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Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund

Peacebuilding Fund

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

In 2023, the Peacebuilding Fund approved support amounting to \$202,485,203 in 36 countries and territories. Across the three priority windows of the Fund's 2020–2024 Strategy, it approved \$24,726,031 for supporting cross-border and regional approaches, \$38,349,022 for facilitating transitions and \$57,058,903 for women's and youth empowerment. Overall, support fell significantly short of demand and below the targeted level due to reduced financing. While 36 donor partners generously contributed \$131.8 million to the Fund, contributions were well below the \$330 million target and dropped by 22 per cent compared with 2022. With increased demand from Member States despite a decline in contributions, the Fund has reached its lowest liquidity level since its inception. The decision of the General Assembly to provide assessed contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund starting in 2025, however, represents a landmark decision that will bring more predictable and sustainable resources while underscoring that peacebuilding is at the core of the work of the United Nations, in which all Member States are committed to investing. At the same time, an increase in voluntary funding will be essential in order to implement the proposals contained in the policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



I. Introduction

1. The present report, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023, is the fourteenth annual report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution [63/282](#). It covers the fourth year of the Fund's 2020–2024 Strategy. The report will be complemented by a certified financial report issued by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office no later than 1 May 2024.

2. In 2023, the world saw an intensification and multiplication of conflicts, unconstitutional changes of government (in Central and West Africa) and the complex impact of organized crime, gang violence and conflicts relating to land and resources, which further exacerbated multifaceted crises and triggered increased migration. In the context of such profound crises, demand for support to peacebuilding has grown. The interconnectedness of peace with economic, environmental and social development worldwide is increasingly self-evident. In his policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General called for the universal pursuit of conflict prevention. With sufficient resources, the Fund can be an accelerator for nationally owned prevention and peacebuilding plans and help to address the underlying root causes and drivers of humanitarian needs. The Summit of the Future, to be held in 2024, provides the opportunity to integrate peacebuilding across the work of the United Nations system and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Global performance and lessons learned

3. In December 2023, in a landmark decision, the General Assembly agreed to support the request of the Secretary-General made in March 2022 to provide assessed contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund (see Assembly resolution [78/257](#)). With that decision, the Member States decisively implemented a key tenet of Assembly resolution [76/305](#), unanimously adopted following the high-level meeting on financing for peacebuilding, held in April 2022. This development underscores that peacebuilding is at the core of the work of the United Nations and requires continual investment. Starting in 2025, \$50 million will be provided annually, earmarked for the Fund's Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility in specified countries and territories. Member States, particularly via the Peacebuilding Commission, and the Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group will be consulted on allocations. In 2024, consultations will be undertaken to update the Fund's terms of reference in accordance with the provisions of the resolution.

4. In 2023, collaboration between the Fund and the Peacebuilding Commission deepened. The Peacebuilding Support Office continued to regularly update the Commission on programmatic activities. In the first-ever meeting involving the full Advisory Group and the Commission, held on 17 November, the policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, the Summit of the Future and the 2025 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture were discussed. Member States and the Advisory Group concurred on the increased urgency of peacebuilding and prevention in the global context. They called for more adequate, predictable and sustainable financing for the Fund from a variety of sources and advocated for increased regular interactions between the Advisory Group and the Commission, the provision of strategic advice to the Fund, joint missions and the incentivizing of recipient countries and territories of the Fund to share experiences with the Commission more regularly.

5. In 2023, 36 Member States made new voluntary commitments to the Fund totalling \$131.8 million. While welcome, that amount was well below the target of

\$330 million, resulting in the Fund's inability to meet the demand for peacebuilding, while witnessing its lowest liquidity level since its inception. Four years into its 2020–2024 Strategy, the Fund has received \$746 million, about half of its five-year \$1.5 billion target and significantly lower than the “quantum leap” of \$500 million per annum called for by the Secretary-General. In an effort to demonstrate to voluntary contributors the impact of the Fund's efforts, working visits by contributing Member States to observe country-level programmes continued to be organized. To highlight the importance of the Fund's work on prevention, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, the Advisory Group and development partners visited Mauritania from 22 to 27 October. Partners also visited Honduras, from 13 to 16 March, where projects were under way to address Indigenous issues and gang violence, among other issues, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 15 to 19 May, where the visit was focused on efforts relating to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission transition.

6. The Fund approved 93 programmes in 2023, amounting to \$202,485,203 across 36 countries and territories. With those allocations, the Fund was able to leverage the whole United Nations development system, collaborating with 57 resident coordinators and country teams. The Fund enables progress on the peacebuilding and prevention objectives of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, with ongoing actions via 22 United Nations entities. Almost exclusively, the Fund finances joint programmes, driving United Nations coherence. In 2023, the eligibility of Burkina Faso and Guinea to have access to the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility was extended until the end of their ongoing political transition periods.

7. In 2023, financial allocations continued to be dedicated to the three priority windows of the Fund's 2020–2024 Strategy: supporting cross-border and regional approaches, facilitating transitions and fostering inclusion through women's and youth empowerment. Against the new targets of 10 per cent, 35 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, revised in accordance with the recommendation of the Board of Auditors, the Fund approved 12 per cent for cross-border and regional approaches, 19 per cent for facilitating transitions and 28 per cent for women's and youth empowerment. Concerning transition settings, efforts were adversely affected by the outbreak of war in the Sudan and the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as well as relatively lower levels of programming in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.

