

# FILLING THE GAP:

How civil society engagement can help  
the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture  
meet its purpose

APRIL 2015



By Camilla Campisi and  
Laura Ribeiro Rodrigues Pereira





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# **FILLING THE GAP:**

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# Organisations involved in this project



A Network of People  
Building Peace

## **The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)**

GPPAC is a member led network of civil society organisations actively engaged in conflict prevention strategies and peacebuilding. The network is of global reach but constituted regionally so that the specific priorities, character and agenda of each region is catered for. An International Steering Group, made up of representatives from each region, determines the network's global priorities and advocacy work. At GPPAC's core is the belief that preventive rather than reactive strategies are best in resolving conflict, and that 'root cause' analysis and civil society inclusion in the formulation as well as implementation of peacebuilding strategies are fundamental to long-lasting conflict prevention.

GPPAC's decision to engage in this review is borne out of its commitment to the practice of inclusive peacebuilding approaches and its capacity to engage with civil society in countries under the mandate of the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture. In 2010, GPPAC also contributed to the Five-Year Review of this Architecture, in collaboration with the World Federalist Movement.



## **The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)**

QUNO convenes informal, open conversations at its headquarters in New York and Geneva, providing a space where UN diplomats, staff and nongovernmental partners can work on difficult issues in a quiet, off-the-record atmosphere outside of the public eye. Since its founding in 1947, QUNO's work has been rooted in the Quaker testimonies of peace, truth, justice, equality and simplicity. QUNO understands peace as more than the absence of war and violence, recognizing the need to look for what seeds of war there may be in all social, political, and economic relationships.

QUNO's decision to engage in this review stems from an appreciation for peacebuilding as a field of practice, and a desire to see the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture realize its potential in the coming years.

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# Acronyms

AGE	Advisory Group of Experts
BINUB	United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi
BNUB	United Nations Office in Burundi
CAR	Central African Republic
CPPF	Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum
CSC	Country Specific Configurations
CSDN	Civil Society Dialogue Network
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
IPI	International Peace Institute
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
MENUB	United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NGOWG	NGO Working Group
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
OC	Organisational Committee
ONUB	United Nations Operation in Burundi
PBA	Peacebuilding Architecture
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
QUNO	Quaker United Nations Office
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UN-NGLS	United Nations Non-governmental Liaison Service
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WGLL	Working Group on Lessons Learned



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ten-year review of the United Nation's Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA), which includes the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), is an important moment to examine how the UN engages with local people in civil society through the PBA and in wider UN peacebuilding efforts. A challenge for the UN's approach to peacebuilding in general is that it is often disconnected from the realities in the countries it is supporting: civil society can bridge this gap. Organised civil society provides the necessary link and local grounding for the PBA in all its various activities, and engaging with local civil society offers a way to make these activities more relevant, strategic and catalytic.

The founding resolutions of the PBA by the General Assembly and the Security Council recognise "the important contribution of civil society and non-governmental organisations, including women's organisations, to peacebuilding efforts."<sup>1</sup> Each resolution also "Encourages the Commission to consult with civil society, non-governmental organisations, including women's organisations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities, as appropriate."<sup>2</sup> However, the findings from research conducted by GPPAC and QUNO suggest that these initial aspirations, despite the existence of specific policy guidelines to support them, have not translated into meaningful and consistent engagement with civil society, including women's organisations.

1 See General Assembly resolution 60/180, *The Peacebuilding Commission*, A/RES/60/180 (30 December 2005), available from [undocs.org/A/RES/60/180](http://undocs.org/A/RES/60/180), and Security Council resolution 1645 (20 December 2005), available at [www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2005.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2005.shtml)

2 *Ibid.*

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the PBA's current engagement with civil society - as a purveyor of local voices - both in New York and in PBC-mandated countries. This includes engagement with local traditional leaders, academics, women's groups, youth groups, disabled groups, internally-displaced people, church groups, international and local non-governmental organisations (INGOs and NGOs), and other forms of relevant non-partisan groups. Extensive interviews were conducted with UN experts, member state diplomats, academics and INGOs in New York as well as in country by local peacebuilders in Burundi, Liberia and the Central African Republic.

This paper found that while most of those consulted for this report who are in countries on the PBC's agenda were not familiar with the work of the Commission, if better mechanisms for consultation were established, they could offer the PBA a greater understanding of the local context and access to local networks helping it to fulfill its mandate and prevent the relapse of conflict. They can also aid the UN's peacebuilding efforts more broadly. In New York, greater transparency by the PBA in its working methods and stronger strategic partnerships with civil society engaged in policy debates - particularly those that are connected with local practitioners - would further add to the capacity and accountability of the UN's peacebuilding activities.

Engaging with civil society in country can bring local knowledge and a strategic dimension to projects funded by the PBF as well as assisting with the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these projects. The challenge is in how to ensure that this engagement is not ad hoc while also not compromising the PBA's flexibility. Supporting and liaising with suitable



multi-stakeholder platforms in country could be a practical way of engaging with a diverse cross section of society while minimising extra layers of administration and bureaucracy. Engaging with civil society both in New York and in country could also help improve the PBA's policies and practices related to gender. By engaging with women on all matters and not only those predetermined to be gender-related, the PBA could be more effective and relevant in countries undergoing transition.

Practical recommendations for the different organs of the PBA are outlined at the end of each chapter. They include, amongst many others, a recommendation for the PBC's Working Group on Lessons Learned to organise an annual session on recent developments in peacebuilding practice, with civil society as key participants; a recommendation for the Chairs of the Country Specific Configurations of the PBC to ensure that National Action Plans for the active participation and leadership of women in peacemaking and political processes (in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325) are part of a country's joint agreement with the PBC; and a recommendation for the PBSO to recruit or appoint a permanent member of staff to serve as a Civil Society Liaison Officer to actively seek and coordinate civil society input into various PBC processes as well as track the inclusion of civil society actors, including women and youth, in these processes.

Further overall recommendations emerging from the research findings are outlined below. They are organized under the most prominent themes that emerged during the analysis and drafting of this report.

Finally, it is important to note that although these recommendations specifically target the PBA, the need to address the issues of transparency, strategic partnerships, convening power and

mutual accountability in UN peacebuilding will likely remain a challenge for the PBC, as well as the UN in general, irrespective of the specific outcomes that emerge from the 2015 UN Peacebuilding Architecture review.

## *Recommendations for the review of the UN's peacebuilding architecture:*

### 1. Transparency

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The Organisational Committee of the UN Peacebuilding Commission should review its working methods with an eye to promoting transparency and accountability in the PBC's day-to-day operations, while not losing sight of the benefits of a flexible member-state mechanism. Clear guidelines and processes for the communication of the PBC's activities, such as publishing a monthly calendar of work and circulating meeting materials in advance to relevant NGOs, should be established in consultation with civil society actors. This process would also offer an opportunity for all stakeholders to engage with the PBC around how it does its work and would foster a greater sense of shared commitment to the PBC's mission. As part of this process, the terms of reference for the Chairs of the Country Specific Configurations should be updated and made public.

### 2. Strategic Partnerships

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The PBA should systematically include civil society in its activities and seek to build strategic partnerships with civil society actors, both in New York and in country, to enhance its policy debates and contribute to strategic planning and assessments. To facilitate this, the Organisational Committee of the UN Peacebuilding Commission should revisit the 2007 Provisional Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society in Meetings of the PBC. This process would offer a key

opportunity for all parts of the PBA to re-engage with civil society in New York and in PBC-mandated countries, and would result in greater transparency and the fostering of trust and mutual collaboration, which would benefit all actors. It would also help to establish clear guidelines for information sharing and communication between the PBA, civil society and other actors outside of the UN.

### 3. Convening Power

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The PBC, through its Organisational Committee, Country Specific Configurations and Working Group on Lessons Learned, should take advantage of its convening power to regularly bring together different stakeholders, beyond national governments, in order to create the space for dialogue, support social cohesion, and bring attention to countries that may be at risk of relapsing into violent conflict. The PBA can work with existing civil society networks in New York and in country to identify a diverse range of participants, including women and youth.

The inclusion of civil society and focus on local knowledge in these types of discussions would be essential to understanding the full context of a country situation and identifying key drivers of violence. The PBC, in its advisory role, could then share the analysis and strategies that emerge in these discussions with the Security Council for countries on its agenda. In country, when Configuration Chairs visit their national counterparts, they should seek to use their convening power to bring together all actors, in particular civil society, including women's groups in meetings with government and the UN in order to create the space for open and inclusive dialogue.

### 4. Mutual Accountability

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In promoting mutual accountability, the PBC should explicitly include a role for civil society and local communities in ensuring that both their governments and the UN fulfil their commitments on peacebuilding priorities and the implementation of activities. This means including civil society in the analysis of national issues, the setting of national priorities and the implementation and monitoring of peacebuilding projects. To facilitate this, the Peacebuilding Fund should require UN agencies in receipt of its funds to consult with civil society actors while developing their project proposals, actively include civil society in the monitoring and evaluation of these projects, and earmark funds for re-granting to local civil society organisations.

# INTRODUCTION

## *“Lack of civil society inclusion is one of the PBC’s greatest failings”*

*Member state diplomat interviewed for this report*

In March 2014, Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota of Brazil, then Chair of the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), told the Security Council that peacebuilding and post-conflict development must not be seen as a “technology of security,” but rather that it has to be “people-centred,” meaning that for efforts to be meaningful they must positively impact the lives of people. The 2015 review of the UN’s Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA), which includes the PBC, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), is an opportunity to examine what a “people-centred” approach to UN peacebuilding looks like. For the PBA to effectively fulfil its mission to assist countries in their recovery from violent conflict and prevent a relapse into violence, it must gauge and measure its success through its impact on people. In practice this requires including the perspectives, strategies and practices of local people in the analysis, design, implementation and evaluation of peacebuilding projects. UN peacebuilding activities beyond the limited scope of the PBA would also benefit from similar inclusive practices.

This paper aims to bridge the gap in understanding between civil society and the UN over what constitutes peacebuilding and suggests practical ways in which civil society engagement can enhance the UN’s peacebuilding approaches in the PBA and beyond. It also considers gender-sensitive peacebuilding as part and parcel of engaging in peace meaningfully; from the rebuilding of social cohesion to the rebuilding of legal institutions, the inclusion and leadership of women in identifying the problems as well

as strategising and implementing solutions is vital to the credibility of UN peacebuilding and the sustainability of the outcome. The report considers the PBA’s efforts to both target women and mainstream gender in its peacebuilding work. The report includes specific recommendations for how the PBA can maximize and harness the potential of civil society expertise so that a more effective UN peacebuilding response can be had overall.

This report is being issued while three major reviews are ongoing, the review of the UN’s Peacebuilding Architecture, the review of UN Peace Operations and the review of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. While these are separate processes, the secretariats and expert panel members of these reviews have acknowledged that there is an added value to exchanging information and coordinating recommendations. In relation to the inclusion of civil society in UN peacebuilding, lessons can be learned from the way in which civil society organisations focused on gender have been successful in making women’s inclusion a priority for UN policy debates as well as getting gender-responsive approaches operationalised by the UN at the country level. The overall challenge is that the UN remains siloed in its approaches to peacebuilding with different departments and agencies engaging in peacebuilding activities without necessarily coordinating together, or giving much importance to the potential role of the PBA. The inclusion of civil society expertise in all three structures is key to ensuring the success of a UN peacebuilding approach that is relevant, strategic and catalytic.

# I. PUTTING PEACEBUILDING ON THE UN AGENDA

*“There is no shared common idea of peacebuilding within the UN”*

*UN staff person interviewed for this report*

While the PBC is only 10 years old, the concept of UN peacebuilding goes back much further. Peacebuilding at the UN was first articulated in 1992’s *An Agenda for Peace*<sup>1</sup> and further elaborated on in the so-called ‘Brahimi Report’ of 2000, named after the Chair of the review panel evaluating the UN’s Peacekeeping Operations.<sup>2</sup> The idea for establishing a body within the UN to specifically address peacebuilding needs began to be formally articulated in the 2004 report of the High-level Panel on *Threats, Challenges and Change*, which notes “a key institutional gap: there is no place in the United Nations system explicitly designed to avoid State collapse and the slide to war or to assist countries in their transition from war to peace.”<sup>3</sup> The idea for the PBC was further

elaborated on in Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s 2005 report *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, which describes a “gaping hole” in the UN, which meant that “no part of the United Nations system effectively addresses the challenge of helping countries with the transition from war to lasting peace.”<sup>4</sup> An inter-governmental advisory body, the PBC, was officially established at the 2005 World Summit for the purposes of filling this gap.

In addition to the PBC, the World Summit also established the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), all three together comprise the UN’s Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA). The original vision for the PBC, as described in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, was to “bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.”<sup>5</sup> It was also meant to provide “recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations.”<sup>6</sup> The PBSO was created as part of the UN Secretariat to support the PBC, and the PBF (which is overseen by the Secretary-General) was

1 See United Nations, General Assembly, *An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping, a report of the Secretary-General*, A/47/277-S/24111 (17 June 1992), available from [undocs.org/A/47/277](http://undocs.org/A/47/277). In paragraph 21 the report defines peacebuilding as preventing the “recurrence of violence among nations and peoples.”

2 See United Nations, General Assembly, *Identical letters dated 21 August 2000 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects*, A/55/305-S/2000/809 (21 August 2000), available from [undocs.org/A/55/305](http://undocs.org/A/55/305). In his identical letters, the Secretary-General included a letter addressed to him from the Chairman of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and his report from the panel. The panel’s report is better known as *The Brahimi Report* and in paragraph 13 it defines peacebuilding as “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war.”

3 See United Nations, General Assembly, *Note by*

*the Secretary-General*, A/59/565 (2 December 2004), paragraph 261, available from [undocs.org/A/59/565](http://undocs.org/A/59/565).

4 See United Nations, General Assembly, *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all: report of the Secretary-General*, A/59/2005 (21 March 2005), paragraph 114, available from [undocs.org/A/59/2005](http://undocs.org/A/59/2005).

5 General Assembly Resolution, *2005 World Summit Outcome*, A/RES/60/1 (24 October 2005), paragraph 98, available from [undocs.org/A/RES/60/1](http://undocs.org/A/RES/60/1).

6 *Ibid.*

created to provide timely and catalytic financing for immediate peacebuilding activities and long-term recovery.

### Member states in favour of a PBC saw it as a way to counterbalance the veto power of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

In the lead up to the World Summit as well as in the process of setting out its founding resolutions in the Security Council and General Assembly, negotiations around the scope and scale of the PBA were contentious.<sup>7</sup> Some member states were against the idea of a PBC. They felt threatened by a more inclusive inter-governmental body that could potentially offer alternative actions and support to the less-inclusive Security Council. Member states in favour of a PBC saw it as a way to counterbalance the veto power of the five permanent members of the Security Council. It was also a way to extend the sphere of influence of countries who contributed to UN peacekeeping operations be it through financial or logistical support, or troops on the ground.<sup>8</sup> The original vision for the PBC as

outlined in the High-Level Panel's report was a much more robust mechanism, and one that included a strong mandate on prevention as well as peacebuilding. However, member states saw this as politically contentious and the Secretary-General's recommendation for the creation of a PBA (one that member states adopted) opted for a mechanism that would only be engaged in post-conflict situations, ultimately limiting the potential of its impact.<sup>9</sup>

In July 2005, around the same period as the establishment of the PBC, civil society organisations led by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), in partnership with the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), organised a Global Conference at the UN's General Assembly, entitled "*From Reaction to Prevention: Civil Society Forging Partnerships to Prevent Violent Conflict and Build Peace.*" The conference was the first informal interactive hearing to be held in the General Assembly on any issue, and over three hundred and fifty representatives from civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were in attendance. Notably, the Global Conference took place in the build-up to the 2005 World Summit when the PBC was created, yet no connection was made between this seminal meeting and the debates about the scope and scale of the Commission.

7 See Security Council Report (2013) *The Security Council and the UN Peacebuilding Commission*, available at [www.securitycouncilreport.org/special-research-report/the-security-council-and-the-un-peacebuilding-commission.php](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/special-research-report/the-security-council-and-the-un-peacebuilding-commission.php); and Hearn, S., Alejandra, K.B., Alischa, K. (2014) *The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture: Past, Present and Future*, available at [cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/un\\_peace\\_architecture.pdf](http://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/un_peace_architecture.pdf); and Salomons, D. (2009) 'On the Far Side of Conflict: the UN Peacebuilding Commission as an Optical Illusion', in *United Nations Reform and Collective Security*, Cambridge University Press.

8 See Hearn, S., Alejandra, K.B., Alischa, K. (2014), in *Supra*, note 9, paragraph 4: "*Parallel attempts to reform the Security Council's permanent membership in 2005 had failed, and the PBC quickly became a safety valve for discontent. The bargains upon the founding of the PBA reflected these tensions. While officially serving as an advisory body to the Security Council and General Assembly, it had no independent authority or*

*decision making power over other bodies. Regardless, some member-states, mostly of the South, perceived the PBC as a potential opportunity to influence the Security Council and to recalibrate inequities in global governance.*"

9 While the PBC was intended to be a more open forum than the Security Council for discussing peace and security issues, it remains in practice more closed to engaging with civil society than the Security Council itself whose members systematically engage with civil society through mechanisms such as the NGO Working Group on the Security Council and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

The conference was the first informal interactive hearing held in the General Assembly on any issue and over three hundred and fifty civil society and non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives were in attendance.

One of the organisers for the conference, who was interviewed for this report, described how the NGOs were ‘tactically blind’ in the two years leading up to the global conference. Even though some of the NGOs were aware that the PBC was being negotiated behind closed doors, the lack of official civil society involvement in the process meant that none of the hundreds of civil society representatives who were in New York for the Global Conference and who specialise in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, contributed to the founding vision of the Commission. While the PBA has since issued guidelines and taken various approaches to engage with civil society, several international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) interviewed for this report trace the roots for the current lack of meaningful engagement between civil society and the PBA to the events that took place in 2005, when even those in regular contact with UN staff working on the creation of a prevention agenda were ‘blindsided’ by the emergence of the PBC.

