



Sustaining Peace in Practice: Lessons Learned from Liberia and Papua New Guinea

February 2020



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About this paper

This submission shares the key takeaways from the IPI-GPPAC joint research on the operationalization of the Secretary-General's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the country level in Liberia and Papua New Guinea. It provides an overview of the United Nations' preparedness to address complex situations and serves to inform the 2020 Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as well as the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review.



Introduction

In line with the Secretary-General's 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustainable peace (S/2018/43), the project assessed implementation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace across four key pillars: operational and policy coherence between all United Nations actors in headquarters and in the field; United Nations leadership and capacities to institute a common approach to sustaining peace; partnerships with local, national and regional actors; and financing for peacebuilding.

The contexts of Liberia and Papua New Guinea are examples of complex situations of transition and political shifts. The assessments conducted in these countries emphasize the importance of strengthening policy coherence; recruiting resident coordinators with the right skill sets; building the capacity of government and local peacebuilders; ensuring continuous and flexible funding; and working with the Peacebuilding Commission to raise and maintain political attention in New York.

Pillar 1: Operational and Policy Coherence

Operational and policy coherence requires joint action by all stakeholders, including the national government, the UN system, international financial institutions, regional organizations, bilateral donors, and civil society. Inclusive fora for dialogue among these stakeholders can provide a platform to discuss who may have the comparative advantage in specific areas and give those most involved an opportunity to contribute toward more integrated programming. This requires a recognition that the United Nations may not always be the leading actor in all contexts.

The starting point for operational and policy coherence should be an integrated context analysis developed by the UN Country Team in partnership with international, regional, national, and local stakeholders. This analysis should form a clearly articulated, overarching vision for how to sustain peace in the country. All United Nations entities should then use this integrated context analysis as the basis for their programming, to guide the advancement of the United Nations cooperation frameworks and national development plans.

GOOD PRACTICE: INTEGRATED PLANNING IN ACTION

In Liberia, the process to develop the United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF) is an example of efforts by the United Nations to ensure operational and policy coherence with national priorities. The drafting of the 2020-2024 UNDAF was led by a steering committee, where the core team included the UN Country Team, the government of Liberia, and civil society organizations. This joint effort allowed for the integration of evidence base from the Common Country Analysis (CCA), the Integrated Transition Plan, the Liberian Peacebuilding Plan, and the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index for Liberia in the UNDAF and for close alignment of the UNDAF with the government's new national development plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). The 2020-2024 UNDAF¹ shows a commitment by the United Nations to ensure its work is in line with the government goals and nationally agreed upon priorities.

Nevertheless, integrated risk analysis and greater coordination between different entities remains a challenge. Each United Nations agency has a different mandate and target beneficiaries and therefore views risk differently. Moreover, at times, various agencies still act independently, which has the potential to undermine integration.

The United Nations should, at a minimum, develop commonly agreed processes for all stakeholders—including the government and international development and financial partners—to share, access and discuss their separate analyses to ensure a common understanding of risks and jointly determine which actors are best placed to respond to them.

Pillar 2: United Nations Leadership

Senior United Nations leadership at the country level has a significant influence on setting the direction for operationalizing peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Resident coordinators have a particularly important role as they are “responsible for coordinating development strategies that are risk informed and help to build peaceful and inclusive societies.”² Therefore, recruiting resident coordinators with the right skill set -- including the acumen to manage complex political relationships, and an understanding of the interactions between peace and security, development and humanitarian programming

¹ UN. (2019). *Government of Liberia, UN and Development Partners Sign 5-Year Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Support of the Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development*. Retrieved from: <https://liberia.un.org/en/13412-government-liberia-un-and-development-partners-sign-5-year-sustainable-development>

² UN. (2018). *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SG%20report%20on%20peacebuilding%20and%20sustaining%20peace.As%20issued.A-72-707-S-2018-43.E.pdf>

-- is a key determinant of success. In dynamic environments, the balance of skills required may change. Ensuring that RCs are adequately staffed and resourced can enable them to effectively scale up efforts to sustaining peace.

