

Peacebuilding Highlights

Issue no. 5
June 2023



DPPA
Preventing Conflict. Sustaining Peace

Editorial

by Brian James Williams - Chief, Financing for Peacebuilding Branch, DPPA/PBSO

Global warming has profound implications for peace and security. The United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has been financing pilot climate security projects for several years, and in April, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) published an [independent Thematic Review](#) on Climate Security and Peacebuilding as part of efforts to continuously learn and improve. The review found that PBF had helped catalyze action in this field, highlighted the value of cross-border programming, encouraged increased inclusiveness of communities in environmental peacebuilding activities and recommended more investment in longitudinal studies. The review was commissioned in partnership with FAO, UNICEF, Climate Security Mechanism and the UK, and led by the UN University's Centre for Policy Research.

The review found that the Fund played a catalytic role as a conversation starter, fund for innovation, and 'tugboat' to bring larger donor funding for climate-security into more fragile and conflict-affected areas. Moreover, it emphasized that the efforts towards climate, peace, and security present opportunities to address pressing social challenges, such as the exclusion of women or elite capture in local communities.

Building on the review's findings, in particular with regard to greater inclusiveness, the PBF has dedicated its 2023 [Gender Promotion Initiative](#) to climate change

mitigation and adaptation and women's engagement in natural resource management. This reflects the commitment to exploring the gender-climate-security nexus through programmatic responses and investing in women's inclusion. Global webinars for all applicants developing proposals on these topics have already taken place.

To further support learning, the PBF is developing internal guidance for climate-security project design. This guidance will outline good practices and common challenges, provide sample project outcomes, activities and indicators, and offer a list of useful resources for reference during project design. Additionally, in partnership with UN System Staff College (UNSSC) and the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM), an in-person training is being organized at the UNSSC in Turin, Italy, dedicated to climate-security programming. This training, taking place in July, will invite nearly 30 United Nations country counterparts currently developing PBF climate-security proposals.

Moreover, we greatly appreciate the recommendation to invest in longitudinal testing to generate a greater impact on the effectiveness of climate-security efforts. Through the PeaceFIELD initiative, launched in 2021 with generous support from Germany and Canada, we are conducting impact evaluations and disseminating findings in five case studies including Guatemala, the Mali-Niger border region, Guinea-Sierra Leone border regions, and Darfur and Gedaref in Sudan. We

hope to learn from this innovative initiative on how best to measure the peacebuilding impact of PBF-funded projects and are open to expanding impact assessments to climate-security projects if further funding becomes available.

Conflict-affected countries struggle to obtain financing from the larger vertical funding sources available for climate change and the environment. The Review recommended that the PBF engages more with these larger climate donors, encouraging UN actors benefiting from PBF resources to maximize the catalytic effect of investments in climate-security efforts.

The Climate, Peace, and Security agenda is a significant priority for PBSO, with an increasing demand for PBF's support to countries in this area. This year, we continue our work on climate security with ongoing projects in Cameroon, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Tunisia, Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, The Gambia, and Madagascar.

This edition of our newsletter features a case study from the Liptako Gourma subregion, illustrating how environmental pressures, transnational armed groups, trafficking, and governance issues have fueled

violence and dire conditions in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Despite the challenges, PBF investments in climate-security offer hope by addressing root causes and engaging communities in bottom-up efforts to balance securitized approaches.

The Annual Strategic Dialogue with the PBF's top twelve donors is scheduled to take place this week on June 13. Hosted by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin, the event will discuss challenges and opportunities for multilateral peacebuilding in the current context and the upcoming New Agenda for Peace. Specific issues will include PBF's support for transitional justice, more strategic orientation of PBF programming in UN mission settings and trends in country demand for prevention.

The need for predictable, adequate, and sustainable funding for peacebuilding continues to grow. For 2023, the PBF faces a widening shortfall. While the Fund's current [five-year strategy](#) called for programming in 2023 of \$350 million, PBSO currently forecasts contributions in 2023 at closer to \$150 million. Without further pledges, activities may have to be postponed. Reduced investment in prevention now, however, comes at a greater cost later.

Peacebuilding Support Office

Financing for
Peacebuilding Branch

Peacebuilding Strategy
and Partnerships Branch

Peacebuilding Commission
Support Branch

PEACEBUILDING STORIES

Climate-Security and Peacebuilding:
Lessons from Liptako Gourma



Blog by Lila Pieters Yahia, UN Resident Coordinator in Mauritania

Climate-security and peacebuilding work has been an area of increased significance and investment within the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). The recently published [Thematic Review on Climate-Security and Peacebuilding](#) highlights that despite implementation challenges, the Peacebuilding Fund's (PBF) climate-security investments in the Liptako Gourma subregion spanning Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger demonstrate potential in addressing root causes and shifting away from militarized approaches. The peacebuilding initiatives are showing positive results in addressing conflicts associated with transhumance. IOM, for example, has reported successful resolution of over half of the nearly 200 identified conflicts through their Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT) system.



Liptako Gourma is a vast arid region facing a crisis due to communal tensions, population pressure, poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, scarce resources, weak governance, and lack of basic services. Since 2015, intercommunal conflict and sexual and gender-based violence have increased, while the governance context has become less stable with military coups in Burkina Faso and Mali. Climate change worsens the situation, impacting livestock herding and rainfed agriculture, while higher temperatures and water fluctuations threaten livelihoods and food security. The region's harsh climate and lack of government support exacerbate these challenges, resulting in conflicts.

“Despite the institutional and political framework that governs it, transhumance remains a source of controversy, especially in the host areas, whether internal or external, because it is often poorly understood by the populations in the host areas or poorly managed by the practitioners when they arrive in these areas,” said **Saidou Oua**, Executive Secretary of the Liptako Gourma Authority.