Given the shaky foundations of the PBA, including its relationship with civil society, and the ongoing acknowledgement by experts both inside and outside the UN that the PBC has yet to live up to its full potential, a key approach for the PBA 2015 review is to go back to the original vision of the PBA in order to find a way forward. Much has also evolved in UN peacebuilding since the creation of the PBA and it has been acknowledged in the terms of reference for the

review that the PBA needs to be viewed in relation to the entire UN system.<sup>10</sup>

Some of the key developments in UN peacebuilding since 2005 include:

- The expansion of multidimensional peacekeeping<sup>11</sup> and special political missions,<sup>12</sup> including several UN peacekeeping missions with peacebuilding specific mandates. Top UN leadership in country, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, as well as Resident Coordinators are also more often involved in supporting national peacebuilding processes.
- The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2005 and UN Security Council Resolution 2122 in 2013, which put in place a roadmap for a more systematic implementation of UNSCR 1325.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See United Nations, General Assembly, *Letter dated 15 December 2014 from the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General*, A/69/674-S/2014/911 (17 December 2014), available from [undocs.org/A/69/674](http://undocs.org/A/69/674).

<sup>11</sup> See United Nations Peacekeeping Operations website: “*Today’s multidimensional peacekeeping operations are called upon not only to maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support the organisation of elections, protect and promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law.*” Available at [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/peacekeeping.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/peacekeeping.shtml)

<sup>12</sup> See United Nations Department of Political Affairs website: “*DPA-led field operations are headed by senior representatives of the Secretary-General and provide a forward platform for preventive diplomacy and other activities across a range of disciplines, to help prevent and resolve conflict or to build lasting peace in nations emerging from civil wars.*” Available at [www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/about/field\\_operations](http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/about/field_operations)

<sup>13</sup> The measures proposed in SCR 2122 include: the development and deployment of technical expertise for peacekeeping missions and UN mediation teams supporting peace talks; improved access to timely information and analysis on the impact of conflict on women; strengthened commitments to consult as well



PHOTO: GPPAC



*Civil society at the UN General Assembly as part of the Global Conference, 2005.*

- The establishment of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which reverted back into the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support in 2014, focusing on issues related to peacebuilding and prevention.<sup>14</sup>
- The Joint UNDP-Department of Political Affairs Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention and its Peace and Development Advisors, who are active in many countries around the world and play a key role in supporting the UN's peacebuilding and prevention efforts by providing a local perspective and connecting with local civil society.
- The increased use of Gender Advisers by UN agencies, most notably UNDP.
- The increased role of regional and sub-regional organisations, particularly in Africa, as key interlocutors for the UN in building and sustaining peace, encouraging national ownership and developing regional action

as include women directly in peace talks.

14 Many civil society actors that had engaged in the work of the BCPR saw its resumption into the parent policy unit within UNDP as a reversal of institutional commitment towards inclusive peacebuilding and conflict prevention on the part of UNDP.

plans for implementing UNSCR 1325.

Interestingly, the research for this report found that what the UN defines as peacebuilding and the kinds of activities this involves are different from those of local civil society, especially those who consider themselves peacebuilders. For example, the UN will focus on building legal infrastructures in the pursuit of rule of law while a local mediator will work on bringing survivors and perpetrators together in the pursuit of healing. This question of how peacebuilding is defined and operationalised inside and outside of the UN is a key area where civil society engagement can lead to improved practices and greater impact on the ground.

## 1. Civil society engagement in UN policy debates

Article 71 of the UN Charter gives NGOs the right to consult with the UN. It states: “the Economic and Social Council may take suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organisations which are concerned with matters within its competence.” The fact that this article specifically refers to NGO consultation with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) means that technically, NGOs do not have the same status with other UN inter-governmental bodies such as the Security Council. Consequently, NGO engagement on peace and security issues has been historically less formal and systematic.

While the Charter for the UN allows for consultation with NGOs, what has transpired in practice, particularly over the past decade, has varied greatly. Civil society engagement with the UN also varies between consultations in New York and in country. In addition - as observed by member states, UN staff and civil society actors consulted for this report - the overall space for civil society engagement with the UN has shrunk over the past decade.

In addition - as observed by member states, UN staff and civil society actors consulted for this report - the overall space for civil society engagement with the UN has shrunk over the past decade.

Starting in the 1990s, there were a series of world conferences in the areas of human rights, development and the environment that focused international attention on important issues and included key roles for civil society in helping the UN to set its global agenda. This time is referenced by many as a very positive era for the coordination and collaboration between civil society and the UN. During this period, civil society, are credited with helping to bring about the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997 and the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 1998.

However, by 2004 the use of global conferences as a way to help shape the UN's policy agenda declined and was ultimately replaced by the use of High-Level Panels, which are seen as a much more closed process than the global conferences, making it difficult for civil society to engage meaningfully. The use of High-Level Panels continues today with the appointment of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE), a High-Level Panel, for the review of the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture in 2015.

## 2. The UN's Peacebuilding Architecture

While the 2015 review of the PBA will look at peacebuilding in the wider UN system, its main focus will be the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture (PBC, PBSO, and PBF). It is therefore useful to understand the purpose and scope of the various

parts of the PBA before looking more closely at how civil society engages with the Architecture in its peacebuilding work.

### The Peacebuilding Commission

The PBC is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports the UN's peace consolidation efforts in countries emerging from conflict. It is a political and non-operational body that helps focus the attention and resources of the international community on post-conflict countries in the immediate aftermath of conflict, enabling them to make the transition to sustainable peace and development. Its engagement in each individual country is by nature transitory and context-specific.

The PBC's governing body, the Organisational Committee (OC), is composed of 31 Member States,<sup>15</sup> with renewable terms every two years, and sets the agenda for the Commission's work (its calendar and activities). Countries currently on the PBC's agenda are: Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, the Central African Republic (CAR), Liberia and Guinea. The elected Ambassador Chair of the OC changes each year, rotating through the various UN geographical regions. The current Chair of the OC is Sweden. A Vice-Chair is also appointed annually.

The bulk of the PBC's work is done through the Country Specific Configurations (CSCs), which are composed of a constellation of the members of the OC as well as other concerned states, often regional neighbours. CSCs are chaired

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15 Seven member states are from the Security Council, including the five permanent members, seven are elected from ECOSOC, and seven are elected from the General Assembly. Of these, five are from the top financial contributors to the UN, five are from the top troop contributors to UN peace operations. Some regional governmental organisations are also represented such as the EU and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, as are the IFM and the World Bank.

by an Ambassador of a participating country, often the Permanent Representative to the UN of that country. With the support of the PBSO, the Chairs of the CSCs oversee the development of an instrument of engagement between the government of the country in question and the PBC - this is essentially a document that highlights the priority areas for peacebuilding in that country. The role of the CSC is to ensure that the mutual commitments are met, and in addition to organising briefings in New York, the Chair often travels to the mandated country to follow up and engage with the national government. The current Chairs for the countries on the PBC's agenda are: Switzerland (Burundi), Canada (Sierra Leone), Luxembourg (Guinea), Brazil (Guinea-Bissau), Sweden (Liberia), and Morocco (CAR). CSCs also issue reviews of the instruments of engagement and Chairs are asked to brief the Security Council on countries on its agenda in open meetings, often before a mission mandate renewal or during an emergency response to a crisis. CSC Chairs do not participate in the Security Council's closed consultations.

### The Working Group on Lessons Learned

The Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) distils lessons from the UN's national and international experiences in post-conflict engagements, with the aim of developing "forward-looking lessons and recommendations for post-conflict strategies and implementations."<sup>16</sup> The current Chair of the WGLL is Japan.

### The Peacebuilding Support Office

The PBSO was established to assist and support the PBC with strategic advice and policy guidance, administer the PBF and coordinate

peacebuilding efforts between UN agencies. The PBSO also coordinates the sharing of information between the CSCs and the UN's peacekeeping, humanitarian, development, political and mediation departments. The PBSO has three branches: Peacebuilding Commission Support; Policy, Planning and Application; and Financing for Peacebuilding. The PBSO is headed by an Assistant Secretary-General, currently Oscar Fernandez-Taranco of Argentina.

### The Peacebuilding Fund

Following a request from the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Secretary-General established a Peacebuilding Fund for post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives in October 2006. The PBF is a fund of the Secretary-General but is managed by the PBSO. The PBF addresses immediate needs in countries emerging from conflict at a time when sufficient resources are not available from other funding mechanisms. It supports interventions of direct and immediate relevance to the peacebuilding process and addresses critical gaps in that process. The PBF focuses on delivering services in the very early stages of a peacebuilding process, before donor conferences are organised and funding mechanisms such as country-specific multi-donor trust funds have been set up. As of February 2014, the PBF had disbursed \$443.7million USD to 21 UN entities working in the 6 PBC-mandated countries and 23 others.<sup>17</sup> The six countries on the PBC agenda have received about 60% of the overall funds.

<sup>16</sup> See United Nations Peacebuilding Commission website on its Working Group for Lessons Learned, available at [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/sm\\_lessonslearned.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/sm_lessonslearned.shtml)

<sup>17</sup> PBSO (2014) *Independent Thematic Review on Gender for the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, March 2014*.

## II. PERSPECTIVES FROM PBC-MANDATED COUNTRIES

*“Peacebuilding is everybody’s business.”*

*Member state diplomat interviewed for this report*

Although the PBA is a New York based body, the work it is ultimately tasked to support, goes on in the countries on its agenda, and this is where the impact of its actions can be measured. The six countries currently on the PBC’s agenda are Burundi, Sierra Leone, the CAR, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Guinea. A typical criticism of the PBA is that none of these countries have yet to ‘graduate’ from the PBC. In fact, two countries under the PBC’s care have relapsed into conflict in 2012, Guinea-Bissau and the CAR. At the same time, no new country has joined the PBC’s agenda since Guinea in 2011. Countries join the PBC by way of self-selection, often on the advice of the UN Secretary-General or the Security Council. In order to delve deeper into how the PBA engages with countries on its agenda, and in particular the special role that local civil society has played and the value added they can bring, this report carried out research with focus groups and key-informant interviews in three of the six countries on the PBC’s agenda: Burundi, CAR and Liberia.<sup>18</sup>

### 1. Burundi

Burundi, along with Sierra Leone, was one of the first countries to come under the PBC’s mandate in 2006, following a referral by the Security Council. Emerging from decades of conflict with the signing of the Arusha peace agreement in 2000, it was initially hoped that the PBC would marshal much needed resources for Burundi and

support the country’s transition to stability in several peacebuilding areas identified jointly by the government and the PBC. These included; good governance, transitional justice, security sector reform and rule of law, human rights and impunity, and land reform and socioeconomic recovery. Burundi remains on the agenda of the Security Council but has seen a shift in the kind of presence the UN maintains on the ground, from a peacekeeping mission (ONUB) to an integrated peacebuilding office (BINUB), to a further scaled-down UN office (BNUB) and most recently in January 2015, to an electoral observer mission (MENUM).

The relationship between the Burundian government and the UN has been charged at times. The PBC however, is credited with marshaling significant resources and international attention to the country, particularly thanks to the work of Ambassador Paul Seger of Switzerland as the Chair of the Burundi CSC. Prior to Switzerland, Norway and Sweden held the chairmanship of the Burundi configuration. Overall, Burundi is often cited as an example where the PBC has been able to play its role as a ‘critical friend’ of a national government, offering support and encouragement publically, while also being forthright with the national leadership about the challenges they face and holding them to account privately. The upcoming national elections in the summer of 2015 risk being a flashpoint for violence in the country and will test the UN and PBC’s ability to prevent violent conflict in one of the longest-standing countries on its agenda. Also, Ambassador Seger will be leaving his post in New York in the summer of

<sup>18</sup> For detailed background summaries on the UN and the PBC’s involvement in these country cases see Security Council Report (2013), in *Supra*, note 9.

2015 but Switzerland will continue to Chair the Burundi CSC.

Civil society actors consulted in this research, who had experience in engaging with the PBC, said that in light of this critical period it would have been preferable for Ambassador Seger's chairmanship to have been extended beyond the elections, and importantly, they could have brought this recommendation to his attention, or the attention of the PBSO in New York, had there been proper mechanisms established for their engagement with the PBA.

That being said, the majority of Burundian civil society representatives consulted during this research were largely unfamiliar with the work of the PBA. While the PBC's mission in Burundi is to promote peacebuilding, several participants noted that the transitional process is incomplete, in large part due to a lack of regular monitoring and feedback from a diversity of civil society actors on the progress that peacebuilding efforts have made in the country. There was a perceived failure of the UN to check-in with people and see the impact that peacebuilding activities have had on their lives. The main obstacles to stability and peace in Burundi identified by those interviewed for this report were the gaps in demobilisation and weak rule of law and good governance, particularly related to the access and management of land and the accountability of political parties, both of which are themes high on the agenda of the PBC and in its initial statement of mutual commitment with the government.

One UN expert involved in the early days of the Burundi CSC who was interviewed for this report noted that civil society from the country were quite engaged in the initial strategies and discussions with the PBC, even coming to New York as part of an official government delegation. In 2006, during the development of peacebuilding priorities for Burundi, the local organisation



**In Burundi**, ten focus group discussions with 93 participants, 33 of whom women, and 30 key-informant interviews were conducted in 3 of the country's 17 provinces, including those most affected by the conflict: the three provinces covered were Bujumbura Mairie, Cibitoke and Mwaro.

**Focus groups and interviews** were attended by representatives from civil society organisations, trade unions, local government, national government bodies, student groups, teachers and academics.

**Civil society representatives** included members of the nationwide forum for civil society (FORSC), National Federation of Non-state actors involved in the health sector (FENAS), election monitoring coalitions (COSOME) and faith-based groups such as the Catholic, Protestant churches and Muslims.

**From government** they included officials from the National Commission for Aid Coordination (CNCA), the Secretariat of Economic and Social Reforms (REFES), Security Sector Development Programme (DSS), National Electoral Commission (CENI) of 2005 elections, political leaders, former military generals, combatants and police commanders, mayors and municipal civil servants.



Biraturaba<sup>19</sup> organised several information sessions and consultation workshops with civil society, and with the support of GPPAC and its New York-based member, the World Federalist Movement, they participated in three CSC meetings on Burundi in October, November and December of that year. It was through Biraturaba's advocacy in New York that the participation of civil society in the Joint Steering Committee was endorsed as part of the PBC's structure in country. Over recent years, this kind of engagement with Burundian civil society has not been sustained, in part due to a lack of funding for NGOs to maintain or initiate this kind of activity.

After the drafting of this report, the security situation in Burundi deteriorated significantly. Beginning in mid-April 2015, mass demonstrations took place in Bujumbura protesting the current president's intention to run for a third term in the upcoming elections. Violence broke out with protestors clashing with police and in a general environment of fear and intimidation, including the destruction of several radio stations, tens of thousands of people fled to neighbouring countries. The lack of credible information on the ground exacerbated local fears and at the time of writing, over 105,000 people had fled the country - roughly one percent of Burundi's population. An attempted coup d'etat in mid-May led to further violence and instability. Since the political crisis began, the PBC held several emergency sessions on Burundi and the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region has been engaged in promoting dialogue between the ruling and opposition parties. The crisis proved very challenging for civil society in Burundi by further polarising opinions, and while some civil society actors were targeted following the protests, others were able to work on de-

escalating tensions at the community level. Through various networks and partnerships local civil society attempted to share their policy recommendations for reconciliation and a peaceful way forward with key actors at both national and international levels. At the time of printing, the prospects of a peaceful resolution to the crisis as well as the extent to which civil society voices have been heard and heeded remain uncertain.

## 2. Central African Republic

The CAR was the fourth country to be added to the agenda of the PBC when it joined in 2008. The early priority peacebuilding areas that were identified included security-sector reform, economic development, and good governance and rule of law. Since late 2012, UN peacebuilding in CAR has been significantly challenged by the renewed violence and fighting between government troops, anti-government militias and local self-defence forces, causing widespread displacement and a major humanitarian crisis. The outbreak of conflict in CAR coincided with a period of over a year and a half that there was no official Chair of the CAR CSC, following the resignation of the Belgian Ambassador Jan Grauls in June 2012.

During his time as Chair, Ambassador Grauls worked to bring attention and resources to a country that many donors had neglected. Since January 2014, Ambassador Mohammed Loulichki of Morocco has been the chair of the CAR CSC. The UN presence in country during the most recent conflict shifted dramatically from an integrated peacebuilding office (BINUCA) to a UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSCA), which was authorized by the Security Council in April 2014. Currently the situation in CAR is characterized as unstable and in general the international response is viewed as having been one of hard security

<sup>19</sup> See Biraturaba's website for more information about their work, available at [biraturaba.org/](http://biraturaba.org/)



over peacebuilding and prevention. The lack of an official Chair during 2013 as the CAR deteriorated into widespread violence severely undermined the PBC's ability to engage. It also meant that the PBC, and peacebuilding approaches in general, became side-lined in the UN's overall response in the CAR.

Participants in CAR were not aware of the PBC as a UN body *per se*. However, they were aware that the UN is attempting to restore peace in the country as most had been consulted at one point or another by a UN staff member seeking information about their needs or their opinions, with the exception of academics and a few rural-based organisations. All participants felt strongly about the role that local civil society can play in advising the UN and other INGOs on how to read the local context, plan meaningful interventions, prioritize them, and even implement them – although most acknowledged the need to enhance their own capacity in case of the latter.

Overall, participants felt that the UN was not currently up to the task of building peace in the CAR. They felt that there are not enough peacekeeping troops on the ground and public opinion about the UN's capacity to achieve peace is low. The role of sub-regional organisations was also rarely mentioned with the exception that regional troops were assumed to better understand local culture and therefore make better decisions. They also felt that government authority is very weak and practically non-existent outside of Bangui. The adequacy of the UN's exclusive partnership with the government is therefore questioned by local people.

Since the drafting of this report, there have been some important developments in the CAR. Of particular relevance is the weeklong dialogue and negotiation process that concluded on 11 May 2015 – the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation. The Forum brought together



**Research in the CAR** was conducted through six focus groups with 135 participants, 38 of whom women, and seven key-informant interviews were conducted in three of the country's 14 'prefectures:' Bangui and Lobaye. A relatively low number of focus group discussions could be carried out due to the country's ongoing security situation making access to areas outside of Bangui very difficult. This was somewhat counter balanced by the inclusion of participants (mostly women) from ten different prefectures in focus groups held in Bangui, and the inclusion of residents from Bangui's 5th neighborhood and the mayor of Zemio, areas which experienced the highest levels of violence and internal displacement in the country.

