

Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea: Prevention in Practice

LESLEY CONNOLLY AND LAURIE MINCIELI



Cover Photo: Women in the village of Aero in central Bougainville come together for a unification ceremony, April 2018, Nick Turner/UNDP.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper represent those of the authors and not necessarily those of the International Peace Institute. IPI welcomes consideration of a wide range of perspectives in the pursuit of a well-informed debate on critical policies and issues in international affairs.

IPI Publications

Adam Lupel, *Vice President*

Albert Trithart, *Editor*

Suggested Citation:

Lesley Connolly and Laurie Mincieli, "Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea: Prevention in Practice," International Peace Institute, September 2019.

© by International Peace Institute, 2019
All Rights Reserved

www.ipinst.org

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

LESLEY CONNOLLY is a former Senior Policy Analyst at the International Peace Institute.

LAURIE MINCIELI is the former UN Liaison Officer at the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IPI owes a debt of gratitude to its many donors for their generous support. IPI is particularly grateful to the governments of Australia and the UK for funding this research initiative. The authors would like to thank the many UN officials, member-state representatives, Papua New Guinean officials, representatives of civil society organizations, and experts who shared their insights and perspectives during interviews conducted in New York and Papua New Guinea.



Global Partnership
for the Prevention of
Armed Conflict

CONTENTS

Abbreviations	iii
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	1
Challenges to Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea	2
What Is Sustaining Peace?	3
Operational and Policy Coherence: Sustaining Peace and the UN Country Team	4
DELIVERING AS ONE: USING THE UNDAF AS THE BASIS FOR A COHERENT VISION	
PREVENTION IN PRACTICE: THE UN'S BOUGAINVILLE STRATEGY	
AN INTERAGENCY APPROACH: THE UN'S ROLE IN THE HIGHLANDS	
Leadership: The Resident Coordinator's Vision for Sustaining Peace	9
The Role of National and Local Partners	10
GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS	
CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS	
PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS	
International Support for Sustaining Peace: The Need for Sustained, Long-Term Interest	9
Conclusions and Recommendations	15
GETTING A RESIDENT COORDINATOR WITH THE RIGHT SKILL SET	

TAKING A LONG-TERM, PREVENTIVE APPROACH
IN BOTH BOUGAINVILLE AND THE HIGHLANDS

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF GOVERNMENT
AND CIVIL SOCIETY

ENSURING CONTINUOUS AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING

WORKING WITH THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION
TO BRING ATTENTION TO PNG IN NEW YORK

Abbreviations

DPA	UN Department of Political Affairs
DPPA	UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
MTDP	Medium-term development plan
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
PBC	UN Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	UN Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	UN Peacebuilding Support Office
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RC	Resident coordinator
RCO	Resident coordinator's office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	UN country team
UNDAF	UN development framework
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNOMB	UN Observer Mission in Bougainville
UNPOB	UN Political Office in Bougainville

Executive Summary

In his January 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the UN secretary-general called for a shift in not only UN policies on peacebuilding, but also approaches to peacebuilding at the regional and country levels. In implementing this shift, he advocated for changes in four key issue areas: operational and policy coherence; UN leadership at the country level; partnerships with local and regional actors; and international support for sustaining peace. This was followed one year later by the reform of the United Nations development system, which empowered UN resident coordinators to be the heads of the UN country teams with a direct line to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

These changes come at a time when Papua New Guinea (PNG) is facing a host of challenges, including a political shift, a referendum on the future political status of Bougainville, increasing intercommunal violence in the Highlands, the growing impact of climate change, and continued poor development outcomes. This confluence of issues makes PNG a good case study to explore the implementation of the secretary-general's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Implementation can be assessed across the four shifts called for by the secretary-general. In terms of operational and policy coherence, structures to promote integrated planning and programming are well established in PNG. A coordinated approach to prevention is particularly critical in Bougainville and the Highlands. In Bougainville, the UN is seeking to prevent the outbreak of violence around the upcoming referendum, though more work is needed to prepare for the worst-case scenarios. In the Highlands, the UN's response to an earthquake in 2018 has allowed it to engage communities in the area, paving the way for expanded peacebuilding programming in the wake of the humanitarian response, though funding remains limited.

In terms of leadership, the role of the current resident coordinator in PNG has highlighted the importance of having leaders who understand the need to ground the UN's work in a clear political strategy, to coordinate within the country team, and to engage with international partners. In terms of partnerships, the UN has engaged with and

supported the national government and civil society, though the capacity of both remains weak. Finally, in terms of international support, the resident coordinator and UN country team are both seeking to garner more political, financial, and technical support from UN headquarters, including the Peacebuilding Commission. In this regard, the PNG UN Country Fund has helped streamline contributions, though the earmarking of funds limits flexibility.

Despite ongoing challenges in PNG, implementation of the secretary-general's recommendations on sustaining peace is already underway. PNG offers examples of how to use the UN's tools and resources to reduce and prevent violence and sustain peace. It reveals the importance of getting a resident coordinator with the right skill set; taking a long-term, preventive approach; building the capacity of government and civil society; ensuring continuous and flexible funding; and working with the Peacebuilding Commission to bring political attention in New York.

Introduction

The UN has long supported peace in Papua New Guinea (PNG), especially since 1998, when it sent its first political mission to the country. Since then, the UN's central aim has been to accompany the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and support national efforts to prevent conflict, build peace, and promote development.

Twenty years since this first mission, the country is in the midst of a political shift, climate change is having an increasing impact, development statistics remain poor, and intercommunal violence in the Highlands is growing. At the same time, an upcoming referendum and subsequent consultation in Bougainville could result in the secession of the region from PNG. This confluence of complex issues requires the UN country team (UNCT) to demonstrate dynamic leadership and use all the tools in its remit to prevent violence, address triggers of instability, and contribute to sustaining peace in the country.

This paper examines the implementation of the secretary-general's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the context of PNG, both in terms of what has been done and what is still needed. These recommendations

emerged from his 2018 report, which focuses on four issue areas. These are used as the basis for the four sections of this report on operational and policy coherence, leadership at the UN country level, partnerships with local and regional actors, and international support for sustaining peace.¹ Looking at each of these areas, the paper considers how the UNCT is adapting its strategy and operations in the country to reflect this new way of working.

This paper is based on both primary and secondary research, including thirty interviews conducted between April and June 2019 with relevant experts at UN headquarters and in PNG (the capital, Port Moresby, as well as Buka in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville). Interviews were conducted with representatives of international donors and development partners in PNG, member-state representatives in New York, UN staff in New York, members of the UNCT in PNG, representatives of civil society in New York and PNG, and members of the government of PNG and the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

This paper is part of a larger project on the operationalization of the secretary-general's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the country level, which the International Peace Institute is conducting together with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Papua New Guinea is the second case study, following a case study on Liberia published in May 2019. It will be complemented by an additional case study later in 2019.² The intention is to connect field research with discussions at UN headquarters on how international actors can best create the conditions for peace and support actors working toward this goal.

