

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PEACEBUILDING FUND



SYNTHESIS REVIEW

2017-2019

PBF project
and portfolio
evaluations



United Nations
Peacebuilding

MAY 18th, 2020

Developed by **Anita Ernstorfer**

SYNTHESIS REVIEW

PBF 2017-2019 PROJECT AND PORTFOLIO EVALUATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The author thanks Marc-André Franche, Simona Santoro and Kyle Jacques at the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of the Peacebuilding Support Office for their leadership in commissioning this synthesis report and for their encouragement to ask the challenging and big picture questions. The author also thanks Peter Woodrow for his critical review of the draft synthesis review report and for acting as a sounding board regarding its findings.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Anita Ernstorfer is the Principal and Owner of [Untangle[®]](#) (LLC), and a member of the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund's Program Support Team. She was formerly the Director of the Peacebuilding Effectiveness Practice of CDA Collaborative Learning, and worked as a conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and conflict sensitivity adviser with UNDP and UNICEF in support of country offices and United Nations Country Teams across five continents.

DISCLAIMER

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

ABSTRACT	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION	10
2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE SYNTHESIS REVIEW	11
3. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF THE BODY OF EVIDENCE REVIEWED	12
4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE SYNTHESIS REVIEW	16
4.1 RECURRING FINDINGS FROM PBF EVALUATIONS	16
4.1.1 Key positive achievements	16
4.1.2 PBF contributions in relation to other country level strategies	17
4.1.3 Peacebuilding Relevance and conflict analysis	17
4.1.4 Peacebuilding Effectiveness and Impacts	18
4.1.5 Sustainability and ownership of PBF funded portfolios	21
4.1.6 Context monitoring, conflict sensitivity and adaptive management	23
4.1.7 Strategic management of PBF portfolios	26
4.2 PBF's PARTICULAR NICHE IN PEACEBUILDING FUNDING	28
4.2.1 Timeliness of funding	28
4.2.2 Risk tolerance and innovation	29
4.2.3 The catalytic nature of PBF funding	30
4.2.4 Flexibility and adaptability	32
4.3 HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS PBF's PRIORITY AREAS AND WINDOWS	32
4.3.1 PBF priority areas: peacebuilding as a 'sector' and peacebuilding as an 'approach'	32
4.3.2 Key insights across PBF's priority windows	35
4.4 UN COHERENCE	37
4.5 DESIGN, MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING	40
5. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PBSO/PBF	43
5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF THE PBF	43
5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGN, MONITORING, AND LEARNING	45
6. CONCLUSIONS	48
ANNEX: KEY DOCUMENTS	49

KEY ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DFID	UK Department for International Development
INGO	International Non-governmental organization
IRF	Immediate Response Facility
DM&E	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GYPI	Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (PBF)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NUNO	Recipient Non-UN Organization (of PBF funding)
PBF	UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	UN Peacebuilding Support Office
PPP	Peacebuilding Priority Plan
PDA	Peace and Development Adviser
PRF	Peacebuilding Recovery Facility
RC	UN Resident Coordinator
RUNOs	Recipient UN Organization (of PBF funding)
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN Country Team

The **synthesis review** analyzes portfolio and project evaluations of PBF funded initiatives during 2017-2019. It is a qualitative review of eight portfolio evaluations, forty-six project evaluations, two lessons learned reviews, and three evaluability assessments conducted during this time.

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) occupies a **unique niche** within the UN peacebuilding architecture. The PBF has made significant progress and generated many lessons over the past fifteen years of peacebuilding funding. Those insights are now more consistently documented through the **increased number of mandatory PBF evaluations** since 2018. At the same time, the 2017 – 2019 evaluations revealed many of the same limitations and gaps for greater peacebuilding impact in PBF funded initiatives that were found in previous evaluations and past PBF reviews.

The **quality of evaluations** reviewed varies greatly, which is due to a number of factors, including how they are managed: project evaluations being managed by recipient UN organizations (RUNOs) and recipient non-UN organizations (NUNOs) in a decentralized way at country level, while portfolio evaluations are commissioned and managed by the PBF in New York. This contributes, for example, to the different interpretations of peacebuilding 'Relevance' and 'Effectiveness' across the evaluations. Even when OECD DAC evaluation criteria are used, they are frequently applied more from a general development rather than a peacebuilding perspective.

When started in 2006, the main intention for PBF was to provide catalytic funding to address specific and imminent peacebuilding needs in post-conflict situations. Over the years, the PBF has become a source of long-term funding for peacebuilding, including in contexts with ongoing fragility and polarization, political transitions and protracted crisis, and not only immediate post-conflict situations. The PBF's significant **growth** over the past few years represents a tremendous opportunity for peacebuilding in the UN system. This growth needs to be managed responsibly and must prioritize peacebuilding program quality and depth over breadth in PBF engagements. The PBF should become a role model for peacebuilding quality in the UN system.

The PBF, which remains the only truly UN-wide funding mechanism for peacebuilding initiatives, provides a critical contribution to peacebuilding in many countries through RUNOs and NUNOs, and supports national government efforts. The PBF funded initiatives in most cases align with other country level and national peacebuilding strategies and priorities. Even though PBF contributions are often small compared to other types of funding in larger post-conflict contexts, PBF investments can be quite **strategic** and **catalytic**—also in UN transition settings.

There is no coherent picture on how UN Country Teams (UNCTs) conduct and utilize **joint conflict analyses**. Relevance of PBF initiatives is hard to assess in cases where there is no articulation of the core dynamics of conflict and peace that UNCTs are responding to. As commented on in previous PBF reviews, this is also tied to various and often unclear levels of understanding of the distinctions between programming that is relevant from a development versus from a peacebuilding perspective amongst RUNOs, NUNOs, and national partners.

The PBF has contributed to some solid **peacebuilding achievements** of the UN system across the different portfolios, and has done so in often extremely challenging and volatile contexts.

PBF receives high praise in the evaluations for prioritizing **government ownership**. The PBF puts governments in the driver's seat even in countries with limited government capacities, where few other funders are willing to. This has led to significant contributions to, for instance, rebuilding trust in government through service delivery in post-conflict societies. At the same time, the evaluations that were reviewed positively re-confirm PBF's ongoing ambition to explore **funding local and community-based organizations directly**, which is in line with broader international trends in the wider peacebuilding field.

Strategic Management of PBF contributions both at country and from HQ remains an important challenge. At country level, Joint Steering Committees (JSCs) often face significant limitations to fulfil strategic oversight functions properly. At HQ levels, the evaluations reveal a need for PBF to more consistently insist on the application of more robust program quality principles in funding decisions and in accountability functions.

The PBF has demonstrably led to a greater number of joint UN programs. However, overall **UN coherence** is limited by the absence of a **strategic framework** at UNCT level and the fact that the PPP (Peacebuilding Priority Plan) was abolished without putting in place another strategic framework that would support UNCT strategic planning at portfolio level to work more consistently towards collective impacts at portfolio levels. The new and reinvigorated role of the **UN Resident Coordinators** (RCs) could play a strategic function in this regard. However, RCs would need to be able to count on a strategic framework for PBF investments to strategically support the enhancement of UN collective impacts. Likewise, **role clarity** between different UN actors in complex country configurations is essential to increase coherence.

While many of the output level changes of PBF funded initiatives are clearly articulated, **theories of change** for higher-level outcomes of PBF portfolios are not always clear. Current program design, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms do not enable assessing **collective impacts** at PBF/UNCT portfolio levels. In terms of monitoring for unintended impacts and program flexibility, some PBF funded portfolios have taken important steps to adopt more consistent approaches to **conflict context monitoring, conflict sensitivity and adaptive management**. However, most PBF portfolios remain weak on these important aspects.

The PBF occupies a particular niche in peacebuilding funding and complements other types of peacebuilding funding through specific criteria. PBF is valued for the **timeliness** of its allocations, and PBF funding is frequently available before other sources of funding sources kick-in. UNCTs also respect PBF's **risk-tolerance** and willingness to support **innovation** and new peacebuilding approaches. RUNOs and NUNOs also generally gave high praise to the **flexibility** and **adaptability** of PBF portfolios as compared to other funding sources.

Capacity limitations of RUNOs, NUNOs, and national partners in relation to robust peacebuilding programming remain a challenge. The evaluations reference this both in relation to methodological aspects such as conflict analysis, peacebuilding program design, or conflict sensitivity, as well as regarding the substantive focus of peacebuilding programs. For example, there seems to be more emphasis in PBF funded programs on working with stakeholders who are willing to work with the international community, rather than with groups that are at risk of committing violence or those who might undermine peacebuilding progress. Evaluations also find that PBF funded initiatives should prioritize more the **transformation of relationships** at both individual and socio-political levels.

In summary, the synthesis review provides the following recommendations to PBSO/PBF:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PBF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT:

- ▲ **Provide** clearer criteria for when PBF funding will be approved – and when it will not;
- ▲ **Consider** a review of the duration of PBF funding windows and related DM&E requirements to resolve the tension between 'catalytic' and 'long-term impacts';
- ▲ **Strengthen** strategic planning and oversight of PBF portfolios;
- ▲ **Make** capacity strengthening of UN agencies and national partners a priority;
- ▲ **Continue** the exploration to fund national and local civil society actors directly;
- ▲ **Articulate** PBF's engagement principles more clearly– peacebuilding as an 'approach' and not only as a 'sector'.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PBF'S DESIGN, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING FUNCTION:

- ▲ **Strengthen** DM&E (design, monitoring, evaluation) and Learning capacities of RUNOs, NUNOs (and possibly local NGOs in the future), PBF Secretariats, and within PBF;
- ▲ **Get** serious about results and impact at the portfolio/collective impact level;
- ▲ **Connect** the "D" with the "M&E" and prioritize learning across portfolios;
- ▲ **Strengthen** the focus on conflict sensitivity, ongoing conflict and context monitoring, and adaptive management across PBF portfolios;
- ▲ **Introduce** more flexibility into existing DM&E tools and be open to adaptation and experimentation with new evaluative approaches;
- ▲ **Select** evaluators and facilitators of other evaluative exercises that have a strong peacebuilding and DM&E background.

▶ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 2019, the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) commissioned a **synthesis review of evaluations** of PBF funded projects and portfolios between 2017 and 2019. The purposes of this synthesis review are to distill **examples and patterns of higher-level peacebuilding results**, as well as **recurring lessons and challenges**, analyze insights for **PBF's design, monitoring, and evaluation practice**, and provide conclusions and **recommendations** from the evaluations for the implementation of the [Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund 2020-2024 Strategy](#), which was finalized in March 2020. The synthesis review is based on qualitative analysis of eight portfolio evaluations, forty-six project evaluations, two lessons learned reviews, and three evaluability assessments conducted during 2017 and 2019, complemented by select project documents, including conflict analyses.

The synthesis review was commissioned at a **strategic moment** for the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and PBF: PBF has been funding peacebuilding initiatives now for fifteen years, since 2006. Even though there are other global joint UN programs on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, such as the DPPA-UNDP Joint Program on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, which deploys Peace and Development Advisers, the PBF remains the only truly UN-wide funding mechanism for peacebuilding initiatives. Between 2017 and 2019, the PBF approved over US\$ 531 million in peacebuilding initiatives in fifty-one countries, more than doubling the US\$ 218 million in the previous three-year cycle. Since May 2018, PBF has required independent evaluations for all PBF funded projects, as well as portfolio evaluations every five years.

This is also a critical time to look at peacebuilding within the UN system more broadly. The 2016 twin resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (General Assembly and the Security Council in resolutions A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282) have asked all UN agencies to articulate their role and contributions to peacebuilding more clearly, and to prioritize collective action across the UN system. The 2020 **Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture** represents an additional critical moment for the PBF right now to articulate how it mobilizes and supports the UN system to contribute to peacebuilding more effectively and collectively.




The PBF has made much progress and generated many lessons over the past fifteen years of peacebuilding funding, and those learnings are now more consistently documented through the increased number of mandatory PBF evaluations. At the same time, the 2017 – 2019 evaluations revealed many of the same limitations and gaps for greater peacebuilding impact in PBF funded initiatives that were found **in previous evaluations and past PBF reviews**. Hence, putting this synthesis review in the larger context of past review findings, there is an overarching question regarding how to enhance long-term **peacebuilding capacities across the UN system** as well as how to stimulate **organizational learning** and sustainable uptake of past lessons.

The synthesis review uses the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria for peacebuilding activities in settings of conflict and fragility as quality criteria for review. The evaluations reviewed applied OECD/DAC criteria to varying degrees, and the quality of evaluations varied greatly. 'Effectiveness' is interpreted differently across the evaluations, sometimes more as general development effectiveness rather than peacebuilding effectiveness, which requires engaging drivers of conflict and peace as identified in a conflict analysis. Qualitative and aggregate data at portfolio levels was not readily available, which makes evaluating results and impacts at PBF portfolios levels difficult. The uneven quality and focus across the different evaluations is also due to how they are designed and managed: project evaluations are managed by recipient UN organizations (RUNOs) and recipient non-UN organizations (NUNOs) in a decentralized way at country level, while portfolio evaluations are commissioned and managed by the PBF in New York.

When started in 2006, the main intention for PBF was to provide catalytic funding to address specific and imminent peacebuilding needs in post-conflict situations. Over the years, in many contexts, the PBF has become a source of **long-term funding** for peacebuilding, including in contexts with ongoing fragility and polarization, political transitions and protracted crisis, and not only immediate post-conflict situations.

The PBF provides a **critical UN contribution** to peacebuilding in many countries through RUNOs and NUNOs, and in support of national government efforts. Against the background of the sustaining peace agenda, the PBF remains a critical vehicle in the UN system for providing resources **across the UN family** to increase the footprint of all UN agencies in peacebuilding, as stipulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



RECURRING FINDINGS FROM PBF EVALUATIONS:

-  **Alignment with other country level strategies.** Most of the evaluations highlight that PBF funded initiatives in most cases align with other country level and national peacebuilding strategies and priorities to achieve greater impact. Even though providing often small amounts of funding, especially in larger post-conflict contexts, PBF funding can be quite strategic and catalytic—and what is strategic for PBF needs to be understood in context. For example, in larger portfolios, PBF might fund specific initiatives not covered by others, or support critical peacebuilding gaps in overall portfolios.
-  **Peacebuilding Relevance and conflict analysis.** The evaluations reveal that there is no coherent picture on how UNCTs conduct or use joint conflict analyses. Relevance is hard to assess in cases where there is no articulation of the core dynamics of conflict and peace that UNCTs are responding to through PBF funding. As commented on in previous PBF reviews, this is also tied to a mixed picture across different contexts and UN agencies related to people's uncertain understanding of the distinctions between programming that is relevant from a development versus from a peacebuilding perspective.
-  **Peacebuilding Effectiveness and Impacts.** The PBF has contributed to some solid peacebuilding achievements of the UN system across the different portfolios, and has done so in often extremely challenging and volatile contexts. There seems to be more emphasis in PBF funded programs on **'doing good'** versus **'stopping the bad.'** This often involves working with stakeholders who are willing to work with the international community, rather than with groups that are at risk of committing violence or with possible 'spoilers' who can undermine peacebuilding progress. Evaluations also find that PBF funded initiatives should prioritize more the **transformation of relationships** at both individual and socio-political levels for greater peacebuilding effectiveness.
-  While many of the output level changes of PBF funded initiatives are clearly articulated, **theories of change for higher-level outcomes of PBF programs and portfolios are not always clear.** Current programming and design, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms do not enable assessing **collective impacts at portfolio levels.** Some of the evaluations applied different approaches to understanding 'contributions' to peacebuilding impacts, while recognizing that PBF's short timeframes are not conducive to contributing to longer-term impacts.
-  **Sustainability and ownership of PBF funded portfolios.** The PBF gets high praise in the evaluations for prioritizing government ownership. The PBF puts governments in the driver's seat even in countries with limited government capacities, where few other funders are willing to. This has led to significant contributions to, for instance, rebuilding trust in government through service delivery in post-conflict societies. Related to engaging governments, the evaluations reveal that PBF



PBF funded portfolios should a) prioritize more the use of **country systems and budgets** to ensure that PBF projects can be sustained; b) invest time to develop a **shared vision** with national government counterparts on what PBF should achieve; and c) carry out appropriate **multi-stakeholder processes** to generate **real buy-in and ownership**.

-  **Fund community organizations and local civil society directly.** Some evaluations make a strong case for PBF to consider **funding national and local civil society** organizations directly. Evidence from practice reveals that many local non-governmental actors have more direct and trusted access to critical locations and communities, and represent more of an ongoing presence in country, as compared to international actors. This change in funding rules would also align with current peacebuilding policy debates about 'localization' and shifting power to national and local actors. PBF's recently published 2020-2024 Strategy prioritizes the further exploration of funding community-based organizations directly.
-  **Context Monitoring, Conflict Sensitivity, and Adaptive Management.** While some PBF funded portfolios have taken important steps to adopt such practices, most PBF portfolios and evaluations are weak on these important dimensions. There is no consistent application of conflict-sensitivity at strategy and project levels, few explicit references to ongoing conflict analysis and context monitoring, or adaptive programming. At the same time, the evaluations do reveal unintended negative impacts resulting from PBF funded portfolios. So far, PBF evaluations have not prioritized assessing these areas systematically.
-  **Strategic Management of PBF contributions.** Providing strategic oversight over a complex portfolio of programs is one of the key challenges related to PBF investments. At country level, Joint Steering Committees (JSCs) often face significant limitations to fulfil strategic oversight and accountability functions properly. Some contexts have tried creative solutions to work around this, or the evaluations provide ideas on how to do so, such as possibly adding technical support and convening functions to JSCs. Ensuring role clarity especially in contexts with multiple UN actors involved (UNCT, PBF, PBSO, PBC, peacekeeping missions or political offices) seems critical to ensure **oversight and accountability**.
-  The evaluations reveal a need for **stronger guidance and principles from PBF** to ensure relevant and strategic peacebuilding programming and to steer PBF portfolios more directly. In line with findings from earlier evaluations and PBF reviews, the evaluations also recognize that, in order for PBF portfolios to be strategic, funds should be allocated more openly and transparently based on a clearer assessment of the actual track record of RUNOS and NUNOs in designing and implementing peacebuilding programs. This approach, combined with careful and creative management of related relationships with government counterparts, will be required to avoid a 'divide-the-pie' approach at UNCT levels.

PBF complements other types of peacebuilding funding through a range of specific PBF criteria as laid out in PBF's Strategic Plan 2017-19 and Guidelines.