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**Focus groups and interviews** were conducted with members of civil society, government officials, international NGOs and UN staff.

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**Civil society participants included** members of the national human rights network, the lawyers association, journalists, academia and young people from the National Youth Council.

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**Participants from the international community** included staff at MINUSCA and the IOM.

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**From government**, the local mayor of Zemio in the Haut-Mbomou prefecture was interviewed.

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nearly 700 leaders from all areas of society; political parties, armed groups, the private sector and civil society, including women's groups, youth groups, traditional chiefs, and religious groups. Together they defined a collective vision for the country. This included: a new programme to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate combatants from all sides, including child soldiers; a new timeline for national elections; the building of more inclusive economic institutions, particularly in the mining and agricultural sectors; and the building of new structures for justice and reconciliation at both national and local levels. The extent to which these ambitions can be concretized remains uncertain. The end of the Forum was marred by protests against the house arrest of combatants who are set to face criminal trials, and funds for the DDR initiatives are not entirely available,<sup>20</sup> but the fact that it relied heavily on consultations with civil society and local communities, especially those most affected by the conflict, clearly marks the desire of Central Africans to build a more peaceful and inclusive society in the future. It also bodes well for the relevance and level of local ownership of the Forum's outcomes going forward.

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20 See Brookings Institute, *Africa in Focus*, 'Five takeaways from the Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation in the Central African Republic,' 15 May 2015, available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/africa-in-focus/posts/2015/05/15-bangui-forum-central-african-republic-copley-sy>

### 3. Liberia

For over a decade, Liberia has been on a steady course towards peace. The implementation of the 2003 Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, with the support of a robust UN peacekeeping mission, is viewed as successful and in 2010 Liberia requested to be put on the PBC's agenda with a focus on the peacebuilding priority areas of rule of law, security sector reform and national reconciliation. The intersection of gender with national reconciliation processes in Liberia is seen as particularly meaningful. Liberia joined the PBC's agenda shortly after the five-year review of the PBC. At the time, there was concerted energy and momentum around Liberia as a country on the PBC's agenda for several reasons: the United States was quite engaged, which was the first time one of the Permanent Members of the Security Council had been so dedicated to participating fully in the work of a CSC; the CSC Chair, the Jordanian Permanent Representative to the UN, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini, was quite involved and keen to visit Liberia often; and given the fact that Liberia joined just after the 2010 review, it was seen as a possible 'test case' for the recommendations and ideas that had just emerged, in particular that of the PBC operating with a 'lighter' footprint.

Prince Zeid stepped down as Chair in 2012 and was succeeded by Ambassador Staffan Tillander of Sweden. This was seen as a positive shift because of Sweden's deep engagement with Liberia as a donor. The current Chair is Ambassador Olof Skoog of Sweden, who is currently also the chair of the PBC OC. One innovative trend in recent years is the regional approach that has been taken by the four PBC countries in West Africa – particularly Sierra Leone and Liberia, with configuration chairs traveling to each other's countries of concern and organising joint meetings in New York. More

recently, the Ebola crisis has made it incredibly challenging for the PBC to engage in Liberia, although the PBC was one of the first UN bodies in New York to draw attention to the health crisis in West Africa through a regional approach. It is notable that Liberia was the first country on the PBC's agenda with an active UN peacekeeping mission (UNMIL) and the PBC is meant to play a role in its drawdown and transition to a political mission which is expected to take place in 2016.

Only three out of the 51 participants in the research were aware of the work of the PBA, one had been invited to consultations by Liberia's Peacebuilding Office, while the other two had merely seen cars marked with the label of 'Peacebuilding Fund' driving around Monrovia. The research also found that support for civil society at the local level and its inclusion in national reconciliation processes, including women's perspectives, are still wanting.

Participants had two main concerns with regards to the UN's peacebuilding structures in the country. First, they identified the gradual drawdown of support for important peace initiatives such as the Peace Committees,<sup>21</sup> resulting in an increasingly difficult environment for peacebuilders to operate in – as the Chairman of Bomi County Peace Committee explains:

*“There are numerous challenges that continue to hinder the work of the peace committee in this country. The UN started the process and they are no longer supporting us. The government of Liberia has become very insensitive to this initiative and the committee is nearly falling apart. We have not been very active over the past two years and there are lots of tensions building up in the county. We want to work,*

<sup>21</sup> County Peace Committees are a local initiative supported by the PBF as part of its Rule of Law portfolio.



**Research in Liberia** was conducted through nine focus group discussions with 51 participants, 25 of whom women, and four key-informant interviews were conducted in three of the country's 15 counties: Grand Bassa, Bomi and Monrovia.

**The discussions and interviews** included members of Peace Committees and national NGOs representing the interests of women, youth, children, the disabled, the environment and ex-combatants.

*but due to the lack of support, people are losing interest.”<sup>22</sup>*

Second, the timeline for the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers is seen as too soon. Most participants expressed concern over the military drawdown of UNMIL in June 2016.<sup>23</sup> People feel anxious about the withdrawal as crime rates are rising and there is a general mistrust in the capacity of the Liberian military to intervene effectively should problems arise.

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<sup>22</sup> Mr. Yousif S. Sheriff, Chairman of Bomi County Peace Committee, Tubmanburg, Bomi County, during interview on 19 December 2014.

<sup>23</sup> See Security Council resolution 2190, S/RES/2190 (15 December 2014), available from [www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2014.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2014.shtml)

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## The importance of communication and information sharing

The research in the CAR showed that as well as there being weak information flows at the level of the UN in New York and between the UN's in country presence and New York, MINUSCA itself was challenged by an inability to collect, analyse, record and retrieve data. Youth participants involved in the research spoke about being approached by different MINUSCA staff on numerous occasions and being asked the same questions within the space of a few weeks. They felt that this at best reflected a high turnover of staff and an inability to retain institutional knowledge, and at worse, was symptomatic of the lack of genuine intent or capacity on the part of the UN to take their issues seriously. Coupled with there being no feedback mechanisms to indicate whether public opinions were taken into account, UN consultations ended up eroding public confidence in the institution as a whole.

In relation to gender in the PBC's engagement with the CAR, only one of the 123 participants was aware of UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security, he had heard it mentioned on the radio once, and none of the participants had heard of a National Action Plan to ensure women's participation in local and national dialogue, negotiations or peacebuilding activities. However, 56 participants mentioned the Constitutional requirement for women to make up 30% of all persons in public office, with two commenting that this quota was not yet met.

One participant mentioned the general participation of women in the national Joint Steering Committee for peacebuilding. This is a compelling illustration of the missing linkages between the implementation of UNSCR 1325 at country level and existing national efforts to enhance women's participation.

Although women said they had continued to be consulted as part of the UN's outreach efforts, capacity-building efforts encouraging their participation in peace processes did not always use the most suitable means of communication: *"We don't have knowledge of international ideas on the role of women or other legislation to ensure that women are represented in peacebuilding activities. It seems too complicated and abstract for us, you have to know that most of us are uneducated, we are doing what we are doing because we are mothers and wives we want our children to have a better future, to live in peace with Christians and all the population."*<sup>24</sup>

One of the most positive characteristics of the CAR at the moment, as noted during this research, is the willingness of civil society to be vocal and engage in matters concerning their immediate wellbeing as well as the longer-term wellbeing of their country. The Youth Council is one such example.<sup>25</sup> It was originally set up by the government but currently runs as a semi-independent body enjoying the sustained participation of hundreds of youth from a wide spectrum of society - their members reportedly come from diverse socio-economic, geographical and religious backgrounds. As the actions and suggestions expressed by young people in this research show, they can also be entrepreneurial. A further example of this is their ability to maximize gains from an otherwise ineffectual exercise. During a recent consultation with MINUSCA staff, the youth involved tried to use MINUSCA as an intermediary between themselves and their government. They proposed activities and suggestions directed at the government, whom they understood to be the primary partner of the UN and over whom they ordinarily have little influence.

<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Antoinette Megouma, resident of the 3<sup>rd</sup> district, Bangui, during interview on 9 January 2015.

<sup>25</sup> As noted by the head of the Africa bureau of UNDP after a visit to the country in early 2015: *"The solution is youth: this country belongs to you, it is you who will have to build this nation,"* in United Nations News Center, 'Ending exclusion, empowering youth key to bridging social divide in Central African Republic-UN,' 11 February 2015, available at [www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50059#.VQb5SbPF-Lc](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50059#.VQb5SbPF-Lc)

## 4. Why engage with civil society in country: local knowledge

A challenge for the UN's approach to peacebuilding in general is that it is often disconnected from the realities in the countries it supports: civil society can bridge this gap. Organised civil society provides the necessary link and local grounding for the PBA in all its various activities, and engaging with local civil society offers a way to make these activities more relevant, strategic and catalytic. If local knowledge is seen as crucial to designing and implementing context-specific peacebuilding projects, then ensuring the vitality and independence of this knowledge is a fundamental first step. As one member state representative interviewed for this report said: *"Member states have our own limitations, civil society can speak freely."*

An empowered and robust local civil society plays an essential role in overcoming the hurdles of transition and establishing sustainable structures for democracy. They are best placed to pressure governments for change and do so in a manner that is locally owned, which can be more effective and transparent than methods used by external actors. Current discourse on post-conflict and fragile states supports this argument: as state-society relations form a key function of a stable democracy, an active civil society is central to forging and strengthening that relationship.<sup>26</sup> Local civil society is therefore a fundamental constituent in the transition out of conflict and fragility.

26 See European Center for Development and Policy Management (2012), 'Strengthening civil society? Reflections on international engagement in fragile states,' Discussion Paper No. 135, available at [ecdpm.org/publications/strengthening-civil-society-reflections-international-engagement-fragile-states/](http://ecdpm.org/publications/strengthening-civil-society-reflections-international-engagement-fragile-states/)

Local civil society in the CAR, Burundi and Liberia is, broadly speaking, highly knowledgeable and well versed on subjects relating to their national affairs. Civil society groups are also well networked but their networks tend to be centralized and sector-based with limited scope for cross-sectorial learning. Their capacities vary greatly based on whether they are a registered NGO, a religious group, an academic institution or a local association. However, participants from all civil society backgrounds acknowledged the need to better elaborate their knowledge to external actors and build their capacities to harness their full potential – as one participant from the Lobaye prefecture in the CAR pointed out:

*"Our community would like to have a strong civil society. All the main organisations are based in Bangui and it seems that they are more credible than us because they have good training and better access to funds and interactions with international organisations and NGOs. We also want to have more training and as local people we are better placed to bring reconciliation in our community. We are better placed to give the international organisations the information they need to prevent conflict in our region and in our country."<sup>27</sup>*

Civil society actors in this research were not only concerned with the diversity of their collective representation but also with the quality of the consultation. In the CAR for example, the UN's apparent willingness to reach out to civil society was welcomed but so far its limits have been outweighed by its benefits. The high-turnover of UN staff in country means that the same questions are often asked repeatedly of civil society because institutional memory and local connections and relationships are not maintained. In addition, the tendency to

27 Mr. Habib Soussou, 33 years old, community leader and resident of Boda, Lobaye prefecture, during interview on 13 January 2015.



pigeon-hole social groups as special-interest groups rather than confer with them as a matter of course on all questions has, at best, resulted in missed opportunities and at worse, the exacerbation of social tensions and conflict. For example, in April 2014, the UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the CAR relocated some 1,400 Muslims from the capital Bangui to Bossangoa on the border with Chad. This, in the view of the research participants, intensified the revival of an old secessionist discourse vying for the border region to become predominantly Muslim and independent from the rest of the country. Although relocation was voluntary, participants who belong to the National Youth Council believed the UN should have considered a wider range of opinions prior to the relocation. The young participants reported a difference in opinion between themselves and their elders. Had they been consulted they would have advised the UN to consider other safe haven options, helping to neutralize tensions rather than exacerbate them.

Furthermore, had they known about the ongoing consultations with the community at risk in Bangui ahead of time, the youth participants said they could have volunteered information to the IOM to give them a broader perspective. As young people constitute over 60% of the population<sup>28</sup> it would be prudent to consult them, if only to be aware of social divergences and fractures. Greater coordination and transparency in UN consultations with communities and civil society would therefore help the UN better understand local social dynamics and uphold its 'do no harm' principle.

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28 According to IndexMundi, an organisation specialising in country profiling, by the end of 2014, 60.7% of the Central African Republic's population was under 24 years old, data available at [www.indexmundi.com/central\\_african\\_republic/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/central_african_republic/demographics_profile.html)

Most research participants, be they small peacebuilding organisations, academics or social groups, said they have no ambition to grow and replicate the models of national or international NGOs. What makes them so effective is precisely their sense of locality – namely the expert knowledge acquired from long-term engagement in a community. This level of history and commitment, in turn, nurtures the perception that the activities they engage in are locally owned.

These kinds of perspectives are usually missing from both strategic planning in country as well as policy debates in New York on peacebuilding, which means the UN is often missing the mark when it comes to identifying the root causes of a conflict and planning strategies and approaches that can prevent a relapse into violence. Ensuring a more diverse representation from civil society is key to making the UN's peacebuilding approaches more effective overall.

In this way, the research showed that there are two types of knowledge that civil society can offer the UN. One is their expert local information for the purposes of obtaining more acute analysis, better planning and implementation, and more realistic evaluations of peacebuilding projects. The other is their praxis – their way of *doing* peacebuilding. Civil society has strategies, practices and activities that they consider important to the building of peace in their country that fall outside of what the UN currently considers in its portfolio of peacebuilding activities. The first kind of knowledge can be shared with the UN through mechanisms for engagement; the challenge is how to devise a mechanism that is efficient yet effective, where the information is timely, precise and reliable. In the case of the latter, the UN would need to accept the challenge of learning 'from the bottom up' and bring these localized forms of peacebuilding into the fold by acknowledging their contribution to bringing about peaceful communities and supporting them.

## Gender and national peacebuilding efforts

Following the electoral unrest in Liberia in 2011, Nobel Peace Laureate, Ms. Leymah Gbowee,<sup>29</sup> was tasked with leading a national agenda for healing and reconciliation.<sup>30</sup> Together with the Minister of Internal Affairs, a coordinating mechanism was established to pursue this work. The way in which the coordinating mechanism will achieve its objectives is outlined in a Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation,<sup>31</sup> which largely supports the government's vision outlined in the 2012 'Liberia Vision 2030' document.<sup>32</sup> Under Ms. Gbowee's stewardship the vision and roadmap seemed to reflect the priorities of most Liberians and the priorities outlined in the documents resonated with those stated in the course of this research. In addition, a woman leading a national peace process, one of healing and reconciliation, is a welcome practical application of SCR 1325.

However, in October 2012, Ms. Gbowee resigned from this leadership position in protest against government corruption.<sup>33</sup> The show of courage in her stance was well received by the participants in this research, who cited her as one of their national role models in the struggle for women's rights.<sup>34</sup> Most participants were also aware of international norms on Women Peace and Security thanks to a policy book published by the Liberian government. However, they also noted that while women were aware of their rights conceptually, they still lacked the legal mechanisms to actively challenge social and legal obstacles to the realization of their rights.

Despite having played a prominent role in bringing peace to the country, Liberian women stated that they continue to struggle against local attitudes, as the Director of Bassa Women Development Association explains:

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29 She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, alongside her compatriots Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tawakkul Karman, for their "non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work." In their award-giving statement, the Norwegian Nobel Committee also acknowledged the importance of women's participation in political processes overall; "We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society." For more information see NobelPrize.org, at [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2011/press.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2011/press.html)

30 As part of her leadership of this initiative, on 7 March 2012, Ms. Gbowee briefed the Liberia configuration on the PBC's potential role as a liaison between the UN, funders and the Liberian government, highlighting the convening power of the PBC and its potential. She said: "If the UN [meaning the PBC] can 'nudge' certain actors and institutions, this could facilitate the process immensely and push institutions to act." Detailed notes on this session of the Liberia configuration can be found on the BetterPeace.org website at [www.betterpeace.org/node/2035](http://www.betterpeace.org/node/2035)

31 See United Nations Country Team Liberia, *A Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding, and Reconciliation June 2012-July 2030*, available at [www.lern.usshahidi.com/media/uploads/page/3/Reconciliation%20Roadmap%20Draft%203-W.pdf](http://www.lern.usshahidi.com/media/uploads/page/3/Reconciliation%20Roadmap%20Draft%203-W.pdf)

32 See Government of Liberia, *Liberia National Vision, Draft Report*, 25 November 2012, available at [http://cdcliberia.org/Vision\\_2030\\_draft.pdf](http://cdcliberia.org/Vision_2030_draft.pdf). This document acknowledges Liberia as a "divided society" and attempts a root cause analysis of the problem and a conceptual way forward.

33 See British Broadcasting Corporation, 'Liberia laureate Gbowee chides Sirleaf on corruption,' 8 October 2012, available at [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19876111](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19876111)

34 Participants cited not only their president Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the Nobel Prize Laureate Ms. Leymah Gbowee, but also the prominent activist Ms. Martha Karnga, head of BAWODA women's association, who took part in this research.

*“The history of peacebuilding in Liberia has been attributed to women’s involvement to a larger extent. It is clear that Liberian women played a very crucial role during the civil war. Our strategy for this is to continue to raise awareness about women’s empowerment, educate more girls and encourage women to take up leadership roles in society, from the bottom to the top. Part of this is raising awareness about the Gender Equality Bill. We want the Bill to pass so that women can change the status quo of their lives. Men don’t want women to compete with them on anything – they say that when a woman is empowered, she becomes frisky. We need to change this myth. We are therefore appealing to the UN to help us initiate more training programmes for men to accept women as their partners and that together we can build a better nation.”<sup>35</sup>*



PHOTO: USAID

*Leymah Gbowee, a leader in the Women in Peacebuilding Network, a programme that emerged from the West African Network for Peacebuilding, a GPPAC member, in 2001.*

There is clearly a need for the UN to support projects promoting women’s rights and participation, including equal partnerships between women and men for mutual benefit, as an integral part of its activities in Liberia. Had National Action Plans been included in Liberia’s instrument of engagement with the PBC, the issues outlined in the Gender Equality Bill would have been supported by the Executive and special projects promoting the Bill could have been planned and supported. Overall, greater momentum for gender equality could have been generated both in parliament and socially.

