



ZIF Xchange - Recommendations

ZIF Xchange Recommendations on

Supporting transitions with peacebuilding tools

On 10 July 2024, key actors from UN Headquarters, peace operations at different stages of transition, the World Bank, UN agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs), as well as representatives of civil society came together for an online exchange organised by the **Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF)**. With a specific focus on transition planning in UN peace operations, the ZIF Xchange aimed to generate concrete recommendations as part of the civil society consultations ahead of the Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding (September 2024) and the upcoming Peacebuilding Architecture Review (2025).

Transitions have long been discussed in the context of UN peace operations but are garnering more attention due to last year's hasty withdrawal of MINUSMA from Mali, the ongoing process of disengagement of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the upcoming transition in Iraq. At the same time, the outbreak of conflict in Sudan, where the closure of UNAMID in the Darfur region was followed by a small Special Political Mission (SPM) UNITAMS centralised in the capital Khartoum, has underlined the need to consider what comes after missions with a security and/or political focus close down.

Critics argue that the UN Security Council (UNSC) which mandates and oversees UN peace operations is stuck in a global firefighting role that inhibits forging innovative and sustainable approaches to accompanying countries that are shifting from a peace operation to a peacebuilding focus. At the same time, host countries are eager to move out of the spotlight of the UNSC's (political) agenda, and in some cases steer their countries toward post-conflict engagement. However, this often entails that countries enter a fragmented space with a multitude of actors, financial instruments and approaches. The Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA), especially the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, can help to navigate this fragmentation by convening and coordinating various tools for post-conflict engagement and providing support in mission-settings as well as before, during and after transition planning and implementation.

How the Context for Peacebuilding is Changing

A few recent developments already indicate a certain direction for the strengthening of the PBA, which is reflected in the recommendations produced during the ZIF Xchange.

The New Agenda for Peace (June 2023) pointed to the potential inherent in the PBC's convening role and its possible application to cross-cutting themes and cross-pillar issues to better bridge peace and development agendas. It also called for greater alignment of political and financial instruments, including actors such as regional organisations and international financial institutions, to better mobilise and manage resources for peacebuilding. Finally, the New Agenda urged the UNSC to seek the advice of the PBC, particularly on the linkages between the mandates of peace operations and peacebuilding tasks. The current draft of the Pact for the Future (to be adopted at the Summit of the Future in September 2024) echoes these points. In addition, the draft

proposes a stronger role for the PBC in supporting transitions as well as more inclusive local-level engagement particularly with civil society actors.

In light of decreasing overseas development aid, the fact that the General Assembly granted the PBF access to assessed contributions in December 2023 and allocated an initial 50 million USD for activities in 2025 (A/RES/78/257) was a welcome step forward. Given that the PBF 2020-2024 strategy envisaged 1.5 billion USD over the five-year period, this appears to be a modest beginning, but a remarkable shift nonetheless. Still, significant funding for transitions and peacebuilding during and in the aftermath of crises will also have to come from other sources.

At UN Headquarters, the cross-departmental Transitions Project has helped shape the understanding of the interface between peace operations and peacebuilding. The UN Secretariat sees peacebuilding as a collective responsibility and in recent years AFPs have acknowledged their own role in peacebuilding. UN HQ participants reported that the transitions policy is being updated to more clearly link transition plans to a mission's political strategy, providing a clear entry point for the PBC. Throughout the ZIF Xchange discussions, there was a plea to expand and make full use of the toolbox available to the UN system, rather than replacing one tool with another.

The discussion at the ZIF Xchange revealed some inhibiting factors that have prevented peacebuilding instruments from playing a greater role, such as the extent of the PBC's political clout and capacity to engage, the amount and type of funding available for PBF activities, or its ability to engage at the regional and/or local level. The following recommendations, which emerged from the ZIF Xchange, focus on enhancing the engagement of the peacebuilding architecture at three main levels: political-strategic, operational (national and mission), and local.

Recommendations

Political-strategic level:

At the political-strategic level, most of the recommendations aim at offsetting the looming political attention gap that often arises in the context of transition, and at fostering coherence across actors/institutions, issues and communities.

