Operationalising the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in Sudan

Building lasting peace in the midst of political uncertainty

GPPAC
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United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations

Acknowledgements

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is grateful to the government of the United Kingdom for funding this research initiative.

The authors would like to thank the many UN officials, the donor community representatives, national government officials, local peacebuilders, and peacebuilding experts who shared their insights and perspectives during virtual interviews and focus group discussions. The authors are grateful to the individuals who provided feedback on earlier drafts of this report and supported the revision process, particularly the Clingendael Institute.

This report was developed in partnership with Justice Call – a GPPAC member in Middle East and North Africa and SUDIA – Sudanese Development Initiative, and input from MAMAN – a Sudanese member of the MENA Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (MENAPPAC).

Operationalising of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in SUDAN:
Building Lasting Peace in the Midst of Political Uncertainty

March 2022

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Abbreviations

AU	African Union
PSC	AU Peace and Security Council
CCA	UN Common Country Analyses
CEWARN	IGAD's Conflict Early Warning Mechanism
DOS	UN Department of Operational Support
DPO	UN Department of Peace Operations
DPPA	UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DSRSG/HC/RC	UN Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General/ Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator
DCO	UN Development Cooperation Office
IFI	International Financial Institutions
PDA	Peace and Development Advisors
PMT	Programme Management Team
SFP	Sudan Financing Platform
SRSG	UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SLF	State Liaison Functions
SFSP	Sudan Family Support Program
SPPSP	Sudan Peacemaking, Peacebuilding and Stabilisation Programme
STG	Sudanese Transitional Government
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
JPA	Juba Peace Agreement
KU	Khartoum University
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator Offices
UNCT	UN Country Teams
AFP	UN agencies, funds and programmes
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner of Refugees
UNISFA	UN Interim Security Force for Abyei
PBF	UN Peacebuilding Fund
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSSC	UN System Staff College
UN	United Nations
UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNAMID	United Nations- African Union Mission in Darfur
WB	World Bank

Executive Summary

Sudan is currently characterised by a **highly fragile political, economic, and security situation,** with most peacebuilding activities being frozen. The volatile political situation, the ongoing intercommunal conflicts, and the ever-growing humanitarian crisis happening simultaneously during a delicate transitional process should keep Sudan in the international spotlight. In this critical moment, a joint action of all UN actors and the donor community at the global and country levels is similarly of crucial importance to support Sudan's transition and sustain peace in the country.

This study aims to provide an initial assessment of the progress and impact of the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda at the country level, by looking specifically into the case of Sudan. The analysis has been structured around the four shifts called for by the UN Secretary-General in his 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, namely leadership, accountability, and capacity; operational and policy coherence; partnerships; and financing.

Leadership, accountability, and capacity

The UN approach in Sudan has reportedly been insufficient in ensuring clear division of roles, increasingly Khartoum-centric, and not sufficiently agile to adapt to the fast-paced developments of Sudan's transition. The lack of clarity has also generated internal competition among UN entities – particularly with regard to UNITAMS' leadership role, which has been partly resisted by other UN agencies. Besides leadership issues, the UN's peacebuilding efforts have also been affected by a modest peacebuilding capacity across the UN system in Sudan. A limited programmatic focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding further hampers the effectiveness of the UN's peacebuilding efforts. Yet, positive efforts have been undertaken to improve such capacity, both by training existing staff in conflict analysis and by recruiting new peacebuilding staff, including in the peripheries. The UNHQ and UNSC have also made available significant support, particularly with respect to the transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS.

To address challenges and capitalise on successes, the Sudan Peacemaking, Peacebuilding and Stabilisation Programme (SPPSP) process needs to be finalised (once a legitimate government is formed) to ensure delivery of the UNITAMS mandate and clarify the division of roles between the UNITAMS, the RCO, and UNCT. Further, to ensure continuity and sustainability of efforts, there also should be a concrete plan to transfer its political functions to the RCO given its long-term presence in the country and UNITAMS' exit-oriented approach. This requires **the right balance in terms of leadership roles** between UNITAMS and UNCT. In this, the UNSC can support the dialogue and mandate renewal of UNITAMS to highlight these priorities, while the Peacebuilding Commission can ensure that the SPPSP process benefits from possible expertise and resources available to this forum.

To ensure the UN's capacity for **a fast-paced response to the changing circumstances**, more needs to be done primarily in the areas of staffing, expertise, and decision-making. As the UN presence in Sudan has been growing its capacity in terms of advancing the implementation of the peacebuilding and sustaining peace agenda, the UN could build on the positive developments, including efforts by the PBF and UNDP to improve peacebuilding capacity in relation to the Sudanese context through trainings in conflict analysis, placements of peacebuilding experts within all UN AFPs and in the peripheries, and the increased support provided by UNHQ to the UN presence in Sudan. Subsequently, sufficient capacity should be made available to the UNCT to regularly review strategic documents and adapt the specific indicators in light of developments in the country. This should be compounded by efforts to strengthen consultations and partnerships with local actors in the peripheries.

Operational and policy coherence:

While UN peacebuilding efforts in Sudan have been extensive, their coordination has reportedly been limited, with instances of overlap, lack of information sharing, and competition over funds. The lack of a

coherent leadership and strategy on both the UN's and the Sudanese side (even before the October 2021 events) has exacerbated this issue. The recently established senior position tasked with improving coordination between UNITMAS and UNCT and a series of joint peacebuilding assessments and the establishment of an inter-agency working group on peace have the potential to enhance the coherence of UN peacebuilding efforts. Further, the finalisation of the SPPSP process could bring UNITAMS and the UNCT behind a shared set of objectives and assist national peacebuilding priorities.

Operational and policy coherence could be strengthened by explicitly **identifying one entity in charge of coordinating UN peacebuilding efforts**. During the transition period, this entity could be UNITAMS, whose mandate includes assistance to peacebuilding. However, in the longer term it would be advisable to select an entity within the UNCT for this role, given its permanent placement within the national context and the accumulated trust between UN agencies and the Sudanese population. In terms of capacity, this entity should feature a combination of peacebuilding expertise and in-depth knowledge of both the Sudanese political context and the challenges related to coordination within the UN system. Funding for this entity could be made available through the Sudan Peace Fund's Peacebuilding and Stabilisation Window.

To address some of the issues that have so far hampered UN peacebuilding efforts, the entity in charge of peacebuilding efforts may focus on promoting **information sharing** on peacebuilding within the UN's in-country presence, optimising existing coordination mechanisms and ensuring adequate focus on peacebuilding at both the national and sub-national levels, and developing a specific result framework tracking progress on the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda (to be embedded in broader results frameworks associated with the SSPSP and/or any future country framework).

In order to improve coordination between UN entities and the Sudanese government, it is important to **work with the Sudanese government to develop a coherent and inclusive** approach to peacebuilding at the national and state levels. This could include drafting of a government-owned national peacebuilding strategy and establishing the Peace Commission and the state level entities as national and state-level bodies in charge of coordinating the peacebuilding efforts of the Sudanese government. When trying to strengthen their coordination with the Sudanese government, UN entities may bear in mind the success of the SLF's Joint 5+8 Technical Committee, which was reportedly successful in bringing together different UN actors (UNAMID/UNCT) and the government. The replication of this mechanism outside of Darfur has already been recommended from previous evaluations.

Generally, the biggest challenge to peacebuilding in Sudan is the absence of a government partner. The UNHQ peacebuilding partners need to conduct **an assessment of the tools and resources available to the UN at the country leve**l to fundamentally rethink the approach to peacebuilding in this kind of context.

Partnerships for peacebuilding:

The UN engagement in Sudan, with **its broad ecosystem of partners** based on their complementary capacities is a welcome development that enables joint analysis, programming and information sharing, improved financial support, and impactful implementation at the country level. There is some room for improvement, however, when it comes to the operationalisation of these partnerships. The opportunity to use the UN's platform to connect regional actors, international financial institutions and civil society that work on early warning and early response, and other diverse stakeholders having common objectives, could be one area for improvement. An assessment of existing partnerships is also required to identify and address challenges that incite competition and mistrust, including the alignment around common concepts and clear division of roles.

It is important that the UN conducts **a mapping of active peacebuilding actors and mechanisms** at all levels, from local to national to sub-regional and regional, in order to identify entry points for UN support to existing efforts, as well as to determine areas where the UN may need to step back and provide a platform for other actors to come together around their common objectives. One such avenue could be to create a space to connect Khartoum University and IGAD on early warning. The mapping will help unpack additional suitable opportunities.

Further, the creation of **the multi-stakeholder and inclusive partnership platform** for coordination and dialogue messaging among all peacebuilding actors is another critical opportunity that the DSRSG/RC/HC is well-suited to undertake. This platform would help with the realignment and development of structural modalities among the WB and the UN and regional organisations and the UN on peacebuilding- and transition-related common objectives.

In regard to the partnership with civil society, the UN needs to s**trengthen the bottom-up dimension of the UN-civil society partnerships**. As such, the UN presence in Sudan would be advised to improve consultation mechanisms with civil society actors, developing a formal and formalised strategy for civil society engagement, and committing to more inclusive partnerships. Particular attention should be devoted to strengthening consultations and partnerships with actors in Sudan's peripheries, who tend to be even more excluded than their Khartoum-based counterparts. Increased efforts are crucial to strengthen the UN's capacity to cater to the needs of conflict-affected populations in these areas. Once

a legitimate government is restored, the UN engage with the government to capitalise on and revive the long history of indigenous peacebuilding and early warning mechanisms which already include the tools, mechanisms. The UN and the donor community more broadly should also play a role in amplifying these initiatives via the platforms available to them.

Financing for peacebuilding:

Peacebuilding funding has reportedly been insufficient and in need of better quality (predictability and sustainability) to cover Sudan's needs. This situation is further exacerbated by the absence of specific peacebuilding markers for donor allocations, making it hard to determine the exact amount of allocations. The PBF (the main financing tool to date) has featured a mixed performance, with positive elements (healthy competition among UN agencies, low overhead costs, some flexibility) and less positive ones (short-term and long chain of beneficiaries). Beyond this, the effectiveness of overall peacebuilding financing has been negatively affected by limited coordination among peacebuilding donors, resulting in overlaps and inefficiencies. While there have been ad hoc coordination efforts, there has been no systematic platform bringing together all relevant stakeholders to enhance coordination. Limited donor flexibility in adapting to Sudan's evolving circumstances has also negatively impacted peacebuilding efforts, as currently most of existing peacebuilding resources to Sudan are frozen.

Since resource mobilisation to support peacebuilding efforts in Sudan has proved to be a complex and challenging endeavour, the **donors should increase their financial commitments** to peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, including by using a peacebuilding marker while maintaining conflict-sensitivity requirement in all international aid in Sudan. For both the UN and the donor community, this would entail a shift away from the current predominantly humanitarian approach, towards an approach that supports Sudan's political transition once a way has been found to put the transition back on track. At the same time, however, the UN presence in Sudan should be careful in managing expectations, as UNAMID's drawdown has left gaps that are unlikely to be filled by UNITAMS, which has relatively scarce resources.

In order to **improve the quality of existing financing mechanisms**, the UN presence in Sudan, as well as the donor community, could consider shortening the long chain of recipients of UN funding, developing concrete mechanisms to support local partners in a more direct fashion. The donors and UN funds can consider lowering the eligibility requirements and increasing the timeline for peacebuilding programming beyond the 18-month limit. Supporting pooled fund mechanisms can be a way to ensure that resources are flexibly allocated; available to diverse stakeholders, including both UNITAMS and civil society; and not earmarked to further contribute and complement the efforts of the PBF and Sudan Peace Fund.

It is also critical to establish **formal coordination mechanisms** involving all relevant stakeholders, including the UN, the Sudanese government, international donors, and implementing partners. This will ensure that opportunities like the Peacebuilding and Stabilisation Window under the Sudan Peace Fund, each their full potential. Ideally, there will be one pooled fund mechanism that supports the implementation of the UN's strategic framework. However, such a mechanism will still exist within a broader array of donors, requiring further coordination. Once the transition is back on track, the UN could also consider options to strengthen the engagement of the Sudan International Partners Forum on peacebuilding. Coordination with or through this forum could lead to more awareness of the priorities and funding cycles of different donors, thus allowing for better planning of assistance.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and background

This section provides an overview of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda, briefly summarising the four shifts called for by the UN Secretary-General in the 2018 Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace and outlining a framework for our analysis of the implementation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Sudan.

1.1 The UN Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda

The United Nations, having been established in the wake of two world wars, serves an overall purpose of supporting its Member States in preventing and resolving armed conflicts in a peaceful manner, and achieving lasting peace.[1] **Peacebuilding** as such has always been a central component of the UN's work. Peacebuilding has gained renewed traction since the early 2000s, when the world was confronted with growing numbers of civilians being killed and injured in conflict, and millions of people being displaced and lacking basic safety and security as a result of armed conflict. Acknowledging that armed conflict and violence are increasingly complex, dynamic, and protracted, the 2015 review of the UN's peacebuilding architecture[2] set out a new framework of 'sustaining peace' in order to strengthen the UN System in such a way that it can better serve its Member States in their efforts to prevent armed conflict and lasting peace.