Gender is also linked to some of the fears over the military drawdown of UNMIL on 30 June 2016.<sup>36</sup> The research shows that people are feeling anxious about the withdrawal as crime rates are rising and there is a general mistrust in the capacity of the Liberian military to intervene effectively should problems arise, particularly after the Ebola outbreak, which is seen by many as a security failure - a failure of containment. The rise in crime rates are viewed as a consequence of high unemployment, particularly among demobilised men, and an empowered female labour force would create more competition for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, further isolating them from society and making them more destitute. Taking into account the impact of demobilisation on women is therefore vital in the planning of sustainable reintegration activities for both men

<sup>35</sup> Ms. Martha Karnga, Executive Director, Bassa Women Development Association (BOWADA), Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, during interview on 10 December 2014.

<sup>36</sup> *Supra*, note 28.

and women. As women took on highly sensitive and demanding tasks during the conflict, they feel they should be awarded equally challenging roles in the future of Liberian society. The failure of UN peacebuilding projects to tackle this head on could exacerbate social tensions across the gender line.

In Burundi participants made little mention of PBF-funded activities directly targeting gender although women are part of the Joint Steering Committee that discusses the allocation of PBF funds in the country. In theory this could allow for gender-sensitive peacebuilding beyond the project-based targeting of women as beneficiaries by including them in the analysis of the problem, which would lead to different programmatic solutions. For example, the targeting of women as beneficiaries could result in a capacity-building project on gender equality legislation aimed exclusively at women participants, while gender-sensitive programming would consider the gender aspects of Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) – such as the vulnerability of female-headed households who lost their husbands in the conflict or the challenge of reintegrating ex-combatants with their families after years of estrangement and power shifting, as women headed the household in their husbands' absence. Gender-sensitive programming would build-in solutions to women's needs as part and parcel of the overall project design. For example, women could be provided with income-generating activities that fit with their family duties in addition to those being offered to their demobilised husbands. This could avoid a rise in social tensions resulting from an unbalanced roll-out of opportunities.

In Burundi,<sup>37</sup> rule of law projects did not entirely provide a reliable mechanism for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and tensions, particularly related to gender and the management of land. Accusations of corruption among the judiciary and local government were common among all those who took part in the focus group discussions. The judiciary was seen as unwilling to resolve land disputes in a manner that was in line with traditional norms, often with the undue influence of a local government official or person of high social status. The failure to mitigate these tensions effectively can result in the outbreak of gender-based violence with a multiplying negative impact on women, as victims of this violence feel they cannot seek redress in these courts and are therefore more susceptible to future incidents of violence.

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37 In Liberia, rule of law was also raised as serious issues. As one participant put it in relation to land issues: *“There are so many land cases in the court that have never been prosecuted. People take other people’s land and because they have power they can manipulate the court system. In this country, there is no justice for the poor.”* Quote from Mr. Aaron G. V. Juakollie, National Programme Officer, Foundation for International Dignity, Monrovia, during interview on 13 January 2015.

### III. THE PBA AND CIVIL SOCIETY: INCLUSION IN POLICY BUT NOT IN PRACTICE

*“Rather than have small NGOs sneak through a hole in the UN fence, we need to have a well-oiled gate.”*

*INGO representative interviewed for this report*

The founding resolutions of the PBA recognize “the important contribution of civil society and non-governmental organisations, including women’s organisations, to peacebuilding efforts.”<sup>38</sup>

Each resolution by the General Assembly and Security Council also “Encourages the Commission to consult with civil society, non-governmental organisations, including women’s organisations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities, as appropriate.”<sup>39</sup>

However the research and interviews conducted for this report suggest that these initial aspirations, as well as the existence of specific guidelines and policies for civil society participation, have not necessarily translated to meaningful and consistent engagement with civil society since the founding of the PBA. This is also the case for the inclusion and mainstreaming of gender in UN peacebuilding efforts.

#### 1. Guidelines for civil society participation

Civil society engagement with the PBA is most clearly outlined in the *Provisional Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society in Meetings of the PBC* issued by the Organisational Committee in June 2007. The guidelines affirm the important contribution of civil society, including women and women’s organisations, in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding.

<sup>38</sup> *Supra*, note 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Supra*, note 1.

It also calls on the PBC to “ensure greater participation of civil society organisations and representatives from the countries under consideration.”<sup>40</sup>

#### The guidelines outline the following modalities for civil society participation in the work of the PBC:

- Civil society can make statements in formal PBC meetings at the invitation of the Chair of the OC or the Chair of a CSC, but only with the approval of the members of the OC.
- Civil society is encouraged to submit input into informal PBC meetings that may be technical or sectoral and are organised outside of the formal CSCs.
- Either before or after a CSC, civil society can participate in public informal meetings or briefings organised by the Chair, to exchange views on peacebuilding in specific country situations as well as provide input on how civil society can contribute to the implementation of recommendations by the CSC. The Chair will prepare a summary of discussion from these meetings to submit to the CSC.
- Civil society may submit written statements to the Chair of the OC, who will, working with

<sup>40</sup> See United Nations, Peacebuilding Commission, *Provisional guidelines for the participation of civil society in meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission*, submitted by the Chairperson on the basis of informal consultations, PBC/1/OC/12 (29 June 2007), available from [undocs.org/PBC/1/OC/12](http://undocs.org/PBC/1/OC/12)

the Chair of the CSC and PBSO, share these with members of the CSC no later than one week before the relevant meeting.

Although civil society groups are able to submit input ahead of CSC meetings, as per the guidelines, if they are not participating in or knowledgeable about the member state deliberations and activities leading up to these meetings, it is difficult for them to formulate their contribution in the most strategic way. The lack of transparency in relation to CSC and OC meetings, including when they are going to take place and what the agenda will be, has meant that civil society participation, if it happens, is often limited to those organisations already based in New York. Local practitioners do not have enough knowledge ahead of time of meetings to be able to meaningfully give input or be able to be present in New York to participate, which means that their perspectives are usually lacking. This in turn reinforces the existing gap between policy and practice on peacebuilding at the UN. The only way that context specific information can circulate amongst member states is if adequate time and communication is given to civil society.<sup>41</sup>

It is also notable that civil society was not consulted in the development of the guidelines. Several civil society organisations based in New York met with member states and the PBSO in the run up to the guidelines being adopted and raised their concerns about the lack of an open and inclusive process in their creation, and the potential that the guidelines as they stood could negatively impact future engagement of civil

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41 The lack of the reliable and current information available on the PBC's website is also a factor. Civil society are unable to inform themselves of meetings that have already taken place in a reliable manner, which impacts their ability to make meaningful and timely contributions. This was a hindrance noted by the authors of this report. The PBC should therefore also ensure that the records on its website are comprehensive and up-to-date.

society with the PBC.<sup>42</sup> Concerns raised included; the need for the PBC to further vet civil society organisations that had already been granted ECOSOC accreditation, the potential lack of transparency in vetting non-ECOSOC NGOs and the lack of a 'right of reply' for civil society organisations who had been rejected by member states, that the reporting requirements are too restrictive and would become a barrier for civil society engagement, and that one week's notice for participation would not provide enough time for travel to be arranged for local partners, particularly those from more rural areas.<sup>43</sup>

### Many civil society representatives noted that the language in the guidelines was very weak compared to other mechanisms used by the UN.

Practically, while the guidelines have existed since 2007, very few of the suggestions for engagement have been taken up by either member states or civil society. In an informal poll of member states engaged in the PBC who were consulted for this report, almost none had even heard of the civil society guidelines. The guidelines were also never reviewed six months after their creation, as called for in their founding document. It was reportedly not seen as a priority at the time and some member states felt that the PBC was adequately engaging with civil society in country. The provision in the guidelines that member states must approve which civil society organisations and representatives may attend OC meetings was recently used in the annual session of the

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42 See International Service for Human Rights (2007), *The Peacebuilding Commission and the Participation of Civil Society*, Human Rights Monitor Series, New York Monitor, available at [www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/0621ngoguidelines.pdf](http://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/0621ngoguidelines.pdf)

43 *Ibid.*



PBC that took place in June 2014. The meeting included a small number of 'hand-picked' civil society participants who were proposed by the PBSO and pre-approved by all member states. This was not a transparent process and no prior discussions with civil society about the event took place, including with those selected to take part in the meeting.

Since 2007, civil society groups in New York report no improvements in their ability to formally engage with the decision-making bodies of the PBC. In fact, New York-based civil society representatives interviewed for this report signalled a trend towards greater obscurity in the mechanisms for engagement, as meetings are officially announced at the last minute and increasingly closed even to ECOSOC-accredited NGOs. The PBC's civil society guidelines also make no reference to civil society contributions to the Working Group on Lessons Learned. Notably, at the time of their creation, many civil society representatives noted that the language in the guidelines was very weak compared to other mechanisms used by the UN such as the speaking slots in ECOSOC meetings or the Arria Formula of the Security Council.<sup>44</sup>

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44 See Hawkins, V. (2006), *Getting the Peacebuilding Commission off the Ground: Including Civil Society*, Conference Report, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, available at [www.fes-globalization.org/ConferenceReports/FES\\_CR\\_NY\\_Peacebuilding\\_Commission.pdf](http://www.fes-globalization.org/ConferenceReports/FES_CR_NY_Peacebuilding_Commission.pdf). More information on the working of the Security Council's Arria Formula is provided in Chapter V.

## 2. Policies for gender-responsive peacebuilding

In 2010, the Secretary-General issued his first report on *Women's Participation in Peacebuilding*,<sup>45</sup> resulting in a 7-Point Action Plan<sup>46</sup> that has been adopted throughout the UN system to guide work on gender-responsive peacebuilding and track its progress. The Secretary General's 2010 report also pledged a financial commitment of 15% of all peacebuilding-related funds to directly target women's needs, advance equality and empower women. The PBF was tasked with implementing this quota immediately.<sup>47</sup>

Since 2010, the PBSO has made concerted steps towards stewarding the implementation of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive peacebuilding through various initiatives. It rolled-out the Gender Marker, a mechanism for tracking the spending of peacebuilding funds on projects that target women. As of February 2014, the Gender Marker had been applied to 281 projects across the 4 priority areas of the PBF:

- support for the implementation of peace agreements and political dialogue
- promotion of co-existence and the peaceful resolution of conflict
- revitalization of the economy and peace dividends, and
- the (re)instalment of administrative services.

For example, in Liberia, the PBF funded a specialised unit within the Ministry of Justice exclusively dedicated to the prosecution of sexual crimes and gender-based violence, and the

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45 See United Nations, General Assembly, *Women's participation in peacebuilding: report of the Secretary-General*, A/65/354 (7 September 2010), available from [undocs.org/A/65/354](http://undocs.org/A/65/354)

46 *Ibid.*, Annex '7-Point Action Plan,' available at [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/seven\\_point\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/seven_point_action_plan.pdf) (GA report on women in pb)

47 *Ibid.*, paragraph 36.

training of legal professionals, including police officers, in case-handling and victim support.<sup>48</sup>

Applying the Gender Marker retrospectively to projects since 2007, the PBSO could state that by 2013, 10% of all PBF-funded projects exclusively targeted women.<sup>49</sup> It was also able to show that by 2011 over 60% of funds went to projects with a specific gender component, including activities and budget allocation for women.<sup>50</sup>

Although the PBSO had met its interim target of 10% by 2013, this was achieved through the tracking of the Gender Marker, which is measured in a global aggregate figure. A country-by-country breakdown is necessary for there to be any accountability and follow-up on whether these initiatives have actually had any bearing on the lives of the women they targeted. There is also the danger that the 15% global mark is achieved on the basis of a few particularly good examples so it does not accurately depict the breadth of this achievement. Without the training of staff in the purpose of gender-sensitive peacebuilding, the 15% target may also result in the unintended incentive of leaving the rest of the 85% of project funds free from having to consider or target women.

In 2011 the PBF launched its own initiative to further the push to meet the Secretary-General's 15% target globally. It launched a Gender Promotion Initiative where countries were invited to compete for funding earmarked for the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality in post-conflict settings. Some \$6.1million USD was allocated to 8 different projects in Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan and

Uganda. In late 2014, the PBF launched a second Gender Promotion Initiative following the same format and objectives but this time contributing \$7.6 million USD to 9 projects in six different countries: Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Somalia.

In a further effort by the PBSO to heed the call in the Secretary-General's 2010 report on *Women's Participation in Peacebuilding* for gender to be factored into peacebuilding projects and programmes, it partnered with UN Women to implement a programme called "*Building Back Better: Gender-responsive Peacebuilding*". The aim of this programme was essentially to facilitate the implementation of the Secretary-General's 7-Point Action Plan.<sup>51</sup> In the second year of this three-year programme, the PBSO summed up its work on gender and peacebuilding in the following way:

*"This project supports international efforts to build inclusive and sustainable peace in conflict-affected countries through enabling women to participate in, and the provision of gender expertise to, key peacebuilding processes. There are longer-term, resource intensive efforts focused on the Central African Republic, Liberia and South Sudan. In the short term, PBSO and UN Women jointly supported targeted and catalytic initiatives from women's groups and the UN in Guinea, Kenya, Libya and Yemen. The partnership also established mechanisms for longer-term "light-touch" engagement with the UN Country Teams in the Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, DRC, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mali, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Sudan, which have self-nominated to*

48 See United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, 'The PBF and Gender Equality,' 27 February 2015, available at [www.unpbf.org/news/pbf-gender-promotion-initiative/](http://www.unpbf.org/news/pbf-gender-promotion-initiative/)  
49 *Supra*, note 20, p. 50  
50 *Supra*. Note 20, p. 51

51 *Supra*, note 49, Annex '7-Point Action Plan,' available at [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/seven\\_point\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/seven_point_action_plan.pdf)

*pilot implementation of the Seven-Point Action Plan by mapping gender-responsive peacebuilding into existing efforts.”<sup>52</sup>*

This paragraph from the PBSO’s Annual Report also refers to the ‘light-touch’ arrangement which is deployed in Liberia and alludes to the longer-term projects to enhance women’s participation in political processes implemented in the CAR and Liberia. Overall, the PBSO and PBF have made some commendable efforts since the 2010 report of the Secretary-General on *Women’s Participation in Peacebuilding*, but many of the other recommendations still need to be put into practice.

### 3. Working Methods

In 2013, the OC issued a document entitled “*Working Methods Part (I)*”,<sup>53</sup> which addresses many of the concerns raised in the 2010 review of the PBC such as communications and the relationship between the field and headquarters. It also establishes for the first time a Terms of Reference for the CSC Chair. The Working Methods document recognizes civil society, including women’s groups, as key interlocutors for the CSC Chair, and calls on the chairs to “Interact (bilaterally and multilaterally) with relevant civil society organisations, private sector entities and think [tanks] to bring their energy, expertise and experience in contribution to the peacebuilding process.”<sup>54</sup>

There is a key example in the document of how civil society organisations in Burundi contributed to the early review of the PBC’s engagement in the country.<sup>55</sup> There are also ideas on how information can be shared with CSC Chairs before and after their field visits, which includes input from civil society and NGOs, and how the CSCs might engage with a broader group of stakeholders. Although it is available on the PBC’s website, this document was never formally adopted by the OC and none of the member states interviewed for this report made any mention of it as a resource. Similarly, most civil society organisations in New York are unaware of this document.

Several member states consulted for this report were surprised to learn that the Security Council’s working methods and activities are overall more transparent and accessible to civil society than those of the PBC. For example, the Security Council has an extensive *Working Methods Handbook* available on their website,<sup>56</sup> which provides much more detailed information than the current Working Methods document of the PBC. In addition, the Security Council publishes a monthly Provisional Programme of Work,<sup>57</sup> which allows civil society who wish to engage with Security Council members on thematic or country specific activities the ability to plan ahead and be strategic in advance of scheduled meetings. While the PBC does publish a calendar on its website,<sup>58</sup> it is not forward looking - in fact, it is only updated on an ad hoc basis. Anyone outside of the UN who is interested in knowing the activities of the PBC

52 See United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (2012), *Annual Report*, p. 9, available at [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/2012PBSO-AnnualReport-Final.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/2012PBSO-AnnualReport-Final.pdf)

53 See United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, *Working Methods Part I*, (30 April 2013), available at [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/oc/PBC%20Working%20Methods%20Compendium\\_Part%20I\\_Formatted\\_30April2013.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/oc/PBC%20Working%20Methods%20Compendium_Part%20I_Formatted_30April2013.pdf)

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*

56 See United Nations, Security Council, *Working Methods Handbook*, available at [www.un.org/en/sc/about/methods/](http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/methods/)

57 See United Nations, Security Council, *Monthly Programme*, available at [www.un.org/en/sc/inc/pages/pdf/pow/powmonthly.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/sc/inc/pages/pdf/pow/powmonthly.pdf)

58 See United Nations, Peacebuilding Commission, *Activities Calendar*, available at [www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/calendar.asp](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/calendar.asp)

must check the online calendar on a regular basis to see if any new meetings have been added rather than benefitting from a provisional monthly schedule of activities that is shared in advance. The PBC calendar also does not include the dates for the visits of CSC Chairs to countries on the PBC's agenda, which would be helpful for civil society representatives who wish to be aware of those trips both in New York and in country.

#### 4. The 2010 review of the PBA

In 2010, as per its founding resolutions and five years since its inception (just four years of full operational form), the PBA was reviewed by a panel chaired by the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and South Africa to the UN. The review mainly focused on the PBC and concluded that *"the hopes that accompanied the founding resolutions have yet to be realized."*

<sup>59</sup> Some of the key issues highlighted as needing improvement were; national ownership, the importance of women's contributions, the regional dimension of peacebuilding efforts, effective communications, the links between field and headquarters, and the relationship between the PBC and the Security Council.