Challenges to Sustaining Peace in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is an ecologically and ethnically diverse country with a population of around eight million people spread over 600 islands, and with 1,000 tribal groups speaking upwards of 850 languages.³ The country's geography means that much of the population—85 percent of which lives in rural areas—is hard to reach and exposed to natural hazards including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and landslides. The country is rich in forestry, fishing, oil, gas, gold, and copper resources.⁴

Despite this wealth of natural resources, chronic poverty is widespread, belying PNG's status as a middle-income country.⁵ PNG is ranked 153 out of 189 countries in the 2017 Human Development Index despite steady improvement over the past two decades.⁶ PNG has a highly decentralized governance system, in which provincial and district governments have “historically performed relatively poorly in terms of delivery of services and development,” according to the 2014 National Human Development Report. The report also notes that “there is a widespread perception within the country that the extractive-based form of development has not been inclusive or reached as many Papua New Guineans as it could and should have.”⁷

Violence is another major problem in PNG. Violent crime rates are high, particularly in the capital, Port Moresby. Intercommunal fighting in the Highlands is becoming more deadly due to the use of more modern weaponry.⁸ Added to this, over two-thirds of women have reported suffering some form of physical or sexual violence.⁹ Underscoring

1 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018.

2 Lesley Connolly and Laurie Mincieli, “Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities?” International Peace Institute, May 2019.

3 Due to the lack of data, the exact population is unknown.

4 United Nations in PNG, “Papua New Guinea United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018–2022,” September 2018.

5 A middle-income country is defined as having a per capita gross national income of \$1,006 to \$12,235. World Bank, “Middle Income Countries: Overview,” March 27, 2018, available at www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic/overview.

6 UN Development Programme (UNDP), “Papua New Guinea: Human Development Indicators,” available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PNG>.

7 UNDP, *2014 National Human Development Report: Papua New Guinea*, pp. 1, 23.

8 Catherine Graue, “Spears to Semi-automatics: Papua New Guinea’s Tribal Conflicts Become More Violent,” Australian Broadcasting Corporation, June 2, 2017.

9 Emily Darko, William Smith, and David Walker, “Gender Violence in Papua New Guinea,” Overseas Development Institute, September 2015.

the level of discrimination faced by women, PNG is one of the only countries in the world where there are no elected women serving in its parliament.

The upcoming referendum on the future political status of Bougainville is also a potential source of tension. This referendum is part of the peace agreement signed in 2001 that ended nearly a decade of armed conflict (1989–1998). Supporting the implementation of this agreement has been the primary focus of UN efforts in the country ever since. The UN established the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) in 1998 following the signing of a cease-fire agreement. UNPOB played a critical role in the peace talks that led to the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2001 and in the subsequent monitoring of this agreement. Following UNPOB, the UN deployed the United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville (UNOMB) in 2003 to finish the residual tasks of UNPOB, particularly the certification of weapons disposal to pave the way for elections.¹⁰

With the withdrawal of UNOMB in 2005, the UN remained engaged in Bougainville through the UN country team. The current UNCT is made up of twenty departments, agencies, funds, and programs (thirteen of which have a permanent presence in the country), plus a resident coordinator office (RCO).¹¹ The total budget of the UNCT in 2019 is \$87.6 million, and it has more than 300 staff members, around a third of whom are international staff. It has offices in Port Moresby and Buka, and some agencies have smaller presences in the Highlands.¹²

What Is Sustaining Peace?

The resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace passed by the UN Security Council and

General Assembly in 2016 define sustaining peace as follows: “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.”¹³

This definition contextualizes the UN’s approach to peacebuilding within the full spectrum of the conflict cycle rather than viewing it solely as an action taken after conflict terminates. It therefore shifts the starting point of analysis from looking only at the drivers of risk to also understanding the sources of resilience in a society, putting the focus on preventive rather than reactive operations. In January 2018, the secretary-general released a report outlining how the UN is implementing sustaining peace and proposing ways to further the process. In April 2018, the Security Council and General Assembly passed another set of dual resolutions (2413 and 72/276) endorsing the continued implementation of the secretary-general’s recommendations. These resolutions requested an interim report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in 2019 as well as a second report following up on implementation as part of the 2020 review of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture.¹⁴

The secretary-general’s report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace calls on the UN system to organize itself in a more coordinated and integrated manner so as to effectively support governments in their efforts to build peace and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹⁵ It advocates for four main shifts, calling for:

10 UN Security Council, “Political Missions and Offices,” available at www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/repertoire/political-missions-and-offices.

11 These include the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNAIDS, UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), UNDP, UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UNESCO, UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UNICEF, UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Habitat, UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP), and World Health Organization (WHO).

12 Written communication with RCO official, September 2019.

13 UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; UN General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262, May 12, 2016, p. 2.

14 The interim report was released in May 2019. UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/73/890–S/2019/448, May 30, 2019.

15 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, p. 2.

1. Operational and policy coherence between all UN actors in headquarters and in the field, with a common country and risk analysis, common vision of sustaining peace for each country context, and common understanding of the role of each actor in implementing this vision, followed by joint planning and programming;
2. Effective leadership and capacities both in headquarters and in the field to institute this common approach to sustaining peace;
3. Stronger partnerships, including with local, national, and regional actors, building off of their capacities; and
4. Adequate and sustained financing for peacebuilding activities.

This paper assesses the implementation of these shifts in PNG, highlighting where more support or attention is needed to ensure effective delivery of prevention and peacebuilding.

Operational and Policy Coherence: Sustaining Peace and the UN Country Team

The secretary-general's 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace advocates for "operational and policy coherence to strengthen support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace."¹⁶ The starting point for this is a coherent and integrated context analysis developed by the different sections of the UNCT in cooperation with international, national, and local actors. This analysis should form a clearly articulated, overarching vision for how to sustain peace in the country. All UN actors should use it as the basis for their programming, and it should drive the creation of the UN development assistance framework (UNDAF).¹⁷ In this way, it can connect all actors, allowing for discussion on which ones have the comparative advantage in specific areas, contributing to more integrated programming, and

recognizing that the UN may not always be in the lead.¹⁸

DELIVERING AS ONE: USING THE UNDAF AS THE BASIS FOR A COHERENT VISION

The 2018–2022 UNDAF guides the work of the UN in PNG. The framework was developed on the basis of an independent evaluation of the UN's programming from 2012 to 2017, a gender scorecard assessment, an evaluation of the UN's comparative advantages, and a 2016 common country analysis. To ensure the UNDAF aligns with government priorities, it was developed in consultation with the government and covers the same period as the government's third medium-term development plan (MTDP III). The UNDAF has four outcome areas that connect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: people, planet, prosperity, and peace.¹⁹

Implementation of the UNDAF is overseen and tracked by a Joint Programme Steering Committee co-chaired by the secretary of the Department of National Planning and Monitoring and the UN's resident coordinator (RC). This committee meets annually to review progress and plan for the following year. It has the power to determine how resources are allocated within the UNCT, allowing it to adjust priorities based on new risk factors or new government priorities.²⁰

In terms of operational implementation, there is a working group for each of the outcome areas in the UNDAF. These working groups, which include program staff from participating agencies, develop joint annual work plans that are signed by the relevant UN agencies and government departments. The working groups report on progress through a single annual report.²¹ This approach helps ensure planning and programming are integrated and connected to national priorities. It also moves the UN from agency-specific to area-specific work plans, promoting coordinated programming that builds off the comparative

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., para. 24. Going forward, UNDAFs will be known as UN sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs).