The concept of **sustaining peace** was formally adopted by the Member States in the 2016 dual General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions (A/70/262[3] and S/RES/2282[4]) and translated in the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda. This agenda sets out four shifts required to strengthen the UN's ability to better support peacebuilding efforts.[5]

The basic premise of the agenda is that its implementation requires a whole-of-system approach that incorporates all three pillars of the UN System – human rights, peace and security, and development – to come to a more holistic, long-term, multidimensional approach for preventing armed conflict, mitigating its impact when it does occur, and supporting governments and their citizens in achieving lasting peace.[6] In order for the UN to work along the lines of a whole-of-system approach, the UN Secretary-General has underlined that shifts are required in **operational and policy coherence** to strengthen support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.[7]

The Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda is a long-term vision that requires institutions, norms, attitudes, and capacities to continuously adapt in response to the context changes at the country level. In order for the UN to deliver on this, the Secretary-General has emphasised that a shift is also required in terms of the UN **leadership, accountability, and capacity** in supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace.[8]

The agenda is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by national peacebuilding

1 United Nations, United Nations Charter, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter.
2 United Nations "The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations peacebuilding Architecture", 29 June 2015, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/07/300615_The-Challenge-of-Sustaining-Peace.pdf.
3 United Nations, "Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, on 27 April 2016 (A/70/262)", 12 May 2016, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_262.pdf
4 United Nations, "Resolution 2282 (2016) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7680th meeting, on 27 April 2016", Accessible at: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2282.pdf.
5 These shifts tie the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda closely to other on-going UN-system wide processes, including the operationalization of the UN Reforms and prevention agenda. See for instance, "The Vision of the UN Peace and Security Pillar", 2019, Accessible at: https://reform.un.org/sites/reform.un.org/files/vision_of_the_un_peace_and_security_pillar.pdf.
6 ODI, Metcalfe-Hough, McKechnie, and Pantuliano, "Delivering the UN "sustaining peace" agenda: Four areas for action by Member States", September 2017, Accessible at: https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/11750.pdf.
7 United Nations, "The 2018 Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707)", 18 January 2018, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/report-secretary-general-peacebuilding-and-sustaining-peace
8 Ibid.

stakeholders in an inclusive manner and with the support of the UN and the donor community. In order for the UN to deliver on this final element of the agenda, the Secretary-General has underlined that shifts are required in terms of **partnerships and financing** for peacebuilding and sustaining peace.[9]

1.2 Implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda

While the general principles of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda are clear enough, there is no simple step-by-step guide on what it means to implement the agenda in practice. Implementation comes down to system changes that are highly dependent on contextual factors, capacities and resources available, and political agendas, among other factors. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify some key action points per shift as identified by the UN Secretary-General.

The required shifts in UN leadership, accountability and capacity in supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace are in part driven by the ongoing processes of repositioning **the RCO** and strengthening **the UN Country Teams (UNCT)** within the UN System and ensuring **collaborative leadership** in the context of transition. The adjustments that are being made to the RC System allow for the UN leadership at the country level to strengthen the linkages between the policy/political and the programming/operational roles of the UN. Acknowledging that support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace is inevitably influenced by political settings means that UN peacebuilding activities have to be accompanied by engagement from UN leadership in high-level and political dialogues. The focus on strengthening the capacities of the RCO and the UNCT to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace is amongst others operationalised by **bringing in relevant advisors and surge capacities** (e.g., peace and development advisors and gender advisors); creating **dedicated positions for civil society engagement** (civil society liaisons) and forming work groups inclusive of civil society; the provision of **training in conflict/context analysis**; strengthening the ability to adapt programming to rapidly changing contexts by conducting **regular assessments and evaluation with a focus on learning** rather than accountability; and ensuring **sufficient spread of UN locations and offices** across the country, to counter a centre-periphery bias.

Shifts in **operational and policy coherence** to strengthen support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace are driven by the UN Secretary-General's ambition to decrease fragmentation of efforts and strengthen coherence, both at the strategic and operational level. A key element in this regard is the ambition to work from **a coherent and overarching country strategy** that ensures that a peacebuilding component is applied across **the Triple Nexus**. The strategy should bring the policy/political and the programming/operational role of the UN in-country together to support peacebuilding activities that are aligned with priorities identified by national peacebuilding stakeholders (government and civil society, specifically including women and youth). Such a coherent strategy (most often captured in the Cooperation Framework – or its predecessor the UN Development Assistance Framework) should be built on a joint understanding of the key issues to address. For this, **CCAs** should be conducted, which should include an analysis of the **main drivers of conflict and instability** in fragile and conflict-affected settings. A key element in strengthening operational coherence is to ensure that the UNCT is working from **a joint understanding of the capacities available** (and required) to work on peacebuilding. This requires the conduct of a capacity assessment, on the basis of which a **clear division of labour** within the UNCT is agreed upon, which takes into account the complementarities in terms of how various UN entities can best support national stakeholders in their peacebuilding processes – and which capacities are required to do so.

Shifts in partnerships for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in part are related to the ongoing processes to strengthen the complementarity between UN peacebuilding efforts and those of **regional organisations and international financial institutions** (especially the World Bank) by engaging regularly in **joint analysis, planning, and information sharing** – in addition to working in direct collaboration. They also relate to the requirement for the UN to develop **participatory systematic and institutionalised approaches** that involve civil society and local communities, including **community-engagement strategies** in consultation with national and local stakeholders, particularly youth and women's groups.

The required shifts in financing for peacebuilding and sustaining peace finally relate to the call of the UN Secretary-General to ensure that UN peacebuilding efforts have **adequate, predictable, and sustained financing**, including through the use of innovative financing mechanisms and pooled funds. As much as possible, the resources available for peacebuilding action are unearmarked and provided for a longer term to ensure that support is **responsive, flexible, and predictable**. In addition, in line with the

9 Ibid.

acknowledgment that sustainable peace requires meaningful engagement of local stakeholders[10], the UN should engage in **authentic partnerships with local peacebuilders** (i.e., move beyond an extractive relationship by treating them as partners rather than implementers). The UN should also support civil society with simple and user-friendly grant application templates and selection/reporting criteria.

1.3. Monitoring progress on implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda

The UN System currently monitors progress on the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda via the Secretary-General's reports on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.[11] These reports provide an overarching picture of where the UN stands in the process, and reflect to a certain extent on progress achieved on the outputs of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda. From the Secretary-General's 2020 Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/74/976-S/2020/773[12]), it is reported that "of the 42 recommendations, 35 are in various stages of implementation, 3 have been completed and 4 related to financing are pending". Currently, monitoring systems for the UN Reforms are also being created (A/75/202[13]; A/72/684[14]).

While the action on the global indicators is a positive development that needs to be maintained, there is **less clarity about the progress made in implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda at the country level** – and about the impact of implementing this agenda on advancing country-level peacebuilding processes and objectives. The 2 July 2020 Peacebuilding Commission Chair's letter speaks to this gap and encourages the UN to measure the success of peacebuilding and sustaining peace 'in terms of impact rather than outputs'.[15] Overall, the lack of adequate analysis of the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda at the country level creates a gap in knowledge about the extent to which it makes a difference to those experiencing conflict and the ways the implementation can be strengthened in line with shifting national priorities.

This brings us to the **rationale of this study**: Based on the premise of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda, it is assumed that if UN actors continuously work to respond to the four shifts called for by the UN Secretary-General, and if the donor community adequately supports these efforts through quality and quantity of financing, peace could be sustained long-term at the country level. In order to assess the effectiveness of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda, our analysis looks at the progress of the implementation and impact of the agenda at the country level.

1.4. Research objective and approach

This research project is a first attempt to fill the knowledge gap mentioned above by providing an **initial assessment of the progress and impact of the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda** in Sudan.[16]
The overarching objective of the research is **to support more impactful peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts at the country level**. This can be broken down into two sub-objectives:

1. to assess how UN actors at the country level have worked to implement the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda and, in this process, how their efforts have contributed to advancing country-level peacebuilding processes and objectives;
2. to engage with national and global stakeholders to formulate ways in which UN actors, in collaboration with the donor community, can strengthen the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda at the country level so as to advance national peacebuilding processes and objectives.

On the basis of insights gathered through a process of desk research, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions with key stakeholders within the UN System, the donor community, the national government,

10 *See for instance* the 2020 dual UN Resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/RES/75/201-S/RES/2558) that recognize local peacebuilders as critical partners in peacebuilding; and the 2020 UNSG Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/74/976-S/2020/773) which states that peace is more sustainable when peacebuilding efforts are locally owned, led and implemented.

11 *For further information see* United Nations, "The 2018 Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707)", 18 January 2018, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/report-secretary-general-peacebuilding-and-sustaining-peace; United Nations, "The 2019 Report of the Secretary General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace", 30 May 2019, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/a_73_890_e.pdf; *and* United Nations, "The 2020 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and sustaining peace", 30 July 2020, Accessible at: https://undocs.org/S/2020/773.

12 United Nations, "The 2020 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and sustaining peace", 30 July 2020, Accessible at: https://undocs.org/S/2020/773.

13 Ibid.

14 United Nations, "Report of the Secretary-General on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda", 21 December 2017, Accessible at: https://undocs.org/A/72/684.

15 United Nations, "Letter dated 2 July 2020 from the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (A/74/935)", 7 July 2020, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/a_74_935-2009035e_1.pdf.

16 This country case study is part of a wider project, containing three case studies (Somalia, Sudan and Mozambique), on the basis of which one synthesis policy note has been produced.

and the local peacebuilding community, this case study explores the progress made in the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in Sudan – as well as some of the initial effects of the implementation thus far.

This report first presents a brief overview of the peacebuilding context in Sudan, briefly summarising the current state of affairs in the country, and highlighting key achievements and outstanding challenges in terms of peacebuilding and sustaining peace (section 2). Then, the report provides an initial assessment of the progress made in terms of implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in Sudan by reflecting on the required shifts as identified by the Secretary-General (leadership, accountability, and capacity – section 3; operational and policy coherence – section 4; partnerships – section 5; and financing – section 6). For each of these sections, the report first presents a brief descriptive overview of the key structures, frameworks, and instruments in place relevant for the required shift, followed by an analysis of how these have contributed to the UN's ability to implement the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in Sudan.

On the basis of that, the study provides practical recommendations for the UN and the donor community working on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Sudan on how to further the implementation of the agenda, feeding into a broader process of drawing lessons to inform the policy discourse behind peacebuilding and sustaining peace (section 7).

2. Background: Peacebuilding in Sudan

This section provides an overview of the peacebuilding context in Sudan, briefly summarising the history of peacebuilding and the current state of affairs in the country, and highlighting key achievements and outstanding challenges towards the operationalisation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the country level.

Since its independence in 1956 and across three parliamentary democracies – each being short-lived and toppled by a military takeover – **political strife and civil war** have plagued Sudan, prolonging the country's quest for sustaining peace. After various eruptions of violence and deep political and economic crises, a widespread non-violent struggle led to the 2019 ouster of the latest authoritarian leader of Sudan for over 30 years, President Omar al-Bashir.[17] Shortly thereafter, Sudan entered **a three-year transition period**, whereby a transitional government – backed by an uneasy military coalition with ties to the previous regime and a wide array of political forces across the capital and the peripheries – was supposed to lead the country towards democracy.

Sudan's fragile **transition collapsed** on 25 October 2021 when the Sudanese military unilaterally seized power, deposing the civilian-led cabinet of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdouk.[18] This move was met with a sustained popular protest movement against the Military Council, which was suppressed with the use of force.[19] The international community reacted accordingly, with the UN Secretary-General and the Friends of Sudan Group[20] publicly denouncing the takeover, and the World Bank freezing USD 2 billion of international development assistance grants allocated to Sudan. The combination of domestic and international pressure led to the reinstatement of the deposed Prime Minister in November 2021 through **an agreement on power-sharing** between the Prime Minister and the Military Council.[21] Yet, the November agreement did not succeed in providing renewed stability to the country. Sudanese citizens, backed by a wide array of political forces, continued their mobilisation on the streets. The Sudanese Professionals Association released a statement viewing the deal as 'a false attempt to legitimise the recent coup and the authority of the Military Council'. These protests continued to be even more violently suppressed, leading to the resignation of Prime Minister Hamdouk in January 2022. As a result of the political developments in Sudan, peacebuilding and development activities were and remain frozen, and all advances achieved through the process of transition have been inevitably aborted by the takeover.

Sudan is currently characterised by a **highly fragile political, economic, and security situation,** as the country is lacking a functioning cabinet and preoccupied with regular protests. Moreover, the country's peripheral regions, most notably Darfur and the Two Areas,[22] have witnessed continued instability, due to the persisting presence of armed rebel groups and increasingly frequent episodes of violence and looting, particularly in Darfur.

2.1 Main achievements

The ouster of Bashir and the advent of the joint military-civilian Sudanese Transitional Government (STG) in 2019 laid the ground for the signing of the **Juba Peace Agreement** (JPA) in October 2020. The deal, inked by the STG and a coalition of armed rebel

17 Crisis Group,' Sudan's U.S. Terror Delisting: Too Little, Too Late?', 2 November 2020, Accessible at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/horn-sudans-us-terror-delisting-too-little-too-late.

18 Aljazeera, 'Sudan security forces arrest PM Abdalla Hamdok, ministers', 25 October 2021, Accessible at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/25/sudans-abdalla-hamdok-under-arrest-report.

19 UN OHCHR, 'Sudan: UN expert deplores deadly military response to protests', 2 November 2021, Accessible at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27752&LangID=E.

20 The Friends of Sudan Group includes Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Italy, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, UAE, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union.

21 DABANGA, 'Sudan opposition: "El Burhan-Hamdok agreement a false attempt to legitimise coup"', 22 November 2021, Accessible at: https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-opposition-el-burhan-hamdok-agreement-a-false-attempt-to-legitimise-coup.

