



Final Report

Mid-Term Review

**UN Secretary-General's
Peacebuilding Fund Strategy 2020-2024**

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Acronyms

AILP	Appui aux Initiatives Locales de Paix
AMISOM	African Union Mission to Somalia
ATMIS	African Union Transition Mission in Somalia
BINUH	United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
BNUB	United Nations Office in Burundi
CAR	Central African Republic
CCA	Common Country Analysis
COVID	Coronavirus disease
CPAS	Comprehensive Performance Assessment System
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Counter Violent Extremism
DCO	Development Coordination Office
DM&E	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPET	Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GM	Gender Marker
GPI	Gender Promotion Initiative
GYPI	Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative
HACP	Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix
HDP	Humanitarian, Development and Peace
HR	Human Resources
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IFI	International Financial Institution
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IRF	Immediate Response Facility
ISSSS	International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
MINUJUSTH	United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MONUSCO	United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo

MTR	Mid-Term Review
MPTFO	Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office
NCE	No-Cost Extension
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAC	Project Appraisal Committee
PDA	Peace and Development Advisor
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	UN Peacebuilding Support Office
PPP	Peacebuilding Priority Plan
PRG	Project Review Group
PSCF	Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
SCORE	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SPM	Special Political Mission
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
TOC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNAMSIL	United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNIOGBIS	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
UNIPSIL	UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
UNISS	UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel
UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPI	Youth Promotion Initiative
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

Executive Summary

The **2020-2024 Strategy** of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is **the most ambitious yet**, designed to ensure the Fund is a core instrument at the heart of the UN's peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts, and a driver of the critical United Nations reform agenda. The first half of the PBF's Strategy 2020-2024 was characterized by deteriorating political and security conditions and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, the PBF saw 2 consecutive years of record approvals totaling close to \$370m in 2020 and 2021.

The Review found a strong consensus that the priorities identified by the PBF in its Strategy remain relevant in the current context. They also remain appropriate insofar as the major developments since the development of the Strategy (the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, the (more) urgent action on the climate crisis, increased polarization and the shrinking of civic space) provide challenges that can appropriately be addressed under the current Strategy on the basis of context-specific analysis of peacebuilding needs, even without being elevated to the rank of an explicit funding priority.

Strategic Results Frameworks (SRFs) constitute the most important innovation under the current strategy to increase portfolio coherence at the country level. Key stakeholders have supported this introduction based on the widespread realization that a projectized approach to peacebuilding will only yield limited results and SRFs are one – if not the only way – of strengthening a programmatic approach. While significant efforts have been made in the development of SRFs, more attention and resources should be dedicated to their operationalization through guiding future investments, a clear articulation of their role in monitoring, evaluation and learning, reporting and resource mobilization efforts.

Through **Priority Window 1: Supporting Cross-Border and Regional Approaches** PBF continues to build on its niche and positions itself as a UN convenor and driving force. Between 2020 and mid-2022, the Fund approved approximately \$ 60m spread across 17 cross-border and regional projects covering 33 countries, which despite a significant increase still falls short of the 20% funding target. Recognizing the significant efforts and the flexible, sometimes bold approaches taken by the Fund to support cross-border and regional programming, the Review highlights the importance of dedicating more attention and resources to regional strategic reflections and the operationalization of genuinely transnational projects. Transaction costs in the development and coordination of this type of projects are reasonably higher due to their complexity, however, additional avenues for exploring more value for money could be explored along the lines suggested by the Review.

Priority Window 2: Facilitating Transitions is the biggest priority in terms of volume and in 2021 the PBF exceeded its 35% funding target reaching 39% through support to 9 transition contexts. A more robust evidence-base regarding PBF support to these contexts is required, however, preliminary findings by this Review suggest that PBF has demonstrated good results in its initial support provided to transition contexts, while strategic links to a transition rationale of subsequent investments seem to decrease over time. In addition, PBF should further refine the definition of transition contexts and ensure that it is widely understood by all stakeholders and its niche and types of support to transition contexts are further refined.

Priority Window 3: Gender and Youth Empowerment continues to be overwhelmingly supported by all stakeholders due to its focus on fostering inclusion. Over the period under review, PBF has met and exceeded its ambitious goal of 30% related to investments in gender-responsive peacebuilding by allocating 40 (2020) and 47% (2021) of its resources to gender equality and women’s empowerment. PBF continues to show a commitment to learning more about how it contributes to this Priority Window as evidenced by the [Gender-responsive Peacebuilding Thematic Review](#) (2021) and the [Local Peacebuilding Thematic Review](#) (2022) with a strong focus on youth. The Gender Promotion Initiative 2.0, rolled out in 2022 in 4 pilot countries, has been a major innovation in PBF programming. The Review suggests continued learning from and scale up of this initiative as a vector for increasing national ownership and strategic engagement at country level with the potential of reducing some of the transaction costs associated with a global call with comparatively low acceptance rates due to demand drastically surpassing available funds.

Beyond the Priority Windows, the Review analyzed a number of additional commitments of the PBF Strategy 2020-2024, including PBF’s support to civil society organizations (CSOs), some core funding principles (catalytic, national ownership and cohesive UN strategies) and Design, Monitoring, Evaluation (DM&E) and Learning considerations.

CSOs do receive a smaller, yet steadily growing, portion of the overall PBF funding. International NGOs receive a lion share of this funding, while only 7 local CSOs became direct recipients of PBF support. PBF’s willingness to expand partnerships with CSOs is an important signal in a context where the shrinking of civic space has become a growing threat to peacebuilding globally and it is positively perceived by the recipients. PBF support to CSOs can be further strengthened through more joint projects between UN and CSOs, removing some obstacles for (national) CSOs to directly access PBF funds and building on positive experiences of funding modalities at the national level that allow national CSOs to become implementing partners with a strong influence on project design and implementation.

Achieving catalytic effects remains an important core principle of the Fund, even though the PBF currently falls short of its goal to mobilize \$ 10 for every \$ 1 invested. Greater attention and accountability concerning proactive resource mobilization strategies earlier on in the project cycle as well as at the portfolio level (through more deliberate anchoring in SRFs) can increase catalytic effects and sustainability.

National ownership is another core principle that PBF worked towards through **active engagement of national actors at all levels** of society at crucial moments in the design, implementation and oversight of PBF portfolios and projects. However, government partners in particular are asking for even more of a leadership role when it comes to strategic decision making. Joint Steering Committees remain the principal means to ensure oversight of PBF’s portfolio but are not functional in all contexts. Alternative ways of ensuring national ownership and leadership need to be explored in countries where governments’ commitment to peacebuilding is fragile or where governments are insufficiently democratically legitimized, e.g., following a coup.

Supporting cohesive UN Strategies is the last core principle analyzed in more detail, where PBF has demonstrated significant contributions based on its integrator role through the prioritization of joint projects with two or more UN recipients, the alignment of SRFs with broader UN strategic documents and the facilitation of conversations about cohesive UN peacebuilding approaches. The

full integration of the PBSO into the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) as well as piloting new approaches regarding the mainstreaming of peacebuilding approaches in the development of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks in partnership with the DCO provide additional avenues for leveraging PBF's support for more cohesiveness beyond a project-based approach.

The PBF is working towards realizing the commitments to **more robust Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E) and Learning systems** formulated in the Strategy as evidenced by its recently published [Evaluation Policy](#) that clarifies its engagement at global, country and project level. Adequate and sustainable staffing in PBSO and PBF Secretariats for ensuring continued support to good enough yet robust DM&E practices (commensurate with the expected peacebuilding outcomes) are necessary, while capacities of national actors need to continuously be developed to ensure accountability and a transfer of responsibilities where possible. While evaluation and some learning functions are already well covered, additional attention to supporting design and monitoring functions should be explored.

In summary, while this Review did not identify a need for major course corrections for the second half of the PBF Strategy 2020-2024, a set of recommendations provides avenues for further increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of PBF engagement in the realization of objectives set out in its Strategic Plan.

A. Introduction

This 2020-2024 Strategy of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is the most ambitious yet, designed to ensure the Fund is a core instrument at the heart of the UN's peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts, and a driver of the critical United Nations reform agenda. This Mid-Term Review of the Strategy takes stock of results achieved so far amid contextual developments and allows the Fund to make necessary adjustments.

Against this background, the Mid-Term Review¹ of the PBF 2020-2024 Strategy has the following objectives:

- Assess the relevance, appropriateness and early indications of effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy, honing in on the Strategy's Priority Windows, experimenting with new country-based Strategic Results Frameworks (SRFs), and peacebuilding partnerships.
- Assess to what extent the PBF is aligned with other country frameworks, including the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and how well it has supported governments to advance achievement of the SDGs.
- Assess the PBF's efficiency regarding its institutional arrangements, including its direct funding to CSOs, as well as its management and operational systems and value for money.
- Document good practices, innovations and lessons.

¹ See detailed Terms of Reference in Annex *

- Identify potential areas of needed course correction in the implementation of the Strategy and provide actionable recommendations for future programming.

This Mid-Term Review examined the Strategy's overall goals, implementation process and underlying assumptions. In that respect, it looked at PBF's performance from 2020 to mid-2022.

Methodology

The Review applied a mixed method approach, collected and analyzed various forms of evidence denoting – where necessary – how they were used to triangulate information. Data collection tools included

- **Document review** focused on documents relevant for assessing the current state of the implementation of the PBF Strategy, including relevant strategy and policy documents, country-specific documents (UNSDCFs, SRFs, eligibility requests, annual reports by Joint Steering Committees, conflict analyses/Common Country Analyses etc.), project documentation and additional academic and other thematic literature. The Review operated at the strategic level and analyzed project information to varying degrees of detail for the different Priority Windows, in preparation of country-level key informant interviews as well as regarding relevant design, monitoring and evaluation elements.
- **Key informant interviews** with 81 stakeholders including representatives of PBSO's leadership and staff, RCOs, PDAs, members of PBF's Advisory Group, PBF Secretariat Coordinators, representatives of other UN Secretariat entities, the PBF Program Support Team, fund recipients (UN and Non-UN), government and civil society partners and donors.
- **An Online Survey**, which was distributed via email to 968 country level contacts including government partners, UNCTs and civil society. PBF Program Officers and in-country secretariats provided the contacts. The survey was rolled out between 19 August and 10 September 2022. Participation was voluntary and respondents were asked for written consent. There were 188 respondents (37% women) from 39 countries.²
- **A Mid-Term Review Stakeholders Workshop** with a representative group of key PBF partners in New York on 25-26 October 2022. The participants were representatives of UNRCOs, PBSO and DPPA staff, recipient UN agencies, government, international and national civil society organizations and donors.

B. Findings

The first half of the PBF's Strategy 2020-2024 was characterized by deteriorating political and security conditions and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, the PBF saw 2 consecutive years of record investments totaling close to \$ 370m in 2020 and 2021. The survey conducted as part of this Review showed high levels of satisfaction with all areas of PBF programming. Participants in the survey saw significant contributions of the PBF to filling funding gaps in the area of gender and youth-responsive peacebuilding as well as providing support to local and grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and to a lesser extent to cross-border and regional programming as well as to facilitating transitions. The support from PBF Secretariats and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) on design, monitoring and evaluation, gender & youth-

² See the Annex for additional information on the survey.

responsive programming as well as conflict sensitivity was deemed overwhelmingly (to more than 80%) as sufficient or more than sufficient. A small majority (53%) considered PBF projects (much) more innovative than initiatives supported by other donors, which leaves some room for improvement.

The positive achievements are also evidenced by the PBF's [Strategic Performance Framework](#) which contains 4 outcomes. Outcome 1 focuses on Strategic Peacebuilding and Prevention Effects, which involves PBF investments leading to more and better nationally led peacebuilding and prevention interventions, including in cross-border and transition contexts, and in support of more inclusion of women and youth. Despite a challenging context, the Fund's engagement reached unprecedented levels. Details of the Fund's engagement under the 3 Priority Windows are elaborated upon below. Strategic Results Frameworks (SRFs) at country level, introduced as part of the current Strategic Plan are an important step forward for even greater strategic relevance and coherence of PBF investments and thus also analyzed in greater detail. .

Outcome 2 focuses on Catalytic Effects, which so far seem to have stayed below the goal of additional \$ 10 raised for every \$ 1 of initial PBF investments. The nuances of catalytic effects under the current Strategy will be further analyzed in a specific section of this Review.

Outcome 3 deals with Systemic Coherence, looking at how PBF investments enable the United Nations system and partners to implement more coherent and integrated approaches to peacebuilding in a timely manner. PBF continues to be an important vehicle for greater UN coherence through its bridge function between UN Secretariat entities and UN agencies, funds and programs as evidenced by its support to facilitating transitions but also in many aspects of its regular programming. Still, throughout the Review, there will be examples of how PBF could build on these successes for even greater impact and for leveraging the full integration of the PBSO into the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).

Outcome 4 on Fund Efficiency and Effectiveness aims at maintaining and enhancing management and governance systems that consolidate the PBF as a leading multilateral, pooled financing instrument with increased resources. The Strategy involves a path of rapid growth in terms of annual contributions/allocations going from \$200m/\$175m in 2020 to \$385m/\$ 400m in 2024. While the allocations so far have largely followed the envisioned path, contributions currently do not grow in the same way, having reached a plateau with \$ 142m in deposits in 2022.³

In light of these developments, this Mid-Term Review of the PBF Strategy has analyzed the current achievements in greater detail with a focus on how to increase strategic coherence for greater impact while reducing transaction costs. This approach is guided by a widely shared realization that projectization in the form of isolated initiatives will only achieve limited contributions to sustainable peace. While the Review does not answer these questions exhaustively, it provides numerous recommendations, which would help the PBF to do more with existing resources (in the case of contributions remaining at the current level) or adapt its programming approaches for greater efficiency (in the case of the growth scenario laid out in the Strategic Plan) during the second half of its Strategy.

³ See the information on the website of the PBF's administrative agent, the [Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office](#).

I. Strategic Country Support

Strategic Results Frameworks (SRFs) constitute **the most important innovation under the current strategy to increase portfolio coherence at the country level**. Key stakeholders have supported this introduction based on the widespread realization that a projectized approach to peacebuilding will only yield limited results and SRFs are one – if not the only way – of strengthening a programmatic approach. While significant efforts have been made in the development of SRFs, more attention and resources should be dedicated to their operationalization through guiding future investments, a clear articulation of their role in monitoring, evaluation and learning, reporting and resource mobilization efforts. SRFs were first developed in 2021, in response to recommendations of the **2017-2019 Synthesis Review** to strengthen strategic planning and oversight of PBF portfolios.⁴ In previous years, PBF had worked with **Peacebuilding Priority Plans** (PPPs). These three-year strategic plans typically took 6-9 months to develop and projects were only designed after PPP-endorsement by the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). They consisted of a quite long and complex document (conflict analysis, vision, theory of change, outcome statements, targeting, risks, fund recipient capacity review, results framework). PBF provided up-front support for a simultaneous start of PPP projects. Due to several challenges, the practice of PPPs was abandoned with the 2018 revision of the PBF Guidelines. During a brief interlude, the PBF experimented with so-called **IRF packages** to address shortcomings in portfolio coherence.

As of December 2022, PBF supported the development of 11 SRFs:⁵

⁴ PBSO (2020): [Synthesis Review 2017-2019. PBF Project and Portfolio Evaluations](#), p. 43: Given the importance of PBF funding in relation to overall peacebuilding work in the UN system, and the significant growth of PBF's budget in recent years, PBF should engage more proactively to strengthen strategic management and accountability of PBF portfolios.

⁵ One SRF was developed for an envisioned regional eligibility for the Western Balkans. This request has never been submitted and therefore will not be further discussed here.

Country	Type of support	Facilitation	PBF Eligibility	UNSCF
2021				
Guatemala	Consultant	Virtual	2020-2025	2020-2025
Kyrgyzstan	Consultant	Virtual	2021-2026	2018-2022; 2023-2027
South Sudan	Consultant	Virtual	2021-2026	2019-2022; 2023-2025
2022				
Honduras	Consultant	In-country	2021-2025	2017-2021; 2022-2026
Liberia	PBSO	In-country	No eligibility (PBC)	2020-2024
DRC – Tanganyika	PBSO	In-country	2020-2024	2020-2024
Niger	Consultant	In-country	2021-2026	2019-2022; 2023-2027
Mauritania	PBSO	In-country	2020-2025	2018-2022
In development				
Sudan	Consultant	In-country	2020-2024	2018-2021
Somalia	Consultant	In-country	2020-2025	2021-2025
Haiti	PBSO	In-country	2020-2024	2017-2021; 2022-2026

Process

The development process of these SRFs differed in many regards. Some processes were facilitated by external consultants of the PBF Program Support Team, while others were supported by Program Officers and members of the PBF DM&E team. In the end, the **type of support** mattered little, as long as some key success factors were considered, including strong in-country support by PBF Secretariats or other stakeholders such as Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs), familiarity with the country context, a focus on the strategic engagement of the PBF and a continuous accompaniment. In some cases, SRFs were developed remotely, mainly because of COVID-related restrictions, others based on in-person consultations, which usually allowed for a deeper engagement.