Table 1
Peacebuilding Fund portfolio by priority window, 2023

	<i>Priority window 1: cross-border and regional approaches</i>	<i>Priority window 2: facilitating transitions</i>	<i>Priority window 3: women's and youth empowerment</i>
Total commitment (United States dollars)	24 726 031.00	38 349 022.49	57 058 903.50
Number of projects	14	19	35
Countries/territories	14	8	21
Fund recipients	7	12	35
Share of portfolio (percentage)	12	19	28

8. In 2023, the Peacebuilding Support Office began implementing recommendations from the 2022 midterm review of the Fund's 2020–2024 Strategy,¹ including the recommendation to increase the functionality of the joint steering committees² at the country and territory levels. Committees were functional in 19 of the 26 eligible countries and territories in 2023.³ Bosnia and Herzegovina and Somalia plan to hold their first committee meetings in 2024. In some cases, the mandates of the committees look at peacebuilding more broadly; in Mali, since 2023, the committee has guided not just the Fund's priorities but also peacebuilding actions under the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund; it also guided the trust fund in support of peace and security in Mali (now closed). The committee in South Sudan, inaugurated in January 2023, has met three times. It includes Peacebuilding Fund donors, representatives of the Government, United Nations entities and civil society organizations and is chaired by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Resident Coordinator, the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Ministry of Peacebuilding. In addition, some committees, for example in Honduras, are part of the Cooperation Framework governance structure.

9. In support of sustaining peace objectives, efforts to strengthen key national and local institutions continued, especially in the areas of justice and security. In Guinea-Bissau, since the closure of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in 2020, the Fund has supported justice and security institutions to prevent, investigate and prosecute drug trafficking and transnational organized crime more effectively. Among interventions jointly led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was a series of trainings against corruption attended by hundreds of justice and security sector officials from the border areas. Following the piloting of a community policing model and the construction of a model police station in Gabu, the community reported that the officers' accessibility had instilled a greater sense of safety and increased trust in the police force. In Nigeria, in Kano State and the Federal Capital Territory, capacity-building for the Complaints Response Unit by UNODC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) led to increased transparency and accountability, and public trust in the police rose from 15 per cent to 48 per cent. Furthermore, partnerships with statutory external bodies led to 61 per cent of users reporting that their complaints had been resolved. In 2023, in Chad, at the request of the transitional institutions, the Fund confirmed support for the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, with technical assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Commission's programme is aimed at creating conditions conducive to an inclusive, transparent and sustainable disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

10. Another midterm review recommendation was to enhance support for civil society. Effective partnership entails several aspects, including how civil society organizations receive financial support. In 2023, to measure the amount that civil society organizations received from the Fund, it calculated the amount of financing received by national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) yearly. While data for 2023 is not yet consolidated, in 2022, 25 per cent of Fund expenditures went to national or local civil society organizations. The Gender Promotion Initiative 2.0 (see priority window 3 below) has been a principal tool for piloting how to better

¹ Salif Nimaga and Anne Moltès, *Final Report: Mid-Term Review-UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund Strategy 2020–2024* (United Nations publication, 2023).

² Countries and territories eligible for the Fund's Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility are required to form joint steering committees, co-chaired by the United Nations and the Government, and include civil society implementing and development partners.

³ Established in the period 2022–2023.

reach NGOs. In 2023, the Fund conducted its biennial synthesis review⁴ of decentralized evaluations carried out in 2021 and 2022. The evaluations highlighted that a participatory approach involving civil society could make a significant difference in the achievement of peacebuilding results. In the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea, for example, the close collaboration of IOM with partners and beneficiaries in the design and implementation of activities triggered community contributions and ownership of the process. A new cross-border project covering Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, led by UNDP with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, is promoting the implementation of civil society-led initiatives, in line with the eight territorial action plans of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region.

11. The Fund continued to encourage joint projects between United Nations entities and civil society organizations. In 2023, 12.9 per cent of newly approved projects were such joint endeavours, including with local civil society organizations, an increase from 4.5 per cent in 2022. In Madagascar, two projects were approved at the end of 2023. The first brings together the organization MSIS-Tatao with OHCHR and UNDP to help to integrate traditional and formal justice systems for conflict prevention and management. The second is a collaboration between the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) focused on the civic and political engagement of young people and women in democracy and peacebuilding during the renewal of key national and local institutional mandates.

Table 2
Peacebuilding fund allocations, 2023

(United States dollars)

	<i>Immediate Response Facility</i>	<i>Peacebuilding Recovery Facility</i>	<i>Total</i>
Benin	1 500 000.00	–	1 500 000.00
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2 306 833.65	10 075 575.00	12 382 408.65
Burkina Faso	1 500 000.00	3 827 310.00	5 327 310.00
Burundi ^a	–	1 353 522.00	1 353 522.00
Cameroon	286 332.00	6 000 024.41	6 286 356.41
Central African Republic	2 000 000.00	10 489 506.00	12 489 506.00
Chad	3 878 419.00	13 858 821.00	17 737 240.00
Colombia	5 749 887.98	3 000 000.00	8 749 887.98
Democratic Republic of the Congo ^a	2 670 000.00	2 000 000.00	4 670 000.00
Costa Rica	2 000 000.00	–	2 000 000.00
El Salvador	3 478 605.83	–	3 478 605.83
Fiji	2 000 000.00	–	2 000 000.00
Gambia	1 499 989.59	4 013 064.53	5 513 054.12
Ghana	2 999 960.00	–	2 999 960.00
Guatemala	5 773 320.00	–	5 773 320.00
Guinea	4 275 185.00	826 660.60	5 101 845.60
Guinea-Bissau ^a	1 900 000.00	–	1 900 000.00

⁴ Conducted by an external consultant and available at https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/synthesis_review_pbf_2021-2022.pdf.