22 *Note* that the Two Areas refers to the security of the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states in the southern region of Sudan. *For further information see* CFC, Sanders, "Sudan's Southern Rebellion: The "Two Areas", October 2012, Accessible at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CFC_MB_Sudan%20Crisis_TWO%20AREAS_Final.pdf.

groups, promised to cease the recurrent conflicts that had characterised Sudan's peripheral regions for decades. The JPA has invited increased development and peacebuilding international support, gradually but cautiously, shifting a long-standing humanitarian focus of all partners. As such, it was strongly welcomed by the UN Security Council (UNSC), which defined it as 'a significant opportunity for comprehensive and sustainable peace in Sudan'.[23] This agreement included important measures concerning issues like political representation, security sector reform, and land management. The reforms promised to have a positive impact for the Sudanese population, including in the previously marginalised peripheries.[24]

To support the Sudanese transition, the UNSC mandated the **UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)** in June 2020.[25] Headed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Volker Perthes, UNITAMS has sought to support not only Sudan's peace process, but also the country's broader political processes and the functioning of the STG. During moments of tension, UNITAMS has offered its good offices to support dialogue and mediation. For instance, following Hamdouk's January 2022 resignation, SRSG Perthes formally launched a UN-facilitated intra-Sudanese political process. In consultation with the Sudanese and international partners, the process aims at finding a way out of the current political crisis.[26] Although political forces were initially welcomed quite coldly inside Sudan, at the time of writing the SRSG is entertaining meetings with different sides to support intra-Sudanese dialogue.[27]

2.2 Outstanding challenges

Despite the transition's achievements, the past years have been challenging for peacebuilding in Sudan. While raising hopes for peace, **the JPA and its implementation featured a number of challenges**.[28] The question of the JPA's inclusiveness was questioned as two key rebel groups from Sudan's peripheries – SPLA/M-N Abdel Aziz al-Hilu and SLA/M Abdel Wahid al-Nur – were included neither in the negotiations, nor in the deal itself.[29] The JPA is seen as serving political elites. The JPA does have strong provisions for addressing the root causes of the conflict, but the leadership was unable to articulate a clear strategy that international partners can adapt to.[30] Moreover, its implementation has occasionally exacerbated instability, particularly in the country's peripheries, where violent incidents have recently increased and the JPA's effectiveness has been called into question.[31] In addition, the full implementation of the JPA has faced significant hurdles due to a lack of funding.[32] The lack of a clear strategy and the non-inclusive development and implementation of the JPA have been referred to as 'a deliberate strategy to stall the peace process and governance'.[33]

The troublesome implementation of the JPA has been compounded by – and closely related to – the **widespread political divisions and instability across the country** that made it increasing complex for the UN to navigate and systematically engage around. Political powers are emerging in the peripheries and in Khartoum, without being linked to each other.[34] In Khartoum, the arrival of former rebel groups as new political actors in the process of the JPA's implementation has added further complexity to Sudan's fractionalised political landscape.[35] For instance, the JPA features a wide range of political and

23 UN, 'Security Council Press Statement on the Juba Peace Agreement (Sudan)', 9 October 2020, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14323.doc.htm.
24 Rift Valley Institute, 'What next for the Juba Peace Agreement?', December 2021, Accessible at: https://riftvalley.net/sites/default/files/publication-documents/RVI%202021.12.15%20Sudan%20Rapid%20Response%201_Juba%20Peace%20Agreement.pdf.
25 DPPA, 'UNITAMS', Accessible at: https://dppa.un.org/en/mission/unitams.
26 UNITAMS, 'Statement attributable to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan – on the announcement of talks on Political Transition in Sudan', 8 January 2022, Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/en/statement-attributable-special-representative-secretary-general-sudan-%E2%80%93-announcement-talks-political.
27 UNITAMS, 'Consultations on Political Process in Sudan: Third Week of UN- Facilitated Consultations for a Political Process for Sudan Broadens Engagement of Groups from Various Sudanese States', 27 January 2022, Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/en/third-week-un-facilitated-consultations-political-process-sudan-broadens-engagement-groups-various
28 Rift Valley Institute, 'What next for the Juba Peace Agreement?', December 2021, Accessible at: https://riftvalley.net/sites/default/files/publication-documents/RVI%202021.12.15%20Sudan%20Rapid%20Response%201_Juba%20Peace%20Agreement.pdf.
29 Crisis Group, 'The Rebels Come to Khartoum: How to Implement Sudan's New Peace Agreement', 23 February 2021, Accessible at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/b168-rebels-come-khartoum-how-implement-sudans-new-peace-agreement.
30 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
31 Outbound: Tamrida "تمريدة", 'Implementing Peace: continuity and change in Sudan's political violence and protests after the Juba Peace Agreement', 3 October 2021, Accessible at: https://tizianacorda.medium.com/implementing-peace-db2065b2b7f4.
32 Crisis Group International, 'The Rebls Come to Khartoum: How to Implement Sudan's New Peace Agreement', 23 February 2021, Accessible at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/b168-rebels-come-khartoum-how-implement-sudans-new-peace-agreement.
33 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
34 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
35 Crisis Group International, 'The Rebls Come to Khartoum: How to Implement Sudan's New Peace Agreement', 23 February 2021, Accessible at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/b168-rebels-come-khartoum-how-implement-sudans-new-peace-agreement.

military actors, often with ties to foreign backers.[36] Respective political actors in the peripheries, gaining more power, can halt the implementation of relevant projects. Historically, such fractionalisation has often led to political impasses, which military leaders have repeatedly used as a pretext to seize power.[37] Such dynamics were replicated leading up to the October 2021 events.

Moreover, **the peripheries are characterised by rampant insecurity**, impacting UN peacebuilding activities in Sudan.[38] In the country's southwest, for instance, the recent spike in violence across Darfur has hampered the delivery of Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) projects.[39] Similarly, the deteriorating security situation in the Jebel Moon area has challenged the ability of UN agencies to assess or respond to the needs of the population. Further challenges faced by the UN when operating in Darfur are displayed in the recent looting of a World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse in al-Fasher and former UN-African Union (AU) Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) sites across the region.[40] In the southeastern periphery, the situation has been complicated by the inflow of refugees from Ethiopia's Tigray region, as well as by the border clashes between Sudan and Ethiopia over the al-Fashaga region. The developments at the border have also prompted the Sudanese government to request and obtain the withdrawal of over 3,000 Ethiopian soldiers from the 4,000-strong UN peacekeeping force in Abyei, a disputed area between Sudan and South Sudan.[41] Finally, **environmental challenges**, such as the 2020 flooding in eastern Sudan and other natural disasters, scarcity of natural resources, coupled with their targeted destruction,[42] and the **COVID-19**[43] pandemic have added further complexities to the peacebuilding efforts and even exacerbated the conflict at times. The most frequently cited environmental driver of the conflict in Sudan is the competition over oil and gas reserves, forests, land, and water.[44] During the pandemic, the Sudanese government has imposed restrictions on movement and travel, raising levels of community and domestic violence. At the same time, the UN Secretary-General has suspended all repatriations and new deployments of uniformed personnel, causing negative repercussions for the UN's capacity in Sudan.

2.3 The way forward

Despite its challenges, the JPA has provided opportunities to expand and improve political representation, security sector reform, and land management to bring peace and stability to Sudan. The military takeover of power in October 2021, coupled with pre-existing challenges, has led to setbacks in the JPA implementation and the UN's overall peacebuilding efforts in Sudan. Development and peacebuilding support – which had increased during the political transition – were largely frozen. The volatile political situation, ongoing intercommunal conflicts, and ever-growing humanitarian crisis happening simultaneously during a delicate transitional process should keep Sudan in the international spotlight. At this critical moment, a joint action of all UN actors and the donor community, at the global and country levels, is similarly of crucial importance to support Sudan's transition and sustain peace in the country.

36 For instance, members of the former Islamist regime of Bashir often retain ties with Turkey and Qatar, the Sudanese Armed forces reportedly benefit from the support of Egypt, while paramilitary forces like the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) are tied to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). By contrast, the civilian coalition of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) and former PM Hamdouk have benefited from the support of the European Union, the African Union and Ethiopia.

37 Oapen Access, 'Civil Uprisings in Modern Sudan: The 'Khartoum Springs' of 1964 and 1985', Accessible at: https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/25790.

38 UNs, 'As Sudan Makes Headway in Transition to Democracy, Security Council Delegates Urge Sustained Support for Tackling Causes of Intercommunal Fighting', 14 September 2021, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14633.doc.htm.

39 IOM, 'Sudan- Emergency Event Tracking Report Ag Geneina, West Darfur 014 (2021)', 25 April 2021, Accessible at: https://dtm.iom.int/reports/sudan-%E2%80%93-emergency-event-tracking-report-ag-geneina-west-darfur-014-2021; UNICEF has been coordinating with the Governor's office to prepare for peace conferences with the tribes and set up a Peace and Development Committee in Gereida. *For further information see* UNDP, 'PBF Project Semi- Annual Progress Report Sudan 2021: Transition to Sustainable Peace in South Darfur', Accessible at: mdtf.undp.org/document/download/27275.

40 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

41 The East Africa, 'Sudan: UN agrees to replace Ethiopian forces within UNISFA', 20 January 2022, Accessible at: https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/un-agrees-to-replace-ethiopian-forces-within-unisfa-3688112.

42 The Wilson Center, 'Examining Environmental Links to Peace and Conflict in Sudan: The UN Environment Programme's Sudan Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment', Event Summary, 21 September 2007, Accessible at: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/examining-environmental-links-to-peace-and-conflict-sudan-the-un-environment-programmes-sudan.

43 COVID-19 infected over 61,500 people in Sudan. WHO, *Sudan: WHO Coronavirus Disease Dashboard*, Accessible at: https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/sd.

44 Ibid; UNEP, 'Sudan', Accessible at: https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/disasters-conflicts/where-we-work/sudan.

3. Leadership, accountability, and capacity

This section reflects on the capacities available within the United Nations in-country leadership to support the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in such a way that country-level peacebuilding priorities and objectives can be advanced, including in the context of fragility and emerging crises.

The UN has **a considerable presence in Sudan and the disputed territory of Abyei**. There are 22 different UN agencies, funds, and programmes (AFPs) active in the country, working across the development cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and peace operations domains.[45] The representatives of these entities make up the UN Country Team (UNCT), whose aim is to ensure interagency coordination and decision-making at the country level.[46] The UNCT is led by the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General/ Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC). In addition to the UNCT, the UN presence features two missions: UNITAMS and the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).
The two missions have different mandates. Established in June 2020, UNITAMS is a special political mission with a countrywide mandate to support Sudan's democratic transition,[47] with a core priority of assisting peacebuilding efforts.[48] UNITAMS has recently replaced UNAMID, a large peacekeeping mission that had been active in Darfur since 2007.[49] The second mission – UNISFA – is a peacekeeping mission active in the Abyei demilitarised border zone between Sudan and South Sudan.[50] Although some of UNISFA's activities have contributed to peacebuilding efforts such as conflict prevention dialogues between tribal communities and capacity building on gender and human rights issues,[51] the force's mandate is silent on peacebuilding and focused on peacekeeping.

In Sudan, **the UN leadership is divided between two figures**. The first is the head of UNITAMS, SRSG Perthes. In line with UNITAMS' mandate, the SRSG's task is to support Sudan's current political transition, including assisting with peacebuilding efforts.[52] The role of the SRSG has been highlighted during the military takeover, as Perthes continues to coordinate UNITAMS' mediation efforts to facilitate dialogue with the relevant Sudanese actors. DSRSG/RC/HC Lo N'diaye is another key figure. In line with the UN's broader efforts to reform its in-country presence, the DSRSG/RC/HC mandate focuses on ensuring the coordination of the UN's various activities, including high-level political consultations with Sudanese stakeholders to advocate UN values, standards, principles, and activities.[53] In this mandate, peacebuilding is categorised as a cross-cutting issue as well as a specific priority.[54]

The UN's efforts in implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in Sudan have reportedly been constrained by a **division of roles that is clearer in theory than it is in practice**. In theory, UNITAMS is supposed to simply provide political guidance, with little to no practical role (the role allocated to the UNCT).

45 *For further information see* UN, 'The United Nations in Sudan', Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/about/about-the-un.
46 Of the 22 representatives of UN entities in Sudan, 19 are resident representatives, while 3 are non-resident. *For a complete list of the UN entities operating in Sudan see* UN Sudan, 'UN Entities in Sudan', Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/about/un-entities-in-country.
47 UNITAMS, 'UNITAMS Mandate', Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/en/mandate.
48 Ibid.
49 IPI, Daniel Forti, 'Walking a Tightrope: The Transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS in Sudan', February 2021, Accessible at: https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Walking_a_Tightrope_Sudan.pdf.
50 UNISFA, 'United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei', Accessible at: https://unisfa.unmissions.org/.
51 UNISFA, 'Ngok Dinka and Misseriya Peace Conference', 24 February 2021, Accessible at: https://unisfa.unmissions.org/ngok-dinka-and-misseriya-peace-conference *and* United Nations Missions, " Stregthening women's participation in peace and conflct resolution processes in Abyei", 4 June 2019, Accessible at: https://unisfa.unmissions.org/strengthening-women%E2%80%99s-participation-peace-and-conflict-resolution-processes-abyei.
52 UNITAMS, 'UNITAMS Mandate', Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/en/mandate.
53 UN Sudan, 'The Resident Coordinator Office', Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/about/about-the-resident-coordinator-office#:~:text=The%20Resident%20Coordinator's%20main%20responsibilities,on%20 behalf%20of%20the%20 UN.
54 UN Sudan, 'The Resident Coordinator Office', Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/about/about-the-resident-coordinator-office#:~:text=The%20Resident%20Coordinator's%20main%20responsibilities,on%20 behalf%20of%20the%20 UN.

In reality, the division of priorities is more difficult.[55] For instance, both UNITAMS and the UNCT, as well as some specific AFPs, have engaged in peacebuilding from the political and operational side. The broadening of activities necessitated UNITAMS to grow from a small mission into a mission with a couple of hundred participants. It is also worth reflecting on UNITAMS' highly political mandate, which essentially should develop a concrete plan to transfer its political functions to the RC Office (RCO) given its long-term presence in the country and UNITAMS' exit-oriented approach. To address some of these challenges, a new senior position has been created and tasked to coordinate between UNITAMS and the UNCT, including on the issues of peacebuilding. However, more needs to be done to ensure sustainability and continuity of efforts.

