



At the crossroads of Climate, Gender and Sustaining Peace: What is the role of the UN peacebuilding architecture?

Virtual Roundtable | 27 October 2021

Summary Note

The 2020 peacebuilding architecture review (hereafter, the 2020 review) concluded on 21 December 2020 with the adoption of the dual resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace by the United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/75/201) and Security Council (S/RES/2558). The resolutions call on Member States, the UN and other stakeholders to “continue to take action to implement the resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and to advance efforts to bring greater coherence to peacebuilding efforts” (S/RES/2558, OP1). In line with this call, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (DHF), the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) are continuing a series of roundtable discussions to examine strategies and pathways towards the operationalization of the dual resolutions.

The eighteenth roundtable discussion explored the unique role that the UN Peacebuilding Architecture could play in the global response to climate-fragility risks, in particular as experienced by women and girls. Specifically, this discussion sought to unpack the role of the Peacebuilding Commission (the PBC; the Commission) in promoting a coherent, coordinated and integrated approach to promoting a coherent, coordinated and integrated approach to climate-sensitive peacebuilding, as well as the role of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in financing catalytic approaches that support at the operationalisation of the gender-climate-peace nexus. Participants shared national, regional and global best practices of climate- and gender-sensitive peacebuilding efforts that seek to reach those most vulnerable to climate change. They also discussed the avenues to amplify the contributions of women to advancing peace, security, and climate action. This summary note captures the key takeaways from the discussion.

Background on the nexus between gender, climate and sustaining peace

As recognised by the UN Secretary-General in his recent statement to the Commission, climate change is an important challenge that needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.¹ The current climate crisis leads to increased competition over resources, exacerbates vulnerabilities and livelihood insecurity, and is a push factor for migration and displacement. Women and girls are especially affected by climate change and the insecurity it induces. It is because women and girls face societal expectations created by intersectional factors that fuel discrimination, including their gender, age, geographical location, disabilities, sexual orientation, and/or ethno-religious background.

¹ United Nations, Secretary-General, Addressing Peacebuilding Commission, Says New Agenda for Peace ‘Is Our Platform to Update Promise’ of Saving Future Generations from War, SG/SM/20985, 22 October 2021, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20985.doc.htm>.

Despite the adverse impacts they face, diverse women have also been part of the solution by driving gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches to addressing climate insecurity. Roundtable participants highlighted that women activists and women-led organisations are often at the forefront of implementing local initiatives and have a strong track record of championing climate security solutions that have community concerns at their core.² It is women's proximity to climate risks that make them the most equipped to lead in the midst of a climate crisis. For example, GPPAC-Pacific in Vanuatu spearheaded the first all indigenous women-led response to category 5 Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020. In January 2021, following Tropical Cyclone Yasa 6, diverse first responders across Fiji's two main islands provided emergency relief and convened safe spaces for rural women to discuss how to enhance their protection and effectively demand their participation in disaster response and long-term recovery plans for COVID-19.³ Recognising women as not only victims who bear the brunt of climate change risks, but also as drivers of change is necessary to enable them to have greater access to decision-making positions on climate and security. Women's efforts need to be adequately supported, both politically and financially.

The role of the Peacebuilding Commission in addressing the link between gender, climate and sustaining peace

Addressing the nexus between gender, climate and sustaining peace requires an integrated approach and coordination among a variety of actors. The roundtable participants reiterated a number of roles the PBC could play in supporting the nexus.

PBC's convening capacity can help bring together critical experts and stakeholders to brainstorm potential solutions, incorporating perspectives from humanitarian, peacebuilding and development actors. Effectively bringing together diverse perspectives helps to address climate security concerns in an intersectional and coordinated manner. Participants noted that the Commission has been able to create this space under the leadership of the governments in the Sahel and the Pacific, where climate change has created a variety of security risks.⁴

Furthermore, these discussions could be effectively used to support the advisory function of the PBC. This is important because, once picked up by the UN Security Council, the outcomes of the Commission's discussions can have immense impacts on the ground. One example of this is the recognition of the adverse impacts of climate change by the Council in the most recent UNOWAS mandate. This has led the region to conduct a comprehensive risk assessment analysis (covering adaptation and mitigation) and develop context-based strategies to address climate-related security risks, including by supporting local women's efforts to find new jobs and acquire new skills. Importantly, UNOWAS assists governments and the UN system in a contextualised manner based on the situations in each specific country (i.e., Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal), not a broader 'regional' risk assessment strategy.