	<i>Immediate Response Facility</i>	<i>Peacebuilding Recovery Facility</i>	<i>Total</i>
Haiti ^a	3 649 999.99	2 000 000.00	5 649 999.99
Honduras	3 363 340.00	2 999 999.66	6 363 339.66
Kenya	4 000 000.00	–	4 000 000.00
Kyrgyzstan	2 915 149.34	–	2 915 149.34
Liberia ^a	2 000 000.00	10 000 000.00	12 000 000.00
Madagascar	3 686 621.74	11 355 346.00	15 041 967.74
Mali ^a	3 950 695.00	915 582.00	4 866 277.00
Mauritania	–	7 000 000.00	7 000 000.00
Montenegro	2 561 929.00	–	2 561 929.00
Niger	4 317 255.00	8 897 878.00	13 215 133.00
Nigeria	818 015.00	–	818 015.00
Papua New Guinea	865 247.00	3 258 150.00	4 123 397.00
Peru	2 600 000.00	–	2 600 000.00
Philippines	3 000 000.00	–	3 000 000.00
Sierra Leone ^a	1 899 999.97	–	1 899 999.97
Somalia ^a	4 000 000.00	2 009 223.53	6 009 223.53
South Sudan	1 000 078.41	500 000.00	1 500 078.41
Togo	2 500 000.00	–	2 500 000.00
Kosovo ^b	2 500 000.00	–	2 500 000.00
Global	4 657 677.05	–	4 657 677.05
Total	98 104 540.55	104 380 662.73	202 485 203.28

Source: Peacebuilding Support Office and Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, December 2023.

Note: The table reflects funding decisions taken in 2023. Financial transfers, in tranches, follow project approval and may occur in subsequent years.

^a Setting considered to be a mission transition, understood, in the context of the Fund, as a setting from which a mission has departed within the past 10 years.

^b References to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#).

III. Results and peacebuilding gains

A. Priority window 1: supporting cross-border and regional approaches

12. As the causes of conflict frequently stem from or are exacerbated by regional dynamics, the Fund's strategy is aimed at incentivizing cross-border actions. These often receive fewer resources, given that the financing structure of most donors is based on individual country strategies. Cross-border actions can include improving border management, such as in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where an initiative of IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) helped to reduce irregular movements. By the project's end, 61 per cent of those surveyed around the Kamako border posts considered that local dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms had improved intercommunity relations and reduced abuses by border officials. Collaboration between Congolese and Angolan officers had also improved, with follow-up meetings organized without

project support. The project also facilitated the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of 1,212 Congolese refugees from Angola.

13. Responding to human mobility dynamics with a human rights-based approach has proven helpful to prevention. The cross-border initiative covering El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, implemented by IOM, UNDP and UNHCR, supported the creation of the Tri-national Coordination Space, providing the countries' Governments with tools to address the repatriation of returned populations, protection protocols, comprehensive care for migrant children and adolescents and processes for detecting and addressing trafficking in persons. On the border between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, the Fund supported a UNDP and UNICEF initiative to strengthen social cohesion, which contributed, among other results, to the efforts of Côte d'Ivoire to adopt a national integrated border management policy. Peace and civil-military dialogue committees have also been set up or revitalized at the community level. A recently established cross-border network of child protection actors has already managed a number of cross-border cases of child victims of abuse and exploitation. An additional 22,000 people living in border areas now have access to potable water.

14. Building peace and cohesion through shared prosperity in border areas is important, especially where transhumance and agro-pastoral issues are sources of conflict. The Fund supports projects on two borders of Guinea: with Sierra Leone, implemented by IOM and the World Food Programme (WFP), and with Côte d'Ivoire, implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and IOM. Across the 28 targeted cross-border villages, 12 transhumance operational committees were set up to support farmers, herders and local authorities in finding preventive and peaceful solutions, reaching 110,000 people. In border regions of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, FAO and UNFPA are enabling cross-border entrepreneurship and collaboration with 78 local self-help groups. The groups, structured around revolving funds, have started to generate their own internal lending and income-generating activities. The project has contributed to improved bilateral relations, as strengthened district-level relationships have facilitated the quicker resolution of cross-border matters. In the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, as a result of supporting Mercy Corps, traditional practices based on gifting livestock have been retooled to foster social cohesion. The practices have been highly valued by civil society organizations and donors, leading to over \$600,000 of financing for seven new projects, demonstrating a catalytic financial effect. Mercy Corps is also increasing the response capacity of local grass-roots organizations in hard-to-reach areas, allowing for early response to emerging situations of fragility and vulnerability.

15. Addressing climate security risks can benefit from cross-border responses. The Fund supported an integrated approach covering Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, where UNDP and IOM helped to build local, national and regional capacity to address climate security priorities and engage in global advocacy. Inclusive consultations with 1,500 representatives of local communities led to greater food security for affected families and in Nui, a particularly remote community of Tuvalu, box gardens are providing nutrient diversity and helping to reduce land conflicts. The Government of Kiribati was supported in finalizing the demarcation of unresolved maritime boundaries and protecting against illegal fishing. To advance policy, specialized climate-security risk assessments helped in the production of the regional Pacific Climate Security Assessment Guide, a methodology for countries in the region to develop climate-related security analyses.

B. Priority window 2: facilitating transitions

16. Working in United Nations mission settings and assisting their transitions has been an objective of the peacebuilding architecture since its establishment. In the Fund's 2020–2024 Strategy, a window was established to help country teams to support mission mandates and build the capacity of national institutions and communities to sustain peace.

17. In Haiti, the Fund has been assisting the United Nations system and partners in the context of a political, security, humanitarian and protection crisis worsened by environmental fragility and an extraordinary expansion of gang violence. In 2023, through sports and cultural and psychosocial activities, Concern Worldwide brought together 1,927 young people from neighbourhoods severely affected by gang violence to foster links between communities. Coupled with socioeconomic support, Concern Worldwide strengthened the agency of marginalized young people and reduced their vulnerability to gangs.