There have been **positive efforts to increase peacebuilding capacities** in both the UNCT and UNITAMS. At the UNCT level, the PBF Secretariat and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) are in collaboration with the UN System Staff College to develop *a tailor-made course on the application of conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity, and peacebuilding* specifically in the Sudanese context.[56] The course, to be delivered in July 2022, is set to target UN staff and their implementing partners in both English and Arabic, and aims to increase the capacity of UN agencies to access PBF funding and implement peacebuilding projects more effectively. This course was inspired by the reportedly low quality of existing proposals to the PBF when it comes specifically to conflict analysis. In 2021, Saferworld launched a *Conflict Sensitivity Facility* that supports both Sudanese and international organisations working in Sudan to understand how their work impacts conflict dynamics and how their activities can avoid harm and contribute to long-term peace.[57] Such initiatives have been further complemented by *the hiring of officials with specific peacebuilding experience and mandates* by UNDP (a senior peacebuilding advisor), UNICEF (a senior national peacebuilding advisor hired recently) and UNITAMS (a senior peacebuilding officer). The mission has also hired a Senior Gender Affairs officer tasked with providing gender-related advice to the SRSG.[58] UNITAMS has also increased its capacity by decreasing the delays in hiring staff, which currently comprises 269 staff members, a majority of whom speak Arabic and have experience in the Sudanese context.[59] Lastly, *the training for the RCO* has added a component dedicated to the activities across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (the Triple Nexus), with the aim of reinforcing its capacity to work more coherently across different domains.[60]

However, **peacebuilding capacities remain modest** in terms of both quality and quantity. The UN capacity mapping exercise conducted in late 2020 highlighted the need for additional capacities in the peacebuilding domain.[61] Peacebuilding experts are not present within all UN AFPs, requiring their consistent reliance on partners to provide such an expertise with limited knowledge of the agency's operations and goals.[62] Despite being a specific priority for the mission, as of February 2022, the UNITAMS peacebuilding unit in the Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General had one peacebuilding officer and three consultants linked to specific projects until June 2022. There was a peacebuilding adviser position in the RCO that was eliminated after the rollout of UNITAMS.[63] Both actions are insufficient to ensure adequate action on the mandate set up by the UNSC.

The absence of a strong **focus on conflict prevention** within the mission does not benefit the goal of sustaining peace in Sudan. The UNITAMS mandate places attention on conflict prevention and mitigation. This indirectly responds to the weak focus of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) on conflict prevention and the absence of a national conflict prevention strategy.[64] The Sudan Peacemaking, Peacebuilding, and Stabilisation Programme (SPPSP) developed by UNITAMS (and described in further detail below) responded to the UNSC's request on paper, making a case for local-level conflict prevention, mitigation and reconciliation, and community violence reduction. Additionally, the SPPSP proposed concrete actions such as an integrated UNCT data collection and a joint analysis to support early warning, conflict prevention, and peace implementation. Some of these actions are already taking place despite the SPPSP not being formally approved. This includes enhancing synergies on data collection and conducting peacebuilding and state-level assessments.[65] However,

55 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
56 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project. *Note* that this course is the first one to be developed focusing on a specific country context.
57 Safer World, ' New Conflict Sensitivity Facility in Sudan', 24 March 2021, Accessible at: https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/954-new-conflict-sensitivity-facility-in-sudan.
58 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
59 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
60 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
61 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, p. 14-15.
62 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
63 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
64 In the text of UNDAF, the references to prevention strategies are made in the context of human rights, recognizing them as a key enabler of prevention, and in the context of natural disasters and shocks. *See* UN Sudan, "The United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018-2021", 01 January 2018, p. 5, 10, Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/19907-united-nations-development-assistance-framework-undaf-2018-2021.
65 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

it is critical that the SPPSP process comes to fruition to meaningfully operationalise conflict prevention objectives currently lacking at both the national and the UN level.

The UN's peacebuilding efforts in Sudan have reportedly benefited from **some support by both UN Headquarters (UNHQ) and the UN's regional centres.**[66] During UNITAMS' inception, the regional Development Cooperation Office for Africa undertook a capacity mapping and assessment exercise in support of strategic planning efforts by UNCT and UNITAMS, reportedly improving coordination between the two entities.[67] The UNDP Joint Transition Project and the Department of Operational Support were particularly engaged in UNAMID's drawdown.[68] The language used by the UNSC spearheads effective peacebuilding action. UNSC resolution 2524 (2020) requested 'UNITAMS and its integrated UNCT partners to establish an appropriate mechanism for joint and coordinated peacebuilding support'.[69] Resolution 2579 (2021) further called for integrated peacebuilding mechanisms as well as finalisation of the SPPSP.[70]

In light with the complexity of Sudan's context, UN peacebuilding efforts have become **increasingly Khartoum-centric**, creating a leadership gap in the peripheries. Currently, the Inter-Agency Working Groups under UNITAMS are concentrated at the Khartoum level. The UN has come under criticism for staffing these regional hubs with senior officials coming from

Khartoum, while employing locals only for lower level positions.[71] Civil society representatives active across Darfur, Kordofan, and the eastern regions have noted that such hiring practices establish teams with a limited array of political views.[72] However, there are positive examples of addressing this issue. UNITAMS, in collaboration with the UNCT, has initiated a series of peacebuilding assessments funded by the PBF in a number of states across Sudan's periphery, with the aim of informing its peacebuilding efforts at the subnational level.[73] This includes ongoing efforts to establish corresponding Peace and Development Working Groups at the state level[74] and expanding the UN's presence across Sudan's peripheries. UNITAMS has opened a regional hub in El Fasher, personnel have been deployed in Kadugli, and preparations are ongoing for the opening of field presences in the east and other parts of Darfur.[75] Currently, peacebuilding officers are being hired for the El Fasher and Kadugli offices.[76] While the progress is ongoing, this current situation impacts the UN's ability to understand the needs of the conflict-affected people in Sudan's peripheries and include these experiences in its decision-making. In some cases, these dynamics have caused dissatisfaction among local populations, creating operational barriers for UN agencies.[77]

Lastly, the UN's in-country presence is reported to have **limited agility** in adapting to the fast-paced developments of Sudan's transition.[78] While individual UN entities may have sought to adapt their programming to the changing circumstances, UNDAF – operational since the Bashir regime – offered no tools to respond to the momentous changes taking place

66 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
67 UN Development Cooperation Office Regional Office for Africa, 'Annual Results Report 2020-2021', July 2021, Accessible at: https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/DCO%20Africa_Annual_Report_2020-2021.pdf.
68 IPI, Daniel Forti, 'Walking a Tightrope: The Transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS in Sudan', February 2021, Accessible at: https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Walking_a_Tightrope_Sudan.pdf.
69 United Nations, Resolution 2524 (2020) Adopted by the Security Council on 3 June 2020, OP. 7, Accessible at: https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2524(2020).
70 UN, Resolution 2579 (2021) Adopted by the Security Council at its 8784th meeting, on 3 June 2021, OP. 10, Accessible at: https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2579(2021).
71 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
72 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
73 UN, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General', 3 December 2021, pp. 11, 13 para 62, Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_sudan_december_2021.pdf. *Note that* an assessment in El Geneina (West Darfur) has already been completed. The other assessments, however, have been put on hold following the military takeover.
74 The progress on several of these initiatives remains stalled by the military takeover of October 2021. UN, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General', 3 December 2021, p. 10, Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_sudan_december_2021.pdf.
75 UN, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan: Report of the Secretary-General', 3 December 2021, p. 10 para 46,
Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_sudan_december_2021.pdf.
76 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
77 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project. *Note* that such dynamics were reported, for instance, in the case of East Darfur.
78 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

in Sudan and required reporting against an outdated set of indicators.[79] At the same time, efforts were underway to develop a new strategic framework, but were halted by the October 2021 events.[80] The above-mentioned issues with staffing, political challenges, and limited capacities have further impacted adaptation capacities. Some good practices of responding to thee changing context, however, emerged to be capitalised on. To ensure constant adaptation of the UN strategy, its officials have reportedly set up a number of initiatives and retreats aimed at revising priorities and periodical inter-agency results groups, including on peacebuilding.[81] Following the joint assessment for the Two Areas, [82] a whole UN action plan was also reformulated based on the joined efforts of the AFPs under the political guidance of UNITAMS. To ensure the UN has capacity for a fast-paced response to the changing circumstances, more needs to be done primarily in the areas of staffing, system-wide coordination, and decision-making.

Moving forward:

Peacebuilding expertise and leadership are improving as UNITAMS settles into Sudan and other UN offices work to strengthen their conflict analysis. Positive efforts have been undertaken by training existing staff and by recruiting new staff with a strong expertise in peacebuilding. Yet, the UN approach in Sudan has reportedly been insufficient to ensure clear division of roles and to practically adapt to the fast-paced developments of Sudan's transition. The ongoing ambiguity in the division of roles and uncertainty around peacebuilding leadership within the UN in Sudan, as well as limited programmatic focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, continue to hamper the effectiveness of the UN's peacebuilding efforts. Actions are required to address the lack of coordination, inter-agency competition, and limited agility. Further, the UN should build on its good practice of providing peacebuilding support, including capacity building in conflict analysis for staff and partners, and consider formulating concrete avenues to support conflict prevention, including joint UN data collection and analysis and early response programming.

79 The UNDAF's creation process started in late 2015 and the document was rolled out in January 2018, when the Bashir government was still in full control of the country. No adjustment of UNDAF priorities was carried out as of late 2020, reportedly due to the loss of the coordination mechanism between the UN and the Sudanese government. This mismatch has been exacerbated by the decision to extend the current UNDAF (supposed to cover the period 2018-2021) until the end of 2022. UN Sudan, 'The United Nations Results Report for 2018, 2019, and 2020', 12 October 2021, p. 67-68, Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/151142-united-nations-result-report-2018-2019-and-2020. It should be noted, however, that this decision was reportedly taken to allow the UN to better align its upcoming strategic framework with the new priorities arising from Sudan's transition. For further information see UN ECOSOC, 'Extensions of ongoing country programmes: Note by the secretariat', 7 July 2021, p. 7, Accessible at: https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/6846/file/2021-PL28-Extensions_of_CPs-EN-ODS.pdf.

80 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

81 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

82 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020.

4. Operational and policy coherence to strengthen support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace

This section looks at the extent to which in-country UN actors have succeeded in coordinating their peacebuilding efforts across the relevant UN pillars (i.e., peacekeeping, peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian) in order to support the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in such a way that country-level peacebuilding priorities and objectives can be advanced.

In Sudan, the **UN peacebuilding efforts are spread across a wide range of activities**. The cross-cutting nature of peacebuilding activities has made it crucial to provide coherence to the UN's peacebuilding efforts. This development has been positive so far, as a wide array of different UN entities have incorporated *peacebuilding considerations in the UN AFPs' programming*. Specifically, UNDP has promoted programmes on conflict prevention; disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration; and livelihood generation, while FAO has adopted guidelines relating to the sustaining peace agenda.[83] The SPPSP was intended to enhance the coherence of the UN's peacebuilding efforts in Sudan; however, the formal approval process for the SPPSP has been stalled by the October 2021 events.

The UN presence in Sudan has made significant **efforts to coordinate and strengthen the coherence** of the peacebuilding efforts. The establishment of various *Inter-Agency Working Groups* is strengthening coordination.[84] For instance, in April 2021, the Peace and Development Working Group was established, chaired by UNITAMS' peacebuilding unit, to provide a forum for inter-agency coordination. Under its auspices a series of state-level peacebuilding assessments have been initiated, which are being conducted jointly by UNITAMS and the UNCT. Moreover, the work of these groups has fed into the drafting of a common country analysis, jointly undertaken by the UNCT and UNITAMS and set to inform the drafting of a new Cooperation Framework.[85] Similarly, *the PBF encourages joint project proposals* that involve more than one UN agency or non-UN agency. The PBF-funded programme in Darfur, for example, has helped to pilot an "area-based" approach whereby multiple agencies collectively implement under the framework of a single project, each leveraging its own comparative advantage in target localities.[86] To further facilitate coordination and minimize programmatic overlap, the PBF helped to initiate a coordinated mapping of the different actors implementing peacebuilding projects in Sudan, including geographic and thematic focus.[87] Lastly, the SPPSP was intended to be an important mechanism to enhance the coherence of the UN's peacebuilding efforts in Sudan by bringing together UNITAMS and UNCT around a shared set of objectives. Following the October 2021 events, the process has been stalled and needs to be reviewed again to align with the new realities once the situation in Sudan stabilises. These various initiatives have the potential to improve coherence by providing a shared understanding of the root causes of conflict and instability.[88]

83 UNDP Sudan, 'Peace and Stabilization Overview', Accessible at: https://www.sd.undp.org/content/sudan/en/home/peace-and-stabilization.html; *and* Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
84 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
85 UN, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General', 3 December 2021, p. 10, Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_sudan_december_2021.pdf.
86 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
87 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
88 TRIAS Consult, 'Review of the Darfur Development Strategy (2013- 2019)', 7 October 2019, p. 5, Accessible at: https://undarfurfund.org/content/dam/darfurfund/docs/dds-review/undp-darfurfund-documents-DDS-Review-Volume-I-Oct-2019.pdf.

