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Challenges and opportunities to peacebuilding:
analysis of strategic issues identified by country-
specific PBF evaluations

Mariska van Beijnum

CRU Report



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Executive Summary

Background

This analysis of country-specific United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) evaluations aims to provide an overview of the key strategic issues identified by those evaluations for the upcoming global review of the PBF. It focuses on understanding how issues related to the PBF's business model and its strategic positioning have affected the Fund's performance in the past. Such an understanding will be helpful in assessing how the PBF has evolved over time, and in understanding the rationale behind some of the steps undertaken by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) to improve the PBF's performance. This, in turn, is helpful when assessing the relevance and effectiveness of these steps.

The analysis has assessed nine country-specific PBF evaluations conducted in 2010–2012: Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Uganda. It does not aim to provide an exhaustive assessment of the PBF's overall performance on these issues, nor is it based on quantitative methodology. Instead, the analysis aims to be illustrative; providing practical examples that highlight the strategic issues identified in the ToR and linking these issues to findings in the country-specific evaluations. An important caveat is that the evaluations analysed mostly cover the first tranches of PBF funding – i.e. the first activities and programmes funded by the PBF. As such, these evaluations relate to programmes that are in some ways 'historical' and part of the initial stages of setting up the Fund. PBSO has since made an effort to address the lessons learned from these stages by further developing the Fund's 'building blocks'.

Key findings

The country-specific evaluations provide a mixed picture of the relevance and effectiveness of PBF funded activities; all portfolios contain successful and less successful projects. Given that the Fund is supposed to kick-start and consolidate peacebuilding processes in complex and politically sensitive (immediate) post-conflict situations, addressing critical (funding) gaps in those processes, the Fund is required to be innovative and risk-taking, which in itself explains why not all projects are successful. Since the Fund's mechanisms also rely heavily on the commitment and capacities of in-

country stakeholders – like the partner government, UN agencies and (local) implementing organisations – and that these actors often require sensitisation and training in peacebuilding programming skills (vis-à-vis ‘traditional’ development programming), a mixed success rate is understandable. Overall, most of the evaluations find that the PBF in one way or another has made a positive contribution to peacebuilding in country.

Notwithstanding these positive contributions, the country-specific evaluations also all underline the need to strengthen the strategic focus of PBF interventions in a country, in order to enhance the peacebuilding impact of the Fund. The evaluations exemplify the difficulties of identifying what does and what does not constitute peacebuilding. Although one can question the usefulness of entering into a definitional debate, it is important to acknowledge that the potential impact of a relatively small fund like the PBF is hindered when virtually anything can be defined as peacebuilding; more strategic focus is needed as the Fund can be literally spread too thin over a wide variety of post-conflict recovery needs.

The evaluations identify a number of strategic issues related to the PBF’s business model and its strategic positioning which have challenged the peacebuilding impact of the PBF:

Global versus in-country fund

In order for the two-tier system of the PBF (global fund with in-country decision-making) to work, a certain level of peacebuilding capacity is required in country, both within the UN system and among the key national partners. The evaluations are generally not very positive about the peacebuilding capacity of the UN agencies in the PBF countries. Many UN agencies have had difficulties in designing activities that would contribute to peacebuilding objectives rather than to ‘normal’ development objectives. Furthermore, the evaluations point to the UN system’s apparent difficulty in dividing PBF funding based on a strategic peacebuilding vision rather than taking a ‘divide the pie’ approach (i.e. dividing funds among agencies and projects). This issue does not seem to be countered by stimulating more joint programming; the evaluations found little added value resulting from joint programming in terms of enhanced peacebuilding outcomes – agencies implemented separate projects under the umbrellas of the joint programmes. The evaluations in some cases also point to a lack of capacity to manage the implementation of approved projects.

The evaluations also point towards a lack of peacebuilding capacity among the key national partners. With regard to the Joint Steering Committees (JSCs) in country, the evaluations make clear that these play an important role in improving relations between the UN (and the wider international community in country) and national stakeholders, as these actors have to work together in the JSCs, which requires open discussion and debate on developments in country. Notwithstanding this important contribution to a peacebuilding process in and of itself, the evaluations find that the JSCs have not always been effective in providing strategic guidance to the implementation of the PBF in country, and that the functioning of the JSCs has affected the peacebuilding impact of the PBF.

Linked to the issue of a lack of peacebuilding capacity in country, the findings of the country-specific evaluations underline the need to strengthen the design of PBF projects. One important element identified by the evaluations is the need to base programming on a solid analysis of the context in which the projects will be implemented. Such analyses should not solely focus on understanding the drivers of conflict in a specific country, but should also identify those areas that will have the greatest potential impact on peacebuilding. A key element in this regard is to identify the institutional capacity and changes necessary to achieve the desired impact on peace consolidation. The analyses should also take into account the (potential) interests and activities of bilateral donors and multilateral organisations, linked to the gap-filling and catalytic nature of the PBF. And perhaps most importantly, the analyses should help to identify those peacebuilding priorities that can be realistically addressed by the PBF, taking into account the Fund's timeframes and funding envelopes. The evaluations underline the need for more realistic peacebuilding programming, an issue that is considered particularly relevant for the projects carried out under the PBF's third 'pillar' – activities undertaken in support of efforts to revitalise the economy and generate immediate peace dividends for the population at large.

Almost all of the evaluations refer to PBSO in thinking about possible solutions to the apparent lack of peacebuilding capacity in country and the need to strengthen the design of PBF programming. The evaluations find that PBSO should provide more specific guidance as to how peacebuilding programming can be strengthened.

Speed and flexibility

The PBF is widely acknowledged and appreciated for providing fast, flexible and timely funding to post-conflict situations – a statement that is supported by all country-specific evaluations. While this is an important accomplishment of the Fund, in practice the PBF has to balance this 'need for speed' with key elements in its business model (i.e. developing Priority Plans and working with Joint Steering Committees) that are not always conducive to speed and flexibility. Almost all evaluations find that there is a (perceived) need for speed in terms of developing a Priority Plan and the commencement of project implementation in PBF countries. It is, however, not always clear where this need for speed is coming from, and it is not always clear why the in-country actors opted for the longer-term Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF) and not the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) – or for a first tranche of IRF funding, in a sense 'buying time' to prepare for a request under PRF funding.

Some evaluations discuss the trade-off between the need to react quickly and produce quick impacts, and the need to involve national stakeholders in order to support a sustainable peace process. In this regard, evaluations refer to the lack of (peacebuilding) capacity in national stakeholders in relation to the level of involvement of those stakeholders in PBF design and implementation. From a perspective of strengthening peacebuilding impact, one would expect that all PBF projects include a focus on capacity building. However, this does not always seem to be the case.

Rather than focusing on the trade-off between the need for speed and the involvement of national stakeholders in PBF design and implementation, the evaluations focus more on the trade-off between the need for speed and the need for proper project design. Some evaluations also find that the need for speed was created not so much by the contextual circumstances in the country, but by the PBF timeframes themselves.

Catalytic nature of the PBF

The catalytic nature of the PBF has long been a source of debate – what does it mean to be catalytic, and how does it play out in practice? Catalytic can be understood in terms of financial follow up, but could also be understood in terms of mobilising national stakeholders in support of peacebuilding ('putting peacebuilding on the agenda'). The evaluations show a mixed picture in terms of how successful the PBF has been in attracting follow-up funding for its projects. Interesting in this regard is the tendency to follow up PBF funding with PBF funding. One can question whether the PBF is truly catalytic when it manages to ensure follow-up funding from its own resources. But it is understandable that this happens, as the PBF is supposed to support critical funding gaps in support of peacebuilding processes. There is an inherent risk in this that other donors cannot be convinced to take over funding responsibilities from the PBF. This underlines the need for a strategic choice of activities, as well as the need for a clear and upfront exit strategy for the PBF taking into account the political context in which the Fund is operating. Related to this, some evaluations call for the need to distinguish between critical funding gaps and critical peacebuilding gaps, as responding to funding gaps in broader post-conflict recovery frameworks does not automatically mean that peacebuilding gaps are being addressed. Rather than focusing on the financial catalytic effect of PBF engagement, some evaluations have found catalytic effects of the PBF on the capacity and engagement of national stakeholders in support of peacebuilding ('putting peacebuilding on the agenda').

Monitoring and evaluation

From a strategic perspective, a relevant question is whether or not the PBF reporting model – in which the Recipient UN Organisations (RUNOs) report back to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office), and PBSO combines this reporting in overall reports to key stakeholders – provides sufficient information to assess peacebuilding impact in country. The country-specific evaluations make clear that in the initial stages of the PBF, many challenges occurred in this regard. Most of these are related to the lack of peacebuilding and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity in country.

Complementarity of the Fund / PBF market-niche in country

Given the limited size and timelines of the PBF, and in line with its catalytic nature, it is extremely important to use the PBF funds strategically. A key element in this regard is to

understand what the added value or comparative advantage of PBF funding is vis-à-vis other available resources in country and how it can be complementary to these resources. The evaluations do not focus on these issues per se, but do provide information on the complementarity of the PBF vis-à-vis other (peacebuilding) funding resources by focusing on coordination issues. The evaluations show that there is room for improvement of coordination at the level of the UN system, as well as with regard to the activities undertaken by bilateral donors and other international organisations. As far as the coordination of PBF activities with activities undertaken by bilateral donors and other international organisations is concerned, some evaluations underline that donors could have been consulted more in the PBF design phase.

Role and function of the UN Peacebuilding Commission as part of the PBF business model

Out of the nine evaluations that have been taken into account for this analysis, five focus on countries that are on the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Agenda: Burundi, CAR, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. Not a lot is known about the actual effect of PBC support to PBF funding. The evaluations do not really focus on the role of the PBC in implementing the PBF, as the PBC does not have a formal role to play in this implementation. More relevant is the question whether or not the PBC has contributed to achieving peacebuilding results in country by supporting the search for additional funding (linked to the catalytic nature of the PBF). According to the evaluations, the PBC has not been very active in this regard.

