



# The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund

## Papua New Guinea



PEACEBUILDING  
FUND

AUGUST 2021

### PBF Investments in

**TOTAL**  
APPROVED  \$21.6 M

**CURRENT**  
PORTFOLIO  \$9 M

### Focusing on

-  Women's and youth empowerment
-  Political dialogue
-  Peaceful management of conflicts
-  Early warning

### Partners



## PEACEBUILDING CHALLENGES

Papua New Guinea is a large country in the South Pacific, which is unique in its cultural and ethnic diversity. In 2001, following a decade-long conflict, the National Government and the leaders representing the people of Bougainville (the most eastwards group of islands in Papua New Guinea) signed the Bougainville Peace Agreement. The referendum on the political status of Bougainville was a vital pillar of the Agreement and was credibly and peacefully concluded in December 2019 with 85% turnout and an overwhelming 97.7% of votes in support of independence. Bougainville has now entered the post-referendum process in an environment where complex challenges remain, including the holding of national elections in 2022, and may pose further risks to sustaining peace.

A very different dynamic of violence has been long present in the Highlands Region of Papua New Guinea, in the middle zone of the main island. Yet the trajectory of traditional tribal warfare in this region has changed drastically in scale, intensity and type of violence over the past two decades, especially with the presence of modern weapons, political competition, and new challenges of distribution of royalties from natural resources. These active conflicts negatively affect the realisation of human rights, social and structural stability, and sustainable development in the Region.

## PEACEBUILDING FUND IN ACTION

The PBF's investment in PNG (\$21.6 million since 2015), implemented through the UN Country Team, has initially focused on supporting an enabling environment for the referendum on the political status of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, which took place in 2019. This support was provided in close partnership and complementarity with other support from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, including the Asia-Pacific Division, Mediation Support Unit, and Electoral Assistance Division, and enabled a continued strong role of the UN in the Bougainville peace process.



In addition, in late 2018, the PBF approved the first project of support in PNG outside of Bougainville, targeting the conflict-ridden Southern Highlands and Hela provinces with a view to starting to tackle tribal conflict and community grievances and to strengthen the peace-humanitarian and development nexus. Following the Secretary-General's approval in 2020 of Papua New Guinea's request for a second period of eligibility to the PBF, the Fund has increased its investment in the Highlands Region and kick-started the Highlands Joint Program (HJP) focusing on two provinces and building on the initial PBF pilot project. The HJP aims to make a difference in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding priorities in the targeted provinces and the PBF support has enabled the UN to commence this much larger Program in this remote and complex region.

## PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION ENGAGEMENT

Papua New Guinea was the first non-PBC Country Configuration Member State which addressed the Commission to discuss its peacebuilding priorities and challenges in 2015, following the original declaration of eligibility to PBF support. In October 2019, the Government addressed the Commission again to discuss the preparations for the Bougainville referendum and the peacebuilding planning for the Highlands Region.

## PEACEBUILDING FUND IMPACT

**1 Enabling a Peaceful Referendum in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville:** The PBF support to the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement since 2015 strengthened the trust and relationship between the Papua New Guinea National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to jointly work towards the referendum on the future political status of Bougainville. Through its risk-tolerant support, the PBF, together with other parts of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Bougainville Referendum Commission, and through the UN Country Team, contributed towards the creation of an enabling environment for a peaceful referendum.

In particular, the PBF enabled political dialogue between the two Governments on issues related to the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the referendum, raised awareness on the Agreement through mass awareness campaigns throughout Bougainville, and assisted with community weapons disposal and reintegration. The PBF also contributed to the resolution of a major area of long-standing dispute between the two Governments, helping to find a compromise formula for the calculation of the Restoration Development Grant paid annually by the National Government to Bougainville. The Fund also assisted in the signing of the parliamentary partnership agreement between the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives, pledging to increase collaboration.

Moreover, PBF support has helped enhance the role of women and youth in the referendum preparation and conduct, including through targeted information campaigns and fora for dialogue on key peacebuilding issues, within communities and with political leaders. The Fund also supported reconciliation and dialogue between the National Council of Women and the Bougainville Women's Federation as well as the inclusion of two women in the post-referendum Task Force.

In the post-referendum period, the Fund has continued to support the efforts of the two Governments to negotiate the implementation of the outcome of the referendum through an inclusive process. In addition, the Fund is supporting continued dialogue between factions that remain outside the Peace Agreement, while also targeting those zones with peace dividend support.

**2 Empowering Women and Youth as Peacebuilders in the Highlands Region:** The PBF has supported the capacity building of selected women, youth and community leaders in peacebuilding and conflict transformation in the Southern Highlands and Hela provinces. The support has enabled an inclusive development of Community Peace Plans in the target communities to foster a culture of dialogue and joint action for peace. Through these processes the various members of the communities realized they could all provide valuable contributions to their communities and they worked together to build community halls for future dialogue and exchanges. The evaluation found, for example, that male youths noted that they used the learning from project's mindset and behavioural change training to resist engaging in fights that would damage this community infrastructure.

## 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.