Despite successes, **coherence and coordination have met several challenges.**[89] First, some participants of interviews reported that *the establishment of UNITAMS* in June 2020 has created a specific set of leadership and coordination issues. For instance, some UN AFPs unilaterally have been taking aspects of mediation and political engagement (normally, a UNITAMS function), challenging the relationships and clarity of the division of roles within the UN in Sudan.[90] Second, UN staff has cautioned that the transition processes at the UN – resulting from UNAMID's drawdown and UNITAMS' launch – can undermine *the years of accumulated trust between UN agencies and the Sudanese population.*[91] This attitude has seemingly been reinforced by the *lack of funding and financial incentives* attached to UNITAMS, meaning that agencies would have little financial incentive to work with the new integrated mission.[92] Further, the coordination mechanisms are reportedly *not adequately optimised*, being ad hoc and consuming significant time from the UN staff, who often are part of several groups.[93] Finally, the *absence of a government-owned national peacebuilding strategy* has also negatively impacted and hindered UN efforts to support national peacebuilding priorities and needs at the country level.[94] The possibilities of progress are yet to be better understood, as a lot of initiatives are currently in the preliminary stages and are yet to be aligned around the new strategic framework.
The impacts of such limited coordination reportedly have resulted in withholding of relevant information and inter-agency competition over funding.[95] For example, UN agencies have occasionally conducted separate peacebuilding assessments.[96] UN agencies have reportedly worked independently to create their own COVID-19 response mechanisms.[97] Such a situation can prevent UN entities from having a shared understanding of the conflict's root causes and ensuing peacebuilding needs – an issue that in the past has negatively affected coordination.[98]

Coherence is however required, not only within the UN presence in Sudan, but also between the UN and the national government at both the strategic and operational levels. At the strategic level, **the level of alignment between the UN's priorities and those of the Sudanese government** has varied over time. Prior to the military coup, the UN had been regularly engaging with the government in the elaboration of its main programmatic documents. The common country analysis process, aiming to inform the development of the next cooperation framework beginning in 2023, have included consultations with the STG. The same has applied to the SPPSP process, at least until the October 2021 events.[99] The priorities articulated by UNITAMS have featured a wide degree of overlap with the STG priorities in terms of supporting Sudan's peace processes, implementing the JPA, protecting civilians, and making the democratic transition.[100] Moreover, the UN's efforts to coordinate economic and development assistance to Sudan support the STG's priority to address socio-economic challenges. Yet, for a significant period of time, the lack of adaptation of UNDAF (which was drafted during the Bashir era) to reflect the current situation of Sudan's transition has created a mismatch between the work plan used by the UN and the situation on the ground.[101]

89 *UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, p. 54, para 166.*
90 *Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.*
91 *Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.*
92 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
93 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
94 TRIAS Consult, 'Review of the Darfur Development Strategy (2013- 2019)', 7 October 2019, p. 5, Accessible at: https://undarfurfund.org/content/dam/darfurfund/docs/dds-review/undp-darfurfund-documents-DDS-Review-Volume-I-Oct-2019.pdf.
95 *Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.*
96 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
97 UN Sudan, 'The United Nations Results Report for 2018, 2019, and 2020', 12 October 2021, p. 67-68, Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/151142-united-nations-result-report-2018-2019-and-2020. Note that overlaps among different UN agencies have also been reported in the natural resource programming domain, with IFAD, FAO, UNDP and UNEP all active in this area; and Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
98 TRIAS Consult, 'Review of the Darfur Development Strategy (2013- 2019)', 7 October 2019, p. 5, Accessible at: https://undarfurfund.org/content/dam/darfurfund/docs/dds-review/undp-darfurfund-documents-DDS-Review-Volume-I-Oct-2019.pdf.
99 UN, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General', 3 December 2021, p. 10, 14 paras 47-488, Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_sudan_december_2021.pdf; *and* UN, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan Report of the Secretary-General', 17 May 2021, p. 12 para 53, Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2021_470-en_0.pdf.
100 The four pillars of UNITAMS' mandate are: (i) assisting the political transition, progress towards democratic governance, protection and promotion of human rights, and sustainable peace; (ii) supporting peace processes and implementation of future peace agreements; (iii) assisting peacebuilding, civilian protection and rule of law, in particular in Darfur and the Two Areas; (iv) supporting the mobilization of economic and development assistance and coordination of humanitarian assistance by ensuring an integrated approach with UN AFPs and through collaboration with IFIs; *For further information see* UNITAMS, 'UNITAMS Mandate', Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/en/mandate#:~:text=On%203%20June%202020%2C%20the,political%20_transition%20to%20democratic%20rule. The five national priorities outlined by the STG in February of 2022 are: (i) addressing socioeconomic conditions; (ii) implementing the JPA and resuming negotiations with the two non-signatories; (iii) security sector reform and protection of civilians; (iv) international relations; and (v) advancing the democratic transition; *For further information see* United Nations, 'Sudan Faces Staggering Challenges to Democracy Despite Significant Advances on Political Transition, Special Representative Tells Security Council,' 9 March 2020, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14460.doc.htm.
101 UN Sudan, 'The United Nations Results Report for 2018, 2019, and 2020,' 12 October 2021, p. 67-68, Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/151142-united-nations-result-report-2018-2019-and-2020.

At the operational level, the **UN has supported the national peacebuilding efforts** in various ways throughout the transition. First, the UN has sought to ensure national ownership of PBF programming in Sudan by establishing a Joint UN-Government Steering Committee.[102] Moreover, the UN support to the STG has been instrumental in convening a donor conference in June 2020, resulting in a pledge of USD 1.8 billion to support Sudan's transition, including its peacebuilding dimension.[103] Second, the UN has bolstered STG peacebuilding efforts by supporting the implementation of the National Plan for the Protection of Civilians with a strong focus on identifying and addressing the threats to the civilian population, particularly persons internally displaced by armed conflict and violence.[104] Such efforts were further optimised by the development of a joint UNITAMS-UNCT strategy to support the plan.[105] Although the UN mechanisms are generally poorly geared towards operating in a situation where the government partner is missing or the relationships are highly complex, the PBF has found a way to be flexible following the October 2021 events. It established avenues to continue relevant projects without governmental endorsement, primarily focusing on community-based peacebuilding activities that support people and initiatives of various tribes on conflict prevention.[106] At the moment of writing this report, the main counterpart for the PBF is the peace commissioner; however, the communication has not been established despite the commissioner remaining in his position throughout the current political developments in Sudan.

Among the many activities undertaken by the UN in Sudan, the **State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in Darfur** have reportedly been a particularly interesting **success story** in terms of promoting cooperation both within the UN system, and between the UN and the national government.[107] The SLFs were aimed at addressing key drivers of conflict in areas from which UNAMID had withdrawn.[108] This mechanism has enabled AFPs to enhance their peacebuilding engagement by making UNAMID's programmatic funds and staff available to them.[109] Moreover, it has created opportunities to build relationships between the UNAMID and UNCT staff, particularly when the staff of different entities would be located in the same workplace.[110] The Joint 5+8 Technical Committee promoted effective UN-government coordination, bringing together representatives from UNAMID, the UNCT, and the government.[111] In view of this success, UNSC Resolution 2524 provided assessed funding to the Two Areas,[112] and the recent UN evaluations have recommended the extension of this coordination scheme to other unstable areas of Sudan, including the east.[113]

However, it should be noted that the SLFs have come under criticism for the absence of an adequate monitoring and evaluation system, as well as for a reported mismatch between the government's priorities and the SLFs' goals.[114] Continuation of such efforts are significantly hindered by the limited resources available to UNITAMS, as compared to those available to UNAMID.[115] It has been noted that while Darfur hosted relatively well-functioning peacebuilding bodies (such as the Darfur State and Locality Level Peacebuilding Coordination fora and the SLF coordination groups), peacebuilding coordination efforts in the region were hampered by the lack of an overarching coordination structure linking local-level platforms.[116] These are important considerations in an effort to draw lessons from the SLFs' positive experience.

Despite some improvements and established good practices, the alignment between the UN priorities and those of the Sudanese government still faces **a number**

102 *Note* that on the Sudanese side, committee members have included representatives from the National Peace Commission (as technical lead), the Prime Minister's Office, three ministries (Finance and Economic Planning, Foreign Affairs, Justice), as well as the Chamber of Federal Governance. On the UN's side, the DSRSG/HC/RC and implementing UN agencies funds and programmes have been included in the committee. Derived from interviews conducted for this project.
103 UN, '$1.8 billion pledged to assist Sudan's people on the road to peace and democracy,' 25 June 2020, Accessible at: https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1067172.
104 UN Sudan, 'Sudan Peacemaking, Peacebuilding and Stabilization Programme', 19 August, 2021, p. 75.
105 UN, "Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan: Report of the Secretary-General", 3 December 2021, p. 12-13 para 59-61, Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_sudan_december_2021.pdf.
106 Such an approach prevents the Fund from being perceived as a political actor taking sides in the national political debate. Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
107 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, paras. 123, 162.
108 UN Sudan, 'The State Liaison Functions (SLFs)', May 2020, Accessible at: https://unamid.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/the_state_liaison_functions_-slfs.pdf
109 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, p. 43, para 123.
110 Ibid, p. 53, para 162.
111 Ibid, p. 41, para 113-114.
112 UN, 'Resolution 2524 Adopted by the Security Council on 3 June 2020', p. 4, Accessible at: https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2524(2020).
113 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020.
114 The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance Report, 'UN/AU Transition in Darfur: Lessons from Assistance on Rule of Law and Human Rights through the State Liaison Functions,' December 2021, p. 28, Accessible at: https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/DCAF_UNAMID_feb2021.pdf.
115 Ibid, p. 46, para 137.
116 Ibid, p. 37, para 98-99.

of challenges. First, the government *does not seem to be interested in peacebuilding*. Some suggest that the creation of the Peace Commission served to delay institutionalisation of peacebuilding, which could be evidenced by the absence of an overarching national peacebuilding framework/strategy for Sudan.[117] For example, *Sudan's fragmented peacebuilding architecture*, lacking a cohesive, government-owned national strategy, has reportedly been a missing part of the puzzle for the development of a strong UN peacebuilding strategy in Sudan. This challenge has been further exacerbated by *the lack of an overall coordinating body* in charge of peacebuilding within the government, as the establishment of the full Peace Commission remains pending.[118] Lastly, *the October 2021 military takeover* has once again disrupted the alignment of the UN's and STG's priorities, as Sudan has not had a legitimate government since October 2021.

Moving forward:

The UN peacebuilding efforts in Sudan have been extensive, including the recent roll-out of the SPPSP and a series of joint peacebuilding assessments that have the potential to bring UNITAMS and the UNCT behind a shared set of peacebuilding objectives. A number of other efforts have also been undertaken to improve coherence (i.e., a capacity-mapping exercise and the establishment of a peacebuilding working group). The SLFs in Darfur have also been hailed as a successful experience in promoting intra-UN cooperation and partnership with the national government. However, UN internal coordination among the key actors continues to be limited, with instances of overlaps, lack of information sharing, and competition over funds. The government, at the same time, seems to be unwilling to engage in peacebuilding. One avenue to address the current challenges to operational and policy coherence could be identifying one entity in charge of coordinating the UN peacebuilding efforts both within the UN and between the UN and the government. This agency can then ensure that peacebuilding is adequately integrated in the ongoing work of the UN in Sudan and assist the government, when an opportunity arises, in developing a coherent and inclusive approach to peacebuilding at the national level.

117 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

118 UN, 'Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan: Report of the Secretary-General,' 3 December 2021, p. 12 para 57,
Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_sudan_december_2021.pdf.

5. Partnerships for peacebuilding and sustaining peace

This section looks at how the UN coordinates with relevant stakeholders outside of the UN System in terms of implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda, and what impact these partnerships have on advancing country-level peacebuilding processes and objectives.

In line with the UN mandate, creating **partnerships with diverse peacebuilding stakeholders** has been a crucial feature of the UN's engagement in Sudan. A broad ecosystem of UN partners includes regional organisations, the donor community, and civil society, among others. In partnering with various entities, the UN conducts joint analyses, programming, and information sharing to improve *coherence among aid actors*, *significant financial flows towards peacebuilding*, and *impactful implementation* at the country level.

Partnerships with Civil Society:

Sudan has **a strong history of grassroots organising**, thus providing a fertile ground for cooperation.[119] The examples of partnerships are numerous. For instance, UNDP has collaborated with Khartoum University (KU) to establish a Conflict Risk Dashboard as part of the UNDP's Joint Conflict Reduction Programme in the states of Kordofan and Blue Nile.[120] This project serves to inform UNDP's programming in Sudan, and the data will be available to UN agencies once it fully matures. Further, the UN has sought to strengthen the capacity of its civil society partners in conflict-affected Darfur by supporting them in accessing UN funding to implement peacebuilding programmes in the region.[121] The PBF's encouragement of joint UN-civil society proposals has helped to further boost partnerships and joint impactful action.[122] During the current political situation, **civil society actors have become even more important partners** to the international actors, who seek to leverage civil society access, legitimacy, and context awareness in order to promote long-term peace.

In its engagement with civil society, the UN has devoted **specific attention to youth and women**. The SPPSP has singled out the participation of both groups as specific cross-cutting priorities to be mainstreamed across the UN's work, reflecting an overall increase in the attention devoted to the topics.[123] The PBF in Sudan is currently funding four projects under its global 'Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative', totalling USD 5.4 million in approved funding, focusing on empowerment of youth through enhanced access to civic space and digital fora, providing mental health and psycho-social support, and establishing a network of youth observers to help monitor political and peacebuilding developments.[124] As for women's participation, UN Women and UNDP supported various women's rights groups in convening a high-level meeting in December 2020 with government representatives to discuss the potential creation of a women monitoring and evaluation mechanism for

119 Numerous non-state actors exist in Sudan, including both traditional actors/mechanisms (e.g. Native Administration, the Judiya, and the tribal reconciliation conferences), as well as more modern and formalised ones (e.g. international and national NGOs, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Community-Based Reconciliation Mechanisms (CBRMs), as well as the peace centres affiliated with the academic universities in several states of the country).