Conclusions – Follow up in PBF Global Review

The evaluations identify a number of strategic issues related to the PBF's business model and its strategic positioning that require further analysis in the upcoming global review, which should:

- look into how the PBF can contribute to strengthening the peacebuilding capacity of actors in country (RUNOs, the JSCs and the in-country PBF secretariats);
- look into how PBSO can support the strengthening of the design of peacebuilding programming at field level, taking into account that PBSO was intended to be a small office focused solely on the management of the global fund, leaving in-country fund management issues to the UN actors in the field (building on their capacity). If this field capacity is not sufficient in terms of achieving peacebuilding impact, clarity is needed on what that means for the role of PBSO;
- provide insights into the perceived need for speed. It should also provide more insights into how best to include a capacity-building focus in urgent peacebuilding programming, so as to better manage the balancing of the need for speed with the need to build national capacity for peacebuilding (as this is essential in strengthening peace consolidation);

- provide insights into the experiences to date in developing a clear and upfront exit strategy for the PBF, linked to the need to attract follow-up funding for PBF projects;
- assess the steps undertaken by PBSO to strengthen its M&E frameworks and reporting requirements, and should also look into possibilities to strengthen M&E in PBF countries, and to enhance possibilities to measure peacebuilding impact;
- provide more insight into the complementarity of the PBF vis-à-vis other (peacebuilding) funding resources available. It would be useful if the upcoming review could create more clarity on what the potential (strategic) added value or comparative advantage of the PBF is in terms of peacebuilding. This should include the question whether or not the PBF should have engaged in a specific country to begin with, in order to strengthen a more strategic engagement of the PBF and to increase its peacebuilding impact;
- look into how the relationship between the PBC and PBF can be strengthened. How can the PBF be strengthened in performing its strategic role within the UN system, and what role can the PBC play in supporting this? What examples can be taken into account here?

Introduction

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) state that the 'Fund shall be independently evaluated every three years to assess effectiveness in fulfilling its objectives and overall impact in support of peacebuilding'.¹ In response to that, the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) has commissioned a global review of the Fund in 2013. This review is to be strategic in nature rather than technocratic, i.e. it should focus on the Fund's global strategy and approach, and should not become bogged down in a narrow focus on the project/programme level. The global review is *not* to carry out impact evaluations of country-level activities as the independent evaluations of PBF country portfolios, which are being conducted under the guidance of PBSO on a regular basis, already provide sufficient information in that regard. Rather, the review is to focus on some of the key strategic issues identified by these country-specific evaluations – and by PBSO's own monitoring activities throughout the years – as potentially limiting the PBF in achieving its goals. Specifically, the global review seeks to better understand how the PBF's business model and strategic positioning have contributed to any successes of the Fund and/or how these may benefit from adjustments.²

PBSO has already undertaken several steps to improve the Fund's performance in recent years, taking into account the lessons learned from the country-specific evaluations.³ The PBF global review is to assess the effectiveness of these steps in terms of improving performance, and as such should serve as an important independent verification of progress and provide clear recommendations on how to sustain and improve fund performance.

The Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Clingendael Institute offered⁴ to conduct an analysis of the country-specific PBF evaluations that have been carried out in the period 2010–2012, in order to create an overview of the key strategic issues identified by these evaluations, which could serve as a basis for the upcoming global review. Understanding how strategic issues have affected the Fund's performance in the past is helpful in assessing how the PBF's business model and strategic positioning have evolved over

1 Paragraph 6.3 of the PBF ToR – A/63/818 (<http://www.unpbf.org/document-archives/terms-of-reference>).

2 ToR PBF Review, p.11/46.

3 ToR PBF Review, pp.9-10/46.

4 As part of its strategic partnership with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs – one of the key donors to the PBF.

time, and in understanding the rationale behind some of the steps undertaken by PBSO to improve the PBF's performance (which in turn is helpful when assessing the relevance and effectiveness of these steps). As such, the analysis is to serve as direct input for the PBF global review. The current report presents the key findings of the analysis.

Understanding the PBF

Following a request from the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General established the Peacebuilding Fund in October 2006. The Fund supports 'interventions of direct and immediate relevance to the peacebuilding process and contribute towards addressing critical gaps in that process, in particular for which no other funding mechanism is available.'⁵ The intended outcome of this support is to: a) catalyse new and more sustained funding sources for peacebuilding; b) mobilise national stakeholders in support of peacebuilding; and c) directly contribute to the sustainability of the peacebuilding process.⁶

In fulfilling its mandate to provide immediate and direct support to post-conflict countries, the PBF funds activities that fall within the following scope:

- Activities designed to respond to imminent threats to the peace process, support for implementation of peace agreements and political dialogue, in particular in relation to strengthening of national institutions and processes set up under those agreements (such as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, as well as strengthening prisons, police forces and peacetime militaries);
- Activities undertaken to build and/or strengthen national capacities to promote coexistence and peaceful resolution of conflict and to carry out peacebuilding activities (such as projects that bolster good governance and promote national dialogue and reconciliation, including projects that promote human rights, aim to end impunity and stamp out corruption; plus projects that strengthen the participation of women in the peacebuilding process);
- Activities undertaken in support of efforts to revitalise the economy and generate immediate peace dividends for the population at large (such as the strengthening of economic governance through the promotion of partnerships with the private sector, the development of micro-enterprises, youth employment schemes and the management of natural resources);

5 Paragraph 2.1 of the PBF ToR – A/63/818 (<http://www.unpbf.org/document-archives/terms-of-reference>).

6 Paragraph 2.1 of the PBF ToR – A/63/818 (<http://www.unpbf.org/document-archives/terms-of-reference>).

- Establishment or re-establishment of essential administrative services and related human and technical capacities which may include, in exceptional circumstances and over a limited period of time, the payment of civil service salaries and other recurrent costs (such as projects that rebuild basic infrastructure, such as energy, transportation, safe drinking water and proper sanitation).⁷

The PBF is a global fund designed to support several country situations simultaneously and therefore combines the scope of a global fund with the country-specific focus of a multi-donor trust fund. The Fund's basic architecture encompasses a two-tier decision-making process: at the central level, the Secretary-General, supported by PBSO, decides upon the country eligibility for Fund support⁸ and the allocation of funding, while at the country level the Government and the senior United Nations representative of the Secretary-General in the country (coming together in a so-called Joint Steering Committee) decide upon the disbursement of funds against an agreed-upon priority plan that is based on a joint analysis of critical gaps and peacebuilding needs.⁹

The PBF can provide support through two funding facilities:

1. Immediate Response Facility (IRF), used to provide emergency funding for immediate peacebuilding and recovery needs – a request for support should be made by the national authorities and the senior United Nations representative in the country, and the Secretary-General can immediately decide to allocate funds based on a case-by-case assessment (through PBSO); funding covers a maximum of two years and does not exceed USD 10 million;
2. Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF), used to support peacebuilding needs identified in a Priority Plan jointly developed by national authorities and the United Nations presence in the country concerned – the priority plan is approved by PBSO, but the authority to identify specific projects is delegated to the country level (Joint Steering Committee); longer-term funding (three years) and funding envelope is decided upon by the Secretary-General.

The PBF is managed by PBSO (on behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support), while the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office) acts as the Fund's Administrator. As such, funding can be received by those organisations that have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the MPTF Office. In practice, this means that all PBF funding is disbursed to Recipient UN Organisations (RUNOs). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based / civil society organisations

7 Paragraph 2.1 of the PBF ToR – A/63/818 (<http://www.unpbf.org/document-archives/terms-of-reference>), and <http://www.unpbf.org/what-we-fund>.

8 In principle, any country before the UN Peacebuilding Commission should be considered a possible recipient of PBF support. The Secretary-General may determine that a particular country in exceptional circumstances and on the verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflict may also be considered eligible for PBF support, even if the country is not yet under consideration by the Peacebuilding Commission. See paragraph 3.1 and 3.2 of the PBF ToR – A/63/818 (<http://www.unpbf.org/document-archives/terms-of-reference>).

9 Paragraph 1.2 of the PBF ToR – A/63/818 (<http://www.unpbf.org/document-archives/terms-of-reference>).

(CBOs/CSOs) cannot access the Fund directly; however, they may implement projects through partnership arrangements with eligible agencies and organisations.¹⁰

10 <http://www.unpbf.org/document-archives/application-guidelines/>

Objectives, scope and methodology of the analysis

The objective of the analysis is to review the country-specific PBF evaluations that have been conducted in the period 2010–2012 in order to provide an overview (and understanding) of the key strategic issues identified by these evaluations. The analysis is to serve as direct input for the upcoming global review of the PBF by providing an understanding of how issues related to the PBF's business model and its strategic positioning have affected the Fund's performance.

As stated before, creating such an understanding will be helpful in assessing how the PBF's business model and strategic positioning have evolved over time, and in understanding the rationale behind some of the steps undertaken by PBSO to improve the PBF's performance (which in turn is helpful when assessing the relevance and effectiveness of these steps). The analysis will not make these assessments itself as that is part of the global review, but rather aims to provide a solid basis for the assessments.

The analysis has assessed eleven country-specific PBF evaluations that have been conducted in the period 2010–2012:

Country	Year of evaluation	Timeframe of evaluation	PBF project portfolio	PBF funding envelope (USD)	PBF facility
Burundi	2010	2007-2009	20 projects	2 million 35 million	IRF PRF
Central African Republic (CAR)	2012	2008-2012	26 projects	30 million	PRF
Comoros	2011	2008-2011	12 projects	9 million	PRF
Guinea-Bissau	2011	2008-2011	8 projects	6 million	PRF
Guinea	2012	2009-2012	11 projects	12.8 million	PRF
Kyrgyzstan	2012	2010-2012	7 projects	10 million	IRF
Nepal	2011	2007-2011	18 projects	10 million	PRF
Sierra Leone	2011	2007-2011	25 projects	2 million 35 million	IRF PRF
Sri Lanka	2011	2008-2012	1 project	3 million	PRF
Timor Leste	2011	2008-2011	1 project	308,963	PRF
Uganda	2012	2011-2012	4 projects	14 million	PRF

Two of these evaluations were found to be less relevant for the purpose of this exercise. The Timor Leste evaluation focuses on one specific project (the Strengthening Early Recovery for Comprehensive and Sustainable Reintegration of Internally Displaced People (SERC) Project), which is funded by Australia, UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) and the PBF. Even though the PBF provides 14% of the total funding, the evaluation does not provide specific insights into the PBF's contribution, nor in the added value of the PBF in supporting this project. Hence, the evaluation does not provide relevant input for this analysis. The same applies to the Sri Lanka evaluation, which is a mid-term evaluation of outcome 7 'Socio-economic recovery in the North and East' under the UNDP Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2008–2012. No reference is made to the PBF and it is not clear from the evaluation how the PBF has contributed to this outcome under the CPAP. Hence, the analysis presented below is based on the findings and observations of nine country-specific evaluations.