The **participants** in the development of the SRFs included a diverse group of actors, representing the UN, government and CSOs. The development of SRFs presents a path for increasing national ownership in the strategic decisions on resource allocations. A positive example is Niger due to the close involvement of the Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix (HACP), a government entity attached to the Presidency, which played a leading role in the development of the SRF.

The development of SRFs usually took **a few months from start to finish**. As SRFs were newly introduced, linkages to the eligibility processes have not yet been well established. In some extreme cases, the SRF is being developed around the mid-term point of the 5-year eligibility cycle. Such a process might help to address some changes in context for a readjustment of the PBF priorities and/or develop a clearer vision of the direction of PBF support. However, some interlocutors voiced frustration that the delays caused by a sequencing of eligibility, SRF development and subsequent project design might run the same risks that led to abandoning the practice of PPPs.

Content of SRFs

The most relevant elements of the SRFs for the purpose of this Review are the strategic outcomes, the theories of change (TOCs) and the indicators.

There is some variation in terms of the **number and quality of strategic outcomes** in the SRFs. Guatemala has 2 outcomes, DRC/Tanganyika and Honduras have 4, while the remaining are in the middle with 3 outcomes. Pitching the outcomes at the right level is challenging; ideally, they are formulated above of what would be considered a project-level outcome but below of what would be a mere peacebuilding vision without clear (causal) linkages to PBF-supported programming.

The current SRFs all have 2-4 strategic outcomes but do not formulate an overarching vision that articulates the interplay between these outcomes. There are no hard and fast rules regarding the number and formulation of outcomes, however, they should be **commensurate with allocated resources**, a key information that is currently missing. Too many outcomes, each integrating several dimensions, will likely distract from strategic coherence, especially in the absence of a larger peacebuilding vision.

With the exception of Guatemala, all SRFs contain **theories of change**. The strongest example comes from the DRC/Tanganyika, which does a good job at presenting a TOC with a focus on causal linkages, the intended interventions (not all funded by PBF) as well as explaining some of the underlying assumptions for the specific context. A general remark regarding the TOCs is that they often focus on strengthening potential positive vectors without clearly articulating which violent and harmful practices need to be stopped in order to achieve more peaceful societies.

SRFs show a large variety in terms of **indicators**. In terms of number of indicators, at the lower end is the SRF of Guatemala with 6 indicators (although many of them are indices that comprise several indicators), at the upper end we find Niger with 45 indicators at three different levels. The formulation of most of the indicators is **conducive to measuring portfolio level changes**. Some results frameworks build on self-constructed indices (Guatemala, Honduras) or a set of indicators measuring a specific phenomenon (e.g., community security perceptions in DRC or the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index in Liberia), which is a promising approach to include an appropriate level of complexity and nuances, provided that the data collection and analysis will be undertaken successfully.

The SRFs contain a **mix between primary and secondary data sources**. Secondary data sources include indicators from the results frameworks of UNSDCFs, SDG monitoring, results frameworks of other trust funds (South Sudan, Sudan) but also non-UN-specific data sources such as government information or publicly available country data. The most common primary data source refers to perception surveys. In the case of Liberia, the SCORE Index provides a robust measurement of longitudinal changes in perceptions. Previous experiences have shown that (national) perception surveys are desirable M&E tools but PBF Secretariats and other in-country stakeholders struggle to execute them regularly and with a sufficient level of social scientific rigor. An analysis of existing data collection capacities is therefore crucial and should be integrated into the SRF development.

Alignment with other strategic frameworks

All SRFs make **reference to other strategic frameworks**, notably the eligibility requests, UNSDCFs as well as national peacebuilding or development frameworks, which increases the need to clearly

articulate the added value of the SRFs. This is not only true in contexts where the PBF is only a minor donor, as governments and UN entities have often no heightened appetite for yet another plan. As a minimum, PBF should opt for the **integration of SRF development in the eligibility process**. A special case are countries that are or have been on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). These countries, such as Liberia, are automatically eligible for PBF funding. In the absence of an eligibility request defining peacebuilding priorities between the government and the UN, SRFs can fill the gap through a clearer articulation of these joint priorities.

To go a step further, PBF could consider **experimenting with more ambitious SRFs** through earlier involvement during the design of UNSDCFs. The operationalization of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus requires a clearer articulation of conflict sensitivity and sustaining peace considerations as part of the UNSDCFs in fragile and conflict-affected settings, either in the form of a dedicated peacebuilding pillar or a thorough mainstreaming of sustaining peace considerations. Providing a seat at the table for PBSO and PBF Secretariat staff during the development of UNSDCFs could facilitate this shift and would also be a vector for further integration of DPPA, the Peace and Security Pillar as well as its interaction with other parts of the system in the spirit of the HDP Nexus. If this were to happen, PBF could take a step towards more strategic decisions regarding its investments as well as act as a service provider for the wider UN system through contributing its peacebuilding-specific M&E expertise to the monitoring of the relevant UNSDCF's components. While such approaches might decrease visibility for the PBF, this would likely be sufficiently balanced by significant increases in impact as well as increasing proportionality of the ratio between M&E budget to overall resources invested.

The experience in Sudan, where the SRF is intended to cover not only PBF activities but also those supported by the Sudan Financing Platform, a multi-partner trust fund to support peacebuilding and stabilization efforts in line with Security Council Resolution 2579 (2021), is already a step into this direction. The development of the SRF in Somalia is not as advanced but will face similar challenges in defining its relationship to the Somalia Joint Fund. In DRC, PBF opted for a different approach, focusing on Tanganyika, a region that has not been part of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS) and the related MPTF. The SRF experience in Sudan should be closely monitored and evaluated, as it could point towards enlarging the scope of **SRFs beyond immediate PBF-investments**.

Functions and use of SRFs

It is too early to assess to what extent SRFs contribute to guiding future PBF investment for more **portfolio coherence**. A promising practice is that some countries (Guatemala) tasked agencies with developing proposals which were assessed against a matrix based on the SRF. So far this has only been done for the regular portfolio. Coherence on the basis of the SRF might be more easily achieved regarding projects designed by UN agencies and those jointly developed with CSOs, as PBF Secretariats, RCOs and JSCs have greater leverage in selecting projects to move forward. CSO projects resulting from the annual Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) global calls for proposals might be more difficult to align with the SRF, in particular if the global themes of these calls do not correspond to SRF outcomes. A new PBF pilot to decentralize the Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI 2.0), approved in 2022 in Niger and Haiti, will create space for more coherence. Another challenge are **broadly formulated outcomes and lists of programmatic approaches**, which

limit a more restrictive approach to programming but provide more flexibility to adapt to changes in context.

Another motivation for the introduction of SRFs was to better **measure portfolio-level results**. All stakeholders agreed that this was a key concern during the development of the SRFs. In practice, however, there are still many obstacles to realize this objective. The clarification of roles and responsibilities for data collection and analysis is going to be crucial given the complex mix of project level data, the need for additional primary data collection and the integration of secondary data. This will require continued attention and support. There were strong voices for encouraging projects that **build the capacity of national actors** (government, academia, CSOs) to undertake research and gather data and integrate the information as part of monitoring SRFs. While this would be a good way of ensuring accountability and national ownership, it also requires additional financial and technical support that should be fast-tracked. Apart from the SRF for DRC/Tanganyika, all of the **baselines and targets for the indicators** still need to be completed. While a lot of energy has been invested in the development of the SRFs, this crucial step should not be treated as an afterthought as otherwise comparisons between two (or more) different states in time will not be possible.

The Review also found different assumptions regarding the **frequency of data collection, analysis and reporting**. It seems unclear whether data will be collected/analyzed on a yearly basis or only at the beginning and the end of the SRF. While some SRFs specify more than base- and endline data collection, the way this information is reported and/or used for evidence-based decision making on programming remains unclear. The Review assumed that the Annual Strategic Reports by the Resident Coordinators would integrate updates on the SRF but this does not seem to be the intention. This observation calls for a **clearer articulation of the use of the information generated through the SRFs**. Only a few M&E plans for SRFs have been developed thus far (Guatemala, Niger) and these exercises should be closely monitored and swiftly be replicated by the other countries with additional support where necessary. The new PBF Evaluation Policy stipulates midterm partnership reviews of SRFs and the underlying project base. This review is supposed to occur between year two and three of a country's five-year eligibility cycle and afford opportunities to revisit the SRF's strategic priorities and outcomes and revise if necessary.

One challenge of PBF portfolio evaluations has been the documentation of the extent to which the portfolio contributed to results that are greater than the sum of its individual projects. This requires not only an **articulation of the interlinkages** between projects under the same strategic outcome but also between projects under different strategic outcomes. While the first aspect is partly addressed by the new SRFs, the linkages between the different strategic outcomes are not really developed, as an overarching vision, a global outcome or an encompassing TOC is missing. Without a clear geographic focus, this type of cumulative results is questionable given the scope of PBF investments in relation to overall peacebuilding needs and will remain difficult to be measured.

A third potential function of the SRFs is to serve as a foundation for **resource mobilization**. This is particularly relevant for cases, where the SRF covers more than PBF investments (DRC, Sudan) but also in other cases the SRF could serve to articulate peacebuilding needs and catalyze additional investments. It will mainly be up to in-country stakeholders to further develop the use of SRFs into

the direction of mapping, donor coordination and resource mobilization, while PBSO should clarify to what extent there should be accountability measures to ensure that this function is fulfilled.

II. Priority Window 1: Supporting Cross-Border and Regional Approaches

Through this Priority Window, PBF is building on a contextual and peacebuilding niche and positions itself as a UN convenor and driving force.⁶ Between 2020 and mid-2022, the Fund approved approximately \$ 60m spread across **17 cross-border and regional projects covering 33 countries** (in Africa, Central Asia, Asia Pacific, Central America and the Western Balkans). Although this marks an increase of 26% from the amount invested under the previous PBF Strategy (2017-2019), it still only equals 15% of total allocations, thus falling short of its 20% funding target. Therefore, recognizing the significant efforts and the flexible, sometimes bold approaches taken by the Fund to support such transnational programming, the review of on-going project reports, complemented by various key informant interviews, highlight the importance of dedicating more attention and resources to regional strategic reflections and the operationalization of such complex projects.

The increase in size of the funding envelope⁷ and the duration of projects is a right step towards justifying the emphasis on a robust and joint design, implementation and coordination strategy. Yet, the limited incentives for partners to launch such regional interventions given the complexity and high transaction costs persist. **Transaction costs** tend to be **perceived as**, and often are, **high**. For more information about the countries, budget and types of regional and cross-border programming under the current Strategy see the table in the Annex.

The encouragement by PBSO, with the support of Resident Coordinators (RCs) and Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs), to conduct **more robust and periodical formal/informal regional peacebuilding reflections and analysis**, has opened the door for more strategic UN engagement. Indeed, Strategic Reports on Regional Peacebuilding and PBF Cross-border Support have been produced for the last two years in Central Africa, West Africa and the Sahel regions respectively. Though this process is time-consuming and requires coordination among a large number of countries (up to 13), it has the value of (i) creating spaces for regional/ cross-border strategic reflections among RCs, PBF Secretariats, UN Regional Offices, UNCTs, and to lesser extent with national counterparts and regional organizations, and (ii) informing PBSO in its strategic investment decisions, and thus should be further developed and encouraged in other regions.

⁶ According to the [PBF Strategy 2020-2024](#), the key objectives are to:

- Extend the PBF's support to cross-border programs to initiatives that can help address wider regional trends through multi-country programming, e.g., on issues like transhumance, migration, violent extremism and dealing with conflict drivers exacerbated by climate change
- Enable recipient organizations to extend their presence and pilot new approaches in underserved geographies working holistically across the humanitarian, development and peace Nexus
- Support the UN's regional prevention strategies, enabling joint approaches of a range of partners from the UN system, regional and civil society organizations
- Develop new avenues for civil society organizations to implement programs in areas where UN access and presence is more limited
- Strengthen the UN's strategic cooperation on peacebuilding with regional organizations especially the African Union.

⁷ The vast majority of projects approved since 2020 exceeded \$3m, the biggest one in DRC-Angola amounting to \$5.1m.

Added-value of regional vs national programming

The vast majority of projects focused⁸ on border areas and addressed dynamics that are similar and indeed require a coordinated transnational response to be truly effective (mostly transhumance and migration and occasionally violent extremism and climate security). However, the analysis of project documents questions the extent to which cross-border conflict drivers are actually being addressed since **many projects tend to be limited to parallel national programming in border regions** and struggle to demonstrate clear evidence of their regional/ cross-border peacebuilding contributions.⁹ While exceptions, like the boost to the transborder cooperation between Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea generated by the launch of the cross-border project exist, the majority of the cross-border projects' initial results lie at the individual country level. Interestingly though, in Côte d'Ivoire, a well-documented PBF cross-border investment with Burkina Faso has been instrumental in driving and scaling-up the response to the terrorism threat coming from the Sahel: a catalytic \$ 4.5m PBF investment led to the implementation of an ambitious \$ 32m resilience program for the two districts of Côte d'Ivoire bordering Burkina Faso. This success was largely based on the strong advocacy towards the Ivorian government to increase investments in the border areas.¹⁰

True costs of designing cross-border and regional programs

Designing cross-border and regional programs comes with a full set of time-consuming requirements and challenges (and therefore costs):

- UN recipient organizations have a **limited presence** in some border regions and enabling them to **extend their reach** (one of the stated objectives of the PBF Strategy) **requires time**.
- Most of the UN presence and programming is decidedly national in focus. Inter-governmental cooperation on conflict issues might not exist or function well. Establishing **efficient communication channels and coordination between countries** at various levels (RCOs, UN agencies, national/ local authorities etc.) **is time consuming** and fraught with **practical challenges** and **political sensitivities**.
- A **locally-owned transnational conflict analysis** that is conflict-, gender and age-sensitive is important and still **rarely achieved**. In most cases, national actors did only partially, sometimes not at all, participate in the conflict analysis, which was undertaken by direct recipients with coordination from the lead UN agency. This lack of involvement was mostly justified by time constraints and/or the existence of a recent enough national conflict analysis, as well as, to a lesser extent, the difficulty of getting government representatives at the desired level engaged at this early stage. Even more time should be invested to raise

⁸ Cross-border and regional programming fall into three different categories specified in the Guidance Note for cross-border and regional programs. See PBSO & PeaceNexus (2020): [Guidance Note on Cross-border and Regional Programming](#).

⁹ While the progress report format invites recipients to reflect on the level of completion of outputs, using three markers: "on track", "off track" or "on track with peacebuilding results", it is notable that only 2 of the projects, particularly those coming to close in 2022, ever marked the latter one (Liptako-Gourma project and Guinea-Sierra Leone one).

¹⁰ The second tranche of the Government's Social Program launched in 2022 includes a dedicated funding window to address fragility along the entire northern borders of the country.

the level of inclusion and localization, designing the analysis already as an intervention itself.

- In some cases, capacities are insufficient to successfully lead an analysis and design process. **Creating partnerships with research institutes and academia**, as recommended by the [PBF Guidance Note on Cross-border and Regional Programs](#), is an option that has **not yet been fully explored**. The focus should be on strong process design and long-term accompaniment, rather than parachuting in capacity for a limited time.

Good practices to overcome some of these challenges include the **project design workshop**, organized for the upcoming cross-border project between Mali, Mauritania and Senegal which gathered the PBF Secretariats, the RCOs, UN agencies and representatives of the respective national governments in Dakar and which fast-tracked the design and PBF's approval stages in four months. **Joint field assessments** would seem strategic as well, yet, in practice, they have been difficult to coordinate, and countries chose to conduct parallel field assessments (as in the case of Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso). These experiences show that while some acceleration is possible, a reckoning regarding the true costs of developing cross-border and regional programs would lead to further adaptations.