Within Liptako Gourma, the PBF has invested over \$21 million in nine active and recent climate-security projects representing 12.5% of its overall climate-security portfolio. The projects have introduced a more regionalized lens to peacebuilding, and have prioritized approaches that address the needs of vulnerable populations.

As one **practitioner in the field** observed: “At the current moment climate-security is a big policy priority but it wasn’t [before]. PBSO played a big role in socializing its importance in programming. They’ve played a catalyzing role.”

All nine projects tackle transhumance-related challenges, recognizing the interconnectedness of pastoral land, water points, and grazing. These initiatives aim to build resilience to climate change and environmental degradation while fostering peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic and occupational communities in the Liptako Gourma subregion.

“This intervention has helped strengthen community cohesion in the pastoral environment, a key element in the stabilization of the Sahelian space,” said the **Mayor of the municipality of Tessit in Mali**.

A central idea underlying most projects is to use the natural resources sector as a catalyst for addressing deep-rooted disparities. Simultaneously, the projects emphasize the critical role of women and youth engagement in enhancing community resilience and promoting better natural resource management strategies. In Mali, two projects exemplify the intersection of gender, climate, and security by empowering women and girls, fostering peace and

resilience against climate change shocks. Engaging youth in community mechanisms, dialogue spaces, education, livelihood opportunities, and community-building activities such as sports and youth clubs also remain a key focus. FAO and IOM are collaborating to alleviate pressure on pastoral resources and mitigate violent conflicts associated with transhumance in the region. Their efforts include enhancing the alert system, implementing mechanisms to manage transhumance and related conflicts, and promoting sustainable use of pastoral resources. Through the alert system, a total of 712 alerts were issued, out of which 213 conflicts were reported, including agro-pastoral disputes and inter-community tensions. As a result of the implemented mechanisms, 126 conflicts were successfully resolved.



Despite limitations in data collection, evaluations have revealed that the projects largely achieved established targets and benchmarks for increased inclusion of women and youth. In the cross-border project spanning Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, internal reports reviewed by independent evaluators recorded increased involvement of women and youth in income-generating and communal activities compared to previous levels.

The thematic review highlighted some of the best practices and lessons learned. Firstly, these projects adopt a comprehensive approach to peace and security, focusing on addressing the underlying climate-driven factors that contribute to conflict rather than relying solely on a militaristic response. The emphasis on the inclusion of women and youth is particularly significant, given the connection between marginalized youth, limited livelihood prospects, and their susceptibility to recruitment by armed factions.

Another best practice is that the PBF has been adaptive, learning from experience and evolving different ways to tackle emerging challenges. PBF's portfolio has evolved through various distinct phases, trialing work with different agencies and aiming to bring together complementary skills.

In the cross-border project spanning Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, PBF's collaboration with smaller

organizations and the implementation of smaller grants, ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000, has proven effective. These initiatives have directly benefited community organizations in regions with limited government presence. As an illustrative example, ten households have started producing biogas, an energy source that allows them to cook and provides other benefits. This improvement in the living conditions for these households has also had a preventative effect on natural resource conflicts, as there is now a reduced reliance on firewood.

Furthermore, training and awareness-raising initiatives on land tenure security for farms have resulted in an increased number of requests for Rural Land Possession Certificates by farmers. Approximately 25 certificates were delivered in the commune of Diapangou in the Liptako Gourma region. The implemented infrastructures have strengthened the conflict prevention system. The introduction of pastoral boreholes has increased the availability of water, reducing the pressure on domestic boreholes.

The PBF's regional approach to peace programming, supported by existing governance structures, coordination mechanisms and implementing partners in each country, sets it apart. The PBF has played an important role in incentivizing countries (and the UN) to think regionally and beyond the capitals.

The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) has recognized the PBF's cross-border programming in the Sahel as an example of innovation that could "more effectively target the root drivers of fragility" in the region. In a preliminary evaluation of the cross-border spanning Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, it was noted that the collection,

analysis and dissemination of information crucial for the peaceful management of transhumance had been accomplished satisfactorily.

Lastly, the PBF is playing a crucial role in helping to forge a more 'One UN' approach to peacebuilding in the Liptako Gourma subregion. As one interviewee put it: "It permits organizations to work together and to understand what other organizations are doing." The national PBF Secretariats are seen as responsive, easy to work with, and generally well-connected to the peacebuilding community in each of their countries.

Through adaptive approaches, a regional focus, and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, the PBF in Liptako Gourma has demonstrated its vital role in addressing climate-security challenges and promoting inclusive peacebuilding practices in the Sahel region.



Catalytic Peacebuilding: Transforming Communities in South Sudan, Colombia and Madagascar



In regions impacted by conflict and violence, catalytic peacebuilding initiatives have been instrumental in fostering positive change and transforming communities. Through collaborative efforts involving government ownership, United Nations' agencies, development partners, and civil society organizations, the Peacebuilding Fund's (PBF) projects have helped address the sources of marginalization and enhance social cohesion in three diverse contexts: South Sudan, Colombia and Madagascar.

Impactful Partnerships for Lasting Change: Strengthening Peacebuilding and Reintegration in South Sudan: Building on lessons from two earlier PBF-funded projects, the European Union (EU) Delegation in South Sudan is collaborating with IOM, UNICEF and WFP in a joint project titled 'Strengthened Access to Education and Livelihoods and Enhanced Reintegration and Community Cohesion in Areas

Affected by Displacement and Returns'. With a total budget of \$25 million, a key component of the project addresses peacebuilding, social cohesion and reconciliation in areas affected by displacement, through dispute resolution and conflict mitigation concerning housing, land and property (HLP).

The preceding projects address youth and conflict issues. 'Youth Action for Reduced Violence and Enhanced Social Cohesion in Wau, South Sudan', implemented by IOM and UNESCO, provided vocational support to over 400 at-risk young people and gang members. At least 75% of the 413 young people empowered through the project have continued to sustain and steadily expand their small businesses. Young individuals have changed their lifestyles and invested in their future. Many of these activities can now be sustained through the EU project.