¹⁸ Ibid., para. 25.

¹⁹ United Nations in PNG, "PNG UNDAF 2018–2022."

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The report is prepared by the Results-Based Management Sub-Committee, which reports to the Program Coordination Committee, which is composed of the head of each working group. Interview with RCO official, Port Moresby, May 2019.

advantages of each agency.²²

Integrated planning and programming are not new to the UNCT, as PNG was a pilot case for “Delivering as One,” an approach launched in 2006. This approach involved adopting the “Four Ones”: “One Programme,” “One Fund,” “Communicating as One,” and “Operating as One.”²³ The purpose was to enhance coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness; reduce transaction costs for national partners; and test what works best in various country situations. In line with this model, three committees were established to support integration within the UNCT, beginning in 2007. The Operations Management Team develops and guides the strategic direction of operations, ensuring coordination and effective use of funds. The Budgetary Framework Committee oversees the PNG Country Fund, which allows donors to pool their financial contributions (a function now held by the UNCT). The UN Communication Group works to increase awareness and understanding of the UN’s work and coordinate joint advocacy. In addition, a Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group supports implementation of the UNDAF across all four pillars. These committees promote coherence within the UNCT, especially in terms of funding and communication.²⁴

To further encourage integrated planning and programming in PNG, the UNCT is working to collocate all UN entities based in Port Moresby. In September 2018, the government designated a piece of land in the capital as the future UN House. This collocation could encourage coordination not only on planning and programming but also on operations, including joint long-term agreements with vendors, sharing of consultants, joint security measures, and pooled transportation.²⁵

The Spotlight Initiative, a large-scale EU-UN partnership in the Pacific that PNG is part of, is an example of how this integrated approach can be effective for resource mobilization. The initiative started with all the UN agencies coming together to determine which of them was best placed to do

each portion of the work, especially where their mandates overlapped. One UN official praised the rollout of this initiative in PNG as a successful example of coherently working together, especially in comparison to the rollout in some other countries.²⁶

However, while there is greater senior-level coordination within the UNCT, agencies still sometimes act independently, which could risk confusion and undermine integration.²⁷ In addition to the joint annual work plans, each agency on the UNCT still also develops an individual work plan with its own targets and approach to implementation, though they often reflect the broader UNDAF. This work plan is the basis for the agreement between each agency and its headquarters in New York and is often attached to funding.²⁸ Each agency also agrees on its individual work plan with the government, helping ensure that all the work of the UN supports national priorities.

PREVENTION IN PRACTICE: THE UN’S BOUGAINVILLE STRATEGY

In his peacebuilding and sustaining peace framework, the secretary-general advocates for long-term programming to prevent the outbreak of violence and address the root causes of conflict, not merely its symptoms. This approach is evident in the UN’s support to the November 2019 referendum to determine the future political status of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (see Box 1). While it is widely believed that the vote will be peaceful, the potential for violence after the referendum remains.

The UN has been able to engage with groups in both Port Moresby and Bougainville because of its perceived impartiality. This has allowed it to play a central role in advancing the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and seeking to prevent the outbreak of violence around the referendum. The UN has been facilitating dialogue between the national government and Autonomous Bougainville Government, providing

22 United Nations in PNG, “PNG UNDAF 2018–2022.”

23 United Nations, “Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel,” November 2006

24 United Nations, “Independent Evaluation of Delivering as One,” 2012.

25 United Nations in PNG, “Annual Progress Report 2018: United Nations in Papua New Guinea.”

26 Interview with RCO official, Port Moresby, July 2019.

27 Ibid.

28 Interviews with officials from UN agencies, Port Moresby, May 2019.

Box 1. Bougainville: Preparing for the referendum

After Papua New Guinea gained independence from Australia in 1975, the region of Bougainville, consisting of two islands, declared independence as a separate country. However, it received no international recognition and remained part of PNG with limited self-governing powers.

This push for independence from “the mainland” stemmed from both cultural differences and grievances related to mining. In 1972, the Panguna copper mine began production in Bougainville. At one point, the mine was responsible for nearly 20 percent of the entire country’s gross domestic product. However, only 1 percent of total revenues went to the people of Bougainville. With claims of worker mistreatment, racial discrimination, and environmental degradation, the Panguna mine caused resentment among the people of Bougainville.²⁹ In 1988, these grievances erupted into violence both between the governments of PNG and Bougainville and between Bougainvillean armed factions. As a result, the Panguna mine stopped production indefinitely. Estimates of the death toll range from several thousand to 20,000 people—as much as 10 percent of the island’s population—with thousands more fleeing.

The Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed in August 2001 between the leaders of Bougainville and the government of PNG, with Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, and the UN as witnesses. It featured three pillars—autonomy, weapons disposal, and a referendum on the political status of Bougainville—but did not provide for investigation into atrocities. The agreement led to the creation of the Autonomous Bougainville Government in 2005, which was granted far-ranging powers.³⁰

The agreement stipulated that a nonbinding vote on the political future of Bougainville had to be held between June 2015 and June 2020. The results will be the basis for a consultation process between the two governments, the outcome of which will be presented to the national parliament for ratification. This could create tension if the national parliament is not seen to respect the wishes of the people of Bougainville. Further, the vote will be between “independence” and “greater autonomy,” but even many of those who are aware of the referendum do not understand what these options will mean in practice. There is a risk that the referendum, scheduled to take place over twelve days beginning on November 23rd, could catalyze more instability and violence.