Slow implementation

PBF has taken the sound decision to **increase** the duration of all its multi-country projects from **18 months to 24 months**. Even so, 6 out of the 7 cross-border projects approved since 2020 and supposed to finish in 2022 required a 6-month no-cost extension beyond their initial 24-month period (or 18 months for 2 of them). These projects often come with a series of commonly known (contextual/ environmental/ security) challenges and require flexibility. However, **slow start-up** (absence of a clear and comprehensive operational start-up plan, delays in hiring key personnel, as well as partnership formalization and other HR/ops related issues sometimes taking over a year) leads to low implementation rate and delivery issues in contexts of weak UN operational presence and/or capacity to rapidly establish a presence in border areas. The **COVID-19 pandemic**, although it only required financial adjustment in the Pacific region project, did especially impact the timely realization of transborder activities. Moreover, the **social/ political tensions**, particularly the coups in the Sahel and West Africa regions, over the last 2 years weakened already fragile regional coordination mechanisms and national engagement.

Aware of the operational challenges and their impacts on project implementation rate, PBF continues to seek new and innovative ways of operation. The inclusion of INGOs as direct fund recipients and a funding modality to local NGOs could help reduce the delays in implementation and could influence PBF's strategic considerations regarding directly partnering more frequently with (international) CSOs that might have capacities and access that would complement those of UN agencies. In 2021, for the first time, PBF provided direct funding to a CSO (Mercy Corps) as part of a joint cross-border initiative (Liptako-Gourma) that includes a **modality to make funding available to community-based organizations** with a recognized different kind of reach in peacebuilding work.¹¹ While the transnational nature of the project is likely to need further

¹¹ The PBF Strategy, supported by the recommendations of PBSO (2020): [Synthesis Review 2017-2019. PBF Project and Portfolio Evaluations](#), recognizes the need for ongoing exploration of funding local and national civil society organizations directly.

articulation and dedicated attention during the implementation, the operational setup is innovative, timely and risk tolerant and might help to circumvent some of the obstacles in areas where UN access and presence is more limited. A similar project is being designed in the Lake Chad region.

Finally, the risk analysis and management of cross-border projects at the design stage often **did not include a real adaptive peacebuilding approach and operational mitigating measures**, which could have prevented delays down the road. Examples relate to the greater anticipation of/adaptation to possible COVID-19 restrictions in countries that faced Ebola a few years earlier, efforts to anticipate and mitigate delays in recruitment and partnership formalization, the use of third-party implementation in contexts of limited access due to security restrictions etc.

Increasing national and regional ownership

The level and timing of national government buy-in and endorsement for a cross-border/ regional project, coupled with the capacity to accommodate existing power structures, constitute key factors for meaningful and effective national (and regional) ownership. When inclusivity and national ownership were not consolidated early on in the project design, particularly in contexts where a cross-border initiative raised political sensitivities related to issues of sovereignty, national authority and/or security, a **delayed endorsement led to slow down or paralysis**. The strongest good practice come from Niger, where the solid trust-based relationship built with the Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix (HACP), a government entity attached to the Presidency, has been instrumental for the design and implementation of cross-border projects at the national, local and transnational levels. Another successful example of engagement of national actors is the multi-step process followed during the design of the Pacific regional project which included a couple of technical meetings and a series of high-level consultations with the leaders of 3 Atoll nations (Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Republic of Marshall Islands) and the Head of the Climate Change Department of Tuvalu to endorse the direction of the project and contribute to its design. Despite taking more time (over a year), this process permitted the development of a refined and sensible project with the right level of national ownership.

Joint project coordination and management

First of all, it has been repeatedly noticed that a higher number of participating countries and UN implementing agencies increases the difficulty of effective coordination (particularly in multilingual contexts). Still, several projects managed to establish, and more or less sustain, a **joint regional coordination mechanism** with representatives of the national/ local authorities and UN counterparts meeting (physically and/or virtually as contexts allowed) despite COVID and in some cases political instability.¹² A few others have existing joint governance structures, yet they are not functional. In situations where national governments rather avoided formal joint governance structures, **parallel national coordination mechanisms** were established which involved UN recipients, implementing partners and national/local government, while transnational coordination was ensured at the level of UN agencies and PBF Secretariat. Such alternative coordination mechanisms have been helpful in maintaining a degree of communication among the

¹² Examples include the cross-border projects between Guinea-Côte d'Ivoire; Guatemala-Honduras-El Salvador; Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso.

various stakeholders and keeping them relatively engaged, despite not being able to significantly shift the dynamic and nudge government towards increased coordination.

Finally, at a more operational level, the Review noted a strong need to encourage strategic thinking and adaptation by PBF staff and its direct recipients, such as the initiative taken by the Central America regional project to consider the increased coordination between the countries/key institutions as a project outcome in itself. Also, while most cross-border projects used one project management structure per country, and sometimes per implementing agency, the creation of a **bi/tri-national project coordinator position** has been increasingly encouraged and put in place. It has been a contributing factor for a better integrated approach on all sides of the border and optimized transaction costs as projects in Central America and the Sahel region demonstrate.

Limited cooperation with regional and subregional organizations

A few regional projects (4) sought to strengthen institutions, policies and capacities of governments and civil societies to address peacebuilding related challenges in the context of migration (Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador), climate security (Atoll nations), regional reconciliation (Western Balkans) and violence (Haiti, Dominican Republic). Despite an explicit desire to work more with regional organizations, political contexts make it difficult to have such cooperation see the light and therefore, so far, there has been no formal demonstration of the strengthening of the UN's strategic cooperation on peacebuilding with regional organizations through cross-border projects. This is reaffirmed by the 41% of respondents of the online survey who stated that the extent to which PBF funding is aligned to strategies and priorities of regional organizations was quite narrow. This said, PBF's contribution to the implementation of UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) and the UN Support Plan for the Sahel are steps in the right direction, seen as innovative examples of an integrated multi-country and multi-sectoral/agency approach the operationalization of the HDP Nexus.¹³ Another encouraging development in that direction is the on-going discussions with the Lake Chad Basin Commission to support a future cross-border project involving the implementation of the official regional and cross-border strategy to address the crisis and stabilize the region.

III. Priority Window 2: Facilitating Transitions

Priority Window 2 of the PBF Strategy is dedicated to Facilitating Transitions. According to the Strategy this is a major priority for the United Nations, which is why the Fund expects the largest share of its investments, i.e., 35%, to support countries undergoing complex transitions, especially when UN configurations change.¹⁴

¹³ Rapid assessment of UN investments in the Sahel (2016-2020), Abridged report, UNISS, September 2021, p.20.

¹⁴ According to the [PBF Strategy 2020-2024](#), the key objectives are to:

- Generate momentum for peacebuilding strategies and international support through close collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission and other stakeholders, leading to improved coherence and sequencing of aid instruments.
- Address transition financing gaps through greater investments in approximately eight transition contexts, providing more predictability for partner countries and the United Nations while preparing the ground for longer-term financing to start.
- Support the implementation of the Secretary-General's planning directive on transitions, ensuring that financing planning begins two years before mission closures, and anticipates the following five years.

In 2021, PBF exceeded its 35% funding target, reaching 39% through investments in 9 transition contexts. A more robust evidence-base regarding PBF support to these contexts is required. Preliminary findings of this Review suggest that PBF has demonstrated **good results in the initial support** provided to transition contexts, while strategic links to a transition rationale of subsequent investments seem to decrease over time. In addition, PBF should further refine the definition of transition contexts and ensure that it is widely understood by all stakeholders. The articulation of PBF’s niche and types of support to transition contexts would also benefit from further refinement, though some obstacles, such as the absence of Joint Financing Strategies, are outside of PBF’s direct influence.

Under the current Strategic Plan, 9 countries are treated as transition contexts, notably: Burundi, DRC, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan. This categorization is mainly done for internal purposes to tally the funds provided to transition settings. Based on this analysis, the 2020-2021 portfolio consists of a total of 59 projects. This amounts to 21% of total investments in 2020 and 39% in 2021.

The dedicated funding window to transitions is a novelty in the 2020-2024 Strategy, even though in many regards it just formalizes previous forms of support. Several aspects of PBF support for transition settings remain to be further clarified. In the online survey, the appreciation of PBF’s contribution to transition settings scored the lowest among the 3 Priority Windows.

Appropriate definition of transition settings

PBF currently uses a definition of transition settings based on three elements: (i) 10-years following the departure of a UN peacekeeping or special political mission (in exceptional cases also a non-UN mission); (ii) the partial draw-down of such a mission or (iii) discussions concerning transitions.

This definition is not always known or understood among stakeholders, causing some confusion around the **meaning of transition** itself. One interpretation is in line with the Strategy and refers to the focus on transitions from one (mostly) UN-configuration to another. Another interpretation refers to non-linear political transitions towards a more democratic rule. While the latter is the rationale behind meaningful and strategic PBF-support in non-mission contexts such as The Gambia, Guinea, Chad or Burkina Faso, it does not make sense to subsume them under Priority Window 2.

As witnessed by the inclusion of Somalia, PBF currently also includes **non-UN transitions**. This expansion is not unanimously supported by all stakeholders and PBF should clarify the rationale and its niche in its support to these settings.

Overview of transitions ¹⁵	
DRC	MONUSCO : Partial drawdown Kasai (06/2021) and Tanganyika (06/2022)
Haiti	MINUSTAH (10/2017), MINUJUSTH (12/2020), BINUH since 06/2019
Sudan	UNAMID (12/2020), UNITAMS since 06/2020
Côte d’Ivoire	UNOCI (06/2017)
Guinea-Bissau	UNIOGBIS (12/2020)
Liberia	UNMIL (03/2018)
Burundi	BNUB (12/2014)
Somalia	UNSOM since 06/2013, AMISOM (03/2022), ATMIS since April 2022
Sierra Leone	UNAMSIL (12/2005), UNIOSIL (09/2008), UNIPSIL (03/2014)

¹⁵ Dates in parentheses refer to the closure. **UN Peacekeeping Operations**, Special Political Missions, *African Union Peacekeeping Operations*.

PBF's focus on a **10-year phase following the departure of a mission** is significantly longer than definitions of other parts of the UN system; e.g., the UN Transitions Project provides support for a much shorter duration.¹⁶ Looking at Burundi, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and to a lesser extent Liberia, one can see strategic PBF-support in the immediate aftermath of the transitions but difficulties in sustaining such a strategic outlook focused on a transition rationale over time.

The third element raises questions of **uniform application of the definition**. The UN Peacekeeping Operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Central African Republic were asked to initiate or intensify transition planning by the UN Security Council (see the respective resolutions S/RES/2463; S/RES/2480; S/RES/2448). However, while the DRC is treated as a transition context (also because of the second criteria related to the partial drawdown), Mali and the Central African Republic are notably absent from the PBF list at the moment.

To address these challenges, PBF should consider moving towards more substantive criteria through the application of **context-specific definitions based on benchmarks for a successful transition**. These could include changes in the context as well as objectives in regard to the performance of peacebuilding-relevant state and civil society institutions. While this would be more challenging than applying a schematic formula, PBF could (re)frame its support to transition settings for greater strategic coherence through eligibility requests, SRFs or based on collaboration with other parts of the UN system. This would also provide a more coherent narrative for PBF transition support, as currently a degree of projectization can be observed, which is an obstacle to more coherence and clearer focus on effective transition support.

Scope of transition support

PBF also needs to **clarify the scope of its support to transition settings**. Currently, the niche of PBF under Priority Window 2 is not fully articulated, as it is unclear how PBF support between transition and non-transition contexts differs and whether all funding provided to a transition context is/should be in support of the transition (and counted as such).

The biggest impact of PBF transition support would be within the framework of a clear **joint financing strategy**, developed by bi- and multilateral donors and the host government. Based on such a strategy, a clear analysis of the remaining peacebuilding gaps could identify areas not supported by the national budget or donor support. PBF support could then be deployed in a truly gap-filling and catalytic way. Though the 2019 Secretary General's Directive on Transition Planning foresees such strategies, currently these conversations seem to be ad hoc and leading to vague results. While the OECD is working on similar strategies for fragile contexts, it does not have the resources to prepare them for all relevant transition contexts. The UN system needs to clarify the procedure and responsibility for developing such strategies. The PBSO might be well placed to take on this task, combining the expertise of its Policy Branch with the possibility of the PBF to provide catalytic funding. The current DPO deployment of one staff from the Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training (DPET) to the Policy Branch of PBSO could be a starting point for such a collaboration, which would require more human and financial resources.

¹⁶ This project is a collaborative partnership between the UN Development Program (UNDP), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO).

For the Tanganyika region in the DRC, the PBF process around the development of a **Strategic Results Framework (SRF)** might serve as an example of such an approach at a smaller scale. The four strategic results of the framework are based on the transition priorities. The SRF was developed with UN entities, government counterparts, CSOs and the local administration and deliberately goes beyond the PBF investments and serves as a base for resource mobilization. It is supported by the PBF Secretariat that sits in the office of the DSRSG/RC, where the MONUSCO transitions team is also located. Finally, a Peace and Security Working Group unites the donor community and provides a forum for information exchange. While it is too early to assess this experience, a closer examination over time will prove whether it will serve as a good practice to be replicated in other transition settings.

In some contexts (Haiti, Sudan), PBF did get involved early in the conversations regarding the transition and intentionally timed the **eligibility** of these countries to be able to provide more substantial support. The eligibility request of Haiti is focused on ensuring that “the work accomplished by the UN in the justice sector and in Haiti’s most at-risk communities over the past fourteen years is seamlessly transferred to the UN Country Team as MINJUSTH prepares to cease activities.” The eligibility of Sudan saw the engagement of the PBF to promote stability and peace in Darfur as a crucial enabler for the UNAMID transition, following a recommendation of the Strategic Review Mission of March 2019. This resulted in a substantial package of projects supporting this objective. Similar positive examples could be cited from previous PBF Strategy cycles for Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia and others.

However, **not all PBF investments in transition contexts are following a transition rationale**, even though currently they are counted entirely towards the 35% target. Examples include Somalia (SOM/A-7: Support Political Transition in Somalia), Sudan (shift from programming beyond Darfur’s geographic focus of UNAMID) and most projects in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire and to a lesser extent Liberia, as mentioned above. Meaningful PBF engagement in these countries based on identified peacebuilding should be pursued, however, it should not be categorized as transition support as per the current default categorization.

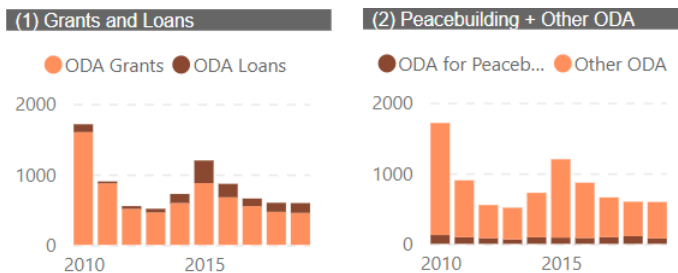
With limited contributions to the more strategic aspects of transitions, some of the implications of transition support take on a much smaller scale. One consequence of the departure of a (peacekeeping or special political) mission might be reduced capacities for political and conflict analysis. Some have interpreted this as a reason for allowing a higher percentage of human resources funded through PBF projects and/or more leniency concerning project quality due to existing gaps.

Financial cliff and donor coordination

One assumption of the PBF Strategy is the existence of a financing gap following transition, sometimes also referred to as a **financial cliff**. UN missions, peacekeeping operations much more so than special political missions, come with substantial financial resources. The detrimental impact on national and local economies resulting from a withdrawal is enormous but in their scale beyond the capacity – and arguably the mandate – of PBF, despite the occasional socio-economic support initiative in transition settings. However, whether or not a withdrawal has **substantial consequences on aid flows** is controversially discussed. A variant of the assumption of the financial cliff states that while the Official Development Assistance (ODA) might not steeply decline after

the departure of a mission, ODA dedicated to peacebuilding will. Robust data on these issues is hard to come by, in particular as some of the transition settings under review have too recently experienced a change in UN configurations. For contexts with available data (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi), neither of these assumptions seem to hold true.¹⁷

The case of aid flows to Liberia could serve as an example, where the departure of UNMIL in March 2018 did not seem to produce an effect adequately described as a financial cliff: neither ODA (orange) nor ODA for peacebuilding (brown) did significantly decline after 2018. The question whether there are residual peacebuilding needs in transition contexts that are insufficiently addressed by ODA for peacebuilding allocations could only be answered on the ground of more detailed analysis and on the basis of a Joint Financing Strategy.