Kur Maruk, a former youth gang member, now runs his own store together with several other young women and men. He said “The project even changed my appearance – I used to wear gang clothes, now I feel good in my nice, colorful t-shirts. My family has seen me change and sees me as a good member again. I also run my own shop with a whole team. My reason to come to the Cash for Work programmes was not just for the money, but to meet others. I enjoy that aspect a lot, because I used to be afraid to go to other places, now I can move freely. I wanted to be a part of this change of perception towards youth. As the project ends, I am thinking ahead: I invest in goods for my shop and support other youth as much as I can.”



The other PBF-financed project, ‘Community Action for Enhanced Capacity for Peaceful Resolution of Housing Land and Property Disputes and Conflict’, is still ongoing and is implemented by IOM and FAO. It addresses housing, land and property disputes. It strengthens communities’ resilience by building the capacity of both formal and informal institutions. This includes conducting gender-sensitive reviews of customary laws, strengthening the effectiveness of local dispute resolution mechanisms and rehabilitating community-prioritized infrastructure and services. This PBF project also serves as a co-funding source for the EU project, contributing \$1.5 million. This enables the EU-funded project to advance its overarching objective of strengthening sustainable reintegration, community cohesion, livelihoods, and access to education and critical services in areas affected by displacement. The PBF’s funding plays a pivotal role in complementing and leveraging activities between the two projects. By providing \$1.5 million to help fulfill the EU’s co-funding requirement of \$5 million, the PBF helped catalyze an additional \$20 million in funding for South Sudan. The synergies between these projects strengthen the collective efforts to address challenges related to displacement and foster sustainable peacebuilding in South Sudan.

Transforming Transitional Justice: Promoting LGBTIQ+ Rights in Colombia’s Peacebuilding Process: In a significant stride in adopting an LGBTIQ+-centered approach in Colombia, the country’s three transitional justice institutions have emerged as pioneers, both nationally and internationally. These institutions include the Truth Commission (CEV), the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) and the Unit for the Search for Disappeared Persons (UBPD). By strengthening civil society and promoting engagement with these institutions, the PBF project titled “Women and LGBTIQ+ people paving a path from justice and memory towards sustaining peace in Colombia” catalyzed transformative change. Implemented by Christian Aid Ireland in 2021, the project provided timely support to incorporate an LGBTIQ+ approach into the mandates of three transitional justice institutions established under the 2016 Peace Agreement.

As a result, Colombia’s Truth Commission became the world’s first to commission a study specifically recognizing the distinct forms of violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ individuals during the armed conflict. Through collaboration with Colombia Diversa and the UBPD, experts are providing specialized guidelines for the search for LGBTIQ+ persons. Moreover, the JEP became the first transitional justice body to investigate violence motivated by discrimination or prejudice against LGBTIQ+ individuals as punishable acts. This contributed to the initiation of “macro-case 11” which prioritizes the investigation of sexual violence and other crimes driven by gender, sex, orientation, or gender identity of the victims during the armed conflict in Colombia.

Violence against the civilian population during the Colombian armed conflict marked distinct geographic patterns, with 70% of the acts of violence occurring in eight of Colombia’s 32 departments, including Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Choco, and Putumayo. Within these territories, marginalized communities including LGBTIQ+ individuals endured high levels of sexual violence and internal displacement, often going unnoticed. The 2016 Final Peace Accord (FPA) marked a crucial turning point by acknowledging the violence inflicted upon LGBTIQ+ persons during the armed conflict.

Catalyzing Peace in Southern Madagascar: Since 2017, the Malagasy Government and the United Nations, have been working together in the Southern Madagascar region (referred to as ‘le Grand Sud’) to address marginalization, tensions and strengthen state presence, security and resilience for vulnerable communities. While the needs in this vast and remote region remain immense, PBF’s investments have made a meaningful impact over the years by reducing insecurity and promoting social cohesion in the former red zones around Betroka and parts of the Andriy Massif region. To date, the Fund has invested \$10 million in various peacebuilding initiatives in the region, implemented by UN agencies including UNFPA, UNDP, IOM, FAO, UNCDF and UNESCO in partnership with authorities and civil society organizations.

Enhanced security infrastructure, consisting of eleven gendarmerie outposts constructed and equipped in areas of high security, has not only increased security presence but has also fostered improved relationships between gendarmes and communities through cultural initiatives aimed at building trust and confidence. The peacebuilding projects have engaged with young men and women from diverse communities, including marginalized groups, offering them training opportunities to collaborate and develop as community leaders and youth ambassadors. Over 6,000 young individuals, with nearly half of them women, joined various community associations and organized a wide range of cultural and sporting activities. Moreover, the PBF-funded projects have created economic opportunities for those who were most in need, such as young people and vulnerable groups who often face poverty and exclusion. These economic activities, including enhanced access to local markets, have been supported through joint community dialogues that prioritize community needs.

In this remote area with little state presence, the projects have facilitated exchanges between representatives of state services and the communities to gain a better understanding of local needs. This has resulted in improved delivery of essential local services in isolated areas where state services were not always available. Mobile legal clinics have played a critical role in providing vital information, raising awareness and offering legal advice, processing over 5,000 cases of disputes within communities. Efforts to improve administrative presence have made it possible for people to obtain essential documents like birth certificates and other key state services.



Benefiting from the Fund's programming, other development partners have been able to initiate and expand interventions in the South of Madagascar that had been previously quite difficult to engage in due to high levels of insecurity, criminality, and lack of confidence between the communities and the state. For example, the peace plans developed by the communities and local authorities, with support from the PBF through inclusive consultation processes are

now being integrated into the Local Development Plans funded by the World Bank's [MIONJO project](#), totaling \$200 million.