18. In the Sudan, supporting the collective efforts of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission and the country team has been a priority. With the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, the operational environment required partners to adapt by working with civil society partners. The Youth Citizen Observer Network, supported by the Carter Center, responded to the renewed conflict by collecting, verifying and analysing information in 10 public reports on the humanitarian, socioeconomic and security situation. In areas less affected by active conflict, projects have proceeded with adjustments to ensure complementarity with the reprioritization of humanitarian and life-saving support. A project aimed at strengthening capacities for peace and social cohesion in Port Sudan and Kassala, implemented by UNDP and UNICEF, resequenced activities to prioritize livelihoods and essential service interventions. These included enhancing water infrastructure in Kassala State, which is expected to benefit 25,000 people and alleviate tensions over water scarcity, and distributing seeds and productive tools to 23,585 people to improve resilience and food security in conflict-affected communities.

19. In Mali, in the context of the termination of the mandate and subsequent withdrawal of MINUSMA, the Fund supported projects aimed at maintaining and reinforcing peacebuilding and stabilization activities. UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) rehabilitated security and justice infrastructure to increase access, effectiveness and State presence. Consultative security committees were set up and security and justice actors received training. As a result, in 2023, communities' level of trust regarding the State's conflict prevention mechanisms and the police increased by 8 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, compared with the results of the previous perception survey, conducted in 2020. Local civil society organizations were supported to create the Kenekanko digital platform for monitoring human rights violations and corruption cases, with more than 900 alerts received through the platform. UNICEF and Search for Common Ground supported 3,000 young citizens with civic education and conflict management training, resulting in the systematic inclusion of youth representatives in 66 per cent of local conflict management structures in 2023, against 39 per cent in 2020. More than 100 youth representatives contributed to developing the National Youth Policy, adopted by the Council of Ministers and approved by the Transition President in May 2023.

20. Preventing electoral violence can contribute to effective and peaceful transitions. With timely financing, the Fund can incentivize early, proactive measures to prevent violence and support political stability ahead of and during election

periods.⁵ In Liberia, IOM, OHCHR and UNDP collaborated with all stakeholders on a human rights-based approach to the electoral process, providing analysis and reporting, as well as tracking and reporting hate speech, thus contributing to largely peaceful 2023 presidential and legislative elections. Guinea-Bissau has been a priority for the Fund as a transition setting and because of its continuing engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission. Before the June 2023 legislative elections, a joint project by UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA and WFP engaged with communities and political actors. Political parties signed a code of conduct and agreed to accept the election results as presented by the National Electoral Commission. Political turbulence towards the end of 2023 underlined the non-linear path of peacebuilding and the importance of accompanying countries through longer-term transitions.

21. The Fund continued to support initiatives aimed at the full and meaningful engagement of women in elections. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Interpeace and UN-Women helped to increase the number of women candidates for the December 2023 elections. In the Dibaya and Luiza territories, there were 59 and 86 women candidates, respectively, in 2023 versus 21 and 31 in 2018. In the Gambia, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF helped to enhance the awareness of women's rights and potential as political leaders ahead of the 2023 local elections. Those efforts contributed to the candidature of 58 women out of 327 nominees for 120 ward councillorship positions, with 17 women elected. That represented a significant increase compared with 2018, when only 19 women were nominated and 7 were elected. In Colombia, a project led by a local civil society organization, Fundación de Estudios Superiores Universitarios de Urabá Antonio Roldán Betancur, successfully advanced the political participation of Indigenous communities in conflict-affected territories, including women, as exemplified by the election of an Indigenous woman as Governor and the appointment of another as the Secretary of the Indigenous territory.

22. The meaningful engagement of women during electoral cycles can help to achieve peaceful elections and prevent sexual violence. In Sierra Leone, UNDP and UNICEF assisted in the launch of the Gender Based-Violence Information Management System and the digital E-referral Pathway application to support case management throughout the elections. Since the launch in May 2023 in three districts, 146 cases of sexual and gender-based violence have been reported. Another initiative in Liberia, implemented by UNDP and UN-Women, supported the conduct of the presidential and legislative elections, the first for which the National Elections Commission provided timely gender-disaggregated data on candidates, voter registration and elections workers. Building on the violence against women in elections and politics protocol, the efforts fostered an enabling environment for the safe participation of women in the 2023 elections, as evidenced by the low number of incidences of violence against women recorded during the electoral period.

C. Priority window 3: fostering inclusion through women's and youth empowerment

23. For the seventh year in a row, the Fund exceeded its internal target allocation of 30 per cent to gender equality and women's empowerment, achieving an allocation of 47.3 per cent to gender-responsive investments.

24. Thirty-two proposals, totalling \$51 million, were approved through the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative. Twelve projects, totalling \$20.5 million, were

⁵ United Nations electoral assistance is provided only at the specific request of the Member State concerned.

focused on increasing women's engagement in natural resource management and climate change mitigation and adaptation and 20 youth projects, totalling \$30.5 million, were focused on promoting political participation and youth safety, security and protection. All of the projects include the commitment to allocate at least 40 per cent of financing to national and local civil society partners.

25. The Fund continued to decentralize initiatives focused on gender promotion through its Gender Promotion Initiative 2.0 to enhance national ownership, integrate women, peace and security commitments into longer-term peacebuilding strategies and expand funding access to national civil society organizations. Pilots are active in the Gambia, Haiti and the Niger. In 2023, a pilot was approved for Colombia, for \$3 million, and more pilots are being rolled out in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Liberia and South Sudan.

26. In 2023, the Fund observed tangible results from initiatives centred on reinforcing the involvement of women and youth in decision-making in the socioeconomic and political spheres. In Chad, the advocacy of two women-led national civil society organizations, supported by Cooperazione Internazionale as the Fund's implementing partner, led to the adoption of four departmental action plans in Lac province, incorporating the full participation of women in decision-making and conflict management. In Guinea, an initiative led by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF strengthened the capacities of more than 1,975 women and girls nationwide in transformational leadership, organizational management, gender equality, women's rights, citizenship, conflict prevention and management and the political participation of women. Following their training, 40 per cent of the women decided to get involved in politics and advocate for their communities and 20 per cent are carrying out local mediation and prevention activities.