- At a time, when the UNSC is shirking its responsibility to decide on peace and security measures, the PBC can advocate for greater attention, sustained engagement and political support, and in that way hold the UNSC accountable. More in-depth exchanges such as UNSC-PBC retreats are one option, PBC engagement with individual UNSC penholders is another.
- Several conversations (on transition, on peace and security, on development, on peacebuilding) are taking place in parallel. The PBC could make greater use of its convening and coordinating remit and tie these strands together. This will require the PBC to identify the spaces, in which it does have political influence, and explore how best to use it to move a political process forward.
- This bridging role is particularly important in the context of transitions when the attention of the UNSC has moved beyond considering a mission mandate and does not extend to the UN Country Team. This leaves a gap in which the PBC's advice is invaluable.
- While maintaining its regional and thematic engagement through the Organisational Committee, the PBC should make full use of the possibility of appointing country-specific chairs as dedicated advocates for a specific setting. A clear lead and commitment can add political weight to the engagement. In addition, the country-specific chairs build up significant

knowledge that lends credibility to their advisory role. (Examples of effective engagement include Sweden-Liberia and Switzerland-Burundi match-ups.) Many of the operational-level recommendations below are contingent upon this depth of knowledge to be put into practice successfully.

- In terms of the PBA's partnerships and strategic engagement, the fact that discussions with international financial institutions (IFIs) have become more systematic is a welcome development to promote coherence and continuity. It may be possible to make greater use of Advisory Group of the PBF and consider extending it to include partner institutions such as the World Bank and regional development banks.
- At the regional level, engagement with UN regional offices and/or regional economic communities (RECs) can be formalised to better address cross-border issues and align peacebuilding efforts with regional frameworks and peace initiatives. Progress towards institutionalising the exchange between the UNSC, the AU Peace & Security Council and the PBC can serve as a foundation on which to build.
- Another option is to link mission activities with other regional initiatives, such as the Middle East Green Initiative and the COP16 on De-desertification by, for example, funding regional dialogue among gulf countries and Iran on knowledge and capacity exchange on Sand-and Dust Storms, as well as water management and cover-crop plantation. This would contribute to stability and position Iraq as regional convener (if hosted in Baghdad).
- Partnerships can also be expanded in thematic areas to foster political continuity on specific issues, such as through exchanges with relevant groups of friends or subject matter experts.
- The ability of the PBC to expand its political advocacy role vis-à-vis the UNSC and member states more generally will be bolstered if it can demonstrate impact, showcase its achievements and learn more systematically from past experiences. The Peacebuilding Impact Hub, which was launched in December 2023, to *inter alia*, generate and communicate empirical evidence on the impact of peacebuilding, should be used and supported to fulfil this role.
- Strategic communication on the role and impact of peacebuilding tools in the context of transitions needs to clarify the exact scope and nature of peacebuilding in each case. As peacebuilding strategies must be tailored to the specific needs of the country, communication around transitions should focus on specific activities and priorities aimed at achieving sustainable peace and development, including the role of the UN family after the transition.

Operational (national and mission) level:

At the operational level, recommendations explore the supportive role of peacebuilding tools in building the capacity of national authorities and strengthening governance at all levels, and in mitigating the security gap through earlier and longer-term support.

- At the national level, the PBC can review peacebuilding plans, as well as help to mobilise resources – not only from donors but also from the private sector – particularly drawing attention to underfunded areas and fostering coherent implementation in a fragmented space. At mission level, tools are often fragmented and keeping an overview of various funding sources and priorities that are supported by member states remains a major challenge.

