



Operationalization of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Donors' Support and Coordination at the Country Level

Virtual Roundtable | 3 February 2022

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.

Summary

The challenge in operationalizing Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace lies not only in the general lack of financing for peacebuilding, but also in the lack of mechanisms and approaches to manage existing funds efficiently and with impact. Based on current research, one of the gaps that impact opportunities for adequate, predictable and sustained peacebuilding financing is the limited coordination among the donor community working at the country level, with donors resorting to informal channels of coordination and the creation of ad-hoc working groups. This contributes to the downgraded quality of financing with the fragmentation, overlap and significant gaps in resources and capacities to meet inclusive national peacebuilding needs.

During the nineteenth roundtable discussion, the participants unpacked some of the good practices and lessons learned from existing efforts to advance donor coordination at the country level and reflected on the impact of these practices on joint programming and operational coherence.

The key takeaway from the discussion is that strong collaboration with donors is required to maximize synergies, minimize potential duplication, and ensure policy harmonization. However, donors rarely have an adequately managed platform for a sustained dialogue. At the country level, the donors obtain critical information either through the briefings by the UN leadership or through their bilateral engagements.

Efforts to advance peacebuilding donor coordination mechanisms at the country level

Both at the global and the country level, donors demonstrate a growing recognition of the need to foster coordination with a view of generating more impact of existing resources at the country level.

At the global level, several initiatives can be highlighted. The UN Funding Compact sets a framework that enables the UN to implement proper assistance at the country level with quality of funding and flexibility required. This framework is suitable for and inclusive of peacebuilding activities, as it allows for significant flexibility depending on respective contexts. Similarly, in 2019, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) launched the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership (HDDP) Facility, a UN instrument which provides small grant financing for the UN-World Bank partnership activities in the areas of joint data and analysis, as well as joint frameworks/priorities and seed funding for joint implementation. This partnership seeks to prioritize financing of activities conducted in collaboration with the UN and relevant UN entities pursuing collective outcomes in countries affected by fragility and conflict. While in Sudan HDDP talks are still finding its ground, the initiative, if implemented, can bring more clarity to the donors on how to best engage in a complementary manner. Same could be said for the Funding Compact that is yet to be fully operationalized for impact at the country level.

At the country level, donors coordinate through a variety of means that are often divorced from the global processes. Donor coordination is mostly taking place through pooled mechanisms that allow for exchange among donors and broader analysis. As one of the largest peacebuilding donors in Sudan, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)¹ has a joint steering committee that oversees the quality of the implementation of the PBF portfolio, and it also serves as a platform for broader peacebuilding discussions. In a crowded field with many donors, such as the newly established Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), and other mechanisms adjacent to peace, a joint platform benefits the recipients of PBF funding, bilateral donors, and the Sudanese government to have joint discussions for improved coordination. Other examples of this include the Malawi Sustainable Development Goals Acceleration Fund (SDG-AF) and the Peacebuilding Fund in Colombia. Such an approach fulfills a gap in funding for transitional peacebuilding activities, while promoting a better risk management. It also encourages comprehensive responses to prevent sectoral silos between humanitarian, peace and security, and development assistance².

Pooled funds are an effective mechanism to facilitate joint action as seen from the examples in Sudan and South Sudan. The South Sudan Multi-Partner Trust Fund Reconciliation, Stabilization, Resilience (RSRTF)³ has created a coordination mechanism between the peacekeeping mission, the UNCT and NGOs to assess and clarify complementarity. The RSRTF also works with local administrators and local governance to reinforce local capacities and to ensure their involvement, but it does not have governmental representation in its steering committee. Today, there are four large area-based programs in the country with flexible approach that builds on local reconciliation efforts. In Sudan, the PBF Secretariat has also worked to encourage the submission of joint proposals between UN agencies and CSOs, which has helped strengthen partnerships between UN agencies and CSOs and enhance mutual learning

Donors also encourage learning that would benefit all partners. In Sudan, the PBF Secretariat works to ensure quality assurance by going to the 'field' and assessing project implementation.