-  **Timeliness of funding.** PBF is appreciated for the timeliness of its allocations, and PBF funding is frequently available before other types of funding sources kick in. For short-term allocations, sometimes PBF's procedures are considered too cumbersome. PBSO/PBF in New York and country level do not always share the same understanding on how long certain steps and processes take. Some evaluations encouraged PBF to be more agile to not only approve funding swiftly, but also respond more quickly to political windows of opportunity in country.
-  **Risk-tolerance and innovation.** PBF is highly appreciated for its risk-tolerance and willingness to

support innovative peacebuilding approaches. Highlights in this regard include, for example, PBF support to weak and transitional governments, which is considered risky by many other donors, or supporting politically sensitive agendas. Some innovations were less successful. For example, placing the PBF Secretariat in Liberia within a host government ministry was a good idea in principle, but led to competing interests and overlapping accountabilities. At the same time PBF is encouraged to continue innovating, as failures are important learning opportunities.

-  **Catalytic nature of PBF funding.** The evaluations provide a mixed picture on how catalytic PBF funding has been, both in generating buy-in for additional peacebuilding programming, and in leveraging additional funding. The collective strength of leveraging key donor relationships and contacts could be used more strategically between New York and country level, including using the wider UN peacebuilding architecture more coherently and consistently for that purpose. Furthermore, there is apparent tension between 'catalytic' peacebuilding engagement and longer-term results and impacts – a creative tension PBF should try to address and resolve going forward.
-  **Flexibility and adaptability.** PBF investments are highly valued for their flexibility and adaptability as compared to other funding sources. Some evaluations note potential divergences between PBF's flexible approach to adapt quickly on the one hand and implementing solid peacebuilding programming on the other. Some PBF portfolios have embraced this proactively. An example is Kyrgyzstan, which has adopted a PBF Learning and Adaptation Strategy.

Across **PBF's priority areas**, the evaluations highlight the overarching insight that **how** PBF funded peacebuilding programs are implemented is as important as **what** is done. In other words, **peacebuilding as an approach** is as important as **peacebuilding as a sector**. While this is not a new lesson in peacebuilding practice, it comes out strongly across the different evaluations. This includes the importance of a continued focus on government ownership (as challenging as that might be in some post-conflict settings); real community inclusion and participation beyond formalistic ways of engagement; close accompaniment of national and local partners; critical process support to the implementation of peace agreements and political dialogue; support to national infrastructures for conflict prevention; and putting peacebuilding on the public policy agenda.

PBF's priority windows represent important areas of innovation and opportunities for deepening existing experiences going forward.

-  **Cross-border peacebuilding work** has the potential to address critical conflict dynamics that cut across communities and borders, if based on strong joint analysis and planning and clearly articulated peacebuilding theories of change. PBF's 2020-2024 Strategy prioritizes cross-border work, also in support of UN regional conflict prevention approaches.
-  **The PBF's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI)** funding window represents an important area of learning, as a significant amount of work is funded in this area, and it is the only funding window that can currently be accessed by NUNOs directly. In order to increase peacebuilding relevance and effectiveness in this window, a few key issues emerge from the evaluations: a clearer articulation of GYPI links to peace and conflict dynamics to understand the relevance from a peacebuilding perspective; enhancing the socio-political impact of GYPI initiatives; and putting stronger emphasis on the 'hard to reach' and possible perpetrators of exclusion or violence.
-  **Facilitating transitions between different UN configurations.** The evaluations under review did not provide a lot of information on this question although the PBF's role in this area has been growing steadily. In 2019, 30 per cent of the Fund's investments were in transition settings, totaling \$57.8

million. Limited insights available from the 2017-2019 evaluations suggest that PBF has not played a big role in this sphere, but has provided important contributions to keeping peacebuilding on the agenda during a time of transition.

UN Coherence. PBF has demonstrably led to a greater number of joint UN projects and programs. However, the absence of a **strategic framework at UNCT level** and the fact that the PPP (Peacebuilding Priority Plan) was abolished without putting in place another process that would support UNCT strategic planning at portfolio level, represent critical gaps in this regard. The new and reinvigorated role of the **UN Resident Coordinators** (RCs) could play a strategic function in this regard. However, RCs would need to be able to count on a strategic framework for PBF investments to strategically support the enhancement of UN collective impacts. Likewise, **role clarity** between different UN actors in complex country configurations is essential to increase coherence, as well as **funding coherence**, including a clearer articulation of PBF's particular niche and role in relation to other funding sources and donors.

Increased clarity from PBF on **monitoring**, and **evaluation** requirements and related support has been appreciated over recent years. At the same time, many monitoring and evaluation frameworks at UNCT level overpromise and are not sufficiently realistic on what it takes to contribute to certain socio-political changes. Systematic design for and monitoring and evaluation of portfolio level results and impacts are a major gap.

The synthesis review provides two sets of recommendations to PBSO/PBF:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PBF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT:

- 1) Provide clearer criteria for when PBF funding will be approved – and when it will not.** PBF should become a UN 'role model' to champion excellent peacebuilding programming. This will also require engaging in a more systematic assessment of capacities and prior peacebuilding experience of RUNOs and NUNOs in making funding decisions. The PBF project assessment scorecard (PAC) developed in 2019 is one emerging step in that direction.
- 2) Consider a review of the duration of PBF funding windows and related DM&E requirements** and resolve the tension between the ambition to be '**catalytic**' on the one hand, and contributing to **long-term 'impacts'** on the other. **This could lead to two really distinct funding windows** in order to be clear, from the onset, whether an initiative is catalytic and short-term, or planned as a longer-term engagement – beyond the current IRF and PRF modalities.
- 3) Strengthen strategic planning and oversight of PBF portfolios at country and PBF levels**, including thinking through the roles of different actors depending on country context. The report summarizes some initial ideas on what this could entail.
- 4) Make capacity strengthening of UN agencies and national partners a priority.** This is a recurring theme in many evaluations and past PBF reviews. PBF could use a certain percentage of country-based funding to develop a clear capacity development plan for RUNOs, NUNOs, and national partners.
- 5) Continue and expand the emerging exploration to consider funding national and local civil society and community organizations** directly.
- 6) Articulate PBF's engagement principles more clearly**, as guidance for RUNOs, NUNOs, and national partners – peacebuilding as an approach and not only as a sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGN, MONITORING, EVALUATION (DM&E) AND LEARNING:

- 1) **Strengthen DM&E and Learning capacities** of RUNOs and NUNOs (and possibly local NGOs in the future), PBF Secretariats, and within PBF in New York.
- 2) **Get serious about results and impact at the portfolio level.** This requires having a strategic framework in place for portfolio level planning and relevant DM&E tools for doing it (references exist in the wider peacebuilding field). This would represent an important source of peacebuilding innovation on behalf of the PBF and a wider contribution to the peacebuilding field.
- 3) **Connect the “D” with the “M&E” and prioritize learning.** Program design support, and monitoring and evaluation functions at PBF are currently disconnected. Greater alignment would lead to enhanced consistency in guidance provided from New York to UNCTs. Facilitating **“learning”** across PBF portfolios should be a greater priority.
- 4) Strengthen the focus on **conflict sensitivity, ongoing conflict and context monitoring, and adaptive management** across PBF portfolios.
- 5) **Introduce more flexibility into existing DM&E tools** and be open to adaptation and experimenting with new approaches. Evaluation is important, but not always the answer, when UNCTs might have different needs, such as around accompaniment, capacity development, more informal strategic reflection, or learning.
- 6) Select **evaluators** and facilitators of other evaluative processes that have a **strong peacebuilding AND DM&E background and streamline terms of reference (ToRs)** for PBF evaluative processes to enhance comparability of findings for learning purposes.

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) was established in 2006, through General Assembly Resolution A/60/180 and Security Council Resolution S/RES/1645. The PBF is a country-focused, globally-pooled fund that provides "timely, risk-tolerant, and flexible" funding to peacebuilding initiatives, before, during and after conflicts. The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) is responsible for the overall management of the PBF under the authority of the Secretary-General. The Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) is the PBF's fiduciary agent.

Between 2017 and 2019, PBF approved over \$531 million in peacebuilding initiatives in fifty-one countries, surpassing its [2017-2019 Strategic Plan](#)⁶ target to approve US\$500 million in forty countries, and more than doubling the US\$218 million approved in the previous three-year cycle.

The PBF allocates money through two funding facilities, the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) and the Peacebuilding Recovery Facility (PRF). Both facilities fund initiatives that respond to one or more of the following four PBF **priority areas**, as outlined in its ToR:

- i. Support for the implementation of peace agreements and political dialogue;*
- ii. Support for strengthening national capacities to promote coexistence and peaceful resolution of conflict;*
- iii. Support to efforts to revitalize the economy and generate immediate peace dividends for the population at large;*
- iv. Establishment or re-establishment of essential administrative services and related human and technical capacities.*

In addition to these Priority Areas, the 2017-2019 Strategic Plan further outlines three **priority windows** to further leverage the PBF's unique added value:

- 1. Cross-border and regional investments to help tackle transnational drivers of conflict;*

- 2. Facilitating transitions between different UN configurations;*

- 3. Youth and women's empowerment to foster inclusion and gender equality*

Since May 2018, and as per the [Guidelines](#)⁶, PBF requires independent evaluations for all projects, as well as portfolio evaluations every five years. The requirement for independent evaluations of all projects has considerably expanded the number of evaluations carried out. Countries seeking PBF eligibility renewal must integrate lessons and recommendations from portfolio reviews.

In light of this significantly expanded program portfolio, a growing body of evidence on the effectiveness and impact of PBF funded projects, as well as the upcoming conclusion of the 2017-19 Strategic Plan, the Monitoring and Evaluation unit in PBSO engaged Anita Ernstorfer from PBF's Program Support Team to conduct a synthesis review of PBF evaluations carried out during the 2017-19 Strategic Plan period. The focal points at PBF who managed the synthesis review were Simona Santoro and Kyle Jacques.

Prior to this review, a similar meta-level review of PBF evaluations was conducted in 2013 by Mariska van Beijnum from the Clingendael Institute⁷ (and also current PBF Chair of the Advisory Group of Experts). The focus of the 2013 review was based on nine portfolio level evaluations conducted between 2010 and 2012. This synthesis review will refer to findings from that previous review of evaluations, where useful. Other and broader types of PBF reviews have also taken place, such as the repeated reviews commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (the most recent one from 2018/2019) and a 2014 overall PBF review by Klyskens and Clark. Findings from those assessments will also be referenced where useful for the purpose of this review.

1. This review can be accessed [here](#).

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE SYNTHESIS REVIEW

The purposes of this synthesis review are as follows:

- ▲ Distill examples and patterns of higher-level peacebuilding results, as well as recurring lessons and challenges emerging from the evaluations, across the examined PBF portfolios;
- ▲ Analyze insights for PBF's program design, monitoring, and evaluation practice, in support of country-level peacebuilding initiatives, resulting from the evaluations; and
- ▲ Capture additional relevant insights from the evaluations for the implementation of the Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund 2020-24 Strategy, finalized in March 2020 (during the writing of this synthesis review).

The synthesis review examines the evaluative exercises conducted in the context of the 2017-19 Strategic Plan, including portfolio evaluations, project evaluations and other relevant documents, such as evaluability assessments, lessons learned and thematic papers. For select projects and portfolios, the reviewer consulted additional documents, such as conflict analyses or project level documentation to triangulate and validate findings highlighted in the evaluations and evaluative documents.

UNIT OF ANALYSIS

This synthesis review is based on a desk review of key PBF documents, including:

- a. Portfolio-level and project-level final evaluations of PBF funded projects between 2017-2019;
- b. PBF strategic documents including 2017-19 Strategic Plan and PBF Guidelines;
- c. Existing reviews of PBF performance (2018/2019 DFID Annual Review, 2013 Clingendael review of PBF evaluations done by Mariska van Beijnum, 2014 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Fund by Klyskens and Clark);

- d. Select additional project-related documents, such as conflict analyses, project proposals, and progress reports for select projects and portfolios.

More specifically, the following evaluations and evaluative documents constitute the core body of evidence for the synthesis review, all conducted between 2017 and 2019:

- ▲ Eight portfolio evaluations: Guinea (2017), Kyrgyzstan (2017), Liberia (2017), Papua New Guinea (2018), Central African Republic (2019), Somalia (2019), Mali (2019), Côte d'Ivoire (2019);
- ▲ Forty-six project level evaluations;
- ▲ Two Lessons Learned Reviews: Sri Lanka (2018) and Guinea (2017, on gender promotion);
- ▲ Three Evaluability Assessments of PBF Priority Plan: Côte d'Ivoire (2017), Madagascar (2018), The Gambia (2019).

All of these documents are available on the PBF [website](#)⁵

3. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF THE BODY OF EVIDENCE REVIEWED

PEACEBUILDING QUALITY PROGRAMMING: APPLICATION OF OECD/DAC EVALUATION CRITERIA

This synthesis review applies the 2012 OECD/DAC criteria “Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility – Improving Learning for Results”² as overarching guiding principles on how to understand **Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, Coherence,** and **Sustainability,**³ and **Conflict Sensitivity** in peacebuilding - and how to design for peacebuilding results, including theories of change. At the same time, the synthesis review also accounts for the fact that different evaluations were conducted according to different principles and different approaches in defining ‘peacebuilding’ and how to assess peacebuilding results. It examines what these different approaches and levels of understanding mean for the comparability of findings. This also includes to what extent conflict analysis was done as the foundation for PBF engagement, and how conflict analysis was used to inform programming.

As evaluative criteria were used in different ways throughout the different evaluations reviewed, the text box below summarizes the definition of key evaluation criteria from a peacebuilding perspective as per the above mentioned 2012 OECD/DAC evaluation criteria.

Key peacebuilding evaluation criteria used to guide the synthesis review

✓ **RELEVANCE:** Does the intervention relate in a meaningful way to key driving factors of the conflict and/or peace factors as identified in the conflict analysis? Are the assumptions on which the activity is based sensible in this context at this time? Are outputs consistent with the objectives of reducing or preventing conflict?

✓ **EFFECTIVENESS:** The synthesis review approached Effectiveness from two perspectives - assessing effectiveness of projects and programs versus assessing changes in context: Project/Program Effectiveness assesses whether a specific project/program is achieving its intended objectives in an effective manner. Peace Effectiveness⁴ asks whether, in meeting specific objectives, projects/programs are having a positive effect on the context by reducing key driving factors of conflict. In order to explore effectiveness on those two levels, it is important to ask a few key questions: To what extent were the project/program objectives achieved? How were they achieved? How was the overall project/program strategy designed? What factors contributed to achievements? Did individual level change translate into socio-political change, and at what level (national, local, etc.)? Were key decision-makers involved alongside the broader public?

✓ **SUSTAINABILITY:** Will peacebuilding benefits be maintained after donor support has ended? Has the intervention addressed the role of “spoilers” (those who benefit from on-going violence) or attempted to engage the “hard-to-reach” (combatants, extremists, etc.)? Do national and local partners and stakeholders have ownership of the activity or program, where possible? Have durable, long-term processes, structures and institutions for peacebuilding been created? Or at least, have there been observable sustained changes in individual or group behaviors, and attitudes?

✓ **COHERENCE:** How does the activity relate to other policy instruments and processes,

2. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/evaluatingconflictpreventionandpeacebuilding.htm>

3. The standard OECD DAC evaluation criteria will be capitalized in this report when applied as such.

4. For more background on these distinctions, please see Ernstorfer/Jean/ Woodrow (2016): *Thinking Evaluatively in Peacebuilding Design, Implementation and Monitoring.*

such as national development or peace and security priorities? How are different UN agencies as well as involved non-UN partners working together, beyond coordination and towards real programmatic synergies? Are different efforts competing, duplicating or undermining each other?

✓ **CONFLICT-SENSITIVITY:** Is there an ongoing system of context monitoring? How does the project or portfolio analyze, prevent and mitigate unintended negative impacts on the contexts and the communities in which it is implemented? What approaches are used for this purpose (e.g., Do No Harm)? How are positive contributions to peace being recognized and maximized?

✓ **IMPACT:⁵** which longer-term socio-political change did the initiative contribute to? How? What were the positive and negative changes produced, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended? How did the intervention impact key conflict actors or affect ongoing conflict-creating or peace-promoting factors?

In addition to the criteria listed above, **specific criteria for PBF** regarding its particular niche and role in peacebuilding funding and aligning with its own definition, mandate, and goals are further outlined in this report, including **timeliness of funding, risk-tolerance and innovation, catalytic nature of PBF funding, and adaptability and flexibility.**

Efficiency, management and coordination: Findings in the evaluations in relation to efficiency, management and coordination are highlighted where they affect the focus areas of this review, in most cases related to strategic management of PBF contributions. Coordination issues are discussed mainly in relation to UN coherence and its impact on peacebuilding effectiveness.

5. 'Impact' is not a PBF evaluation criterion in project evaluations, but only portfolio evaluations. In portfolio evaluations, contributions (of PBF funded portfolios) towards longer-term impacts are assessed, while 'attribution' is not possible to assess.

However, this synthesis review does not focus on the more technical aspects of project management efficiency or more procedural PBF coordination questions. It also does not address financial efficiency, as in most cases this information was not an element of the reviewed county level evaluations.

IMPORTANT QUALIFIER: Even though this report applies the above criteria and approach, the findings of this synthesis review ultimately depend on how the individual evaluations assessed those criteria. This point is pursued further below in the analysis of the body of evidence reviewed.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH OF THE SYNTHESIS REVIEW

The synthesis review applied a qualitative analysis approach to distill patterns that emerged across the different evaluations in line with the focus areas outlined in the ToR and the inception report for this assignment. The patterns examined included the following: a) statements and findings that occur more than once in relation to the focus areas of this synthesis review; b) a qualitative analysis of those statements and their meaning in relation to the focus areas of the review; c) conflicting accounts of events or processes; and d) gaps emerging from the document review. A comparative assessment of the collected data and patterns was conducted, including gaps in data and evidence. Conflicting patterns that emerged were weighed against their relevance and meaning.

ANALYSIS OF THE BODY OF EVIDENCE REVIEWED

There is no consistent approach on how to design for, monitor and evaluate 'Relevance', 'Effectiveness', 'Impacts', or 'theories of change' across the various PBF portfolios or their respective evaluations.

Project evaluations are managed by recipient UN organizations (RUNOs) and recipient non-UN organizations (NUNOs) in a decentralized way at country level, while portfolio evaluations are commissioned and managed by the PBF in New York.

During the period of review, there were no standard ToRs for either project or portfolio level evaluations. PBF is currently trying to change this by producing new guidance for PBF evaluations (to be published in 2020).