GOOD PRACTICE: THE RIGHT SKILL SET FOR AN EMPOWERED RESIDENT COORDINATOR

The role of the current resident coordinator in Papua New Guinea highlights the importance of having leaders who understand how to ground the United Nations' work in a clear political strategy, to coordinate within the UN Country Team, and to engage with international partners, while simultaneously reaching out to New York to access political and financial mechanisms. Prior experience of working at United Nations headquarters has provided the resident coordinator with a strong understanding of the United Nations' conflict prevention and peacebuilding tools and how to use them. Under the current resident coordinator, the UN Country Team has shifted toward a more integrated, whole-of system approach, with support to development, governance, and humanitarian relief grounded in a clear political strategy.

Resident coordinators, however, face a number of challenges related to the development system reforms. First, the multiple and overlapping reporting lines pose a particular hurdle. Second, the offices of resident coordinators lack reliable financing or sustainable staffing, which translates to valuable time being spent on logistics and fundraising rather than on programming. RCOs require sustainable financing modalities to maintain needed staff capacities, e.g., on political analysis, following transition.

The role of resident coordinator needs to be strengthened. A clear, dedicated budget line should be created within the UN Country Team's budget to ensure the sustainability and empowerment of resident coordinators. Also, strengthening the role of the resident coordinator through the development of obligatory reporting and developed communication structures can create incentives for sustainable funding for resident coordinators in the long-term.

Pillar 3: Partnerships

It is widely acknowledged that peacebuilding efforts need to be locally and nationally owned with regional and international support. A diverse group of stakeholders including international and regional actors, the national government, religious leaders, civil society, and the private sector are essential to advance efforts to prevent conflict and build peace.

GOOD PRACTICE: UNITED NATIONS LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In the Highlands area of Papua New Guinea, the resident coordinator office established a Community Engagement Working Group to coordinate common messaging on the humanitarian response, mass communication campaigns, and inter-cluster dialogue on community engagement activities. Following this, the Working Group later established a Community Response Map, an inter-cluster platform for tracking communities' needs and their perceptions of the humanitarian response. This engagement paved the way for further community-level peacebuilding programming in the wake of the humanitarian response, with these efforts helping to ensure that humanitarian programming was grounded in the work and strategies of local actors.

Systematic engagement with local peacebuilders requires a consolidated effort to address consistent challenges. First, local peacebuilders struggle to differentiate between different United Nations agencies; others feel confused and frustrated after trying to engage, citing overly bureaucratic institutions and unclear or overlapping mandates. A high level of staff turnover within the United Nations further adds to the frustration as meaningful relationships are frequently lost. Moreover, funding relationships are also difficult, as donors, including the United Nations, often require financial and organizational documentation many local peacebuilders simply do not have. Finally, the United Nations support is usually project-specific, creating yet another barrier for small civil society to sustain their work in the long term.

In order to build systematic engagement with local peacebuilders, the United Nations must work to address these obstacles by developing ways to better inform local peacebuilders on the appropriate methods to engage with relevant United Nations funds and programs, and developing alternative funding modalities that enable local peacebuilders to obtain and manage funds long-term.

Pillar 4: Financing for Peacebuilding

There is a clear need for more international support in peacebuilding financing, as use of innovative tools like pooled funds are rarely used. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is one arm of the overall United Nation peacebuilding architecture, created to “mobilize emergency financing and bridge the vast divide between funding needs and funding availability.”³ It provides rapid, flexible contributions for interventions seen as too ‘risk laden’ for more conventional funding streams,⁴ and is particularly useful during mission transitions, when it can prevent or lessen the impact of a financial cliff once peacekeeping funding ends.

³ A/69/968-S/2015/490

⁴ Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, para. 113.