In line with the ToR for the global review, the remaining nine evaluations were reviewed with a focus on i) strategic issues that relate to the PBF's business model (e.g. funding modalities, global versus in-country fund, catalytic nature of the Fund, etc.) and ii) issues that relate to the strategic positioning of the PBF (e.g. comparative advantage of PBF, identifying peacebuilding priorities, etc.). It is important to state that the resulting analysis does not aim to provide an exhaustive assessment of the PBF's overall performance on these issues, nor is it based on quantitative methodology. Given the varied nature of PBF programming in the individual countries, the varied contexts and the different levels of analysis in the country-specific evaluations, such an assessment would require a deeper and more intricate analysis, rather than a review in order to avoid comparing 'apples-and-oranges'. Instead, this analysis aims to be illustrative; providing practical examples that highlight the strategic issues identified in the ToR and linking these issues to findings in the country-specific evaluations.

An important caveat is that the evaluations that have been analysed mostly cover the first tranches of PBF funding – i.e. the first activities and programmes funded by the PBF. As such, these evaluations relate to programmes that are in some way 'historical' and were part of the initial stages of setting up the Fund. PBSO has since then made an effort to address the lessons learned from these stages by further developing the Fund's 'building blocks'. For instance, recognising the need to provide more and better assistance during programme design stages at the country level, as well as the need to link allocation decisions more closely to performance, PBSO has developed a Business Plan 2011–2013 with associated targets and a decision to focus on a limited set of priority countries. Also, efforts have been made to focus on 'value for money', and to make allocations more performance-based. Furthermore, work has been done to clarify what is meant by the 'catalytic' nature of the Fund, and PBSO recognises the need to further empower the monitoring and guidance role of Joint Steering Committees and to increase synergies with the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).¹¹ None of these recent efforts have been taken into account in this analysis, as they have been undertaken in response to the country-specific evaluations analysed here (and hence are not included in these evaluations). These efforts will be taken into account by the upcoming global review.

11 ToR PBF Review, pp.9-10/46.

The findings of the analysis are presented in the sections below. First, a general overview of the impact of the PBF on peacebuilding is provided (section 4). Then, the key strategic issues that have influenced the performance of the Fund are presented (section 5). The analysis is concluded by an overview of key issues that require further assessment, and which should ideally be included in the upcoming global review of the PBF (section 6).

General overview of the impact of the PBF on peacebuilding

A mixed success rate

In order to strengthen the PBF's strategic focus, you need to assess what works and what does not work in the PBF's current practice (i.e. identify best practices and build upon these when examining future options for the Fund). The country-specific PBF evaluations provide input on this issue in the sense that they provide information on the PBF's impact in terms of programme effectiveness; they reflect upon the impact of PBF programming on drivers of conflict and peace at the country level. They do so mostly by assessing the relevance and effectiveness of PBF-funded activities.¹²

The country-specific evaluations provide a mixed picture of the relevance and effectiveness of PBF funded activities; all portfolios contain successful and less successful projects. This is of course not surprising, given the nature of the PBF and the complex and politically sensitive contexts in which it is providing support. The Fund is supposed to kick-start and consolidate peacebuilding processes in (immediate) post-conflict situations, addressing critical (funding) gaps in those processes. This focus requires the Fund to be innovative and risk-taking, which in itself explains why not all projects are successful. If one then also takes into account that the Fund's mechanisms rely heavily upon the commitment and capacities of in-country stakeholders like the partner government, the UN agencies and (local) implementing organisations, and that these actors very often require sensitisation and training in peacebuilding programming skills (vis-à-vis 'traditional' development programming),¹³ a mixed success rate is understandable.

Contributing to peacebuilding

Overall, most of the evaluations find that the PBF in one way or another has made a positive contribution to peacebuilding in country. The Burundi evaluation for instance

12 A valid impact assessment would require substantial amounts of time, resources and available (baseline) information – preconditions that are usually not met for the country-specific PBF evaluations, and which are not deemed feasible for the PBF, given the Fund's limited size and timeframes.

13 See section 5 below for a further discussion on the in-country peacebuilding capacity.

notes that the PBF developed several truly innovative peacebuilding projects that made an important contribution to peace consolidation in Burundi, and that the PBF has increased the national capacity to manage conflict peacefully (p.7). The Uganda evaluation finds that the PBF made a significant contribution to peacebuilding through targeted programming in the areas of access to justice and transitional justice, and a relevant contribution to peacebuilding in the area of strengthened conflict management capacities at the community/household level (p.4). It in fact states that the PBF has helped to put peacebuilding back on the agenda in Acholiland (p.4). The Guinea evaluation finds that PBF support has played an important role in supporting international mediation at the early stages of the transition in that country, which was indispensable for managing severe tensions during the presidential elections in 2010 (p.3). It also finds that the PBF has played an important role in energising support to the security sector in a context where no other actors were able or willing to provide direct support (p.3). The Sierra Leone evaluation calculates that over 60% of the funding was spent in projects that made a significant contribution to peacebuilding (p.20), making it a worthwhile investment (p.7). The Kyrgyzstan evaluation finds that the IRF funds provided by the PBF effectively jump-started projects immediately post-conflict that were important for creating stability and a sense of normality in the country. Specifically, the ability of the IRF to engage quickly post-crisis reduced some of the critical drivers of conflict, which could have ignited a further spate of violence if not addressed quickly (p.5). As such, the Fund contributed to the prevention of a relapse into conflict. The Central African Republic (CAR) evaluation is also positive about the PBF's ability to respond quickly to immediate peacebuilding opportunities. It refers specifically to the fact that the PBF provided an emergency window grant next to the PRF grant for the Inclusive Political Dialogue project, which allowed an inclusive transitional government to be created which in turn paved the way for presidential and legislative elections in 2011 (p.22). The evaluation also concludes that the CAR Joint Steering Committee (JSC) has had an important peacebuilding impact, in the sense that it played an essential role in contributing to an open dialogue among key actors, even if that dialogue was sometimes difficult/contentious (pp.50-51). And the evaluation of the UN Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN), to which the PBF has contributed, states that the Fund is seen by a significant majority of respondents as making the UN system an effective peacebuilding partner to the government of Nepal. The Fund is seen to have contributed to the increase of national capacity to build and manage peace, and has supported innovative pilot activities that are likely to prove to be significant for future peacebuilding (p.7).

Strengthening strategic focus of the PBF

Notwithstanding these positive contributions, the country-specific evaluations all underline the need to strengthen the strategic focus of PBF interventions in a country, in order to enhance the peacebuilding impact of the Fund. This is linked to the difficulties of identifying what does and what does not constitute peacebuilding. As the Burundi evaluation states, there is a lack of conceptual clarity on what kind of projects are most appropriate for PBF funding (p.8). The evaluators state that there is confusion among all involved in the PBF – both at the country level and in New York – around the definition of peace consolidation, and what does and does not qualify as a priority, which influenced

the ability of people implementing and overseeing the PBF projects to maintain their strategic alignment (p.33).

The question of what constitutes peacebuilding is a long-standing debate, and one can question the usefulness of entering into a definitional debate. It is important, however, to acknowledge that the potential impact of a relatively small fund like the PBF is hindered when virtually anything can be defined as peacebuilding; more focus is needed as the Fund can be literally spread too thin over a wide variety of post-conflict recovery needs. It is clear from the evaluations that the abilities of identifying priorities for PBF engagement in a given country – taking into account the comparative advantages of the Fund vis-à-vis other sources of funding – need to be strengthened. Even in the case of the UN Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN), to which the PBF is a contributor and which is widely considered to be a successful peacebuilding fund, it is found that this fund lacks clear criteria allowing a distinction between projects contributing to immediate peacebuilding, and therefore matching the purposes of the UNPFN, and projects qualifying for support outside the UNPFN (p.73).¹⁴ The CAR evaluation in turn finds that, taken as a whole, the 26 PBF projects lack strategic coherence. The three pillars of the PBF programme in CAR – Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR); governance and Rule of Law; and strengthening war-affected communities – were not strategically linked. Although each project individually links to one of the three pillars guiding PBF allocations, this is not sufficient to ensure that a project is critical or even necessary for peacebuilding (p.9). In fact, the evaluation finds that the problems were compounded by the fact that decisions on how to allocate PBF funding were based on a division among agencies and projects, rather than on a strategic vision consistent with the objectives of the PBF (p.16). Similarly, the Burundi evaluation states that the potential impact of PBF projects was reduced by the tendency of RUNOs to ‘divide the pie’. It finds that this was possible because ‘the UN tends to label everything ‘peacebuilding’ in post-conflict environments’ (p.39).

It would be useful if the upcoming review could create more clarity on what the potential (strategic) added value of the PBF is in terms of peacebuilding. The Burundi evaluation takes a stab at this question by identifying the PBF’s comparative advantage as undertaking activities that a) target institutions critical to prevention of near-term violence and ready for peacebuilding intervention, b) fill a critical or temporal funding gap, and c) enable national actors to sustain project outcomes (p.8). It goes on to state that the comparative advantage of the PBF describes a more narrow definition of peacebuilding than is generally accepted within the UN or even in most policy and academic literature on the subject. As a result, it is stated, it is important that the PBF not be seen as the primary vehicle through which the UN does peacebuilding in countries emerging from large-scale violent conflict. Instead, all UN entities operating in post-conflict countries should examine how their projects and programmes contribute to the immediate and long-term consolidation of peace (i.e. peacebuilding), and how they can

14 The PBF has contributed 31% of the total funding to the UN Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN). The UNPFN is seen by a significant majority of respondents as making the UN system an effective peacebuilding partner to the government and the people of Nepal (p.7 Nepal evaluation). It is seen as having contributed to the increase in national capacity to build and manage the peace, as well as the enhancement of the UN’s contribution to peacebuilding, which is deemed more efficient and consistent than before (p.8 Nepal evaluation).

be sensitive to the interaction between their interventions and the conflict dynamics (i.e. conflict sensitive) (pp.8-9). The evaluation applies the 'comparative advantage lens' to the projects selected in Burundi (it finds, for instance, that the projects intended to deliver an immediate peace dividend do not meet the criteria, p.9), but does not apply it to the overall question of whether or not the PBF should have engaged in Burundi to begin with. The upcoming review should explore that question as well, in order to enhance the potential impact of the PBF.

Key strategic issues that have influenced the performance of the PBF

The evaluations identify a number of strategic issues related to the PBF's business model and its strategic positioning that have challenged the peacebuilding impact of the PBF. These issues are clustered here as follows: global versus in-country fund; speed and flexibility; the catalytic nature of the Fund; monitoring and evaluation; complementarity of the PBF in country; and the role and function of the PBC as part of the business model of the PBF.