What might be the case, however, is that **funding to UN entities** is significantly impacted by the departure of a UN mission. In this scenario, the financial cliff would be less relevant from the perspective of peacebuilding needs in the country but more so from a perspective of a shift in the stakeholder constellation. The OECD study on mission drawdowns warned against the common perception of the PBF as the provider of last resort, detracting from the Fund’s unique capabilities.¹⁸ However, given the observations above there might be even a bigger danger that the PBF is considered the **“provider of first resort”**, namely that it is approached before its UN recipients have even attempted other resource mobilization strategies. While a pooled fund such as the PBF can provide an added layer of coherence, it should be careful not to become the default donor for UN actors in a post-transition setting. At least one donor warned against creating unnecessary dependency on PBF-funding. The starting point for resource allocations should rather be an assessment of who is best placed to address the remaining peacebuilding needs of the country. PBF funding should therefore be tied to those areas where UN entities have a proven comparative advantage in addressing remaining elements of the mission mandate.

Another important consideration is that **PBF is an important yet relatively small donor**, as others provide significantly more funding to transition settings. The average ODA for peacebuilding to the transition settings supported by PBF is estimated to be roughly \$910m per year. The comparable investments by PBF in these settings under this Strategy were \$52.15m per year (with considerable increases from 2020 to 2021), which represents less than 6%.¹⁹ For this reason, PBF should strengthen its strategic approach by **drawing attention to underserved areas** and/or providing support to proof-of-concept programming approaches. PBF could also explore **matching** arrangements, previously tried in other contexts, most notably in PBF support to the DRC through

¹⁷ See the data presented in the Annex for more detail. This and all other ODA related data comes from the PBSO managed site [Snapshot of ODA Disbursements related to Peacebuilding](#), which contains data until 2019. The data for Côte d’Ivoire is missing from the site.

¹⁸ OECD (2020): [Mission Drawdowns - Financing a Sustainable Peace. Sustaining Gains and Supporting Economic Stability Post UN Mission Withdrawal](#), p. 16.

¹⁹ PBF allocations to Côte d’Ivoire have not been included, as ODA data for that country is not available.

collaborating with the Stabilization Trust Fund. Such an approach would be particularly beneficial regarding initiatives funded through national budgets, as the importance of transferring capacities and responsibilities to national actors in the aftermath of a mission drawdown is often overlooked. In this regard, a clear division of labor and clarification between the PBF and national Multi-Partner Trust Funds and their respective niches would be good, as these two instruments co-exist in several transition contexts (Liberia, Sudan, Somalia, DRC) with varying degrees of success.

Outlook on support to transitions

Many of the details of PBF impact in transition settings are still unknown and the Fund should **invest in a more robust evidence-base** for its future support, e.g., in the form of a Thematic Review. In the meantime, there are already some signs that suggest the need for an adaptation of its strategic support to facilitating transitions. A few countries, such as Burundi, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, will phase out of this Priority Window based on the currently applicable 10-year criteria or for other reasons, and there are not enough candidates that will immediately take their place. The second half of the 2010s has seen the closure of the missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Darfur as well as the special political mission (SPM) in Haiti, when these operations came under general pressure, which led to— at times — **hasty withdrawals**. This required more robust support for post-transition settings. In the current context, similar developments regarding the existing peacekeeping operations are not to be expected as mid-term perspectives on mission closure and partial drawdowns, such as in the DRC, are the more likely scenarios. More importantly, the thinking has shifted to an even **greater focus on integration**.²⁰ In other words, the better integrated the UN work in mission settings is and the better prepared the transitions are, the less important substantial (PBF) support for post-transition settings will become, as UNCTs will already be better positioned to access funding. As a consequence, PBF should consider orienting its support to settings pre-withdrawal/drawdown in an effort to strengthen integration and prepare for a smooth(er) transition. This would also contribute to providing the right incentives for solving the underlying challenges resulting from mission drawdowns instead of encouraging continued reliance on PBF-support for insufficiently well-prepared transitions. In short, **PBF support to transition contexts should itself be transitory**. If this might not lead to an immediate reduction of PBF funding to transition contexts under the current Strategy, this should likely be the case for the next strategic cycle.

IV. Priority Window 3: Fostering Inclusion through Women and Youth Empowerment

The strategic relevance of having a Priority Window on Women and Youth Empowerment²¹ — or as it has been called “an affirmative action programming for women and youth”, continues to be

²⁰ See UN (2020): Review of UN Integration. Final Report, p. 15: “The requirement for integration is also particularly acute in transition settings during which the United Nations is reconfiguring from one type of context to another.”

²¹ More specifically, the [PBF Strategy 2020-2024](#) seeks to:

- Support the meaningful participation of women, young people, and the most marginalized in peacebuilding
- Increase the volume of the Fund's special calls for proposals, the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives, to better meet growing demand
- Recalibrate the focus of the special calls in close consultation with recipient entities to ensure they help address gaps in the WPS and YPS agendas; and to incentivize innovation, e.g., changing concepts of

overwhelmingly supported. This is reaffirmed by the survey conducted as part of this Review, where over 70% of respondents stated that PBF's contribution to the effective participation of women and youth was large or very large. Over the period under review, PBF has met and exceeded its ambitious goal of 30% related to investments in gender-responsive peacebuilding by allocating 40% (2020) and 47% (2021) of its resources to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE contribution).²² Rather than a question of "whether", it is therefore one of "how" PBF fosters inclusion of these groups and the most marginalized in peacebuilding. In that regard, PBF continues to show a commitment to learning more about this "how", as the 2021 [Gender-responsive Peacebuilding Thematic Review](#) and the 2022 [Local Peacebuilding Thematic Review](#) with a strong focus on youth illustrate.

Popularity of the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI)

In order to make peacebuilding more inclusive and recognize the critical roles women, gender equality and young people play in peacebuilding,²³ the Fund continues to support the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) – an Initiative whose Gender component (GPI) celebrated its 10th year anniversary in 2021. Through GYPI, PBF has allocated in the last two years **\$ 88m to 66 projects in 27 countries** (see number of projects per recipient country in Annex), thus confirming a steady growth in investments.²⁴ However, several interlocutors raised the question, whether the GYPI has become a victim of its own success. The last few years have indeed seen steep increases in the number of concept notes submitted, with a record number of 444 in 2022 – mostly due to a sharp increase in CSOs applications (the number of UNCT applications is capped at four per country).²⁵ There are several reasons for this increase ranging from acute peacebuilding-related gender and youth needs, lesser avenues for funding in some contexts and broader communication around the Call to closer guidance and greater accessibility, all of which raise important questions about transaction costs. There is indeed an increasing tension between the time and efforts invested by PBSO staff in the review of hundreds of concept notes in light of the low approval rates (about 10%) and the Fund's demonstrated willingness to expand its outreach (to local CSOs in particular) and to be flexible, timely and risk-tolerant.²⁶

masculinity, unblocking the structural impediments for participation of both women and youth, and shifting youth programming towards facilitating inclusive governance mechanisms and policy dialogues

- Expand partnerships with civil society organizations and explore new avenues to make funding available for community-based organizations
- Surpass the PBF target that supported programs should invest at least 30% of their resources in gender-sensitive peacebuilding.

²² See data in Secretary General (2021): [Peacebuilding Fund Report 2020](#) and Secretary General (2022): [Peacebuilding Fund Report 2021](#).

²³ GYPI seeks to advance the implementation of the SG's Seven-point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding as well as the SC Resolution 1325 (2000) and others on WPS and SC Resolution 2250 (2015) on YPS.

²⁴ The total GYPI allocations in 2020 and 2021 represents 24% of PBF's total investments so far and 80% of the GYPI investments made under the previous 2017-2019 Strategy.

²⁵ Out of these, a total of 46 were selected to develop full project proposals.

²⁶ From the concept notes' initial review process and eligibility review, to the full proposal feedback process and approval (PACs meeting) which all require the mobilization of most of PBSO's program staff, management when it comes to the PACs, MPTFO for the eligibility review. At times, an external program support consultant had to be mobilized to provide extra support to the review process.

Responses that would diminish these costs are various and require careful assessment. In addition to the broadening of the GPI 2.0 experience (see below), one option could be to further increase the size and duration of projects (40% of the projects ending in 2022 requested a no-cost extension), beyond the positive extensions already made in 2022.²⁷ Another option could be to sequence the calls – having each year only a certain number of eligible countries apply, while experimenting with country-specific calls based on priorities identified in national strategic frameworks and SRFs. As it stands, GYPI tends to support more ad-hoc initiatives than integral parts of PBF’s strategic planning in a given context. Greater decentralization would help developing a vision of a bigger change sought down the line and would allow a better definition of GYPI’s expected contribution to it.

In the meantime, PBF has launched two main innovations regarding the GYPI, namely the introduction of global themes and the trial phase of what has been called GPI 2.0.

GYPI themes

Global themes were introduced in the context of the present 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. In 2020 and 2021, the same themes were used for both GPI and YPI while starting in 2022, PBF has decided to introduce separate themes for GPI and YPI respectively as it acknowledged the need (following the 2021 Gender Thematic Review) for greater substantive distinction, partly because of the risk of young women falling through the cracks when they are indistinctly reduced into the categories of “women and youth” and partly to further consider the diversity of voices, needs and agency of both groups more appropriately.²⁸ The global special themes, **addressing existing gaps in the WPS and YPS agendas**, were defined through consultations with some PBF stakeholders at the national level and through on-going conversations globally. The relevance of the themes was confirmed by interviewees, even though the process leading to their identification seemed to be somewhat blurred and lacking national ownership. Therefore, ways of better aligning themes to national priorities can be further explored.

At the same time, a broadening of the conceptual scope of gender- and age-responsive peacebuilding “to open up opportunities to work on other relevant themes, including gender norms such as those associated with masculinities and femininities” remains to be considered.²⁹ While the 2020 theme targeting LGBTQI is an important step made towards the broadening of the scope of gender equality (24% of all projects approved that year), it is worth recalling that the WPS agenda misses to highlight that both men and boys can contribute to, and be harmed by, gender norms and that PBF would benefit from paying greater attention to the construction of male identities and norms on masculinity.³⁰ So far under the present Strategy, only two YPI projects addressed this issue explicitly, one in Sierra Leone (IRF-417) engaging male allies in tackling harmful masculinities and the other one in Sudan (IRF-444) working on gender equitable masculinity.

²⁷ Increase from \$1.5m to \$2m and from 18 to 24 months.

²⁸ Themes included in 2020: (i) women and youth leadership, (ii) protection of women and youth peacebuilders – with a preference given to projects that targeted LGBTQI; in 2021: (i) the promotion and protection of civic spaces, notably regarding land, indigenous people and environmental issues; (ii) the promotion and strengthening of health and psychosocial well-being for women and youth as part of local peacebuilding processes; and in 2022: strengthening women’s CSOs (GPI) and (i) youth-inclusive political participation and (ii) youth protection (YPI).

²⁹ For this key recommendation, see PBSO (2021): [Thematic Review on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding](#).

³⁰ See recommendations section of PBSO (2021): [Thematic Review on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding](#).

GPI 2.0

In 2022, PBF piloted GPI 2.0, a **decentralized initiative** that seeks to build on existing national capacities, foster greater national ownership, better integrate support for WPS commitments into longer-term country level peacebuilding strategies and expand access of national CSOs to PBF resources.³¹ The Fund allocated an initial \$10m envelope (\$2.5m to 4 countries including The Gambia, Guatemala, Niger and Haiti). Though it is too early to draw conclusions, so far, the initiative has received great traction among all groups of stakeholders, which allows the following initial assessment:

- Being more localized, GPI 2.0 has the opportunity to **better build on national priorities** and contribute more meaningfully to the **UN long-term engagement on fostering GEWE** in the country.
- The management of this initiative requires **greater consultations and engagement/expertise of national actors** which is likely to lead to more quality project development. Guatemala for instance has launched a series of consultations with the UN, (over 50) women's organizations in four regions and state institutions to identify entry points linked to both the WPS agenda and national priorities including the SRF.
- The typically high **transaction costs** of a GYPI project **should decrease** as PBSO gets less involved in its review and decision-making processes, while continuing to provide quality assurance.
- **Innovative and locally-driven ways of providing funding to local CSOs** as direct recipients or as implementing partners may emerge.

GPI 2.0 could therefore be a meaningful tool for PBF to meet its 2020-2024 Strategy ambitions, providing this first round is successful and **further improvements are given to its operating model** (including bigger envelope, different time scale, greater national engagement, increased number of eligible countries and setup of YPI 2.0 etc.).

Overall, based on the consultations conducted with various stakeholders during this Review, the importance of giving youth and gender greater attention in peacebuilding is reaffirmed, while it calls for an even more flexible programmatic approach. One that would encourage greater decentralization/ localization where and when possible and keep the regular GYPI programming when the operational, political, strategic conditions for country-level approach are not fully met.

PBF's overall contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment

PBF continues to be seen as **a leader within the UN system in working towards gender mainstreaming in its entire portfolio**. While it might be assumed that in order to reach its GEWE target PBF had to rely on its GPI call, it so appeared that the regular programming (non GYPI) contributed at the level of 35% to gender-responsive peacebuilding, thus also exceeding the set target. Out of a total of 142 accounted projects, 99 projects were classified as GM2 and 8 projects GM3 (dedicated to gender equality in peacebuilding). This success is partly linked to the fact that the Fund has become adamant about ensuring that gender is considered at every step of peacebuilding interventions: from the design stage (conflict analysis, budget definition, etc.) to the implementation and M&E (e.g., reporting, results framework). As a consequence, this Review

³¹ PBF's Note on GPI 2.0 – Key elements and possible courses of actions

confirmed that recipients became more sensible and nuanced in their marking approach. Yet, while the tracking of financial allocation to projects that promote GEWE has become systematic, the measurement tools, methods and indicators could be even more rigorous and transparent. It must be noted that the **GEWE allocations** are counted on the basis of projects budget (not actual expenditures). While the entire PBF Gender Marker Guidance Note does include a qualitative approach to marking projects and the budget allocation is expected to provide qualitative justification for the GEWE marker, in practice GEWE allocations is more of a quantitative approach that tends to conceal more fundamental questions about the intention and results of this support.

Some of them have been listed at length in the Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding Thematic Review and in the Synthesis Review.³² Some of these concerns are also relevant for a clearer articulation of PBF's support to youth-sensitive peacebuilding, for which a similar marker does not (yet) exist.

Limited attention to marginalized groups

The 2020-2024 Strategy seeks to place additional emphasis on the inclusion and participation of marginalized groups in peacebuilding processes (distinct from women and youth) given the extent to which exclusion has proven to be a driver of conflict. In that regard, the Review and the Partner Survey found that, beyond the specific commitment towards women and youth empowerment, PBF investments only gave **limited attention to marginalized communities** that are excluded due to gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ ethnicity, physical ability or immigration status.³³ While the 2020 GYPI call specifically called for considerations towards LGBTQI people, out of the 29 GYPI projects approved that year, only 3 projects specifically targeted them (Colombia, Liberia and DRC). No other projects, outside this explicit call ever included them. The targeting of specific (marginalized) ethnic groups and IDPs/ refugees/ returnees/ migrants was also quite limited with a total of 11 projects altogether over the period.

While recognizing the high risks engaging some of these marginalized groups entails, PBF's mandate and core principles would naturally call for **a bolder approach regarding the inclusion of marginalized groups**, and those typically overlooked or seen as hard-to-reach/engage with. One missed opportunity seems to have been the project to prevent the feminization of Boko Haram's modus operandi in Chad that decided against directly engaging women demobilized from Boko Haram or known sympathizer/ members and instead focused on general women's training on countering violent extremism (CVE), income generating activities and awareness raising.

The need to better address the position of marginalized groups in peacebuilding processes and in society at large points to important considerations of how PBF states the theory of change (TOC) underlying its support to women and youth empowerment. Many projects continue to **generalize and consider all women and youth as marginalized**, thus missing important nuances regarding the lack of an intersectional perspective, treating both women and youth as monolithic groups, and an understanding of the roles women and young people can play in both peace and conflict situations, either as victims, peace actors, perpetrators or bystanders. An observation that echoes the way

³² PBSO (2021): [Thematic Review on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding](#) and PBSO (2021): [Drawing on Evaluations and Evaluative Exercises of Initiatives Supported by the Fund](#).