120 Derived from interviews conducted for this project.

121 This support has been provided through the Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund (DCPSF). The DCPSF has been under the authority of a multi-stakeholder steering committee, chaired by the DSRSG/HC/RC and administered by a technical secretariat of the UN. *For further information see* UNDP Sudan, 'Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund (DCPSF)', Accessible at: https://www.sd.undp.org/content/sudan/en/home/operations/FundManagment/DCPSF.html.

122 Derived from interviews conducted for this project.

123 *Note* that reflecting this trend of increasing attention devoted to youth and women, one can look at the number of times the words 'youth' and 'women/gender' were mentioned in the UN's main programmatic documents. In UNDAF, these words were mentioned on average 2.5 times per page. In the SPPSP, this figure more than doubled (5.2 mentions per page).

124 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

the JPA implementation.[125] These selected examples demonstrate that the inclusion of women and youth is a priority of the UN in Sudan.

Despite these successful examples of cooperation, the UN's partnerships with civil society have been reported to have **several shortcomings**. To be sure, the civil society activists interviewed for this report reported positive instances of partnership, whereby they received meaningful support from the UN.[126] For instance, two different women's rights activists lauded the capacity-building support they received from UN Women on gender and peacebuilding issues.[127] Yet, some civil society actors, especially from Sudan's youth networks, have reported that numerous programmes, projects, and initiatives supported or implemented by the UN have often failed to *translate into a real impact* on the ground.[128] Further, the UN is reportedly unwilling to work on collaborative partnerships that *invest in capacity building*, and works instead with capacitated civil society actors, either international NGOs or national civil society actors, primarily headquartered in Khartoum. As a result, the UN tends to work with the same partners continuously, without diversifying its engagement. Moreover, civil society representatives noted *little awareness on the sustaining peace agenda*, partly due to the lack of accessibility of the UN actors and partly to the lack of efforts by the UN to raise awareness.[129]

Some civil society activists interviewed for this report criticised the UN for managing its partnerships based on a **top-down** approach. It was suggested that the UN failed to duly consider the local context and perspectives when drafting strategies and work plans, particularly in the country's peripheries.[130] Although the UN regularly consults with local stakeholders,[131] these consultations could have been more inclusive and meaningful. First, there has been little attempt to provide an environment conductive to a free and open dialogue. For instance, on one occasion, the presence of security forces at the consultation site prevented local activists from fully disclosing their views due to fear of retribution after the UN left the site.[132] Moreover, according to some activists, these consultations have not always led to any incorporation of the recommendations gathered into UN programming.[133] As a result, various UN projects have reportedly set forth objectives and tools that were not fully in line with local needs and circumstances, with a negative effect on the projects' potential impact.

Civil society has a particular difficulty to navigate **financial opportunities with the UN**. The PBF and AFPs have avenues to support local civil society; however, eligibility requirements often prevent civil society outside of Khartoum to access UN funding.[134] In this, budget requirements have been singled out as particularly strict. For example, direct access to PBF funding required an annual budget of $400.000 over the previous two years, restricting civil society actors' ability to access the funds.[135] On the one hand, the purpose of these requirements – i.e., to ensure cooperation with trustworthy organisations – is very understandable. Moreover, it should be noted that smaller local actors can still receive funding indirectly, notably by working on the project as subcontractors/implementing partners (most often for UN agencies). However, the authenticity of their action is significantly challenged by the donor's priorities, and the sum received by the implementers is significantly lower, owing to the share taken by the UN agency acting as an intermediary.[136]

For their part, UN officials have reported that their efforts to engage civil society have been hampered by the **absence of civil society coordination and reliance on traditional ways of working**. Different UN agencies have stressed that the lack of a single umbrella civil society network makes it difficult for the UN to engage in a systematic and long-term manner.[137] It is reported to have roots in the polarisation of society more broadly.[138] In this context, civil society actors have difficulties cooperating with each other, and the UN is challenged by identifying the independent partners to engage with.[139] This trend has been reportedly compounded by a lack of adequate mapping of local peacebuilding actors.[140] Moreover, the tools, techniques, and policies

125 Open Democracy, 'Sudanese women show that peace requires participation not just representation', 17 December 2020, Accessible at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/sudanese-women-show-peace-requires-participation-not-just-representation/.
126 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
127 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
128 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
129 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
130 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
131 This includes, for example, the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultations. Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
132 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
133 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
134 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
135 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
136 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
137 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
138 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
139 During the Bashir era, the UN used to engage with many national organisations that were lately shut down during the transition due to their affiliation with the former regime. These experiences not only left the UN at a loss in terms of funding that had been advanced to these partners, but also laid bare the difficulties in engaging with civil society partners in a polarised political context. Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
140 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

used by civil society are outdated and require additional innovation on the part of civil society.[141]

There appears to be some **competition between the UN and civil society** around access to donor resources.[142] The UN agencies general enjoy an advantage in accessing funding – both from the pooled funds and from the bilateral donors – due to significant imbalances in terms of capacity.[143] Such dynamics of competition have reportedly taken place not only over funding, but also over staff.[144] As one interviewee reported, the higher salaries offered by UN agencies (as well as by international NGOs) often lure skilled individuals away from the local organisations, thus weakening their capacity and creating further imbalances. At the same time, there is a trend of donors supporting capacity building within the communities following the October 2021 events, driven by an assumption that peace can only be sustainable when capacities exist among national constituencies, especially in the absence of a functioning government. The challenges of getting UNITAMS up to speed and the lack of clarity in peacebuilding coordination are cited as additional factors that encourage money to be spent at the local level. As such, the competition has little potential to further expand, unless it is supported by strong and operational partnership modalities that address the existing challenges.

In addition to these dynamics, the UN's engagement with the Sudanese government has also reportedly **affected UN-civil society relations**. On the one hand, owing to its mandate, the UN is obliged to engage with government authorities. However, this engagement has created a degree of scepticism among civil society actors towards the UN. For instance, the UN's reliance on Sudanese security forces during certain field visits has reportedly led local communities (particularly in war-torn areas like Darfur) to mistrust the UN.[145] Moreover, various civil society representatives have reported being ignored in the past by the UN due to their antagonistic positions vis-à-vis the government, particularly during the Bashir era.[146] A women activist, for instance, shared about her experience being repeatedly denied a meeting with UN representatives in Khartoum. Another peace activist from Sudan's periphery complained that UNDP turned down his organisation's bid in the wake of pressure from local government authorities. It must be noted that UNDP has rejected this allegation after conducting an internal review. Although the relationships have been improving following the transition, the legacy of those times seems to still affect civil society's perception of the UN today, as some peace activists reported refraining from engaging with specific UN agencies. Moreover, the October 2021 events and the subsequent crackdown on civil society have the potential to further strain relations with the UN, which maintains an engagement with Sudan's military rulers.[147]

Partnerships with Regional Organisations:

In line with the broader UN approach, the **UN's presence in Sudan regularly engages with regional and sub-regional organisations**. The UN's two major partners in this regard are the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which have both been active in supporting peace efforts in Sudan.[148] The main instance of *the UN-AU cooperation* in peacebuilding is their joint management of UNAMID for 15 years.[149] Since then, it has been unclear how a comparative advantage of the AU could be leveraged to support the situation in Sudan. As for *the UN-IGAD partnership*, cooperation in the peace domain has not been Sudan-specific, but rather has been embedded in broader cooperation schemes such as joint analysis, information exchange, early warning, mediation, peacebuilding, crisis management, governance, and democratisation.[150] The lack of systematised partnerships with IGAD is a missed opportunity for the UN in Sudan to fulfil its aspiration to strengthen conflict prevention.[151] IGAD's Conflict Early Warning Mechanism

141 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
142 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
143 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
144 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
145 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
146 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
147 *Note* that for instance, the Sudanese Professionals Association's approach towards the political consultations launched by UNITAMS in January 2022. *For further information see* African News, "Sudanese protesters reject UN-led talks with the military", 9 January 2021, Accessible at: https://www.africanews.com/2022/01/09/sudanese-protesters-reject-un-led-talks-with-the-military/.
148 For instance, the AU has played a role in negotiating the 2019 power-sharing agreement that led to the creation of the STG. *For further information see* Project Syndicate, Paul Mulindwa, 'Success in Sudan', 31 July 2019, Accessible at: https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/african-union-au-sudan-power-sharing-agreement-mediation-by-paul-mulindwa-2019-07. *Also,* IGAD's contribution to advancing peace in the Horn of Africa region has included supporting reconciliation efforts, regional development, and durable solutions for internally displaced persons and refugees, notably across the Sudan-South Sudan border. UN Sudan, 'The United Nations Results Report for 2018, 2019, and 2020', 12 October 2021, p. 2, Accessible at: https://sudan.un.org/en/151142-united-nations-result-report-2018-2019-and-2020.
149 UN University, Diego Salama, 'Is Hybrid Peacekeeping a Model of Success? The Case of UNAMID', 25 July 2016, Accessible at: https://unu.edu/publications/articles/hybrid-peacekeeping-case-of-unamid.html.
150 Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, 'Mapping Study of the Conflict Prevention Capabilities of African Regional Economic Communities', November 2018, p. 107, Accessible at: https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/files/documents/2020/Dec/mappingreport.pdf.
151 UN Sudan, 'Sudan Peacemaking, Peacebuilding and Stabilization Programme', 19 August, 2021, p. 49.

is one opportunity to achieve common goals, where the UN actors can adequately facilitate the engagement between IGAD's and KU's early warning projects to strengthen their joint efforts and meaningfully advance conflict prevention.

The UN's partnerships with regional organisations were cited as having a number of challenges. For instance, the UN-AU joint management of UNAMID has experienced difficulties with dynamics of mistrust, tension, and conflict,[152] ultimately hindering effective cooperation between the two entities following UNAMID's withdrawal.[153] Moreover, in the wake of Bashir's ouster, there was serious friction between the AU Peace and Security Council and the UNSC.[154] This stemmed particularly from the former adopting a firm line on the need for a transition to civilian rule in Sudan, while the latter did not endorse the AU's position, despite pressure from its three African members, mostly due to Chinese and Russian resistance.[155] More recently, UNITAMS' efforts to launch a facilitation process aimed at finding a solution to Sudan's political crisis have been received rather coldly by both the AU and IGAD, with the AU Peace and Security Council stressing the need for the AU to coordinate the international community's efforts, and IGAD pledging to launch its own mediation process.[156] At the time of writing this report, the AU has suspended Sudan's participation in activities until the restoration of the government office.[157] Addressing these coordination challenges is crucial to ensure the alignment of the UN's and the regional organisations' objectives towards the implementation of the sustaining peace agenda.

Partnerships with the World Bank:

The UN's partnership network in the peacebuilding domain has also extended to international financial institutions, most notably with the **World Bank** (WB). Cooperation between the UN and the WB in Sudan has been grounded in the April 2017 Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations[158] and recently operationalised through the 2021-2022 Sudan Country Engagement Note.[159] The Sudan Family Support Program has been a major instance of such cooperation, with the WB acting as both a partner and a funder of a WFP program aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of the STG's economic reforms.[160] For 2022, the WB envisions coordinating with UNITAMS on issues related to governance, peacebuilding, and joint data efforts.[161] However, the note does not provide any concrete steps on how to operationalise such objectives.

There are a number of **stumbling blocks** when it comes to the relationship between the UN and the WB. The UN partners report an inability to establish meaningful connections with the WB. Further, there remains a sense of competition between the WB and the UN AFPs, primarily for programmatic activities, due to the overlapping mandates.[162] One illustration of this is the partnership around the Sudan Family Support Program, where the UNCT initially decided against participation until the WFP offered to provide technical cash transfer support for the initiative, and even then the sense of caution between the partners continued.[163] Such competition affected the alignment of priorities and effective joint analysis and information sharing. Simultaneously, UNITAMS as a political actor has yet to define its partnership modalities, as the WB sees itself as a non-political actor and therefore cannot engage at the same level as the mission. The continuous joint efforts to operationalise agreed 2022 joint commitments could be an opportunity to assess and address existing challenges.

152 UN University, Diego Salama, 'Is Hybrid Peacekeeping a Model of Success? The Case of UNAMID', 25 July 2016, Accessible at: https://unu.edu/publications/articles/hybrid-peacekeeping-case-of-unamid.html; Kilian Spandler, 'UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations', 6 March 2020, Accessible at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17502977.2020.1725729.

153 UN University, Diego Salama, 'Is Hybrid Peacekeeping a Model of Success? The Case of UNAMID', 25 July 2016, Accessible at: https://unu.edu/publications/articles/hybrid-peacekeeping-case-of-unamid.html; Kilian Spandler, 'UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations', 6 March 2020, Accessible at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17502977.2020.1725729.

154 Crisis Group, 'A Tale of Two Councils: Strengthening AU- UN Cooperation', 24 June 2019, Accessible at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/279-tale-two-councils-strengthening-au-un-cooperation.

155 Ibid.

156 Sudan Tribune, 'IGAD to mediate talks to end Sudan's transition crisis', 1 February 2022, Accessible at: https://sudantribune.com/article254752/.

157 Derived from interviews conducted for this project.

158 UN, 'The April 2017 Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations', April 2017, Accessed at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/2017-united-nations-world-bank-partnership-framework-crisis-affected-situations.

159 World Bank, 'Country Engagement Note Sudan for the Period of FY 21- FY 22,' 10 September 2020, p. 27, Accessible at: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/879871602253859419/pdf/Sudan-Country-Engagement-Note-for-the-Period-FY21-FY22.pdf.