27. Promoting gender equality at all levels of public life remained central to many of the Fund's interventions. In South Sudan, Saferworld successfully partnered with four local civil society organizations to challenge discriminatory gender norms contributing to violent conflict. The partners raised awareness and strengthened capacities, resources and access to mental health support, reaching 710 women and girls. They engaged over 1,500 community members and leaders and, in several instances, local authorities and customary courts took action to affirm women's rights to land and property, end cycles of cattle raiding and prosecute relatives who had forced underage girls into marriage. In Chad, South-South cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire helped to operationalize an observatory to promote gender equality and equity, with technical support and advocacy coordinated by FAO, OHCHR and UNFPA. The observatory provides gender and age-sensitive data to inform policymaking.

28. In 2023, progress was made in various countries in building national peace infrastructure inclusive of youth participation, contributing to a vibrant civic space, fostering dialogue, resolving conflict and strengthening the foundation for a stable society. In Haiti, OHCHR and UNDP are laying the groundwork for a national peace infrastructure by mapping youth organizations and facilitating their access to the national authorities. In Guinea, UNDP, UNESCO and UNFPA facilitated country-wide consultations with over 2,400 young people on the current political transition processes. They were followed by an inclusive process to formally establish the National Council of Youth, with local and regional branches, engaging 3,175 young people who will help to inform the National Youth Policy.

29. The Fund has helped the United Nations system to invest in youth engagement in multiple settings worldwide. Increased youth engagement in local mediation in the Bamingui-Bangoran region of the Central African Republic yielded tangible results, with constructive interactions between farmer and herder communities increasing

from 37 per cent to 68 per cent over two years. In addition, at the end of the intervention, which was led by Search for Common Ground, 71 per cent of 160 young people surveyed reported a higher level of trust in the other community. In Buenaventura, Cali and Quibdó, Colombia, the International Labour Organization, UNFPA and UNICEF supported youth empowerment in communities of African descent affected by violence and stigmatization, resulting in the design and implementation by 2,483 adolescents and young people of 90 local initiatives for peaceful conflict resolution and the prevention of gender-based violence and the establishment of partnerships with local governments, the media, academia, trade unions and the private sector. In Madagascar, 33 United Nations Volunteers are supporting a youth-led joint conflict prevention initiative of UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA to amplify the voices of young people, including from the country's 18 ethnic groups, during electoral periods.

30. Helping to engage at-risk young people and reintegrate young people who have participated in organized violence fosters social cohesion and builds resilience. In Somalia, the efforts of IOM and UNICEF to strengthen community-based reintegration work with 1,324 young people resulted in an improvement in social and psychosocial indicators for young people formerly associated with al-Shabaab (38.3 per cent improvement) and young people marginalized in their communities (53.4 per cent improvement), according to the project baseline and endline surveys. In addition, 31 per cent of young people marginalized in their communities reported improved access to opportunities. A growing level of confidence in community-based reintegration was illustrated by a 61 per cent increase, as of August 2023, in the number of children formerly associated with al-Shabaab handed over by the authorities to partners for community reintegration compared with 2022. In Sierra Leone, FAO, UNDP and UNFPA trained at-risk young people on civic education, peacebuilding and gender equality, enabling their representation in district and chiefdom youth structures. The project also provided economic alternatives to illegal activities. Antisocial and risky behaviours were significantly reduced in 92 per cent of the 421 beneficiaries across 18 communities. An internal project survey found that the proportion of young people who believed that their community heard their voice rose from a baseline of 55 per cent to 86 per cent by the end of the project. Similarly, the proportion of young people who believed that violence was never justified increased from 13 per cent to 75 per cent.

31. In recent years, the Fund has witnessed increased demand for mental health support to address psychological trauma and stress caused by conflict. In Burundi, UNDP and the NGO Cord enabled the provision of mental health support to former combatants, returnees and host communities, as well as members of the police, to help to alleviate the trauma of all actors and improve relations within the community and between the police and communities. That effort resulted in over 55 per cent of the local police force reporting that they no longer wanted to act against former combatants or perpetrators or to leave the force and 50 per cent reported that they now treated community members better. The programme was replicated in other precincts, under the police budget. In Kyrgyzstan, an intervention implemented by Saferworld was instrumental in shifting perceptions of mental health and its interconnections with conflict resolution. Notably, local crime prevention centres in Osh, Batken and Issyk-Kul formally incorporated mental health services into their long-term crime prevention plans, institutionalizing mental health support as an essential component of community safety. In the context of growing insecurity and heightened sexual and gender-based violence in Haiti, UN-Women and the World Health Organization (WHO) are helping to increase mental health services outreach, with 2,814 people having had access to support in 2023.

32. Mental health as part of integrated care has been included in programmes aimed at assisting victims of violence, especially survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. In Somalia, the women, peace and protection programme, implemented by UNDP and UN-Women, supported the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development in the ongoing implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and the development and implementation of related local action plans in each federal member state, providing a platform for establishing one-stop treatment centres for survivors. A total of 229 survivors were assisted in 2023 in cities in which access had previously been limited or non-existent. In the north-western part of Nigeria, the Neem Foundation and the Bridge That Gap Initiative, two local women-led associations, are supporting mental health, trauma healing and psychosocial support for those affected by violence. In 2023, 544 individuals benefited from those services and 30 front-line respondents received enhanced training specifically for victims of violence. In Burkina Faso, UNFPA and WHO are training community-based leaders and health workers in mental health, psychosocial support and social cohesion to increase the provision of care to distressed people. A total of 827 young survivors of gender-based violence benefited from those services in 2023.