**One of the concerns raised from the perspectives of civil society in the review was the lack of consultation by the PBC of local stakeholders in the drawing up of national peacebuilding priorities.**

<sup>59</sup> See United Nations, General Assembly, *Identical letters dated 19 July 2010 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council, A/64/868-S/2010/393* (21 July 2010), available from [undocs.org/A/64/868](http://undocs.org/A/64/868).

Civil society was broadly consulted in the review, with some informal meetings taking place in New York and policy documents being issued by a handful of INGOs. However, the extent to which these opinions were formally considered in the review is unknown, as no official mechanism for consultations with civil society existed. An external assessment of the PBA in 2010 by INGOs focused on civil society inclusion in the PBC's role in Sierra Leone and Burundi.<sup>60</sup> This report raised the central point that *"ownership must extend beyond the government to include meaningful civil society participation, a key component in the restoration of the social compact between the State and its people."*<sup>61</sup>

One of the concerns raised in the review, from the perspective of civil society, was the lack of consultation by the PBC of local stakeholders in the drawing up of national peacebuilding priorities. The review also noted that more could be done to build national capacity beyond government. It pointed out that civil society, including women, is key to the work of the CSCs. Yet, no specific channel for engagement with civil society groups was opened. In the final summary of the reports' recommendations, under the heading *"A more relevant Peacebuilding Commission,"* the review includes *"greater civil society involvement"* as one of the ways for the PBC to be more relevant.<sup>62</sup>

On the contribution of women, the review noted that the PBC is the first UN body to have an explicit focus on gender in its founding resolutions and yet it goes on to state that the PBC has not lived up to this strong and clear

<sup>60</sup> See report by GPPAC and WFM (2010), *The Peacebuilding Commission Five Year Review: The Civil Society Perspective*, p. 5, available at [betterpeace.org/files/GPPAC:IGP\\_Civil\\_Society\\_Perspective\\_of\\_the\\_PBC\\_Review\\_June2010.pdf](http://betterpeace.org/files/GPPAC:IGP_Civil_Society_Perspective_of_the_PBC_Review_June2010.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Supra*, note 63.

mandate. In particular, it notes in the section on national ownership and capacity issues, that “the record regarding women’s organisations is particularly thin.”<sup>63</sup> The 2010 review concluded with a rather stark message: “The co-facilitators hope that the present review will serve as a wake-up call.”<sup>64</sup>

While the 2010 review was widely accepted as a critical yet fair assessment of the PBA, not much has been done since then to implement many of the recommendations. Given the lack of civil society engagement in its development, once the outcomes of the review were made public, actors outside of the UN could have done more to make sure the PBA implemented the recommendations, especially as they were mostly in their favour. The 2015 review of the PBA is seen as a make or break moment for the Architecture. As one member state interviewed for this research put it: “The 2015 review is the biggest opportunity to change the PBC, if it doesn’t happen now, it won’t happen in the future.”

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## Recommendation

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*Ensure transparency and accountability in the PBA’s policies and working methods for civil society and women’s inclusion.*

### *How:*

- The PBA should review and update the Provisional Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society in Meetings of the PBC in close consultation with civil society.
- The PBA should support and implement all of the recommendations in the Secretary-General’s report on *Women’s Participation in Peacebuilding* and UNSCR 1325 by, amongst other things, including the creation of National Action Plans for women’s participation and leadership in decision-making and the protection of women and girls in its work with governments on the setting of national peacebuilding priorities.
- The PBA should institute working methods that foster transparency and greater engagement with civil society, in particular women and youth.

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<sup>63</sup> *Supra*, note 63.

<sup>64</sup> *Supra*, note 63.

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## IV. THE PBA AND CIVIL SOCIETY: MEASURING ITS EFFECTIVENESS

*“We need to understand the nature of the conflict, civil society can do that. Until it’s fully understood, we can’t respond.”*

*Member state diplomat interviewed for this report*

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, policies do exist to promote the engagement and inclusion of civil society in the PBA, however the practice of putting them into good use has not necessarily taken place. Despite this, civil society has been actively engaging with the PBA in various ways since its establishment in 2005, in both formal and informal settings. The PBA has also deliberately included civil society in its activities, most notably when CSC Chairs visit countries on the PBC’s agenda. Lessons can be learned from these experiences that can help improve the PBA’s current working relationship with civil society, and also address persistent gaps. This chapter focuses specifically on the various parts of the UN’s Peacebuilding Architecture and assesses how effective it has been in engaging with civil society in both New York and at country level. At the end of each section, specific recommendations are offered for how the PBA could improve its engagement with civil society going forward.

### 1. The Peacebuilding Commission

While the PBC is not operational, the bulk of the work it does is for the countries on its agenda through the Country Specific Configurations. The visits of the CSC Chairs to countries on the PBC’s agenda provide both an opportunity and a challenge for civil society engagement. It has become common practice for the Chairs to meet with local civil society during their visits, however,

these meetings do not necessarily include local community representatives who are engaged in peacebuilding and offer insights and perspectives beyond that of organisations based in the capital. As noted in Chapter II, most of the people interviewed for this report in Burundi, Liberia and CAR were not aware of the PBC or that the CSC Chairs make visits to their countries. In this way, the Chair’s visits can be a missed opportunity to gain a wider perspective from civil society actors and communities who are often well engaged and knowledgeable in the areas of concern for the PBC.

It has also been recognized that the level of engagement by a CSC with civil society is driven mainly by the personal interests and motivations of the individual Chairs, since there is currently no systematic process for Chairs to gather the perspectives of civil society in country or include them in meetings New York. This also speaks to the lack of a detailed Terms of Reference for the PBC Chairs, leading to the inconsistent way in which their roles are carried out in each CSC.

Chairs often rely on the UN mission or UN Country Team in country to identify which civil society actors to meet with, unfortunately, this usually means only those groups who are ‘known’ or present in capital are invited. As a result, meetings do not necessarily include a diverse representation of local civil society and missing are usually actors who are not based in capital.



**The meaningful participation of women in local and national peacemaking and peacebuilding activities, including those supported by the PBC, is vitally important.**

The meetings themselves are normally quite large and yet time restricted, sometimes 80 civil society representatives are given one hour to share their views, so that even if a less represented group is present, they may not have the opportunity to take the floor. Social dynamics, as well as the location and timing of meetings also play a role in either encouraging or discouraging women from voicing their opinion. Language can also be a barrier to participation for civil society who might only speak or work in a local language that is not used in a meeting with a CSC Chair. The reports of Chair's visits are also usually not publicly available. They are only circulated informally to members of the CSC, making it difficult for civil society groups to see if their views were taken into account or to prepare for future visits. All of these issues would need to be taken into account in order to arrange a diverse and representative consultation with civil society.

The Chair's visits have worked well when the Chair sees it as an opportunity to create a space for national dialogue. As one diplomat from a PBC country interviewed for this report said: *"The Chair's visit is important because it provides an umbrella for everyone to meet in country."* This is particularly relevant when the Chair uses his or her presence as a catalyst to bring together civil society and the national government when these interactions would not have taken place otherwise. Both Burundi and Sierra Leone were cited as examples where the CSC Chair

has played an important role in either bringing together local actors across sectoral divides, including between civil society and government, which helped to create the space for meaningful dialogue, or in elevating the voices of civil society and local actors in meetings with national government, when those perspectives would not otherwise be heard.

A 2007 study by Action Aid, CAFOD, and CARE International on the PBC's engagement in Burundi and Sierra Leone supports this notion of the PBC's role in country. It notes the increased trust and interaction between the government and civil society groups in Burundi as a result of engagement by civil society in PBC-related activities in the country, such as the process of creating Burundi's PBC strategic framework, and the initial establishment of a framework for dialogue and consultation.<sup>65</sup> These efforts speak to the useful convening role that Chairs can have in country and the potential impact this can have on social cohesion and dialogue.

Although the PBC's guiding principles do not refer to the need for the Chair to engage with local women during their country visits, UNSCR 2122 (2013) requires that representatives of the Security Council hold interactive meetings with local women and women's organisations during their country missions. While CSC Chairs are not always sitting members of the Security Council, they represent a subsidiary organ of the Council whose work is seen as complimentary and should therefore follow the same standards of practice. Moreover,

<sup>65</sup> See ActionAid, CAFOD, and CARE International (2007), *Consolidating the Peace? Views from Sierra Leone and Burundi on the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission*, available at [www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/consolidating\\_the\\_peace\\_-\\_views\\_from\\_sierra\\_leone\\_and\\_burundi\\_on\\_the\\_united\\_nations\\_peacebuilding\\_commission.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/consolidating_the_peace_-_views_from_sierra_leone_and_burundi_on_the_united_nations_peacebuilding_commission.pdf)

the meaningful participation of women (as individuals or groups) in local and national peacemaking and peacebuilding activities, including those supported by the PBC, is vitally important. It is in itself a measure of a nation's commitment to achieving lasting peace: for engaging in processes that reflect their desired outcome (that of inclusive, sustainable peace) ensures the higher likelihood of achieving it.

In New York, engagement between civil society and the CSCs has been ad hoc. In interviews for this report, many suggested that the entry point for civil society in New York is not through the CSCs but through the OC, because it would be less likely to upset national governments. As one UN expert interviewed for this report said, civil society needs to understand the dynamics with member states; in the CSCs, they could walk into a minefield and disrupt a sensitive political process. Others noted that the CSCs is where the real work of the PBC takes place. CSCs have a wider array of tools at their disposal, they can set an agenda, and the Chairs can ultimately do more to support civil society inclusion.

Outside of the OC and CSCs, the Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL) is another potential venue for formal engagement of civil society by the PBA, particularly given the fact that over the years it has explored a wide range of issues, from youth and gender to reconciliation and rule of law. The 'experts' featured in WGLL meetings are often from UN agencies or member states. Occasionally representatives from academic institutions or the World Bank are included. Local civil society practitioners or INGOs engaged in peacebuilding are normally not featured. International NGOs in New York may attend WGLL if they have ECOSOC-accreditation but only as observers. In order to enhance the breadth and depth of the WGLL discussions, the Chair of the WGLL should more systematically engage with INGOs in New York in order to gather ideas for meeting topics

and identify expert speakers from civil society. An annual session on developments in peacebuilding practice could be another way for the WGLL to engage with a larger group of stakeholders including civil society. One focus of such a session could be the creation of indicators and benchmarks for measuring a country's progress against agreed peacebuilding objectives, which civil society could help to develop and monitor.

Making use of video conferencing is another way the PBC can improve its ability to engage with civil society. The PBC's mandate provides specific operational guiding principles on how to ensure that actors outside of New York are part of the conversations that take place in New York, further acknowledging the value of local and regional voices in its discussions. In its founding resolutions, the PBC recognized "*the importance of adopting flexible working methods, including use of video-conferencing, meetings outside of New York and other modalities, in order to provide for the active participation of those most relevant to the deliberations of the Commission.*"<sup>66</sup>

Member states consulted for this report noted that the use of video conferencing is harder than it seems as the challenge of knowing which civil society participants to invite to speak to a CSC remains. Without good guidelines and trusted networks for the identification and participation of civil society in PBC meetings, the use of video conferencing technology remains problematic.

In regards to both the CSCs and the OC, the suggestion was made that civil society should seek to have an informal advisory role rather than participate formally in meetings, given the general feeling of those interviewed that neither OC nor CSC formal meetings were necessarily useful for real discussion and deliberation. Informal meetings that have included PBC members and

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<sup>66</sup> *Supra*, note 1.

Chairs have taken place at venues outside of the UN, such as Quaker House<sup>67</sup> and the International Peace Institute (IPI),<sup>68</sup> which has allowed for interaction between member states and civil society experts in off-the-record settings. These informal discussions were often viewed as much more useful than the formal PBC meetings, particularly when civil society representatives from countries on the PBC's agenda participated and could speak candidly about their experience engaging in local peacebuilding. Given that the effectiveness of the OC and CSCs is being evaluated as part of the 2015 review of the PBA, it is possible that these mechanisms will be revised, opening up different possibilities for civil society engagement, both formal and informal.

One challenge for civil society engagement with the PBA is the lack of expertise and experience that many member states have on peacebuilding practice and the role of the PBC. Several member states interviewed for this report expressed a desire to interact more frequently with civil society, both those based in New York as well as in the field, in order to gain a better understanding of peacebuilding generally and the context of the countries they are engaged in more specifically. There has been some success in the past with workshops for new members of the PBC organised by IPI and the Quaker United Nations Offices (QUNO), with support from the PBSO. The last such meeting was held in 2013, included civil society representatives and provided a space for engagement with member states. However, the challenge for these meetings is that given the informal setting, not all member states feel required or compelled to participate. More must

be done to ensure that informal workshops and trainings for PBC member states have the buy-in and support of all member states so that broader participation takes place.

There were some interviewed for this report who felt that INGO engagement with the member states of the CSCs or OC in New York was not necessary or impactful. They recommended that civil society engagement take place in country with UN agencies that are operational or in national capitals. At the same time, they recognized that if civil society actors want to influence UN peacebuilding policy, then that must happen in New York.

A member state expert who was deeply engaged with a CSC reported that in the early days of the configuration they reached out to INGOs in New York but there was not much response, and so many years later, that interaction still does not take place. The analysis offered was that INGOs in New York do not see investing time and energy in working on the PBC as worthwhile. There seems to be a general lack of INGOs in New York who follow the PBC closely. As one member state put it in regards to PBC meetings that were once open but have in recent years been closed to ECOSOC-accredited NGOs, *"We're not available, but people are not knocking on the doors either."*

It is notable that civil society in New York is not holding the PBC to account in the same way that they are with the Security Council. Many interviewed recognised that most INGOs see no need to engage with the PBC on policy matters when the Security Council is seen as a more relevant and effective body on peace and security issues. Based on the interviews for this report, this seems less due to the fact that INGOs do not see the PBC as useful but more that they are not aware of the PBC's work at all. Also, the majority of countries on the PBC's agenda are not currently in crisis and are therefore not the focus

<sup>67</sup> Quaker House is an informal meeting space maintained by the Quaker United Nations Office for off-the-record discussions between members of the UN community on topics related to peacebuilding and prevention of violent conflict.

<sup>68</sup> See International Peace Institute, available at [www.ipinst.org/](http://www.ipinst.org/)

of INGOs working on humanitarian and human rights advocacy. The CAR has recently been an exception to this, and yet the majority of related INGO advocacy work in New York has focused on the humanitarian and human rights situation and the roll out of the UN peacekeeping mission, with very little attention paid to peacebuilding or the role of the PBC.

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## Recommendation

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*Ensure the inclusion of civil society in key discussions at policy arenas of the PBC and at various points in the strategising and monitoring of PBC activities.*

### *How:*

- The Chairs and members of the OC, CSC, and WGLL should directly consult with civil society on a regular basis and facilitate their participation in meetings in New York, as well as establish opportunities for regular engagement in country.
  - Information about meetings and country visits (both before and after) should be made available widely well in advance and civil society expertise, particularly women and youth, should be sought out to help shape the agenda and priorities, and to ensure that meeting logistics enable/do not limit their participation.
  - The PBC should establish a strategy to create feedback loops for civil society monitoring and assessments of its activities both in New York and in country.
  - The PBC should work with INGOs in New York to help identify local partners and ensure that a diversity of perspectives is included.
  - Chairs of the CSCs should ensure that National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the active participation and leadership of women in peacemaking and political processes are part of a country's joint agreement with the PBC.
  - The WGLL should organize an annual session to update itself on recent developments in peacebuilding practice, with civil society as key participants.
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## The PBC and the CAR in crisis

Like in many of the PBC's strategic frameworks for peacebuilding, the framework for the CAR aspired to the principles of national ownership, an inclusive approach to planning and coordination and a sustained commitment from all stakeholders. At the end of 2014, the PBF had committed over \$45 million USD<sup>69</sup> to peacebuilding projects under the Framework, but by mid-November 2014 the country had spiralled into a crisis with over 420,000 Central Africans seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and 410,000 being internally displaced (62,500 in Bangui and 347,500 in the provinces).<sup>70</sup> Ideally in a crisis situation, the PBC should play a useful role in assisting the UN to establish a feedback loop to set the right context.

Attempts to overthrow the government of President Francois Bozizé erupted in December 2012 but there was no action by the CAR CSC at that time due in large part to the absence of an official Chair of the configuration following the resignation of Ambassador Grauls of Belgium in June 2012. A new Chair was not appointed until January 2014, before which the CAR had fallen under the chairmanship of the OC Chair by default. The lack of an official Chair meant that the PBC did not use its advisory role with the Security Council adequately, nor was it able to play an active role in the prevention of a relapse into conflict in the CAR.



*Internally displaced youth in Bangui's main mosque greet the convoy of the UN Secretary General as he pays them a visit on 5 April 2015.*

The CAR is an example of the failure to utilise civil society analysis of the local context<sup>71</sup> and thus awareness of the potential for relapse into renewed violence was not given enough attention by the UN. Greater transparency in the work of the PBC and clear avenues for civil society involvement could have led to a more timely response to the impending crisis. Ideally, in a crisis situation, the PBC can play a useful role in assisting the UN to establish feedback loops that maintain a close eye on developments on the ground and provide timely information about the ever changing context. By bringing civil society to speak at a CSC meeting, either in person or by video link, the PBC and PBSO can brief the Security Council and other UN departments and agencies more effectively.

69 See United Nations Development Programme, Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, Gateway website, available at [mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PB000](http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PB000), document downloadable at [mptf.undp.org/document/download/13468](http://mptf.undp.org/document/download/13468)

70 See United Nation, Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic*, S/2014/857 (28 November 2014), available from [www.un.org/en/sc/documents/sgreports/2014.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/sgreports/2014.shtml)

71 In the CAR, frustration with the UN's apparent misunderstanding of the situation on the ground was widespread. A representative of a local organisation based outside of Bangui, who took part in the research on 22 January 2015, explains: "I don't understand why the United Nations and other international organisations call this conflict a 'religious conflict.' How is that possible? We know that the important dynamic is the link between natural resources in some areas of the country where the Séléka came from and where they went back to today. When you know this, you understand that the reaction against them is no religious retaliation. It has been 20 years since the UN established a presence here in the CAR and none of its data was useful in giving a better definition to the crisis? They need a better definition of the problem so that they can have a better response."