The PBF focused on promoting more inclusive local planning as a critical step towards strengthening the social contract between the state and the communities. Through a series of facilitated dialogue platforms, the municipalities developed peace plans that reflected the needs and aspirations of the communities.

According to a member of Fokontany Ifarantsa in the municipality of Beraketa, "Since the establishment of the dialogue platforms, I have seen the growing confidence of our communities in our capacities to resolve conflicts, without having to involve the gendarmerie. Now I feel confident in my skills."

The establishment of local consultation committees has paved the way for more inclusive and collaborative governance by ensuring that one-third of the members are women and one-third are young people. These committees, along with the joint development of the peace plans, have enabled people to discuss, identify and prioritize their most pressing needs, while fostering improved communication with government officials.

The enhanced trust established between the security forces and the community representatives through dialogue and reconciliation activities in the targeted municipalities has enabled the World Bank's flagship MIONJO project to expand its reach into those zones. Furthermore, the youth ambassadors and associations trained by the UN programs have been recognized as valuable partners by the Bank's project, building upon the groundwork laid by the PBF through investments in local dialogue mechanisms.

Anjara Manantsara, the Coordinator of the MIONJO project in Madagascar said "MIONJO project plays a crucial role in improving access to essential and basic infrastructure, resilient livelihood opportunities, and local governance in southern Madagascar, with a specific emphasis on empowering youth and women. The contribution of the PBF has had a significant impact, fostering an enabling environment for progress and development in the Great South region, including through improved relations between the communities and the security sector and existence of inclusive local dialogue and planning mechanisms. It has enabled our project to be implemented in additional municipalities in the region. And it has enabled us to leverage the youth leadership skills that the PBF funding has built through engagement with the youth peace ambassadors."

Nurturing Safer Digital Spaces: Empowering Youth Against Hate Speech in the Western Balkans



Fake news, misinformation, and hate speech are causing significant harm to mental health, exacerbating social divisions, and eroding trust in public institutions throughout the Western Balkans. Marginalized groups, particularly women and girls, are frequently targeted by hate speech. Of particular concern is the role of social media, which has become a fertile breeding ground for disinformation.

In order to foster trust and inclusive online spaces for young people, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women (The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), and UNESCO are collaborating to empower young individuals to take a stand against hate speech and cultivate a safer digital environment. This \$4.5 million initiative, funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), is being implemented over two years across the Western Balkans. The project engages a diverse range of youth, including students, journalists, decision-makers, politicians, artists, and activists.

The project has helped increase knowledge and participation concerning the interconnections between gender equality, social cohesion challenges, and sustainable development in the region. UN Women has established a safe space for 150 young people to convene, deliberate, and gain a deeper understanding of the societal and patriarchal barriers that women still encounter. The pivotal role of women in creating inclusive, peaceful, and egalitarian societies, as well as promoting youth engagement in decision-making processes, has been highlighted.

“Through projects like this, we show that we have not stopped in time and that we can progress only when we are given the opportunity,” said **Emina Šehović**, student, Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo.

The initiative empowers young people to familiarize themselves with various forms of hate speech in both traditional and social media platforms, equipping them with the skills to report and combat such speech. With the guidance of expert mentors, young participants design campaigns centered around issues that resonate with them, ranging from promoting youth democratic engagement to conveying anti-hate speech messages.

In Albania, young individuals have developed small-scale project ideas aimed at countering hate speech.



Youth Boot Camp, Albania, March 2023

Some of the most promising ideas receive mentorship and financial support. Winning proposals encompass diverse initiatives, such as graffiti promoting peacebuilding in a particular city, the production and dissemination of a series of short animations highlighting the value of democratic processes on social media, and a collection of podcasts aimed at fostering young people's interest and involvement in voting and social activism.

In Serbia, over 80 young people have undergone training focused on transferring the skills to recognize and combat fake news, toxic narratives, and online hate speech. Through in-depth sessions on media literacy and critical thinking, these young minds have been empowered to distinguish fact from fiction, counter the dissemination of disinformation, and create evidence-based campaigns on youth media platforms.

The project facilitates collaboration among universities in the region and provides young people with opportunities for exchanges across the region. In Albania and Kosovo¹, the project supports the next generation of journalists through facilitating partnerships with universities and multi-community media organizations and outlets. Young journalists from diverse ethnic backgrounds are empowered to engage with media platforms, crafting constructive narratives, countering hate speech, and challenging negative gender norms through youth-led story writing and publication in local media.

1. References to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

The initiative has already directly engaged with over 3,500 young people, who are now more confident in recognizing and combatting hate speech while being assertive in expressing their ideas. Through their advocacy efforts, they are addressing a range of positive issues, including Roma education, reconciliation, gender equality, political inclusion, environmental policies, the rights of people with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ rights.

By leveraging existing networks and resources from previous PBF-supported projects in the Western Balkans, the initiative has already initiated some changes. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the project is helping to ensure the sustainability of the Youth Peer Peacebuilding manual by universities integrating it into their courses. This initiative aims to reach young people who have not yet participated in intercultural dialogue activities, including those affected by intergenerational trauma.

Young trainers in BiH and Albania attest that the training programmes help them adopt a more inclusive stance and value diverse perspectives.

One **young trainer from BiH** states, “The training challenged my biases, teaching me to approach conflicts with a problem-solving mindset, seeking collaborative and peaceful solutions. Moreover, it gave me a deep appreciation for the power of dialogue and active listening. I now recognize the importance of creating safe spaces for open and honest conversations.”

Since the inception of the project, over 315 young people in Albania have enhanced their knowledge and capacities in countering hate speech, discrimination, and bullying. As the lead implementers of these training activities, the Y-Peer network of Trainers of Trainers employs a training approach, utilizing a “Youth Peer Education for Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation” manual developed in the previous PBF-supported project of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), which has been simplified and tailored to the specific needs of the area, community, and target youth group.