33. Including women and young people in land and natural resources conflict management can help to enable equitable and lasting solutions. In Mali, the Fund is supporting two initiatives, led by Helvetas and the local NGO Azhar, to increase access to agricultural land and participation in local conflict prevention and management. The initiatives have resulted in almost 2,500 representatives of associations, mostly young people and women, receiving certificates of customary allocation of farming lands in areas in which limited land access constitutes a source of conflict and violence. In addition, in 16 communes in which the Azhar project is being implemented, 80 per cent of land-related conflicts were solved peacefully by land commissions established or revitalized through the intervention. Also in Mali, the support of UNDP and UN-Women to women and girls in four communes increased their participation in local decision-making and natural resource management mechanisms from 5 per cent to 27 per cent.

34. The engagement of young people in land and natural resource management, including through increased awareness and more opportunities to be involved in local governance and planning structures, can help to sustain peace. In the Niger, IOM and Search for Common Ground focused on rehabilitating infrastructure, in collaboration with the Regional Youth Council, to improve the access of young people to civic spaces and increase their inclusion in local decision-making structures. Consequently, approximately 640 young people have been equipped with the skills to participate in local governance in seven communes of the Diffa region. Seventy-five per cent of young people reached by the project stated that they had adopted new behaviours for the preservation of the environment, compared with 32 per cent at the beginning of the project. In the province of Rennell and Bellona in the Solomon Islands, where mining and logging have exacerbated land-related disputes, UNDP and World Vision are empowering young people to participate in land management. The effort has resulted in the preparation of 12 action plans relating to land recording and mapping and their submission to the Ministry of Lands. Implementing plans benefiting from the participation of young people will help to mitigate land-related disputes affecting entire communities, while also contributing to shifting mindsets on the capacity of young people to defend their communities' land rights effectively.

D. Notable trends in the engagement of the Fund

35. As noted in *Climate-Security and Peacebuilding: Thematic Review*,⁶ commissioned by the Peacebuilding Support Office in partnership with FAO, UNICEF, the climate security mechanism and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and led by the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, the Fund has responded to continuously rising demand to address the intersection of climate change and conflict and the effects of heightened competition over natural resources. In the eastern part of Burkina Faso, where increasing water scarcity has been affecting drivers of conflict, FAO and UNDP enabled the establishment of pastoral boreholes, increasing water availability and reducing pressure on domestic boreholes for animal watering, thereby reducing conflict and improving social cohesion. Women are central to the Fund's efforts to prevent climate-induced conflicts in Papua New Guinea. On the basis of an inclusive climate risk assessment, which revealed concerning climate trends in the intensity, frequency and severity of national hazards with potential gendered impacts, including displacement and gender-based violence, IOM and UNDP provided technical support to provincial and subprovincial governmental authorities to integrate the assessment outcomes into provincial strategic frameworks. In Chad, IOM and Humanity and Inclusion enabled a constructive dialogue between the Government and communities to better manage conflicts over gold, water, gypsum and natron in the northern provinces. As a result, a road map was developed by local stakeholders, civil society representatives and the authorities, with several solutions agreed, including one for the improvement of mining governance in collaboration with the Société Nationale d'Exploitation Minière et de Contrôle. (As many environmental issues transcend national borders, several examples of cross-border progress are also contained in section III. A. of the present report.)

36. The need to counter hate speech, ethnonationalistic rhetoric and other divisive practices persisted among the requests for support from the Fund. In a regional initiative covering Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia, as well as Kosovo,⁷ over 10,000 young people were directly engaged by UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and UN-Women with the aim of strengthening the role of young people in promoting increased mutual understanding through innovative methods of engagement. Overall, with the project's support, the participation of young people improved in 57 municipal councils and 3,300 young people were empowered with skills to address hate speech effectively, promote constructive narratives and foster intercommunity dialogue. In Sri Lanka, UNDP and UNICEF have been strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to address hate speech, resulting in the local production of monthly reports shared with more than 150 partners to enable the inclusion of hate speech mitigation activities in their programmes. A series of community dialogues facilitated by religious leaders and educators gathered 2,500 people, resulting in 11 social action programmes to equip community members with digital literacy and critical thinking skills.

37. The demand for the localization of peacebuilding efforts highlights the growing recognition of the effectiveness of community-driven approaches. In Libya, IOM, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP held community consultations to establish local peacebuilding and development committees in the southern municipalities of Sebha, Ghat and Ubari. The three towns developed local peacebuilding and development plans and resource mobilization strategies that reflected the priorities of local

⁶ Erica Gaston, Oliver Brown, Nadwa al-Dawsari and others, *Climate-Security and Peacebuilding: Thematic Review* (New York, United Nations University, 2023).

⁷ References to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

constituencies. As a result, the percentage of committee members feeling very or fairly confident in their active contribution to local peacebuilding rose from 45 per cent at the beginning of the project to 92 per cent at the end. In a complex intervention in Papua New Guinea, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women made concerted efforts to empower local actors in the Highlands region to prevent and address local conflicts and engage in trust-building and resilience-strengthening activities, including around socioeconomic peace dividends. The five mediation teams, led by the Catholic Diocese of Mendi and the United Church, successfully brokered dialogue among the parties involved in 12 conflicts and prevented relapses into violence. Six conflicts have already been settled with signed local peace agreements. Furthermore, 25 community peacebuilding grants created positive change by strengthening cultural, social and economic ties among the previously disputing parties.

38. The focus on sustainable solutions for internally displaced persons marks a significant shift in addressing long-term stability and resilience in conflict-affected areas. With the Fund's backing, IOM, UNESCO and Horizon Femmes are supporting young people in displaced and host communities in the Littoral and West regions of Cameroon to obtain legal identification and engage in income-generating activities. So far, 645 displaced young people have been supported to obtain identification cards providing them with access to services and employment. In Tanganyika Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a project implemented by Tearfund enabled the endorsement by displaced Twa and Bantu communities of a land charter that outlined customs in local land management and facilitated the mapping of land access rights. Ten land conflicts over demarcation were resolved peacefully.