At the same time, many of the evaluations conducted by different teams did follow at least some similar evaluation criteria, as most of them used the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, that is: Effectiveness, Relevance, Sustainability, Efficiency, and Impact, as outlined above. Some applied the specific 2012 OECD DAC guidance on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Many evaluations added a criterion on gender, in line with PBF's priority window on gender and promoting women's participation in peacebuilding. However, interpretations of, for instance, 'Effectiveness' and 'Relevance from a peacebuilding perspective' vary greatly across the evaluations. Hence, this synthesis review summarizes and analyzes how the evaluations assessed those criteria.

The key higher-level patterns that emerge across the different evaluations reviewed include the following:

▲ Some evaluations are more relevant than others. In light of the fact that peacebuilding evaluation criteria were applied unevenly across the evaluations and the quality of evaluations varied significantly, some evaluations were more relevant for the purposes of this synthesis review than others.

▲ Project and portfolio evaluations. While some project and program evaluations provide useful insights of broader relevance for this synthesis review, others are quite technical and focus on project-specific details that are important for the specific country context, but of more limited relevance for this global synthesis review. This is also the reason why the majority of quotes that are used throughout this document to illustrate certain points are mainly— though not exclusively—from the portfolio evaluations. Portfolio and PPP (Peacebuilding Priority Plan) evaluations

across the board were helpful for gathering findings in relation to the broader insights PBF is trying to identify through this review. However, many of the portfolio evaluations also depended to a certain extent on reviewing existing project evaluations, so their findings were also influenced, to some degree, by the quality of available project evaluations.

▲ Evaluability and analysis, design, monitoring and evaluation systems. Some PBF portfolios have elaborate conflict analysis, design, monitoring and evaluation systems in place, both at the individual UN agency level and at the PBF portfolio level supported by PBF Secretariats. Others are only emerging. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, the PBF DM&E (Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation) system was only put in place in a more systematic way by the PBF Secretariat right before the portfolio evaluation was conducted. Hence, the portfolio evaluation was not based on existing data available through a portfolio wide M&E system. The strength of these systems and available data has an impact on the strength of the evaluations, and the evaluability of PBF investments in the first place.



Evaluability is the extent to which a project or program can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion. Evaluability assessments usually analyze three key program dimensions: (i) strength of program design; (ii) availability of data and information; and (iii) conduciveness of the context for an evaluation.

“The evaluation team would like to express concerns about the evaluability of this project due to the absence of a baseline, the poor quality of the results framework, and the lack of documentation around the approval of several revisions of the results framework. Particularly the absence of a baseline means that the reliability of the conclusions of this evaluation is compromised.”

CAR COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROJECT EVALUATION, 2017, P. 3

Most evaluations are based on strong qualitative data (document review, interviews). Few also benefit from solid quantitative data, a frequent challenge in peacebuilding initiatives. In relation to the evaluations reviewed quantitative data was further limited because of weak DM&E systems underpinning the PBF funded portfolios and projects.

projects that were planned individually over the years. As a result, the portfolios were not necessarily developed under one coherent, long-term framework, which makes it challenging to assess portfolio level results and impacts. Therefore, some of the portfolio evaluations (such as Mali, CAR, and Liberia) took a 'sample approach' and picked one or two projects for a closer examination to draw conclusions on overall impact of the portfolios.⁶

⚠ Different interpretations of 'Effectiveness'. As mentioned above, how peacebuilding effectiveness was interpreted by different evaluation teams varied across the board. Evaluation results and quality were observably different, depending on whether the evaluators a) had mainly a technical DM&E background with limited experience in peacebuilding; b) whether the evaluators and/or teams had experience with evaluations in development cooperation broadly speaking; or c) whether they had broad expertise in peacebuilding and/or experience with the specifics of peacebuilding evaluation. These factors determined how the evaluation criteria were interpreted and applied. For example, let's consider 'relevance': In peacebuilding, a key way to assess Relevance is to examine whether and how an initiative has addressed the key drivers of conflict or peace, as identified in a conflict analysis. However, some of the evaluations assessed Relevance from a broader perspective of overall development needs in the country, under the questionable theory of change that any/all development leads to peace. Only few evaluations assessed relevance from a review of how PBF funded portfolios address key drivers of conflict in a systematic way.

⚠ Inconsistent understanding of levels of change. There was no consistent approach across the evaluations regarding the levels of socio-political change that were assessed. The majority of project level evaluations focused on evaluating 'project/program effectiveness,' but did not ask the higher-level question of how specific initiatives made a contribution to wider changes in context, whether positive or negative. Some of the portfolio evaluations did ask those questions, but findings in relation to evaluating 'peace effectiveness' were limited by the available data and context monitoring systems of PBF portfolios.

⚠ The timing of evaluations of PBF funded portfolios. Most portfolio evaluations were conducted as 'summative evaluations,' yet reviewed a combination of finished and ongoing projects. This raised questions regarding how especially Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability were to be understood. In evaluating ongoing projects under a portfolio, it is challenging to assess results, much less impact. Evaluating closed projects has the added challenge that many staff and some partners and program participants have moved on, making it harder to get qualitative information through interviews.

⚠ The difficulty of finding aggregate data at portfolio levels. Many of the portfolio evaluations struggled with finding useful aggregated information and data at PBF portfolio levels. Frequently, PBF portfolios evolved through a range of shorter-term

6. For example, the Liberia portfolio evaluation (2017) used a "maximum-variation sampling strategy" to draw a sample of locations representative of Liberia's diverse operating contexts. This approach ensured a mix of urban and rural, wealthy and poor, conflict-affected and historically marginalized, and ethnically diverse locations.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE SYNTHESIS REVIEW

4.1 RECURRING FINDINGS FROM PBF EVALUATIONS

The PBF has been in operation since 2006. It was originally started to provide catalytic funding to address specific and imminent peacebuilding needs in post-conflict situations. Over the years, in many contexts, PBF has become a source of long-term funding for peacebuilding, including in contexts with ongoing fragility and polarization, political transitions and protracted crisis, and not only immediate post-conflict situations. PBF funding often includes multiple rounds of IRF (Immediate Response Facility) and PRF (Peacebuilding Recovery Facility) funding. Often, these multiple funding windows evolved organically over time, from funding pilot activities into longer-term project. However, in many countries, the transition from short-term, urgent efforts to long-term initiatives came about without a solid long-term strategy for peacebuilding in the given context. Much of the thinking behind PBF funded projects and programs amongst UN agencies has been project based and focused only on the duration of the specific project or program. At the same time, portfolio evaluations have tried to assess results and impact at PBF portfolio levels, while an overall portfolio strategy and system to design and track higher-level collective results on an ongoing basis has often been lacking.

This section summarizes key findings across the reviewed evaluations and evaluative documents. It starts with a summary overview (4.1.1) of key positive achievements and unique contributions across PBF funded initiatives that were highlighted across the evaluations during the period under review. This will be followed by a closer examination of specific elements that emerged in relation key PBF funding dimensions, including insights and recommendations for how PBF can improve.

4.1.1 KEY POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

The PBF provides a **critical UN contribution** to peacebuilding in many countries through RUNOs, NUNOs, in support of national government efforts.

Against the background of the UN sustaining peace agenda, the PBF is a critical vehicle in the UN system for providing resources **across the UN family** to increase the footprint of all UN agencies in peacebuilding, as stipulated in the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Agenda.

PBF funded initiatives, in most cases, are **strategically aligned** with other country level and/or national peacebuilding strategies and priorities, and complement other activities through specific contributions. In this regard, PBF has provided **critical contributions across different peacebuilding sectors**, and PBF's priority funding areas and windows. PBF is highly appreciated across the evaluations for prioritizing government ownership and putting governments in the driver's seat through Joint Steering Committees. This stance was maintained even in countries with limited government capacities and in contexts where other funders might be reluctant to do so.

The PBF occupies a particular **niche** in peacebuilding funding and complements other types of peacebuilding funding through specific criteria. The PBF is valued for the **timeliness** of its allocations, and PBF funding is frequently available before other sources of funding sources kick-in. UNCTs also respect PBF's **risk-tolerance** and willingness to support **innovation** and new peacebuilding approaches. RUNOs and NUNOs also generally gave high praise to the **flexibility** and **adaptability** of PBF portfolios as compared to other funding sources.

A key lesson emerging across the evaluations is that how PBF funded peacebuilding programs are implemented is as important as what is being done. This reinforces a key lesson in the peacebuilding field more widely and speaks to looking at peacebuilding as a programmatic and technical sector on the one hand, and peacebuilding as an approach on the other. Key elements that emerge in this regard, throughout PBF evaluations, are the importance of a continued focus on government ownership (as challenging as that might be in some post-conflict settings); real community inclusion and participation beyond formalistic ways of

engagement; close accompaniment of national and local partners; critical process support to the implementation of peace agreements and political dialogue; support to national infrastructures for conflict prevention; and putting peacebuilding on the public policy agenda.

PBF's priority windows represent important areas of innovation and opportunities for deepening existing experiences going forward:

↕ Cross-border peacebuilding work has the potential to address critical conflict dynamics that cut across communities and borders. In the new 2020-2024 Strategy cross-border peacebuilding work is highlighted as a priority and niche, also in support of the UN's regional conflict prevention strategies;

♀♂ PBF's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) funding window represents an important area of learning, as a significant amount of work is funded in this area, and it is the only funding window that can currently be accessed by NUNOs directly. PBF's 2020-2024 Strategy highlights that the Women, Peace and Security Agenda remains underfunded; and

🔗 The limited and emerging information on facilitating transitions between different UN configurations across the evaluations reviewed for this report points to the insight that PBF might not play a big role in this sphere but provides important contributions to keep peacebuilding on the agenda during a time of transition. At the same time, the PBF's role in this area has been growing steadily. In 2019, 30 per cent of the Fund's investments were in transition settings, totaling \$57.8 million. Hence, this will be a more important area for learning going forward.

PBF has demonstrably led to a greater number of joint UN projects and programs. Increasing clarity from PBF on monitoring and evaluation requirements and related support has been appreciated over recent years.

The following provides a deeper review of specific areas that emerged as the most salient and recurring ones across the reviewed documents.

4.1.2 PBF CONTRIBUTIONS IN RELATION TO OTHER COUNTRY LEVEL STRATEGIES

In the majority of countries, the PBF is only one source of peacebuilding funding among other types available in the context. At the same time, there are contexts in which PBF funding is one of the main sources of peacebuilding funding, for example in Kyrgyzstan and Papua New Guinea. In some of the larger post-conflict operations, PBF contributions are relatively small compared to other types of funding. The evaluations confirm that it is desirable and beneficial for PBF funded work to be aligned with other country level and national peacebuilding priorities. From an evaluation perspective, this makes it challenging to look at PBF efforts separately to try to understand the results or even 'impacts' of PBF funded initiatives in themselves.

What is 'strategic' for PBF engagement is very context-specific, and depends significantly on the particular country situation, UN configuration in country, and other types of peacebuilding funding that is available.

“Due to the relatively small 'footprint' of the PBF portfolio in the country and due to the existence of highly elaborated peacebuilding frameworks with articulated conflict drivers already present, the PBF portfolio has [...] taken a "gap-oriented" approach to the support of peacebuilding projects; identifying opportunities to support a diverse range of projects that address gaps in the support provided by the larger donors and investments to peacebuilding in the country. When overlaid against the backdrop of the larger strategic frameworks, the gap-oriented approach is appropriate and strategic for the context.”

SOMALIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, P. 6

While PBF funding is relatively limited compared to other funding sources in certain contexts, it can play a small but quite strategic and catalytic role. It is also well positioned for keeping peacebuilding on the broader policy map during times of country and UN transitions (see section 4.3.2 for further insights on UN transitions).

4.1.3 PEACEBUILDING RELEVANCE AND CONFLICT ANALYSIS

The evaluations surfaced a few key points in relation to overall Relevance considerations and

the relationships between peacebuilding and development programming. Boundaries between initiatives that are relevant from a peacebuilding perspective and ‘development’ programs are often fluid and not necessarily well understood by everyone involved at UNCT levels. PBF funding is implemented by a range of RUNOs and NUNOs, some with a stronger background and experience in peacebuilding than others. This tension around a limited understanding of peacebuilding has been an issue since PBF’s first steps in 2006, and has been commented on in previous PBF reviews, as illustrated by the quote.

“The question of what constitutes peacebuilding is a long-standing debate, and one can question the usefulness of entering into a definitional debate. It is important, however, to acknowledge that the potential impact of a relatively small fund like the PBF is hindered when virtually anything can be defined as peacebuilding; more focus is needed as the Fund can be literally spread too thin over a wide variety of post-conflict recovery needs.”

MARISKA V. BEIJNUM: PBF EVALUATION REVIEW, CLINGENDAEL, 2013, P. II

There is no consistent approach to assessing peacebuilding Relevance across the evaluations. From a peacebuilding perspective, a key aspect of **Relevance** is whether and how an initiative engaged one or several of the key structural drivers of conflict. This requires a recent **conflict analysis** that can be used as a reference for program design. There is a general notion across the evaluations that at least a good part of PBF funded programming was ‘generally relevant’ to the key dynamics of conflict. However, conflict analysis was done and used inconsistently. In some but not all cases, there was a systematic process of conducting a joint conflict analysis within the UNCT (or jointly using an analysis produced by one UN agency or other stakeholders in the country) and with national and local counterparts. Ideally, the joint analysis process was followed by conscious decisions regarding which conflict drivers were the most strategic for the UNCT to address, and ongoing conversations to understand changes in context and portfolio implications.

In other cases, Relevance was interpreted as relevant to the overall development needs in the

countries, or what program beneficiaries expresses as most useful for their livelihoods. This makes assessing Relevance difficult from a peacebuilding perspective and plays into the above challenge regarding the differences between peacebuilding and development programming.

For example, in the Mali portfolio evaluation, many of the projects reviewed adopted a ‘peace dividends’ approach that focused on addressing socio-economic consequences rather than socio-political or structural causes of the conflict dynamics. This would seem justified for the initial PBF engagements, but not for longer-term programming.⁷

Another aspect emerging from some of the evaluations is that **more systematic specialized conflict analysis** might have contributed to more relevant peacebuilding programming. For example, in Mali and CAR, more regionalized conflict analysis (in the areas of intervention e.g. at sub-national or specific local or district areas of engagement) would have been helpful. In Somalia the PBF funded portfolio was focused on addressing peacebuilding gaps not filled by others. Hence, a sharper **gap analysis** would have been useful to be even clearer which drivers of conflict and factors for peace were being addressed.

“Les projets n'étaient pas toujours basés sur des analyses de conflit détaillées et spécifiques aux zones géographique de mise en œuvre et aux bénéficiaires ciblés. [...] Pourtant, il manquait des analyses des dynamiques conflictuelles ou de consolidation de la paix spécifiques au domaine et à la zone d'intervention pour bien épinglez les changements désirés et pour comprendre comment y arriver par les activités proposées.”

CAR PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2019, P. 14


4.1.4 PEACEBUILDING EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACTS

Many of the evaluations reviewed provide good insights into project results and the effectiveness of specific projects and programs. PBF has supported some solid peacebuilding contributions of the UN

7. Mali Portfolio Evaluation 2019, p. iv

system across the portfolios in volatile contexts (see section 4.3 for an analysis of some highlights emerging across PBF's priority areas and windows). At the same time, assessing higher-level and longer-term results in addressing structural causes of conflict is more challenging.

Output versus **outcome changes**. Output level changes involve direct results and deliverables from specific activities. These are often clearly articulated, either in PBF **theories of change** project documents or a results framework. However, outcome level changes concern **higher level changes** such as behavior in attitudes changes or steps towards broader socio-political changes to which PBF might have contributed. These are often not clearly articulated.⁸ Hence, it is hard to assess outcome level changes in evaluations. This is a challenge at the individual project and program level, as well as at the portfolio level.



A **'theory of change'** explains how a set of activities are understood to produce a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impacts. It can be developed for any level of intervention – an event, a project, a program, a policy, a strategy, a portfolio, or an organization.

If outcome level changes are not clearly articulated at the project and program level, it is very difficult to assess outcomes or even 'impact' collectively across various initiatives.

Clearly articulating theories of change in relation to peacebuilding is critical, in order to test the peacebuilding rationale and assumptions in a given project and to make projects and programs evaluable from a peacebuilding perspective.

“ It appeared that the ToC [theory of change] was not systematically used as a tool for promoting and monitoring peacebuilding objectives, which sometimes led to losing the peacebuilding logics in projects. In a few projects, business/employment objectives predominated over peacebuilding logics, reflecting the immediate priority of stakeholders/beneficiaries.”

KYRGYZSTAN PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2017, P. 35

If the PBF continues to expand its funding across the **development-humanitarian-peacebuilding nexus**, it will be important to be clear about peacebuilding theories of change and expected peacebuilding impacts across the development and humanitarian spectrum. For example, the PBF funded cross-border pilot project in Burundi/Tanzania implemented an integrated development-humanitarian-peacebuilding approach to prevent conflict and address instability in relation to cross-border displacement. The 2019 evaluation includes anecdotal evidence that the component of the project focused on local conflict resolution showed some promising results. However, given the lack of a clear theory of change and monitoring data it was difficult to assess progress and results in a more robust way. In order for PBF's funding to show strategic peacebuilding results in such integrated development-humanitarian-peacebuilding 'nexus' approaches, peacebuilding theories of change and related monitoring mechanisms need to be clearly defined and applied.

“Doing good” and “stopping the bad.” Several of the evaluations reviewed commented on the fact that some PBF funded peacebuilding initiatives emphasized working with peacebuilding actors that are keen and willing to engage with the international community, rather than working with perpetrators of violence: the 'hard to reach', or actors with the potential to spoil peacebuilding progress.

The *Reflecting on Peace Practice Program* (RPP) of CDA Collaborative Learning explored 'what works in peacebuilding' through multiple years of collaborative learning from peacebuilding practice. One of the key findings was that in addition to engaging the broader population ('**more people**') it is also critical to engage '**key people**' – individuals and groups of people play a critical role in either sustaining violence or promoting peace. Working with both 'more' and 'key' people simultaneously and over time is a critical factor for projects and programs to demonstrate sustainable peacebuilding results.⁹ For example, the Mali portfolio evaluation found that while the PBF funded portfolio took important

8. For more details on PBF definitions of outputs and outcomes see [PBF 2018 guidelines](#)

9. For more insights in relation to this question and other findings from RPP, see *Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Basics. A Resource Manual*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2016

important steps to work with ‘key people’ with both positive and negative influences, e.g. by targeting so-called youth at risk or through strengthening institutions playing a positive role in conflict transformation. However, the evaluation observes “a lack of approaches tackling key people promoting violence and conflict or at least an approach to prevention with more refined targeting of people who are already more advanced on their path to radicalization”.¹⁰

The PBF’s role in promoting programmatic coherence and synergies to increase effectiveness. As highlighted above and as examples illustrate throughout this synthesis review, there are many examples of success, in which PBF funded efforts have contributed to significant peacebuilding results. For example, in Liberia, PBF support has been credited with very useful projects that improved conflict resolution and reconciliation processes at the community level, in particular the Palava Huts, Community Peace Committees or Peace Huts, and also support to national reconciliation at the national level. However, it was also noted that there was **duplication of efforts** among these projects and that they would could have been more effective if there was greater coordination and synergies under a coherent **joint strategy**.