Following its earlier missions, the UN has been increasing support to this process since 2014, when the chief secretary to the government of PNG and chief secretary for the Autonomous Bougainville Government both wrote to the UN requesting assistance. Six months later, the UN received an additional request to support the 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections in Bougainville. Based upon these requests, the under-secretary-general for political affairs, in his capacity as the UN electoral focal point, deployed a needs assessment mission to PNG. The mission concluded that the referendum preparations required significant investment of time and attention, and the UN has since been providing support in a number of areas.³¹

technical advice and financial assistance to both national and Bougainvillean institutions (their electoral bodies, their parliaments, and the Bougainville Referendum Commission) and assisting with weapons disposal.³² It has also been providing technical expertise to both governments through the RC, the Department of Political and

Peacebuilding Affairs’ (DPPA) liaison officer who is also the head of the UN’s Buka office, and an expert from the UN’s Mediation Standby Team, as well as short-term experts.³³

One potential trigger of instability is that many Bougainvilleans expect that independence will

29 Anthony J. Regan, “Causes and Course of the Bougainville Conflict,” *Journal of Pacific History* 33, No. 3 (1998).

30 Bougainville Peace Agreement, Arawa, Bougainville, PNG, August 30, 2001.

31 UNDP, “Bougainville Referendum Support Project,” December 2017, available at <https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/PNG/Bougainville%20Referendum%20Support%20-%20Project%20Document%20-%20SIGNED%2019Dec2017.pdf>.

32 United Nations in PNG, “Annual Progress Report 2018.”

33 The head of the Buka office is a liaison officer from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs who reports directly to the RC. Interview with RCO

automatically follow from a vote in favor of independence in the referendum, even though the referendum is non-binding and parliament could choose not to endorse its agreed outcome. Many of the UN's activities have therefore focused on educating voters, mostly with funding from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The RCO and UN Development Programme (UNDP) have supported a joint initiative by the national and Bougainvillean governments to organize roadshows in Bougainville that raise awareness about the referendum and post-referendum processes and offer an opportunity for communities to engage with officials.³⁴ The UN has partnered with a local youth group to develop a fifteen-episode radio drama addressing issues related to the referendum to be broadcast across Bougainville.³⁵ The Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia is implementing "peace workshops" and a series of community dialogues. The UN has also been spreading information on the referendum and the situation in Bougainville on the mainland, where many are unaware of the upcoming vote.

Another risk is that the root causes of the crisis in Bougainville, including issues surrounding the Panguna mine, have yet to be addressed. If Bougainville becomes independent, it would face pressure to open the mine to generate revenue. However, recent discussions around this opening have sparked hostilities in neighboring communities. A December 2018 vote among Panguna landowners on whether to renew the license of the mining company was split.³⁶ Because of this risk to peace and stability, the Autonomous Bougainville Government imposed a moratorium on the mine. Though the UN has not directly engaged on this issue, it may grow unavoidable in the post-referendum period.

As the referendum draws closer, the UN is working to ensure both the smooth acceptance of the results by both sides and to identify next steps. As part of this work, it has been providing facilita-

tion support and technical assistance to the Post-Referendum Planning Taskforce established by both governments in 2018 to consult with the national and Bougainvillean governments to find consensus on the way forward after the vote.³⁷ However, more work is needed to prepare for scenarios where violence does break out. The challenge facing the UN is that its mandate and capacity to intervene under such scenarios are limited. The RC would likely need to draw on higher-level regional and international support, including for mediation and observation. Beyond this, it is unclear whether there would be international, regional, or domestic political support for a more robust option such as a protection force.

AN INTERAGENCY APPROACH: THE UN'S ROLE IN THE HIGHLANDS

To effectively sustain peace, the UN needs to adopt a "whole-of-system approach" to preventing violence.³⁸ In line with this approach, the UN's program in the Highlands of PNG reflects the growing consensus that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts need to mutually reinforce each other (known as the "humanitarian-development-peace nexus"). The UN's work in the Highlands also reflects the principles in the UN–World Bank "Pathways for Peace" report, which calls for conflict-sensitive, preventive approaches to development.

The UN's engagement in the Highlands began with the 7.5-magnitude earthquake that struck the region in 2018. The UN coordinated the response through a disaster management team and the humanitarian cluster system, together with the government's National Disaster Centre and Emergency Controller's Office.

Because the Highlands are remote, with limited channels of communication and many languages spoken, the UN has used innovative tools to engage with people. The resident coordinator office (RCO) established a Community Engagement Working Group to coordinate common messaging on the

official, Port Moresby, May 2019. One example of the UN providing short-term expertise was when Ian Martin, the former special representative of the secretary-general in Timor-Leste, was invited to Port Moresby to engage with the two governments on how to prepare for the referendum.

34 United Nations in PNG, government of PNG, and Autonomous Bougainville Government, "Joint GoPNG-ABG-UN Roadshow," 2019.

35 Interview with UNCT official, Buka, May 2019.

36 Helen Davidson, "Bougainville Imposes Moratorium on Panguna Mine over Fears of Civil Unrest," *The Guardian*, January 9, 2018.

37 Interview with UN official, Buka, May 2019; United Nations in PNG, "Annual Progress Report 2018."

38 UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, p. 4.

Box 2. The Highlands: A deteriorating situation

Though all of PNG is undergoing rapid modernization, the Highlands have been particularly affected, as “first contact” with many remote communities there was only established in the 1930s.³⁹ International attention on Southern Highlands and Hela provinces increased in the aftermath of a 7.5-magnitude earthquake in 2018, which caused extensive damage and necessitated a humanitarian response. This attention revealed to the UN the low level of human and economic development and high level of conflict in these two provinces.⁴⁰

The economic situation in Southern Highlands and Hela provinces has been deteriorating for some time as the rise in conflict has limited economic opportunity. It has also reduced service delivery, with few governmental or nongovernmental actors present. Economic grievances are compounded by local perceptions that mineral wealth is being extracted for the benefit of others at the expense of the province (especially in Hela) and that some landowners have betrayed traditional beliefs of the sacredness of natural gas by allowing its large-scale extraction.

Violent conflict in Southern Highlands and Hela provinces is driven by a range of issues, including inequality, patronage politics, corruption, environmental factors, lack of justice, societal pressures, and long-standing tribal feuds.⁴¹ The introduction and quick spread of modern weapons has made fighting more devastating and deadly, which has significantly increased fatalities and casualties. It has also hardened the positions of opposing sides due to the escalating cost of reparations.

Traditionally, women and faith-based organizations have served as intermediaries between tribes (though women face more challenges participating in decision making). Communities generally trust these traditional actors over political or government actors, which they often see as partial. However, the escalation of violence has strained the effectiveness of these traditional practices. Neither traditional reconciliation mechanisms nor a top-down, security-driven approach will create the conditions for lasting peace on their own. The government, civil society, and international actors will have to address the root causes of conflict.

humanitarian response, mass communication campaigns, and inter-cluster dialogue on community engagement activities. Working with the regional hub of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the working group established a Community Response Map, an inter-cluster platform for tracking communities’ needs and their perceptions of the humanitarian response. In addition, staff from UN agencies conducted consultations with 535 community members in six communities, cross-referencing the information gathered with the Community Response Map to identify the most pressing needs.⁴²

This community engagement paved the way for further community-level peacebuilding program-

ming in the wake of the humanitarian response. In late 2018, the PBF funded a project aiming to prevent and respond to conflict by making community-level peacebuilding mechanisms and local institutions such as village and district courts more inclusive of women and youth—the first UN peacebuilding project in the region.⁴³ The UN also established a network of over 500 volunteers (65 percent of them women) to raise awareness of reproductive health, gender-based violence, and violence against children. The Community Engagement Working Group worked with this network to facilitate five community consultations that informed a context analysis of the region. These efforts helped ensure that programming was grounded in the work and strategies of local

39 The Highlands of PNG consist of seven provinces: Southern Highlands, Enga, Western Highlands, Simbu, Eastern Highlands, Hela, and Jiwaka.