- It can also monitor the implementation of a transition plan, document lessons learned and best practices, and in that way ensure a timely response to shortfalls as they arise or advise on adjustments in consultation with the host government and the mission.
- Participants underlined the need for state and institution building as a precondition for transition, especially when it comes to the protection of civilians. While peacebuilding tools cannot play a role in physical protection, they could be more involved in building host state institutions and protection mechanisms – processes that generally exceed the lifespan of a peace operation.
- For instance, participants underlined that the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) still needed international engagement but with a greater emphasis on state-building, including reform of the security forces (army and police). The PBC could mobilise resources and act as an intermediary through a monitoring, advising and coordinating role. This could help to fill gaps in a timely manner, thereby enhancing the protection of civilians.
- This entails earlier PBC (and PBF) engagement on longer term issues, such as security sector capacity-building. Besides governance, the financial requirements for restoring state authority also need to be addressed. In the case of the DRC, this would have contributed to the national armed forces (FARDC) and national police (PNC) having sufficient technical, financial and logistical resources to take over when MONUSCO withdraws from North Kivu and Ituri.
- Climate and resilience financing can serve as entry points for the PBC (and PBF) to convene relevant actors that can support national governments to strengthen governance of natural resources to benefit the national budget, promote energy transformation, engage non-state actors and ultimately undergird the transition. This may require the Terms of Reference of the PBF to be revised.
- A coordinated approach could also help to prioritise and sequence PBF engagement in those areas where a peace operation, for instance MONUSCO, is going to withdraw with a focus on strengthening early warning and local protection mechanisms.
- Including more programmatic tasks alongside POC-mandates might provide missions, the UNCT and peacebuilding tools with the space to better converge, mobilise and coordinate funding – without having to fund these activities through the budget of a peace operation.

Peacebuilding and early transition – good practice in South Sudan and Iraq

In **South Sudan**, the PBF supports the Ministry of Peacebuilding to coordinate activities and actors outside of the PBC framework in order to build on synergies. Based on this model, the PBF could also fund the establishment of similar structures and activities on the local level. UNMISS works along four key pillars of engagement, in order to build the requisite institutional capacity and thereby enable ownership:

1. Security Sector Reform; Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration; Community Violence Reduction
2. Rule of Law and access to justice
3. Human Rights, Gender, Youth
4. Cross-cutting issues.

In **Iraq**, UNAMI works on extra-budgetary projects that focus on governance, for example encouraging youth in government or promoting climate adaptation. The projects are small, but impactful. By continuing to fund these initiatives, the PBF has an opportunity to support the mission during the transition period and ensure a smooth transition to the UNCT.

On climate, the PBF could look into supporting UNAMI's engagement with the Iraqi government on transboundary water and climate adaptation issues, such as by funding a regional dialogue (in conjunction with the UNEP initiative on the transboundary management in the Tigris and Euphrates basin) including government interlocutors at technical level of the Gulf countries and Iran, to work on mutually beneficial solutions, building on the narrative of soft-diplomacy in the Middle East/West Asia.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, MONUSCO created Provincial Integrated Transition Teams (PITT) that bring together relevant actors at provincial level to develop and implement "roadmaps" that aim at facilitating the gradual transfer of mandated tasks and responsibilities to national/provincial authorities, with UNCT support and in consultation with civil society and partners. Such a gradual approach can offer a suitable platform for international and national partners to support transition processes. The use of assessed contributions to "bridge the gap" is critical but can only be seed funding that will have to be scaled up by other actors.

Local-level approaches:

Inter-communal violence is a key driver of conflict and a major source of insecurity within and across borders. At the same time, there is a whole ecosystem of local peace champions that could be better supported – during transitions but also more generally with a view to prevention.

Participants suggested the following entry points:

- Participants pointed to the need to invest in local-level early-warning systems, e.g. by including a wide range of stakeholders as valuable data sources as well as active responders and key drivers of social change.
- Equally important to safeguard gains made in peace and stability is to ensure that early-warning and response mechanisms are integrated into broader, longer-term conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts at the national and the local level.
- To best utilise existing local knowledge on conflict drivers, participants stressed the need to empower local actors as early as possible through programmes that map relevant actors, assess their technical capacity, and design needs-based capacity-building activities.
- In the context of transitions, civil society organisations are often expected to fill gaps that arise after a mission's withdrawal, including in the security sector/rule of law areas. Participants stressed the importance of strengthening local-level justice mechanisms, including peace tribunals as well as other traditional justice mechanisms prior to a transition.
- The PBC should closely accompany mission transition plans and push for local-level input throughout the design of inclusive local peacebuilding strategies. It could also task the Peacebuilding Impact Hub to collect best practices on grassroots peace initiatives based on local community structures in mission settings (with a focus on aspects of particular importance to transitions).