“Participation in the process of creating the National Strategy for Youth, besides sowing a promising future, will also bear fruit by giving a sense of belonging, respect, improving personal development and skills, and empowering us, the youth,” said **Adriatik Llugini**, Head of the Kosovo Youth Assembly.

The project has strengthened the capacity of national and local bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Kosovo, to engage with youth in policymaking alongside youth organizations and civil society. As a result, the ideas and priorities of young

people are being integrated into North Macedonia’s National Youth Strategy 2023-2027, a process led by the Agency for Youth and Sports with UNDP support. This process involved extensive consultations with students, young parliamentarians, and organizations working with youth and individuals with disabilities. Later in the year, a youth-led and youth-informed plan for advancing the priorities and needs of young people in the country will be adopted.

The project also supports the development of Kosovo’s youth strategy through consultations with young people, authorities, civil society, and other partners. The process places young people at the core and prioritizes the eradication of hate speech.

In May 2023, two working groups from North Macedonia and Kosovo convened in Skopje to exchange experiences, learnings, and best practices on youth policy development.

In Albania, a national gathering involving approximately 100 representatives of the Youth Municipal Councils took place in collaboration with the Ministry of State for Youth and Children. This gathering provided an opportunity for young members of municipal youth councils to discuss and devise strategies to strengthen local decision-making structures, free from hate speech and discrimination. The objective is to collaborate with all political parties and central authorities, such as the Ministry of State for Youth and Children, to develop local youth plans and promote participatory and all-inclusive decision-making processes in the cities and regions where these councils are active.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project launched the Youth Peace Policy Lab (YouPOL), which serves as a bridge between public institutions and young people, facilitating the development of policy solutions for issues of mutual interest. The young participants receive technical advice, mentorship, and guidance. YouPOL is now collaborating with the Ombudsperson’s institution, the government, and universities in the UK, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Young participants discussing hate speech at the media literacy training in Belgrade, May 2023.

An awareness and behavior change campaign was launched in Albania against hate speech under the slogan “Fjala vret” (Words hurt). The campaign aims to alter the behaviors and attitudes of young people on social media platforms. Through various communication channels, including traditional and social media, the campaign aims to reach up to 600,000 people monthly.

By equipping youth with these invaluable skills, the project not only empowers young people to navigate the digital world with confidence but also nurtures a generation that champions truth, combats falsehoods, and fosters a more inclusive and well-informed society.



Independent Evaluation confirms the significant impact of the United Nations Peacebuilding initiative on fostering cohesion in Niger's Agadez region.



An independent evaluation report published in October 2022 has highlighted that an IOM project in Agadez, Niger, financed by the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), has helped contribute to a growing recognition and acceptance of coexistence, as migrants steadily integrate into the local community. Moreover, small grants provided by the project helped kickstart businesses, creating economic opportunities, particularly for women and youth. 46.7% of individuals expressed a positive perception of migrant presence compared to 27.6% at the beginning of the project. Additionally, around 65% of grant recipients reported being well-equipped to secure additional funding, due to the training and

coaching they received. This not only ensured the sustainability of their livelihoods but also created new job opportunities for both the locals and migrants.

Nestled between Algeria, Libya, Mali, and Chad, the Agadez region in Niger has emerged as a critical crossroads in the Sahara Desert, serving as a key transit point for West African migrants transiting to North Africa and Europe. For years, the communities in Agadez have heavily relied on migration activity as a crucial source of income, particularly after the decline of mining and tourism industries. The movement of migrants provided economic opportunities, but it also brought forth a range of challenges that have tested the resilience of this remote region.

In an attempt to curb migrant trafficking, the Government of Niger passed a law in 2015 criminalizing several economic activities associated with migrant transportation that had been providing livelihoods for the locals. Consequently, the risks of conflicts between the locals and the migrant communities have escalated, severely impacting the communes of Agadez, Arlit, and Ingall. Within these communities, tensions and frustrations have risen, fueled by the perception that migrants receive more assistance from authorities and the international community, particularly among those who have lost their traditional income sources.

To address these challenges, prevent conflicts, reduce community tensions, and strengthen the local economy, the Government of Niger collaborated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for the implementation of a \$2.5 million initiative funded by the PBF.

Ms Louise Aubin, Resident Coordinator in Niger said, “Humanity is what drives us when we develop projects and engage in initiatives to support migrants. This said, host communities also need to be accompanied in their generous hosting of vulnerable communities whose lives have been torn-away. Beyond communities, the situation in the region of Agadez exemplifies the welcoming approach of the government of Niger towards migrants. Let’s remember that Niger is a [champion for the Global Compact for Migration](#) since 2021 and has demonstrated its commitment in promoting safe and regular migration through its support to vulnerable migrants in transit and addressing needs of displaced persons. This rare favorable context does ease our work and provide protection mechanisms for the most one of the fragile population.”

To bridge the gap between the migrants and locals, the peacebuilding initiative provided opportunities for mutual dialogues and culturally enriching activities aimed at promoting peace and social cohesion. These dialogues brought together a diverse array of participants, including representatives from traditional and religious authorities, migrants, local communities, women and youth. Around 30,000 individuals, including over 14,000 women, actively engaged in these constructive dialogues, which together with sensitization training, helped in reducing conflicts among the migrants and local communities.

The establishment of community monitoring committees have been helpful in mitigating and preventing conflicts. These committees, operating across the fifteen municipalities of the Agadez region, empower the local population to closely monitor the transit conditions of migrants and alert authorities about early signs of escalating tensions. Field assistants, serving as intermediaries, attentively listen to the people and address their concerns by forwarding complaints to the committees for effective resolution.

