

## 1. Objective and Scope

This policy is elaborated in compliance with ST/AI/2021/3<sup>1</sup> and subsequent guidelines<sup>2</sup> and is based on the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards<sup>3</sup> and thus the UNEG definition of evaluation shall be used.<sup>4</sup> It sets forth the organizational set-up, procedures and accountabilities governing the evaluation function at the PBF. The policy will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised every five years, at the end of the PBF's Strategic Plan period.<sup>5</sup>

### Organizational Structure of the PBF and its Evaluation Pillar

The Peacebuilding Fund, established in 2006, is a UN Secretariat entity situated within the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). Within DPPA, the Fund's Secretariat is located in the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), headed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support. The Fund is managed by a director-level Chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of PBSO, and is supported by a team of programming, data analysis, evaluation, knowledge management and communications professionals. The Fund was established by General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005) and further defined in the report of the Secretary-General A/60/984 (2006) as the United Nations' financial instrument of first resort to respond to and prevent violent conflict.

The Fund operates on the basis of five-year Strategic Plans that articulate operational priorities and set funding targets. The 2020-2024 Strategy foresees \$1.5 billion in investments in at least 40 countries on all continents through projects implemented by UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, as well as civil society organizations.

At country level, the Fund invests through two facilities: the Immediate Response Facility (IRF), which can be deployed in any country setting up to a threshold amount of funding, and the Peacebuilding Recovery Facility (PRF), for which countries need to be declared eligible. PRF eligibility is granted for five years, after which it can be renewed through a re-application process. Funding provided to eligible countries typically is much greater than to those receiving only IRF funding.

Regardless of the setting, the PBF recognizes that high-quality evaluation is an essential aspect for evidence-based decision-making, learning and accountability.<sup>6</sup> Since its inception, the PBF has continuously aimed to improve both the breadth and quality of evaluation coverage to support learning and more effective programming, as well as accountability. An independent Synthesis Review of the PBF performance in 2017-2019, which examined evaluations and other key documents during the PBF's last Strategic Plan, recommended the Fund to identify innovative and more context-adaptive means of evaluating PBF's performance.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, the PBF's Strategy 2020-2024 committed the Fund to pursuing innovative, iterative, and adaptive evaluation exercises that afford opportunities to learn and course-correct. In 2020, this commitment translated into the establishment of a designated Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E) team, a new support facility within the PBF to provide dedicated support to programming colleagues within the PBF and among its fund recipients.

1. [ST/AI/2021/3](#), Administrative instruction, Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat, 2021.

2. Guidelines - Administrative Instruction on Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat, 2021.

3. United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#), 2016.

4. UNEG defines evaluation as 'an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decisionmaking processes of organizations and stakeholders. The purposes of evaluation are to promote accountability and learning [...]', UNEG, Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016.

5. This policy is coming into force in the third year of the Fund's current Strategic Plan 2020-2024. Exceptionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated in late 2024 to respond to possible changes emerging from the next Strategic Plan.

6. See [ST/AI/2021/3](#) and *Administrative Instruction on Evaluation, United Nations Secretariat Guidelines* (2021).

7. Ernstorfer, Anita. "Synthesis Review 2017-2019: PBF project and portfolio evaluations", *Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund*, 18 May 2020: [https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/synthesis\\_review\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/synthesis_review_final_report.pdf).

## 2. Organizational Setting

The PBF evaluation function is anchored in the PBF's Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E) team. Within the DM&E team, the evaluation pillar consists of two staff members (one P5 DM&E Team Leader / Senior Advisor and one P3 Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist). The DM&E team commissions global and country portfolio evaluations and provides guidance and quality assurance for project evaluations. As part of its quality assurance approach, the DM&E team commissions third-party evaluation quality assessments (see 4. *Types of Evaluations, Process, Roles and Responsibilities*). The Head of the DM&E team reports to the Chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of PBSO. To ensure the independence and impartiality of the evaluation function, the Head of the DM&E team secondarily reports to the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support.

For countries eligible to receive PRF financing, small PBF Secretariats are established to manage country-level implementation of PBF resources. Secretariats typically consist of a mid- to senior-level PBF Coordinator and an M&E specialist, who support fund recipients and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) on country portfolio-level monitoring, evaluation and reporting. In-country Secretariats have a direct reporting line to RCOs, with a secondary reporting line to PBF country focal points in New York.

## 3. Types of Evaluations, Process, Roles and Responsibilities

There are three types of evaluations at the PBF: a) global evaluations, b) country portfolio evaluations and c) project evaluations.

### a) Global evaluations

- ▶ **Fund evaluations** – these include midterm and final evaluations of the Fund's Strategies, as well as biennial Synthesis Reviews. Fund evaluations meet the PBF's commitments under its Terms of Reference,<sup>8</sup> which require an independent evaluation at least every three years to assess the PBF's effectiveness in fulfilling its objectives and overall impact in support of peacebuilding.
- ▶ **Global thematic evaluations** – the Fund may elect to procure and manage global evaluations on specific thematic areas or institutional actors (such as PBF Secretariats or Joint Steering Committees) related to its funding.
- ▶ **Annual cohort evaluations of projects under or equal to \$1.5 million** – starting in 2021, the Fund will procure and manage evaluations of projects with budgets under or equal to \$1.5 million (see *Project evaluations* below for more detail).

### b) Country portfolio evaluations

In eligible countries, the Fund follows one of two approaches to evaluating the country portfolio. Country teams should consult with PBF to determine which of these two approaches prevails in their setting.

**Pathway one: Eligible countries with substantial investment.** The Fund is responsible for a range of evaluative approaches including iterative evaluative exercises such as outcome harvesting, midterm reviews, and portfolio final evaluations, described in more detail below. In case where the PBF is supporting the below iterative evaluative exercises, projects associated with the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) will not be required to conduct separate final evaluations.

