



October 2023



PBF Investments in



TOTAL APPROVED \$22.2 M

CURRENTLY ACTIVE: \$9 M

Focusing on

- Conflict prevention;
- Peace dividends in remote areas
- Strengthening state capacity through the extension of essential public services

Partners



PEACEBUILDING CONTEXT

As an 'oasis of stability in the Sahel region, Mauritania has developed an interesting model of prevention and resilience despite the multi-dimensional risks and fragilities it faces, including cross-border insecurity, the spread of violent extremism and conflicts related to access to natural resources. The impacts of climate change on peace and security affect not only the livelihoods as well as the water and food security of local populations and refugees, but also have the potential to undermine social cohesion and stability. Social cohesion challenges are linked to the peaceful coexistence between communities exacerbated by displacement patterns, combined with complex social structures, social disparities and perceptions of inequalities, and high youth unemployment. The impact of climate change constitutes a significant risk factor as a significant proportion of the active population lives from agropastoral economy. The porosity of borders combined with climatic hazards exacerbates tensions around natural resources including during cross-border movements of herders.

PEACEBUILDING FUND IN ACTION

PBF invested in a first initiative implemented by FAO-UNDP-UNICEF-OHCHR back in 2018 in Bassikounou to promote social cohesion between host communities and Malian refugees who have been living around the Mbera refugee camp. The tensions once observed between the two community groups have reduced in an area largely affected by desertification and climate change. Training on the pastoral code and joint management of natural resources combined with investments around pastoral hydraulics and the development of an integrated management plan of natural resources, increased local conflict prevention capacity and the amicable settlement of conflicts between farmers and herders. While the project ended, the Bassikounou women's network supported has now been institutionalized with legal status and is the technical branch of the newly created Observatoire National des Droits de la Femme et de la Fille and the Bassikounou radio continues its broadcasting to promote harmony between host communities and refugees.

The Secretary-General granted eligibility to Mauritania in 2020 following a request from the Government of Mauritania asking support for conflict prevention and peaceful coexistence, delivery of peace dividends in remote areas and strengthening State capacity and authority through the delivery of basic services. On that basis, additional national and cross-border investments led to the following results.

To empower women in preventing and countering violent extremism, UNODC and UNESCO worked with the Government in a peacebuilding initiative in five regions of Mauritania funded by the PBF. The initiative created a network of 50 women religious guides and community leaders known as Mourchidates in charge of transmitting alternative discourses to violent extremism. By providing an alternative discourse to violent radicalism, these women deconstructed the radical rhetoric of extremist groups using religious arguments. The project evaluation found that the Mourchidates have acquired skills to counter radical discourse and violent extremism, which they were previously unable to do; they reached new vulnerable groups that had been neglected in previous violent extremism prevention strategies, including mothers who were informed on how to recognize the first signs of radicalization in their children, women prisoners, the families (mothers, wives, sisters and children) of male prisoners convicted of terrorism-related offenses; the Mourchidates gained visibility and legitimacy by being officially recognized as a network by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Original Mauritanian Education. The Mourchidates have also been invited to share their work in Mali so that such an approach could be replicated there.

With WFP and FAO support, social cohesion has improved in the five communes of the Karakoro Basin, in Guidimakha, thanks to the establishment of inclusive conflict prevention and conflict management mechanisms linked to use of natural resources while community resilience was strengthened. Positive social cohesion approaches have also been piloted in Mbera, including its fire brigade. Founded by refugees, this all-volunteer firefighting group has extinguished over 100 bushfires and planted thousands of trees to preserve the lives, livelihood of the host communities and refugees and the local environment. As a multi-ethnic group of men and women, working together has also fostered greater understanding and cooperation. The Brigade was awarded the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award for the Africa region in 2022. The award recognizes the Brigade's exceptional courage and dedication in fighting bushfires and protecting the camp, surrounding villages and host communities and Mauritania's shared natural resources.

■ CROSS-BORDER INVESTMENTS

► FAO and IOM implemented a peacebuilding initiative to resolve cross-border conflicts among the agro-pastoral communities between the border areas of Mali and Mauritania. These conflicts were significantly reduced with the deployment of the transhumance tracking tool (TTT), the establishment of an early warning system, the creation of a consultation framework for conflict management, and the organization of awareness-raising campaigns. Through the early warning system, a total of 969 alerts were issued, including 642 alerts related to events that had already occurred and 327 alerts regarding sudden movements of transhumant animals. The majority of these alerts, around 89% were effectively resolved, with village committees involved in resolving 80% of the conflicts. The project strengthened cross-border cooperation among local authorities and communities through village committees and promoted the participation of youth and women, in intercommunity dialogues, and conflict and crisis management, leadership, and the prevention of violent extremism.

► Between Senegal and Mauritania, a new cross-border investment implemented by UNODC and IOM is strengthening cross-border governance with a view to guaranteeing border security and preventing illicit cross-border trafficking; (ii) Strengthening trust between border populations and the central State, on the one hand, and between cross-border communities, on the other hand, with a view to consolidating social cohesion and reducing tensions in Mauritania's border areas and Senegal; (iii) Strengthening the resilience of populations through access to basic social services and the empowerment of young people through strengthening their capacities in the prevention of transnational organized crime.

■ ABOUT THE PEACEBUILDING FUND

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund is the organization's financial instrument of first resort to sustain peace in countries or situations at risk or affected by violent conflict. The Fund may invest with UN entities, governments, regional organizations, multilateral banks, national multi-donor trust funds or civil society organizations. The Fund works across pillars and supports integrated UN responses to fill critical gaps; respond quickly and with flexibility to peacebuilding opportunities; and catalyze processes and resources in a risk-tolerant fashion.