Global versus in-country fund

As explained in section 2, the PBF is in practice a two-headed creature, specifically for PRF funding: decision-making on overall funding is made at the central level, but then with the transfer of funds to the decentralised level, there is a lack of control to follow up on that central decision-making process. The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) is in control and responsible for the selection of activities and for ensuring peacebuilding impact in the country, while the RUNOs are responsible for ensuring that activities are carried out in an effective and efficient manner. In order for this two-tier system to work, and hence for the PBF to support effective peacebuilding, a certain level of peacebuilding capacity is required in country, both within the UN system and among the key national partners. What do the country-specific evaluations say about this in-country capacity? And what do the evaluations say about the role of the global level (i.e. PBSO) in implementing the PBF in country?

Peacebuilding capacity of the UN system in country

The evaluations are generally not very positive about the peacebuilding capacity of the UN agencies in the PBF countries. The Burundi evaluation, for instance, finds that lack of experience with peacebuilding programming on the part of most UN staff engaged in PBF programming reduced the PBF's effectiveness (p.11). From the perspective of programme management, the evaluators found a considerable lack of capacity in both government and UN at the outset (p.22). Many UN agencies have had difficulties in

designing activities that would contribute to peacebuilding objectives rather than to 'normal' development objectives. Furthermore, the evaluations point to an apparent difficulty within the UN system to divide PBF funding based on a strategic peacebuilding vision rather than taking a 'divide the pie' type of approach (i.e. dividing funds among agencies and projects). The Kyrgyzstan evaluation finds that the programme design of the first tranche of IRF funding relied on a safe 'business as usual' model, with respondents stating that 'the UN would have done the same programming, conflict or no conflict' (p.30), and even refers to the fact that there has always been a certain spirit of competition among the international organisations and their implementing partners in carrying out programmes and projects (p.10).

This issue does not seem to be countered by stimulating more joint programming. In Uganda, for instance, the UN agencies valued the pilot experience of joint programming under the PBF. Nonetheless, the evaluation found little added value resulting from joint programming in terms of enhanced peacebuilding outcomes; each agency implemented separate projects under the umbrellas of the joint programmes. This 'scattered' implementation approach in fact led to a decrease in cost effectiveness of the overall PBF programme (p.19). The CAR evaluation similarly finds that when projects implemented by several UN agencies were grouped together into a combined PBF project, the RUNOs 'did not concretely engage in effective coordination, much less a productive collaboration' (pp. 50-51). Even in the case of the UN Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN), which has relatively well established guidelines for joint programming, the evaluation found that the procedures for joint execution of projects by the UN agencies and coordination of implementation need to be improved in order to avoid delays. Furthermore, the evaluation states that agencies need to be very clear about their individual responsibilities as well as their capacity to manage the implementation of approved projects (p.72).

This last point is also underlined by the Guinea-Bissau evaluation, which finds that the project aimed to rehabilitate selected prisons was poorly managed, incurring extremely large administrative costs: 'Wasteful management practices substantially reduced the funding available for expenditure on the true substance of the project' (p.17). As to the project aimed at the rehabilitation of selected barracks in Guinea-Bissau, the evaluation finds that even though this project was designed to have a quick impact on the morale of the armed forces, and as such support other efforts by the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the international community to restructure the security sector, the project had the opposite effect as it was poorly managed, with high management costs and delays (p.18). Partly as a result of these findings, the overall contribution of the PBF programme for 2008–2011 was not found to be very significant (p.6). Similarly, the Comoros evaluation finds that PBF resources were not used efficiently and this 'severely limited' the peacebuilding impact of PBF interventions (p.24).

The answer to some of these issues is sought in strengthening the peacebuilding support to UN actors in country. The CAR evaluation, for instance, recommends that project budgets be used to achieve certain objectives and that PBSO and the in-country PBF Secretariat should take steps to ensure this occurs. For example, the evaluators recommend identifying a minimum amount of money per project that should be allocated to monitoring & evaluation and a maximum share of the budget that can be allocated to on-the-ground activities versus other costs. They also propose identifying a minimum

amount of money that should be allocated to strengthening the capacity of stakeholders (pp.19-20). The upcoming global review of the PBF should look into these types of suggestions, taking into account what can realistically be expected from a relatively small fund like the PBF. This would at the very least require further dialogue with the headquarters of the UN agencies receiving PBF funding, as well as with the Fund's donors. As the Nepal evaluation makes clear, the achievements of the UNPFN have been possible through the hard work of the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and staff of the UNPFN Support Office (equivalent to the in-country PBF Secretariat), and that, should the UNPFN continue beyond its current mandate, additional resources and staff will be required (p.14).

Functioning of the Joint Steering Committees

The evaluations make clear that the JSCs play an important role in improving relations between the UN (and the wider international community in country) and the national stakeholders, as these actors have to work together in the JSCs, which requires open discussion and debate on developments in country. The CAR evaluation, for instance, concludes that the CAR JSC has had an important impact, in the sense that it played an essential role in contributing to an open dialogue among key actors (pp.50-51). Similarly, the Burundi evaluation finds that the Burundi JSC played an important role in improving relations between the UN and the government, and that it also played an important role in the conceptualisation and oversight of PBF projects and improved the relationship between some members of the government and civil society (p.70). As such, the mere existence of JSCs can be seen as a peacebuilding outcome of the PBF, but that is beside the point here.

What is important is that the evaluations clearly find that the strategic focus of the PBF in country needs to be strengthened; this is first and foremost the responsibility of the JSCs. Not surprisingly, the evaluations find that JSCs have not always been effective in providing strategic guidance to the implementation of the PBF in country, and that the functioning of the JSCs has affected the peacebuilding impact of the PBF. As the Burundi evaluation states, the JSC chose projects without being guided by a strategic vision and then focused on project design and implementation, 'not on whether the projects were achieving their strategic goals or contributing to the consolidation of peace' (p.40). The Sierra Leone evaluation notes that the JSC did not adequately take into account the RUNO's capacity to execute projects, which created frustration because of capacity problems and a mismatch between the RUNOs' strengths and the needs of relatively short-term projects (p.23). All projects in the 'first wave' of PBF allocations to Sierra Leone were awarded to UNDP, even though UNDP lacked the capacity to execute these projects (p.20). In the second wave, UNDP received four out of seven projects, while the International Organization for Migration (IOM) got two, and UNIFEM/UNICEF one. However, the specific allocation of projects did not seem to match organisational comparative advantage, with IOM getting a project to develop the prison system while UNDP got a project for purchasing fuel and spare parts (p.22). The JSC then chose IOM to execute four of five 'third wave' projects, and UNDP one, despite the fact that all of the five were capacity-building projects. The evaluation states that this led to

'inconsistencies', with for instance UNDP financing a large, comprehensive parliamentary support project while the PBF financed a minor parliamentary project 'with marginal input' (p. 23).

The CAR evaluation finds that the JSC failed to bring a strategic vision to the implementation of projects, either thematically or geographically, and as such failed to bring the strategic focus required to ensure peacebuilding impact (p.50). The evaluation states that at least some of the difficulties stemmed from the fact that the government side of the JSC felt that the RUNOs were insufficiently transparent and that the government was often presented with *faits accomplis* without having the opportunity to discuss strategic options and having no means of ensuring that JSC decisions would be implemented (p.48). Alternatively, other evaluations point towards the lack of commitment and engagement from national stakeholders in the JSCs. The Guinea-Bissau evaluation, for instance, states that the participation of government members in the JSC had been only approximately 50%. The JSC officials recognise that they need to participate more and more actively by 'leading the process' (p.6). Other evaluations, however, point towards the fact that there can be such a thing as having too much engagement. In the case of Sierra Leone, for instance, the evaluation states that the JSC was reported to be too large to play an effective role. The evaluators suggest that an executive committee of the JSC be created to meet regularly, oversee progress, and take action to address problems as necessary, with the full JSC only meeting to approve projects (p.23). In any case, it is clear that the functioning of the JSCs affects the impact of the PBF; the upcoming global review of the PBF should look into this issue in more detail. One thing to take into account specifically is the role of the in-country PBF secretariats, which are active in most PBF countries and are supposed to provide support to the JSCs.

Strengthening the design of PBF projects

Linked to the issue of a lack of peacebuilding capacity in country, the findings of the country-specific evaluations underline the need to strengthen the design of PBF projects. One important element identified by the evaluations is the need to base programming on a solid analysis of the context in which the projects will be implemented. The Guinea-Bissau evaluation, for instance, finds that the Priority Plan carried out for the first phase of the PBF intervention in that country did not include a systematic conflict analysis (p.11). This had consequences on the selection of intervention areas; a series of key causes of conflict were not addressed (p.15) and the 'priorities' identified in the Priority Plan covered a very wide range of peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery needs (pp.11-12). The Uganda evaluation states that a weakness in the PBF design process was that no comprehensive conflict analysis was undertaken to underpin programming (p.5), while the Comoros evaluation finds that the absence of a thorough conflict analysis limited the intervention areas identified and the range of the interventions the programme conceived (p.9). The evaluation even states that the Comoros Priority Plan prioritised the wrong area (poverty and economic crisis, which received nearly 42% of the PBF envelope) and that, had a proper conflict analysis been done, the other two areas in the Priority Plan (security and stability, and governance and social cohesion) would have been given

higher priority, with a greater potential impact on peacebuilding (p.10). Most evaluations recommend the conduct of conflict analyses to inform PBF programming prior to deciding on which projects to fund – a point that is made for instance by the Sierra Leone evaluation (p.9).

Such analyses should not solely focus on understanding the drivers of conflict in a specific country. In order for the PBF to have impact, it is important to identify those areas that will have the greatest potential impact on peacebuilding. A key element in this regard is to identify the institutional capacity and changes necessary to achieve the desired impact on peace consolidation. As the Burundi evaluation states, a clear analysis of the types of institutional changes necessary is essential for the targeting of PBF projects towards interventions that are likely to catalyse change (i.e. reform of laws, building individual capacity and reinforcing institutional capacity simultaneously). Such analyses also enable advocacy to be targeted, and provide an entry-point for other actors to complement and carry out the work of the PBF-supported intervention (p.49).

The analyses should also take into account the (potential) interests and activities of bilateral donors and multilateral organisations, linked to the gap-filling and catalytic nature of the PBF. The Guinea evaluation for instance finds that there is surprisingly little analysis underlying project work and that the selection of projects developed to strengthen the roles of youth and women is questionable, given the high level of interest from bilateral donors in this sector (p.4). At the same time, other evaluations question the selection of certain projects because of the lack of bilateral donor interest – and hence the impossibility to ensure follow-up funding (which links to the issues of the catalytic nature of the PBF and sustainability, as discussed below). This tension is inherent to the PBF given its objective to be both gap-filling and catalytic, and underlines the need for more clarity on the catalytic nature of the Fund.

