As previously mentioned, the Youth Volunteer Coordination Unit, consisting of local government ministries, has played an important role for implementers in achieving the intended outcomes. It has helped identify participants for the project, provided teaching materials, and facilitated communication with local communities. Due to their involvement in the YoVoReD, local governments have been able to increase their capabilities and improve their communication skills.

### **Enhanced Ownership**

The fifth phase of the YoVoReD is ongoing. For the last decade, this project has continued despite the unstable political situation in Darfur, Sudan. These multiple phases during the last decade would contribute to the higher level of local ownership compared to other development projects with only one phase. However, the multiple phases themselves do not necessarily mean that the project has secured local ownership. The local ownership is related to whether and how this project involves local communities and governments.

As the YoVoReD involves various local stakeholders ranging from the youth volunteers to local businesses in diverse sectors, the network formed through the YoVoReD extends throughout Darfur. Youth and community members who are part of this network have become strong supporters of the YoVoReD and are willing to continue the project independently. One of the youth volunteers stated that she has continued to share her experience and knowledge with community members even after her assignment in the village ended. She stated that she does this to help her friends and other community members improve their lives. Related to the enhanced ownership, a local government official we interviewed also mentioned like below.

*“I believe that the YoVoReD has significantly contributed to the communities. I am also very confident that local governments might continue the similar training projects for youths. While it is very important to secure the outside funding, it might be possible to utilize our own funding to some extent.”*

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Potential Challenges of the Integrated Approach

Taking the YoVoReD as our case study, our study shows that an integrated approach applied to international development projects can generate synergistic outcomes in the forms of complementarity, spillover, and enhanced ownership. Our case study also reveals several challenges to pursuing an integrated approach in development. The first challenge pertains to financial resources and personnel constraints. While financial and human resources are crucial for all development projects, the implementation of an integrated approach that addresses multiple development goals tends to require a higher budget and more manpower. It also requires the utilization of experts in multiple areas. UNDP seems to have effectively implemented the project given the limited budget and personnel.

Second, the implementation of an integrated approach requires a strong central authority that can serve as a control tower for multiple stakeholders. Moreover, there must be strong support from the locality. This is because of the characteristics of the integrated approach, which must include various stakeholders from multiple sectors. While stand-alone projects focus on a single task with stakeholders from a specific sector, the integrated approach addresses many actors from various sectors. Having support from local governments is important for all development projects, but it is crucial for the integrated approach as it requires coordination among various stakeholders. For the YoVoReD, UNDP showed strong leadership and mobilized local governments to form the Youth Volunteers Coordination Unit. Through this, the integrated approach could be effectively implemented.

The third challenge is in securing financial resources from donors. Traditionally, as development projects tend to focus on one sector, donors such as members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee, categorize development projects into only one distinct sector, such as health, water, environment and etc. Therefore, development projects utilizing an integrated approach can have difficulty securing funding easily from traditional donors. This challenge might be overcome if the integrated approach is planned and implemented often in the development field. Existing development projects with multiple components need to be also categorized as development projects using an integrated approach because most of them are now included in one specific sector. Related to this challenge is the challenge of evaluation. While the integrated approach is increasingly being adopted in practice, there is no consensus on how to evaluate this new approach to development. Thus, most integrated projects are being evaluated using traditional methods developed for stand-alone projects. When donors receive evaluation reports in which traditional evaluation methods have been employed, they can make imprecise judgments about projects, which might undermine the financial sustainability of integrated projects.

## **5.2. Suggestions for the YoVoReD**

While we observed several positive aspects and outcomes of the YoVoReD, we hereby offer some suggestions for the improved implementation of the project in the future. First, we suggest that the coverage of the YoVoReD be continued and expanded to all Darfur areas. With limited resources, UNDP and implementing partners have made great efforts to cover wider areas. Nonetheless, the coverage of the YoVoReD is still significantly limited, considering the size and population of Darfur. UNDP must pursue further sources of funding from international donors in addition to the current donor, KOICA. With a higher budget from multiple donors, the YoVoReD can train more youth volunteers and dispatch them into more communities. These extended networks can help perpetuate peace in the area.