**Iterative evaluative exercises** – While a country's eligibility spans a five-year time horizon, the Fund acknowledges the need to establish flexible and context-adaptive systems. In high-investment countries, the Fund will support iterative evaluative exercises such as outcome harvesting or developmental evaluation to encourage context-adaptation and foster a learning-based approach.

8. UN, A/63/818, [Arrangements for the revision of the terms of reference for the Peacebuilding Fund](#), 2009.

**Midterm partnership reviews** – Because the contexts in which the Fund works are extremely dynamic, the PBF requires a midterm partnership review of a country's five-year Strategic Results Framework<sup>9</sup> and the underlying project base that operationalizes the SRF's strategic outcomes. The review should occur between year two and three of a country's five-year eligibility cycle and afford opportunities to revisit the Framework's strategic priorities and outcomes and revise if necessary.

**Portfolio final evaluation** – In year four of a country's five-year eligibility cycle, the PBF will procure and manage an evaluation of the SRF across the full implementation cycle, including the Framework's underlying projects. The portfolio evaluation should be timed early enough to contribute to decision making about possible eligibility renewal and launch of new programming.

**Pathway two: Eligible countries of lesser investment.** There is no requirement for portfolio level evaluations in these settings. Whether or not to commission a portfolio level evaluation will be a case-by-case decision by PBF and the RCO. Independent, final project evaluations will be procured and managed by the fund recipients. Fund recipients should refer to the requirements for final project evaluations, including minimum budget thresholds, outlined in section 3c below.

### c) Project evaluations

**Final, independent evaluations are required for all projects with budgets greater than \$1.5 million.<sup>10</sup>**

Responsibility for procuring and managing an independent evaluation rests with the project's fund recipients, either Recipient UN Organizations (RUNOs) or Non-UN Organizations (NUNOs). Where a project includes multiple fund recipients, all recipients must be involved in the joint management of the final evaluation. RUNOs and NUNOs must obtain the clearance of their evaluation ToR from the designated PBF focal point and submit key deliverables, including inception reports and draft final reports, for PBF's clearance.

All final project evaluations, moreover, must be conducted by an external evaluator or evaluation team. While some PBF fund recipients may have independent Evaluation Offices, these are not considered external evaluators for the purposes of PBF evaluations.

Fund-recipients' Evaluation Offices, however, are expected to support the implementation of the country-based project evaluations and ensure both its quality and utilization. Evaluation managers at country level are expected to alert their Regional Office and Headquarters evaluation colleagues prior to commissioning the project evaluation. Because PBF final evaluations are always externally procured, it is essential that sufficient resources are set aside to commission a high-quality evaluation.

The below table outlines the minimum budget per project budget category that RUNOs and NUNOs must retain for evaluation purposes:

**Table 1. Project evaluation budget table**

Project budget	\$1.5 million to \$1.99 million	\$2 million to \$3.99 million	\$4 million to \$7.99 million	\$8 million and over
Minimum evaluation budget	\$50,000	\$65,000	\$80,000	\$100,000

9. In 2021 the PBF began rolling out new country-level Strategic Results Frameworks (SRFs), which translate the strategic priorities articulated in a national government's request for PBF eligibility into measurable strategic outcomes that are valid for five years. SRFs consist of strategic outcomes, their underlying theories of change and assumptions, as well as high-level indicators to mark progress against the outcomes. SRFs should orient the design of individual projects that operationalize the achievement of the SRF's strategic outcomes. Given their role in shaping the PBF's five-year investment strategy in a given country, the design of SRFs should be participatory and inclusive.

10. The exception to this policy is high-investment settings where the PBF is managing the portfolio-approach to M&E outlined in Section 3.b. Additional exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.

**For projects with budgets less than or equal to \$1.5 million.** RUNOs and NUNOs are not required to conduct evaluations of projects with budgets less than or equal to \$1.5 million. Instead, as noted above, the PBF will commission an annual cohort evaluation of lower-budget projects.<sup>11</sup> An internal scan of the PBF's projects from 2019 to 2021 indicated that the majority of lower-budget projects were approved through the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) annual call for proposals. Given that the GYPI issues its annual calls on the basis of priority themes, the annual cohort evaluation of lower-budget projects will enable the PBF to tailor evaluation questions to pursue specific thematic foci.

## 4. Enhancing use, communication and follow-up of evaluations

In the interest of accountability, PBF adheres to the UNEG norms and standards to promote the transparency of evaluation reports. On this basis, all evaluation reports of the PBF shall be made publicly available on the [PBF website](#).

Evaluation findings and recommendations will be used to promote learning within the PBF and among its fund recipients through the commissioning of periodic Thematic Reviews, Synthesis Reviews, and other knowledge products, learning events and trainings for the PBF Community of Practice to support better programming.

The PBF will commission external quality assurance services to determine the credibility of all final evaluations, including those procured by PBF as well as fund recipients. Evaluation quality scores will be publicly available on PBF website, alongside the evaluation report.

## 5. Budget

Funds to support the evaluation-related posts for the DM&E team are drawn from the PBF overhead budget.

Funds to support evaluations that are procured and managed by the PBF, as well as costs associated with the evaluation function are drawn from programme funds via a special support project managed by the DM&E Team Leader. Associated costs may include travel, hosting of seminars or other events, and training.

Budgets for country portfolio exercises will be divided between in-country PBF Secretariats (for midterm partnership review and outcome harvesting) and PBF HQ (final portfolio evaluations). Project evaluation budgets are to be taken from and managed by fund recipients through individual projects, in line with the parameters indicated in Table 1.

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<sup>11</sup>. Exceptions to this policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis.