

Overview of the UN Peacebuilding Fund's Efforts on Financing for Gender Equality and the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda



Since its inception in 2006, the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has evolved into a vital mechanism for advancing women's leadership, protection, and participation in peace processes, ensuring that gender equality is not only a principle but a practice in peacebuilding efforts across the globe.

The PBSO pursues a two-track approach to gender equality by supporting and encouraging both dedicated targeted interventions and gender mainstreaming across all PBF-financed projects. Some of the key practices and policies in support of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) include:

 **Gender Marker:** At the heart of PBF's approach is the Gender Marker (GM), introduced in 2009 to track both the substantive integration of gender equality in programming and financial resources allocated for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Aligned to the UNDG standard, the PBF Gender Marker is based on a four-point scale: GM3 for projects that have gender equality as a principal objective; GM2 for projects that have gender equality as a significant objective; GM1 for projects that contribute in some way to gender equality, but not significantly; and GM0 for projects that are not expected to contribute to gender equality. Since 2017, the PBF has rejected GM0 projects and has discouraged projects that achieve only GM1. The PBF's Gender Marker scoring considers the extent to which gender and gender-responsiveness is integrated in conflict analysis, implementation and activities, results framework, and budget. Together with dedicated guidance and monitoring, these policy innovations have prompted UN Women to dub the PBF Gender Marker one of the most rigorous in the UN system.¹

 **Gender mainstreaming target:** In 2015, PBF became the first UN peace-focused financing mechanism to meet the goal of dedicating at least 15% of its investments to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), a goal set by the Secretary-General under S/RES/1325. PBF Strategy 2017-2020 set an even more ambitious annual target of 30% of PBF investment for gender equality. Since 2018, the PBF has consistently exceeded this benchmark, allocating over 40% of its funding to GEWE.²

 **Prioritizing programmes focused on women's and youth empowerment:** The Fund's 2020-2024 Strategy, extended until the end of 2026, established a priority window to promote the engagement of women and young people within peace and security agendas, setting 25% investment target for programmes focused on this goal, which the Fund has exceeded every year since.³ The priority window is seen as reinforcing the strategic importance of addressing exclusion as a root cause of conflict and a barrier to lasting peace.

 **Leveraging partnership with PBC:** The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), as the UN's principal body supporting peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected countries, plays an important role in integrating gender perspectives into peacebuilding. Since the adoption of the PBC Gender Strategy in 2016, the Commission ensured a systematic focus on gender issues across its deliberations, which has been monitored with the support of the Peacebuilding Support Office and UN Women through reviews and consultations with Member States, UN entities, and women peacebuilders. An independent review of the Gender Strategy implementation shows that the Commission experienced a sharp increase in the inclusion of gender analysis in its documents, and in the number of meetings and field visits involving women peacebuilders. Women peacebuilders, some who implement PBF-supported initiatives, now brief the PBC more frequently and have highlighted how this has helped them gain visibility and recognition that strengthens their advocacy at national and regional levels. Member States have expressed that these interactions enrich their understanding and enhance the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts. Through these developments, the PBC has significantly advanced gender-responsive peacebuilding, setting a precedent for inclusive policy and practice across the UN system.

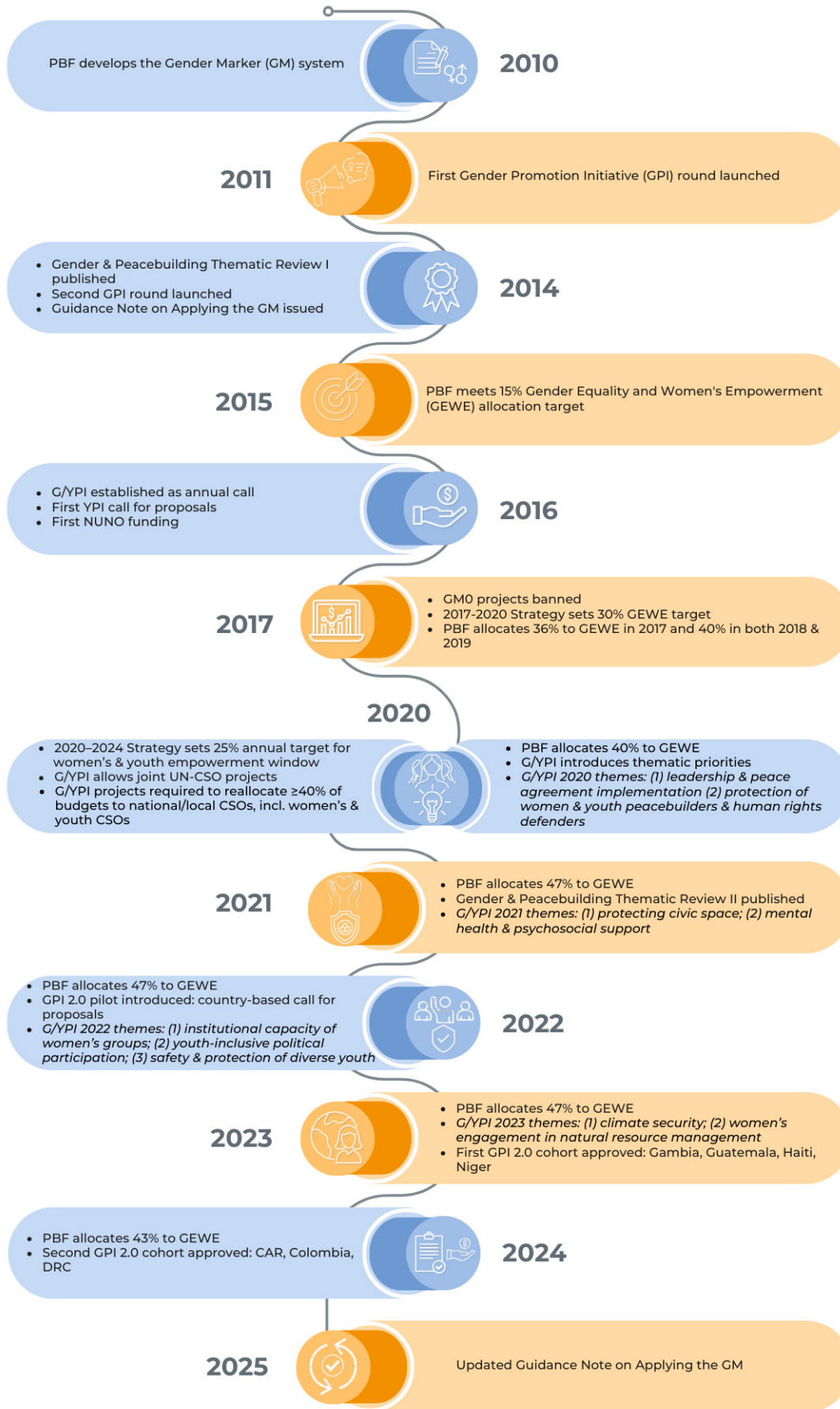
 **Localizing WPS agenda:** Launched in 2011, the Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI) was introduced as a special global call for proposals to incentivize the development of projects that place gender equality and women's empowerment at the center of peacebuilding strategies and programming. In 2016, PBF took affirmative action to enable civil society organizations to apply for funding, including through the annual GPI call. In 2022, PBSO has further evolved the Gender Promotion Initiative, moving away from the global call for proposals, and instead decentralizing to country level to provide more context-specific support. By 2024, PBSO had launched "GPI 2.0" pilots in 7 countries, thus enabling greater national ownership of GPI programming and its integration into national peacebuilding strategies, and deeper engagement with local civil society actors.

1. "Gender Marker Implementation in the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)," UN Women: <https://gendercoordinationandmainstreaming.unwomen.org/gender-marker-implementation-peacebuilding-fund-pbf>

2. PBF Performance Framework 2020-2026 (indicator 1.2.1): https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/performance_framework_2025-09-05.pdf. The annual PBF investment to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) is calculated based on budget allocations to GEWE across all projects approved a given year (GM1, GM2, GM3).

3. PBF Performance Framework 2020-2026 (indicator 1.2.3): https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/performance_framework_2025-09-05.pdf. The results for the PBF priority window on the empowerment of women and youth in peacebuilding are calculated based on full budgets of the projects that primarily focus on youth and on women (GM3 projects).