“During a meeting at the chief of the village’s house, women committed themselves to peacefully preventing and resolving conflicts between local communities and migrants. Through the committee, we regularly organize community discussions to promote understanding, comprehension, acceptance, and tolerance of the other” said **Fatima**, a 60-year-old member of the Association des Femmes Nigériennes Contre la Guerre (AFNCG) for over a decade.

Through regular community discussions facilitated by the committees, a culture of understanding, acceptance and tolerance towards one another is constantly nurtured.

The cultural activities brought communities together in celebration of local traditions and heritage. Festivals such as Bianou and Air arranged by local authorities played an important role. During the Bianou festival, the Sultan of Air, known as the guardian of Agadez’s culture and traditions, joined forces with the Mayor of Agadez to extend a warm invitation to a group of migrants, urging them to participate in the festivities. This gathering provided an opportunity for all communities to intermingle, forge bonds and celebrate local traditions and heritage.

Mr. Tigato, a migrant from Liberia, was among the group of 40 migrants from IOM’s transit center in Agadez who joined the festivities. Draped in traditional festive attire, the migrants embraced the Agadezien culture during the celebrations. “We felt excited to be part of the festival. The communities were very welcoming, and we were caught up in the euphoria of the celebration. The migrants were celebrated, and the people integrated us,” says Mr. Tigato. These cultural exchanges extended beyond mere participation, with migrants displaying an interest in learning the local language and donning traditional attire.

In parallel, by providing long-term employment opportunities for community members and daily jobs for migrants, the initiative helped strengthen the local economy while fostering meaningful interactions between transit migrants and the host community. The financing of small businesses that employed local residents played a key role. For instance, in the Ingall municipality, supported individual businesses, on average, generated three jobs per enterprise, while in the urban municipality of Agadez, the ratio stood at six new jobs per individual business.

Overall, the project supported 78 cooperatives, benefiting a total of 483 individuals, including 401 women. In response to community priorities, a revolving fund was created to support social cohesion and economic initiatives led by the Nigerien Association of Women Against War of Agadez. In a



significant demonstration of the project's impact, the communities proactively approached the Mayor of Agadez to establish a training center for women engaged in these activities.

With the training and grants they received, the leadership of youth and women has flourished, instilling a greater sense of confidence in decision-making regarding their business development and future ambitions.

"Our neighbors have integrated us into the community and supported us throughout this project's realization. And they are the ones who test our products first and give us feedback on the quality. We look forward to growing bigger and contributing to the local economy with our business," said **Véronique Raissa**, a 32-year-old Cameroonian chemist and mother of two.

She moved to Agadez in 2019 after a perilous journey to North Africa and a few months later, she established a local soap factory. With 19 other young entrepreneurs, she received entrepreneurship training at the 'Centre Incubateur des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises' (CIPMEN) in Agadez. During the training, Véronique generously shared her knowledge and techniques in manufacturing household products such as vinegar. As a result, she received material and financial support worth one million CFA (approximately USD 1,629) to kickstart her soap factory project.

Approximately 56% of people reported a significant increase in their income due to the project, while 41% experienced a moderate increase.

Moreover, the project's impact extended beyond its direct activities. For example, it catalyzed the establishment of a multifunctional women's center in the rural commune of Ingall, funded by the European Union. This followed a series of training activities on promising trades for women's groups in the commune, facilitated by the project. Similarly, five young entrepreneurs who received entrepreneurship and leadership training through collaboration with the Regional Youth Council of Agadez received non-financial support for incubation, coaching and funding of up to 5 million CFA (approximately USD 8,150) each to launch their own ventures.

The peacebuilding initiative demonstrated that the implementation of community initiatives in the Agadez region has the potential to enhance community stabilization. Supporting local social infrastructure and generating new economic opportunities can help effectively address conflicts and tensions that emerge due to the decline of the migration economy.



Featured Partners

The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund is grateful to all its donor partners for their continued trust and support

In each newsletter, we will feature a small number of donor partners.



Germany

Germany is a fervent advocate for and dedicated partner to the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture. As a longstanding member of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Germany is proud to support prevention and peacebuilding efforts that are characterized by an exceptionally high degree of national and regional ownership. With contributions amounting to more than \$130 million in the past three years alone, Germany is also the largest donor to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Recognizing the critical role of women in peacebuilding, Germany has also supported the Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)

with more \$50 million since 2019, making Germany the largest donor to this important financing tool which supports women-led civil society organizations that foster locally rooted peacebuilding efforts.

As Vice-Chair of the PBC for 2023, Germany has reaffirmed its commitment to the Commission's vital role in promoting peacebuilding across the globe. Germany is honoured to be able to lever its position in the PBC to underscore the importance of regional cooperation and in dealing with common risk threats and impediments to building peace. Germany also

advocates for strengthening the PBC's bridging role and interaction with the General Assembly, the Security Council, ECOSOC and other central UN fora, such as the Human Rights Council, and promoting its place in the Secretary General's New Agenda for Peace.

Germany's leading contribution to the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is an expression of the value Germany attaches to peaceful conflict prevention and resolution. Germany is currently joining forces with the Peacebuilding Support Office to improve the impact and impact assessment of PBF projects. Moreover, Germany has taken a leading role in innovative peace financing. A staunch supporter of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Germany recognizes, supports and promotes the indispensable role played by women, children and marginalized groups in peacebuilding and throughout the entire conflict cycle, and advocates for their systematic, full, equal and meaningful inclusion. Germany moreover partners with the Fund in efforts to enhance peacebuilding impact assessment methodologies through pilots in several countries related to intergroup trust, peaceful coexistence, and conflict prevention.