³³ 50% of the Partner Survey respondents considered PBF's contribution to the effective participation of the most marginalized communities to be either medium or low.

projects tend to see the engagement of women and youth in politics as the end goal, often overlooking the fact that inequalities and structural discrimination of women, youth and other groups persist. To seriously address these inequalities and structural discrimination, TOCs would have to be developed in a way that **moves beyond micro-level changes** associated with specific activities or an overall program approach and create linkages to national gender and youth strategies and other institutional and socio-political change. As this is difficult for an isolated project, this requires more strategic thinking about how the totality of PBF's engagement on women and youth empowerment could add up to reach these levels of change.

This also requires for gender equality and youth projects to **move beyond the focus on strengthening positive vectors** such as women and youth's participation in peace processes, mental health, human rights defenders' activism and early warning systems. While these initiatives have their merit, more attention needs to be given to the individuals, groups, organizations, institutions or systems that influence the dynamics at large and could be engaged to transform their behaviors, change policies etc. This also requires working with men and generating collective shifts in attitudes and behaviors, developing masculinities that see men as partners to support women's political participation (e.g., Liberia project LBR/B-4).

V. Additional Review Elements

Beyond the Priority Windows, the PBF Strategy 2020-2024 contains a number of additional commitments that invited a closer assessment during the Mid-Term Review. These include PBF support to civil society organizations (CSOs), the core funding principles (catalytic, national ownership and cohesive UN strategies), Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E) and Learning considerations, and investments in sustaining peace.

1. Support to CSOs

As a CSO representative put it, "PBF is uniquely positioned to level the field and act as a connector in country but also feeding up to inspire systemic changes". Yet, the Review perceived a tension for PBF between being seen as too centralized, with a small number of agencies receiving the bulk of the funding and CSOs being turned into mere implementing partners, and PBF's willingness to expand partnerships with civil society organizations to help close persistent funding gaps at the local level and explore new avenues to make funding available for community-based organizations – at a time when the shrinking of civic space has become a growing threat in regard to peacebuilding globally.³⁴

In practical terms, **CSOs do receive a smaller, yet steadily growing, portion of the overall PBF funding**. In total, out of the 185 projects approved in 2020 and 2021, 44 projects had a CSO as direct recipients (out of which 36 were GYPI projects), representing a total investment of about \$ 38m. Yet, only 7 local CSOs³⁵ (out of which only one women's and no youth's organization) accessed funding as direct recipients, many others being unable to comply with the strict financial and legal requirements of the MPTFO, required for grants whose size often exceeds the annual

³⁴ As highlighted by several participants during the MTR Reflection Workshop in October 2022.

³⁵ ONG Azhar, Fund for Congolese Women, MSIS-TATAO, Fudacion Nacional para el Desarrollo de Honduras, Red de Instituciones por los Derechoses de la Ninez, FESU, COIPRODEN.

budgets of these organizations. While INGOs were more represented (26 direct recipients), their perception tends to align with that of national CSOs which consider PBF funding difficult to access. The application comes with costs for CSOs, that some cannot invest. And even then, national CSOs were sometimes turned down in the end, like a national CSO in the Sahel region that invested time and human resources in designing a project technically approved by PBF yet eventually abandoned due to an eligibility issue the CSO still does not understand. Other reasons listed by interlocutors that could explain the limited support to CSOs concerned the perception that PBF is a Fund exclusive to UN agencies or one that is faced with acute competition from UN agencies that were sometimes said to be reluctant to partner with CSOs. The explanations ranged from arguing that (local) CSOs lack capacities or are not sufficiently complementary to arguing that (international) CSOs have access to other funding streams. The fact that, since 2020, GYPI has encouraged joint UN-CSO proposals (which so far concerned 12 GYPI projects in 9 different countries – incl. 2 projects with national CSOs in Honduras) had the effect that this type of project is more common in the GYPI than in the regular portfolio. In addition, GYPI direct recipients are required to allocate at least 40% of the funds to national or local organizations.

Recognizing that CSOs have a different kind of reach and footprint in peacebuilding work and ultimately sustainability, compared with UN agencies, bold strategies to overcome the glass ceiling national CSOs face are required to further increase the already significant alignment of PBF funding to local/ grassroot peacebuilding priorities.³⁶ While PBF certainly does not have the capacities to multiply direct small grant allocations at the local level, considerations should be given to the transfer of (technical but also financial) capacities to CSOs through international (UN and non-UN) direct recipients and to the creation of managing agents that would provide direct funding to local CSOs on a smaller scale. One innovative example of the latter is the **funding facility** currently being tested by Mercy Corps in the Sahel region.³⁷ In addition, the Fund should consider increasing its support to building (institutional and operational) capacities of national/ local organizations engaged in peace – prioritizing women’s and youth’s organizations. One example for this is a project aimed at reinforcing the institutional and operational capacities of the existing Women Mediators Network in Burundi. The 2022 GPI call for “Strengthening of women’s organizations, groups, and networks” is a good step in that direction but additional actions and incentives at the portfolio level should be considered, which include

- Dedicating specific budget lines for institutional capacity development of local partners with clear indicators of achievement.
- Having a predefined funding envelope for joint UN/INGOs-CSOs proposals.
- Further localizing GYPI calls (following the model and learning from the experience of GPI 2.0 – see above).
- Adding a portfolio-wide target for funding – directly and/or indirectly received by CSOs.

³⁶ 59% of the Partner Survey respondents considered that PBF funding is to large extent aligned to local/grassroot peacebuilding priorities.

PBF’s Partner Survey Results, August-September 2022.

³⁷ The Appui aux Initiatives Locales de Paix (AILP) project assumes that CSOs in the region have better access to remote areas of the Liptako-Gourma region and better knowledge of the localized conflict issues. Therefore, they are best placed to respond to conflict situations and peace challenges encountered at the local level.

- Applying a similar kind of CSO allocations requirement that the one used for GYPI (percentage of the grant) to the rest of the portfolio.

2. Core Funding Principles

The PBF Strategy references 6 core principles which are meant to guide the Funds operations, namely (i) Timely, ii) Catalytic, iii) Risk-tolerant, iv) Inclusiveness and national ownership, v) Integrated support, vi) Cohesive UN Strategies. The Review took a closer look at the three that invited a more detailed assessment.

Catalytic effects

Significant emphasis is put on the catalytic nature of the Fund. It is seen as a core principle, which enables the Fund to pilot new systems or to bring about more sustained support mechanisms via larger and longer-term financing engagement. Yet, generating, capturing and disseminating the catalytic effects of the investments constitute a complex endeavor.

The PBF Strategy 2020-2024 formulates the goal to mobilize \$ 10 for every \$ 1 invested. Since 2020, the PBF has undertaken two (internal) scoring exercises to quantify its catalytic effect in light of this target. Whether 10 to 1 is a reasonable or an overly ambitious goal remains arguable, however, the available data shows that the Fund is far from reaching its target, having (potentially) raised an approximate additional \$ 140m among 17 projects that started since 2020, for a total investment of close to \$ 300m (noting that the Darfur project approved in 2019 (SDN/A-5) accounts for a potential \$ 104m alone).

Catalytic effects, whether financial or non-financial, do not emerge automatically but require a proactive resource mobilization strategy grounded in demonstrated or anticipated solid results. While PBSO staff has over the last months become more diligent during the project appraisal committees (PACs) regarding the soundness of the sustainability/ exit strategy, the review of project documents approved over the last couple of years shows that they generally **miss having a clearly formulated and measurable approach to project closedown and sustainability**. Where such an approach exists, the progress made towards its reach is difficult to assess since recipients are only asked to report on actual catalytic effects. Also, while PBF's reporting format has evolved to include both financial and non-financial catalytic reporting, the way this information is tracked by PBF's management information system and capitalized upon, through fundraising and advocacy products for PBSO, donors and UNCT use, remains unsystematic and calls for a **more rigorous methodology and guidelines**.

The Review also noticed that there is an evident **misunderstanding or lack of capacity** pertaining to **what a catalytic effect entails** and the **way it should be tracked**. Out of the 30 catalytic impacts reported by direct recipients whose project started since 2020, only a few can reasonably be called catalytic. The others relate to intended results or impact of the projects or list effects that have not actually taken place yet. Only a few projects were able to report a catalytic effect on the engagement of other stakeholders in the peacebuilding process or to demonstrate how achievements will be sustained or built upon once the project is completed. Examples include the level of trust built through the National Youth Institute in Guinea-Bissau project, which led to the launch of a non-PBF-supported process of defining youth priorities for peace and security (IRF-406)

and the decision of young people to expand the geographical scope of their observer network in Madagascar, a YPI project (IRF-416) helped establish.

Moving forward, PBF should seek to better articulate the catalytic function of its investments and thus ensure a **better alignment** between the overall **vision and ambition of the Fund's catalytic nature**, its **understanding by various stakeholders** and **attainability**. At the project level, greater emphasis should be put on the development of strategies for securing financial commitments to scale up or extend a specific PBF-funded project (via co-financing by another donor or the government)³⁸ and ensuring that the project's impact will be sustained or built upon once it is over. While as of today, PBF's catalytic impact has been nearly exclusively considered from a project angle, there might be additional value in **linking it to the SRF development process**. This way not only would the meaning of catalytic effect be defined based on national contexts, but it would also be explicitly articulated as an objective to be reached with its set of indicators and assessed as part of the SRF evaluation processes.

National ownership

Fostering inclusion and national ownership is another one of PBF's 2020-24 Strategy core principles and in general stakeholders were appreciative regarding its achievement. This said, while there is a recognition by PBF that peacebuilding cannot rely solely on the interventions of international actors acting as primary agents and that it requires the **active engagement of national actors at all levels** of society, the extent and way it is translated strategically and operationally calls for continued attention. Indeed, the legitimacy of peacebuilding processes requires the engagement of not only state-level political elites, but also local authorities and civil society which constitute critical national owners in terms of their ability to reach the grassroots level, connect authorities and citizens and ensure processes are grounded in local realities.

Good practices to operationalize PBF's national ownership principle were noticed. At the assessment and design stages, PBF's recipients are required to articulate how and the extent to which national stakeholders were engaged. This Review noted genuine efforts by some recipients to meaningfully engage via the organization of inclusive design workshops, the candid consultation of key stakeholders or their involvement in field visits to jointly conduct analysis. Unfortunately, these are not yet the rule and many project documents did not articulate a meaningful engagement of national actors in determining the scale, scope and strategic focus of PBF support.

PBF's eligibility and SRF processes constitute opportunities to enhance strategic and genuine engagement of national authorities as well as to ensure the government's leadership and commitment towards sustaining peace. National stakeholders underlined the importance of being in a leadership role when it comes to strategic decision-making on the allocations of resources and portfolio design, in practice, it is not always guaranteed. This is evidenced by the survey conducted

³⁸ As the RCO note on the "Catalytic use of Peacebuilding Fund resources to promote resilience in the North-East region of Côte d'Ivoire" highlighted: the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Côte d'Ivoire paved the way for the implementation of an ambitious \$32m resilience program for the two districts of Côte d'Ivoire bordering Burkina Faso. This landmark prevention initiative was made possible thanks to a catalytic \$4.5m PBF investment, in the face of a rapidly deteriorating security situation spilling over from the Sahel region. Another catalytic impact of the above PBF investment, albeit indirect, has been the adoption by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire of a priority program focusing on fragility along its northern borders.

as part of this Review, where 30% of government representatives stated that PBF only allowed for very little national ownership over funding priorities and 44% saw very little influence over decisions related to resource allocation. In general government representatives scored the current level of national ownership below average. **Joint Steering Committees** remain the **principal means to ensure high-level oversight of PBF's portfolio by government and UN together**. Where such a coordination mechanism is co-chaired by the RC and a committed high-level government representative, functional and inclusive of other national stakeholders' representatives, it is considered to be a strong agent for national ownership. This said, it is important to also note that cooperation and political will at national level do not necessarily trickle down to the local level, and that there is therefore a **need for closer coordination and more effective communication between the national and local levels** (both local authorities and local CSOs).

Particular attention to national ownership is also important in **transition settings**. According to impressions shared by key informants, conversations regarding transitions remain **largely an exercise internal to the UN**, even bilateral donors and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are often not sufficiently part of the conversation. The goal of a carefully managed transition process is to build a foundation upon which the host State can build its own future, on its own terms, preserving essential peacebuilding and conflict prevention gains, thus guarding against relapse into conflict.³⁹ Therefore it is crucial that conversations with national stakeholders are prioritized, including a proper assessment of national capacities and state budget to cover remaining peacebuilding needs. The eligibility requests, for example, of Sudan and Haiti that were specifically designed to support a transition contain sections regarding the capacities of the UNCT but lack a similar assessment of national capacities.

Finally, the deteriorating security and/or socio-political situation in a number of countries over the last couple of years calls for **alternative ways of ensuring national ownership and leadership**, particularly in countries where governments' commitment to peacebuilding is fragile. Countries that faced violent conflicts, the collapse of State authorities (e.g., coup) or social unrest, all saw their capacity to undertake medium-term strategic planning hindered as unified authorities with whom to plan became absent or dysfunctional. As a consequence, PBF should seek ways of maintaining, to the extent possible, coordination and consultation with the host country/ de facto government, local authorities and other partners including civil society in order to build resilience and anticipate potential vulnerabilities. By also trying to extend existing planning and implementation frameworks (SRFs/ UNSDCFs), further time for consultations with national partners can be accommodated while continuity of the state party's accountability, irrespective of the current government, remains.⁴⁰

Cohesive UN Strategies

The PBF continues to play its integrator role. At the project level, this is achieved through the prioritization of joint projects with two or more recipients. At the country level, SRFs are at a

³⁹ See also OECD (2020): [Mission Drawdowns - Financing a Sustainable Peace. Sustaining Gains and Supporting Economic Stability Post UN Mission Withdrawal.](#)

⁴⁰ United Nations Sustainable Development Group (2022): Guidance on UN country-level Strategic Planning for development of exceptional circumstances.

minimum aligned with broader UN strategic documents, such as UNSDCFs, and ideally facilitate conversations about cohesive UN peacebuilding approaches.

The creation of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) slightly preceded the PBF Strategy, however, the operationalization of the full integration of the PBSO into the DPPA is still ongoing with considerable effects on the way the Fund is managed. **The Standard Operating Procedures – PBF Project Development and Approval** formalize and deepen the extent of consultation and decision-making processes throughout all stages. For example, they state that DPPA/DPO regional divisions are consulted semi-annually on the overall investment plan, by region, at Director level. At the technical level, DPPA desk officers are involved at the early drafting stage on concept notes and project documents and are requested to provide political analysis inputs; they are also full members of the Project Appraisal Committee (PAC). All PBF projects are also shared with the PBF Project Review Group (PRG), which is composed of regional and policy focal points of DPPA-DPO, DCO and PBF recipient UN agencies, funds and programs at Headquarters. These procedures demonstrate the effort to increase coherence and testify to the many ways that PBF plays an important role in translating institutional commitments into practical action on the ground.

At the same time, there are additional opportunities that might be seized for greater peacebuilding impact. PBF, through Program Officers in PBSO as well as through its Secretariats in-country, could still better contribute its expertise during **Common Country Analyses (CCAs)**, with a clearer role in a joint analysis identifying conflict drivers and potential programmatic entry points. This would lay the foundation for country-wide UN peacebuilding approaches, even beyond PBF-financing. PBF participation during the development of **UNSDCFs** is still not systematic, though during this phase crucial decisions regarding the UN support to national peacebuilding activities are or could be taken. PBF support to any country will always remain limited considering existing peacebuilding needs. Using the process of UNSCDF development as an entry point for conversations about mainstreaming peacebuilding cooperation in an attempt to operationalize the HDP Nexus and contribute to SDG 16, would create a critical mass of initiatives for greater peacebuilding impact. Potential PBF support to relevant elements in the UNSDCF could be an important incentive to engage in such a conversation. In a few pilot countries, PBF should experiment with an approach where time and resources normally invested in the development of eligibility requests and SRFs are channeled to UNSDCF development. The experience in Guinea, where PBF-support was used to define an overarching vision for the UN engagement under the leadership of the RC, points to the potential of such approaches.

3. Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The 2020-2024 Strategy includes a number of commitments to more robust Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E) and Learning systems. Most importantly, it proposes new measures to enhance M&E approaches for peacebuilding effectiveness.⁴¹ Until now, PBF made progress on

⁴¹ According to the [PBF Strategy 2020-2024](#), the key objectives are to:

- Improve guidance on how to measure “achievable change” and “catalytic effect”, with increased roles for PBF secretariats in close collaboration with recipient agencies, RCOs and Joint Steering Committees.
- Pilot new evaluative approaches in three countries, e.g., using quasi-experimental approaches for innovative or risky initiatives.

some of these commitments. It recently published its [Evaluation Policy](#) that clarifies its engagement at global, country and project level.

At the **global level**, there are three types of relevant exercises, such as Fund evaluations, which include this **Mid-Term Review** and a **Final Evaluation** of PBF Strategy, as well as biennial **Synthesis Reviews**. The PBF 2020-2024 Strategy is accompanied by a Performance Framework, which tracks key outcome and output indicators relevant to the Strategy. Still, many stakeholders did express continued interest and need for a better understanding of what PBF success at the global level entails. **Global Thematic Reviews**, such as the previous ones on [Transitional Justice](#), [Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding](#), or [Local Peacebuilding](#) (and 2022-ongoing Thematic Reviews on Climate Security and Peacebuilding, and Human Rights and Peacebuilding) will continue to provide more detailed assessments on specific thematic areas or institutional actors. Finally, the Evaluation Policy introduces **Annual Cohort Evaluations** of projects under or equal to \$1.5 million, which the Fund will procure and manage.

Another initiative at the global level, not mentioned by the Evaluation Policy, is **PeaceFIELD: Impact Evaluation for Peacebuilding** in collaboration with the International Security and Development Center, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation and the German Federal Foreign Office. This initiative is guided by the vision to support the development of a foundation that affords peacebuilders recourse to knowledge-based support on what works and how in peacebuilding programming. It is organized in two phases: (i) Design of Peacebuilding Fund Impact Evaluations, Learning and Dissemination (2021 – 2022) and (ii) Completion of PBF Evaluations, Dissemination of Findings (2023 – 2024).

At the **country level**, there is the distinction between two different scenarios:

Eligible countries with substantial investment	Eligible countries of lesser investment
Iterative evaluative exercises, such as outcome harvesting or developmental evaluation to encourage context adaptation and foster a learning-based approach	No requirement for portfolio level evaluations but possible at the discretion of PBF and the RCO.
Midterm partnership reviews of a Strategic Results Framework and the underlying project base	
Portfolio final evaluation of the SRF across the full implementation cycle, including the Framework’s underlying projects	

The policy does not specify the threshold for a substantial investment. Even in countries with substantial investments, the balance seems to be tilted towards evaluative exercises, while design, monitoring and learning activities receive significantly less attention.

At the **project level**, there is a requirement for independent evaluations of all projects with budgets greater than \$1.5m and the above-mentioned cohort evaluations for projects below that

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- Share noteworthy efforts of recipient agencies who innovate design, monitoring and evaluation in peacebuilding programs.
 - Align with system-wide changes in mission and non-mission contexts, notably the updated UN Common Country Analyses and (UNSDCF) country evaluations (guided by the Development Coordination Office) and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) being introduced for all UN missions.
 - Establish a design, monitoring and evaluation advisory function where leading experts periodically review and enhance monitoring and evaluation practices of the PBF and its recipients.

threshold. In 2020, 39 projects were approved that are above the \$1.5m threshold, while in 2021, there were 44. These evaluations are likely to provide some important insights, however, the Evaluation Policy remains vague about the use of this information. With a conservative estimate of \$ 50k per evaluation and roughly 40 evaluations per year, this amounts to a minimum of \$10m investment in project evaluations over the duration of the 5-year strategy, whose **value for money** would benefit from a clearer articulation.

One answer to this question could come from recommendations from two Synthesis Reviews, which argued for **a more proactive focus on learning**.⁴² This learning could engage Fund recipients but also inform processes related to the five-year eligibility and SRFs. To further increase experience sharing (in combination with joint planning exercises), the **organization of (sub-)regional meetings** could be explored based on stakeholder feedback. Another potential answer to the value for money question is related to the recommendations regarding SRFs going beyond PBF investments and the potential for **PBF to leverage existing M&E activities of SRFs and country portfolios for a more system-wide engagement** in the form of mainstreamed peacebuilding considerations in UNSDCFs.

The demands resulting from the Evaluation Policy are substantial, while there will be only a small PBSO DM&E team to manage several evaluative exercises at the global and national level each year, providing quality assurance to some project-level evaluations as well as strengthening design, monitoring and learning activities. It will be important to **sustain human resources**, especially since the position of the DM&E Team Leader has been vacant for most of 2022 and some additional support from UNVs is phasing out.

A renewed focus on **strengthening capacities** in PBF Secretariats could help contribute to a more decentralized distribution of the workload. The same goes for the recommendation to build national capacities (of government and civil society) for collection of data on peacebuilding results, SDG 16 monitoring etc., which – after an upfront investment – would not only increase national ownership and build sustainable national (peace) infrastructures but also lower the workload for PBF staff.

4. Investments in Sustaining Peace

In support of the Sustaining Peace Agenda, the 2020-2024 Strategy anticipates support at the level of 40% for prevention, 10% during conflict and 50% in post-conflict settings. Currently, **the Fund does not track its investments according to these criteria**. The PBF provides funding to a diverse set of contexts, at various stages of the conflict spectrum. However, in the absence of direct requests there seems to be little engagement in countries experiencing open conflict: the project in Ukraine is from 2020, preceding the current war and there is less engagement on countries like Yemen and Myanmar that previously were treated as “during conflict” or Ethiopia which entered into open conflict during this Strategy.

The Sustaining Peace approach notes that there is **no linear development between these different stages**, which makes the distinction between prevention and post-conflict settings particularly

⁴² For the following see PBSO (2021): [Drawing on Evaluations and Evaluative Exercises of Initiatives Supported by the Fund](#) and PBSO (2020): [Synthesis Review 2017-2019. PBF Project and Portfolio Evaluations](#).

difficult: post-conflict interventions might just as well be interpreted as prevention of a relapse into conflict. While a number of stakeholders have highlighted the importance of (more) support to prevention, often it is not clear what this request entails concretely. In a very general interpretation, this might aim at preventing conflict from escalating to an extent that requires an (external) military intervention or the deployment of a peacekeeping operation. However, based on this interpretation all (successful) PBF interventions would be preventive in nature. In a narrower interpretation, this might be based on a distinction between a more backward-facing reconciliation or conflict resolution approach and a more forward-looking prevention approach. However, this interpretation seems more theoretical than practical, especially when even the supposedly more backward facing interventions can mitigate the consequences of conflict and lay the foundation for a positive peace that is more than the mere absence of physical violence.

Moving beyond the conundrum of what prevention means in practice, the goal formulated in the Strategy could mean that PBF tries to explore its **risk-taking niche through programming in contexts of ongoing conflict**. This could entail support to mediation as well as peacebuilding programming in pockets of stability. Such an approach could also present an entry point for further developing partnerships with humanitarian actors with the intent to further operationalize the HDP Nexus.

A final takeaway regarding this point is that the PBF could increase its rigor in terms of categorization through a set of **indicators to distinguish between different contexts as the foundation for evidence-based decisions on expected resource allocations** during the annual planning at the beginning of the year. Such an exercise for which some foundations already exist could contribute to making assumptions more explicit resulting in more transparency. In turn this would facilitate external communication around these issues and potentially provide answers to stakeholders asking for more engagement on prevention.

C. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the Review found a strong consensus that the **priorities identified by the PBF in its Strategy remain relevant**. In the current globalized context, addressing cross-border and regional drivers of conflict will only become more important, which calls for doubling down on genuinely transborder peacebuilding programming. Despite some remaining challenges of articulating the PBF niche in regard to facilitating transitions, there is still an added value of a UN pooled fund to support these complex reorganizations of UN configurations while supporting the sustainable transfer of peacebuilding and conflict prevention capacities to national stakeholders. Finally, in a world of growing inequality and marginalization, dedicated support to initiatives fostering inclusion remains crucial. In short, the relevance of these priorities is evident and the main question remaining is how the PBF can further increase its efforts at achieving strategic coherence for greater and more sustainable prevention and peacebuilding impact.

The **PBF priorities also remain appropriate**. The Review analyzed the following potential additional priorities, which were mentioned by stakeholders throughout the process. However, no clear candidate could be identified to be lifted to the rank of a Priority Window (or replace an existing one).

Several developments have emerged or intensified since the formulation of the PBF Strategy. One of them is **the war in Ukraine**, which at the systemic level has brought with it a renewed focus on

international armed conflict, global economic effects regarding food and energy supplies with impact on inflation, increased competition over resources and the overall increase of fragility. The likely global recession might not only lead to diminished funding for PBF but also an even heavier debt burden of many PBF recipient countries. The war has also led to a significant increase in military expenditure and a prioritization of militarized narratives and solutions, sidelining peacebuilding approaches.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has highlighted fragility, the interconnectedness in a globalized world, the importance of equal access to health services, a shrinking of civic space together with numerous implementation challenges, not only in cross-border contexts.

The realization of the need for **urgent action on the climate crisis** has intensified over the last few years. In many parts of the world, climate change leads to environmental degradation with detrimental effects on the access to natural resources. Increased competition often paired with the deepening of socio-economic inequality create a dynamic of exclusion that can intensify conflict. While policy and climate security mechanisms have evolved, they still struggle to keep up with these dynamics, including but not limited to the management of climate change-induced migration.

Stakeholders also noted an increasing **polarization**, with an increase in offline and online violence. Increased access to and use of social media with significant impact not only on youth populations provide avenues for intensifying conflict drivers and empowering agents of change. Accompanying processes relate the shrinking of civic space and an increase in undemocratic government changes.

While these developments are important and impact the work of PBF, the overall impression of stakeholders was that **nothing in the current context prevents PBF supporting these issues** based on a thorough analysis of context-specific peacebuilding needs. From this perspective, the formulation of an explicit funding target or priority window does not seem to provide additional benefits.

Finally, **in terms of efficiency, the Review was impressed by the achievements of the PBF** in light of its small organizational footprint within PBSO and across the in-country PBF Secretariats. Nonetheless, some areas were identified which point to a potential for reducing transaction costs or employing existing (human and financial) resources differently with the potential of achieving more strategic or greater peacebuilding impact, such as a further development of the GPI 2.0 as well as more ambitious SRFs with closer links to UNSDCFs.

In summary, while this Review did not identify a need for major course corrections for the second half of the PBF Strategy 2020-2024, it developed several recommendations to further increase the efficiency and effectiveness of PBF engagement in the realization of objectives set out in the Strategic Plan.

Recommendations

Strategic Country Support

- R1 **Ensure appropriate timing and accompaniment of SRF development and implementation:**
Link the development of SRFs to the eligibility process to create synergies between the two processes (conflict analysis, prioritization), leading to swifter project development and

overall reduction of transaction costs. Prioritize in-person workshops that engage in-country stakeholders, in particular national counterparts, during the course of a few months to allow for deeper reflections and ownership to develop. Avoid turning SRF development into a mere technical exercise but focus on co-creating a narrative for the PBF engagement and its desired results. Dedicate sufficient resources within PBSO (DM&E team and/or Program Officers) to lead on all aspects of the development and use of SRFs based on a clear attribution of roles and responsibilities.

- R2 **Ensure the formulation of ambitious, yet realistic strategic outcomes:** Limit the number of strategic outcomes in SRFs in proportion to the expected investments, allowing for multiple anticipated projects per outcome.
- R3 **Focus on capturing change at the portfolio level:** Abstain from indicators that are essentially just monitoring context and formulate SMART results indicators that realistically capture expected change resulting from PBF (or broader) interventions. Build a database/archive of good peacebuilding indicators and useful secondary data sources. Strengthen collaborations with DCO (for results frameworks of UNSDCFs) and UN recipients (for results frameworks of Country Program Documents or at project level) for greater synergies.
- R4 **Develop clear criteria where the development of an SRF provides a clear added value:** Factors to be considered could include the absence of an eligibility request (PBC configuration countries), size and complexity of the portfolio, need for stronger alignment between different funding vehicles, lack of articulation of peacebuilding priorities in other strategic frameworks. In parallel, experiment with more ambitious SRF processes through PBSO/PBF Secretariat support to the development of UNSDCFs with a focus on defining a separate peacebuilding pillar or thoroughly mainstreaming peacebuilding as a cross-cutting issue.
- R5 **Clarify roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and reporting:** Encourage projects that build capacity of national actors (government, academia, CSOs) to undertake research and gather data to be integrated into the SRF. Provide additional support (financial, human resources, capacities) to PBF Secretariats and/or UN system partners or national stakeholders to fill out assigned roles. Define frequency of data collection and analysis and clarify intended use of information for reporting and data-driven portfolio management decisions. Clarify the role of SRFs for aggregated peacebuilding results across different country contexts, e.g., through the creation of an Impact Lab.

Regional and Cross-border Programming

- R6 **Optimize transaction costs:** Better articulated partnership/cooperation strategies for scale up (e.g., starting at times with 2 countries, then adding a 3rd one; starting with easier issues first; moving from the local to the more institutional/national levels etc.). Prioritize PBF follow-up engagements over the proliferation of cross-border/regional projects involving more and more borders/countries. Opt for more cost-effective national programming in border areas where additional impacts resulting from addressing conflict drivers in more than one country simultaneously are not clearly demonstrated.

- R7 **Deepen the involvement of national/local governments and national civil society actors at the design and implementation stages:** Invest more time to raise the level of inclusion and localization and design joint analysis already as an intervention in itself, thus ensuring an adequate level of national and regional ownership and buy-in at the design stage. Assess the level and timing of national government buy-in and endorsement for a cross-border/regional project as well as the capacity to accommodate existing power structures to avoid delayed endorsement generating slowdown or paralysis. Encourage regional strategic coordination mechanisms at strategic and technical levels or develop meaningful alternative strategies of engagement and communication. Prioritize programming that supports the policies and priorities of national government authorities and regional organizations.
- R8 **Update knowledge base of cross-border/regional projects:** Conduct a Thematic Review of Cross-border Peacebuilding to demonstrate high-level results and further reflect on the contribution to peace and catalytic effects of PBF's cross-border and regional programming. Invest in more analytical work at a sub-regional level, building on RCO-led regional strategic peacebuilding analysis.
- R9 **Provide more systematic upfront support (financial and technical) for the development of cross-border projects:** Generate a more robust process, better strategic-thinking and more involvement and buy-in from all stakeholders. Explore options, such as a more structured 'inception phase support' (similar to what is currently discussed with Peace Nexus) and providing additional incentives for direct recipients to pre-launch key personnel recruitment as well as the partnership development processes. Request the submission of a thorough start-up plan that takes into consideration the recipients' and its implementing partners' existing and anticipated capacities and integrates a risk analysis to better anticipate possible contextual developments and prepare concrete responses.

Facilitating Transitions

- R10 **Clarify the definition of transition settings:** Develop and apply a substantive and context-specific definition of transition settings that conditions the end of PBF support to the transition on the achievement of certain benchmarks. This definition can be adapted over time and does not preclude the continuation of PBF-funding following the achievement of these benchmarks in the form of "regular", non-transition support to sustaining peace.
- R11 **Articulate the niche of PBF transition support:** Clarify the intention and scope of strategic PBF support to transition settings, including through making clear what distinguishes it from its engagement in non-transition contexts. Explore possibilities of PBSO support to the design and accompaniment of Joint Financing Strategies for transition settings.
- R12 **Strengthen the strategic approach to transition support and leverage PBF-funding for greater impact:** Develop a coordinated and sequenced approach to leverage PBF support to transition settings, including through planning more deliberately for catalytic results. Tie PBF-support to UN recipients in transition settings to a proven comparative advantage in addressing remaining elements of the mission mandate. Expand partnerships, such as with the World Bank, to scale up support and experiment with matching formulas. Include a

more robust analysis of national capacities in PBF procedures and assess where the facilitation of the transfer of responsibilities to national actors can be supported.

- R13 **Adapt PBF support to transition settings based on a more robust evidence-base:** Commission a Thematic Review on the results of PBF support to transition settings to make evidence-based decisions on future programming. Reorient some of the support reserved to transitions from post-transition to integrated programming in pre-withdrawal settings. Accompany early transition planning financially and through the contribution of strategic accompaniment rooted in a close cooperation within the Peace and Security Pillar, which could include a more systematic participation of PBF (Secretariats and NY-based staff) in relevant exercises, such as Strategic Review Missions.