## 2. The Peacebuilding Support Office

The PBSO has an important role to play in communicating to the outside world the work of the PBC and PBF. The PBSO is also meant to be a resource for both civil society and member states when it comes to technical and country specific information. The PBSO most often engages with civil society through its policy branch. The PBSO has engaged with civil society over the years in consultations on various thematic reports and policy initiatives such as work on reconciliation. The PBSO's country-focused staff have also participated as experts in informal meetings on peacebuilding outside the UN.

In a role that many interviewed felt was a key way for PBSO to add value to UN peacebuilding discussions, the PBSO has occasionally brought in outside civil society experts to advise member states in the CSCs. The most successful example of this, according to those interviewed, is the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (CPPF),<sup>72</sup> which has assisted the PBSO and CSCs in their work by drawing on its convening power and access to academic experts and practitioners on various country situations. These engagements have been informal and off-the-record and provided member states with a deeper analysis and understanding of local conflict dynamics in countries on the PBC's agenda. This form of expert civil society engagement has been acknowledged as valuable, however it still often excludes finer elements and details that local peacebuilding practitioners can bring to the table.

Another example is the role that PBSO played with INGOs and other UN agencies in producing the *“Guiding Principles on Young*

*People's Participation in Peacebuilding”* in 2014.<sup>73</sup> Prior to these guidelines, there was no policy framework for youth, particularly within peace and security work at the UN, and there was very little policy language on youth in any official documents. To develop the Youth Guidelines, the PBSO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women worked with INGOs including World Vision, Search for Common Ground and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders. The process of developing the Guidelines is seen as a good model for interaction between the UN and civil society. One UN expert noted that drawing up the framework between actors both inside and outside the UN took a long time but this also meant it was truly consultative and inclusive. The next step is for the Guidelines to be disseminated among peers and partners and then implemented in the field; all of which is being done through close coordination between relevant civil society actors, UN departments and UN agencies.

Information sharing and communications is another area where the PBSO can play a key role in supporting engagement with civil society. While the PBSO shares information with the PBC member states regarding upcoming meetings and activities, INGOs are not included on these mailing lists. Similarly, many documents and notes from PBC meetings are not made public or available to civil society, even though several member states interviewed did not feel that this information was particularly sensitive and could be shared more widely. The PBSO also maintains the UN Peacebuilding Community of Practice (PB-CoP) listserv, which includes practitioners from civil society and INGOs, however the topics and themes discussed on this listserv are not necessarily specific to the work of the PBC.

<sup>72</sup> See Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, available at [www.ssrc.org/programs/cppf/](http://www.ssrc.org/programs/cppf/)

<sup>73</sup> See Search for Common Ground (2014), *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*, launched in New York on 24 April 2014, text available at [www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples/](http://www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples/)



While a New York-based INGO monitored the work of the PBC at one point through the [betterpeace.org](http://betterpeace.org) website, no updates have been recorded for the past year. This is due to a lack of donor interest in the project, in large part related to the PBC's lack of engagement with civil society. The PBC's lack of transparency and openness made it difficult for civil society to articulate the outcomes arising from its monitoring of the Commission. Another resource that was once available was the Peace Building Initiative website developed by HPCR International in partnership with the PBSO and in cooperation with the Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University.<sup>74</sup> However this project has not been active since 2009.

In New York, the lack of INGO engagement with the PBA seems less due to the fact that they do not see the PBC as a useful mechanism but more that they are not aware of the PBC's relevance to the peace and security issues that they ordinarily follow. There is no official civil society mechanism in New York that has a mission to engage with the PBC, unlike the peacebuilding networks and platforms in Brussels,<sup>75</sup> Geneva<sup>76</sup> and Washington, DC,<sup>77</sup> which are mandated to engage with local policy makers. In Brussels, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) manages the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN),<sup>78</sup> which is a mechanism that promotes dialogue between civil society and EU policy makers on peace and

conflict issues, and is jointly managed by EPLO, the European Commission, and the European External Action Service. The CSDN is potentially an interesting model to be emulated in the New York context, to ensure regular consultations between the PBA and civil society that would include official institutional commitment from the UN.

More recently, civil society organisations in New York have formed the New York Peacebuilding Group, which is working to bring attention to the 2015 review of the PBA as well as make links with partners in country and advise the UN and member states on peacebuilding issues more broadly.<sup>79</sup> In March 2015, they hosted eight civil society representatives from countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and arranged meetings between them and members of the AGE on the Review of the PBA and the High-Level Panel on the Review of UN Peace Operations, as well as UN staff (including PBSO), INGOs and member states (see text box in Chapter V). The PBSO should make more regular use of the New York Peacebuilding Group group as a way to broaden its network and assist member states with identifying civil society partners who can provide local knowledge and context analysis relevant to their work. A monitoring mechanism with similar objectives and capacities as Security Council Report<sup>80</sup> is needed for the PBC to become

74 See Peacebuilding Initiative, available at [www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/](http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/)

75 See the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, website available at <http://www.eplo.org/>

76 See the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, website available at <http://www.gppplatform.ch/>

77 See the Alliance for Peacebuilding, website available at <http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/>

78 See the Civil Society Dialogue Network, information available on the website of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office at [www.eplo.org/civil-society-dialogue-network.html](http://www.eplo.org/civil-society-dialogue-network.html)

79 The New York Peacebuilding Group is a gathering of organisations (the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, GPPAC, IPI, Interpeace, PAX, Peace Direct, QUNO, and World Vision) engaged on various peace-related issues at the UN and in country levels. Since September 2014 they have actively worked together to strengthen the role of civil society at the UN on peacebuilding as well as create the space for dialogue and collaboration with the UN and member states.

80 Security Council Report monitors and analyses the work of the Security Council bringing transparency to an otherwise opaque inter-governmental body. With access to insider diplomatic information, it is able to analyse the dynamics in the Council, which informs the general

more accessible to civil society and audiences outside of the UN.

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## Recommendation

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*Ensure transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the PBA to civil society.*

*How:*

- The PBSO should recruit or appoint a PBSO staff person at the P3 or P4 level to serve as a Civil Society Liaison Officer and actively seek and coordinate civil society input into various PBC processes including OC meetings, CSC meetings, WGLL meetings, policy debates and cross-learning exercises. This person should also be tasked with tracking the inclusion of civil society actors, including women and youth, in different UN peacebuilding-related processes and their outcomes.
- The PBSO should institutionalize the position of a gender-sensitive peacebuilding expert by opening a permanent post at the P4 or P5 level for this role.
- The PBSO should work with new members of the OC to orient them to the role of INGOs and civil society in New York and in the field.

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public of trends and the expected outcomes of specific meetings and processes. They also regularly share the Council's forthcoming agenda on a monthly basis allowing for NGOs who follow the work of the Council to prepare their interventions and lobby strategies. Website available at <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/>

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## The PBSO and gender-sensitive peacebuilding

When considering gender-sensitive peacebuilding, it is useful to look beyond the work of PBA to gauge the range of strategies being deployed by other UN actors. There could be scope for greater synergy and partnership between the PBSO and some of these initiatives.

In 2012, UNDP produced a draft report outlining the lessons learned from its deployment of Senior Gender Advisers to 10 crisis countries including Burundi. The report finds that this extra expert capacity enabled the Programme to move beyond piecemeal, project-based approaches to gender inclusivity, towards a more strategic impact in various areas of its work, from political participation to access to justice and livelihood issues. In all cases, the Advisers had played a central role in building an organisational culture that was informed and convinced of the relevance of addressing gender. The result was that gender was addressed in all parts of internal programming and reporting, and all programmes included working with women's groups as part of their course. The PBSO could benefit from a similar position among its staff.

In July 2013, a UN-backed declaration was signed in Bujumbura, Burundi, at the *Regional Conference on Women, Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region*. Its opening paragraph reads:

*“We, participants of the Regional Conference on Women, Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region meeting in Bujumbura, Burundi from 9 to 11 July, 2013, organised by H.E. Mary Robinson, the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region in Africa, Femmes Africa Solidarité and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, for women leaders to discuss and develop a road map for women's participation in the implementation of the Framework of Hope and to set a process in place for the adoption of a Regional Action Plan for the Great Lakes region for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325.”<sup>81</sup>*

However, the Regional Action Plan remains in need of financing and implementation. The PBF could begin to consider regional projects as well as national ones for its Gender Promotion Initiative, and consider re-granting in the way that foundations do to ensure that smaller, more targeted NGOs and women's groups also receive funding.

Mary Robinson's efforts alongside civil society groups, including women's organisations, have led to a new platform being established: the Women's Great Lakes Platform. Its objective is to ensure women's oversight and monitoring of peace agreements. The platform has endorsed the Regional Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 after painstaking consultations among cross-border and regional organisations based in Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Civil society actors played a central role in convening as well as participating in these developments, for example, the INGO Femmes Africa Solidarité helped facilitate the entire process. The PBSO could engage with this platform in an information exchange exercise to learn from some of the local strategies being devised by women

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<sup>81</sup> See paragraph 1 of the *Bujumbura Declaration of the Regional Conference on Women, Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region Implementing the Framework of Hope and UNSCR 1325*, available at [www.fasngo.org/assets/files/Great%20Lakes%202013/Bujumbura%20Regional%20Conference%20Declaration.pdf](http://www.fasngo.org/assets/files/Great%20Lakes%202013/Bujumbura%20Regional%20Conference%20Declaration.pdf)

for monitoring peace, as well as strategies for the successful engagement with local actors, and the shortcomings of certain approaches.<sup>82</sup>

The PBSO should ensure that the development of National Actions Plans is included in the instruments of engagement for PBC-mandated countries as a way to operationalise UNSCR 1325 or reinforce it if the country is already part of a regional plan. Civil society can arguably have greater leverage over budget allocations of National Action Plans than over regional ones but sometimes, due to political sensitivities, civil society can find better entry points at the regional level and use those to open up discussions at the national level.

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82 Many civil society actors in the region feel that the platform has in fact heightened frictions between them and did not facilitate local civil society involvement to the extent necessary to allow for their meaningful participation. As a result, the initiative lacks attachment at the local level and risks being abandoned once the initial funding cycle has ended. Irrespective of the platform's successes and failings, the PBSO would benefit from engaging with this UN-led initiative and discovering any lessons learned.

### 3. The Peacebuilding Fund

Within the PBA, the PBF has been the most successful in incorporating civil society expertise in various areas of its work, particularly as reflected in the 2013 review of the PBF and its 2014-2016 business plan. The PBF's most dynamic form of engagement with civil society is through their participation in the Joint Steering Committees (JSCs). These Committees are co-chaired by the national government and the UN and oversee the allocation of PBF funding.

Through its participation in the JSC in Burundi, the local peacebuilding NGO Biraturaba (also a GPPAC member) galvanized support for civil society participation in other fora such as the monitoring and evaluation clusters in the PBC Strategic Peacebuilding Framework process, as well as the technical monitoring committees of PBF-funded projects. However, by 2008, civil society taking part in these processes already expressed their dissatisfaction with the limited room for influence available in the processes. By 2010, despite having met with the PBC Chair during his country visits and submitting civil

society input to BINUB and the government<sup>83</sup> on a regular basis, Biraturaba staff report having developed a degree of mistrust towards the UN as a whole as they witnessed the viewpoints brought by civil society being ignored time and time again. As a result, civil society participation in UN-led activities waned with many groups, including Biraturaba, opting to work on bilateral peacebuilding initiatives instead, such as those supported by the European Union.

Indeed, the 2013 review of the PBF found that the representation by NGOs and civil society in the JSCs is *"often inadequate."*<sup>84</sup> The review notes: *"NGOs play a critical role in assessing and addressing peacebuilding needs from their perspective, having access to vulnerable groups and working in relevant specific regions or sectors. Moreover, they can have a key role in holding government accountable for*

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83 Biraturaba regularly organised civil society consultations on the peacebuilding aspects of the IMF's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers for Burundi.

84 Kluyskens, J. and Clark, L. (2014), *Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund*, available at <http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-May-UN-PBF.pdf>

*effective peacebuilding actions. The Review Team recommends that PBF ensures that JSCs include NGO and/or CSO [civil society organisation] representatives.”<sup>85</sup>*

Building on the recommendations in the review, in its 2014-2016 business plan the PBF has stated it will pilot the pre-qualification of a select number of INGOs so that they can apply for PBF funds directly and not have to partner with a UN agency, as has been the practice in the past. It is not clear how widely known this initiative is within the INGO community in New York or in the field as PBF has not conducted any broad information sharing sessions with INGOs in recent. However, through its branch in the PBSO, the PBF does partner with the INGOs PeaceNexus, ACCORD and Interpeace for technical assistance including in conflict analysis. The 2013 review of the PBF found little engagement of local leaders and the local population in the PBF's project development, but a more mixed picture in its project implementation.<sup>86</sup> The reviewers found that PBF programming can sometimes be overly “capital-centric” and that it would benefit from the information, analysis and input as well as regular engagement from local actors.<sup>87</sup> This recognition in the review of the need to engage with local actors in programme planning and implementation is a model that would help all of the UN's peacebuilding work, not just the PBF.

The PBF's donors may not be necessarily interested in having the PBF fund INGOs directly. Some feel that for the funding to be catalytic it must be free from the administrative burden of administering hundreds of small grants. They also see that one of the important roles of the PBF is to build the peacebuilding capacities of UN agencies, not of INGOs or civil

society. The challenge is that if UN agencies do not include civil society views in project planning and proposal writing, then civil society actors cannot help set the analysis, and ultimately become simply implementers or beneficiaries rather than strategic partners.

On the governance side, the PBF's Advisory Group is composed of academics and international practitioners with expertise in various aspects of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. These academics and practitioners are not necessarily representative of local peacebuilding actors. There is a lack of transparency as to how and when the PBF's Advisory Group is activated, aside from its annual meetings and the breadth and depth of their influence on the Fund's activities. At the same time, the Advisory Group is seen as very helpful and supportive, including on gender and women's issues.

Another challenge for civil society engagement is that if a country does not have a JSC (which only those countries receiving the longer-term Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility funds will have), it is not clear how meaningfully civil society will be engaged. Similar to the PBC OC and CSC mechanisms, it was noted by those interviewed that INGOs in New York do not currently lobby the PBF, but they could do so in order to ensure that civil society involvement is held to account with the commitments that have been made in the PBF's business plan.

Local civil society consulted for this report voiced concern over the changing financial landscape for international peacebuilding funds. Although they welcomed the PBF's innovative approach towards funding peacebuilding in general, they noted their exclusion as direct beneficiaries, and as such, the UN's lack of commitment to preserving their independent space as civil society actors. The limits placed on funding are exacerbated by a

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

general decrease in the amount of funds available for peacebuilding work, resulting in a greater competition among peacebuilding organisations and the overall shrinking of their operational space.

Prospects are particularly stark for smaller peacebuilding NGOs and groups working on niche fields such as local mediation or non-violent education as they often also lack the absorption capacity to apply for larger grants. These kinds of groups or organisations would benefit from re-granting mechanisms allowing them to receive small grants from larger operational bodies and remain as specific as they are. In light of its mandate, the PBF could be innovative in this regard and fill the funding gap: it could designate an amount of its funds to UN counterparts to be re-granted to support these kind of peacebuilding activities throughout the country.

Should a staff person in PBSO be appointed to ensure inclusivity for all in country PBF-funded peacebuilding projects, he or she could also keep an eye on the overall cohesion of the projects and their impact on the ground, using regular civil society engagement as a sounding board which can then trigger more comprehensive evaluations if need be. This would enhance the overall performance of the UN in peacebuilding. In the case of UN peacebuilding activities in Burundi for example, it would answer one of the main criticisms of the PBF-funded projects, namely that they lacked overall cohesion and complementarity.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> See Campbell, S.; Kayobera, L. and Nkurunziza, J. (2010) *Independent External Evaluation of the Peacebuilding Fund's Projects in Burundi*, available at [www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Independent-Evaluation-Burundi.pdf](http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Independent-Evaluation-Burundi.pdf)

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## Recommendation

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*Ensure that civil society is closely engaged in strategic planning, implementation and assessments of PBF-funded projects.*

### *How:*

- The PBF should proceed with directly funding INGOs, based on its 2014-2016 business plan, including pre-qualifying INGO partners who can re-grant to smaller peacebuilding actors.
  - The PBF should require UN agencies receiving funds to strategically include civil society actors in the elaboration of project proposals and encourage UN agencies to partner with civil society outside of the capital.
  - The PBF should hold an annual information session with civil society actors in New York and regularly consult civil society groups in country as part of feedback on PBF-funded projects implemented by various UN agencies.
  - The PBF should track the inclusion of civil society in PBF-funded projects and report on the outcomes.
  - The PBF should ensure that a broad section of civil society is part of all Joint Steering Committees in country.
  - The PBF should include additional representatives and local practitioners from civil society in its Advisory Group, particularly those experienced in gender-sensitive peacebuilding and youth, to provide practical, country-specific input on PBF-funded projects.
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## The PBF in Burundi

One of the key messages coming from the Burundi research for this report relates to the PBF and the failure to consolidate local infrastructures for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and tensions. In early 2007, the PBF allocated \$35 million USD to support the consolidation of peace in Burundi through 18 projects in four main areas: Governance and Peace; Strengthening the Rule of Law in the Security Forces; Strengthening Justice and Promoting Human Rights; and Land Issues. Although the PBF projects are widely considered to have been innovative and timely, particularly in light of the fact that other bilateral and multilateral donors would have found them too risky, they lacked an overarching strategic direction to secure the desired outcomes from the projects.

A 2010 independent evaluation of PBF interventions in Burundi found that after the initial project selection, the JSC focused on the details of project design and implementation rather than on whether the projects were achieving their strategic goals or contributing to the consolidation of peace.<sup>89</sup> The evaluators go on to identify that, with the exception of projects targeting the National Defence Forces, *“there was no strategic coherence between projects within each sector, and little effort to achieve an aggregate complementary impact.”* Five years on and it seems that no greater impact has been achieved. The results of the field research for this report support the 2010 analysis.