Ambassador Antje Leendertse, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations said, "Investing in peace is a central tenet of the Secretary-General's common agenda and it is one that Germany has always endeavored to uphold. The Secretary-General's 'New Agenda for Peace' provides a great opportunity to further strengthen and develop the UN's peacebuilding instruments and give them a more central role. Germany, as current Vice-Chair of the PBC and main voluntary contributor to the PBF, will remain committed to bring forward the UN peacebuilding agenda. We will strive to strengthen the linkages between the PBC and the PBF even further. The recent PBC meetings focusing on South Sudan's peacebuilding efforts, that are actively supported by the PBF, are a good example of this linkage. We need full political ownership for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace from all UN Member States. An agreement on the introduction of assessed contributions for the PBF would underline this joint political ownership."



The African Union

The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) partners with the African Union (AU) in a variety of ways including through its support to the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) country and regional engagements in Africa and its annual consultative collaboration with the AU Peace and Security Council

(AU PSC) on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The partnership, guided by the [Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security](#), is rooted in comparative advantages, complementarity, and burden-sharing principles along with other frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018), the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Policy Framework, and the extended AU's Silencing the Guns Initiative.

The Commission places high value on the work and expertise of regional organizations and has continuously invited the AU to brief or intervene at PBC meetings. For instance, at a PBC meeting organized on Chad in December 2021 the AU High Representative and Special Representative for Chad, H.E Mr. Basile Ikouébé, briefed the PBC on the ongoing transition in the country. Additionally the AU Youth Envoy Ms. Chido Cleopatra Mpemba briefed the PBC at its annual meeting on Youth, Peace and Security. The PBC and the AU PSC have also annually convened an informal consultative meeting to discuss current and emerging threats to peace and security and peacebuilding in Africa. Informal consultative meeting topics have included the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on peacebuilding and PCRD activities in African countries, political transitions, and the climate-peacebuilding nexus. In October 2022, the Commission submitted its first-ever written advice to the Security Council on the AU for the Council's Debate on the partnership with the African Union and encouraged more impact driven collaboration between the UN and the AU, including in support of the AU's efforts to revitalize and operationalize the AU's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy.

In line with the above, the Observer Mission of the African Union has emphasized the concrete and impactful opportunities for partnerships in the domain of peacebuilding between the AU PSC and the PBC, here in the timely context of South Sudan: "Further, the African Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development support frame allows the Peacebuilding mechanism to the United Nations as being reactivated and operationalized in order to provide enabling environment for South Sudan's reconstruction and development. The reinvigorated approach is already leading to opportunities for further collaborations with bilateral and multilateral partners. Chair, the Peacebuilding Commission may recall that during its last visit to South Sudan, the African Union mission had suggested consideration for joint AU/PBC missions and increased coordination between the AU and the PBC."



Colombia

Colombia is an important partner of the United Nations and a champion of its peacebuilding efforts. Colombia led the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), as Chair in 2019 and Vice-Chair in 2020, and contributed to the strengthening of the Commission as a platform that conflict-affected countries can use to share peacebuilding experiences and seek the support of the international community to address remaining challenges.

During its tenure as Chair, Colombia convened a PBC meeting in Cartagena, Colombia. In this first ever meeting of the Commission outside of New York, the President and senior representatives of the Colombian government and PBC members had an opportunity to discuss the peacebuilding priorities of Colombia, including updates on the political situation and peacebuilding initiatives in the country.

Colombia has continued to share with the Commission progress and challenges in the implementation of the country's Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo.

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has supported national peacebuilding efforts in Colombia since January 2014. Following the Secretary-General's approval of Colombia's eligibility in 2017 for funding under the PBF's Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility, the PBF became the first contributor to the UN Multi-Donor Trust Fund in Colombia, which has mobilized more than \$198.2 million for the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement. To date, the PBF has invested up to \$41.5 million in Colombia, enhancing integrated UN action and funding Civil Society initiatives aimed at supporting national efforts to implement key provisions of the Peace Agreement. PBF investments have enhanced state-society relations, built community confidence, supported demobilization and transitional justice, empowered women, youth, and vulnerable groups, promoted integrated peacebuilding programs, and piloted innovative approaches such as blended finance.

H.E. Mrs. Leonor Zalabata Torres, Permanent Representative of Colombia, at a recent meeting of the Commission that focused on transitional justice, congratulated the "Commission for giving us a genuine opportunity to discuss our countries' experiences". She underscored the importance of "social participation in decisions making processes" and the need for "international help and support to allow us build our experiences and have successful results". She concluded by "thanking the international community for the efforts they have undertaken for Colombia". She also said that "The Peacebuilding Fund has made

important contributions to the implementation of the 2016 Final Peace Agreement and continues to be an important partner of Colombia in the pursuit of Total Peace and reconciliation."



The Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea is a committed partner in the United Nations' peacebuilding efforts, recognizing the importance of international cooperation and multilateralism in addressing global challenges, particularly in the realm of promoting peace and security. The Republic of Korea contributed \$4.34 million to the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in 2023, responding to the Secretary-General's call for more adequate, predictable and sustained funding to effectively support countries at risk of or affected by violent conflict.

The Republic of Korea is a longstanding supporter of the PBF, having contributed over \$16 million to the PBF since its establishment in 2006. By investing in the Fund, the Republic of Korea supports vital peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-affected areas worldwide, with a strong emphasis on facilitating UN transitions and empowering women and youth. It recognizes that women leaders at the grassroots level are at the heart of the Women, Peace and Security agenda which receives critical support through the PBF, for example by strengthening women's rights, representation and access to resources. The Republic of Korea is also a member of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), elected by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Ambassador Joonkook Hwang, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations in New York said, "The Republic of Korea views the Peacebuilding Fund as a core instrument for peacebuilding and a unique multilateral tool to build sustainable peace in crisis and fragile contexts. We believe that investing in the Peacebuilding Fund is an essential step towards fostering inclusive societies, empowering local communities, and creating the conditions for lasting peace."