Gender and Youth Empowerment

- R14 **Rollout GPI 2.0 and consider launching a YPI 2.0:** Plan for such a roll out to more countries and developing a similar type of decentralized initiative for Youth, provided that anticipated advantages are confirmed in pilot countries. Consider inviting each year a third of eligible countries to develop a 3-year localized G(Y)PI portfolio whilst ensuring quality assurance, support from and collaboration with dedicated PBSO Program Officers.
- R15 **Increase the contribution and integration of GYPI projects in PBF's SRFs or other existing country priority plans:** Develop alternative approaches to the GYPI global themes that would ensure greater national ownership and better alignment with national priorities (e.g., existing national youth or gender equality strategies) and SRFs, while ensuring WPS and YPS agendas' gaps continue to be addressed. Consider further increasing the size and duration of projects.
- R16 **Move beyond the focus on strengthening positive vectors:** While initiatives addressing women's and youth participation in peace processes, mental health, human rights defenders' activism and early warning systems etc. have their merits, more attention needs to be given to the individuals, groups, organizations, institutions or systems that influence the dynamics at large and could be engaged to transform their behaviors, change policies etc. Broaden the engagement to include work on positive masculinities, working with men and boys to generate collective shifts in attitudes and behaviors that see men as partners to support women's political participation.
- R17 **Experiment with bolder approaches to directly or indirectly engage typically overlooked or seen as hard-to-reach groups:** Engage marginalized groups more systematically without disregarding the high risks sometimes associated with such an approach. Be more rigorous in avoiding the generalization and the equation of women and youth with marginalized groups.

CSOs support

- R18 **Further explore ways of increasing CSOs' engagement:** Increase the number and quality of genuine joint projects between UN agencies and CSOs (international or national ones) and between INGOs and national CSOs. Use innovative models such as resorting to UN agencies or national/ international CSOs to act as real intermediaries to reach frontline local organizations (of women and youth in particular) and/or managing agents of small-grants

facilities (i.e., consider replicating the innovative local CSOs' funding mechanism being currently tested in the Sahel region in comparable national and/ or regional contexts as appropriate). Diversify partnerships with all kinds of CSOs that could have an impact on peacebuilding, including organizations ranging from community-based socially oriented organizations all the way to peacebuilding specific or human rights organizations.

- R19 **Be more intentional about building institutional and operational capacities when collaborating with national/ local CSOs as implementing partners:** Consider providing dedicated budgets lines and associated progress indicators. Explore ways of simplifying the national CSO eligibility procedures in the spirit of PBF's timely, flexibility and risk-tolerance principles (e.g., provision of funds to CSO direct recipients from an UN-agency rather than MPTFO).

Catalytic effects

- R20 **Better articulate the catalytic nature of PBF's engagement:** At the country portfolio level, identify context-specific opportunities for catalytic programming based on the key peacebuilding changes sought in the SRFs. Ensure that the country level M&E team examines several projects that claim catalytic effects, to determine to what extent those expectations have been met and they contributed to the realization of the set country goals. At the project level, put greater emphasis on the development of a clear strategy to not only mobilize actors and resources that will build on the work started by PBF programming but also foster national ownership for additional activities relevant to peacebuilding to occur. Such a concerted and strategic approach requires dedicated time, effort and monitoring over the lifetime of the project.
- R21 **Encourage the set-up of more partnerships:** Diversify partnerships with bilateral donors, the World Bank, governments, INGOs, regional organizations etc. through both programmatic collaboration (e.g., joint analysis and planning) and strategic positioning of the Fund as gap filler, initiator of critical intervention or proof of concept peacebuilding approaches that others can then take to scale through larger financing instruments.

National ownership

- R22 **Undertake a process of JSC revitalization:** Ensure that a functioning and active oversight mechanism is in place in all countries with considerable PBF investments. Be more adamant about the importance of having regular national (or regional as applicable) JSC meetings, co-chaired by RCs and relevant high-level government counterparts and inclusive of some civil society, local government and development partners representatives.
- R23 **Seek alternative ways of ensuring national ownership and leadership in exceptional situations:** Diversify options of working in countries undergoing violent conflict and/or where national authorities are either delegitimized or overthrown. This includes defining clearer parameters for PBF's engagement in estranged situations, seeking ways to work

more with local governments and creating the space/ legal framework for civil society continued engagement.

Cohesive UN Strategies

R24 Leverage the integration of PBSO into the DPPA for more coherence and greater peacebuilding impact: Ensure PBF participation (from PBSO or through PBF Secretariats in country) in CCAs and UNSDCF development to ensure joint analysis of conflict drivers, entry points and programmatic responses. Explore opportunities of further linking PBF support to UNSDCFs in an attempt to operationalize the HDP Nexus and contribute to SDG 16. This could take the form of providing catalytic support to peacebuilding relevant elements of the UNSCDF, a clearer connection to the eligibility process and/or contributing PBF peacebuilding M&E expertise for the UNCT. Engage regional DCO and PDAs into evaluation support including integration in UNSDCF evaluations.

DM&E and Learning

R25 Clarify the scope and intended use of M&E generated information: Continue to explore good enough yet robust M&E practices that are commensurate with the expected peacebuilding outcomes. Further develop learning and information sharing of evaluation findings and best practices, including through the organization of (sub)regional stakeholder meetings. Articulate value for money considerations of evaluative exercises beyond accountability purposes.

R26 Strengthen support to Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning: Ensure adequate and sustainable staffing in PBSO within the DM&E Team, with additional focus on design, monitoring and data analysis. Strengthen collation and aggregation of data at global level while strengthening DM&E systems and capacities at country level, e.g., through support to PBF Secretariats and projects supporting national capacities (of government and civil society) for collection and analysis of data on peacebuilding results and SDG 16.

Annexes

Additional Portfolio Data

Approvals by Priority Window and Year (as of May 2022)

	2020		2021		2022	
Cross-Border & Regional	\$28.7m	17%	\$26.6m	14%	\$4.5	32%
UN Transitions	\$35.4m	21%	\$75.9m	39%	\$5m	35%
Women and youth empowerment	\$59.1m	34%	\$70.8m	36%	N/A	0%
Total Approved (including outside of Priority Windows)	\$173.7m		\$195m		14.1m	

Regional and Cross-border Programming approved under the current strategy (as of May 2022)

Country	Approval Year	Type of project	Themes	Budget
Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu	2020	Regional	Climate security	\$ 3.2m
DRC, Rwanda	2020	Same dynamics	Peace dividends for women and youth/ Cross-border trade and food security	\$ 3m
Mali, Mauritania	2020	Same dynamics	Transhumance	\$ 3m
Cameroon, Chad, Gabon	2020	Same dynamics	Youth engagement/ illicit trafficking	\$ 4m
CAR, Cameroon	2020	Same dynamics	Illicit trafficking	\$ 3.1m
Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo	2020	Same dynamics	Inter-community conflicts/ Violent extremism	\$ 3.3m
Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger	2020	Same dynamics	Transhumance	\$ 3m
Dominican Republic, Haiti	2020	Regional	Binational dialogue and cooperation	\$ 3m
El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras	2020	Regional	Migration	\$ 3.2m
Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger	2021	Same dynamics	Local peacebuilding initiatives	\$2.5m
Guinea, Sierra Leone	2021	Same dynamics	Transhumance	\$ 4.5m
Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea	2021	Same dynamics	Border land and natural resources management/ Transhumance/ Women and youth	\$ 3.7m
Angola, DRC	2021	Asymmetrical dynamics	Migration/ Community stabilization	\$ 5.1m
Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire	2021	Same dynamics	Border management/ Inclusive dialogue/ Access to social services	\$ 4m
Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan	2021	Same dynamics	Border environmental and socio-economic cooperation	\$ 3m
Gambia, Senegal	2021	Same dynamics	Migration/ Illicit trafficking/ Border management	\$ 3.8m
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia	2022	Regional	Intercultural dialogue/ hate speech	\$ 4.5m

Country repartition of GYPI projects in 2020 and 2021

Countries	Number of projects (2020-21)		
	GPI	YPI	GYPI
Burkina Faso	0	3	3
Burundi	2	0	2
Cameroon	1	1	2
CAR	2	2	4
Chad	1	0	1
Colombia	3	2	5
Côte d'Ivoire	0	2	2
DRC	2	1	3
El Salvador	0	3	3
Gambia	1	0	1
Guatemala	0	1	1
Guinea	0	1	1
Guinea Bissau	1	2	3
Haiti	2	1	3
Honduras	2	2	4
Kyrgyzstan	0	1	1
Liberia	2	1	3
Madagascar	1	2	3
Mali	2	2	4
Mauritania	2	0	2
Niger	0	1	1
Papua New Guinea	2	0	2
Sierra Leone	1	1	2
Solomon Islands	1	1	2
Somalia	1	1	2
South Sudan	1	0	1
Sri Lanka	1	1	2
Sudan	1	3	4
TOTAL	32	35	67

Participants to the Mid-Term Review Stakeholders Workshop

Name	Country Organization	Title
Aymeric Misoni Lwanzo	DRC	Advisor to the Minister of Plan/PBF focal point in the Cabinet of Ministers
Edwin N. Dennis	Liberia	Director General of the National Bureau of Concessions
Marvin Manuel Pol Alvarez	Guatemala	Director de Alianzas para el Desarrollo, de la Subsecretaría de Cooperación y Alianzas para Desarrollo
Daniyar Suiunov	Kyrgyzstan	Expert at the Department for Political and Economic Research of the Presidential Administration of the Kyrgyz Republic
Carmen Haydeé Lopez	Honduras	Vice Minister of Justice
Pia Philip Michael Yangu	South Sudan	Undersecretary for Peacebuilding
Samy Saadi	Germany	Political Advisor for Western Africa, Sahel & Peacebuilding, Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN
Kadi Doumbia	Sweden	Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN
Halvor Saetre	Norway	UN Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway
Geoffrey Dean	Canada	Director, Conflict Prevention, Stabilization and Peacebuilding, Global Affairs Canada
Kathleen Smith	HQ	Search for Common Ground, Lead Expert on Peacebuilding Policy and Financing for Peace
Mohammed Halima	Egypt	Policy Coordinator, Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping & Peacebuilding
Jordan Street	HQ	Saferworld, Senior Policy and Advocacy Lead
Harijaona Niaina	Madagascar	Director MSIS - TATAO
Vincent Martin	Guinea	Resident Coordinator
Elizabeth (Lucy) Turner	Guatemala	PBF Secretariat Coordinator
Malika Grogga-Bada	CAR	PBF Secretariat Coordinator
Catalina Perdomo	Colombia	Peace and Development Advisor
Patrick Mc Carthy	The Gambia	Peace and Development Advisor
Taija Kontinen-Sharp	Sudan	Chief, Integrated Office of the DSRSG/RC/HC Sudan
Diloro Kadirova	HQ	Prevention and Peacebuilding Lead, Development Coordination Office
Jacqueline Seck	HQ	Director North Africa Division, DPPA-DPO

Fiorella Triscritti	HQ	Political Affairs Officer, DPPA Latin America
Brian J. Williams	HQ	Chief, Financing for Peacebuilding, PBSO
Marcus Lenzen	HQ	Senior Advisor and Deputy Chief, PBSO
Tim Heine	HQ	Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, PBSO
Diane Sheinberg	HQ	Program Officer, PBSO
Nicolas Gonzalez	HQ	Program Officer, PBSO
Sara Bottin	HQ	Program Officer, PBSO
Jelena Zelenovic	HQ	Program Officer, PBSO
Emmanuelle Bernard	HQ	Program Officer, PBSO

Key Informant Interviewees

Name	Position/ Entities	Countries of focus
Elizabeth Spehar	PBSO, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support	Global
Awa Dabo	PBSO, Deputy Head of PBSO	Global
Brian Williams	PBSO, PBF Chief	Global
Marcus Lenzen	PBSO, PBF Senior Advisor & Deputy Chief	Global
Emmanuelle Bernard	PBSO, Program Officer	DRC, CAR, Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Cameroon, Sudan, South Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen, Somalia, Kenya
Diane Sheinberg	PBSO, Program Officer	Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Haiti, Benin, Libya, Tunisia
Sara Bottin	PBSO, Program Officer	Niger, Nigeria, Chad
Ylva Skondal	PBSO, Gender and Peacebuilding Officer	GYPI countries
Aicha Bouslama	PBSO, Assistant Program Officer - helping on GYPI	GYPI countries
Nicolas Gonzalez	PBSO, Program Officer	Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, South Caucasus
Alejandro Bonil Vaca	PBSO, DM&E Officer	Central and South America
Jelena Zelenovic	PBSO, Program Officer	Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Madagascar, Solomon Islands, PNG, Phillippines, Albania, Bosnia and

		Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Marshall Islands, Ukraine
Shaza Suleiman	PBSO, Gender Advisor	Global
Tim Heine	PBSO, M&E Officer	Global
Stephanie Magalage	PBSO, Associate Program Officer	
Margherita Capellino	Coordination Officer, seconded to PBSO	-
Marriet Schuurman,	Advisory Group Member (Netherlands)	-
Sebastien Lapierre	DPPA - Team Leader, Central Africa	Central Africa
Dirk Druet	DPPA Strategy Consultant	-
Bautista Logioco	PBF Program Support Team Member	Guatemala
Luc Lafrenière	PBF Program Support Team Member	Niger
Jim Rogan	PBF Program Support Team Member	South Sudan, Kyrgyzstan, Western Balkans
Carla Villagran	PBF Program Support Team Member	Honduras
Philip Pierce	PBF Program Support Team Member	Sudan
Anita Ernstorfer	PBF Program Support Team Member	-
Gedeon Behiguim	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Burkina Faso
Abdoulaye Fadiga	M&E Specialist, PBF Secretariat	Burkina Faso
Davide Dolcezza	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Cameroon
Malika Groga-Bada	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	CAR
Anatole NDOMA	PBF M&E Specialist	CAR
Appoline Uwimbabazi	PBF Coordinator - UNDP	Chad
Emmanuel Bureau Morgode	Peace and Development Analyst	Chad
Alice Beccaro	MPTF Technical Secretariat Coordinator	Colombia
Irene Rojas	MPTF Technical Secretariat M&E	Colombia
Olga Lucia Zuluaga	UNICEF	Colombia

Roger Davila	UNICEF, M&E Specialist	Colombia
Maria Alexandra	UNICEF	Colombia
David Turizo	UNFPA, Youth Advisor	Colombia
Gutierrez Pelaez, Nicolas;	ILO	Colombia
Mahamadou Tandia	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Côte d'Ivoire
Grace F. Kpohazounde	Peace and Development Advisor	Côte d'Ivoire
Arsène Assande	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	DRC
Silvia Vides	Partnerships and Development Officer - RCO	El Salvador
Ndella Faye-Colley	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Gambia
Mamadou Salieu Bah	PBF Secretariat M&E Officer	Gambia
Lucy Turner	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Guatemala
Ibrahima Barry	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Guinea
Joachim Ouedraogo	RCO M&E Officer	Guinea
Guie-Aissatu Ndjai	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Guinea Bissau
Mamadou Bamba	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Haiti
Tony Kouemo	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	Haiti
Louise Bosetti	OHCHR/ BINUH	Haiti
Sergio Aguinada	Head of Office - RCO	Honduras
Kurtmolla Abdulganiyev	Peace and Development Advisor	Kyrgyzstan
John Dennis	M&E Officer / PBF coordinator ai - UNDP	Liberia
Pierre Antoine Archange	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Mali
Kissima Sylla	PBF National Expert	Mali
Brahim Fah	Team Leader Governance - UNDP	Mauritania
Jean Claude Cigwerhe	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Niger
Abdel Mbohou	M&E Specialist	Niger
Habsatou Boubacar	National coordinator	Niger
Simonetta Rossi	Peace and Development Advisor	Sierra Leone
Joerg Stahlhut	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Somalia
Diane Ngure	Resilience and Recovery Advisor	South Sudan
Ulan Shabynov	PBF Secretariat Coordinator	Sudan
Kyle Jacques	PBF Secretariat M&E Officer	Sudan
Zoe Meier	UNICEF	Sudan