39. In 2023, the Fund's rule of law projects demonstrated positive results. In May, in the Gambia, the Government launched a national five-year plan outlining a comprehensive reform agenda spanning prosecutions, reparations, reconciliation and constitutional and legal reforms, with support from UNDP and OHCHR. That effort facilitated the recent passage of the Victims' Reparations Act, which will guide the establishment of a specialized body to oversee reparations for victims of the former regime.

40. In many contexts, support for reconciliation processes is pivotal for addressing past abuses and fostering social cohesion, laying the groundwork for sustainable peace. In South Sudan, the Fund is supporting the efforts of UNDP and UNESCO to enable the meaningful participation of vulnerable communities in inclusive transitional justice processes. Partners have facilitated consultations by a technical committee, set up by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, with over 1,500 internally displaced persons across South Sudan and 213 refugees in Ethiopia. Associated efforts have helped to establish and train five networks of 150 persons with disabilities and 35 victim support groups, through which 720 victims and survivors received counselling and psychosocial support in 2023. In Papua New Guinea, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs supported high-level meetings between the national Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to advance the post-referendum process in support of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. They included a joint supervisory body meeting that brought together the Prime Minister of the national Government and the President of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, with their respective cabinets.

41. The Fund continued to support the implementation of peace agreements as a focus area of its work. In Colombia, the Fund approved an initiative to deliver agile support and technical expertise to the parties of the ongoing peace negotiation between the Government and the National Liberation Army through OHCHR and UNDP, in close cooperation with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which is accompanying the peace process.

42. Under the auspices of the Fund, the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership Facility continued to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to engage with the World Bank and other international financial institutions on strategic and operational alignment in prevention and transition contexts, with preferred financing from voluntary donors.⁸ In 2023, the Facility allocated an estimated \$1.5 million, including to support joint data and analysis initiatives, facilitate advisory support and deploy surge capacity for partnerships at the national and local levels in more than a dozen country and regional settings, including Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Mozambique, the Gulf of Guinea and the Tigris-Euphrates river basin. The Facility supported joint knowledge management and policy development, including by deepening exchanges with regional development banks and supporting policy dialogues and research, such as an initiative with New York University, UNDP and the Department of Peace Operations to explore the scope to strengthen collaboration with international financial institutions on the security and justice sectors and governance. The Fund continued to finance the global Saving Lives Entity, led by UNDP and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, focusing on small arms control, with preferred financing by several voluntary donors.⁹

IV. Peacebuilding Fund oversight and management

A. Advisory Group

43. In 2023, the seventh Advisory Group held two meetings, in April and November, focused on their oversight role, in consultation with the Secretary-General, on the implications of the New Agenda for Peace and the Fund's connector role, impact and funding. For the first time, following a briefing by the Chair of the Advisory Group at the annual retreat of the Peacebuilding Commission in June, a formal session between the entire Advisory Group and the Peacebuilding Commission was held, in November.¹⁰ Three Advisory Group members also participated in the Fund's partner visit to Mauritania in October.

B. Budget and personnel

44. In 2023, direct cost expenditures for the management of the Fund amounted to an estimated \$4,787,433, in line with its terms of reference. In addition, the Fund provided design, monitoring and evaluation support to country teams and their partners to ensure quality, accountability and learning. Programme and project support missions were provided to 12 countries. Monitoring and evaluation support activities included thematic reviews of Fund-financed programmes and country portfolio evaluations. The Financing for Peacebuilding team of the Peacebuilding Support Office comprises one director and four professional and two general staff members. The Fund also continued to benefit from partnership arrangements with United Nations Volunteers, the Junior Professional Officers Programme and staff members on secondment from UNDP, UN-Women and OHCHR.

⁸ Information on the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership Facility is available at <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/policy-issues-and-partnerships/partnerships/un-worldbank-partnership>.

⁹ Information about the Saving Lives Entity is available at <https://disarmament.unoda.org/salient/> and <https://www.undp.org/rolhr/community-security/salient>.

¹⁰ See <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/document-type/chair%E2%80%99s-summary>.

C. Enhanced monitoring, evaluation, impact analysis and learning

45. Fragile political and security situations, frequently entailing movement restrictions or project governance obstacles, can cause delays in implementation or require adaptive measures. In 2023, countries with multiple project challenges included Haiti, Mali and the Niger, all encountering political or security obstacles, and Nigeria, which also held a general election. The Fund monitors project implementation and asks Governments and implementing partners to address such obstacles. In 2023, significant efforts were made to address delays encountered in 2022: of 47 projects reported as off track in November 2022, only 8 were reported as such in November 2023. Thus, while obstacles or delays are to be expected in peacebuilding, the Fund's partners are constantly addressing and adapting to them.

Table 3
Global performance of the Peacebuilding Fund, 2022–2023

<i>Fund priority areas</i>	<i>Project count^a</i>	<i>On track to deliver outputs (percentage)</i>	<i>On track with evidence of significant contribution to peacebuilding outcomes^b (percentage)</i>
Priority area 1^c			
2023	23	78	26
2022	21	57	33
Priority area 2^d			
2023	181	85	22
2022	174	81	19
Priority area 3^e			
2023	7	71	29
2022	7	57	14
Priority area 4^f			
2023	23	87	9
2022	22	86	9
Overall 2023	234	84	21
Overall 2022	224	79	19

Source: Peacebuilding Support Office project assessments, periodic reports and independent country evaluations

^a The table includes ongoing projects for which there is a performance score and does not include those that are in the early stages of implementation.