Perhaps most importantly, the analyses should help to identify those peacebuilding priorities that can be realistically addressed by the PBF, taking into account the Fund's timeframes and funding envelopes. The evaluations underline the need for more realistic peacebuilding programming. The Comoros evaluation, for instance, finds that the objectives and outcomes expected from the PBF programme were overstated and that the timeframe allotted for the execution of the various projects (24 months) was not a realistic one. This period does not allow enough time for these projects to produce partial outcomes that can be achieved with the funds available (p.13). Similarly, the Guinea-Bissau evaluation states that in formulating PBF projects one needs to keep in mind that PBF funds are there to jumpstart key programmes rather than provide a comprehensive long-term solution to whole areas (p.16). The Burundi evaluation notes that PBF timeframes (in Burundi initially 12 months) are incompatible with the goals and activities of a number of activities (pp.9-10). It concludes that the PBF should 'match the pressure to spend with equal pressure to achieve results' (p.69).

While this is an issue for all PBF programming, the evaluations seem to underline that this issue is particularly relevant for the projects carried out under the PBF's third 'pillar' – activities undertaken in support of efforts to revitalise the economy and generate immediate peace dividends for the population at large. The Uganda evaluation, for instance, states that it is questionable whether the short timeframes of PBF funding are suited to the livelihoods activities supported (p.5). It seems particularly difficult for this

category of projects to distinguish between 'simply' strengthening economic opportunities for weak groups in society (focusing on inclusive economic growth), and achieving peacebuilding impact. In the case of Burundi, for instance, the evaluation finds that even though the women's project had positive impact on the economic condition of some women, in terms of peacebuilding impact the outcome was minimal. The other projects in the socio-economic peacebuilding category were considered even less successful (pp.44-45). The Comoros evaluation similarly finds that essentially the projects in the poverty/economic crisis category made limited contributions to peacebuilding or did not deal with imminent threats to peace, and as such should not have received PBF funding (p.17). The Uganda evaluation states that the focus of the PBF programme in Uganda on livelihoods in and of itself may have contributed to providing some peace dividends, but that this is not the same as contributing substantially to peacebuilding outcomes. The programme was not designed to leverage outputs related to livelihood for vulnerable/marginalised groups to act as catalysts to prompt further peacebuilding, or to ensure that such support contributed to social cohesion in communities (p.13). As a result, the evaluation finds that PBF projects in Uganda have made a weak contribution to peacebuilding through its programming related to livelihoods support and youth empowerment (pp.13-14).¹⁵ The evaluators state that livelihood/economic recovery support should only be considered for peacebuilding funding when it is clearly articulated how such support will be adjusted to contribute to peacebuilding outcomes, and when it carefully considers funding timeframes in order to ensure the sustainability of such interventions (p.6). The upcoming global review of the PBF should explore the need for further guidance on identifying 'peacebuilding relevant' livelihood support opportunities.

Role of PBSO in implementing PBF in country

Almost all of the evaluations refer to PBSO in thinking about possible solutions to the apparent lack of peacebuilding capacity in country and the need to strengthen the design of PBF programming. In fact, most of them seem to think that it is PBSO's responsibility to provide support and guidance to the country-level mechanisms (both JSC and RUNOs). The Comoros evaluation, for instance, finds that 'a lack of a functioning system by PBSO to intervene at the project design stage or to monitor projects throughout their cycle, were major weaknesses' (p.5). Similarly, the Sierra Leone evaluation states that PBSO did not 'actively participate' in project selection or design, leaving that entirely to the JSC and the UN Country Team (p.23). The evaluation suggests that PBSO should be more actively engaged in these activities. Also, PBSO should be 'more present' in country, by video-conferencing and other contacts as well as travel (p.23). The Uganda evaluation in turn finds that PBSO provided some useful steering for the development of the Priority Plan. However, some challenges to achieving better peacebuilding outcomes remained, including the fact that the reporting requirements set out by the MPTF Office were not

15 In contrast, the evaluation finds that the PBF projects have made a significant contribution to peacebuilding through targeted programming in the areas of access to justice/transitional justice (p.11), and that they have made a relevant contribution to peacebuilding in the area of strengthened conflict management capacities (including land-related) at the community/household level, through PBF's programming related to gender-based violence, child protection and human rights (pp.11-12).

adjusted to elicit peacebuilding-specific reporting (including no incorporation of a focus on Do No Harm) (p.26). The evaluation finds that PBSO should provide more specific guidance as to how peacebuilding programming can be strengthened, beyond making reference to addressing conflict drivers (p.26). Peacebuilding programmes should have access to specialised peacebuilding expertise for their design and coordination (p.28). A similar recommendation is made by the Kyrgyzstan evaluation, which states that UN Country Team offices that receive IRF funds would benefit from more structured guidelines for the use of the funds as well as initial programmatic support (p.6).

The CAR evaluation takes it one step further and states that the relative lack of relevance of the PBF projects is tied to a number of factors, one of which was 'the lack of guidance from PBF and PBSO' (p.10). In their recommendations the evaluators identify a number of guidance and training tools that 'the PBF Secretariat and PBSO' should provide for technical committee members who make decisions on which projects to fund and for JSC members who need to adopt a strategic approach (pp. 81-82). The Burundi evaluation is also outspoken about the need for PBSO to provide more (strategic) guidance. It states that while the PBF offers a real opportunity to engage in innovative and high-quality peacebuilding programming, it lacks sufficient guidance to make this type of programming the norm (p.26). The evaluators find that the development of a results framework by PBSO has been helpful but still (at least when the evaluation was done) did not provide an explanation of how priority results should be selected or how to evaluate the PBF's comparative advantage in any given country (p.38). The evaluation provides a series of recommendations to PBSO in order to strengthen PBF impact, most of which are related to the development and/or strengthening of PBF guidelines (e.g. on PBF programme and project selection, on PBF programme design and implementation, on PBF monitoring and evaluation, and on PBF roles and responsibilities) (pp.79-82).

The upcoming global review of the PBF should look into these issues in more detail, not least because PBSO has since taken action on these points and has taken steps to strengthen its support to the country level. The review should take into account that the PBF's business model of transferring certain fund 'management' responsibilities (i.e. decision-making on activities and oversight of implementation) to the decentralised level is the result of a conscious decision on the part of the UN system and the Fund's donors. In order to avoid duplication and the creation of yet another UN actor in the field of reconstruction and recovery support, it was decided that PBSO should be a small office focused solely on the management of the global fund, leaving the in-country fund management issues to the UN actors in the field (building on their capacity, so to say). Now that it turns out that this field capacity may not be sufficient in terms of achieving peacebuilding impact, it has to be made clear what that means for the role of PBSO. Does PBSO have the capacity to play the support role that seemingly is required? And is PBSO 'allowed' to build this support capacity? The broader question would be how the UN's peacebuilding capacity (e.g. analytical capacity, programming expertise) can be strengthened, and what role is there in that regard for the PBF?

Speed and flexibility

The PBF is widely acknowledged and appreciated for providing fast, flexible and timely funding to post-conflict situations – a statement that is supported by all country-specific evaluations. While this is an important accomplishment of the Fund, in practice the PBF has to balance this ‘need for speed’ with key elements in its business model (i.e. developing Priority Plans and working with Joint Steering Committees) that are not always conducive to speed and flexibility. However, these elements are essential in strengthening peace consolidation and building national capacity for peacebuilding. In fact, there are very valid reasons for ownership and capacity building to win out over speed and flexibility. What do the evaluations say about the way in-country programming has dealt with this issue?

Need for speed

Almost all evaluations find that there is a (perceived) need for speed in terms of developing a Priority Plan and the commencement of project implementation in PBF countries. It is, however, not always clear where this need for speed is coming from. Presumably it is linked to the perception that there is a need for quick results in response to the developments/peacebuilding opportunities in the individual countries. But if that need really was as high as perceived, and could only be covered by the PBF and not by other funding resources, one would expect to see mostly requests for IRF funding (which is quick, flexible and not bound by as many ‘procedural’ requirements – like working through a JSC – as the PRF modality). Yet, the bulk of the activities covered by the evaluations have been funded through the PRF modality. It is not always clear why the in-country actors opted for the PRF modality and not the IRF. Presumably, this is linked to the objective of engaging the partner government in a peacebuilding process. As the Burundi evaluation finds, catching the right momentum for country engagement is a major added value of the PBF (p.7). However, one could also think of opting for a first tranche of IRF funding, in a sense ‘buying time’ to prepare for a request under PRF funding (in collaboration with the partner government). In the case of Kyrgyzstan, for instance, the evaluation states that IRF peacebuilding funds were initially allocated to supplement existing activities. Not all UN agencies understood the work undertaken to be peacebuilding in intent and were not able to articulate how their activities contributed to the outcomes that framed the IRF allocation (p.16). Yet, the first IRF tranche was seen in the eyes of the agencies as an opportunity to engage and build capacity for further funding within the second IRF tranche and possible PRF support (p.17). It would be worthwhile for the upcoming global review to look into this issue, so as to have better insight into the perceived need for speed.

Need for speed versus ownership

Notwithstanding the above, the evaluations accept that there is a need for speed and some evaluations discuss the trade-off between the need to react quickly and produce quick impacts, and the need to involve national stakeholders in order to support a

sustainable peace process. The CAR evaluation, for instance, acknowledges that there is a trade-off between greater participation of national/local actors and the speed with which projects will be implemented (p.16). In some cases, the need for speed seems to have won out over the involvement of national stakeholders in the design and implementation of the PBF programme in country. In Uganda, for instance, the evaluation finds that not much time was taken to consult comprehensively for the design process of the PBF programmes, which in turn led to delays in programme implementation as various adjustments needed to be made (p.28). And in the case of Kyrgyzstan, the evaluation finds that even though there were good reasons for the government to be less involved in the PBF decision-making process – given the situation immediately following the conflict, in which the transitional government was still trying to consolidate its authority and was unable to respond and participate fully in the development of IRF programming and the humanitarian crisis which was on-going at the time – authorities still felt left out of the decision-making process as the UN decided internally how to allocate the PBF funds. UN Country Team staff reportedly responded to this by stating that ‘authorities are not well informed and don’t understand peacebuilding; they need to be convinced on the value of peacebuilding’ (p.28).