¹ Countries must apply through a specific procedure to be eligible for PBF funding. Sudan became eligible in 2019 and that eligibility will be valid for 5 years. Sudan is also one of the top priority countries for the PBF, with a current portfolio of 42 million USD—implemented by 10 UN agencies, 3 direct-recipient civil society organizations (CSOs), and 20-25 CSOs who receive funding through the UN and governmental agencies.

² United Nations Development Group, 'UNDG Discussion Paper: The Role of UN Pooled Financing Mechanisms to deliver the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda', 2016, <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNDG-Paper-on-Pooled-Financing-for-Agenda-2030.pdf>

³ The RSRTF (South Sudan Multi-Partner Trust Fund Reconciliation, Stabilization, Resilience) was established between 2017-2018 under the auspices of former Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) David Shearer as a method for the UN to be more effective in South Sudan. Two specific drivers led this effort, conflict, and hunger. The RSRTF seeks to address drivers of conflict and thus focuses more on prevention and resilience. This focus reinforced the primacy of political efforts i.e., conflict reduction and making sure that investments were linked to political agreements and community efforts.

The Secretariat also noted that a good practice overall has been to invite partners on field missions. This practice has resulted in increased awareness among project partners of the specific issues being worked on, to identify priorities and the barriers that peacebuilding activities face at the country level. Further, the feedback from unsuccessful proposals has helped the PBF strengthen capacities for the development of future proposals.

Significant efficiency can be gained through joint programming and through collective area-based programs, when encouraged by donors. The work of the RSTF in South Sudan is one example of prioritising the area-based approaches that bring various parts of the UN system together for stronger impact. Through partnerships and collective efforts, it becomes easier to monitor projects, to report, and coordinate to prevent duplication of efforts.

Such action also creates stable conditions for additional investments. However, despite donors being very enthusiastic about joint and nexus approaches, funding mechanisms are not always compatible with them. Across the triple nexus, donors often earmark funding for stabilization rather than financing for peacebuilding and transitional initiatives, resulting in complex funding mechanisms that fail to address the root causes of conflict.

Optimizing coordination at the country level

Coordination mechanisms at the country level have certain challenges, such as their multiplicity that makes it challenging for all of the partners to participate in every meeting. In Sudan, there are a number of ways in which donors coordinate with each other and other stakeholders. Many of such mechanisms are ad-hoc or functioning infrequently, minimizing their value. In the discussion, it was noted that the objective should be to minimize a number of coordination mechanisms and ensure that those that exist are functioning well. As such optimizing and ensuring that there are no unnecessary and duplicative coordination platforms exist is the key. Another lesson learned from this also note that actors want to incorporate peacebuilding issues into the existing platforms, such as gender and peacebuilding, thus avoiding silos.

One way to optimize is to have the UN play a role of a coordinator. In some countries, it is already being done through the briefings by the SRSGs and RCs to the donor community. In Sudan, the Resident Coordinator (RC) is the focal point and the face of the PBF. The RC provides overall leadership, has high level responsibility for selection and implementation of PB Funds, and makes sure that UN priorities align with the country's national priorities. There are multiple challenges in this approach, but the idea is there, and efforts are being made to coordinate the triple nexus under the lead of one coordinator. Additionally, humanitarian assessments performed by humanitarian agencies often include the participation of personnel from peacebuilding agencies. This level of coordination ensures coherence and cohesion by creating better interlinkages and cross-cutting levels of collaboration.

Recommendations

Based on the key takeaways from the discussion, we draw the following recommendations:

- The UN senior leadership should take a coordinating role among peacebuilding donors at the country level. In mission settings, it could be done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). In non-mission settings, RC can take up donor coordination.
- The donor community should encourage optimization of coordination mechanisms, including by prioritising regular systematic and institutionalized models of engagement.
- The coordination group leads should ensure that a gender-responsive peacebuilding component is always a part of the thematic objectives and that civil society is involved and engaged in all stages of coordination.

- The donor community should encourage joint programming, joint learning and joint reflection that includes not only the UN but a broader range of relevant stakeholders.
- The UN at the country level should develop a dedicated peacebuilding strategy in accordance with country priorities (as discussed above) to help donors and Embassies align around a strategic portfolio that promotes integrated, coordinated, and flexible peacebuilding action at the country level over a long period of time.