“ Put a clearer focus on transforming relationships between the parties as an explicit benchmark for measuring project success. A core function of the JMC [Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee] is exchange of information and resolving of disputes between the armed actors. The JMC is a unique model and there is plenty of evidence that it has contributed to building confidence between the armed actors. This goal was not however clearly translated into the project activities, report indicators and evaluation process which had instead a heavy focus on setting up an infrastructure for ceasefire monitoring activities

MYANMAR EVALUATION OF THE JOINT CEASEFIRE MONITORING COMMITTEE SUPPORT PLATFORM PROJECT 2019, P. 24

While some PBF funded projects and programs are quite innovative and try different approaches in peacebuilding, others are rather technical in nature. To strengthen the peacebuilding results of development interventions, **transformation of relationships** would need to be a more prominent

benchmark for program success across PBF interventions. Efforts focused on improving relationships have both horizontal and vertical dimensions, engaging different parts of society at intra- and inter-community levels, as well as between society and the state.

The example cited from Myanmar illustrates this point clearly, and is also further developed through other examples in section 4.3.1: **peacebuilding as a sector and peacebuilding as an approach**. A clearer approach is needed on how to translate changes at the **individual level** (such as changes in attitudes and behaviors) into **socio-political change** at the level of intergroup, institutional or policy changes.

Peacebuilding impacts. As mentioned above, the way PBF funded portfolios are designed and monitored at the moment makes it **difficult to assess collective results and impacts at a portfolio level**. Most portfolios grew organically through a myriad of shorter-term projects and programs, and were not planned with an overarching long-term ‘impact’ articulation in mind across the different projects. Without a portfolio level strategy, a macro-level theory of change or baseline at the portfolio level, it is challenging to assess portfolio levels results and impacts.

In line with above, it is difficult to ‘attribute’ impact to PBF funding alone. As one example from Liberia shows, “Overall, national reconciliation remains an incomplete process. As one interviewee put it, ‘I don’t think there is aggregate impact (that PBF had) on reconciliation, but there have been some smaller results.’” (Liberia portfolio evaluation, 2017, p. 29). Hence, it is more realistic to speak about PBF **‘contributions,’** and contributions to impact. Some of the reviewed evaluations did that. For instance, the Central African Republic evaluation uses the notion of ‘emerging impacts.’ “[...] débuts d’impact des projets PBF”, “[...] c’est-à-dire de quelle manière les projets ont contribué à des dynamiques plus larges qui pourraient avoir un impact positif sur la sécurité, la paix, ou la réconciliation.” (CAR portfolio evaluation 2019, p. 15). Articulating contributions to impact is ultimately linked back to how clearly theories of change are being articulated from a peacebuilding perspective, as illustrated by the examples from the cross-border review in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

10. Mali portfolio evaluation 2019, p. 15

“The original prodoc presented output-level theories [...]. These theories of change clarified through what mechanism the desired change was expected to be achieved. These theories of change were well articulated and are and remain plausible, although some fine-tuning will be necessary, as discussed in more detail in the annex. Subsequently the implementing agencies devised certain strategies that were aimed to contribute to these expected outcomes. At the level of these strategies the project employed, the theories of change have remained relatively unclear. For this reason, it is not always evident in what way a certain activity is intended to contribute to peacebuilding impact.”

REVIEW OF PBF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION, KYRGYZSTAN/TAJIKISTAN, 2017, P. 7

Cumulative or collective impacts. Assessing **cumulative or collective impacts** at the portfolio level would require a clear strategic framework and theory of change at the UNCT level. The Peacebuilding Priority Plans (PPPs) were certainly not a perfect process in this regard, and were often considered as very long and cumbersome by those involved. At the same time, they represented one dedicated mechanism to ensure a certain level of strategic and holistic planning for the UN system in a given context. Abolishing them without putting in place a different strategic planning vehicle at UNCT level raises the question of how the foundations for collective impacts at the portfolio level will be provided in the future.

“While these projects show the potential of the PBF to flexibly support emerging peacebuilding opportunities and attempt containing the spreading of the crisis, the absence of a priority plan or strategic framework and the number of individual projects make it very difficult to speak of cumulative effects of the peacebuilding portfolio.”

MALI PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. V

Short timeframes. The **short time windows** and duration of PBF projects and programs add an additional dilemma to the ambition of achieving peacebuilding impacts, which was noted as such in the majority of evaluations reviewed. The current PBF funding mechanisms through IRF and PRF windows are perceived as suitable for generating shorter-term and possibly catalytic results, but are not considered very helpful for long-term peacebuilding change and impacts. In reality, PBF often becomes an important funder

over a longer period of time, but often based on repeat PBF allocations and renewed eligibilities. This piecemeal approach becomes institutionalized and long-term, without having a **long-term strategy in place**.

The evaluations noted several related dynamics, including unhelpful technical requirements, such as rushed proposal approval processes that stood in the way of developing clear peacebuilding program strategies and the proper development of complementarities among different PBF funded projects. Also, the yearly call for GYPI proposals was perceived as too short-term and demanding, especially for smaller UN agencies

“Extending the programming time-frames might facilitate addressing root causes of conflict more effectively.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2017, P. V

4.1.5 SUSTAINABILITY AND OWNERSHIP OF PBF FUNDED PORTFOLIOS

As noted above, most PBF funded initiatives start fairly small and on a project basis. It is difficult to ensure sustainability in the long run, if there is no strategy for maintaining long-term results from the beginning. While PBF initiatives receive and deserve high praise for their principle of prioritizing national ownership, sometimes PBF's desire to stimulate catalytic peacebuilding results faces clear limitations in terms of sustainability. For example, in Liberia, PBF provided significant technical and financial support to the government of Liberia during an important time in the country's post-conflict transition. However, this also resulted in PBF encouraging the government to initiate programs the country could not afford, without identifying follow-on sources of funding and developing new ideas for how to absorb the programs into the national budget (Liberia portfolio evaluation, 2017).

There also appears to be a certain built-in **tension** between trying to achieve catalytic peacebuilding at a critical stage of a country's peacebuilding process on the one hand, and the requirement for long-term sustainability of peacebuilding on the other. For example, in Papua New-Guinea (PNG), PBF funding was

critical and strategic during an important period in the country (in relation to the Bougainville conflict), while there were limited other peacebuilding sources. At the same time, the limited capacity and resources of the governments of PNG and the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) meant that scaling up and sustaining PBF funded activities was not possible.

“PBSO should continue to consider supporting peacebuilding priority plans that may not be able to focus on sustainability, replication, or magnification but that are able to support priority actions to build or sustain peace at critical periods in the peacebuilding processes around the world.”

PNG PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2018, P. 6

Strong **inclusive and participatory engagement of both governments and national and local civil society** is critical to create ownership – a precondition for ‘Sustainability’. As already mentioned, PBF places a lot of emphasis on putting national governments in the driver’s seat to manage PBF portfolios from the beginning through the Joint Steering Committees. The evaluations surface some important **lessons about government engagement** and **sustainability**, with examples from some evaluations:

▲ **Use of country systems** to strengthen national ownership and leave behind important administrative and financial management structures is important and not always prioritized. “The portfolio was less strong in the use of country systems. Implementation of PBF activities was largely carried out by RUNOs, and existing country systems were used sparingly, if at all. Programs were managed by the RUNOs financially and administratively. Respondents thought that government systems and capacity should have received more attention. Several GoL interviewees felt divorced from the implementation process and wished for more involvement in management.” (Liberia portfolio evaluation 2017, p. 14)

▲ **Invest time to develop a shared vision** and understanding of what PBF funding can and should achieve. For example, in Mali, the general cooperation between the government of Mali and the PBF in country was considered very positive. “However, efforts to strengthen national ownership need to be further reinforced. This includes the development of a shared understanding of PBF funding priorities at a global level and its strategic added value. In turn, this would provide the foundation to increase national ownership in the definition of priorities at the portfolio level and the distribution of resources at the project level, which are currently largely decided by UN stakeholders.” (Mali portfolio evaluation, 2019, p. 42)

▲ **Invest in appropriate and genuine multi-stakeholder processes** to generate real buy-in and ownership and go beyond ticking a box on ‘participation.’ For example, the 2019 portfolio evaluation from Central African Republic reveals that some government counterparts felt that select PBF activities were “handed to them” without sufficient consultation, driven by the UN. PBF decided not to set up a formal JSC in light of political volatility in 2014 and because other coordination mechanisms existed. This decision was later criticized by the CAR government and national partners and ultimately impacted ownership and sustainability. “Les représentants du gouvernement ont, en général, exprimé leur appréciation pour les investissements du PBF, mais ont critiqué un manque de coordination formelle dans certains secteurs, non seulement du PBF, mais aussi de ses partenaires de mise en œuvre. Quelques responsables du gouvernement se sont plaints qu’ils fussent souvent consultés d’une manière superficielle sur des nouveaux projets internationaux, mais qu’ils ne fussent pas en position de refuser de nouveaux financements vu l’ampleur des besoins dans le pays.” (CAR portfolio evaluation, 2019, p. 20)

Constrained government capacity and resources are key reasons for limited sustainability of PBF interventions – both for strategic oversight of PBF portfolios, as well as long-term sustainability and making PBF interventions ‘stick’. JSCs are usually considered to be a critical anchor to ensure PBF investments at country-level are aligned with key government priorities.

However, past and more recent PBF evaluations have repeatedly pointed out the **limitations of the JSCs ability to provide strategic portfolio management** of PBF investments and to serve as a hub to ensure accountability and transparency in managing PBF portfolios (see 4.1.7 for more details on this point).

“[...] Evidence from this evaluation supports a recurring finding across PBF portfolio reviews and country evaluations that JSCs are inefficient decision-makers, do not adequately monitor implementation or provide guidance for improvement, and do not fully consider the synergy and strategic impact of the projects they approve.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2017, P. VII

Role of national and local civil society actors. The engagement and ownership of national and local civil society actors is critical for long-term sustainability of peacebuilding results. This is certainly not a new insight but is stressed again clearly as a lesson from the PBF evaluations. In the wider peacebuilding field, there is significant work right now to operationalize the **‘localization’** agenda, and to come up with radically different models for locally-led decision-making and funding mechanisms.¹¹

While most evaluations reveal the critical role of national and local civil society actors for effective and sustainable peacebuilding, some of them directly recommend the **inclusion of NUNOs, and national and local NGOs and civil society actors specifically, as PBF fund recipients**. Currently, NGOs only have access to apply for the GYPI funding window, and such funding is mainly granted to international NGOs. This is being addressed through PBF's 2020-2024 Strategy with the articulated goal to further explore new

11. For example, see *Radical Flexibility: Strategic Funding for the Age of Local Activism*, by Riva Kantowitz and Peace Direct, February 2020, or the emerging work of *Conductive Space for Peace*.

avenues to provide more flexible funding to local-level and community based organizations, with modalities adjusted to different capacity levels from context to context.

Current experiences working with international NGOs (INGOs) as PBF recipients are generally positive as per the evaluations, and many of them bring a strong track record with peacebuilding programming. INGOs are often also much more cost effective than working through UN agencies. Many INGOs work with and through national and local NGOs, hence there is the reasonable question why PBF should not consider funding national and local NGOs directly. RUNOs often struggle with the question of access in volatile and insecure locations and hotspots, and NUNOs often have ongoing and trusted relationships with partners within the local context, and hence better access. This also applies to other operational questions, such as procurement, as the example from Mali below illustrates.

“Procurement is challenging, as procedures do not always take into account the realities on the ground. RUNOs often will not only have to find contractors who can get the job done but also invest time and energy to find creative solution to actually get them hired in line with administrative procedures. Intimate knowledge of the area of intervention can help to increase conflict sensitivity and efficiency in the choice of contractors but is not always available at RUNOs with limited presence in the envisioned area of intervention.”

MALI PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2019, P. 33

Strengthening capacities of local and national non-government organizations would also help mitigate another major limitation to sustainability of PBF funding: frequent staff transitions both within national governments, within UN agencies, and also within INGOs. Funding local NGOs and civil society actors directly would need to include a component of capacity building, as well as streamlining required administrative requirements for receiving and managing PBF funds.

4.1.6 CONTEXT MONITORING, CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Peacebuilding work most often occurs in volatile and quickly changing environments, in which any kind of programming (development,

humanitarian, or peacebuilding), despite all good intentions, has the potential to cause **unintended harm** and unintended negative impacts.

Conflict-sensitivity is critical for any kind of externally supported intervention in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings, including for peacebuilding – to minimize possible unintended negative impacts, and maximize positive contributions to peacebuilding. This requires that conflict sensitivity analysis and implementation is fully supported by senior management. Program and operations staff must also have the substantive knowledge and understanding of how to implement conflict sensitivity in practice, how to monitor for unintended impacts on the context, and how to adapt programs and operations where unintended harm might occur or has occurred.

Current evaluations (and evaluation ToRs) often put **limited emphasis on conflict sensitivity, unintended impacts, and adaptive management** – or do not cover them at all. DM&E mechanisms, both at country level as well as within PBF in New York, are neither set up to support UNCTs in conflict-sensitivity implementation, nor to monitor and evaluate for it. In some cases, there are statements like “No interviewee in the fieldwork for the evaluation noted unforeseen impacts of the PPP.” (Examples including the PNG PPP evaluation 2018, and the Guinea portfolio evaluation, 2017). This is quite unusual for peacebuilding interventions or any other type of project implemented in a conflict-affected setting. This is not a critique of the evaluations or evaluators, but rather speaks to the point that systematic monitoring for unintended impacts (positive or negative) was not part of ongoing PBF portfolio implementation or DM&E system. In fact, some of the reviewed evaluations do document negative impacts that occur related to PBF investments, like the example from Côte d'Ivoire illustrates.

In Mali, the PBF portfolio did not take conflict sensitivity into account during the first phase of implementation and saw some unintended negative impacts in relation to the DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration) process. Based on this learning, the UNCT is now taking conflict-sensitivity into account during the second phase of PBF implementation.

“An important lesson from Phase 1 relates to the necessity of conflict sensitive programming in the work of UN agencies, funds and programs. An example for such a reflection is the consideration of how livelihood support in food-insecure areas can affect conflict dynamics [...]. Another example [...] is how to mitigate frustrations and other negative feelings in the selection of beneficiaries of income generating activities in a context characterized by widespread poverty.” (Mali portfolio evaluation 2019, p. 31).

“There is no Do No Harm analysis or awareness-raising on specific conflicts, although these different aspects do indirectly appear in the risk analysis. Potential negative effects have not been identified, such as for instance the effect of strengthening certain actors at the local level rather than others. The level of participation in the various interventions also varied depending on the population categories. This contributed to creating gaps between the different social groups and increasing tensions which were already present in the social fabric.”

CÔTE D'IVOIRE PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. 12

In Liberia, similar learning took place. “An unintended consequence can alter the course of a project. At the start of the land project, the Land Commission (LC) was meant to be a policy organization. Quickly, the implementers learned that land conflict mediation was a pressing concern requiring immediate attention. This altered the work of the LC and created a much more impactful program. By mediating land disputes in Land Coordination Center (LCCs), policy work was also strengthened, since LC personnel had greater knowledge of the challenges faced by community members.” (Liberia portfolio evaluation 2017, p. iv, v).

Applying conflict-sensitivity systematically in practice requires being aware of possible unintended impacts of PBF funded interventions on the context in the first place – and **monitoring local and national conflict dynamics** and the wider context on an ongoing basis, as the finding from the Sri Lanka evaluation illustrates.

There are examples where UNCTs have taken steps to set up systematic context and **conflict monitoring** systems, to use that information for conflict prevention purposes, and to avoid unintended negative impacts of PBF portfolios.

For example, within the Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan cross-border program, an early warning and conflict monitoring system was established. Initial experiences that were documented in the 2017 review indicate that the information was used to ensure conflict sensitivity in project monitoring, at least to some extent. However, how the information was used or could possibly be used by the national government was less clear – and brings its own challenges in terms of possible misuse of information by the government in terms of responses.¹²

PBF needs to consider conflict sensitivity, not only at the project level, in relation to the details of intervention, but also at **strategic decision-making levels** when strategy and funding decisions for the overall PBF portfolio are made. Otherwise, unintended negative impacts can spiral out of control very quickly and put the work of the UN system at risk. This happened, for example, in Kyrgyzstan, around the rehabilitation of the Kaerma canal, where quality cross-border consultations were not prioritized sufficiently, which led to significant tensions between the Kyrgyz and Tajik authorities. This has had ongoing repercussions for the relationships of UNDP and the UN system with both authorities until today (2018 cross-border program review, p. 13).

“An overarching thread/theme running through this review is that the project interventions sat within a broader context were additional factors and supplementary support services that may not have been considered at the project design stage were found to impact on the outcomes of the direct interventions of the project and thereby determine the overall success or failure of the project. Therefore, it is important to consider the external and contributory factors that contribute towards the wellbeing of the targeted population.”

EVALUATION OF SRI LANKA RE-SETTLEMENT OF IDPS PROJECT, 2017, P. 66

Putting mechanisms in place to identify potential or actual negative implications of PBF funded

interventions is only worthwhile if there are also mechanisms for adapting strategies and programs based on the findings from ongoing context and conflict monitoring. **The evaluations reveal a disconnect between DM&E data collection and the management systems for PBF funded programs.**

This finding also reflects an insight from the evaluations regarding risk management. Peacebuilding work brings with it greater political risks for the UN system than other types of development work. Therefore, thinking about **risk management** and conflict-sensitivity should be two sides of the same coin for UNCTs. The evaluations reveal a mixed picture in this regard as well: risk management was not a systematic category in the evaluations reviewed, and, if it was reviewed, findings most often show that available data was not used in practice, as the Côte d'Ivoire text box quote illustrates.

“Risk-management matrices were developed for each of the interventions, but they were not updated following the initial design and were not used very much in the context of programming. Most of the identified risks are political in nature, while programmatic, trustee-related and security risks are barely mentioned.”