40 UN, internal context analysis, October 2018.

41 For more on the roots of intercommunal conflict in the Highlands, see International Committee of the Red Cross, “The Roots of Restraint in War,” 2018.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

actors.⁴⁴

As the UNCT looks to expand its engagement in the Highlands, it faces several challenges. One is its lack of a longstanding presence in the Highlands. As a result, UN development and peacebuilding actors will have to work with humanitarian actors already present in the area as well as local churches and other faith-based organizations. A second challenge is the lack of funding. While unlikely to receive the resources needed to substantially increase programming in the Highlands, the UNCT should be conscious that it does not overstretch itself and that expansion to other provinces does not take away focus from critical issues like sustaining peace in Bougainville.

Leadership: The Resident Coordinator's Vision for Sustaining Peace

The secretary-general's 2018 report emphasizes the important role of senior leadership in setting the direction for implementing the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions. Resident coordinators (RCs) have a particularly important role as the people "responsible for coordinating development strategies that are risk informed and help to build peaceful and inclusive societies."⁴⁵ Their job description also now specifically mentions facilitating work related to prevention and sustaining peace in conflict and post-conflict settings.⁴⁶ The secretary-general has advocated for empowered and impartial RCs to ground efforts aimed at sustaining peace in political strategies.⁴⁷

The current RC in PNG, who took office in February 2018, has an atypical profile that makes him well-matched to this task; one UN official described him as "the right guy in the right place."⁴⁸ He has a political affairs background and had

previously worked at UN headquarters for six years. This gives him an understanding of the UN's conflict prevention and peacebuilding tools and how to use them.⁴⁹ Under the current RC, the UNCT has shifted toward a more integrated, whole-of system approach, with support to development, governance, and humanitarian relief grounded in a clear political strategy. UN staff have praised his political acumen for helping the UNCT work together to deliver tangible results, implement the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and increase support from UN headquarters.⁵⁰ For example, he is actively involved in the development of project proposals, using his understanding of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) to identify projects and priorities and ensure they are coherently connected to the UNDAF.⁵¹

This approach has been evident in the UN's engagement in Bougainville and the Highlands. In Bougainville, the UNCT has developed a coherent political strategy and increased support for referendum planning. For example, under the leadership of the RC, the UNCT has brought in technical expertise at critical moments, including a mediation expert to support the Post-Referendum Planning Taskforce and peace and security experts as resource people for the Joint Supervisory Board that oversees implementation of the peace agreement.⁵² It has also worked toward an integrated approach in the Highlands. The UNCT not only led a unified humanitarian response to the earthquake but also leveraged this response to expand into development and peacebuilding work to address the root causes of violence and conflict. The RC has also worked with the UNCT to maintain attention on the Highlands, rallying donors to provide support and going on a roadshow with the minister of finance (originally from Hela province) to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the earthquake.

44 United Nations in PNG, "Annual Progress Report 2018."

45 UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, p. 7.

46 UN Sustainable Development Group, "Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System," May 2019, Annex 2.

47 United Nations, "Presenting Reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System Plan, Secretary-General Urges Member States to Fully Support, Fund United Nations Development System Reforms," press release, UN Doc. SG/SM/19206-DEV/3349, September 11, 2018.

48 Interview with RCO official, Port Moresby, May 2019.

49 Ibid.; Interview with UN official, Buka, May 2019.

50 Interview with RCO official, Port Moresby, July 2019.

51 Interview with RC, Port Moresby, May 2018.

52 Ibid.

To improve coordination, every two months the RC holds coordination meetings with the heads of agencies, as well as more junior staff, to discuss the implementation of activities working toward the UNDAF. These meetings build off the UNDAF working group meetings, and many on the UNCT see them as an effective tool for sharing information. Other efforts have also aimed at building bridges between UN agencies, such as the RC's request that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provide inputs into the RCO's peace and political analysis reports, something that had not previously been done. Members of the UNCT also praised the RC for being transparent, including by sharing information on his engagement with the government.⁵³

In addition to improving coordination within the UNCT, the RC has enhanced engagement with international partners. These partners noted his openness, coordination skills, and receptiveness to feedback, signaling something of a reset in the relationship.⁵⁴ The RC is also seeking to generate more attention on the complex situation in PNG in New York and to share his vision for the UN in the country.⁵⁵

To support his work, the RC has an office made up of a peace and development adviser, a DPPA liaison officer, and a head of office. Under the reforms to the UN development system, which took effect in January 2019, the RCO is expected to expand to include an economist and a partnerships and funding officer, in addition to a monitoring and evaluation officer, communications officer, and senior peace and development adviser. This expanded RCO should assist in providing political analysis and strategic support in PNG.

Even before the development reforms took effect in January, the RC undertook some changes that have helped smooth their implementation. Upon arriving in PNG, he delegated authority over all development-related activities to the UNDP deputy representative while he focused on political engage-

ment ahead of the Bougainville referendum. In line with this division of labor, he encouraged the expedited deployment of more program staff to Buka and had UNDP staff in Buka working on the referendum report directly to him. With the reforms, this division between development and political affairs has been formalized. In May 2019, a new UNDP resident representative arrived in the country to lead all of UNDP's programming and manage all UNDP funds and staff. A potential complication of this arrangement is that UNDP staff working on the referendum now formally report to the resident representative with no official reporting lines to the RC. Though this risks creating confusion and tension between the RC and resident representative, their positive working relationship has ensured the effective flow of information, mitigating this risk.⁵⁶

The Role of National and Local Partners

According to the secretary-general's peacebuilding and sustaining peace report, "An ecosystem of partners... is critical to sustaining peace."⁵⁷ It is widely acknowledged that peacebuilding efforts need to be locally and nationally owned with regional and international support. A diverse group of stakeholders, including international and regional actors, the national government, religious leaders, civil society, and the private sector are required to advance efforts to prevent conflict and build peace.

GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The government's long-term development strategy is enshrined in its Vision 2050. Developed in 2011, this document sets the goals of growing several economic sectors and ensuring that development is broad-based and diversified. To support this vision, the government adopted a Development Strategic Plan 2010–2030.⁵⁸ The government also adopts medium-term development plans (MTDPs)

53 Interview with OHCHR official, Port Moresby, May 2018.

54 Interview with Australian diplomat, Port Moresby, May 2018.

55 Interview with RC, Port Moresby, May 2018.

56 Ibid.

57 UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, p. 7.

58 PNG National Strategic Planning Taskforce, "Papua New Guinea Vision 2050."

every five years. The current plan, MTDP III, covers 2018–2022 and focuses on inclusive economic growth, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and law and order.⁵⁹

The MTDP III and current UNDAF cover the same time period, were developed in concert, and have similar priorities. The government also sits on the UNDAF’s Joint Programme Steering Committee and thus oversees and advises on the implementation of the UN’s work.⁶⁰ The government has sought to ensure that the MTDP III—like

the UNDAF—connects to the SDGs and is working with the UN to prepare for its voluntary national review of progress toward these goals in 2020 (see Table 1).⁶¹

The challenge for the government is in the implementation of these policies at the national and subnational levels. Governance in PNG is weakened by inadequate funding of government institutions, lack of training and capacity development for public officials, lack of structures for monitoring and accountability, and geographic inequalities.⁶² The

Table 1. Alignment of the MTDP III’s key results areas to the SDGs⁶³

Sustainable Development Goals	MTDP Key Results Areas
1: No Poverty	1: Increased Revenue and Wealth Creation
2: Zero Hunger	1: Increased Revenue and Wealth Creation
3: Good Health and Well-Being	5: Improved Service Delivery
4: Quality Education	5: Improved Service Delivery
5: Gender Equality	1: Increased Revenue and Wealth Creation
6: Clean Water and Sanitation	7: Responsible Sustainable Development
7: Affordable and Clean Energy	7: Responsible Sustainable Development
8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	1: Increased Revenue and Wealth Creation
9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	2: Quality Infrastructure
10: Reduced Inequalities	1: Increased Revenue and Wealth Creation 3: Sustainable Social Development
11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	3: Sustainable Social Development
12: Responsible Consumption of Production	7: Responsible Sustainable Development 7: Responsible Sustainable Development
13: Climate Action	7: Responsible Sustainable Development
14: Life Below Water	7: Responsible Sustainable Development
15: Life on Land	7: Responsible Sustainable Development
16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	4: Improved Law, Justice, and National Security
17: Partnerships for the Goals	6: Improved Governance

59 PNG Department of National Planning and Monitoring, “Mid-Term Review Plan III (2018–2030).”

60 Interview with UNDP official, Port Moresby, May 2018.

61 PNG Department of National Planning and Monitoring, “Mid-Term Review Plan III (2018–2030).”

62 United Nations in PNG, “UN Common Country Assessment,” October 2016.

63 Table adapted from “Mid-Term Review Plan III (2018–2030).”

government has little presence outside the National Capital District, especially in highly underdeveloped areas like the Highlands. In these areas, services and governance are primarily delivered by non-state actors such as the Catholic Church and traditional tribal systems.⁶⁴ The lack of data also makes it difficult to develop programming that targets development needs.⁶⁵

The UN is undertaking some initiatives to support the work of the government. For instance, UNDP supported the development of the MTDP III by providing platforms for dialogue and technical support. UNDP also supported the government in developing standards for development assistance to ensure that it is nationally owned and driven.⁶⁶ A new UNDP project in the Highlands aims to improve the rule of law by supporting informal traditional courts. After setting up an SDG committee in Bougainville, UNDP also facilitated a lessons-learned exchange between civil servants there and in a community in the Highlands.⁶⁷ In terms of human rights, OHCHR advisers are supporting the government's engagement in the Universal Periodic Review process and training government officials on international human rights treaties.⁶⁸

One of the main challenges to engaging with the government is recent political instability. The prime minister, James Marape, came to power on May 30, 2019, after the resignation of his predecessor, Peter O'Neill, after he was abandoned by several senior ministers and coalition partners. Moreover, parliament is fragmented among many political parties, and turnover among parliamentarians is high. This political turmoil has undermined the government's preparations for the referendum.

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS

While civil society in PNG is relatively weak and divided, the UN has sought to work with it at the local level, especially in Bougainville. One example is the Bougainville Women's Federation, which receives support from UNDP and UN Women to convene community dialogue related to the referendum and from UN Women to facilitate reconciliation. The Bougainville Women's Federation and Bougainville Youth Federation also participated in workshops sponsored by UN Women, the UN Population Fund, and OHCHR to improve their capacity to participate in the referendum process and educate their communities.⁶⁹ While this project was developed under PBF's new Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative, some groups criticized it as more traditional and less effective than it could be.⁷⁰ The project was designed with limited civil society input and did not provide post-workshop resources, resulting in those trained struggling to implement what they learned in their communities.⁷¹

In addition to these workshops, the UN is convening meetings between the Autonomous Bougainville Government and civil society in the lead-up to and after meetings of the Post-Referendum Planning Taskforce.⁷² While civil society groups are not allowed to participate directly in the taskforce's meetings, this initiative provides space for them to provide input into negotiations with the national government and receive feedback on these negotiations from Bougainvillean officials.⁷³

The biggest obstacle to more systematic engagement is civil society organizations' lack of organizational capacity or financial resources. This is exacerbated by poor communications and

64 Murray Ackman, Adrea Abel van Es, and Daniel Hyslop, "Measuring Peace in the Pacific—Addressing SDG16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions," Institute for Economics & Peace, 2018.

65 United Nations in PNG, "UN Common Country Assessment."

66 Interview with UNDP, Port Moresby, May 2019.

67 Ibid.

68 Interview with OHCHR, Port Moresby, May 2019.

69 Interview with representative of the Bougainville Women's Federation, Buka, May 2019.

70 Interview with representative of civil society organization, Buka, May 2019.

71 Ibid.

72 Interview with RCO official, Buka, May 2019.

73 Ibid.

transportation infrastructure and lack of social cohesion, making it difficult for civil society to coordinate at the national level or engage across community lines.⁷⁴ Moreover, civil society organizations struggle to differentiate between different UN agencies, often confusing their mandates.⁷⁵

A further challenge is that there is no single umbrella body for civil society organizations in PNG. The National Alliance of Non-Government Organisations, established in 1998, failed to gain broad support and folded. The interim body, the PNG CSO Forum, serves as the country's national liaison unit for the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations but is weak.⁷⁶ The lack of strong, national organizations or networks makes it harder for the UN to access civil society in PNG.

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

The private sector has been an important partner for the UN in PNG, particularly in humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding work in the Highlands. The large oil and gas companies Oil Search and ExxonMobil have been present in Southern Highlands and Hela provinces since they launched the PNG LNG project in 2014. Over the years, frustrations with the project among landowners have frequently led to violence, including the blockage and destruction of equipment at Angore in June 2018.

Regardless, both Oil Search and ExxonMobil invest in community affairs projects, particularly in the areas of livelihoods and health. Due to a lack of local capacity, the government of PNG has also devolved responsibility for chairing the provincial health authorities of both provinces to Oil Search. During the earthquake response in 2018, both companies directly provided assistance to affected communities while also providing logistical support to the broader humanitarian response through storage and transloading facilities and flights. Both companies have come to recognize the value of collaborating with the UN due to its broader development mandate and technical expertise.