Partner Country Visits

Strengthening Multilateralism for a Peaceful Future: ASG Spehar's visit to Sweden and the Stockholm Forum



The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Elizabeth Spehar, visited Sweden from 15 – 17 May to engage with Government counterparts and to participate in the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development. With the Director General for International Development Cooperation at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, ASG Spehar discussed Sweden's longstanding partnership with DPPA and Sweden's role as a champion of prevention and peacebuilding. She also met with other partners, including the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). At the Stockholm Forum, organized by SIPRI, ASG Spehar spoke at a high-level panel about the transformational shifts needed to



strengthen multilateralism to address today's challenges, alongside fellow panelists SIPRI Chair Stefan Löfven and Afghan political leader and women's rights activist Fatima Gailani. The ASG emphasized political will as one of the key ingredients needed, as well as the principles of trust, solidarity and universality. [See the video here.](#)

Advancing Peacebuilding Efforts in Kenya



From 1 – 4 May, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Elizabeth Spehar, interacted with United Nations and national actors working in peacebuilding in Nairobi, Kenya on the sidelines of the UN Sustainable Development Group Principals Meeting. ASG Spehar, together with the Resident Coordinator Stephen Jackson, met with the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management to discuss the review of Kenya's Peacebuilding Architecture looking at how to re-energize infrastructures for peacebuilding and address compounding and multi-faceted challenges. ASG Spehar joined a reflection session with Kenyan state and non-state peacebuilding actors, that received support from the Peacebuilding Fund, to contribute to peaceful elections. OHCHR and UNDP helped to reduce risks of violent conflict around elections and strengthened early warning and response capacities. The project successfully engaged a broad coalition and capacitated a national platform to quickly detect, investigate and counter over 800 hate speech incidents surrounding the 2022 national elections. Timely analyses of trends, risks and incidents in offline and online spaces informed responses and prevention efforts at the national and subnational levels, reaching over 7 million people online and 10 million people through radio.

Through the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, UNDP, WFP and OHCHR, ASG Spehar was briefed on a project proposal being developed to enhance inclusive peace and development in the North East region of Kenya, which will seek PBF funding. She also engaged with the Fund's coordinator on peacebuilding and with the UN-World Bank liaison officer in Somalia. The donor community in Nairobi interacted with the ASG who called upon member states to support the Peacebuilding Commission.



Key Stakeholders Collaborate on TRRC Recommendations Implementation in The Gambia



On 12-15 May, PBSO Director and Deputy Head, Awa Dabo participated in the Stakeholder and Donor Conference on the implementation of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) recommendations in The Gambia and met with key peacebuilding and transitional justice stakeholders, including the Ministry of Justice, the World Bank, National Human Rights Commission, and civil society. The Government's White Paper implementation plan on the TRRC recommendations was discussed by national, regional, and international stakeholders to ensure effective, coherent, and coordinated support to the implementation process. Ms. Dabo underscored political commitment, national ownership, and inclusive approaches as key to a successful implementation process and sustainable impact. She also reiterated the importance of adequate, timely, and sustainable technical and financial resources for an inclusive implementation process to advance national reconciliation and social cohesion.



Donor Partner Visit Explores Peacebuilding Fund's Support in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



To highlight the impact of the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund's (PBF) support in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Peacebuilding Support Office organized a donor partner visit from 15 - 19 May. Participants included representatives from Belgium, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the DRC and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) Bintou Keita welcomed the delegation and briefed on the Mission's priorities and transition planning. DSRSG/RC/HC Bruno Lemarquis and officials of the Ministry of Planning accompanied the delegation to visit PBF-funded projects in Tshikapa, Kasai Province, one of the regions where PBF support has focused during and after MONUSCO's drawdown. The delegation was able to learn about results and challenges through conversations with beneficiaries and partners of community security, social cohesion, durable solution and transitional justice initiatives implemented by UNDP, IOM, UN Women, UNFPA, OHCHR, UNHCR, Interpeace and World Vision. Meetings with Provincial Governments of Kasai and Kasai Central as well as with the World Bank, bilateral development partners and civil society organizations completed the visit.



Donor partners appreciated the unique role the PBF played in enabling an effective transition of the UN configuration in Kasai province. They made recommendations on how the PBF could apply lessons from transition support in the Kasais to new programmes in the Eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, where a joint transition plan by the UN and the Government is being developed. Donor partners also recommended that the PBF retain a flexible and agile approach to its financing to allow quick responses to unexpected situations; encouraged to remain focused on the sustainability of interventions, as well as their scalability, catalytic quality and risk tolerance; and to measure the longer-term impact and sustainability of results achieved through PBF funding. This could entail, for example, complementing the PBF's periodic portfolio evaluations of five-year support periods with additional sampling of selected PBF-funded project sites that could be revisited five to ten years later to learn about any lasting effects and follow-on actions from beneficiaries.

Recent Events

The Seventh Advisory Group of the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund Convenes in New York

From 27-28 April, the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund's (PBF) Seventh Advisory Group convened for its second full session in New York. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres met with the Group together with the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Elizabeth Spehar, and discussed resource mobilization for the Fund and peacebuilding more generally, connections to the New Agenda for Peace, engagements between the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and PBF and the priority of peacebuilding in today's world. The Group underscored the urgency of coming to a positive conclusion on assessed contributions sooner rather than later. Group members discussed the New Agenda for Peace and its link to longer-term processes including the 2025 review of the Peacebuilding architecture. They also consulted representatives of key UN partners (UN Development Coordination Office, UNDP, IOM and UNFPA) on the role of the Fund to promote integrated and impactful UN peacebuilding support in countries, including with regard to supporting the crucial work of women and youth peacebuilders. The Group also met with the PBC Chair and Vice-Chairs to enhance PBF-PBC synergies and consider how to further strengthen the Commission's role in the peacebuilding architecture. For more information about the Advisory Group, [click here](#).