CÔTE D'IVOIRE EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT 2017, P. 8

At the same time, a few PBF portfolios have embraced conflict sensitivity and adaptive management and taken it to the next level. The UN system in Kyrgyzstan, with support from PeaceNexus, has developed a **Learning and Adaptation Strategy** for its Priority Plan 2018-2021. This strategy articulates an overall learning and adaptation approach, specific mechanisms for doing so, actors to be involved, approaches to ongoing context monitoring, risk assessment, and strategies to design, monitor and adapt theories of change as part of this overall learning and adaptation approach. Conflict-sensitivity is a key component of this strategy, as it lies at the core of monitoring for possible unintended impacts on the context, how to mitigate negative impacts, and how to maximize the potential for peacebuilding results. This is a good example for how solid conflict analysis, planning and M&E can be combined with an approach for flexibility, program adaptation based on changes in context, and ongoing learning.

12. During time of writing of this synthesis review, there was an evaluation of the PBF funded Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan cross-border program underway (March/April 2020), which should yield additional insights to this specific question once completed. For general insights about the effectiveness, opportunities and risks related to conflict monitoring and early warning systems, please see Anna Matveva, “Early Warning and Early Response, Conceptual and Empirical Dilemmas,” GPPAC (Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict), 2006; or David Nyheim, “Early Warning and Response to Violent Conflict, Time for a Rethink,” Saferworld, 2015.

4.1.7 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF PBF PORTFOLIOS

A key question that emerged from the evaluations is related to the challenge of providing **consistent strategic oversight over a complex portfolio of programs to ensure overall coherence**. In principle this is supposed to be the function of the high-level Joint Steering Committee comprised of representatives from key government ministries/departments and UNCT stakeholders. However, this model often has limitations for a number of reasons, including composition of the JSC, frequent changes in government, limited capacities of members, limited oversight due to access and security conditions, broader government interests that sometimes undermine strategic peacebuilding results, etc. Given this reality, the evaluations provide useful insights regarding how some UNCTs have attempted to work creatively around this limitation and strengthen the role of the JSC.

For example, in Somalia, given access and security conditions in the country, the approach has been to **integrate PBF oversight into pre-existing coordination mechanisms and spaces**, while also seeking better strategic alignment between PBF and other sources of funding and peacebuilding work. While this approach is good in principle, it also limited the attention to PBF as a standalone portfolio, while related accountability measures got watered down (see Somalia portfolio evaluation, p. xiii.).

In other contexts, evaluation reports suggest supplementing the limited strategic and substantive functionality of JSCs with **technical support functions** (provided e.g. by the PBF Secretariat or the PDA) for providing strategic oversight. JSCs might also benefit from additional useful technical expertise. Adding civil society actors as full JSC members would also strengthen national ownership and sustainability of PBF portfolios (for instance, see the Mali portfolio evaluation, 2019).

In relation to strategic management, accountability and oversight of PBF investments, several of the evaluations encourage stronger guidance and direction from PBSO and PBF.

This points to a certain **identity question** for PBF. On the one hand, PBF identifies as a donor that is hesitant to get involved too deeply in supporting implementation. On the other hand, PBSO also acts as a key hub within the UN system to promote peacebuilding results across agencies, new thinking, and excellence.

“[Quote from key informant in the evaluation] ‘I think that outside JSC, PBSO didn’t step in when it could have, should have, and justifiably had the opportunity to do so. There was no rule, oversight, or accountability. It’s not that they weren’t aware, [...] but I think their view was that it wasn’t their responsibility to intervene at country level.’ [Quote end]. Interviews with PBSO at times felt reluctant to step in or overrule country-level actors for fear that it might undermine a sense of local ownership.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2017, P. 18

Another key aspect of strategic oversight and accountability is related first to gaining greater **role clarity** amongst PBF and PBSO and possibly Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)—and then between those entities and the various levels of UN country presence in a given context (UNCT, Peacekeeping mission/SRSG, political presence, etc.). Different understandings and lack of coordination amongst the various players involved can significantly limit strategic oversight of PBF investments.

Evaluations also reveal that there are different views and expectations in relation to the **PBF secretariats and PBF coordinators** in country and the role(s) they should (or should not) play in relation to strategic management of PBF portfolios. PBF secretariats are located in different places depending on UN country configuration in a given context. In most cases, PBF Secretariats are housed within UNCT/RC Offices, in some cases (such as Mali) in the UN Mission, in other (more experimental cases) within national governments (as in Liberia).

The evaluations reveal a wide variety of **expectations vis-à-vis the PBF coordinators and Secretariats**. These include the following potential roles: i) political analyst, ii) diplomat, iii) facilitator and convener, iv) program manager, v) resource mobilization champion for UN agencies, vi) donor desk officer, and vii) report writer. The wide range

of roles and expectations suggest that a single coordinator may not be sufficient to respond to all the needs. A PBF team may be required to adequately fill the expected roles in complex contexts. Clarity of the mandate of the PBF Secretariat, the PBF coordinator, and additional staff (such as an M&E coordinator) is critical for strategic portfolio oversight. Oversight and implementation should never be combined in the same office/person.¹³

The 2013 review by Clingendael/Mariska van Beijnum, referred to the need for a certain level of in-country **peacebuilding capacity**, both within the UN system and among the key national partners, for PBF's 'two-tier system' to work.¹⁴ This finding is repeated across the evaluations reviewed for this synthesis review. The PBF has taken some steps to strengthen capacity, for instance by putting together a small roster of program expert consultants who can be deployed to support UNCTs at different stages of PBF implementation. Additional steps might be needed to strengthen ongoing capacity and oversight, both at PBF and at the country level.

There are positive experiences in countries where UN Peace and Development Advisers (PDAs), deployed under the [UN-DPPA Joint Program on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention](#),¹⁵ have played support roles in relation to UN PBF investments and related processes. Such roles have included facilitating joint conflict analysis, supporting joint program design, or reinforcing conflict-sensitivity processes. PDAs, in many cases, bring **strong peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity technical skills, and are often experienced facilitators, trainers, and conveners of multi-stakeholder processes**. These are critical skills for supporting UNCTs with strategic peacebuilding at PBF portfolio levels. Skilled PDAs can also provide strategic support to RCs, on the

one hand, and also lend technical and programmatic support to RUNOs on the other. PBF should seriously consider strengthening the capacities of PBF Secretariats broadly speaking, while also prioritizing strong peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding DM&E and process facilitation skills amongst hired staff. Transferring such skills to national counterparts would be a high priority for a sustainable footprint in peacebuilding at country level.

Strategic portfolio management might sometimes require uncomfortable and possibly controversial decisions. As the evaluations demonstrate, different levels of capacity and prior experience of RUNOs with peacebuilding programming plays a major role in the success (or lack thereof) of PBF funded projects. Some evaluations (see quote from Liberia) ask for a much stricter approach and clearer criteria from PBF to ensure that only strong programs and proposals are funded.

“Echoing recommendations from the 2014 Burundi evaluation, PBSO should look for ways to ensure that PBF funding is only allocated to those RUNOs with a demonstrated capacity to design, implement, and monitor peacebuilding activities. This includes having a demonstrated capacity to conduct and update conflict analyses, ability to track more qualitative peacebuilding outcomes, and tested internal procurement and reporting procedures that can efficiently procure goods and services within appropriate timeframes. JSCs could play an important role by requiring that the RUNOs do a better job of reporting on intermediate progress, challenges, barriers, and bottlenecks they are facing, and adjustments they have or plan to make in their programming.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2017, P. VI

This would also mean that only those entities/organizations with demonstrated capacity to implement peacebuilding initiatives would benefit from PBF allocations. Such strict criteria would apply not only to RUNOs and NUNOs, but also to their partner national government agencies and ministries or those that develop a clear capacity-development strategy to fill certain gaps in peacebuilding skills or expertise. Implementing a stricter approach in practice will require substantive and technical leadership, but also creative maneuvering of the political realities in which PBF funding is implemented. Given the strong focus on government ownership of the PBF, national

13. See for example, lessons documented in the Liberia portfolio evaluation 2017, where the PBF Secretariat played both an oversight and implementation function, which led to a conflict of interest

14. “The Fund's basic architecture encompasses a two-tier decision-making process: at the central level, the Secretary-General, supported by PBSO, decides upon the country eligibility for Fund support and the allocation of funding, while at the country level the Government and the senior United Nations representative of the Secretary-General in the country (coming together in a so-called Joint Steering Committee) decide upon the disbursement of funds against an agreed-upon priority plan that is based on a joint analysis of critical gaps and peacebuilding needs.” (Mariska van Beijnum, PBF Evaluation Review, 2013, Clingendael, p. 4

counterparts and ministries also have strong interests at stake and typically advocate strongly for certain directions, allocations, and programming. Managing this careful balance between solid peacebuilding programming and constructive relationships with national government counterparts is a critical role for the RCs.


The **new role of RCs**, now detached from UNDP, might provide new avenues to bring greater rigor to capacity assessment of RUNOs and NUNOs in making PBF funding allocations. Such assessments will help to determine which agency is most strategically positioned to implement certain PBF investments, in place of a 'divide-the-pie' approach. In order for RCs to play this new and not uncontroversial role effectively, clear support and direction from PBF and PBF's donors for making these decisions would be essential, with the aim of – slowly and over time – raising the bar on the overall quality of PBF funded peacebuilding programs.


4.2 PBF'S PARTICULAR NICHE IN PEACEBUILDING FUNDING

The PBF complements other types of peacebuilding funding through a range of **criteria** it has laid out for itself, as documented in the [Guidelines](#).⁵ These include timeliness of funding, risk-tolerance, the catalytic nature of PBF funding, and flexibility and adaptability. The synthesis review analyzed the evaluations according to the definitions of these criteria outlined below and further discussed in the following sections.

 **Timeliness of funding.** As per the Guidelines, the aim is to “respond quickly and with flexibility to political windows of opportunities, especially when those windows are time sensitive, and as part of a political strategy of engagement – it is often the ‘investor of first resort.’”¹⁵

 **Risk-tolerance and innovation.** Of interest for the synthesis review were evaluation findings on the ‘risk appetite’ of the PBF, but also whether the increased risk-tolerance of PBF led to more innovative and meaningful peacebuilding results at country level.

 **The catalytic nature of PBF funding.** Were initiatives able to leverage additional programs and processes through the PBF funded initiatives, as well as additional funding and donors for peacebuilding?

 **Flexibility and adaptability of management**
This reviewed both the flexibility of PBF in responding quickly to changes in programming realities and related peacebuilding needs, and also whether and how PBF funded programs adapted to changes in context and the overall conflict environment.

As per the Guidelines, PBF's ambition is to “*Fill strategic financing gaps where other resources are not readily available and catalyze vital peacebuilding processes and/or financial resources by supporting new initiatives or testing innovative or high-risk approaches that other partners cannot yet support.*”¹⁶

4.2.1 TIMELINESS OF FUNDING

Overall, evaluations assessed the timeliness of PBF funding as very positive. PBF funding is often available before other funding sources kick-in. At the same time, quick approval processes at the level of PBF are only helpful if PBF approval timelines are aligned with timely implementation. Several of the evaluations found limitations in this regard. Even though PBF approves projects in a very timely manner, this does not necessarily mean that implementation starts right away, as often UN agencies delay getting started, especially when operating in highly complex environments. This is particularly the case if peacebuilding is not the core mandate of the agency, if programming happens in insecure locations with limited access to partners and beneficiaries, and if joint UN programs require additional layers of coordination and joint planning to implement PBF funding responsibly. In addition, internal RUNO bureaucratic requirements sometimes slow the allocation of funds from headquarters (HQ) to country offices (CO) within specific agencies, as well as causing procurement delays.

¹⁵. *PBF Guidelines on PBF Funds Application and Programming, 2018, p. 4*

¹⁶. *Ibidem*

4.2.2 RISK TOLERANCE AND INNOVATION

PBF is highly appreciated for its **risk-tolerance and willingness to support innovative and new peacebuilding approaches**. This has played out positively within the UN system but also in complementing other international efforts and actors involved in peacebuilding. The following highlights a few **examples** of how PBF contributions were utilized from a risk-tolerance and innovation perspective:

⚠ PBF supports governments that are weak and transitional, unlike many other donors, which can lead to (re-)establishing trust through government service delivery in fragile settings. *“In spite of its small size, the portfolio is perceived to be highly impactful for generating positive consequences because of its emphasis on innovation and risk taking. The PBF portfolio was seen as supporting the engagement in newly emerging States with relatively weak institutions and a volatile social context. [...] Thus, relying on national structures for the delivery of basic services was seen as a high risk by donors due the lack of administrative and financial controls which would allow even basic transfers of funds with sufficient accountability to ensure compliance and appropriate application.”* (Somalia portfolio evaluation 2019, p ix/x)

⚠ PBF has supported approaches that are otherwise perceived as possibly controversial, in order to support countries at particular points in emerging peacebuilding processes. For example, in Central African Republic, PBF funding was used to temporarily pay the salaries of security sector actors (something that the UN and other actors usually do not do) to unblock an acute governance crisis. *“[...] mais le PBF a reconnu l'opportunité de débloquent une situation qui avait provoqué des manifestations et un arrêt des fonctions étatiques.”* (CAR Portfolio Evaluation, 2019, p. 11)

“These findings qualify the claim of PBF as a funding instrument to respond quickly and flexibly to emerging peacebuilding challenges. While the approval process is indeed fast, it does take – often considerable – time to translate the available funding into activities with tangible results on the ground.”

MALI PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2019, P. 133

Some evaluations also reveal that there is not always the **same understanding between PBSO/PBF in New York and UN agencies at country level** on how long certain planning processes take. Processes at country-level (with the national government, amongst UN agencies, as well as with implementing partners) often take much longer than what PBSO/PBF plans for. Making an upfront investment in joint conflict analysis, translating conflict analysis findings into solid strategy and peacebuilding program design, and coordinating all of this as part of joint programming takes time. More alignment between processes and expectations in New York and UNCTs is needed. Like other issues outlined in this report, this has been a recurring finding also from past PBF reviews and evaluations, as illustrated by the quote from the 2013 PBF evaluation review.

“Some evaluations also find that the need for speed was created not so much by the contextual circumstances in the country, but by the PBF timeframes themselves.”

MARISKA VAN BEIJNUM, PBF EVALUATION REVIEW 2013, CLINGENDAEL, P. 22

There is also some tension between timeliness of standard PBF approvals versus the ability and speed to respond to emerging **political windows of opportunity**. While PBF has a good track record of supporting political dialogue as a more medium-term process (for instance, see CAR portfolio evaluation 2019), the reviews of its agility to respond to sudden changes in the political landscape were more mixed. For example, in Somalia, “The PBF modalities as currently implemented were not seen as sufficiently agile by the political mission stakeholders to be able respond to the political opportunities, even if they can align with the development opportunities.” (Somalia portfolio evaluation, 2019, p. xii)

▲ PBF has contributed to important peacebuilding gains by not shying away from supporting **politically sensitive agendas**. For example, it supported national reconciliation activities in Liberia. “Among the examples of risks that PBF was willing to take was its support for national reconciliation activities. In particular, interviewees pointed to the Palava Huts project, which tackled the politically charged issue of truth telling as part of the national reconciliation processes. The project, through the ethnographic forums, provided an unprecedented setting for traditional leaders, elders, women, youth, and persons with disabilities to sit together for the first time to discuss traditional Palava Hut mechanisms and processes and how they could be incorporated into the National Palava Hut system.” (Liberia portfolio evaluation, 2017, p. 29)

Some innovations were **less successful**, which is to be expected when trying new and untested approaches in different and difficult contexts. For example, placing the PBF Secretariat in Liberia within a host government ministry to promote ownership and sustainability was a worthwhile but challenging experiment. “One of the clearest and most significant lessons learned from the PBF Liberia experience relates to the placement, function, and accountability of the PBF Secretariat. PBSO followed an innovative approach of placing the PBF Secretariat within a host government ministry to promote ownership and sustainability. However, as evidenced by the 2015 PBO evaluation and subsequent relocation of the PBF Secretariat, while the general idea was sound, overlapping accountabilities, heavy staff workloads, and at times competing interests between the UN and GoL ultimately diminished the success of this initiative.” (Liberia portfolio evaluation, 2017, p. iv)

In innovation, such setbacks are to be expected. PBF is well advised to avoid looking at setbacks as linear ‘failures.’ Rather, it should maintain its commitment to promoting innovation in peacebuilding, to encouraging honest learning from successes and failures across its portfolios,

and to systematically sharing these lessons across teams and with the wider peacebuilding field.

4.2.3 THE CATALYTIC NATURE OF PBF FUNDING

As highlighted above, it is a major goal of the PBF to be ‘catalytic.’ Two dimensions of the catalytic nature of PBF funding were reviewed in this synthesis review as per the findings in the evaluations: a) the ability to **leverage additional peacebuilding programs and processes**, and b) **to generate buy-in for additional peacebuilding engagement** through the PBF funded initiatives, including leveraging additional funding and donors for peacebuilding. The evaluations provide a **mixed assessment** of how catalytic PBF funds have been, in relation to both dimensions.

On a **program/project level**, there are some promising examples of the catalytic nature of results achieved with PBF support. For example, according to the 2017 portfolio evaluation in Liberia, PBF contributed significantly to the first tangible actions towards decentralization of governance and service delivery at the county level, while being aligned with national and sector plans of the Government of Liberia.

“[...] the strategic outreach to the international community present in Mali, in particular potential donors, is weak. In other settings, this would be a key role for the PBF Secretariat, which does not play this role in Mali. Unfortunately, this function is not fulfilled either by other parts of the Stabilization and Recovery Section. A clarification of roles and responsibilities involving the DSRSG/RC/HC, the leadership of the Stabilization and Recovery Section of MINUSMA and the PBF Secretariat is needed to identify who would be best placed to ensure this strategic outreach with the potential to provide more visibility to PBF interventions and increase the potential for resource mobilization.”

MALI PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. 39

On a **funding level**, in some instances, the PBF funded portfolio was used strategically to leverage other funds for more peacebuilding work, such as in Somalia. In other instances, Mali for example, the PBF portfolio had more limited success in catalyzing additional financing for peacebuilding. This was surprising in a context with significant other potential international peacebuilding funding sources: “It appears that crucial communication and outreach functions

are not properly fulfilled, with the effect that PBF funded interventions are too little known.” (Mali portfolio evaluation 2019, p. 30)

Larger **strategic considerations**, in terms of donor engagement at both global/New York and country levels, seem to influence the ability to leverage donor interest, which speaks to the importance of role clarity amongst the different UN stakeholders involved in relation to catalyzing new funding. Close coordination at the country level, as well as between country level and PBF in New York City, seems to be an important factor for success, as the example from Mali (see text box) illustrates.

The PBF is well positioned to support UN configurations at the country level with fundraising, given its close relationship with PBF bilateral donors globally and also relationships with other multi-lateral actors, such as the World Bank.

“As far as the coordination of PBF activities with activities undertaken by bilateral donors and other international organisations is concerned, some evaluations underline that donors could have been consulted more in the PBF design phase”.