Rachel Scott	OECD, Financing for Transition	
Adie Yahaya	HACP – General Secretary	Niger
Mohamed Mouhamadou	HACP	Niger
Celine Salamou	HACP – M&E officer	Niger
Kwanli Kladstrup	Concern Worldwide	Haiti, GYPI
Inti Alher	Mercy Corps, Program Manager	Sahel
Guma Komey	Carter Center	Sudan
Hernando Enriquez	NRC	Colombia
Louis Le Masne	Search for Common Ground, Program Development Specialist	West Africa
Alice Soulama Midibahaye	WANEP, National coordinator	Burkina Faso
Leyla Yousif Anis	Donor representative: Sweden	-
Kadi Doumbia	Donor representative: Sweden	-
Gabriela Helm	Donor representative: UK	-
Tom Dobin	Donor representative: UK	-

Online Survey, Aug-Sept 2022

In August and September 2022, the Peacebuilding Fund conducted a partner and stakeholder survey to which specific questions for the Mid-Term Review were added. The survey was addressed to UN agencies funds and programs, recipient governments and civil society organizations in countries where PBF has funded peacebuilding programs. The survey was distributed via email to over 900 recipients recommended by the PBF Program Officers at the HQ level and coordinators at the country level. Participation in the survey was voluntary, anonymous and administered online using Kobo Toolbox. A total of 200 persons participated in the survey, of which 11 reported that they did not have sufficient knowledge of the PBF to answer questions on its effectiveness and impact and 1 person did not consent to participation. The survey results referenced in this report are thus based on 188 responses (118 men, 69 women, 1 person choosing not to disclose their gender) from 39 countries:

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Asia & the Pacific</i>	<i>Central & Southern Africa</i>	<i>East Africa</i>	<i>Europe & Central Asia</i>	<i>Global/ Multiple Regions</i>	<i>Latin America & the Caribbean</i>	<i>Middle East & North Africa</i>	<i>West Africa</i>
Total	188	5	52	39	17	5	14	2	54
<i>Recipient Government</i>	27	1	6		1	1	2		16
<i>International NGO</i>	14		5	2	2				5
<i>National NGO</i>	29	1	14	2			3		9
<i>UN Agency, Fund or Programme</i>	78	2	20	29	9	4	3		11
<i>UN Resident Coordinator Office</i>	18			2	5		4		7
<i>UN PBF Secretariat</i>	13		4	1			2		6
<i>UN Peacekeeping Mission</i>	1		1		0				
<i>UN Special Political Mission</i>	3			2	0			1	
<i>Regional Financial Institution</i>	1		1		0				
<i>Other</i>	2	1	1		0				
<i>Prefer not to Answer</i>	2			1	0			1	

Mid-Term Review

United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund Strategy 2020-2024

Terms of Reference

Duration: 48 days for Team Leader/Consultant 1 and 43 days for Consultant 2, both over 5 months of July-November 2022 (per consultant)

Location: Home-based (with travel anticipated to facilitate 2-day workshop in New York)

Type of Contract: Individual Consultant (x2)

A. BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 2006, the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is the United Nations' financial instrument of first resort to respond to and prevent violent conflict. In response to escalating levels of violent conflict since 2010, the Secretary-General embarked the United Nations on an ambitious reform agenda. He called for greater national leadership, a shift from response to prevention through cross-pillar strategies and a quantum leap of support to the Peacebuilding Fund – to enable United Nations system support to governments and societies dealing with complex conflict risks.

In 2020, contributing directly to the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) 2020-2022 Strategic Plan, the PBF's Strategy for 2020-2024⁴³ ('the Strategy') set out a bold vision to meet increasing demand to invest in peacebuilding through a broad range of partners, including UN entities, governments, national multi-donor trust funds and civil society organizations (CSOs). The Strategy focuses on the PBF's unique comparative advantage as a timely, catalytic and risk-tolerant investor, with increased emphasis on quality assurance and learning, and a balanced approach to scale and focus. With a funding target of \$1.5 billion over the five-year horizon of the Strategy, it is the most ambitious for the PBF yet, designed to ensure the Fund is a core instrument at the heart of the UN's peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts, and a driver of the critical United Nations reform agenda.

The Strategy was adopted in early 2020, shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic started. The pandemic dramatically changed working methods for the PBF and the broader UN system. On the substantive side, the pandemic shifted the political and socio-economic dynamics in many of the PBF programming countries, exacerbating inequalities and underlying social tensions and in many contexts reinforcing authoritarian tendencies and the shrinking of democratic spaces. The PBF attempted to address these changed circumstances by adapting its ways of working to more remote models of delivery and evaluation, and reorienting the approaches in existing projects to address underlying social tensions and the shift in the political landscape holistically.

⁴³ [Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund, 2020 – 2024 Strategy](#)

The Strategy is also the first to be implemented following the 2019 UN Development System reform, which saw the PBF, and PBSO more generally, joining with other Secretariat entities to form the new Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. The reforms also triggered a change in the Resident Coordinator system, which the PBF has been explicitly supporting, as well as a revised approach to country-level UN strategies through the replacement of UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) with UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) that are meant to be underpinned by rolling Country Context Analyses (CCAs). These two changes at the country strategic framework level are in recognition of the need for the UN system to develop policies and frameworks that are more responsive and adaptable to dynamic country environments. Launching in the second year of the reforms, the 2020-2024 PBF Strategy was designed to support these changes and help Resident Coordinators drive timely, politically sensitive conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

B. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

Purpose and Objectives

In the Strategy, the PBF committed to undertake a Mid-Term Review together with stakeholders, to take stock of results achieved so far amid contextual developments and to allow the Fund to make adjustments to its Strategy as needed. In assessing the degree to which the PBF is meeting its intended peacebuilding objectives and results, the Mid-Term Review will provide evidence about whether the current Strategy is suited to enable the PBF to successfully support effective peacebuilding approaches and operational practices, as well as highlight areas where the PBF performed less effectively than anticipated.

Specifically, the Strategy identified three “Priority Windows” to orient the PBF’s work and advance its niche and leverage its comparative advantage. The Strategy assigned specific allocation targets for each priority window (25% to women and youth empowerment, 35% for facilitating transitions, 20% to cross-border and regional approaches).

First, recognizing that the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda remains severely underfunded and only 0.2% of bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts went directly to women’s organizations in 2016-17, priority window one focuses on fostering inclusion through women and youth empowerment. The PBF is one of few existing UN funding vehicles supporting the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). This priority window aims to support the meaningful participation of women, young people, and the most marginalized in peacebuilding and increase the volume of the Fund’s special calls for proposals – the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives (GYPI) - to better meet growing demand.

Second, recognizing that countries undergoing transitions from peace operations tend to experience higher degrees of aid volatility as the main mechanisms and the scale of international support shift, the PBF is focusing its support to facilitating transitions, supporting countries undergoing complex transitions, especially when UN configurations change. The objective of this priority window is to generate momentum for peacebuilding strategies and international support

through close collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and other stakeholders, leading to improved coherence and sequencing of aid instruments.

Third, recognizing that while conflict factors often transcend national boundaries, international aid systems have not sufficiently adjusted to enable adequate responses, the PBF focuses on cross-border or regional work. This priority window aims to extend the PBF's support to cross-border programmes that can help address wider regional trends through multi-country programming and strengthen the UN's strategic cooperation on peacebuilding with regional organizations.

The Strategy period has also seen the reintroduction of country-based strategic frameworks to guide PBF funding in eligible countries. The reintroduction of these frameworks, which builds and improves upon PBF's earlier Peacebuilding Priority Plans (PPPs), responds to recommendations from the 2017–2019 and the 2020 Synthesis Reviews of the PBF, which noted the difficulty of assessing PBF's collective contribution to peacebuilding at country level in the absence of overarching strategic results frameworks. The PBF began rolling out new country-level Strategic Results Frameworks (SRFs) in 2021. Given their role in shaping the PBF's five-year investment strategy in a given country, the design of SRFs is participatory and inclusive and closely aligned with the respective UNSDCF's. This Mid-Term Review should examine the process, utilization, implementation and quality of finalized Strategic Results Frameworks to date (Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, South Sudan, Liberia, Niger, Somalia) with an eye toward recommendations for future improvement.

Objectives of the Mid-Term Review:

- Assess the relevance, appropriateness and early indications of effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy, honing in on the Strategy's priority windows, experimenting with new country-based Strategic Results Frameworks, and peacebuilding partnerships;
- Assess to what extent the PBF has aligned to other country frameworks, including the UNSDCF's, and how well it has supported governments to advance achievement of the SDGs, in particular SDG 16;
- Assess the PBF's efficiency in regard to its institutional arrangements, including its direct funding to CSOs, as well as its management and operational systems and value for money;
- Document good practices, innovations and lessons emerging from the Mid-Term Review;
- Identify potential areas of needed course correction in the implementation of the Strategy and provide actionable recommendations for future programming.

C. SCOPE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

This Mid-Term Review will examine the Strategy’s overall goals, implementation process and underlying assumptions. In that respect, the Mid-Term Review will look at PBF’s performance from 2020 to 2022.

The below guiding questions should inform the main lines of inquiry for the Review.

Suggested Guiding Questions:

- Is the PBF fit for purpose to support the UN development system reform and work within the nexus, alignment to and support of UNSDCFs (via PBF Strategic Results Frameworks)?
- How agile is the PBF in regard to its institutional arrangements as well as its management and operational systems, particularly concerning the funding of cross-border programming, women and youth empowerment and facilitating transitions?
- To what extent did the assumptions for determining priority windows and assigning respective programming targets hold true? Is there a need to course correct because the UN system-wide or broader political landscape has shifted?
- In programming countries, how strong is the commitment of governments and other stakeholders to sustaining the results of PBF support and continuing initiatives supported by PBF funding?
- To what extent did PBF funding complement work by different entities, especially by other UN actors?
- To what extent did PBF funding to civil society actors contribute to the intended peacebuilding results?
- Was PBF funding used to leverage political windows of opportunity for engagement?
- How novel or innovative were PBF approaches? A particular emphasis should be given to drawing lessons for emerging funding demands in innovative finance for peacebuilding approaches, climate security and contexts where political space is shrinking.
- To what extent has PBF funding been used to catalyze other sources of investment for underfunded peacebuilding needs?

D. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The Mid-Term Review will employ a participatory approach whereby discussions with and surveys of key stakeholders will provide and/or verify the substance of the Reviews’ findings. The assignment will consist of three phases:

- An inception phase to generate evidence and questions to frame subsequent discussions with partners. In this phase a desk review of key documentation (including but not limited to project and portfolio evaluations, PBF eligibility requests, and annual strategic reports of the Resident Coordinators) and key informant interviews with stakeholders are envisioned to design the methodology and provide evidence to inform facilitation of the partner consultation in the second phase of work. Four short issue briefs shall also be produced in this phase (see annex for topics of issue briefs).

Methodology for phase one may include: Desk review of key documents, including systematic review of internal assessments and evaluations; systematic review of PBF Eligibility Requests and Annual Strategic Reports of the Resident Coordinators; online surveys, Key Informant Interviews

- Facilitation of a two-day in-person partnership consultation/workshop with key stakeholders of the PBF in late September (date tbd) in New York.
- Drafting of a final report to present the results of the Mid-Term Review, including findings from phase one and conclusions/outcomes of phase two.

E. DELIVERABLES

1. Inception Report: The consultants will prepare an Inception Report to further refine the Review’s guiding questions and detail the methodological approach of the research, including data collection instruments. The Inception Report should also include a Concept Note for the Mid-Term Review two-day workshop, to be prepared in consultation with the PBF. The Inception report must be approved by PBF.
2. Four Issue Briefs (3 to 5 pages, see topics in Annex 1) that outline initial findings and trends from the inception and research phase in the respective thematic areas. These papers will be shared with workshop participants prior to the workshop.
3. Mid-Term Review two-day workshop facilitation: The consultants will be expected to design and facilitate a key partner feedback event. A representative group of key PBF partners (governments, civil society organizations, UN Resident Coordinators, etc.) will be invited. The objective is to gather independent feedback from UN entities, CSOs, donors, and recipient country partners on PBF’s performance according to the guiding questions of the Mid-Term Review. Information collected through this workshop will validate and round out findings identified in the inception phase and be a key input for the drafting of the Mid-Term Review report.
4. Final Mid-Term Review report: The consultants will prepare the final Mid-Term Review report. The first draft of the final report will be shared with the PBF for comments which are expected to be incorporated into the final report. The report should be between 30 to 35 pages (excluding annexes) and include an executive summary and recommendations.

F. TIMEFRAME AND LEVEL OF EFFORT (PER CONSULTANT):

Deliverable	Number of days	Due Date / Date	Associated payment
Inception Report (including suggested Workshop format and methodology)	7 days	25 July, 2022	\$4,900 (per consultant)

Four (4) Background Papers (topics in attached annex)	20 days	15 September, 2022	\$14,000 (per consultant)
Two-day partnership consultation/workshop	5 days (3 days of preparation and 2 days of facilitation)	28 and 29 September, 2022	Travel costs will be covered separately by the PBF. The payment for this milestone will be included in the next installment below.
Draft Report	7 days	31 October 2022	\$8,400 (per consultant)
Final Report	4 days	30 November 2022	\$6,300 (Team Leader/Consultant 1 – see below) \$2,800 (Consultant 2)
Supervision and Quality Assurance	5 days	Ongoing (Team Leader only)	Included in the installment payment above.

The payments to the consultants will be facilitated in a total of four installments as per the table above, upon submission of the respective deliverable and their formal endorsement by the PBF.

G. CONSULTANT PROFILES:

This assignment shall be carried out by a team of 2 independent consultants who are members of the PBF Programme Support Team (PST) roster managed by UNOPS on behalf of the PBF.

Education

- An advanced university degree in social science, international relations, development studies, public administration, or other relevant discipline from a recognized university is required.
- A Bachelor's degree in relevant field with additional two years of relevant experience may be accepted in lieu of an advanced university degree.

Experience

- A minimum of seven years of experience in peacebuilding or related field is required.
- Extensive experience in designing and facilitating multi-stakeholder feedback sessions or consultations is required.
- Extensive international expertise on UN peacebuilding approaches and programming is required.
- Extensive knowledge of PBF modalities, guidance, approaches and projects is required.

Language

- Fluency in both written and spoken English is required.
- Fluency in French and/or Spanish is an asset.

Annex 1: Topics for the Issue Briefs

Topic	Guiding Questions	Sources
Strategic Country Support / SRFs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the lessons learned from the roll out of new country-based Strategic Results Frameworks (Western Balkans, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, South Sudan, Liberia, Niger, Somalia)? • How well have SRF exercises from 2021-2022 aligned with UNSDCFs and DCO policies? What are the barriers or opportunities/entry points? 	Document review and KIIs with people stakeholders involved in the process around the SRFs that have been developed.
Priority window 1: Supporting cross-border and regional approaches	<p>What are lessons learned from the cross-border and regional approaches so far? How effectively has the PBF enabled recipient organizations to extend their presence and pilot new approaches in underserved geographies working holistically across the development-humanitarian peacebuilding nexus? How effectively has the PBF supported the UN’s regional prevention strategies, enabling joint approaches of a range of partners from the UN system, regional and civil society organizations?</p> <p>How effectively has the PBF developed new avenues for civil society organizations to implement programs in areas where UN access and presence is more limited?</p>	Document review and KIIs with stakeholders involved in cross-border projects.

<p>Priority window 2: Facilitating transitions</p>	<p>What are lessons learned from the support to transition contexts so far? Has the PBF been able to effectively respond to the funding gaps, for example, those noted in the 2020 OECD Study “Mission Drawdowns: Financing Sustainable Peace”? How should the PBF best define a “transition” setting? Have PBF resources to transitions resulted in better outcomes on the ground? Is the PBF-funded programming after mission drawdown able to tap into strong conflict and political analysis?</p>	<p>Document review and KIIs with stakeholders involved in projects in transitions contexts.</p>
<p>Priority window 3: Fostering inclusion through women and youth empowerment</p>	<p>What are lessons learned from Priority Window three so far? Has the PBF been overall successful supporting the meaningful participation of women, young people, and the most marginalized in peacebuilding? How effectively has the PBF recalibrated the focus of the GYPI special calls in close consultation with recipient entities to ensure they help address gaps in the WPS and YPS agendas? How effectively has the PBF expanded partnerships with civil society organisations and explored new avenues to make funding available for community-based organisations?.</p>	<p>Document review and KIIs with fund recipients of GYPI</p>

Final Report

Mid-Term Review

UN Secretary-General's
Peacebuilding Fund Strategy 2020-2024

January 2023

Salif Nimaga and Anne Moltès

Disclaimer: The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office commissioned this publication as an independent review. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations, any of its affiliated organizations or their Member States.