Had there been feedback loops in the 18 PBF-funded projects in Burundi where civil society would have been consulted on the impact of their activities on a regular basis, then realignment with changing social priorities or some programmatic adjustments could have been possible, ensuring the overall coherence in the interventions. Had there been more consultations with civil society at earlier intervals on the DDR processes in Burundi and Liberia, more realistic timeframes and contingency plans could have been developed.

One of the principles of financing short-term projects through the PBF is because the Fund is meant to be catalytic. However, if donors are not eventually supporting these short-term projects in the long-term, this creates gaps in the peacebuilding response of the UN. Civil society consulted for this report noted that in their experience, countries undergoing peace consolidation processes take a long time to stabilise and this cannot be addressed by short-term funding. For example, although demobilization has taken place in Burundi, participants in this research unanimously said the process remains unfinished. Some of the root causes of the conflict remain, such as a lack of access to livelihoods and ex-combatants who have been left particularly vulnerable. As a result, the incompleteness of their reintegration into society has led to a growing sense of insecurity amongst the population. As tensions rise in the lead up to 2015 elections, the presence of ex-combatants who have not been reintegrated presents a real threat to peace in the country. Those consulted for this report argued that the timeline for demobilisation and reintegration processes should be extended and take into account several electoral cycles.

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<sup>89</sup> See Campbell, S.; Kayobera, L. and Nkurunziza, J. (2010) *Independent External Evaluation of the Peacebuilding Fund's Projects in Burundi*, available at [www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Independent-Evaluation-Burundi.pdf](http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Independent-Evaluation-Burundi.pdf)

## V. HARNESSING THE VALUE OF CIVIL SOCIETY: PRACTICALITY AND DIVERSITY

*“It could prevent the scourge of war if men and women on the ground had access to decision makers to say there is a war coming”*

*Civil Society representative interviewed for this report*

While this report has focused on the case for *why* civil society actors should be engaged, the reality remains that civil society faces difficulties in its ability to feed targeted, timely and context-specific information into the PBA and the UN’s broader peacebuilding activities. This is due to several factors, including the inadequacy of the UN’s community outreach initiatives and the absence of multi-stakeholder engagement at the local level, the inappropriateness of timeframes and evaluation mechanisms at the national level, and an overall lack of transparency and accountability at the international level. From civil society’s point of view, the ever-increasing competition over resources and limited information networks hinders their potential as partners to the UN.

The process taken in the research for this report of sitting with and listening to local communities and civil society in countries on the PBC’s agenda could serve the UN well in its peacebuilding efforts. Not only did it uncover specific issues related to UN peacebuilding, it also highlighted the innovative ways that civil society is playing a role in managing information flows that can signal the potential for violence and mitigate conflict, as well as the ways in which peacebuilding is done at a community level. What follows in this chapter is an exploration of the kinds of support and mechanisms for engagement that could be sought by the PBA and the UN more broadly, to better harness civil society’s knowledge and expertise for the purposes of fine-tuning its peacebuilding approaches.

### 1. Engaging civil society in country

Participants in the research noted that consultations with civil society groups are currently less about national ownership and more about legitimising pre-planned interventions. As it is always the same actors who are consulted by the UN, the perception is that these actors are (even if unintentionally) pre-determined to prioritise certain issues and activities over others, and usually their priorities match that of the UN and donors. In this way they do not accurately reflect the diversity of viewpoints and peacebuilding work present in society. The result is a rubber-stamping exercise rather than an open process over which people can feel ownership. National ownership, they say, is the result of a process that has touched or involved the whole of society, especially when a country is in transition from a state of conflict or a government has won heavily contested elections. The legitimacy of such a government is by nature more *de jure* than *de facto*.

All of those interviewed for this research in PBC-mandated countries – as well as many who were interviewed in New York – agree: an active civil society is essential to the successful transition from a state of conflict to a stable democracy and they should be involved as much as possible in peacebuilding analysis, planning and implementation. The question invariably becomes one of how. Envisioning a mechanism that can incorporate all of civil society and be effective is a

daunting task. Also, the ways in which civil society can be included in discussions both in country and in New York are invariably different, so how can one mechanism cater to both? Before exploring different options to address these concerns, it can be useful to parse through some of the issues that need be considered when thinking about civil society inclusion.

### **It is also important to note that civil society can play an overtly political role in society.**

Firstly, what is civil society? According to the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS), the definition of civil society is “*the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interests*”.<sup>90</sup> It is citizens rather than organisations that form the building blocks of society, particularly in post-conflict countries where – for a variety of political and practical reasons – registering organisations is not a straight forward task and social action takes shape through informal associations just as much as registered ones. As explained elsewhere, this paper takes the inclusion of civil society to mean the inclusion of voices from non-governmental organisations, both national and international in reach, local traditional leaders, academics, local community groups, women’s groups, youth groups, disabled groups, internally-displaced people, as well as church groups and other religious groups.

In defining civil society, it is also important to note that civil society can play an overtly political role in society. As one member state interviewed for this report noted, “*All six countries on the PBC’s agenda suffer from civil society fragmentation*

*and politicisation. There are conceptual misunderstandings and economic agendas. People look for ways to make a living so they create an NGO.*”

This negative perception of civil society, coupled with the ‘watch dog’ role that civil society plays in many countries holding their national governments to account, is one of the reasons some member states claim they are less open to civil society inclusion in UN policy debates, including in the PBC. However, even while playing such a political role or epitomising the economic conditions of their time, civil society still serves as a mirror to the social and political changes in the country, and in this way, their views remain valuable and representative.

With such a wide range of groups and persons to consider, determining who is relevant and who is not is a complicated task. Engaging with civil society therefore requires strategic partnerships, the development of which is more an art than a science. Keeping in mind the objective of ensuring conflict sensitivity in the analysis, planning and implementation of peacebuilding work, the navigation of the civil society landscape is made a little easier. In order to identify and connect with local civil society and practitioners ahead of meetings or during policy debates, member states and UN staff can consult with INGOs such as the New York Peacebuilding Group, who can convey messages from their partners or directly facilitate the participation of local representatives.

In country, practicalities such as spoken language, access to a common base of information and proximity to the discussion venues are further considerations. A mechanism where all, including the most reclusive associations, are invited to take part in dialogue and feedback processes<sup>91</sup>

90 Heinrich, V., and Khallaf, M. (2006), *Assessing Civil Society in Cyprus and Across the World*, The Civil Society Index, CIVICUS, available at [www.civicus.org/view/media/AssessingCivilSocietyinCyprus\\_AcrosstheWorld.pdf](http://www.civicus.org/view/media/AssessingCivilSocietyinCyprus_AcrosstheWorld.pdf)

91 Casting the net widely can also have a multiplier effect on the distribution of key messages from the UN regarding its peacebuilding activities, effectively supporting its outreach efforts with local communities.

and are then left to self-select according to their capacity can work well; so long as there is someone responsible for both ensuring that information reaches remote areas and for bridging capacity gaps between different NGOs, groups and associations. Using the principle of conflict sensitivity to guide the selection of participants, this person could also take on the logistics of bringing rural-based participants to meetings in capitals, arrange video links and conference calls, and otherwise ensure that important civil society messages are conveyed in all peacebuilding discussions.<sup>92</sup>

Another practical mechanism for involving multiple civil society members in country is the creation of a multi-stakeholder platform. This mechanism received a lot of support from local civil society involved in this research, particularly in the CAR. Multi-stakeholder platforms are useful because they can address power disparities between participants through the very act of participation; weaker parties build their capacity 'by doing' and both weaker and stronger parties learn to trust each other as common projects take off and the extent to which they depend on one another increases. Such platforms also create the basis for better problem-solving analysis, as a boarder set of viewpoints are considered, as

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92 For the purposes of monitoring this participation, the PBF's Gender Marker template could potentially be adapted to measure the variety of civil society participation. The UN bodies implementing PBF-funded projects in country could report on whether they included one, two or three different civil society sectors in their discussions. One sector is the professional sector such as human rights and peacebuilding NGOs; another is made up of practitioners such as mediators, traditional leaders, healing facilitators and religious groups; and the other of social groups such as associations of women, youth, disabled, rural workers, internally-displaced and academics. Adapting the Gender Marker into an Inclusivity Marker, the UN agency would tick one of three boxes: Marker I could mean the inclusion of only one of these sectors in discussions; Marker II, the inclusion of two sectors; and Marker III the inclusion of all three.

well as better plans of action, as decisions and strategies are more widely accepted and better coordinated. The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, for example, is a platform where civil society, governments and donors have come together to generate better analyses and strategies for helping self-appointed fragile countries transition out of conflict. The fragility index and the donor-led 'New Deal' are, respectively, good examples of each.<sup>93</sup>

The downside of multi-stakeholder platforms is that they tend to have a slow start, rely heavily on a 'champion' and depend on the existence of good communication channels as well as funding for the implementation of action plans. There is a need to back-up common goals with concrete action in order to build momentum in the platform, so the pressure to yield dividends early on is rather high. Preliminary analysis is thereby needed on whether a collective approach to a peacebuilding problem is really necessary over and above a participatory one. Given limitations on the PBF's capacity as a multilateral donor (its need to raise \$100 million USD per year, for example), such an initiative would most likely need to be taken up by a bilateral donor, perhaps one already supportive of the PBF's activities in a particular country in question. The PBF, and the UN more broadly, could then make use of the multi-stakeholder platform as a resource for enhancing the analysis, planning and implementation of its projects.

## 2. Engaging civil society in New York

In the field of peace and security, civil society actors have developed innovative mechanisms

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93 See International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, website available at <http://www.pbsdialogue.org/>

for influencing the work of the UN's primary body responsible for these affairs, the Security Council. As the PBC is a subsidiary body of the Council, it is interesting to note developments in the relationship between the Council's membership and civil society over the past decade as it has, perhaps surprisingly, gone against the grain. Much can be learned from these existing mechanisms, as they provide models for how the PBA might better engage with civil society.

The NGO Working Group (NGOWG) on the Security Council<sup>94</sup> has managed to progressively encourage member states on the Security Council to interact with civil society on a regular basis. Since its inception in 1997 – on the heels of talks about Council reform resulting from a sharp increase in Council activity in the post-Cold War era – the NGOWG on the Security Council has organised dialogue sessions between member states on the Council and civil society representatives to discuss issues on the Council's agenda. Having started off with meetings on an ad hoc basis to discuss topics such as the Council's annual report, the NGOWG on the Security Council now meets Security Council Ambassadors on a regularly scheduled basis to discuss various work streams of the Council through informal, off-the-record meetings.

The invitation for dialogue has also been extended to senior UN staff, such as the heads of UN agencies and Under Secretary-Generals. The NGOWG on the Security Council has around forty INGO members, is managed by a steering group, and is supported by a permanent Coordinator. Member states also reportedly seek regular engagement with the NGOWG on the Security Council beyond the customary minimum of one briefing during their Council presidency. This shows the extent to which diplomats

value civil society input, particularly should read perspectives from those with partners in countries on their agenda, and just before major policy debates and decisions.

In interviews for this report, it was noted that before the creation of the NGOWG on the Security Council, there was very little regular interaction between INGOs and member states on the Council, and now it is a given that these meetings will take place. The Security Council does not have formal guidelines for civil society consultation but from the perspective of INGOs, the working group fulfils that need. One INGO expert interviewed said that no one remembers when this was not the case, it is now just understood that all Security Council members will meet with INGOs through the NGOWG. Another INGO expert who was involved in the early days when it was difficult to even get reports of the Council's work issued publicly, said: *"it's unbelievable how they meet with us now."*

Using a similar organisational title but a different model of engagement is the NGOWG on Women, Peace and Security.<sup>95</sup> Originally coming together in 2000 as a loose group of INGOs who had called for a normative change in how the Council deals with women during conflicts and in post conflict situations, the NGOWG on Women, Peace and Security was formally formed once they achieved their principle goal of obtaining a Security Council Resolution on women and conflict, namely UNSCR 1325 (2000).<sup>96</sup> With the financial support of around a dozen member states and foundations and three full-time staff – an Executive Coordinator, a Research Manager and a Programme Assistant – the NGOWG on Women, Peace, and Security now monitors the

94 See NGO Working Group on the Security Council, website available at [www.ngowgsc.org/](http://www.ngowgsc.org/)

95 See NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security, website available at [womenpeaceandsecurity.org/](http://womenpeaceandsecurity.org/)

96 See Security Council resolution 1325, S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000), available at [www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-RES-1325%282000%29-E.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-RES-1325%282000%29-E.pdf)

implementation of UNSCR 1325 around the globe through regional and national action plans, builds the capacity of women peacebuilders and produces detailed analysis on countries on the Council's agenda from the perspective of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive peacebuilding.

As a practical means of influencing member states and UN policy makers on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, the NGOWG on Women, Peace and Security also developed a Human Rights Defenders Programme where women from countries on the Security Council's agenda come to New York to meet with Council diplomats ahead of mandate renewals in order to advocate for their issues to be dealt with in the new mandates. For the safety of the local participants involved, the programme is not widely publicised but it does enjoy regular funding from member states committed to the mission of UNSCR 1325 - reflecting the importance member states give to hearing directly from local women peacebuilders in a timely manner.

Civil society engagement with the Security Council also benefits from the existence of the Arria Formula. Created in 2000, this mechanism has allowed diplomats to arrange informal briefing sessions with NGOs and outside experts on issues pertinent to the Security Council. These meetings became so useful to the Security Council that they are formally encouraged in the Council's Working Methods Handbook.<sup>97</sup> In recent times however, the mechanism has been criticized as expedient but too narrow as meetings are called quickly, usually regarding a country in crisis, and though officially public, according to those interviewed for this report, the Council's penholder for that country tends to invite NGOs who push for its agenda. Changes

in the diversity of voices heard through this mechanism is another example of the shrinking space for civil society at the UN. Despite these recent limitations, some interviewed suggested that an Arria-type Formula mechanism could be established for the PBC to facilitate civil society engagement in a more formal way.

Finally, it is worth noting that there have been positive examples of NGO engagement with high-level processes recently with the creation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda after the Rio +20 conference. In particular, the Open Working Group mechanism in the post-2015 process reversed some of the negative trend with civil society being able to attend the Open Working Group Sessions and special interactive dialogue sessions being organised between civil society actors and member states during inter-governmental negotiations. The Non-governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) is also actively seeking civil society speaking roles for the interactive dialogue sessions with member states during the official negotiations. Although the NGLS services only ECOSOC-accredited NGOs, it is worth scoping the possibility of it extending its reach to local peacebuilding NGOs, many of whom do not have the necessary focus or documentation for ECOSOC-accreditation.

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<sup>97</sup> See United Nations Security Council, *Working Methods Handbook*, S/PV.5601, p. 13, available at [www.un.org/en/sc/about/methods/arriaformula.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/methods/arriaformula.shtml)



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## Recommendation

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*Ensure and enhance the independence and capacity of civil society to engage with the UN in local peacebuilding and in international policy debates.*

***How:***

- Donors and the UN should provide financial and technical support for the creation of multi-stakeholder platforms in country to discuss peacebuilding initiatives. Participation should include national and local government, INGOs, the UN, and a broad spectrum of local civil society.
  - International donors should directly support local civil society networks and platforms that are already in existence.
  - In New York, donors should support the work of civil society actors in creating a the New York Peacebuilding Group and member states and UN experts should take advantage of its networks and expertise when seeking input for UN policy debates on peacebuilding.
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## Civil society engagement in the 2015 review: a way forward

Civil society actors in New York have been creative in the ways in which they have engaged with the 2015 review of the PBA, as well as in how they have bridged this process with the reviews of UN Peace Operations and UNSCR 1325. The Terms of Reference for the 2015 review of the PBA does not make any explicit reference to the inclusion of local communities or perspectives, civil society, women, or gender, although the modalities document outlining how the review should be conducted does include reference to interviews with civil society.<sup>98</sup> One of the early reasons for the creation of the New York Peacebuilding Group was to work collectively to try and bring local perspectives and expertise into the PBA review process.

**The diversity of membership in the New York Peacebuilding Group allows it to reach out to a wider group of partners in different sectors, beyond those normally engaged in policy debates.**

Starting in early 2015, the New York Peacebuilding Group, working in partnership with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), reached out to the Secretariats of both the Peace Operations and the PBA reviews in order to signal its willingness to engage on issues related to peacebuilding and the inclusion of civil society in both processes.

The New York Peacebuilding Group is currently composed of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the International Peace Institute, Interpeace, PAX, Peace Direct, the Quaker United Nations Office, and World Vision.

This led to two off-the-record meetings in February 2015 between New York-based civil society actors and representatives from both the High-Level Panel on UN Peace Operations as well as the Advisory Group of Experts for the PBA review. All of the panel members who participated in these meetings welcomed the views of civil society and noted that they were particularly interested in getting the perspectives of communities who are impacted by the work of UN peace missions.

The New York Peacebuilding Group and NUPI then planned a three day consultation in March 2015 for civil society partners from countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to come to New York and spend time sharing and learning from each other as well as preparing key messages to be delivered to representatives of both review panels. After sharing their messages in person during the meetings, they summarised their key points into one document and it was submitted as the New York Peacebuilding Group's official input for both review processes. The document is provided as an Appendix at the end of this report.

Feedback from the civil society participants in this process was that, for many of them, it was their first opportunity to engage with the UN at a policy level. They felt heard and empowered to renew their engagement with the UN locally. Feedback from the panel experts was also positive and it was noted to

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<sup>98</sup> *Supra*, note 13.

the Group that the consultation was a unique and effective way to gather a diversity of perspectives on the UN's role in peacebuilding.

As part of the review, members of the AGE are making country visits to Timor Leste, Burundi, South Sudan, CAR and Liberia. Following the New York consultations, the New York Peacebuilding Group and other civil society organisations have assisted the AGE with identifying local partners for them to meet in order to hear community perspectives on peacebuilding and the UN's work.



PHOTO: QUNO/VIVIEN CHE

*Peacebuilder from Timor Leste, Luis Ximenes, shares his experience during a three-day civil society consultation with UN staff, diplomats and members of the High-Level panels on the UN's Peace Operations Review and Peacebuilding Architecture Review. The meetings were held at the Quaker House in New York.*

For example in March 2015, several members of civil society in Burundi met with members of the AGE during their country visit in a session that was organised by the local NGO Biraturaba, with support from an INGO, the American Friends Service Committee. The members of the AGE heard the opinions of civil society representatives on the status of the national reconciliation process, including demobilisation and reintegration, the funding allocations for peacebuilding activities by the PBF, the need for greater civil society monitoring of these activities, and the shrinking space for civil society action in Burundi, including the space for consultation with UN actors. Feedback from both the civil society actors and the UN was that this was a positive experience and that new and different perspectives came to light from the fact that the participants were not the 'usual' civil society partners who the UN engages with in Burundi.

This process initiated by the New York Peacebuilding Group and partners in setting up mechanisms where local perspectives can be taken into account in a UN policy process, is a model the UN could learn from. The diversity of membership in the New York Peacebuilding Group allows it to reach out to a wider network of partners in different sectors, beyond those normally engaged in policy debates. The time spent during the consultation working with the local participants preparing them for the meeting with the review panels was also exemplary, as it gave everyone an opportunity to learn from each others' local knowledge and build on each others' strengths and experience. These are the types of approaches that are needed in order to enhance the UN's ability to learn from and listen to different civil society groups.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

*“Is the PBC filling the gap? The question is if the PBC is the answer for addressing the gap”*

*INGO representative interviewed for this report*

It is well recognised by actors both inside and outside the UN, that given the PBA's current mandate and make up, the political blockages by member states, and the challenges in its relationship with other parts of the UN engaged in peacebuilding, it is very difficult for the Architecture to live up to the original vision of the High-Level Panel on *Threats, Challenges and Change*: that of a robust tool in the UN's toolkit to fill the gap in the UN's response to violent conflict. Meaningful engagement with civil society offers the PBA a way forward. Civil society can bring local perspectives to the otherwise state-led political work of the PBC. It can bring local knowledge and capacities to the analysis, strategising, implementation and monitoring of PBF-funded projects, and it can assist the PBSO in supporting a more transparent and coherent PBC and PBF. The challenge is how to ensure that this engagement is not ad hoc, and yet does not compromise the PBA's flexibility as a UN mechanism. Ultimately, the PBA's improved engagement with civil society actors will help to build a UN approach to peacebuilding that is more relevant, catalytic and strategic. It is important to note that although these recommendations specifically target the PBA, the need to address the issues of transparency, strategic partnerships, convening power and mutual accountability in UN peacebuilding will likely remain no matter what emerges from the 2015 UN Peacebuilding Review process.

### 1. Transparency

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*One of the benefits in the way the PBA was initially set up, particularly the PBC, was that it could be more creative and flexible than other UN member state bodies already in existence. Ten years on, while the potential for creativity and flexibility remains a unique advantage for the PBC, the lack of transparency and public communication on its day to day operations such as its monthly schedule, its working methods, its meeting materials and outputs, continues to hamper the ability of civil society and other actors outside of the UN to engage meaningfully or to hold the PBC to account. A more transparent PBA means that there will be more support both inside and outside the UN for its work.*

#### Recommendation

The Organisational Committee of the UN Peacebuilding Commission should review its working methods with an eye to promoting transparency and accountability in the PBC's day-to-day operations, while not losing sight of the benefits of a flexible member-state mechanism. Clear guidelines and processes for the communication of the PBC's activities, such as publishing a monthly calendar of work and circulating meeting materials in advance to relevant NGOs, should be established in consultation with civil society actors. This process would also offer an opportunity for all stakeholders to engage with the PBC around how it does its work and would foster a greater sense of shared commitment to the PBC's mission. As part of this process, the terms of reference for the Chairs of the Country Specific Configurations should be updated and made public.

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## 2. Strategic Partnerships

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*The inclusion of civil society in meetings, strategies and evaluations, can bring an additional tool to the PBA's toolbox. Civil society actors will bring different perspectives, approaches and feedback from communities who are the ones most impacted by the PBA's work. At the moment, this inclusion is ad hoc and a better mechanism needs to be created to ensure that civil society is engaged systematically in the PBA's work in a flexible way. The provisional guidelines which outline civil society participation in meetings of the PBC have never been reviewed or evaluated since their adoption in 2007. As a result, these guidelines do not reflect developments in the work and functions of the Commission, or in the evolution of civil society's role in peacebuilding both locally and globally. These guidelines, while public, are not widely known or utilized by member states in the PBC or by civil society actors either in New York or in country.*

### Recommendation

The PBA should systematically include civil society in its activities and seek to build strategic partnerships with civil society actors, both in New York and in country, to enhance its policy debates and contribute to strategic planning and assessments. To facilitate this, the Organisational Committee of the UN Peacebuilding Commission should revisit the 2007 Provisional Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society in Meetings of the PBC. This process would offer a key opportunity for all parts of the PBA to re-engage with civil society in New York and in PBC-mandated countries, and would result in greater transparency and the fostering of trust and mutual collaboration, which would benefit all actors. It would also help to establish clear guidelines for information sharing and communication between the PBA, civil society and other actors outside of the UN.

## 3. Convening Power

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*Peacebuilding is inherently political, and the PBC as an inter-governmental body is a political forum. This political forum, coupled with the PBC's convening role and its diverse membership, offers a unique space for the discussion of many different issues related to peacebuilding as well as creating the space for different perspectives to be heard and considered. Creating the space for debate and discussion on the impact and linkages between UN peacebuilding, the role of national governments, and most critically, local peacebuilding by civil society actors, is the 'value added' of the PBC. This approach can also be a mechanism where concerns about a country relapsing into conflict can be discussed and links made between UN peacebuilding and the UN's role in the prevention of violent conflict.*

### Recommendation

The PBC, through its Organisational Committee, Country Specific Configurations and Working Group on Lessons Learned, should take advantage of its convening power to regularly bring together different stakeholders, beyond national governments, in order to create the space for dialogue, support social cohesion, and bring attention to countries that may be at risk of relapsing into violent conflict. The PBA can work with existing civil society networks in New York and in country to identify a diverse range of participants, including women and youth. The inclusion of civil society and focus on local knowledge in these types of discussions would be essential to understanding the full context of a country situation and identifying key drivers of violence. The PBC, in its advisory role, could then share the analysis and

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strategies that emerge in these discussions with the Security Council for countries on its agenda. In country, when Configuration Chairs visit their national counterparts, they should seek to use their convening power to bring together all actors, in particular civil society, including women's groups in meetings with government and the UN in order to create the space for open and inclusive dialogue.

#### 4. Mutual Accountability

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*One of the PBA's key roles is to hold governments and the UN to their commitments by helping to coordinate their peacebuilding strategies. Mutual accountability is not a new concept for the PBA, however in the past it has mainly referred to accountability between national governments and the UN. National ownership is also not a new concept for UN, and by default, it refers to the level of ownership national governments feel they have over peacebuilding processes. It may infer, but does not actively accommodate, the views of the people in those countries. A broadened definition of accountability and ownership must be taken if the PBA is to live up to its original vision as a catalytic and relevant peacebuilding actor and help address the deficit of trust between local communities and the UN.*

##### Recommendation

In promoting mutual accountability, the PBC should explicitly include a role for civil society and local communities in ensuring that both their governments and the UN fulfil their commitments on peacebuilding priorities and the implementation of activities. This means including civil society in the analysis of national issues, the setting of national priorities and the implementation and monitoring of peacebuilding projects. To facilitate this, the Peacebuilding Fund should require UN agencies in receipt of its funds to consult with civil society actors while developing their project proposals, actively include civil society in the monitoring and evaluation of these projects, and earmark funds for re-granting to local civil society organisations.

In its work with governments to identify national peacebuilding priorities, the PBC should include the creation of a National Action Plan for women's participation and leadership in decision-making and the protection of women and girls, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325.

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## A further set of concrete recommendations for the PBC, PBSO, PBF and donors:

### 1. Ensure the transparency and accountability of PBA policies and working methods that relate to civil society inclusion.

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- The PBA should review and update the *Provisional Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society in Meetings of the PBC* in close consultation with civil society.
- The PBA should support and implement all of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on *Women's Participation in Peacebuilding* and UNSCR 1325 by, amongst other things, including the creation of National Action Plans for women's participation and leadership in decision-making and the protection of women and girls in its work with governments on the setting of national peacebuilding priorities.
- The PBA should institute working methods that foster transparency and greater engagement with civil society, in particular women and youth.

### 2. Ensure the inclusion of civil society in key discussions at policy arenas of the PBC and at various points in the strategising and monitoring of PBC activities.

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- The Chairs and members of the OC, CSC, and WGLL should directly consult with civil society on a regular basis and facilitate their participation in meetings in New York, as well as establish opportunities for regular engagement in country.
- Information about meetings and country visits (both before and after) should be made available widely well in advance and civil society expertise, particularly women and youth, should be sought out to help shape the agenda and priorities, and to ensure that meeting logistics enable/do not limit their participation.
- The PBC should establish a strategy to create feedback loops for civil society monitoring and assessments of its activities both in New York and in country.
- The PBC should work with INGOs in New York to help identify local partners and ensure that a diversity of perspectives is included.
- Chairs of the CSCs should ensure that National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, and the active participation and leadership of women in peacemaking and political processes, are part of a country's joint agreement with the PBC.
- The WGLL should organize an annual session to update itself on recent developments in peacebuilding practice, with civil society as key participants.

### 3. Ensure transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the PBA to civil society.

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- The PBSO should recruit or appoint a PBSO staff person at the P3 or P4 level to serve as a Civil Society Liaison Officer and actively seek and coordinate civil society input into various PBC processes including OC meetings, CSC meetings, WGLL meetings, policy debates and cross-learning exercises. This person should also be tasked with tracking the inclusion of civil society actors, including women and youth, in
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different UN peacebuilding-related processes and their outcomes.

- The PBSO should institutionalize the position of a gender-sensitive peacebuilding expert by opening a permanent post at the P4 or P5 level for this role.
- The PBSO should work with new members of the OC to orient them to the role of INGOs and civil society in New York and in the field.

#### 4. Ensure that civil society is closely engaged in strategic planning, implementation and assessments of PBF-funded projects.

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- The PBF should proceed with directly funding INGOs, based on its 2014-2016 business plan, including pre-qualifying INGO partners who can re-grant to smaller peacebuilding actors.
- The PBF should require UN agencies receiving funds to strategically include civil society actors in the elaboration of project proposals and encourage UN agencies to partner with civil society outside of the capital.
- The PBF should hold an annual information session with civil society actors in New York and regularly consult civil society groups in country as part of feedback on PBF-funded projects implemented by various UN agencies.
- The PBF should track the inclusion of civil society in PBF-funded projects and report on the outcomes.
- The PBF should ensure that a broad section of civil society is part of all Joint Steering Committees in country.
- The PBF should include additional representatives and local practitioners from civil society in its Advisory Group, particularly those experienced in gender-sensitive peacebuilding and youth, to provide practical, country-specific input on PBF-funded projects.

#### 5. Ensure and enhance the independence and capacity of civil society to engage with the UN in local peacebuilding and in international policy debates.

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- Donors and the UN should provide financial and technical support for the creation of multi-stakeholder platforms in country to discuss peacebuilding initiatives. Participation should include national and local government, INGOs, the UN, and a broad spectrum of local civil society.
  - International donors should directly support local civil society networks and platforms that are already in existence.
  - In New York, donors should support the work of civil society actors in the New York Peacebuilding Group and member states and UN experts should take advantage of its networks and expertise when seeking input for UN policy debates on peacebuilding.
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## APPENDIX

### Civil Society Recommendations for the Reviews of UN Peace Operations and the UN Peacebuilding Architecture

*This briefing note summarizes the recommendations and inputs made by civil society representatives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America who participated in a civil society consultation on the UN Peace Operations Review and the UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review from March 11-13, 2015 in New York. The civil society representatives took part in a preparatory workshop at Quaker House, gave presentations directly to members of the Independent High-Level Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture in a roundtable discussion and were featured speakers in a panel event at the International Peace Institute. These meetings were organised by the New York Peacebuilding Group and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI).*

#### *Key recommendations:*

- **Community Engagement Strategies**
    - The Security Council should mandate the development and implementation of community engagement strategies for all UN Peace Operations as part of a UN mission's overall political strategy. These strategies should be developed in cooperation and consultation with local civil society actors, and shared and reviewed with local communities on a regular basis.
    - The UN Peacebuilding Commission should develop engagement strategies with civil society for each of its Country Specific Configurations in order to assist the chair and its members in ensuring that community peacebuilding perspectives and activities are part of UN peacebuilding strategies at the national level as well as policy discussions in New York.
  - **Local Peacebuilding Assessments**
    - Reports of the Secretary-General on UN Peace Operations and UN Peacebuilding should provide analysis of the diversity of perspectives and priorities across different groups within countries. To aid in this, UN missions (or UN Country Teams in the case of non-mission settings) should regularly carry out community-based assessments or perception surveys in these countries, preferably through local civil society networks if they are already in place, and provide regular feedback to communities on the UN's mandate and activities on peace and security.
    - The UN's Peacebuilding Architecture (PBC, PBF, PBSO) should integrate local views on peacebuilding in all of its work through the use of community-based assessments or perception surveys in countries it is engaged with in order to be able to be responsive to, and inclusive of, local perspectives when identifying national peacebuilding priorities and evaluating projects that are funded by the PBF.
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## *Summary of main issues raised in three key areas of concern:*

- **Community Engagement and Peacebuilding**

- The trust deficit between the UN and local populations must be addressed. In many areas, local populations do not have a clear understanding of the role of UN peace operations in their communities because there is no direct interaction. Communities perceive that the UN is there to help the government or the armed groups and not the people. This is further exacerbated when communities do not see accountability for crimes committed by peacekeeping troops.
  - Youth should be seen as positive agents of change for peace, rather than victims or troublemakers. Youth are not just the future, but also the present, and should be considered active peacebuilders and peacemakers in their communities, rather than a 'livelihoods' problem or recruitment threat.
  - Concerted efforts must be made to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 by involving women in peace and security initiatives at all levels. 1325 includes provisions for participation, promotion and protection of women during armed conflict, but it is inconsistently implemented on the ground. National Action plans or strategies should be developed and implemented.
  - Inclusion of all under-represented populations, such as people with disabilities and religious, ethnic, linguistic minorities, is essential for sustainable peace. Exclusion of any group will seriously hamper peace and security efforts.
  - Lessons learned from previous engagements must be taken into account. A great deal of documentation already exists on what makes for effective engagement with local partners for peace operations and peacebuilding, yet the political will to put these into practice is lacking.
  - Put people back in the center of the UN. Institutional rigidity often prevents putting people as the main focus, but without addressing the needs of the people, there will be no lasting impact.
  - Reconciliation is essential for traumatized populations to heal and make progress. Sustainable peace requires transformed relationships at all levels. It is equally important to address this with government officials and senior leaders as it is difficult for people suffering from trauma to effectively lead their country. They, too, need healing, and the UN could help provide space for this.
  - The breadth and depth of civil society must be identified and recognized. There are significant local peace resources, capacities and programmes, and they must be empowered to sustain peace. Issues raised by local civil society actors that might be critical of government should not be ignored by the UN but rather be acknowledged and addressed.
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- Responding to Local Peace and Security Needs

- Multidimensional problems require multidimensional solutions. Although there may be threats that require a military response, political dialogue is necessary to address the root causes of conflicts and find sustainable solutions. Furthermore, securitized approaches to peacebuilding neglect the power of local solutions that do not rely on the presence of armed actors in communities. A long-term military response is not sustainable. Hence, a human security approach is necessary to ensuring sustainable peace and security.
- There are existing civil society-led efforts to identify and address community security needs, but the UN is not constructively engaging with them. Small-scale, local efforts are more sustainable than top-down, externally-imposed activities. Engaging with communities is not only an opportunity for the UN to learn about their security needs, but also to explain in practical terms what the UN can and cannot do.
- Local civil society has an important monitoring and accountability role that is not always put to use. Local civil society has firsthand knowledge of the situation on the ground, and can contribute to early warning systems and also monitor the impact of peacebuilding activities throughout project cycles as well as once the UN leaves.

- Broadening Local Participation and National Ownership

- Context-specific conflict analysis is rarely done, and even then, local peacebuilders' perspectives are not incorporated. Conflict analysis informed by local voices is necessary before, during, and after UN peace operations to understand the context, comprehensively address the challenges, and ensure there is lasting impact and 'Do No Harm'.
  - Even when community engagement is conducted, the voices of people who are not linked to any institution are not always reflected. UN strategies that do not reflect and address the concerns of community members are not sustainable.
  - Youth and women are heard only in relation to a narrow selection of issues. As vital segments of society (often composing the majority in post-conflict countries), youth and women should be consulted in the analysis and design phases of all peacebuilding initiatives and not only with regards to the implementation of gender or livelihood projects.
  - UN strategies lack long-term vision. In some countries, the UN has been present for decades but is still making short-term plans and strategies. The high staff turnover rate also affects sustainability of peace operations.
  - Community engagement should be continuous and systematic rather than ad hoc and sporadic. Often, community members are consulted one time and do not hear how their input is used, making them reluctant to participate in future consultations. Effective information feedback loops in conjunction with consultations are critical.
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- Although it can be difficult, access to rural areas is necessary to ensure the inclusion of all voices.
- There is no monitoring mechanism for international expenditures for peace. Once the UN has completed a project or activity, there is no system in place to monitor its effectiveness. While communities have firsthand knowledge of the impact, there is no established feedback mechanism for them to share this with the UN.
- Statebuilding often focuses on developing physical infrastructure but does not address how it will be used. Enormous resources are expended on buildings, cars, and other material items but there is minimal effort made to identify how these efforts will benefit local communities, and they are often misused (or not used at all) while the challenges they were meant to address remain.
- The UN sometimes tries to play too many roles and does not succeed at any of them. The UN should focus on how it can uniquely contribute to improving state-society relations, and identify ways to support existing, community-led mechanisms rather than creating new systems

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\* The New York Peacebuilding Group is a gathering of organisations (the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the International Peace Institute, Interpeace, PAX, Peace Direct, the Quaker United Nations Office, and World Vision) engaged on various peace related issues at the UN and in country. Since September 2014 they have actively worked together to strengthen the role of civil society at the UN on peacebuilding as well as create space for dialogue and collaboration with the UN and member states.





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