In line with this statement, other evaluations refer to the lack of (peacebuilding) capacity in national stakeholders in relation to the level of involvement of those stakeholders in PBF design and implementation. The CAR evaluation, for instance, states that few projects gave a significant role to the partner ministries in the day-to-day management of activities (p.53). With regard to project development, ministries were often only involved to approve project documents that were essentially finalised. Their input into project development was minimal (p.66). Similarly, officials at the local level were only involved in a formal sense, as heads of local monitoring committees that had no means to play this role (p.67). The evaluators note that the technical services of ministries did not own the projects for several reasons: 1) lack of capacity, 2) lack of clarity of the role, 3) lack of ‘means’ (presumably financial), and 4) personnel mobility within ministries (p.67).

From a perspective of strengthening peacebuilding impact, one would expect that all PBF projects include a focus on capacity building. However, this does not always seem to be the case. The CAR evaluation, for instance, finds that while lack of capacity on the part of national actors was often stated as a reason for limited coordination and ownership of PBF projects, the evaluators found little evidence of efforts to strengthen capacity (p.13). The Burundi evaluation finds that national stakeholders have been actively involved in the identification of PBF priorities in the country, as well as in the selection of PBF projects (p.8). As a result, the PBF ‘increased the national capacity to manage conflict peacefully’ (p.7). The evaluation goes on to state that, ‘those projects that were most effective focused on capacity building and transfer as a core element of programming’ (p.10). It would be interesting to learn more about how best to include a capacity-building focus in urgent peacebuilding programming.

Need for speed versus proper project design

Rather than focusing on the trade-off between the need for speed and the involvement of national stakeholders in PBF design and implementation, the evaluations focus more on the trade-off between the need for speed and the need for proper project design. This trade-off is of course relevant in the case of IRF funding. The Kyrgyzstan evaluation (two consecutive IRF funding envelopes), for instance, finds that the majority of the projects were based on needs assessments originating from the humanitarian response and not on an analysis of the conflict that was relevant to the crisis that took place. Therefore, there was no common understanding of the drivers of conflict and its triggers, or what a common approach to addressing the systemic issues of conflict would be (p.10). The evaluation questions what should be expected from UN agencies in regards to achieving effective peacebuilding with IRF funding due to its unique and rapid approval and disbursement mechanism. Ideally, IRF funding should be approved only when the conditions for the effective implementation of projects are in place. One of these conditions is an existing strategic framework with peacebuilding goals. This, however, does not always exist immediately post-crisis and often the IRF is used to respond to unexpected emergencies. More often than not, the evaluation finds, UN Country Teams have not undertaken a conflict analysis (p.24). The evaluators recommend that the PBF should revisit the criteria used to assess the impact of IRF programming to reflect the immediacy and unique nature of this funding modality (p.34).

But the trade-off is also relevant in the case of PRF funding. The Sierra Leone evaluation, for instance, finds that a need to begin programming rapidly worked against carrying out a comprehensive conflict analysis at the outset of the PBF allocation (p.13). It also finds that pressure to start implementation 'did not allow for proper project design' (p.15). Similarly, the Comoros evaluation states that a comprehensive conflict analysis that could have guided selection of PBF interventions was not undertaken due to 'the need to respond quickly to the situation' (p.11). And the Guinea-Bissau evaluation concludes that the pressure to kick off the programme did not allow for proper project selection and design (p.15). The lack of time invested to carry out a proper project formulation also led to choosing project outcomes that were unrealistic in terms of the funding envelope provided and the time allotted to achieve them (p.15).

Some evaluations also find that the need for speed was created not so much by the contextual circumstances in the country, but by the PBF timeframes themselves. The CAR evaluation, for instance, finds that delays caused by UN agency procedures 'created additional pressure to implement projects very rapidly' (p.12), with detrimental effects on the ability of these projects to positively affect peace consolidation and ownership (p. 67). This need for speed to make up for time lost due to administrative delays had a negative effect on ownership and the participation of beneficiaries, post-intervention support (for example, the distribution of kits following training and time available for M&E) and related course corrections and linkage between activities and needs (such as the distribution of seed at the wrong time in the growing season) (p.14).

The evidence from PBF implementation in CAR demonstrates that concern for the quality of the intervention should trump concerns about speed (as is stated in the CAR evaluation on p.17). Similarly, the Burundi evaluation finds that implementation was

skewed to favour spending money over achieving outcomes (p.10). It concludes, for instance, that 'the pressure to spend money quickly led in many cases to the tendency to purchase more expensive goods or not to engage in innovative programming that would have taken more time, but may have cost less money' (p.61).

The catalytic nature of the PBF

The catalytic nature of the PBF has long been a source of debate – what does it mean to be catalytic, and how does it play out in practice? Catalytic can be understood in terms of financial follow up, but could also be understood in terms of mobilising national stakeholders in support of peacebuilding ('putting peacebuilding on the agenda'). And recently, the debate has shifted towards the need to understand catalytic as kick-starting processes – e.g. bringing in capacity in the early stages of a peacebuilding process, providing funding for the conduct of conflict analysis and the development of system-wide peacebuilding priority plans (or transition compacts as intended in the New Deal), etc. What do the country-specific evaluations say about the catalytic nature of the PBF in-country? In what sense has the Fund been catalytic?

Catalytic funding

The evaluations show a mixed picture in terms of how successful the PBF has been in attracting follow-up funding for its projects. The Guinea evaluation, for instance, finds that the PBF has played an important role in energising support to the security sector in a context where no other actors were able / willing to provide direct support (p.3). And the Guinea-Bissau evaluation states that the PBF contribution to the 2008 Parliamentary Elections attracted additional funds from other donors (p.16), though it is not stated which donors or how much additional funding was attracted. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the evaluation finds that some projects were successful in their ability to interest other donors and stimulate other funding (p.27). However, it also finds that overall there were limited catalytic results that can be attributed to the PBF funding. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, however, the initial IRF allocation was followed-up by a second tranche of IRF funding, so projects are able to continue anyway.

One can see this tendency to follow up PBF funding with PBF funding in other cases. The Guinea-Bissau evaluation, for instance, states that the future of the conference on national dialogue is assured, as funds have been made available from the second phase of PBF funding (p.23). And the Comoros evaluation raises questions about the ability of the government to mobilise resources 'to ensure certain key outputs are completed'. The review team therefore recommends follow-on PBF funding (p.24). Similarly, the Nepal evaluation calls for continued PBF support to the country's peace process, as that would increase the 'catalytic effect' of UN efforts (p.78). One can question whether the PBF is truly catalytic when it provides follow-up funding from its own resources, but it is understandable that this happens as the PBF is supposed to support critical funding gaps in support of peacebuilding processes. The inherent risk in this is that other donors cannot be convinced to take over funding responsibilities from the PBF. As the Burundi

evaluation states, the PBF-supported projects that other bilateral and multilateral donors believed to be too risky filled critical funding gaps and catalysed funding of follow-up activities by other donors in some of these areas (p.7). Nine out of 22 projects filled a critical funding gap (defined as a peace consolidation priority that was unlikely to be funded through Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) by any other donor). Only two of these led other donors (The Netherlands and Belgium) to also contribute funding (Military Barracks and Morale Building for Army) (p.36).

In such situations, one has to weigh the possibilities for follow-up funding with managing the expectations that have been raised by starting certain processes. As stated in the Kyrgyzstan evaluation, for instance, through PBF funding, expectations have been raised in terms of infrastructure, trainings and social opportunities. There is a challenge to sustaining the level of these efforts, and a need for an effective transition plan for resource mobilisation. Otherwise, there is a significant risk that youth may become disillusioned and no longer attend or participate in social cohesion activities (p.18). This underlines the need for a strategic choice of activities, as well as the need for a clear and upfront exit strategy for the PBF, taking into account the political context in which the Fund is operating. As stated in the Guinea evaluation, for instance, activities with respect to criminal justice, human rights and citizenship education were conceived as emergency measures, and lacked an enabling political framework. The evaluation finds that there are serious issues with the choice of activities, given the scale of challenges in these sectors and the limited resources of the PBF (p.3). The evaluation calls for attention to the political preconditions for interventions to be effective (p.4).

Similarly, some evaluations call for the need to distinguish between critical funding gaps and critical peacebuilding gaps. The Uganda evaluation, for instance, finds that the PBF responded to a funding gap in the UN Peacebuilding and Recovery Action Plan for Northern Uganda (UNPRAP), within the broader context of decreasing funding available for post-conflict recovery assistance. The UNPRAP, in turn, was aligned to the Government of Uganda's Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), which was also heavily reliant on donor funding. However, the majority of the interventions implemented under the PBF were part of existing or planned programmes of the implementing agencies, and were therefore not specifically designed as or principally focused on peacebuilding programmes. They were also not aligned to those aspects of the PRDP most directly relevant for peacebuilding. The evaluation concludes that 'responding to funding gaps in broader post-conflict recovery frameworks does not automatically mean that peacebuilding gaps are being addressed' (p.17).

Catalytic effect in terms of peacebuilding

Rather than focusing on the financial catalytic effect of PBF engagement, some evaluations have opted to focus on the catalytic effects of the PBF on the capacity and engagement of national stakeholders in support of peacebuilding ('putting peacebuilding on the agenda'). The Burundi evaluation, for instance, notes that there was confusion about the definition of 'catalytic effect' among the various stakeholders, and that experience from Burundi suggests that catalysing funding should be a secondary objective. The evaluators argue that it is more important to catalyse 'capacity and action

that help consolidate peace and prevent a relapse into violent conflict' (p.39). In that sense, the PBF has been catalytic in that it 'increased the national capacity to manage conflict peacefully' (p.7). The Uganda evaluation finds that the main catalytic effects of the PBF in terms of peacebuilding lie in the areas of transitional justice, land, and in how the PBF has helped to put peacebuilding back on the agenda in Acholiland (p.4). This, of course, links back to the focus on capacity building among national stakeholders, as discussed in section 6 above. The CAR evaluation, for instance, states that the PBF projects that are most catalytic in terms of financing and politics are those where the implementers have the capacity to communicate and create a positive dynamic around their activities. This appears to be more important than the nature of the activities themselves (p.72).