^b Evidence of significant contribution to peacebuilding outcomes entails results achieved at the societal or structural level, including changed attitudes, behaviours or institutions.

^c Security sector reform, the rule of law, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and political dialogue.

^d Reconciliation, democratic governance and conflict prevention/management.

^e Employment and equitable access to social services.

^f State capacities, extension of State authority and governance of peacebuilding resources.

46. The thematic review on climate, peace and security,¹¹ reaffirmed that investments in climate security and environmental peacebuilding approaches were critical and growing in importance. Initiatives relating to local natural resource management represent promising areas for peacebuilding, linking to both economic and social issues, such as the exclusion of women and young people. The Fund was

¹¹ Gaston, Brown, al-Dawsari and others, *Climate-Security and Peacebuilding*.

highlighted in the review as one of very few supporters of cross-border and regional environmental approaches in conflict-affected contexts. Two trainings on climate, peace and security programming were co-facilitated with the United Nations System Staff College to contribute to disseminating the findings. In 2023, 29 per cent of newly approved projects included climate, peace and security considerations. The Fund has commenced a human rights and peacebuilding thematic review, to be launched in the second quarter of 2024, in partnership with Switzerland and OHCHR.

47. Thirty-four project-level evaluations were completed in 2023. The Fund also commissioned country portfolio evaluations in Chad, El Salvador and the Gambia, resulting in the finding, in all three evaluations, that the Fund's contributions were highly relevant to the peacebuilding challenges of each country, as outlined by the country itself, and recommendations were made around portfolio coherence for sustained impact and measurability. Furthermore, the Fund commissioned the first-ever cohort evaluation of its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative projects, covering the 29 projects approved in 2020. It was posited in the draft evaluation that outcome achievement was high in most projects, with additional unexpected positive results also reported. Involving local leaders was found to be a critical success factor, with a recommendation made for effective engagement with local partners, from design through evaluation. Best practices were identified and recommendations made for future initiatives, including increasing engagement with local civil society actors in project design and monitoring. The three country-level evaluations and the cohort evaluation will be published in early 2024.

48. The Fund also commissioned a synthesis review to draw out lessons learned from the significant body of evaluative exercises undertaken in the period 2021–2022.¹² The review covered 120 evaluations: 117 project-level evaluations (63 in 2021 and 54 in 2022) and three portfolio evaluations and reviews (Burundi, Guinea and Madagascar). Several cases in which the Fund had played an important role in sustaining dialogue amid challenging political circumstances were highlighted. One recommendation was for a greater focus on capacity-building for implementing agencies and national and other partners to enable them to achieve and demonstrate sustainable peacebuilding results. Another was for the inclusion of more explicit conflict-sensitivity strategies in projects. A reoriented evaluation approach was encouraged to better capture significant programming results.

49. Given the high number of project evaluations commissioned directly by recipient entities, the Fund has established an independent external evaluation quality assessment process for all project-level evaluations to strengthen accountability. In 2023, based on a four-category rating system, 6 evaluation reports were rated as “very good”, 21 were rated as “good”, 23 were rated as “fair” and 1 was rated as “unsatisfactory”.¹³ The highest scores were in the “findings” section, with the lowest scores in the “executive summary” and “recommendations” sections. Given the importance of the two latter sections for decision makers, the evaluation quality assessment recommendation was that they be prioritized for improvement. The evaluation portfolio as a whole did not excel in its coverage of cross-cutting themes. Evaluation findings are shared with recipient entities and the Peacebuilding Support Office is working with the United Nations Evaluation Group to design the first-ever evaluation guidelines for peacebuilding programmes.

50. The Fund's impact evaluation and dissemination initiative, PeaceFIELD, launched in January 2021 and comprising case studies in Guatemala, the Sudan and

¹² See https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/synthesis_review_pbf_2021-2022.pdf.

¹³ See https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbf_evaluation_quality_synthesis_report_2022-final_clean_5-jan.pdf.

the Mali-Niger and Guinea-Sierra Leone border regions, is beginning to yield results, with the analysis of communities in which projects have been or will be implemented and their comparison with control groups. The evaluation on the Sudan concluded in early 2023 and, at that time, before the outbreak of conflict, the results of the Fund's projects in five states in East Darfur confirmed the positive effects on engaged communities. Interventions by UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, FAO, IOM and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme were found to have reduced local conflicts and increased residents' perceptions of the effectiveness of local peace committees. The projects were found to have increased school enrolment by 11 per cent and reduced local conflict drivers by improving residents' satisfaction with administrative and sanitation services when compared with similar geographical areas without the Fund's support. Final data for the other case studies will be collected in 2024 and subsequent years.

V. Conclusion

51. In 2023, new and ongoing actions financed by the Peacebuilding Fund demonstrated the growing national and subnational demand for peacebuilding. Governments, working with resident coordinators, the full range of United Nations entities and civil society partners, found ways to increase participation in infrastructures for peace, build relations across borders to manage risks of conflict, address the exacerbating effects of global warming on conflict and establish early warning systems. Partners supported transitional justice programmes, helped to reintegrate displaced persons and provided socioeconomic opportunities for marginalized populations. Women and young people and the organizations that they lead were supported to engage in peace and development. Efforts are continuing on evaluation and the rigorous measurement of peacebuilding impacts. Demand continues to outstrip supply, however. In 2024, the Peacebuilding Support Office will follow up on General Assembly resolution [78/257](#) and establish programming procedures for assessed contributions. The Peacebuilding Impact Hub will help to deepen the evidence for peacebuilding, while a continuing dialogue with civil society will help to grow collective action for peace and guide peacebuilding practice. Efforts to mobilize voluntary resources, which must remain the primary source of financing, will be redoubled. The conflicts dominating the headlines today only underscore the need to invest now in sustainable peace for tomorrow.