160 Word Bank, 'Sudan Family Support Project,' Accessible at: https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P173521; *and* Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

161 World Bank, 'Country Engagement Note Sudan for the Period of FY 21- FY 22,' 10 September 2020, p. 27, Accessible at: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/879871602253859419/pdf/Sudan-Country-Engagement-Note-for-the-Period-FY21-FY22.pdf.

162 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

163 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.

General Note on Partnerships:

Overall, there is **a significant issue of missing trust between all peacebuilding stakeholders** operating at the country level in Sudan. It is important that wider coordination is established among these partners, including the donor community. The Sudan Partnership Forum, established early September 2021 was created for that purpose, but since the October 2021 events the Sudan Partnership Forum has been unable to set off.[164]

Moving forward:

The UN's ongoing effort to operationalise its engagement in Sudan with a broad ecosystem of partners, including regional organisations, the donor community, and civil society, based on the complementary capacities and respective mandates of each actor is a welcome development that enables joint analysis, programming and information sharing, improved financial support, and impactful implementation at the country level. There is some room for improvement, however, when it comes to the operationalisation of these partnerships, especially when it comes to understanding mandates and eliminating competition. The opportunity to use the UN's platform to connect KU and IGAD on early warning is one opportunity to leverage existing partnerships. Another avenue is to reflect on what makes particular relationship modalities challenging and address these issues as part of a continuous partnership-building effort. It is also critical to assess where systematic partnership modalities are missing (i.e., partnerships with civil society) and work to carve out strategies that can capitalise on the progress made to date. The UNCT is an actor well-positioned to provide such a platform to bring a variety of actors together, given its long history of engagement in Sudan.

164 Dervied from ther interviews conducted for this project.

6. Financing for peacebuilding

This section examines various funding systems in place to finance the UN's implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda at the country level, assessing whether or not these systems provide funding of quality and quantity – in an adequate, predictable, and sustainable manner – and how the amount of funding available impacts the UN's ability to advance country-level peacebuilding processes and objectives.

Financing for peacebuilding is currently one of the biggest challenges to impactful, integrated and coherent delivery of peacebuilding programming. Since the October 2021 events, the donor community has suspended funding to Sudan, including peacebuilding allocations. This prevents both capacity-building and coordination activities. Many suggest that in such a complex setting as the current situation in Sudan, funding cannot be frozen but needs to be reallocated by the donors and the UN, after making a joint assessment of ways to advance peacebuilding and prevent escalation.

Even before the October 2021 events, resource mobilisation for the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in Sudan was a complex endeavour involving **a number of different mechanisms**. On the UN side, the main financing mechanism currently supporting peacebuilding efforts in Sudan is the PBF.[165] As of February 2022, the PBF's portfolio in Sudan stood at around USD 42.2 million spread across 14 active projects, with two projects in development and one project completed.[166] In addition to the PBF, *the newly established Peacebuilding and Stabilization Window of the Sudan Financing Platform*, also known as the Sudan Peace Fund, is set to support UNITAMS and its UNCT partners in the implementation of UNITAMS' peacebuilding mandate.[167] However, as of February 2022, total funding in support of the mandate through the pooled funding mechanism stood at only USD 8.211.289.[168] The UN's efforts to finance peacebuilding in Sudan have also been supported by *other international actors*, including international financial institutions, most notably the WB and the African Development Bank, as well as various *bilateral donors*.

There was a general agreement among the respondents interviewed for this report that the amount of peacebuilding funding has so far been insufficient to meet Sudan's needs.[169] The exact amount of funding dedicated to peacebuilding remains currently unclear, as many donors do not have a specific peacebuilding marker for their allocations to specific countries. Yet, it was reported that, as a consequence of international engagement dynamics during the Bashir era, the available funding for the country has been mostly geared towards the humanitarian domain. While the ongoing transition has altered Sudan's financing needs, it is unclear whether donors have the required flexibility to shift their country strategies from a predominantly humanitarian focus towards supporting the transition's development and peacebuilding priorities.[170] Exacerbating this shortage of peacebuilding funding, UNAMID's drawdown – as the largest and most expensive mission – left behind a significant financial gap. This gap is visible where the funding for UNITAMS is massively smaller but the expectations are very ambitious.[171]

165 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
166 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
167 UNITAMS, 'Peacebuilding and Stabilisation Framework under UNITAMS', Accessible at: https://unitams.unmissions.org/en/peacebuilding-and-stabilization-framework-under-unitams. *For further information on the Sudan Financing Platform* see UNDP, 'Sudan Financing Platform', Accessible at: https://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/4SD00.
168 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
169 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project; *and* UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, p. 41, para. 116.
170 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, p. 41, para. 116.
171 Ibid.

In terms of the **quality of financing mechanisms** – their predictability and sustainability – the research yielded unclear results. Pooled funds are seen as a critical example – a good practice to ensure predictable and sustainable funding modalities, including for peacebuilding. In this regard, the PBF performance has reportedly been a mixed one. On the one hand, the PBF has been praised for facilitating healthy competition and partnerships among the UN AFPs and supporting innovative approaches to peacebuilding by less-established UN AFPs in Sudan.[172] This is due to its practice of allocating funding according to the quality of incoming proposals instead of established reputation of partners, organising visiting missions to assess their progress, providing constructive feedback to rejected proposals, and investing in building the UN's joint capacity in conflict analysis.[173] Moreover, the fund has been credited for its relatively low overhead costs, as well as its flexibility in redirecting funds, including in order to address the new needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.[174] On the other hand, the PBF's allocation mechanism has been criticised for being short-term and over-reliant on a long chain of fund recipients. Although the PBF has adopted two primary modalities, one long-term (up to 3-5 years) and the other short-term (18 months or less), the majority of PBF-funded projects in Sudan fall under the former. The 18-month duration has been assessed as not sufficient to advance the peacebuilding impact, but rather as an effective catalyst for ongoing activities.[175] In line with the PBF's preference to support joint UN-civil society proposals, these funds have often been used to subcontract implementing partners from civil society rather than to engage them as equal partners. This is in part due to the strict funding eligibility criteria of the PBF's financial administrator – the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office – which prevents CSOs from receiving funds directly if they do not meet certain requirements.

The effectiveness of financing mechanisms that support peacebuilding efforts in Sudan has also been reportedly affected by the **limited coordination among donors**. Donors have found bilateral ways to facilitate engagement that provide a swift response to crises and emerging threats facing Sudan. The Group of Friends for Sudan is one mechanism for coordination that has helped to respond to the October 2021 events. The Team Europe approach has been applied in Sudan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.[176] Closest to peacebuilding, the PBF invited donors to participate in the Joint Steering Committee meeting; however, it was cancelled due to the October 2021 military takeover. Moreover, information exchange among donors and the UN is currently facilitated regularly by the SRSG and have reportedly been successful in avoiding duplication of efforts.[177] Prior to this, coordination was limited, resulting in overlaps, duplications, and inefficiencies in the allocation of potentially already scarce resources, with different actors such as the UN and the African Development Bank reportedly supporting projects with similar goals.[178] These coordination attempts, however, have been reported to be largely ad hoc and informal – leading to calls for the establishment of more formal coordination platforms bringing together the UN, the Sudanese government (prior to 25 October 2021), and the international donor community.[179] The lack of donor coordination creates practical hurdles. For instance, UNDP is currently receiving separate sums from different sources (e.g., PBF, SHF, DCPSF, etc.), creating burdensome processes and affecting its flexibility and responsiveness to changing circumstances.

Limited coordination among donors has **several rationales**. The lack of coordination has been due to the different approaches adopted by different donors, who have often sought to *allocate their funding bilaterally* in order to foster their own strategic objectives.[180] Moreover, a number of donors have increasingly preferred *allocating funds directly to civil society* rather than to the national government or the UN, particularly as the role of the latter actors has become increasingly contested during the current political crisis.[181] Lastly, *the lack of a formal platform for coordination* of donor funding has reportedly affected the effectiveness of such funding.[182]

International support for peacebuilding efforts in Sudan has also been hampered by the **limited flexibility** displayed by the UN funds and international donors. To be sure, the UN system has succeeded in taking a number of adaptive measures – most notably in response to the challenges posed by COVID-19. For instance, implementing partners who had signed agreements for the execution of peacebuilding projects were allowed to divert some of their budgets to counter the spread of the pandemic through the

172 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
173 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
174 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
175 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
176 European Commission, 'Coronavirus response: Team Europe support to Sudan through EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flight', 24 June 2020, Accessible at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1180.
177 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
178 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
179 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, p. 41-42, para 116-120.
180 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
181 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
182 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, p. 41- 42, para 116-120.

distribution of soap and face masks, and to carry out awareness-raising in markets and public spaces.[183] Yet, overall, bureaucratic procedures have reportedly reduced donors' flexibility to adapt to the changing circumstances.[184] In the current context, at a time of heightened uncertainty about the prospects for peace in Sudan, adapting support to the country's evolving needs is going to be critical to support peacebuilding efforts.

Despite the challenges faced in devising suitable mechanisms to finance peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, there are **several positive developments**. First, the PBF Secretariat is currently conducting an internal assessment of ongoing PBF-funded programmes, in coordination with project-implementing agencies, to assess whether revisions are required in light of the October 2021 military takeover. The PBF will also support the completion of an independent final evaluation of its USD 20 million programme in Darfur, with the aim of assessing key peacebuilding results and lessons learned. These *PBF assessments* may serve as a basis to better understand some of the mechanism's shortcomings and address them. In addition, *the SFP* has the potential to improve coordination by providing a dedicated financing stream for both UNITAMS and the UNCT in line with the peacebuilding objectives set forth by UNITAMS' mandate. Once a legitimate government is re-established, it will be crucial to embed these mechanisms into broader coordination structures that bring together all relevant stakeholders, including UN entities, the Sudanese government, and donors, as well as implementing partners.[185]

Moving forward:

Currently, peacebuilding funding is reportedly insufficient to cover Sudan's needs, with most peacebuilding resources largely frozen following the October 2021 events. Donors have reportedly found it difficult to shift from a humanitarian-focused approach towards one that supports the transition, leading to limited flexibility to adapt to Sudanese realities. As the primary financing tool, the PBF displays positive elements such as healthy competition among UN agencies, low overhead costs, and some flexibility. However, the fund reportedly has mixed performance due to its short-term nature and long chain of fund recipients. Furthermore, the limited coordination among donors has negatively impacted the effectiveness of financing for peacebuilding, causing overlaps and inefficiencies. Although ad hoc and bilateral coordination efforts exist, there is no systemic platform with relevant stakeholders to enhance coordination. Should a political solution be found, there is the potential to address some of these issues through the new Peacebuilding and Stabilisation Window under the SFP, particularly if it is embedded into a broader coordination platform. Another avenue is to strengthen the role of the DSRSG/RC/HC – as the head of the PBF in Sudan – in coordinating peacebuilding donors.

183 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
184 Derived from the interviews conducted for this project.
185 UN, 'Mapping of UN Development System Capacities in Sudan: Joint UNDCO / UN Transition Project Report', December 2020, p. 41-42, para 116-120.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this study has been to provide an initial assessment of the progress and impact of the **implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda at the country level**, by looking specifically into the case of **Sudan**. The analysis has been structured around the four shifts called for by the UNSG in his 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, namely leadership, accountability, and capacity; operational and policy coherence; partnerships; and financing. This section summarises the main findings of the analysis and provides a number of recommendations on how to improve UN efforts to implement the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda in Sudan.

Sudan is currently characterised by a **highly fragile political, economic, and security situation**, with most peacebuilding activities being frozen. The volatile political situation, the ongoing intercommunal conflicts, and the ever-growing humanitarian crisis happening simultaneously during a delicate transitional process should keep Sudan in the international spotlight. In this critical moment, a joint action of all UN actors and the donor community at the global and country levels is similarly of crucial importance to support Sudan's transition and sustain peace in the country.

7.1. Leadership, accountability, and capacity

The UN approach in Sudan has reportedly been insufficient in ensuring **clear division of roles**, increasingly **Khartoum-centric**, and **not sufficiently agile** to adapt to the fast-paced developments of Sudan's transition. The lack of clarity has also generated **internal competition** among UN entities – particularly with regard to UNITAMS' leadership role, which has been partly resisted by other UN agencies. Besides leadership issues, the UN's peacebuilding efforts have also been affected by a **modest peacebuilding capacity** across the UN system in Sudan. A limited programmatic focus on **conflict prevention and peacebuilding** further hampers the effectiveness of the UN's peacebuilding efforts. Yet, **positive efforts** have been undertaken to improve such capacity, both by training existing staff in conflict analysis and by recruiting new peacebuilding staff, including in the peripheries. The UNHQ and UNSC have also made available significant support, particularly with respect to the transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS.

Recommendations:

Originally, UNITAMS was supposed to simply provide political guidance, with little to no practical role (the role allocated to the UNCT). This is however no longer the case and creates the most confusion in understanding the leadership structures. Should a legitimate government be formed, **the SPPSP process would need to be finalised** to ensure delivery of the UNITAMS mandate as well as clarify the division of roles between the UNITAMS, the RCO, and UNCT to avoid further competition. To ensure continuity and sustainability of efforts, there also should be **a concrete plan to transfer its political functions** to the RCO given its long-term presence in the country and UNITAMS' exit-oriented approach. This requires the right balance in terms of leadership roles between UNITAMS and UNCT. In this, the UNSC can support the dialogue and mandate renewal of UNITAMS to highlight these priorities, while the Peacebuilding Commission can ensure that the SPPSP process benefits from possible expertise and resources available to the Peacebuilding Commission's forum.