Sustainability

The assessment of the catalytic effect of PBF interventions is closely linked to issues of sustainability, which in turn are closely linked to issues of ownership and peacebuilding capacity among national stakeholders. The Burundi evaluation, for instance, states that the Local Public Services project provided a peace dividend that appeared to change both capacity and behaviour. The evaluators see a potential positive impact on the 2010 elections. However, the sustainability of this project is in doubt because the government has not committed resources to reinforce capacity built during the project (p.43). Similarly, the Anti-Corruption project in Burundi increased the number of anti-corruption cases addressed by the court system and raised awareness among the general population of the problem. However, corruption continues to increase and the contribution of this project to the larger problem of corruption is seriously stymied by a flawed legal and institutional anti-corruption framework (p.44). The Sierra Leone evaluation also points out that some PBF-funded activities might not be sustainable. It points, in particular, to the independent SL Broadcasting Corporation 'which to date has been unable to secure enough revenue from advertising to cover its recurring costs', raising the possibility that the SLBC might need to rely in the future on government financing, thereby jeopardising its independence (p. 21). Two other projects can only be continued if the PBF provides additional resources, which suggests that they will not be sustainable even in the medium term (p. 21). The Guinea-Bissau evaluation points towards the responsibility of the Government of Guinea-Bissau (in cooperation with the PBC) to mobilise the necessary additional funding to cover the larger national peacebuilding effort. The evaluation mission failed to see any evidence that this crucial responsibility had been exercised (p.16).

One can question which of these issues fall realistically within the sphere of influence of the PBF. In the case of CAR, for instance, the evaluation finds that the PBF DDR project disarmed some armed groups and enabled people to move more freely. However, the reinsertion portion of the project was apparently not implemented (because there was not enough funding) and the state failed to fill the security vacuum once people were disarmed and demobilised (pp.38-39 / p.59). This is an issue of coherence among donors, and commitment of the government. One could argue that the PBF could have done more to mobilise support for a more extensive security response and/or that

perhaps the PBF should not have funded the DDR work without additional resources being made available both for reinsertion and for redeploying formal state security bodies.

Monitoring and evaluation

From a strategic perspective, a relevant question is whether or not the PBF reporting model (in which the RUNOs report back to the MPTF Office, and PBSO combines this reporting in overall reports to key stakeholders) provides sufficient information to assess peacebuilding impact in country. The country-specific evaluations make clear that in the initial stages of the PBF, many challenges occurred in this regard. Most of these are related to the lack of peacebuilding and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity in country.

For instance, the Uganda evaluation notes weaknesses in the theories of change underlying the PBF programmes, and relates these to design challenges (p.15). Similarly, the Guinea-Bissau evaluation states that in the design of the six projects approved during the first phase of PBF funding, baseline and success indicators were not included. This would have allowed for objective M&E of the contribution of each project to peacebuilding (p.6). The CAR evaluation finds that most of the PBF projects did not articulate a theory of change to explain their contribution to peacebuilding, and that no baseline studies were conducted (p.31). Furthermore, the evaluation argues that project budgets lack much necessary detail for determining if they are using their resources effectively and efficiently (p.56). Overall, lack of M&E is seen as blocking effective use of PBF funding (p.62). Similarly, the Guinea evaluation states that the M&E processes in the portfolio have been weak (p.2). There are effectively no consolidated reporting tools to track the impact of projects against the expected results of the Priority Plan, or against the Performance Management Plan of the PBF (p.9).

Some evaluations point towards some key elements of the PBF mechanism as being counter-productive in terms of creating better insight into the peacebuilding impact of the PBF. For instance, the Comoros evaluation finds not only that the lack of baselines for projects means that impact is hard to assess (p.11), but also that RUNOs' reports to the MPTF Office provide financial information and narrative on what activities are carried out, but not information on how these activities contribute to the peacebuilding process. Additionally, the individual project reports 'are difficult to aggregate in order to get a feeling for how the Priority Plan objectives are being met, much less evaluate the value of PBF's global contribution to peacebuilding' (p.42). And the Burundi evaluation finds that the short timeframe of PBF-supported projects creates problems in evaluating impact (but also states that in addition, the large majority of PBF projects only gathered data on inputs and outputs, not outcomes) (p.30).

PBSO has since developed new M&E frameworks and reporting procedures. The upcoming global review of the PBF should assess these steps, and also look into possibilities to strengthen M&E in PBF countries, and to enhance possibilities to measure peacebuilding impact (in support of the efforts that are already being undertaken by PBSO). The evaluations provide some concrete suggestions in this regard. The Uganda evaluation, for

instance, finds that not all PBF programmes articulated their results-based management (RBM) systems well in terms of indicators, outputs and outcomes, which hindered reporting against an overarching peacebuilding framework (p.30). Furthermore, the end-of-programme reports list cumulative percentages on 'summary of programme progress in relation to planned outcomes and outputs', instead of a qualitative, narrative overview of how project achievements link to the planned outputs and outcomes. This presents a missed opportunity to clarify the programme logic (and thus theories of change) at the end of the programme (p.30). The evaluation recommends that PBSO should insist on reporting against the Peacebuilding Priority Plan so that the broader results of peacebuilding programming can be tracked and reported. Furthermore, the PBF end-of-programme report should make it compulsory to incorporate a narrative summary of programme progress in relation to planned outcomes and outputs (p.30). Also, to enable an in-depth value-for-money or cost-effectiveness assessment, UN agencies should be asked to provide details of expenditure against outputs and outcomes (p.18).

One general observation that can be made after reviewing the country-specific evaluations is that the timeframe and budget for the country-specific evaluations themselves seem much too short and too small for the amount of information that needs to be collected based on the Terms of Reference for the evaluations. Perhaps, when the monitoring capacity in country is strengthened, this will no longer be an issue, but for now the evaluations have to collect too much information 'from scratch' for the evaluators to cover the wide scope of issues asked for in the given timeframes.

Complementarity of the Fund / PBF market-niche in-country

Given the limited size and timelines of the PBF, and in line with its catalytic intention, it is extremely important to use the PBF funds strategically. A key element in this regard is to understand what the added value or comparative advantage of PBF funding is vis-à-vis other available resources in country? How can it be complementary to other funding in country? And how has this influenced the process of deciding whether or not the PBF should engage in specific countries? The PBF practice provides different 'models' that will provide different answers to these questions: the Fund has provided support both to so-called 'donor orphans' like CAR, as well as to countries where multiple donors are active.

Complementarity of the PBF vis-à-vis other funding in country

The evaluations provide information on the complementarity of the PBF vis-à-vis other (peacebuilding) funding resources available in country by focusing on coordination issues. The evaluations show that there is room for improvement of coordination at the level of the UN system, as well as with regard to the activities undertaken by bilateral donors and other international organisations. The CAR evaluation, for instance, identifies a lack of coordination within the UN system: there were no or only minimal efforts to create synergies among projects carried out by UN agencies (p.67). And the Kyrgyzstan evaluation finds that there has been an overlap between the projects undertaken during the humanitarian response to the crisis in Kyrgyzstan and the PBF support, and that it

was not always clear to the evaluation team which activities were funded by humanitarian budgets and which came from the PBF budget as UN agency-specific financial reports were not required by the MPTF Office. This created difficulties, not only in terms of evaluating the programmes, but also in attributing either success or failure to the work undertaken within a peacebuilding framework and with peacebuilding funds (p.6).

As far as the coordination of PBF activities with activities undertaken by bilateral donors and other international organisations is concerned, some evaluations underline that donors could have been consulted more in the PBF design phase. The Sierra Leone evaluation, for instance, states that the interests and intentions of other donors should have been canvassed to avoid duplication of efforts and to identify opportunities for joint financing (p.22). Similarly, the Burundi evaluation finds that donors report not being consulted during the project selection phase of the PBF and therefore not given the opportunity to say if they planned to fund these projects in the future (p.37). The evaluation states that there was little collaboration between the PBF projects and bilateral activities and other coordination mechanisms, and finds that this was partly because the donors themselves did not take the opportunities offered by the JSC mechanism and partly because the PBF projects did not seek such linkages (p.71). The Guinea evaluation concludes that the fact that PBF projects were developed through bilateral agreements between UN agencies and their partner ministries, prior to the instalment of the JSC, led to negative consequences with respect to the involvement of bilateral partners. Most donors considered the PBF's involvement in Guinea to be 'opaque', or in some cases a *chasse gardée* ('private hunt') (p.2). And in the case of CAR, the evaluation finds that there was little or no effort to create synergies with projects supported by other donors, including the World Bank (p.69).

Comparative advantage of the PBF engaging in specific countries

Even though the country-specific evaluations were not supposed to look into the question whether or not the PBF should have engaged in a specific country to begin with, from the perspective of complementarity some evaluations provide information that would warrant the asking of that question. In the case of Comoros, for instance, the evaluation states that all development partners recognised the importance of peacebuilding activities but 'none manifested that they are making or might make in the future contributions in that direction' (p.25). The one exception is possible cost sharing from the World Bank to expand economic and social opportunities for youth and women in agriculture; but this is a project that the evaluation assessed as not really a peacebuilding activity (p.22). In other words, one can question whether there is anything for the PBF to be complementary to, which raises questions about the relevance of selecting Comoros as a PBF country (and in this specific case, the role of the PBC in this process).

Whereas in Comoros there seems to be a lack of peacebuilding activities to be complementary to, in other situations questions can be asked about the added value of the PBF vis-à-vis a multitude of peacebuilding activities. In the case of Nepal, for instance, where the PBF has contributed 31% of the total funding to the UN Peacebuilding Fund Nepal (UNPFN), the evaluation does not make clear which funding

gap the PBF has filled by contributing to the UNPFN. The UNPFN has received substantial amounts of funding from bilateral donors, which are also main donors to the PBF (UK, Norway, Denmark, Canada) (p.22). Furthermore, these donors support peacebuilding activities outside of the UNPFN; most of them are, for instance, also key donors to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF) managed by the Government of Nepal. The evaluation states that 'PBF support through the UNPFN to the implementation of projects has been critical to the success of peacebuilding efforts' (p.72), but does not make clear in which way this has been critical. If it is merely in terms of accessing additional funds to cover the wide range of recovery needs in Nepal, one can question if the PBF is fulfilling its comparative advantage in Nepal. The evaluation recommends that the PBF continues to provide 'key financial support to the Nepal peacebuilding process that enables to increase the UN support and catalytic effect' (p.78), without making clear what the added value of PBF funding is vis-à-vis the other available resources. In fact, the evaluation states that the PBF should 'provide support to the development of mechanisms and processes to assess genuine PBF contributions to the peacebuilding process as there are multiple donors also funding peacebuilding programmes through the UNPFN' (p.78).