Second, while pursuing international funding to implement more phases of the YoVoReD, UNDP must prepare exit strategies for the future. One of the exit strategies can include the construction of incubators for youth volunteers, namely, youth centers. Youth centers can serve as a space where youths can meet and communicate with community members. Once youth centers are established, local versions of the YoVoReD can be implemented by local people with support from local governments. This will ultimately alter the economic and political conditions of communities and the Darfur area in general. Moreover, this model can be adapted to other areas of Sudan.

Third, the element of political empowerment for peace in the YoVoReD must be further developed and incorporated at the state or national level. Training in conflict resolution for the promotion of peace can ultimately contribute to the establishment of political stability in the region. It would be more effective if this training could be provided to all civil servants at the central and local levels.

Finally, modified evaluation methods must be utilized to evaluate the fifth phase of the YoVoReD, considering the features of the integrated approach. By using traditional methods of project evaluation that focus on stand-alone project goals, the outcomes of integrated projects cannot be precisely evaluated. For example, the evaluation report of Phase IV submitted to KOICA stated that the YoVoReD Phase IV did not achieve the component of peace. This evaluation might be correct using traditional evaluation tools as conflicts were occurring during Phase IV. However, as previously mentioned, the implementation of political empowerment for peace has served as the basic foundation for other goals. The traditional single-task project evaluation method may assess performance regarding the achievement of peace for integrated projects poorly since this type of evaluation is tailored to single-task projects using sector-specific criteria, such as the number of conflicts. Methods tailored to the integrated approach can use multiple criteria for peace to evaluate performance in other goal areas. The impact of the YoVoReD project on peace has been significant since other project goals have been achieved.

## **5.3. Limitations of the Study**

Our explorative study has several limitations. Without a controlled experiment, we were unable to establish a causal relationship between the conditions for the most likely case we identified and the



outcomes we observed. While we provide qualitative information that allowed us to connect conditions to the outcome, we cannot rule out the possibility of reaching the same outcome without the YoVoReD intervention or with a non-integrated approach.

Relatedly, due to the short period of field research, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and a period of high-security risk in the region, what we observed in the field and heard during our interviewees might have suffered from systematic biases. On the one hand, the pandemic induced economic hardship; social disorders can confound project outcomes and lead researchers to underestimate positive effects. On the other hand, NGOs and community members desperately needing international assistance might over-report project outcomes in fear of project discontinuation, which would lead to an overestimation of positive effects. Given that the YoVoReD is a multi-phase project that is still ongoing (Phase V), future studies can reevaluate the project in a post-pandemic setting.

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## **Appendix 1. Interview Questionnaires for IP Staff**

### **In-depth Interview Questionnaires**

#### Implementing Partner Staff

#### **1. General questions about the project and communities**

- Could you briefly explain Phase IV of the YoVoReD project? What is the major goal of Phase IV? What has been the overarching goal of the project as a whole (Phases I-V)?
- What has been your role in the project?
- The project areas cover borderlands such as West Darfur. Have the characteristics of the borderlands affected project design and implementation?
- What are the major challenges and problems in this community?

#### **2. Project outcomes and impacts**

- What were the most important outcomes and impacts of the project as a whole? What about those of Phase IV?
- What have been the most successfully achieved outputs and outcomes throughout the project?
- In your opinion, has the project (Phases I-IV) been successful overall? Was Phase IV successful? If so, why? If not, why not? Can you compare the performance of YoVoReD Phase IV to other projects that you previously managed or have information about?
- What are the limitations and challenges of the project?
- How did borderland characteristics influence the implementation and outcome of the project?