The PBC's Gender Strategy⁵ and Action Plan⁶ are additional effective tools to mobilise gender-sensitive peacebuilding action on climate and peace. Together, they articulate a roadmap to advancing climate resilience, gender equality and socio-economic empowerment of diverse women. As the Commission works to further improve its record on engaging with diverse women

² Nihad, Nayifa & Abdenur, Adriana, 2021, "At the Forefront of Climate Action: Local approaches to climate-sensitive conflict and violence protection:" <https://www.gppac.net/resources/forefront-climate-action-local-approaches-climate-sensitive-conflict-and-violence>

³ Bhagwan Rolls, Sharon, 2020, "Peacebuilding Commission: Ambassadorial-level meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Pacific Islands:" <https://gppac.net/resources/gppacs-chair-board-briefs-peacebuilding-commission-impact-covid19-peacebuilding-pacific>

⁴ See more information about the Peacebuilding Commission's meetings: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/documents>

⁵ See the 2021 Gender Strategy of the Peacebuilding Commission:

https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/07092016-pbc_gender_strategy_final_1.pdf

⁶ See the 2021 PBC Gender Strategy Action Plan:

https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbc_gender_strategy_action_plan_final.pdf

peacebuilders, as well as employing gender analysis in its work, it could further strengthen climate-sensitive considerations brought up by women peacebuilders and help relevant stakeholders to design climate action that is gender-sensitive, intersectional and comprehensive.

At the same time, the PBC is unlikely to spearhead thematic meetings centred around the specific topic of climate security. Instead, the responsibility falls on Member States to raise these issues when they are relevant in their respective contexts. It is imperative that the situation at the country level dictates PBC discussions. This, however, can pose a challenge in situations where national governments do not see climate change as an immediate threat, in contrast to the experiences of local peacebuilding actors, including in the most remote areas. Therefore, including diverse civil society briefers and experts in context-specific PBC discussions is of critical importance.

The role of the Peacebuilding Fund and other donorship for climate action

The scarcity of financing for peacebuilding is a recognised challenge, together with the challenge of making financing more effective and impactful at the country level. This is aggravated by the fact that there is no dedicated fund for climate and security. Further, women peacebuilders and climate experts traditionally experience a lack of access to funding,⁷ as there is no dedicated funding for women-led climate action.

One mechanism that can provide financial support to the gender, climate and sustaining peace is the UN Climate and Security Mechanism, which distributes resources to strengthen the capacity of the UN system to analyse and address the adverse impacts of climate change on peace and security.⁸ In West Africa, the UN Climate and Security Mechanism supports inclusive climate risk management that promotes conflict prevention by linking national and regional actors, involving the private sector, distributing new technology and renewable energy resources and improving women's access to land.

Roundtable participants also noted that the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) plays a catalytic role in climate action and can have a multiplier effect on investments in climate security.⁹ A recent example of this work can be found in the Pacific, where the PBF has pledged US \$3.2 million to support a climate security project in partnership with the Governments of Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands. The project aims to address climate security challenges faced by the three nations, including displacement and forced migration due to the loss of livelihoods, food sources and coastal erosion and increased social tensions linked to shrinking land and fisheries resources.¹⁰

Roundtable participants highlighted the importance of rethinking the current financing models, to allow more direct funding to local peacebuilders and frontline climate change responders. Within the current structures of peacebuilding financing, local peacebuilders are normally perceived as implementers and receive sub-grants that can be as small as US\$25,000 to implement the project in three countries. Intermediary organisations and UN entities, who are direct recipients of funding obtain much larger grants that are dedicated to a large extent to

⁷ See the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), Kvinna till Kvinna, MADRE, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), 2021, "Feminist Solutions for more Impactful Financing for Peacebuilding."

⁸ Albrecht, Patrizia, 2021, "Joint Efforts for Sustaining Peace: Meet the UN Climate Security Mechanism:"

<https://www.unssc.org/news-and-insights/blog/joint-efforts-sustaining-peace-meet-un-climate-security-mechanism/>

⁹ United Nations, 2021, "Secretary-General, Addressing Peacebuilding Commission, Says New Agenda for Peace 'Is Our Platform to Update Promise' of Saving Future Generations from War:"

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20985.doc.htm>

¹⁰ UNDP Pacific, 2020, "United Nations launches pioneering Climate Security Project in the Pacific supported by UN SG's Peacebuilding Fund:" <https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/un-launches-pioneering-climate-security-project-in-the-pacific.html>

operational costs. As a result, the initial grants become significantly smaller by the time they reach the local level, where the change is most required.