GOOD PRACTICE: UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY FUND IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The PNG UN Country Fund is a good example of a pooled fund as it helps streamline contributions and decrease transaction costs. This particular Fund has a strong track record in strengthening coherence and coordination; broadening the contributor base; improving risk management and leverage; empowering the resident coordinator and providing incentives for collaboration.

PBF funding remains a small portion of overall requirements in transition environments. To expand and deepen its donor pool, the PBF should continue to strengthen how it demonstrates its impact. At the same time, other sources of risk-tolerant financing are required. Earlier planning on transition financing would help ensure greater predictability, and anticipate likely funding gaps for peacebuilding priorities. The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has demonstrated its value in sustaining international attention, highlighting peacebuilding priorities and identifying financial gaps. The PBC, therefore, has proven to be an invaluable partner in building bridges between different parts of the United Nations system, peacebuilding partners and donors in-country.

To sustain attention on complex situations and emphasize the ongoing challenges, the Peacebuilding Commission should continue to explore flexible formats for meetings on transitions, both thematic and country-specific, and bring in national and local voices.

Conclusions and Key Recommendations

As the UN Country Teams and the United Nations headquarters work to operationalize peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the local level, this submission highlights several opportunities for action:

At the National Level:

1. United Nations Operational Support:
 - create **thematic working groups or sustaining peace contact groups** composed of heads of United Nations agencies that review, discuss, and set peacebuilding priorities;
 - (in partnership with relevant stakeholders) coordinate the development of commonly agreed processes to **enable a coherent and integrated context analysis** and use it as the basis for relevant programming and strategies;
 - ensure that any efforts to address crisis and respond to violence are **leveraged to support ongoing work in other fields** (i.e., humanitarian, peacebuilding, development).
2. United Nations Leadership:
 - Encourage **mandatory reporting** of all United Nations individual agencies to the resident coordinator and improve formal communication structures;
 - **Increase awareness** and understanding of the United Nations' work within a broader range of stakeholders in-country and support capacity-building to engage with the United Nations.
3. Partnerships:
 - Strengthen **systematic engagement** with and provide **inclusive platforms for dialogue** among regional organizations, national partners and local peacebuilders in developing joint strategies and programming.
4. Financing for Peacebuilding:
 - Support **the development of country funds** that allow donors to pool their financial contributions, while allowing for the UN Country Team's flexibility to respond to the highest-priority needs and adapt programming in response to specific needs;
 - Continue **strengthening relationships between donors and the government** by holding regular dialogues with donors, international financial institutions, as well as others.

At the United Nations Headquarters Level:

1. United Nations Operational Support:
 - develop **system-wide guidelines for joint risk analysis** and guidance to UN Country Teams on how to translate such analysis into coherent, actionable plans.
2. United Nations Leadership:
 - Ensure that resident coordinators have **the right skills set and background** to ensure operational and policy coherence of United

Nations in-country action with national priorities and existing strategies and policies;

- Ensure **reliable funding and sustainable staffing** for the resident coordinator offices;
- Recognize **both its own limitations and the political leverage and capacity** of the United Nations as well as other actors, and work to harness these to ensure all needs in the country are met.

3. Partnerships:

- Ensure that the Peacebuilding Commission effectively promotes and sustains attention on countries in transition and creates **inclusive space for a wide range of stakeholders** at all levels to participate in meetings on specific country situations.

4. Financing:

- Concentrate the support from the Peacebuilding Fund towards **filling the gaps that appear as a result of a comprehensive analysis** of the available funding streams;
- Create **a clear dedicated budget line** within the UN Country Team's budget to ensure the sustainability and empowerment of resident coordinators;
- Develop **alternative funding modalities** that enable local peacebuilders to obtain and manage funds long-term;
- Provide **platforms for engagement** with a diverse catalogue of United Nations agencies, funds, and programs, as well as the IFIs related to these issues.