Another issue that is raised by the evaluations in this regard is which contextual preconditions have to be met in order for the PBF to engage in a country (and through which modality). In the case of Guinea, for instance, the evaluation explains that project development at country level has been rather ad hoc; a Priority Plan was launched in 2009, but a Steering Committee to control strategic direction was not installed until 2011. Projects were instead developed through bilateral agreements between UN agencies and their partner ministries, and their progress tracked and evaluated in the same way (p.2). The lack of a JSC was linked to the fact that there was no viable and legitimate government representation when the PBF was launched in Guinea. Taking this into account, it is not clear why funding was provided through the PRF modality, and not solely through the IRF modality. The evaluation notes that the utilisation of the PRF modalities normally implies two other preconditions (next to decision-making by the JSC): 1) the close involvement of 'representatives of other stakeholders' (normally via JSC), and 2) the joint analysis of critical gaps with national authorities. These preconditions were not met in Guinea, which has contributed to a very weak involvement of other international partners, and the fact that national ownership over some objectives of the Priority Plan did not materialise (pp.17-18). All of this has severely limited the peacebuilding impact of the PBF in Guinea, and raises the question whether the PBF should have engaged in Guinea to begin with.

Some evaluations also raise questions about the ability of in-country actors to use the PBF to its comparative advantage (which links closely to the need for more strategic engagement of the PBF, as discussed above). In Guinea, for example, the evaluation finds that it is far from sure that direct service delivery is the best utilisation of the PBF's scarce resources. The evaluation is concerned about the feasible scale of action for the PBF, contrasting the creation of 550 permanent jobs by a PBF project with the demographic realities that there were 600,000 new entrants into the labour market during the life of the project. To indicate the differences in comparative advantage, the evaluation refers to a World Bank project that focuses on the same issues but which targets more than 20,000 families at a budget of USD 25 million (p.45).

The upcoming global review of the PBF should look into these issues, in order to strengthen a more strategic engagement of the PBF and to increase its peacebuilding impact.

Role and function of the UN Peacebuilding Commission as part of the PBF business model

Out of the nine evaluations that have been taken into account for this analysis, five are on the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Agenda: Burundi, CAR, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. In its set up, the PBF is closely linked to the PBC – in principle, any country before the PBC should be considered a possible recipient of PBF support. The idea was for the PBC to play a role in gaining further (political and financial) support to the peacebuilding processes in these countries. But not a lot is known about the actual effect of PBC support on PBF funding. What do the country-specific evaluations say about the PBC's role in the PBF getting results in country?

Role of PBC in implementing PBF in country

Not surprisingly, the evaluations do not really focus on the role of the PBC in implementing the PBF. The PBC does not have a formal role to play in this implementation, but there are certain elements in the PBC's work that influence PBF implementation. One of those is the fact that countries on the PBC Agenda have to develop a Strategic Framework for peacebuilding. In developing the Priority Plan for the PBF, one would expect that alignment is sought with this Strategic Framework. However, in the case of Burundi, the evaluators find that the PBF's Peacebuilding Priority Plan and the PBC's Strategic Framework do not have strategic coherence and are not based on a conflict analysis. Both appear to justify specific projects rather than sectoral peace consolidation priorities (p.32). Furthermore, changes to the PBC's Strategic Framework were not reflected in adjustments to PBF projects.

Role of the PBC in catalysing financial support for peacebuilding

More relevant is the question whether or not the PBC has contributed to achieving peacebuilding results in country by supporting the search for additional funding (linked to the catalytic nature of the PBF). According to the evaluations, the PBC has not been very active in this regard. The Guinea-Bissau evaluation, for instance, states that the PBC (in cooperation with the Government of Guinea-Bissau) has the task of mobilising the necessary additional funding to cover the larger national peacebuilding effort. The evaluation mission failed to see any evidence that this crucial responsibility had been exercised (p.16). It recommends that the PBC, in coordination with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's Office and the Government for Guinea-Bissau, should design and make explicit a resource mobilisation strategy which should: 1) include those intervention areas and/or projects identified in the Priority Plan but not yet financed; 2) contain specific financial targets; and 3) contain a timetable (p.8). The

Sierra Leone evaluation finds that the PBC has failed to mobilise any funding in support of peacebuilding activities. It recommends that the PBC assists the Government of Sierra Leone in designing and executing a resource mobilisation strategy (p.8). Interestingly, the evaluation team responsible for the CAR evaluation does not seem to think that the PBC has a role to play in catalysing financial support for peacebuilding activities as it singles out the agencies and the JSC as the actors that have not done enough in this area (p.51 / p.75).

In any case, it is clear that it would be good if the upcoming global review of the PBF could look into how the relationship between the PBC and PBF can be strengthened. How can the PBF be strengthened in performing its strategic role within the UN system, and what role can the PBC play in supporting this? What are examples that can be taken into account here? One interesting additional angle in this regard is provided by the Guinea evaluation. Guinea is the only country on the PBC Agenda without a mandated peacekeeping or political mission – it is the Resident Coordinator who is the senior representative of the UN in country, with a supporting office in UNDP. As a consequence, the evaluation finds that it has been necessary to negotiate the political framework for projects on a case-by-case basis, which creates risks in the sense that the authorities may not be disposed to organise spaces for dialogue, and that political will on the part of the government may not exist to push forward the reconciliation process (p.18). The evaluation underlines the differences between the 'black UN' (missions under a Security Council mandate) and the 'blue UN' (the agencies, funds and programmes). UN officials in Guinea stated that their starting point is 'accompaniment of the government' and that the central principle for the Resident Coordinator system is to improve the effectiveness of response to the national development priorities. This has led to two important differences from other countries where the PBF is engaged. First, the role of the JSC is less political; programme activity of the PBF and the mutual engagements between Guinea and the PBC 'exist in two different universes' (p.19). Second, it is evident that the role of 'accompaniment' is not compatible with that of neutral interlocutor amid the high tensions around the finalisation of transition. The evaluation, for instance, cites the absence of the 'round table' or facilitation role with political actors, which is commonly found for political / peacekeeping missions (p.19).

Conclusions – Follow up in the PBF Global Review

Notwithstanding the positive contributions the PBF has made to peacebuilding processes in specific countries, the evaluations underline the need to strengthen the strategic focus of PBF interventions in a country, in order to enhance the peacebuilding impact of the Fund. The evaluations identify a number of strategic issues related to the PBF's business model and its strategic positioning that require further analysis in the upcoming global review.

First, the evaluations point towards a lack of peacebuilding capacity in country, both within the UN system and among the key national partners. Linked to this, the evaluations underline the need to strengthen the design of PBF projects by basing the programming on solid analyses and by identifying peacebuilding priorities that can be realistically addressed by the PBF, taking into account the Fund's timeframes and funding envelopes. The upcoming review should look into how the PBF can contribute to strengthening the peacebuilding capacity of actors in country (RUNOs, the JSCs and the in-country PBF secretariats).

Almost all of the evaluations refer to PBSO in thinking about possible solutions to the apparent lack of peacebuilding capacity in country and the need to strengthen the design of PBF programming. The evaluations find that PBSO should provide more specific guidance as to how peacebuilding programming can be strengthened. The upcoming global review should look into these issues in more detail, not least because PBSO has undertaken steps to strengthen its support to the country level. The review should take into account that PBSO was intended to be a small office focused solely on the management of the global fund, leaving the in-country fund management issues to the UN actors in the field (building on their capacity). If this field capacity is not sufficient in terms of achieving peacebuilding impact, clarity is needed on what that means for the role of PBSO. Does PBSO have the capacity to play the support role that seemingly is required? And is PBSO 'allowed' to build this support capacity? The broader question would be how the UN's peacebuilding capacity (e.g. analytical capacity, programming expertise) can be strengthened, and what role there is in that regard for the PBF.

The PBF is widely acknowledged and appreciated for providing fast, flexible and timely funding to post-conflict situations – a statement that is supported by all country-specific evaluations. While this is an important accomplishment of the Fund, in practice the PBF has to balance this 'need for speed' with key elements in its business model (i.e.

developing Priority Plans and working with Joint Steering Committees) that are not always conducive to speed and flexibility. Almost all evaluations find that there is a (perceived) need for speed in terms of developing a Priority Plan and the commencement of project implementation in PBF countries. It is, however, not always clear where this need for speed is coming from. It would be worthwhile for the upcoming global review to look into this issue, so as to have better insight into the perceived need for speed.

In terms of the trade-off between the need to react quickly and produce quick impacts, and the need to involve national stakeholders in order to support a sustainable peace process, the evaluations refer to the lack of (peacebuilding) capacity in national stakeholders. From a perspective of strengthening peacebuilding impact, one would expect all PBF projects to include a focus on capacity building. However, this does not always seem to be the case. The upcoming review should provide more insights into how best to include a capacity building focus in urgent peacebuilding programming.

In terms of the catalytic nature of the PBF, the evaluations show a mixed picture in terms of how successful the PBF has been in attracting follow-up funding for its projects. They also underline the need to learn more about the possibilities of developing a clear and upfront exit strategy for the PBF; the upcoming review should provide insights in the experiences to date in this regard.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the country-specific evaluations make clear that in the initial stages of the PBF, many challenges occurred in this regard. Most of these are related to the lack of peacebuilding and M&E capacity in country. PBSO has developed new M&E frameworks and reporting procedures. The upcoming global review of the PBF should assess these steps undertaken, and should also look into possibilities to strengthen M&E in PBF countries, and to enhance possibilities to measure peacebuilding impact (in support of the efforts that are already being undertaken by PBSO).

As for the PBF playing to its comparative advantage in country, the upcoming review should provide more insight into the complementarity of the PBF vis-à-vis other (peacebuilding) funding resources available. It would be useful if the upcoming review could create more clarity on what the potential (strategic) added value of the PBF is in terms of peacebuilding. This should include the question whether or not the PBF should have engaged in a specific country to begin with, in order to strengthen a more strategic engagement of the PBF and to increase its peacebuilding impact.

Finally, there is a need for more information about the actual effect of PBC support on PBF funding. The upcoming global review of the PBF should look into how the relationship between the PBC and PBF can be strengthened. How can the PBF be strengthened in performing its strategic role within the UN system, and what role can the PBC play in supporting this? What examples can be taken into account here?

Challenges and opportunities to peacebuilding: analysis of strategic issues identified by country-specific PBF evaluations

The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) was established in October 2006, with the intention to support interventions of direct and immediate relevance to peacebuilding processes and to contribute towards addressing critical gaps in such processes. The UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) has now commissioned a global review of the Fund in order to assess the PBF's effectiveness in fulfilling these objectives. This report provides input for that global review by presenting an overview of the key strategic issues that have affected the Fund's performance in the past, as identified by country-specific PBF evaluations conducted in 2010-2012. Notwithstanding the positive contributions the PBF has made to peacebuilding processes in specific countries, the evaluations underline the need to strengthen the strategic focus of PBF interventions in a country, in order to enhance the peacebuilding impact of the Fund. The evaluations identify a number of strategic issues related to the PBF's business model and its strategic positioning that require further analysis in the upcoming global review.

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Colophon

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