Some steps can be taken to ensure that efforts to address the gender, climate and sustaining peace nexus are adequately financed. In this, there are lessons to be learned from the financing for the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. For example, the Secretary-General's call for a minimum of 15 percent of peacebuilding funds to be allocated to projects with the principal objective of addressing women's needs and advancing gender equality.¹¹ Similarly, the PBF has a marker of 15 percent for gender-sensitive action.¹² Similar financing targets on climate and a specific fund must be established to ensure climate security action is sustainably and adequately resourced. These climate-related targets must be gender-sensitive and could be tracked through a funding dashboard for peacebuilding recommended in the 2018 Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.¹³

Finally, funding agencies, such as multilateral donors, pooled funds and regional development banks can also serve as contributing partners. The PBC, as well as bilateral donors and individual Member States operating in spaces other than the PBC, can support the engagement of other donors and financial partners in action on the gender, climate and sustaining peace nexus.

Utilising alternative spaces to address the link between gender, climate and sustaining peace

The climate crisis is not a challenge that is restricted to a specific country. Whether in the Pacific or in the Sahel, actions of an individual country will not be effective without *a regional approach* and coordination. In the Pacific, the Pacific Islands Forum coordinates humanitarian pathways developed to support countries in the Pacific pooling together capacities and expertise to support each country. In West Africa, a regional working group has been established by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Regional Collaboration Centre of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to craft comprehensive, regional solutions and ensure that local needs are addressed. Such initiatives should be politically supported and adequately resourced.

Consideration must also be given to alternative avenues for engagement and coordination beyond the PBC. For example, the UN Office for South-South Cooperation should expand their action on issues of climate, gender and sustaining peace. A new structural approach is needed to link emerging global frameworks on inclusive climate and security with increased international cooperation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for the UN Peacebuilding Architecture on addressing the nexus between climate, gender and sustaining peace have emerged from the discussion:

Member States should raise the issue of the nexus between gender, climate and sustaining peace in the PBC discussions as it relates to their respective contexts. These discussions should include

¹¹ UN Women, 2021, "Global Norms and Standards: Peace and Security:" <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/global-norms-and-standards>

¹² United Nations Peacebuilding, 2020, "Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund 2020-2024 Strategy:" https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbf_strategy_2020-2024_final.pdf

¹³ UN, 2018, Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, A/72/707-S/2018/43, para 46: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/72/707

relevant local peacebuilders and climate experts working at the local level, as well as regional experts to ensure that the discussions are informed by local expertise and regional perspective.

The PBC should continue to use its convening and advisory functions to advance an integrated approach to the link between climate, gender and sustaining peace and coordination across a variety of actors, including by providing visibility to the link between climate and gender in its briefings and advisory opinions to the UN Security Council on relevant country topics, and encouraging the UN field presences as well as regional organisations to effectively support the nexus.

Member States should utilise PBC's Gender Strategy and Action Plan to mobilise peacebuilding action on climate and security. This includes supporting briefings by women climate experts in the Commission and advancing an intersectional analysis that puts climate indicators at the core of conflict analysis.

Member States should support locally-led organising (i.e., the establishment of a Pacific Women's Mediation Network). Women-led and feminist networks and coalitions could support greater representation of women at the political level, leading to increased visibility of alternative analysis and better general guidance on how political support by the UN peacebuilding architecture can be organised.

The PBC should utilise its space to encourage other donors (i.e., regional development banks and multi-partner funds) and other relevant stakeholders (i.e., the UN Office for South-South Cooperation) to dedicate funding specifically to the link between gender, climate and sustaining peace. The convening space of the PBC is particularly fit for this action due to its capacity to bring various stakeholders into the UN discussions.

The donor community should consider a dedicated climate and security fund with an embedded climate-gender marker. Existing climate and peacebuilding donors could also consider dedicating more attention to the gender, climate and sustaining peace nexus and also adapt a climate-gender marker. This will ensure that the gender, climate and sustaining peace nexus is receiving adequate resources.

The donor community should support local peacebuilding action on gender, climate and sustaining peace either directly through embassies and direct grants, UN country capacities, in particular through the UN Country Teams and Peace and Development Advisors, or through intermediary models such as feminist coalitions and networks that are rooted in authentic partnership and local ownership.