



April 2024



PBF Investments in



TOTAL
APPROVED

\$84 M



CURRENTLY
ACTIVE

\$16.3 M

Focusing on



Land governance and
conflict management;



Youth and women
empowerment;



Community social cohesion
and violence prevention;



Cross-border community
peacebuilding

Partners



PEACEBUILDING CHALLENGES

Sierra Leone held peaceful national presidential, parliamentary and local council elections in 2007, 2012 and 2018, representing an important democratic and peacebuilding milestone. In June 2023, general elections were held and the incumbent President was re-elected. However, controversies arose around the results, which the main opposition All People's Congress (APC) refused to accept. As a result, the APC declared a general boycott of partaking in governance and did not assume their positions in Parliament and Local Councils. Following a process of mediation from the international community, the Government and APC reached an "Agreement for National Unity" that includes, inter alia, the establishment of a cross-party committee to review the election system and management bodies. Although the country has made significant progress in rebuilding and strengthening post-war institutions and addressing some of the immediate needs of its people and war victims, many challenges remain with some of the root causes of the civil war still requiring to be fully addressed, such as youth inclusion and employment, tackling corruption, inequality, decentralization, food insecurity and more inclusive access to land, particularly for women and girls. The 2023 election also left the country deeply divided, increasing the country's fragility, combined with additional emergencies, such as the widespread drug abuse and internal security challenges.

PEACEBUILDING FUND IN ACTION

Since 2007, the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has invested USD \$84 million in Sierra Leone. Working closely with the Security Council mandated United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), while it was present in the country, and with the UN Country Team (UNCT), the PBF supported a wide range of peacebuilding projects in Sierra Leone, contributing to the state-building processes, conflict prevention and resolution.

Re-building state institutions and social fabric in the post-war period:

Building on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, early PBF support focused on strengthening institutions for inclusive democratic governance, reconciliation, access to justice and protection of human rights, improved security, promotion of dialogue, and gender equality. During the 2007 and 2012 electoral periods, the PBF support focused on multi-faceted communication campaigns advocating for political tolerance,

which contributed to peaceful general elections in both 2007 and 2012. In addition, dialogue and partnership with a broad range of actors including political parties, traditional and religious leaders, community-based organisations, women and youth, increased the participation of various segments of the society in the electoral process and promoted inclusiveness. Together with UNIPSIL, the PBF helped broker a series of agreements between the main political parties and their youth and women's wings, creating inclusive spaces for dialogue. The PBF was also instrumental in setting up and consolidating the National Human Rights Commission, including its regional offices, an important step towards improving access to justice and human rights. The capacity of the Police Services and the Office of National Security was strengthened through establishing Chiefdom Security Committees (CHISECs) and District Security Committees (DISECs) across the country, including in sensitive border areas.

Supporting transition from UNIPSIL:

From 2013 to 2016, the PBF investment focused on helping to support a smooth transition from the UNIPSIL to the UN Country Team, which took place in March 2014, following a resolution of the UN Security Council. The PBF helped to strengthen the country's human rights mechanisms including the protection of women and girls from SGBV and the promotion of the rights of people with disabilities. Conflict resolutions mechanisms were also strengthened with the setup of a network of 50 insider mediators and 30 youth monitors in six districts to address community tensions and act as early warning ambassadors. Community dialogues were also promoted as a means of discussing issues of community concern inclusively and avoiding conflict.



The early warning system set up in the Office of National Security and Police headquarters, also supported by the PBF through 150 community-based monitors from 6 districts, provided real time early warning reports on incidences of violence during elections. Data generated from these tools helped highlight incidents of violence to key government institutions, engaged the security system, notified electoral management bodies, the international community and civil society leaders, and advocated for actions.

Post-2018 support on land conflict resolution, women's empowerment and reducing youth vulnerability to violence:

Since 2018, the PBF support to Sierra Leone has focused on specific conflict-related issues, identified by the UN and the Government as priorities and where the PBF and the UN can contribute to innovative solutions. This included a strong focus on land conflicts, cross-border and borderlands community vulnerabilities, women and youth empowerment and participation, and continued support to early warning mechanisms in support of peaceful 2023 elections.

A project (WFP/UNDP) in Pujehun and Moyamba districts established dedicated multi-stakeholder platforms, grievance redress committees and inclusive community development committees, which set the foundations for more inclusive land use planning and exchanges with the private extractive companies accessing community land. By the end of the project, 88 percent of land disputes in the target zones were resolved amicably through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms supported by the PBF. Moreover 31 farmer groups were supported with more sustainable livelihoods, increasing land yield and decreasing pressure on land and related community disputes. Another project (FAO, UNDP, UNFPA) in Kenema and Tonkolili districts targeted vulnerable youth, especially those engaged or at risk of engagement in cliques and gangs, to become resources for sustained peace, community resilience and social cohesion. The project supported around 500 young people in two targeted districts with a combination of trainings, psycho-social support, dialogues with authorities and provision of livelihoods. At the end of the project, the level of crime and violence associated

with these young people and cliques/gangs was drastically reduced, as reported by communities and local security providers. There was also a significant reduction in anti-social and risky behaviours such as theft, fighting, aggression, and substance abuse, a result of the wide range of civic education, youth leadership, conflict resolution training and livelihoods support. The targeted youth are now taking part in community decision-making and other local development and social activities through chieftdom and district structures. Many young people also reconciled with and moved back in with their families.

Though a separate complementary initiative on community conflict in Tonkolili and Pujehun districts, with support and advocacy of a PBF project (Cordaid), the district security committees restructured their membership to include youth from the district youth councils, especially young women, who now attend committee sittings where they meaningfully contribute to conversations around key drivers of conflict, insecurity, and injustice. In addition, a cross-border project between Sierra Leone and Guinea is helping address community conflict risks especially around the movement of cattle. The project (WFP/IOM) has redynamised cattle settlement committees; supported participatory community planning and locally led construction of irrigation systems; organized a series of advocacy activities around inclusion and peaceful conflict resolution; mapped transhumance flows and supported the establishment of a specialist data unit at the district council. The project also organized a border peace summit between the two countries and is supporting the review of the Cattle Settlement Policy.

In addition to support to address land related disputes, the PBF has supported a series of engagements with specific groups of young people (e.g. motorbike riders) and with women across the country to address their vulnerabilities and facilitate their increased engagement in local decision-making and conflict prevention, including before, during and after the 2023 elections. During the 2023 electoral period, a PBF project (UNDP/UNICEF) built on earlier electoral projects, supported two early warning and response mechanisms operationalized by the government and civil society respectively, which anticipated and responded to election-related conflicts. 600 security personnel including 128 women were trained on election security and conflict management. Enhanced dialogue, and technical training of various stakeholders, as well as support to verification of information mitigated some hate speech and tensions during the electoral period. 8 fact-checkers and 2 coordinators including 5 women were trained on the iVerify fact-checking system operationalization, and 204 stories were verified and published following requests by platform users where 2.5 million people were reached. Finally, Sierra Leone became the first country in a government-led and non-humanitarian context to pilot and launch the Gender Based-Violence (GBV) Information Management System and digital referral pathways to support GBV Case Management throughout the elections.

■ 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.