#### **3. Integrated approach**

- Are you familiar with the integrated approach? How do you define the integrated approach? What do you think are the key elements of the integrated approach?
- Was YoVoReD designed and implemented with an integrated approach in mind? Does it reflect the characteristics of the integrated approach?
- Whether and/or how have the outcomes of the initial stages (Phases I-II) influenced the subsequent phases (Phases III-IV) of the project?
- Whether and/or how do the activities of economic empowerment influence the activities of political empowerment and vice versa?
- Do you think that the adoption or application of the integrated approach has affected the project outcomes? If so, how?
- Do you think that the integrated approach can produce synergistic effects among various project goals?

## **Appendix 2. Focus Group Interview Guide for Youth Volunteers**

### **Focus Group Interview Guide for Youth Volunteer Group**

#### **Section 1. Introduction [5-10 minutes]**

[To avoid response bias, do not say that you are here to evaluate the success of YoVoReD or its training program.]

*Thank you all for coming today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a researcher from \_\_\_\_\_. Today's discussion is **to understand your perspective on challenges and opportunities for your village.** You all participated in YoVoReD, and we feel that it is very important to speak to you as the youth leaders of your village. Your opinions are very valuable, and there are no right or wrong answers, so please feel free to share what you think about the topics we discuss. Your identities will not be revealed in any way.*

[Icebreaking: go around the room and ask each participant to state their name.]

#### **Section 2. Youths' perspectives on community issues**

- What are some strengths and weaknesses of your community?
- *What are the challenges and problems you face in this community?*
- *What are the challenges and problems the community as a whole is facing?*

#### **Section 3. Youth trainees' experiences with the project (bear in mind that you need to understand the impact of the integrated approach)**

- *Which training programs have you participated in during this project? Did you like the training? Please elaborate on your experience regarding the training.*
- *Has the training helped you address the problems you mentioned earlier?*
- *What do you think was the key takeaway from the training?*
- *How do you evaluate the training?*
- *If an additional training opportunity were provided for you, what kind of training would you like to receive?*

[If responses are not specific enough, ask the questions below]

- *(For participants of both economic and political empowerment training): The training you received covered both economic and political empowerment. Did you like this approach of providing both types of training for youths?*
- *(For participants of only economic empowerment training): Your training concentrated on economic empowerment. Did you like the focus on the economic dimension?*

#### **Section 4. Interaction between youth trainees and community villagers**

- *Can you tell me about your experience engaging with other villagers to share what you learned from the training? Tell me about both positive and negative experiences.*
- *What did the villagers particularly appreciate about the project?*
- *Do you think such interactions with the villagers can help address community challenges and problems?*

#### **Section 5. Future of the community**

- *What do you think this community would look like five years from now?*
- *To prevent setbacks and induce more positive changes, what role should youth leaders play?*
- *What kind of training do you think other villagers need that you would want to provide them with in the future?*

### Appendix 3. Pictures from Field Research



KIIs with local governmental officials



FGIs with youth volunteers



Youth sports center



FGIs with community members

Figure A.1. Field Research in Nyala, South Darfur

Does an Integrated Approach Lead to Better Outcomes?  
The Youth Volunteers Supporting Peace and Recovery in Darfur



KIIs with local governmental officials



FGIs with youth volunteers



Community health center



FGIs with community members

Figure A.2. Field Research in El Fasher, North Darfur



## Appendix 4. AHP Questionnaires

Question: Between Criteria A and B, which challenge or problem is more important for your community? (1 = Equal importance, 3 = Moderate importance, 5 = Strong importance, 7 = Very strong importance, 9 = Extreme importance (2, 4, 6, 8 = value in between))

	A is extremely more important.									Equally important			B is extremely more important.								
A	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	B			
Lack of youth economic empowerment																		Lack of youth political empowerment			
Lack of youth economic empowerment																		Lack of community economic empowerment			
Lack of youth economic empowerment																		Lack of community political empowerment			
Lack of youth political empowerment																		Lack of community economic empowerment			
Lack of youth political empowerment																		Lack of community political empowerment			
Lack of community economic empowerment																		Lack of community political empowerment			