MARISKA VAN BEIJNUM, PBF EVALUATION REVIEW 2013, CLINGENDAEL, P. 28

Some evaluations provide interesting findings on the use of PBF funds to **influence national level government policy processes**. While policy advocacy is not an explicit priority of PBF investments, it is a critical dimension to consider across all PBF priority areas and windows, especially in light of increasingly shrinking spaces for peacebuilding work in many countries, and given the particular role the UN can play as opposed to INGOs, for example. **It is not yet evident how PBF funded programs can support impacts at policy levels**. Greater clarity on the PBF's role in relation to policy advocacy might be desirable, as illustrated by the Sri Lanka example.

As part of the ongoing processes related to the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, it is also worth assessing how the different UN configurations were used across the entire **UN peacebuilding architecture** to promote catalytic peacebuilding. While not many of the evaluations

provide major insights on this point, some valuable points are worth reflecting upon as part of these wider UN processes. Section 4.4 on UN coherence will provide additional insights in this regard. In terms of looking at the different UN configurations to understand how they were used strategically to catalyze additional peacebuilding programming and funding, much of the available information in evaluation reports comes back to the question of strategic **vision** and role clarity. In Liberia, “[...] the evaluation team heard from interviewees that PBC did not meet its intended role of raising additional funding or using its seniority to assert political pressure in support of key political priorities.” (Liberia portfolio evaluation 2017, p. 21).

“The drafting of the National Policy on Durable Solutions for Conflict-Affected Displacement took place at the same time as the project implementation period. Although the drafting of the policy was assisted by and incorporated the knowledge and experience of ‘a small team of consultants supported by the United Nations’ the PBF funded project lacks documentation of their participation in this policy development process, and how the learning from the project was shared for policy influencing. In future, it would be useful to document such interactions for attribution of policy influence” (Sri Lanka Re-settlement of IDPs evaluation 2017, p. 64).

SRI LANKA RE-SETTLEMENT OF IDPS EVALUATION 2917, P. 64

‘Catalytic’ was not a relevant category in all contexts. In some places, albeit the minority, there were not so many other peacebuilding programming or funding opportunities, and PBF plays an important role in itself for a specific moment in time. For example, in Papua New Guinea there were few externally funded ‘peacebuilding’ efforts. Hence, PBF played a vital role as one of the few peacebuilding funding sources, especially in relation to the political dialogue and processes amongst PNG and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, even though not much additional funding or programming was leveraged.

There is also a certain **tension** between being **catalytic** on the one hand and achieving **‘impact’** on the other. ‘Catalytic engagement’ often implies shorter-term and, relatively speaking, small amounts of funding. At the same time, PBSO/PBF aims to contribute to longer-term peacebuilding ‘impacts’. Short-term projects in peacebuilding

are often set up quite differently than long-term engagements. They involve a different level of rigor when it comes to the scope of conflict analysis, the level of effort that goes into program design processes, and also the type of M&E frameworks involved. **Such shorter-term projects might not require a full evaluation based on formal evaluation criteria such as OECD DAC.** More **flexible approaches** might be more useful for looking at the results and catalytic effects of innovative projects, more in the spirit of learning to inform next steps and longer-term funding priorities. Hence, PBF investments would be well advised to be clear about when a specific engagement is indeed shorter-term or when relevant steps should be taken for longer-term investment.

4.2.4 FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Overall, PBF investments receive **high praise for their flexibility and adaptability** as compared to other funding sources. But the evaluations provide an important distinction between PBF's flexibility to adapt programs to evolving and changing needs in country, which is highly valued, as opposed to PBF's administrative procedures, which are considered as too heavy in some evaluations (not across the board). This distinction again comes in related to points raised in earlier sections of this report: the PBF administrative and reporting procedures are considered appropriate for long-term peacebuilding programming, but not necessarily for short-term, catalytic contributions that might play a role in relation to specific peacebuilding needs (such as Somalia's gap filling approach outlined above).

“ La flexibilité du PBF est également un atout, notamment pour adapter la formulation des projets à l'évolution du contexte et des besoins émergents, même si ces procédures sont jugées lourdes pour un instrument qui se veut flexible.”

CÔTE D'IVOIRE PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. 9

Some evaluations noted a certain **tension between the PBF's flexible approach to adapt quickly on the one hand, and having solid peacebuilding programming and theories of change** on the other, ideally developed in a participatory manner with local partners, which

takes time. This speaks to the creative tension between 'being catalytic' and achieving impact, as raised in the previous section. This might suggest a clearer approach and distinction in requirements for shorter-term, innovative or pilot projects on the one hand, and longer-term engagements with a more transformative ambition in peacebuilding.

At the same time, **adaptive management** is important for all types of programming. The example of the Kyrgyzstan Learning and Adaptation Strategy, as mentioned above, shows that adaptive management does not have to happen at the expense of solid planning and programming.

4.3 HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS PBF'S PRIORITY AREAS AND WINDOWS

This synthesis review of evaluations does not provide a deep, substantive synthesis of findings across the various evaluations regarding each priority sector or priority window. Each of these priority sectors and windows are very broad and, in practice, encompass a variety of different projects and programs that are hard to compare. Hence, it is not possible to come to conclusions about the 'Effectiveness' or 'Relevance' of specific projects or programmatic approaches under each of the broad priority areas, based on the evaluations reviewed. Instead, this section provides an analysis of some of the most salient points that emerged across PBF's priority areas and windows.

Furthermore, the PBF has commissioned sector reviews in a couple of programmatic areas to draw more in-depth conclusions about the results, Relevance and Effectiveness. For instance, sector reviews in the areas of transitional justice, and youth, peace and security are forthcoming in 2020.

4.3.1 PBF PRIORITY AREAS: PEACEBUILDING AS A 'SECTOR' AND PEACEBUILDING AS AN 'APPROACH'

An overarching insight that emerged across the evaluations is that how PBF funded peacebuilding programs are implemented is as important as what is being done. Important factors include:

a) processes for engaging national and local partners; b) promotion of local leadership and ownership; c) accompaniment of local actors; d) promoting capacities and coherence of local networks; and e) enhancing national and local capacities for conflict prevention and social cohesion. In this regard, it is important to recognize PBF's contribution to **peacebuilding as a sector**, which involves working across different thematic areas and actors, as well as **peacebuilding as an approach**, which requires a focus on how specific activities across these sectors are implemented with what results.

The section below summarizes a few **highlights** across the evaluations, combining insights on the 'what' and the 'how.'

A focus on government leadership and ownership.

It can be challenging to engage governments with limited capacity in fragile contexts, as functionaries and politicians might play difficult roles themselves in relation to ongoing or past conflict dynamics. Nevertheless, it is a key strength of the PBF to consistently promote government ownership of strategic PBF investments. This is also important for re-establishing trust between governments and their citizens in post-conflict societies.

“Within a context where significant resources are channeled for stabilization and recovery efforts outside of Government management – even if in consultation – projects such as the IRF-141 National Window were highly appreciated and valued by Government stakeholders. The work through the Government was cited by field respondents as improving the visibility of the Government in supplying basic services and increasing trust of the citizens towards the State.”

SOMALIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. VII

Authentic community participation, inclusion, and promoting community ownership and participation.

Some PBF investments have taken these principles seriously to, for example, promote economic opportunities for marginalized populations in different contexts. Where this worked well, and where relevant RUNOs and NUNOs had the relevant community engagement and facilitation skills available, this proved to be an important practice in peacebuilding. But in other cases this did not work so well. At times, civil

society perceived even basic consultations by PBF funded work as a 'ticking of the box' exercise and did not feel that their needs were taken seriously or even 'heard.'

This played out in different shapes and forms as the examples in the quotes below highlight. For example, the UN system was perceived as a) only benefitting a small group of privileged people; b) biased towards working with 'donor darlings' (organizations that often benefit from international assistance because they have learned to engage with the international community in 'their language'), or c) focusing on the 'easier to reach' population, such as those living in capital cities.

“While the relevance of the program was applicable to most respondents, a sizable difference exists between Monrovia-based and rural respondents regarding community consultations. Respondents in Monrovia overwhelmingly felt that PBF plans were based on community consultations. For rural respondents, the perception was the opposite. Stakeholders outside of Monrovia did not feel they were properly consulted about the planning process.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2017, P. 11

“Certaines représentantes des organisations féminines interrogées regardent le projet de renforcement de la participation politique des femmes (IRF 187) comme servant les intérêts d'une petite minorité des femmes issues des élites urbaines, qui sont concernées par la participation politique, mais pas nécessairement par les besoins de la vaste majorité des femmes du pays.”

CAR PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. 12

Accompaniment of national and local actors and promoting national and local networks. Evidence across the evaluations demonstrates that PBF investments played critical roles in the accompaniment and coaching of national and local governmental and non-government actors. Particular highlights in this regard were efforts that promoted not only the capabilities of single institutions and organizations, but also synergies and coherence amongst various actors involved in one sector, as well as support for national and local networks. This work included, for example, local peace committees to support redress of grievances and to facilitate negotiations, or other local conflict resolution mechanisms.

“At the local municipality level, there are a range of local level actors involved with different UN projects including the municipal authorities, the POM (local level police force), the municipal council, women’s councils, the youth committee, the council of elders, school officials, village heads, among others. One constant theme in local interviews was that there appeared to be relatively little coordination among these bodies and very limited understanding regarding the overall objectives of the PPP or the relationship of each of these actors to the larger set of projects involved.”

KYRGYZSTAN EVALUATION OF PRIORITY PLAN, 2017, P. 35

On the one hand, this makes PBF investments more effective, relevant, and sustainable. On the other hand, it is also the responsibility of the UNCT and PBF funded initiatives to support coherence amongst various national and local entities, and to promote synergies, alongside greater UN system coherence.

Support for the implementation of peace agreements and political dialogue. PBF funding has supported important work supporting the implementation of peace agreements and political dialogue. For example, in CAR, PBF funding was used strategically to promote political dialogue, including mediation and negotiation efforts, in support of the signing of the peace agreement (signed in early 2019).

At the same time, the mere initiation of PBF support can create critical political dialogue with national governments and put peacebuilding on the agenda. For example, the JSC and meetings of the joint supervisory body to manage PBF funds in Papua New Guinea was a critical element in strengthening relationships and trust between the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government. Again, the ‘how’ was as important as the ‘what’ in those cases.

“It was noted that the PPP was very helpful in initiating dialogue with the military and building a partnership with them, especially in terms of work to animate military officers towards peacebuilding work”.

SRI LANKA LESSONS LEARNED REPORT, 2018, P. 20

Strengthen national and local infrastructures to promote conflict prevention and promote social cohesion. Many evaluations stress the importance

of PBF funding for national infrastructures for conflict prevention. In most cases the crucial actions were to strengthen national and local conflict management mechanisms and policies, and to fund investments in broader and longer-term capacities. This was considered a critical role for UN agencies, as opposed to other actors. Where PBF funding was merely used to fund more ‘projects’ in one sector, observers felt that the UN had missed an opportunity to play a more strategic role – as the PNG quote illustrates. Again, for sustained engagement in conflict prevention, a long-term structural approach is necessary.

“Some areas of support in trauma healing were seen as less strategic and thus less relevant and appropriate. [...] working to support trauma healing through the refurbishment of facilities, training and networking of professionals, and service provision itself rather than pursuing a strategy of developing policies and frameworks for trauma healing [...]”

PAPUA NEW GUINEA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2018, P. 5, 18

Putting peacebuilding on the public and policy agenda. PBF’s contributions can be relatively small compared to other funding sources, but can play quite a strategic role to place or keep peacebuilding on the public and policy agendas. The Côte d’Ivoire portfolio evaluation illustrates that PBF’s contributions, albeit fairly limited in financial and political weight, has contributed to keep peacebuilding on the national policy map. Also, as illustrated in the Papua New Guinea example below, PBF funding can be critical to ensure consistent information sharing amongst the population by providing platforms for public debate, and providing spaces for governments and citizens to come together to engage in exchanges about national priorities are critical steps in any peacebuilding process.

“People across Bougainville face tremendous challenges with learning about the implementation of peace and participating meaningfully in dialogue and debate, in particular without enough information. The PPP was able to successfully support significant information dissemination to the population as well as support ways for communities to discuss peacebuilding with political leaders.”

PAPUA NEW GUINEA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2018, P. 4

4.3.2 KEY INSIGHTS ACROSS PBF'S PRIORITY WINDOWS

Cross-border and regional investments to tackle transnational drivers of conflict. PBF funding in this area is promising and an innovative area of funding that not many other funders support. That said, supporting cross-border peacebuilding initiatives adds more complexity to often already complex peacebuilding portfolios. It requires implementers to manage different levels of sensitivities across different geographies and jurisdictions, and requires a significant level of flexibility from peacebuilding funders. The PBF is uniquely positioned to fund cross-border peacebuilding activities, leveraging the presence of UN agencies and UN Country Teams in neighboring countries.

Evaluations of PBF funded cross-border peacebuilding work are few, so the evidence is only emerging. This is also a result of the fact that the multiplicity of actors and the complexity of programs involving multiple UN country teams result in a slower pace of approval of new projects than for single-country programs. In 2019, the PBF approved new cross-border investments amounting to \$7.8 million, which is fairly limited compared to other funding envelopes.

Emerging lessons from past PBF funded cross-border peacebuilding work include the following:

▲ **Conflict dynamics cut across communities and borders.** Funding cross-border peacebuilding work is an excellent opportunity to address cross-border and sub-regional conflict dynamics.

▲ **Cross-border engagement** is a good opportunity to work across the development-humanitarian-peacebuilding nexus. For example, at the border of Tanzania-Burundi, PBF funding was used to mitigate instability and conflict linked to displacement in cross-border areas, improve protection, support displaced persons, and enhance resilience of host communities. As a pilot project, this might yield interesting insights on the

humanitarian-development-peace-building nexus and PBF's contribution to the peacebuilding component – again as a sector AND as an approach. At the same time, as outlined earlier, it is critical to be clear about the **type of change that is expected from a peacebuilding perspective**, within larger humanitarian and development operations.

▲ **Joint analysis and planning** are even more important in cross-border work than in individual projects within one country, to be clear about drivers of conflict, and entry points for positive change.

“The joint approach adopted for the planning and implementation of Cross-border Project between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia appears to be the main success factor that has driven the positive changes observed at project completion.”

CÔTE D'IVOIRE – LIBERIA CROSS-BORDER EVALUATION, 2019, P. 9

Facilitating transitions between different UN configurations. The evaluations reviewed do not provide extensive information on this priority window of PBF, even though the PBF's role has become more prominent in this year during 2019, as outlined above. In 2019, PBF approved new investments that aim to contribute to addressing peace and development challenges that countries continue to face during and after mission transitions. Within the available information from the evaluations, the PBF often plays a small (in terms of funding) but strategic role in placing and keeping peacebuilding on the UN map with national actors during times of UN transitions. For example in Côte d'Ivoire, PBF did not play a huge role in mitigating the gap between UNCT and ONUCI (UN Operations in Côte d'Ivoire) transitions in terms of human and financial resources, given its limited size. But it managed to keep peacebuilding on the agenda during a time of transition. In Central African Republic, during a time of UN transitions, PBF provided important contributions to support political dialogue and national reconciliation.

Youth and women's empowerment to foster inclusion and gender equality. Overall, PBF's GYPI

considered a very useful and important priority window of the PBF, with good project results across the board. There are many examples of PBF programming in this area. It is currently also the only funding window that can be accessed by NUNOs directly.

There are many lessons from various project level evaluations on different levels. These are summarized below, highlighting a few common themes that emerge as the more strategic questions in relation to this synthesis review.

▲ Relevance: Few of the women's and youth empowerment evaluations link the general rationale of the project to the conflict analysis. Hence it is difficult to know the particular role that women's empowerment and gender issues play in relation to the conflict dynamics in the first place, and hence to assess Relevance of programming from a peacebuilding perspective. This also speaks to how 'Relevance' was defined by those designing and managing the PBF funded programs and those conducting the evaluations. Often, the rationale applied was more around the question of whether youth and women's empowerment is important for the general positive development of the country (the answer to which is usually 'yes'), but not whether programming under investigation contributed to addressing drivers of conflict or engaged with factors for peace more deliberately. For example, the 2019 Liberia Inclusive Security project evaluation defines relevance in the following way: *"Relevance refers to the extent to which the objectives of the joint project are consistent with evolving national needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders, and are aligned with government priorities, as well as with the policies and strategies of UN Women, IOM and UNDP"* (p. 24). This is rather a definition of 'appropriateness to the context' but not Relevance from a peacebuilding perspective.

▲ Theories of change. Related to the above point on Relevance, the theories of change of projects (if available) should reveal how the empowerment of women, women's participation or youth engagement have a clear pathway to desired peacebuilding changes. While there is general agreement that inclusion of women and youth is an important value and component in any peaceful society, the PBF funded work in this area does not always make it clear how women's empowerment or youth participation contributes to sustainable peacebuilding and addresses key drivers of conflict.

▲ Broader socio-political impact in relation to women's empowerment and youth promotion initiatives. This connection is not always clear or strong, as documented in various evaluations. Many of the women's empowerment and youth initiatives focus on sensitization and capacity building, but do not build on such efforts to advocate for greater participation of youth and women in political decision-making processes where they might actually apply their new skills in attempting to influence key decision makers.

“This move from individual to socio-political and institutional change would be crucial for increasing the portfolio's contribution to women empowerment.”

MALI PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. 34

For example, PBF funding is often used to promote women's participation in community processes, economic development, or vocational training opportunities. However, women are still underrepresented at higher level decision making in governance peacebuilding processes, such as negotiations among contending groups or development of a national peace agenda

“However, too often focus was on increasing the number of female participants rather than ensuring the quality of their participation.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2017, P. III

▲ **“Doing good versus stopping the bad” and engaging the “hard to reach.”** “Doing good versus stopping the bad” and engaging the “hard to reach.” There is a question whether PBF funding in the GYPI area reaches the ‘hard to reach,’ such as, perpetrators of violence and those who are not obvious project partners but key decision-makers and influencers for peace or violence in a given setting. For example, the Côte d’Ivoire portfolio evaluation revealed individual progress at the project levels, while overall participation of women and youth in political processes remains a challenge, and overall GBV (gender-based violence) rates have not really decreased in the country. This is a classic example of how project effectiveness can happen in a context in which we can discern no larger peace effectiveness. This is also illustrated by the youth programming example from Liberia cited below.