Practically, to ensure the UN's capacity for **a fast-paced response to the changing circumstances**, more needs to be done primarily in the areas of staffing, expertise, and decision-making. As the UN presence in Sudan has been growing its capacity in terms of advancing the implementation of the peacebuilding and sustaining peace agenda, the UN could **build on the positive developments**:

(i) Recent efforts by the PBF and UNDP to improve peacebuilding capacity in relation to the Sudanese context through **trainings in conflict analysis** represent a welcome initiative that may be followed up on – compatibly with funding constraints. The

adoption of the SPPSP could also help formulate concrete avenues to support conflict analysis, including through early warning and early response programming. It is critical that the SPPSP process comes to fruition to meaningfully operationalise conflict prevention objectives currently lacking at both the national and the UN level.

(ii) Positive efforts to **increase peacebuilding capacities**, including in the peripheries, should be amplified and increased. Currently, peacebuilding experts are not present within all UN AFPs, requiring their consistent reliance on partners to provide such an expertise with only limited knowledge of the agency's operations and goals. It is important that all actors have significant peacebuilding expertise. The UN in-country presence would also benefit from a database of peacebuilding experts/champions who can be deployed across the country to perform a number of functions (i.e., mediation, facilitation, etc.). A thorough mapping is required to set up such a database.

(iii) The extensive **support provided by UNHQ** to the UN presence in Sudan represents another positive example. In the wake of UNAMID's drawdown, this support should not be discontinued, but rather re-geared towards UNITAMS and/or UNCT.

At the same time, however, there is **room for improvement** on other fronts:

(i) During Sudan's transition, the lack of adaptation of key strategic documents (most notably UNDAF) has led to a misalignment between old UN strategies (and their results framework) and new realities on the ground. Sufficient capacity should be made available to the UNCT to **regularly review strategic documents and adapt the specific indicators** in light of developments in the country.

(ii) The UN's peacebuilding efforts in Sudan have been largely characterised as Khartoum-centric. Although UNITAMS's recent efforts to expand its regional presence are laudable, they may not be sufficient if key decisions (particularly on needs assessments, project design, and financial management) remain concentrated either in Khartoum, or in the hands of senior officials working in field offices but coming from the capital. Addressing this imbalance may require increasing the number of **UN staff with direct experience in Sudan's peripheries in Khartoum**. This should be compounded by efforts to strengthen consultations and partnerships with local actors in the peripheries, as well as increasing the number of peacebuilding experts working in the peripheries.

7.2. Operational and policy coherence:

While UN peacebuilding efforts in Sudan have been extensive, their coordination has reportedly been limited, with instances of overlap, lack of information sharing, and competition over funds. The lack of a coherent leadership and strategy on both the UN's and the Sudanese side (even before the October 2021 events) has exacerbated this issue. The recently established **senior position tasked with improving coordination between UNITMAS and UNCT** and **a series of joint peacebuilding assessments** and the establishment of an **inter-agency working group on peace** have the potential to enhance the coherence of UN peacebuilding efforts. Further, the finalisation of the SPPSP process could bring UNITAMS and the UNCT behind a shared set of objectives and assist national peacebuilding priorities.

Recommendations:

The challenges to operational and policy coherence could be addressed by explicitly identifying one entity in charge of **coordinating UN peacebuilding efforts**. During the transition period, this entity could be UNITAMS, whose mandate includes assistance to peacebuilding. However, in the longer term it would be advisable to select an entity within the UNCT for this role, given its permanent placement within the national context and the accumulated trust between UN agencies and the Sudanese population. In terms of capacity, this entity should feature a combination of peacebuilding expertise and in-depth knowledge of both the Sudanese political context and the challenges related to coordination within the UN system. Funding for this entity could be made available through the Sudan Peace Fund's Peacebuilding and Stabilisation Window. To address some of the issues that have so far hampered UN peacebuilding efforts, the entity in charge of peacebuilding efforts may do the following:

(i) Promote **information sharing** on peacebuilding within the UN's in-country presence. This may include the development of joint peacebuilding assessments and their circulation across UN entities, as well as the (at least temporary) co-location of staff from different entities working on peacebuilding.

(ii) Optimise existing **coordination mechanisms** and ensure adequate focus on peacebuilding at both the national and sub-national levels. For example, the Peace and Development Working Group, which is currently concentrated at the Khartoum level, could be expanded to establish similar working groups at state level. Wherever possible, these mechanisms should seek to coordinate UN support to existing peacebuilding actors and mechanisms active at the local level. The platforms for donor coordination on peacebuilding and the platform for the UN coordination can leverage off each other and be potentially facilitated by the same actor (i.e., the DSRSG/RC/HC).

(iii) Develop a **specific result framework** tracking progress on the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda (to be embedded in broader results frameworks associated with the SSPSP and/or any future country framework).

In order to improve coordination between UN entities and the Sudanese government, it is important to **work with the Sudanese government** to develop a coherent and inclusive approach to peacebuilding at the national and state levels. This could include:

(i) The drafting of a government-owned **national peacebuilding strategy**, listing national objectives and priorities in relation to peacebuilding. The UN could use this strategy to inform its own efforts.
(ii) The full establishment of the **Peace Commission** and the state level entities as national and state-level bodies in charge of coordinating the peacebuilding efforts of the Sudanese government.
(iii) When trying to strengthen their coordination with the Sudanese government, UN entities may bear in mind the success of **the SLF's Joint 5+8 Technical Committee**, which was reportedly successful in bringing together different UN actors (UNAMID/UNCT) and the government. The replication of this mechanism outside of Darfur has already been recommended from previous evaluations.

Generally, the biggest challenge to peacebuilding in Sudan is the absence of a government partner. The UNHQ peacebuilding partners need to conduct **an assessment of the tools and resources** available to the UN at the country level to fundamentally rethink the approach to peacebuilding in this kind of context.

7.3. Partnerships for peacebuilding:

The UN engagement in Sudan, with **its broad ecosystem of partners** – including regional organisations, the donor community, and civil society – based on their complementary capacities is a welcome development that enables joint analysis, programming and information sharing, improved financial support, and impactful implementation at the country level. However, there is **a significant issue of mistrust** between partners. There is some room for improvement, however, when it comes to the operationalisation of these partnerships. The opportunity to **use the UN's platform to connect** regional actors, international financial institutions and civil society that work on early warning and early response, and other diverse stakeholders having common objectives, could be one area for improvement. **An assessment of existing partnerships** is also required to identify and address challenges that incite competition and mistrust, including the alignment around common concepts and clear division of roles.

Recommendations:

It is important that the UN conducts **a mapping of active peacebuilding actors and mechanisms** at all levels, from local to national to sub-regional and regional, in order to identify entry points for UN support to existing efforts, as well as to determine areas where the UN may need to step back and provide a platform for other actors to come together around their common objectives. One such avenue could be to create a space to **connect KU and IGAD on early warning**. The mapping will help unpack additional suitable opportunities.

Further, the creation of **the multi-stakeholder and inclusive partnership platform** for coordination and dialogue messaging among all peacebuilding actors is another critical opportunity that the DSRSG/RC/HC is well-suited to undertake. This platform would help with **the realignment and development of structural modalities** among the WB and the UN and regional organisations and the UN on peacebuilding- and transition-related common objectives.

In regard to the partnership with civil society, the UN needs to strengthen **the bottom-up dimension** of the UN-civil society partnerships. As such, the UN presence in Sudan would be advised to:

(i) Improve **consultation mechanisms** with civil society actors, devoting extra care to providing them with a safe environment when voicing their needs (e.g., by ensuring confidentiality of their remarks), and duly following up on the recommendations arising from such consultations. This should include consistently ensuring the presence of Sudanese experts, including academics and practitioners, in decision-making fora that are currently made up of largely international staff.
(ii) Develop **a formal and formalised strategy for civil society engagement** as opposed to the ad-hoc consultations with a limited feedback loop. The deployment of a civil society liaison within the UNCT would help operationalise such a strategy.
(iii) Commit to **more inclusive partnerships**. Particular attention should be devoted to strengthening consultations and partnerships with actors in Sudan's peripheries, who tend to be even more excluded than their Khartoum-based counterparts. Increased efforts in this regard are crucial to strengthen the UN's capacity to cater to the needs of conflict-affected populations in these areas.
(iv) Once a legitimate government has been restored, engage with the government to capitalise on and revive **the long history of indigenous peacebuilding and early warning mechanisms** which already include the tools, mechanisms, and structures in place to build peace. The UN and the donor community more broadly should also play a role in amplifying these initiatives via the platforms available to them.
(v) Support local peacebuilders in **building their capacity** in the process of joint work, instead of selecting and continuously working with a few organisations that meet the UN's expectations. Besides funding, civil society actors have cited the need for trainings either on relevant thematic issues (e.g., transitional justice), or on practical project-related skills (e.g., financial management). While the desire to hire competent staff is understandable, it must be kept in mind that this trend perpetuates the condition of weakness of local actors, thus hindering the creation of long-

term partnerships of equals. UN entities may explore creative arrangements to address this issue, for instance by allowing their new employees to continue assisting their previous local employer.

7.4 Financing for peacebuilding:

Peacebuilding funding has reportedly been **insufficient** and **in need of better quality** (predictability and sustainability) to cover Sudan's needs. This situation is further exacerbated by the **absence of specific peacebuilding markers** for donor allocations, making it hard to determine the exact amount of allocations. The PBF (the main financing tool to date) has featured a **mixed performance**, with positive elements (healthy competition among UN agencies, low overhead costs, some flexibility) and less positive ones (short-term and long chain of beneficiaries). Beyond this, the effectiveness of overall peacebuilding financing has been negatively affected by **limited coordination among peacebuilding donors**, resulting in overlaps and inefficiencies. While there have been ad hoc coordination efforts, there has been no systematic platform bringing together all relevant stakeholders to enhance coordination. **Limited donor flexibility** in adapting to Sudan's evolving circumstances has also negatively impacted peacebuilding efforts, as currently most of existing peacebuilding resources to Sudan are frozen.

Recommendations:

Since resource mobilisation to support peacebuilding efforts in Sudan has proved to be a complex and challenging endeavour, the **donors should increase their financial commitments** to peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, including by using **a peacebuilding marker** while maintaining **conflict-sensitivity requirement** in all international aid in Sudan. For both the UN and the donor community, this would entail **a shift away from the current predominantly humanitarian approach**, towards an approach that supports Sudan's political transition once a way has been found to put the transition back on track. At the same time, however, the UN presence in Sudan should be careful in **managing expectations**, as UNAMID's drawdown has left gaps that are unlikely to be filled by UNITAMS, which has relatively scarce resources.

In order to **improve the quality of existing financing mechanisms**, the UN presence in Sudan, as well as the donor community, could:

(i) Consider **shortening the long chain of recipients** of UN funding, with local peacebuilding organisations usually functioning as sub-contractors, and encourage the UN AFPs to engage with local peacebuilding partners in a process of co-creation with a clear division of roles and responsibilities based on respective mandates and expertise, with equitable distribution of resources.

(ii) Develop concrete mechanisms to **support local partners in a more direct fashion,** while maintaining a degree of cooperation with in-country UN entities. **The Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office** can change existing regulations that prevent funds like the PBF from supporting smaller civil society organisations, especially in the peripheries. It also requires innovative thinking by bilateral donors in providing local peacebuilders not only financial resources but also capacity building and a platform for political support.

(iii) Consider lowering the **eligibility requirements** for the establishment of partnerships and/or access to UN funding, in order to reduce the current imbalances that often limit the roles of local organisations to those of sub-contractors and implementers.

(iv) Increase the **timeline for peacebuilding programming beyond the 18-month limit** that is sometimes adopted and analyse the impact of three- to five-year peacebuilding programming at the country level. Based on such analysis, the trend of five-year programming could be further adopted as a norm and implemented in all peacebuilding programming.

(v) Consider **removing earmarking** from their contributions to enable additional flexibility in resource management. This could help ensure that local realities are reflected in the development of relevant projects for increased impact.

(vi) Support the launch of **pooled fund mechanisms** that are flexible; available to diverse stakeholders, including both UNITAMS and civil society; and not earmarked in order to further contribute and complement the efforts of the PBF and Sudan Peace Fund.

(vii) Include **conflict-sensitivity and peacebuilding markers** for development and humanitarian funding. These efforts should build on reflections and learnings from gender experts who have previously worked on including gender markers.

It is also critical to establish **formal coordination mechanisms** involving all relevant stakeholders, including the UN, the Sudanese government, international donors, and implementing partners. This will ensure that opportunities like the Peacebuilding and Stabilisation Window under the Sudan Peace Fund, each their full potential. Ideally, there will be **one pooled fund mechanism** that supports the implementation of the UN's strategic framework. However, such a mechanism will still exist within a broader array of donors, requiring further coordination. Building on the existing good practices, the UN could:

1. Continue reflecting on **the results of the Development Finance Assessment** and integrate this learning in the coordination processes.
2. Consider facilitating **donor coordination through the DSRSG/RC/HC**, and continue to include donors in initiatives such as project monitoring missions and PBF Joint Steering Committee meetings.
3. Once the transition is back on track, strengthen **the engagement of the Sudan International Partners Forum** on peacebuilding. Coordination with or

through this forum could lead to more awareness of the priorities and funding cycles of different donors, thus allowing for better planning of assistance.

4. Build on **existing national financial frameworks**, including the National Financing Framework for Peace and Sustainable Development in the Sudan (drafted by the STG in cooperation with the RCO, UNDP, and UNICEF).

Annexes: Relevant resources

Global Resources:

Security Council Report, Resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/peacebuilding-including-the-pbc/.

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Sudan-Specific Documents:

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World Bank, "Country Engagement Note Sudan for the Period of FY 21- FY 22", 10 September 2020, p. 27, Accessible at: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/879871602253859419/pdf/Sudan-Country-Engagement-Note-for-the-Period-FY21-FY22.pdf.

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February 2022

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