TIMELINE OF PBF'S WPS SUPPORT MILESTONES



List of acronyms:

CAR – Central African Republic

CSO – Civil Society Organization

DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo

GEWE – Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

GM – Gender Marker

GMO – Gender Marker 0 projects (that are not expected to contribute to gender equality)

GPI – Gender Promotion Initiative

G/YPI - Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives

NUNO – Non-UN (CSO) recipient of PBF funds

WPS – Women, Peace and Security

YPI – Youth Promotion Initiative

 **Learning on WPS:** PBF has invested in building a rich ecosystem of learning to strengthen gender-responsive peacebuilding. This includes two flagship Gender Thematic Reviews ([2014](#), [2021](#)), cohort evaluations of Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative projects, focused learning on gender through country portfolio evaluations, as well as webinars and trainings on gender-responsive design, implementation and monitoring. PBSO's partnership with UN Women has been instrumental in advancing PBF-funded programming on WPS, including through supporting dedicated gender capacity at HQ and capacity building for PBF Secretariats and partners. These efforts have transformed the PBF into a knowledge-driven, learning-oriented fund that empowers stakeholders at all levels to prioritize the WPS agenda in meaningful, sustained ways.

While the WPS agenda is built around four pillars – participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery – the Fund has consistently supported integrated approaches that reflect the interdependent nature of peacebuilding challenges, as further illustrated in project examples below.

1. Participation: The participation pillar is based on the understanding that women's meaningful inclusion in political, economic, and social spheres strengthens peace by fostering inclusive governance, addressing root causes of conflict, and ensuring broader societal ownership of peace processes. The project [“Support for Inclusive Social and Community Dialogue”](#) in the **Central African Republic** expanded women's participation in governance and newly established conflict resolution mechanisms. The project revitalized 12 inclusive Local Peace and Reconciliation Committees and established four women-only “peace houses”. These efforts enabled women to play active roles in local safety meetings, electoral preparations, and mediation, contributing to a 40% reduction in community violence in target areas.

2. Protection: The protection pillar focuses on safeguarding women and girls from conflict-related threats such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), displacement, and targeted attacks, and recognizes their safety as essential to their participation in peacebuilding. PBF provided long-term support to accountability for wartime sexual violence in **Guatemala**. The project [“Support to the consolidation of the right to truth, justice and reparations”](#) helped the national actors to enhance strategic litigation capacities, contributing to the 2013 genocide conviction of former President Ríos Montt and later, the landmark Sepur Zarco case. This historic conviction of two ex-military officers for sexual slavery marked the first time a Latin American court prosecuted SGBV as a crime against humanity, demonstrating PBF's commitment to survivor-centered justice.



“These women are reshaping what leadership looks like in Kasai. They've shown that peace is not just the absence of violence – it's the presence of inclusion,” says a local official in the Democratic Republic of the Congo regarding a PBF-funded project [PBF/COD/B-8](#) that increased women's participation in the 2023 local elections.

3. Prevention: The prevention pillar acknowledges women's crucial role in early warning and nonviolent conflict resolution. The PBF-funded cross-border project between **The Gambia** and **Senegal** - [“Supporting cross-border cooperation for increased community resilience and social cohesion”](#) - addressed the growing risks of localized conflicts escalating into national-level instability. The gender-balanced Community Prevention and Safety Committees in The Gambia contributed to a 90% drop in reported conflicts between women and border authorities. In Senegal, women-led market gardens strengthened both livelihoods and cross-border solidarity. These initiatives promoted shared ownership of peacebuilding across national lines, illustrating PBF's unique ability to coordinate integrated, gender-responsive multi-country responses.

4. Relief and Recovery: The relief and recovery pillar ensures that gender equality is embedded across early recovery, economic revitalization, and transitional justice efforts. In **Sudan**, the PBF's Darfur Program supported \$20 million in integrated projects across all five Darfur states, providing access to basic services with durable solutions for displaced populations and conflict resolution mechanisms. Results included a 15% rise in girls' school enrollment, establishment of ten women's microfinance associations, and vocational training for 315 women and girls. Community consultations, legal documentation support, and expanded access to services laid the groundwork for inclusive recovery.

Over the past decade, through its dedication to conflict-affected women, the Peacebuilding Fund has emerged as one of the most consistent and forward-leaning supporters of the Women, Peace and Security agenda within the multilateral system. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic showed how quickly gains across all four WPS pillars can be eroded in times of crisis. Looking ahead, the Fund's engagement with WPS will remain dynamic and responsive to future peacebuilding needs shaped by both emerging challenges and evolving mandates, working jointly with governments and local actors.