“The PBF funded programs sought to address the needs of youth but did not sufficiently target at-risk youth. The NYSP [National Youth Service Program] focused on incorporating youth into peacebuilding programming and was risk-taking, innovative and generally successful, while funding was available. However, overall, given the extensive needs of young people in Liberia, the funding for projects targeting youth was inadequate. Consequently, many at-risk youths were left out of PBF programming. Many respondents considered this a missed opportunity, especially since public opinion surveys consistently show that Liberians consider at-risk youth to be one of the key potential conflict instigators in Liberia.”

SOMALIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. VII

▲ There seems to be a certain level of confusion between what is **gender and youth** sensitive programming and what is **gender and youth specific programming**, as reflected in some of the rather confused theories of change and indicators. This is also related to the above point in this section about the need for clearer distinctions regarding whether a PBF funded initiative in relation to youth and women’s empowerment is actually relevant from a peacebuilding

perspective, and related confusion on that point in current programming. This confusion is similar to the confusion that frequently exists between conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding (although this did not come strongly in the evaluations reviewed, as conflict sensitivity was not implemented and/or assessed that much in the first place, as highlighted above).

Assuming that the GYPI priority window will continue to be an important one for PBF going forward, addressing some of the gaps described above could lead to programming that is stronger and more relevant to peacebuilding in the future.

4.4 UN COHERENCE

While ‘Coherence’ has been a criterion in evaluations of peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions for a while, it was only formally included in the general OECD/DAC evaluation criteria during their most recent revisions in late 2019.

OECD/DAC defines ‘Coherence’ as ‘the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution’. It includes both **internal coherence** and **external coherence**. Internal coherence addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out by the same institution/government, as well as the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which that institution/government adheres. External coherence considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors’ interventions in the same context. This includes complementarity, harmonization and co-ordination with others, and the extent to which the intervention is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort.

Operational and **policy** coherence is also relevant in the context of the 2016 twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of the recommendations emerging from the 2018 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. The Secretary-General’s reform of the peace and security pillar, which took effect

in 2019, was aimed at strengthening coherence, including through joined-up analysis, planning and programming.

PBF is the only large-scale peacebuilding funding resource within the UN system, and the only one that focuses on funding peacebuilding initiatives **across different UN agencies and other partners.**¹⁷ It is uniquely positioned to catalyze joint analysis and joint programming in support of nationally-led efforts, and to provide a platform for UN agencies to work together and strive for broader collective peacebuilding impacts. In reality, however, individual agency needs and mandates, and competition for funding frequently dominate the approach to PBF funding, limiting the potential for PBF efforts to increase UN coherence and collective results.

This synthesis review analyzed available insights from the evaluations regarding how PBF funds have been used by UNCTs to increase UN coherence, including during the first year of implementation of the recent reforms. **There is currently no data available in the evaluations that could determine if greater coherence also led to more effective programs.**

Joint projects and joint programming. PBF investments have, in many cases, contributed to an increase in joint UN programming related to peacebuilding, including related programmatic synergies. In some cases, joint programming benefits from quality practices, including regular exchanges among involved staff across the different UN agencies, and collective problem-solving sessions regarding program challenges and the changing context (see for example Somalia portfolio evaluation 2019).

Over the years, while much progress has been made in some contexts to develop more shared strategies across UN agencies, the problems that have been intrinsic to PBF investment since its beginning in 2006 remain in many places. These include, among other issues, competition for

funding amongst UN agencies; a **'divide-the-pie'** mentality rather than making decisions on who is best placed to support what based on **shared strategic peacebuilding vision** for the country; overlap of projects and programs; lack of overall coherence; and UN agencies applying for PBF funding that have very limited peacebuilding capacity or prior experience implementing related programs. The 'divide-the-pie' mentality is further reinforced by the political contexts in which PBF funding is implemented, and sometimes strong advocacy and influence from national government counterparts for certain directions and priorities.

“La cohérence interne et la convergence géographique des projets PBF ont permis de capitaliser sur les mêmes structures et mécanismes existants pour mener des activités complémentaires, connecter différents acteurs locaux, et développer et consolider les capacités locales, ce qui a permis de multiplier ou pour le moins consolider les effets des interventions individuelles de chaque projet.”

CÔTE D'IVOIRE PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. 10

All the factors listed above limit the overall effectiveness of PBF portfolios. These limitations have been documented extensively in prior PBF reviews, and surface again in most of the evaluations analyzed for this review.

“The evaluations point to the UN system's apparent difficulty in dividing PBF funding based on a strategic peacebuilding vision rather than taking a 'divide the pie' approach (i.e. dividing funds among agencies and projects).” A 2014 Burundi PBF evaluation also highlighted these issues and provided a useful recommendation for PBSO to “assess the capacity of RUNOs to design, implement, and monitor this distinctive or 'high quality peacebuilding programming' before agreeing to provide funding for a specific project in the future.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2017, P. 22

The importance of a strategic framework at UNCT level to promote coherence. The reasons for this limited strategic peacebuilding vision at UNCT level and related scrambling for funding and overlap are multiple, the most important ones highlighted in the evaluations are listed below. Several of these have been highlighted in past evaluations and PBF reviews:

¹⁷ Another relevant multi-agency funding source, focused on conflict prevention, is the Joint UNDP/DPPA Program on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. While Peace and Development Advisers frequently support broader UN peacebuilding and conflict prevention purposes, including PBF funded initiatives, PBF's funding is significantly larger in size and includes the entire UN family.

⚠ **Joint Steering Committees** are not perceived as supporting overall strategic decision making on most effective peacebuilding in a given context and are not well set up to ensure greater linkages and complementarities between efforts when approving projects.

⚠ The **'divide-the-pie'** approach has prioritized the distribution of PBF funds relatively equally amongst UN agencies, rather than basing decisions on which RUNO might have the most leverage and strategic entry points in specific areas; differential peacebuilding capacities, resources, and skills; as well as internal support for peacebuilding work. These dynamics are further complicated by politics and influence from national governments.

⚠ The **abolishment of the PPP** process as one important vehicle for jointly developing an overall vision for peacebuilding for the UNCT in a given context without replacing it with another process.

⚠ **PBF guidelines** and application processes do not sufficiently emphasize complementarities and synergies.

⚠ **PBF approval processes** are not sufficiently clear and rigorous enough about what constitutes solid peacebuilding and what should not be funded under PBF.

“The hard truth might be that although the PBF serves the UN system as a whole, it might not be the best use of its limited resources to distribute them (equally) among all members of the UNCT. A clear set of criteria and priorities should be developed – in cooperation with PBSO – that guides the work of the Steering Committee which applies it rigorously and communicates decisions in a transparent manner. This increase in procedural fairness would help reduce frustrations.”

MALI PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, P. 37

As noted above, there are hopes that the **reform of the RC and UN Development Coordination System** might empower RCs to be more pro-active decision-makers and influencers for greater UN coherence at UNCT levels.

Role clarity is critical, especially in complex country configurations where UNCTs, peacekeeping missions, and/or the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) are all involved.

Ensuring overall coordination and coherence amongst the multiple UN actors within a given context in relation to peacebuilding has proven to be challenging, especially if a country is also on the PBC agenda and has a peacekeeping or political mission. Much progress has been made in terms of UN coherence and coordination, as part of the UN reforms. However, it is too early to draw solid conclusions how these more recent changes will play out in practice, and what their influence on PBF effectiveness might be. If PBF is interested in these types of conclusions, it will need to include dedicated **lines of inquiry** along these lines in the ToRs for its future evaluations. PBF might also engage UNCTs regarding this question early in the design of PBF portfolios.

“Fund's growth is intrinsically linked to the implementation of UN Reforms. Specifically, the capacity of the RCs to identify peacebuilding opportunities and guide their development into projects based on strong conflict analysis and theories of change will be critical.”

DFID EVALUATION OF PBF 2018/2019, P. 16

While overall UN coherence is important, PBF should also be aware of the implications for the **'visibility'** and footprint of PBF interventions. While **integration of PBF within larger UNCT strategies** allows for better strategic UN coherence, it does raise the risk that no one body will pay specific attention to the management and coordination of the portfolio itself. This was, for example, one key lesson emerging from the Somalia portfolio evaluation (2019). Closer coordination might also limit the ability of PBF funded engagements to take risks or be innovative, if tied too closely to wider UN systems or a risk-averse Resident Coordinator.

As highlighted earlier in this review, **role clarity** between the different UN stakeholders involved in

a given setting is fundamental. It is essential that role clarity is in place, at a working level, as well as the senior leadership level. For example, the Central African Republic portfolio evaluation reveals that, while there was good overall coordination on a higher/senior leadership level between the heads of MINUSCA, PBF/PBSO, and the UNCT, coordination was a challenge on a working level.

“PBF Liberia benefitted from active and motivated PBC Chairs dedicated to ensuring the ultimate success of the investment. However, while being beneficial for spurring discussion and interest in PBF activities, the active participation of PBC Chairs also created some confusion around who was ultimately responsible for the technical leadership of PBF.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2017, P. VII

In Mali, the PBF Secretariat is housed within MINUSCA, under the supervision of the DSRSG, while the PBF Secretariat administratively depends on UNDP. This set-up has created confusion amongst PBF partners, as it is not clear whether PBF ‘belongs’ to the mission or UNDP, or whether it is a separate entity. This confusion has not been helpful in terms of overall coherence and buy-in from the government.

Funding coherence is a critical element of overall peacebuilding coherence. This is frequently a practical challenge, especially in settings where there are multiple funding sources geared towards peacebuilding (and related areas, such as stabilization, post-conflict recovery, conflict prevention, etc.). As already mentioned, PBF’s funding footprint is usually relatively small compared to other funding windows and is frequently related to specific peacebuilding needs or filling gaps in other portfolios or not yet existing portfolios.

PBF’s contribution is most strategic if leveraged to complement other funding types. This needs to be clearly identified and articulated. A clearer understanding of what funding windows are available for what purposes (within the UN system and from other sources) could also reduce competition and tensions between UN agencies and UN peacebuilding missions as applicable, and increase complementarity and sequencing of activities. For Mali, for example “this could e.g.

include an emphasis on the political and greater risk-taking nature, the accompaniment of infrastructure projects financed by other donors through community-based interventions, and the preparation of the handover of MINUSMA residual tasks to both the Government of Mali and the UNCT, as per the Security Council Resolution 2423 (2018).” (Mali portfolio evaluation, p. ix).

Funding coherence is also important outside of the UN system, including with other key players, such as bilateral donors, or the World Bank. Again, being clear about PBF’s particular funding niche and articulating that more clearly could help enhance complementarities. Some of the evaluations noted missed opportunities in the past when complementarities with larger peacebuilding funders was not pursued.

In the wider peacebuilding field, there are emerging approaches to support greater coherence and **collective impact** of complex portfolios of various peacebuilding initiatives, which could serve as inspiration for PBF to experiment with going forward.¹⁸

4.5 DESIGN, MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

This section highlights relevant findings from the evaluations regarding **PBF’s role in promoting systematic conflict analysis, peacebuilding program design, monitoring and evaluation, and learning for PBF funded peacebuilding initiatives.** It includes both direct findings in this area from the evaluations, as well as broader observations from the author of this synthesis review based on an analysis of the content and quality of the evaluations and other evaluative documents reviewed. A degree of triangulation was also achieved by checking back on other documents, such as conflict analyses or project related documents in relation to some projects and portfolios.

Overall, the level of clarity from PBF in terms of DM&E requirements and the type of support provided is appreciated as having improved over time and especially in more recent years.

18. See for example Woodrow, Peter: *Framework for Collective Impact in Peacebuilding*. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2019. Cambridge, MA, 2019

he guidance and support provided from PBF in New York has been valued.

“While the poor quality of M&E was consistently raised during interviews as a shortcoming of the portfolio, interviewees highlighted that PBSO took concrete steps, and made incremental progress, on addressing this shortcoming. These steps included a PBF-wide practice of assigning two PBSO staff to each country, one with program officer functions and the other with M&E functions, as well as bringing in an international M&E Specialist to work in PBSO. The evaluation team also noted improvements in program M&E reporting, including the commissioning of justice and security perception baselines and revisions to the PBF portfolio results framework.”

LIBERIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2017, P. 18

However, in some instances, in smaller countries and portfolios specifically with more limited human resources, PBF DM&E requirements were considered as **too labor intensive for relatively small scale funding**. “Peace-Building Fund Rules and Procedures Are Exhausting: The two short-term IRF projects of under USD 1.5 million had extensive management, monitoring, and evaluation requirements that are little different from larger initiatives. UN Women and UNDP devoted additional non-IRF funding to meeting these requirements.” (Papua New Guinea PPP 2017 evaluation, p. 8)

Generally speaking, there seems to be need and demand for increased use of **higher-level qualitative data** (in addition to project level day to day monitoring data) to better capture higher level changes that PBF interventions contributed to, and more emphasis and resources to facilitate learning within and across PBF portfolios. “A greater emphasis on detailed qualitative information in the project documentation is also beneficial as it will document internal lessons learnt and survive staff turnover which is inevitable and the loss of knowledge that results.” (Sri Lanka Re-integration of IDPs evaluation, 2017, p. 64)

“Most of the projects developed were overly aspirational given the conditions of the context, leading to a tendency to target higher level outcomes before the requisite basic foundations had been built.”

SOMALIA PORTFOLIO EVALUATION, 2019, P. XV

Need for more realism. Many of the evaluations

note that expectations were not realistic regarding what can actually be achieved with PBF funding in relatively short periods of time. This is reflected in overall project and program strategies, the formulation of project objectives, theories of change, and M&E frameworks.

Design, monitoring, and evaluation at portfolio level. Designing for and capturing higher level results at portfolio level is currently one of the biggest gaps in relation to PBF's DM&E approach. The current mechanisms and systems in place are not set up to design for, monitor or assess collective impacts at portfolio level, beyond the results of specific projects and programs. At the same time, for example as part of the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review, there is a thirst for this type of aggregate information in relation to PBF investments more broadly.

The PBF relies on the DM&E systems and approaches of individual UN agencies. Looking at the results of individual projects and program does not help to understand **collective impacts at portfolio levels**. To capture these more systemic changes, some of the evaluations recommend allocating more PBF resources to allow for portfolio level DM&E and to develop and test new DM&E approaches that would enable the design for and capturing of collective impacts at portfolio levels.

For PBF, developing and experimenting with new **DM&E approaches and systems at the portfolio level** to capture higher level collective impacts across the efforts of different RUNOs and NUNOs could be a great source of innovation going forward. The PBF is uniquely positioned to do so and thus, make a contribution to the peacebuilding field more widely. Having better systems in place to capture collective results at the PBF portfolio level would also support PBF's ability to communicate PBF achievements and to create stronger narratives about peacebuilding impacts, both at the country level, and to feed those into global policy processes.¹⁹ Having better systems in place to capture collective results at

19. For past efforts to advance theory and practice on the question of cumulative and collective impacts in peacebuilding, please see the [collaborative learning initiative](#) CDA led 2017-2019 in collaboration with Humanity United. Furthermore, Peter Woodrow and Diana Chigas summarize lessons from past case studies in this publication: [Adding Up to Peace: The Cumulative Impacts of Peace Initiatives](#), 2018.

the PBF portfolio level would also support PBF's ability to communicate PBF achievements and to create stronger narratives about peacebuilding impacts, both at the country level, and to feed those into global policy processes.

More honest and realistic DM&E capacity assessments and ongoing coaching of UNCTs. The evaluations reveal that even in those cases where PBF provided additional DM&E support (through PBF staff in New York or through consultants deployed to provide temporary support), UNCTs were not always able to pick up the work produced by others, internalize it, and use it themselves going forward. For example, Papua New Guinea received support for community-based monitoring (CBM) in consultation with PBF, through a consultant, who supported the UNCT in a useful way, but teams in ground were then unable to leverage and use the new processes, as illustrated by the quote.

“These mechanisms produced high-quality data that was unprecedented in Bougainville on the perceptions and amount of information of community leaders and the population on the BPA [Bougainville Peace Agreement]. This mechanism appears to have not been used to a great extent, however. [...] No interview noted the use of the CBM data for PPP management. While the data from the two population surveys was available, no interviewee noted specific ways that this information was used to inform PPP planning or implementation.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA PPP EVALUATION, 2018, P. 27

5. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PBSO/PBF

This section summarizes the key recommendations resulting from the evaluations reviewed, and includes additional reflections from the author, based on the cross-analysis conducted for this synthesis review.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF THE PBF

1. Provide clearer criteria for when PBF funding will be approved – and when it will not.

The PBF should become a 'role model' when it comes to applying a degree of rigor regarding what constitutes strong peacebuilding programming. By making funding approvals contingent on more consistently applied peacebuilding programming quality criteria, it will support UN agencies to raise their own bar internally and also help RCs in the strategic management of PBF funded portfolios. The requirements for joint conflict analysis and participatory program design clearly need to be different for the IRF compared with the PRF windows. The PBF project assessment scorecard (PAC) that was developed in 2019 is one emerging step in that direction. It is a check-list that includes different program quality criteria (e.g. related to conflict analysis, theory of change, conflict-sensitivity or M&E) that are scored during project approval. It is a step in the right direction. At the same time, like every other check-list, is only as good as the wider processes within which they are being applied. Hence, an overall increased rigor and commitment to enhanced PBF program quality combined with a more systematic assessment of capacities and prior peacebuilding experience of different RUNOs and NUNOs is required.

2. Consider a review of PBF timelines and resolve the tension between 'catalytic' and long-term 'impacts.'

As highlighted in this review based on evaluation findings, the IRF and PRF timeframes in most cases were considered to be too short for developing a long-term strategy for peacebuilding.

Many portfolios have been funded for sometimes ten or more years, and have evolved through many short-term projects and programs, rather than systematic analysis and longer-term planning. Being clearer about the distinction between short-term opportunistic funding (intended to be 'gap-filling' and catalytic) and longer term programming from the onset will lead to better peacebuilding results. Because the PBF has become the de facto peacebuilding funding source in the UN system, a review of the general funding and programming assumptions related to PBF since its inception might be advisable. One option could include keeping the two quite distinct funding windows: a) one that is indeed responding to immediate peacebuilding needs in support of urgent political peacebuilding priorities, including possibly a greater emphasis on capitalizing on political windows of opportunity, as highlighted by the Somalia evaluation; and b) a second window that is much more long-term, extending beyond the current PRF eligibility and providing space for long-term strategic systemic change, and capacity building. This could then be mirrored by two approaches to evaluation. While portfolio evaluations constitute a useful approach to assessing longer-term and higher-level results, not every PBF funded project needs an evaluation from an accountability perspective. The section below describes what possible alternatives might look like (recommendations for PBSO/PBF in relation to design, monitoring, evaluation and learning).

3. Strengthen strategic planning and oversight of PBF portfolios.

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.

3. This could include the following steps:

- ▲ Get serious about **collective impacts** at portfolios levels, put relevant mechanisms in place, and experiment with new and innovative approaches. Recommendations in the DM&E and Learning section provide more insights on what that could look like.
- ▲ Develop processes that fulfil the function of **strategic planning at UNCT portfolio levels**; figure out what needs to replace the abolished PPPs.
- ▲ Provide relevant **strategic support to RCs to perform portfolio level oversight** and accountability. Do not rely on Peace and Development Advisers only to fulfil this function. Strengthen the role and capacities of PBF Secretariats, with real peacebuilding, facilitation and senior DM&E and learning facilitation capacities.
- ▲ Develop clearer **quality criteria** for the selection of JSC members, including the involvement of national level civil society peacebuilding experts.
- ▲ In countries on the agenda of the PBC, leverage more consistently the benefits and different **roles** of various UN actors involved (PBF, PBF, UNCT, special UN missions etc.) to promote a coherent and strategic UN peacebuilding vision and agenda and support fundraising.
- ▲ Use parts of the increased PBF budgets to strengthen PBF capacities in New York to enable support to strategic portfolio management. Prioritize strong peacebuilding capacities in new hires, including facilitation and DM&E and learning facilitation experience.

“ Themes discussed in the collaborative spaces tended to focus on operational challenges or individual project updates. When asked for examples of types of topics covered in the JSC or outcome level working group meetings, all examples cited related to discussing an implementation challenge, relationships with specific implementing partners, or sharing project progress updates in terms of activities accomplished and budget expended. No stakeholder cited examples of discussing progress towards the strategic objectives or analyzing whether the peacebuilding priorities reflected in the TOC were still valid.”

KYRGYZSTAN EVALUATION OF PPP, 2017, P. 35

4. **Make capacity strengthening of UN agencies and national partners a priority.**

The limited capacities of RUNOs and national government counterparts with solid peacebuilding programming has been a recurring theme in many evaluations and past PBF reviews. It causes one of the biggest limitations to the sustainability of PBF investments. As part of the UN Sustaining Peace agenda, many multi-mandate UN agencies have started to develop internal processes to strengthen their capacity in peacebuilding programming, conflict analysis, and conflict sensitivity, but often struggle to allocate sufficient funding for it. PBF could engage in a strategic dialogue with PBF donors to use a certain percentage of country-based funding to develop a capacity development plan for RUNOs, NUNOs, and national partners. This should benefit only those RUNOs, NUNOs and national partners that credibly demonstrate a long-term commitment to embracing peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity as an institutional priority. Those who make such a commitment must show that they are willing to take relevant steps to develop their internal capacity by allocating core resources for staff and process development, and changing internal systems as needed.

5. **Continue and expand the explorations to fund national and local civil society actors directly.**

It is an important step that PBF's 2020-2024 Strategy commits to exploring new avenues to provide more flexible funding to local-level and community based organizations directly, with modalities adjusted to different capacity levels from context to context. This is in line with international policy discussions in the wider peacebuilding field. PBF should contribute proactively and creatively to this emerging agenda and contribute practical experiences of how this works in practice. Funding local organizations should, in principle, follow the same quality criteria as for RUNOs or NUNOs, but administrative requirements would need to be designed to avoid overburdening local organizations with bureaucratic requirements they cannot meet. Partnerships between local NGOs and INGOs could be considered in this regard.

6. Articulate PBF's engagement principles – peacebuilding as an approach. As highlighted in section 4.3, the evaluations illustrate clearly that it is important to choose peacebuilding technical sectors consciously and in line with existing entry points and RUNO and NUNOs experience and skills. At the same time, the highest priority must be placed on **how** implementation is done. Working in peacebuilding requires sound substantive and technical expertise, but it also demands solid experience in process facilitation, multi-stakeholder engagement, empowerment of national partners, and knowledgeable approaches to conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity (to name just a few). PBF could sharpen its edge as a fund by articulating not only **what** it funds, but also **how** it expects RUNOs and NUNOs to engage through a peacebuilding approach.

2. Develop and experiment with new DM&E and learning approaches at portfolio levels. If PBF wants to be serious about increasing and capturing portfolio level results and 'impacts,' it needs to adapt its M&E approach. Any technical level product (such as a 'results framework' at portfolio level) would need to be based on a higher-level articulation of the UNCT collective vision for peacebuilding—that is, the specific achievable changes it intends to work towards. This requires figuring out how to replace some of the functions that the PPP processes fulfilled, and how to experiment with new methods to enable portfolio level planning and monitoring. These efforts can be based on approaches and learnings developed and tested by other peacebuilding actors, such as systemic conflict analysis, systems approaches to peacebuilding strategies, and collective impact approaches that enable a greater degree of cumulative impacts.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGN, MONITORING, AND LEARNING

1. Strengthen DM&E and learning capacities of RUNOs and NUNOs (and possibly local NGOs in the future), PBF Secretariats, and within PBF in New York. In line with the above recommendation to dedicate a part of PBF's investments to capacity development of RUNOs and NUNOs, prioritize DM&E and learning facilitation skills as part of the package. This should include more systematic conflict analysis, the development of sound theories of change relevant for peacebuilding, an increase in the overall understanding of what constitutes relevant peacebuilding, and progress towards portfolio level strategies. Currently, there are many small scale M&E requirements, but often a 'mezzo-level' of design, and M&E thinking is missing.

3. Connect the “D” with the “M&E and prioritize learning across PBF portfolios. Currently, the peacebuilding program design support and approval processes within PBF is disconnected from the monitoring and evaluation function. This should be changed, as the results reported through 'M&E' can only be as good as what went into the analysis and the design in the first place. In other words: you cannot fix in an evaluation what wasn't done as part of an initial conflict analysis and program design. A stronger integration of those functions, overcoming internal silo thinking, and beefing up required skills and capacities at the level of PBF in New York will be critical. This should go hand in hand with increased **facilitation of learning processes across PBF funded portfolios.** A significant amount of evidence and learning is being generated through the increased number of evaluations since 2018. This investment will become useful only if the findings from these evaluations, as well as from PBF's sector review and other types of reviews (like this synthesis review), are used to stimulate

“UNCT capacity is slowly building with mixed results and depends in part on the level of PBF funding, the RC and PDA. There does not appear to be a broader strategic plan for building UNCT capacity.”

DFID 2018/2019 EVALUATION OF PBF, P. 8

discussions within PBF and PBSO, amongst different PBF country portfolios and UNCTs, with PBF donors, as well as the UN Peacebuilding Contact Group. While there has been significant progress over the past few years, this report also highlights that some of the key shortcomings in PBF implementation have remained rather static over the past few years. Prioritizing a learning agenda across the various levels of PBF engagement will contribute to uptake of lessons and improve practice. This is reflected in the 2020-2024 Strategy which provides greater emphasis on learning.

4. Strengthen the focus on conflict sensitivity, ongoing conflict monitoring, and adaptive management. As highlighted in section 4.3, the evaluationsAs highlighted above, conflict sensitivity is crucial for avoiding unintended harm for local partners and beneficiaries, but also from a risk management perspective for the UN. From the evaluations reviewed, although there are exceptions, currently program managers seldom pay more than lip service to conflict sensitivity during design, implementation, and M&E of PBF investments. Correcting this deficit could also involve creating greater synergies between conflict- and gender sensitivity, to minimize relevant process and analysis steps for UNCTs²⁰.

5. Introduce more flexibility into existing DM&E tools and be open to adaptation and experimenting with new approaches. It has been a significant achievement to require evaluations of PBF programs and portfolios since 2018. However, evaluations are not always the answer and it is not always clear how evaluations are being used to learn from them in practice. One recommendation

above suggests making a clearer distinction on DM&E requirements for shorter-term, innovative, and catalytic projects versus longer-term portfolios and to plan accordingly from the beginning—and the types of evaluations and other types of evaluative processes should match these two levels of programming.

At times, a program or portfolio might not be evaluable or ready for a formal evaluation, and might benefit more from different processes. For example, a more informal strategy reflection process (such as PBF has just conducted in Kyrgyzstan in March 2020) to jointly reflect on past achievements and critical priorities and gaps going forward. Sometimes an evaluability assessment might not be what a UNCT needs, but rather an investment in UNCT capacity to develop better skills and systems for analysis, program design, and M&E. In some cases, especially if strengthening UNCT capacities is a key priority in light of the above recommendations, building in a developmental evaluation approach or a 'critical outside friend' who accompanies portfolios over longer periods of time might be most helpful (insider/outside evaluation). While accountability is important, learning needs to be equally prioritized as a key objective of evaluative processes. The PBF should apply more flexibility in deciding on a case-by-case basis what might be the most useful process, while not compromising key accountability steps.

6. Select evaluators and facilitators of other evaluative processes that have a strong peacebuilding AND DM&E background. While there were some strong project and program level evaluations among those reviewed for this synthesis review, the quality of the portfolio evaluations was generally higher. This was linked to the processes of commissioning evaluations, developing evaluation ToRs, and selecting evaluators (one cannot blame the evaluator for missing the peacebuilding perspective if it was not part of her/his ToRs in the first place). Most portfolio evaluations were strong because

²⁰ There is increasing work in the wider peacebuilding field on integrating gender-sensitivity and conflict sensitivity from an analysis and program implementation perspective. For example, Conciliation Resources developed a gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders in 2015, and has taken further steps by enhancing this methodology by using approaches from CDA Collaborative Learning to apply a conflict and gender systems perspective. See <https://www.c-r.org/news-and-insight/5-steps-towards-gender-sensitive-conflict-analysis>

evaluation teams combined peacebuilding expertise with DM&E skills.

It will be important for PBF to provide more coherent guidance to UNCTs on how to shape evaluation ToRs for project and program evaluations and support a more consistent and coherent profile of evaluators and evaluation teams. The forthcoming PBF evaluation guidance should be helpful in this regard. Another helpful step would be to facilitate exchanges across some of the key PBF evaluators, alongside PBF program, M&E staff, and PBF Secretariat staff. Several of the evaluations reviewed were conducted by the same people, at least at the level of portfolio evaluations. In the spirit of developing a stronger network of PBF evaluators and sharing experiences across the different evaluations and country contexts, it could be useful to convene some of PBF's repeat evaluators for an exchange on higher level trends and findings, possibly taking this synthesis review as one foundation for discussion.

6. CONCLUSIONS

PBF occupies a unique niche within the UN peacebuilding architecture. It is well placed to put peacebuilding on global and country level agendas, leverage a peacebuilding approach alongside other UN actors, particularly in complex UN country settings, and seek related complementarities.

The focus on sustaining peace encourages all UN agencies to articulate more clearly how they are able to make contributions to peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, even though peacebuilding might not be their core mandate. PBSO and the PBF are uniquely positioned to support these efforts. They should undertake such support with an ambitious goal of improving the quality and effectiveness of peacebuilding across UN agencies through sustained capacity.

The PBF's significant growth over the past few years represents a tremendous opportunity for peacebuilding in the UN system. This growth needs to be managed responsibly and must prioritize **peacebuilding program quality** and **depth over breadth** in PBF engagements. The PBF should become a role model for peacebuilding quality in the UN system and become recognized as a fund with clear principles regarding how to engage with national partners and how to ensure Relevance and Effectiveness. This was also recognized by the latest DFID review of PBF, as highlighted in this quote.

“The PBF should carefully consider trade-offs when further expanding the number of eligible countries and maintain a focus on high-quality programming across a defined set of countries. There is also a risk that as the Fund grows that its focus will shift away from its niche capability (high risk, innovative, catalytic), and absorb existing development programming. A strong PBF Strategy, solid monitoring and evaluation at the Fund and portfolio level will be critical in mitigating these risks and in assessing the catalytic function of the Fund and its ability to leverage peacebuilding finance and programming.”

DFID REVIEW OF PBF 2018/2019, P. 2

After fifteen years in operation, this is a good moment for the PBF to **review its core operational approaches and assumptions, particularly its funding timeframes.** As the evaluations revealed, in many instances PBF is a critical source of

peacebuilding funding, but timeframes are considered as too short and ad hoc to achieve greater results. Many years of short-term IRF and PRF repeat allocations come at the expense of more strategic and long-term peacebuilding strategy planning. This is an opportune moment to reassess existing timeframes and funding windows and develop two distinct funding models for the short- and longer-term, planned as such from the beginning – beyond current IRF and PRF modalities.

A key area of innovation for the PBF going forward will be prioritizing **collective impacts at the portfolio level** and putting needed systems in place to allow for strategic portfolio planning, accountable management of portfolios, and experimenting with new design and M&E approaches in support of portfolio-level results.. This will necessarily mean a more systematic investment in RUNO and NUNO capacity development, as well as experimenting with new DM&E tools and approaches.

Finally, the PBF is well placed to make a contribution to the important emerging agenda of **localization in peacebuilding** and putting local partners in the driver's seat. The PBF has the flexibility to experiment with new approaches in this regard. Such approaches should align with core peacebuilding principles that call for close consultation with local partners and beneficiaries, remaining aware of global power dynamics, and following clear conflict- and gender sensitivity principles.

▶ ANNEX: KEY DOCUMENTS

PBF EVALUATIONS AND OTHER EVALUATIVE DOCUMENTS REVIEWED:

- ▲ Portfolio evaluations: Guinea (2017), Kyrgyzstan (2017), Liberia (2017), Papua New Guinea – PNG (2018), Central African Republic – CAR (2019), Somalia (2019), Mali (2019), Côte d'Ivoire (2019)
- ▲ Lessons Learned Reviews: Sri Lanka (2018) and Guinea (2017, on gender promotion) Evaluability Assessment of PBF Priority Plan: Côte d'Ivoire (2017), Madagascar, The Gambia (2019)
- ▲ 46 project level evaluations

All evaluations are available on the UN [PBF website](#)^s. Evaluations reviewed included evaluations in English, French, and Spanish. Select project documents, progress reports, and other relevant project documents were reviewed, as found on the [UN Multi-partner Trust Fund Office Gateway website](#)^s.

PAST PBF REVIEWS:

- ▲ Beijnum, Mariska: [Challenges and Opportunities to Peacebuilding: Analysis of Strategic Issues identified by Country-specific PBF evaluations](#)^s. Clingendael/Conflict Research Unit Report, The Hague, July 2013.
- ▲ DFID [Review of the PBF 2018/2019](#)^s, September 2019.
- ▲ Klyskens, Jups and Clark, Lance: [Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund](#)^s, May 2014.

PBF GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS:

- ▲ [UN Peacebuilding Fund Strategy 2020-2024](#)^s
- ▲ [Strategic Plan 2017-2019](#)^s
- ▲ [Guidelines on PBF funds application and programming, 2018](#)^s
- ▲ [Guidance Note on Strengthening PBF project monitoring and implementation through direct feed-back from communities](#)^s: perception surveys and community based monitoring, 2019
- ▲ [Guidance Note on Youth and Peacebuilding](#)^s, 2019
- ▲ [Guidance Note on Gender Marker Scoring](#)^s, 2019
- ▲ UN system in Kyrgyzstan: [Learning and Adaptation Strategy](#)^s. Peacebuilding Priority Plan 2018-2021.

KEY PEACEBUILDING EVALUATION RESOURCES OF IMMEDIATE RELEVANCE TO THE ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THIS SYNTHESIS REVIEW:

- ▲ Barnard-Webster, Kiely, Nicole Goddard, and Isabella Jean. [Monitoring and Evaluation of Conflict Sensitivity](#): Practical Considerations in Conflict Sensitivity: Taking it to the Next Level swisspeace working paper, 2/2016 edited by Sabina Handschin, Eric Abitbol, and Rina Alluri: 88-95.
- ▲ Chigas, Diana and Peter Woodrow. [Adding Up to Peace: The Cumulative Impacts of Peace Programming](#). Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2018.
- ▲ Chigas, Diana, Madeline Church, and Vanessa Corlazzoli: [Evaluating Impacts of Peacebuilding Interventions: Approaches and Methods, Challenges and Considerations](#). A Conflict, Crime, and Violence Results Initiative (CCVRI) product. London, UK: DFID, 2014.

- ▲ Conciliation Resources: [Gender and Conflict Analysis Toolkit](#). London 2015.
- ▲ Corlazzoli, Vanessa, and Jonathan White. [Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security and Justice Programs](#). Part II: Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation." A Conflict, Crime, and Violence Results Initiative (CCVRI) product. London, UK: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and DFID, 2013.
- ▲ Ernstorfer, Anita, Diana Chigas, and Hannah Vaughan-Lee. 2015. [From Little to Large: When does Peacebuilding Add up](#). *Journal for Peacebuilding and Development* 10 (1): 72-77.
- ▲ Ernstorfer, Anita, Isabella Jean, and Peter Woodrow, with Diana Chigas. [Thinking Evaluatively in Peacebuilding Design, Implementation and Monitoring](#): Three Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) and Do No Harm (DNH)-infused options to strengthen the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategies and programs. Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium, 2016.
- ▲ Ernstorfer, Anita and Kiely Barnard-Webster. [Peacebuilding Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation: A training package for participants and trainers at intermediate to advanced levels](#). Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium, 2019.
- ▲ Goldwyn, Rachel, and Diana Chigas. [Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity. Methodological challenges and practical solutions](#). A Conflict, Crime, and Violence Results Initiative (CCVRI) product. London: DFID, 2013.
- ▲ OECD/DAC. [Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results](#). Paris: OECD, 2012.
- ▲ Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium. [Peacebuilding Evaluation Online Field Guide](#). [A compilation of a wealth of resources for peacebuilding evaluation]
- ▲ Velpillay, Sweta and Woodrow, Peter: [Collective Impact in Peacebuilding. Lessons from Networking Efforts in Multiple Locations](#). CDA Collaborative Learning, 2019. Access to all case studies conducted under the collective impact in peacebuilding project,
- ▲ Woodrow, Peter: [Framework for Collective Impact in Peacebuilding](#). Revised version after field testing. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2019
- ▲ Woodrow, Peter, and Jean, Isabella: Scrambling after Moving Targets: Monitoring & Evaluation Applied to Adaptive Management Approaches in Peacebuilding", in: [New Directions in Peacebuilding Evaluation](#), edited by Tamra Pearson d'Estrée, 2019.
- ▲ Woodrow, Peter, with Nick Oatley. [Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security and Justice Programs](#). Part I: What they are, different types, how to develop and use them. A Conflict, Crime, and Violence Results Initiative (CCVRI) product. London, UK: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and DFID, 2013.

KEY WEBSITES

- ▲ [DM&E for Peace](#)^s
- ▲ The [Online Field Guide to Peacebuilding Evaluation](#)^s



United Nations Peacebuilding

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PEACEBUILDING FUND

SYNTHESIS REVIEW

2017-2019

**PBF project and
portfolio evaluations**

DISCLAIMER

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

Developed by **Anita Ernstorfer**