International Support for Sustaining Peace: The Need for Sustained, Long-Term Interest

While the secretary-general's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace stresses the role of national governments in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, there is also a need for more international support. This includes both financial support, including through innovative peacebuilding financing models, and political support and attention from intergovernmental bodies in New York, particularly the Peacebuilding Commission.

POLITICAL SUPPORT FROM UN HEADQUARTERS

The current RC and UNCT in PNG are working to push the country higher up the priority list at UN headquarters to ensure that there is "just enough international attention to sustain adherence to the peace agreement."⁷⁷ The RC is particularly seeking to garner more technical and financial support from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). DPPA, as well as its predecessor, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), was the main counterpart of the UN missions in PNG from 1998 to 2005. After the last observer mission ended in 2005, DPA's Asia and Pacific Division still followed the UN's work in PNG and supported the ongoing efforts of the UNCT.

In 2013, the secretary-general approved PNG to be eligible for financing from the PBF's Peacebuilding and Recovery Fund, mainly to support referendum readiness. All PBF projects have been designed in consultation with the government, DPA, and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO).

DPA and PBSO have worked together to conduct a joint conflict analysis of PNG in the run-up to the determination of its eligibility for PBF funding, to

74 Interview with World Vision representative, Port Moresby, May 2019.

75 Interview with representative of civil society organization, Port Moresby, May 2019.

76 Asian Development Bank, "Civil Society Briefs: Papua New Guinea," 2015.

77 Interview with RC, Port Moresby, May 2019.

support the drafting of the PBF priority plan, and to review all approved projects. They also undertook two joint missions, one in 2014 to support the first priority plan and one in 2018 to lay the foundations for the second phase of support.⁷⁸ In addition, in 2018, PBSO chose PNG as one of three PBF-eligible countries to which it brought donors from Europe, Asia, and the region to raise its profile and peacebuilding needs. DPA deployed weapons disposal experts, a liaison officer in Buka, and a constitutional expert to facilitate the work of the Post-Referendum Planning Taskforce and other activities funded through the PBF.⁷⁹ This cooperation continued following the merger of DPA and PBSO into DPPA in January 2019.

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) offers another avenue for providing political accompaniment, driving coherence, ensuring engagement of a broad range of partners, and potentially generating funding for prevention and peacebuilding initiatives in PNG. The PBC can focus attention on a country and facilitate the sharing of ideas on how to address its challenges. In 2015, the PBC held its first—and to date only—meeting on PNG, the first time the PBC held a meeting focused on a country for which there is no established configuration.⁸⁰ Since then, the UN and the government of PNG have discussed holding another PBC meeting to discuss ongoing peacebuilding work in the country. However, the government of PNG has not yet endorsed this approach.

POOLED FUNDING: THE UN COUNTRY FUND AND PEACEBUILDING FUND

In line with the “Delivering as One” approach, the UNCT has a PNG UN Country Fund that channels most contributions to the UNCT beyond agencies’ core or regular resources. The fund is administered by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, which is housed within UNDP in New York. The total funding provided by the fund in 2018 was \$13.7 million.⁸¹ Such funds are central to the secretary-

general’s strategy for financing peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as they can ensure predictable and flexible funding. In PNG, the fund is meant to decrease transaction costs, eliminate the need to sign separate contracts with different agencies, reduce reporting requirements, and enable donors to receive consolidated analysis of financial and results-based performance.⁸²

The PNG UN Country Fund is overseen by the Joint Programme Steering Committee, which also oversees implementation of the UNDAF. The RC allocates resources on behalf of the committee based on recommendations from the UNDAF’s interagency working groups and the heads of participating agencies. While the RC holds the ultimate decision-making authority, the whole UNCT helps determine priorities for programming and allocating resources.⁸³ Using the same reporting lines as the UNDAF not only reduces the number of oversight committees but also ensures that priority areas are funded as needed and facilitates adaptations in programming and funding allocations.

Since 2017, PBF funds have been channeled through the PNG UN Country Fund but earmarked for specific activities.⁸⁴ PNG has received a total of \$16.6 million in PBF contributions for ten projects, three of which are ongoing: two focusing on the referendum and peacebuilding priorities in Bougainville and a third on the Highlands.⁸⁵ This recently approved Highlands project reflects the work of the current RC and UNCT to broaden the use of PBF funds beyond Bougainville.⁸⁶ Several interviewees suggested that this expansion in the geographic reach of the PBF was facilitated by the RC and UNCT’s advocacy.

However, all of the funds in the PNG UN Country Fund are earmarked, limiting the UNCT’s flexibility to respond to the highest-priority needs and adapt programming as needs change. It has also been difficult for the UNCT to show donors

78 Interview with DPPA official, New York, May 2019.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Papua New Guinea UN Country Fund,” available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PG100>.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Interview with RCO official, Port Moresby, May 2019.

85 UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “The Peacebuilding Fund,” available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PB000>.

86 Interview with UN official, New York, May 2019; interview with RCO official, Port Moresby, May 2019.

the impact it is having in areas such as mediation and trust building that defy easy measurement.⁸⁷

OTHER BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL SUPPORT

Other major partners in PNG include the multilateral development banks and several governments in the region. The World Bank finalized its 2019–2023 country partnership framework with PNG in May 2019. This five-year strategy, which is aligned with PNG’s MTDP III, lays out three main focus areas: improving macroeconomic and fiscal resilience; making services more effective and inclusive; and encouraging private sector growth and jobs in the non-resources sector. The strategy is underpinned by efforts to improve governance of natural resources and management of public resources.⁸⁸ The Asian Development Bank’s country partnership strategy for 2016–2020, developed in coordination with the government and in alignment with government plans, focuses on support to infrastructure development, employment, and business creation.⁸⁹

Australia is PNG’s largest bilateral development partner, providing approximately \$392 million in official development assistance in 2018–2019—well over half the total.⁹⁰ The Australian government estimated that up to \$34 million went to Bougainville in 2017–2018 (up to 9 percent of the total for that period).⁹¹ Further, Australia’s high commission in Port Moresby is one of its largest diplomatic missions in the world, with approximately 500 staff overseeing the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and providing technical assistance to the government. The department also has six staff based in Buka, Bougainville, and twenty-five advisers working with the autonomous government. As a result, Australia is one of PNG’s closest foreign partners

and an important partner for the UN. New Zealand plays a smaller but important role in PNG by providing technical assistance and supporting development projects, including support to strengthening governance, increasing economic growth, and supporting local police in Bougainville.⁹² China’s role in PNG has also increased through trade, loans, aid, and investment in infrastructure.⁹³

To engage with these development partners, the UN and government co-chair a Development Partners Round Table that meets on a semi-regular basis. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank also participate in the UN’s Security Management Team meetings. In addition, the UN holds regular dialogues with both organizations and has been exploring working in the Highlands together with the World Bank.⁹⁴ The UN and the high commissioner from Australia co-host a biannual donor coordination meeting, which is happening on a bimonthly basis in the lead-up to the referendum in Bougainville. There are also more regular informal exchanges at the expert level. Beyond consultations and information exchange, however, the UN does not conduct joint risk analyses or implementation of programming.⁹⁵

Conclusions and Recommendations

In 2020, the secretary-general will release his report on progress on the implementation of the recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as required by the 2018 joint resolution. This will build off the 2019 interim report and will feed into the 2020 review of the UN’s role in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. These reports will offer a timely reflection on efforts to create a

87 Interview with RCO official, Port Moresby, May 2019.

88 World Bank, “Papua New Guinea: New World Bank Group Strategy Focuses on Delivering Economic Growth, Improved Services for Most Marginalized People,” May 22, 2019, available at www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/05/22/papua-new-guinea-world-bank-group-strategy-focuses-on-delivering-economic-growth-improved-services-for-most-marginalized-people.

89 Asian Development Bank, “Papua New Guinea: Country Partnership Strategy (2016–2020).”

90 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Overview of Australia’s Aid Program to Papua New Guinea,” available at www.adb.org/countries/papua-new-guinea/strategy.

91 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Australian Assistance to Bougainville Up to \$50 Million 2017–2018,” available at <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/papua-new-guinea/development-assistance/Pages/australian-assistance-to-bougainville.aspx>.

92 New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Our Development Cooperation in Papua New Guinea,” available at www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/pacific/papua-new-guinea/our-development-cooperation-in-papua-new-guinea/.

93 Jenny Hayward-Jones, “Changing Geopolitical Dynamics for Papua New Guinea,” Lowy Institute, December 2017.

94 Interview with RCO official, Port Moresby, May 2019.

95 Interview with Australian diplomat, Port Moresby, May 2019.

more prevention-oriented UN working across silos to support positive, long-term outcomes.

In Papua New Guinea, implementation of the secretary-general's recommendations on sustaining peace is already underway. PNG offers examples of how to use the UN's tools and resources to reduce and prevent violence and sustain peace. Nonetheless, there are many challenges facing the UN in PNG, and its offices need support to ensure that programming is oriented toward conflict prevention and connected to discussions at UN headquarters. The following conclusions and recommendations offer insights into how the secretary-general's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace can be implemented in PNG. Many of these recommendations could likely also be adapted and applied to other conflict-affected settings.

GETTING A RESIDENT COORDINATOR WITH THE RIGHT SKILL SET

On January 1, 2019, the RC was elevated to be the "highest-ranking development representative of the UN system [working] to deliver collective responses to national needs and ensure system-wide accountability on the ground."⁹⁶ RCs' roles and responsibilities in conflict and post-conflict settings were also expanded to include facilitation of "the integration of the UNCT's work with UN peacekeeping or political missions to fully contribute to building resilience, prevention, sustaining peace and to transition planning and management."⁹⁷

With this expanded role, there is increased pressure on the RC to ensure the UNCT's work is grounded in a preventive, political approach. This makes it even more important that the RC has the right skill set. In PNG, the current RC's experience with political negotiation and prevention and his understanding of the full set of tools the UN possesses have helped the UNCT attract more support in terms of both staffing and financing. They have also helped the UNCT develop a political strategy to guide its work in Bougainville and the Highlands. However, the UNCT needs to institutionalize this approach to ensure it

continues. UN headquarters, specifically the Department of Development Cooperation, should also share the experience of PNG with other RCs to guide them in implementing their prevention-focused mandate.

TAKING A LONG-TERM, PREVENTIVE APPROACH IN BOTH BOUGAINVILLE AND THE HIGHLANDS

Much of the focus on prevention in PNG is on preparations for the referendum. At the same time, however, there is a need to prepare for the post-referendum period, including tensions over the Panguna mine. Some interviewees do not see the UN as yet taking sufficient responsibility for what may become of Bougainville after the referendum.

As part of a long-term, preventive strategy, the UN could develop scenarios for different possible outcomes of the referendum and potential sources of conflict and use these to discuss how the UN would respond. This process would help the UN engage donors to generate funding for post-referendum activities aiming to prevent violence, including mediation and dialogue, which the UN is well-placed to provide. It would also allow for frank conversations between the UNCT and donors on the impact the referendum could have on other provinces' push for autonomy; while the UN has downplayed this risk, others think it is real. Discussing this risk and how to mitigate it will be important in the lead-up to and after the referendum.

As the UNCT continues to engage in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Highlands, it is vital that it addresses the structural issues underlying the conflict and accounts for the region's cultural diversity. This requires the UNCT to draw on ongoing work in the area, particularly by private sector and civil society actors, and to understand its comparative advantages. It also requires an integrated approach within the UNCT. The well-coordinated humanitarian response to the earthquake in the Highlands in 2018, which helped open the door for development and peacebuilding work, is a good example of cooperation among both UN and non-UN actors. The pilot

⁹⁶ United Nations, "UN Development System Reform 101," available at <https://reform.un.org/content/un-development-system-reform-101>.

⁹⁷ UN Sustainable Development Group, "Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System," May 2019, Annex 2.

PBF project in the Highlands provides an opportunity to take forward such an approach and to analyze the risks and potential of further engagement in the region. The RC and UNCT will also need to avoid losing focus on Bougainville while expanding work in the Highlands.

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility of all stakeholders, with the primary focus being on the national government. However, the government of PNG lacks sufficient capacity to implement its ambitious development plans, including Vision 2050 and its medium-term development plan for 2018–2022. The UNCT should support the government in achieving these plans by helping improve governance and service delivery and building the capacity of civil servants and government officials.⁹⁸

While civil society in PNG is weak, it plays an important role in building social cohesion through dialogue and mediation. While the UNCT has made an effort to work with local actors, it needs to further build the capacity of civil society and systematize engagement with both traditional community leaders and local government officials.

ENSURING CONTINUOUS AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING

The PNG UN Country Fund is a good example of a pooled fund. These funds have a strong track record in “strengthening coherence and coordination; broadening the contributor base; improving risk management and leverage; empowering the RC and providing incentives for collaboration.”⁹⁹ However, pooled funds are less valuable when their money is earmarked. Donors should provide non-earmarked funding that can facilitate not just joint implementation of programming but also joint planning.

Beyond the PNG UN Country Fund, the PBF should continue to provide resources in the post-referendum period when the risk of conflict will

escalate. The second phase of PBF funding is set to run through July 2020, providing a buffer for referendum negotiations to conclude. However, the national government and Autonomous Bougainville Government both move slowly, so the UN must not rush the process with rigid financial timelines. Moreover, as the UNCT increases engagement in the Highlands, it should maintain continuous conversations with the PBF and donors about what resources will be required.

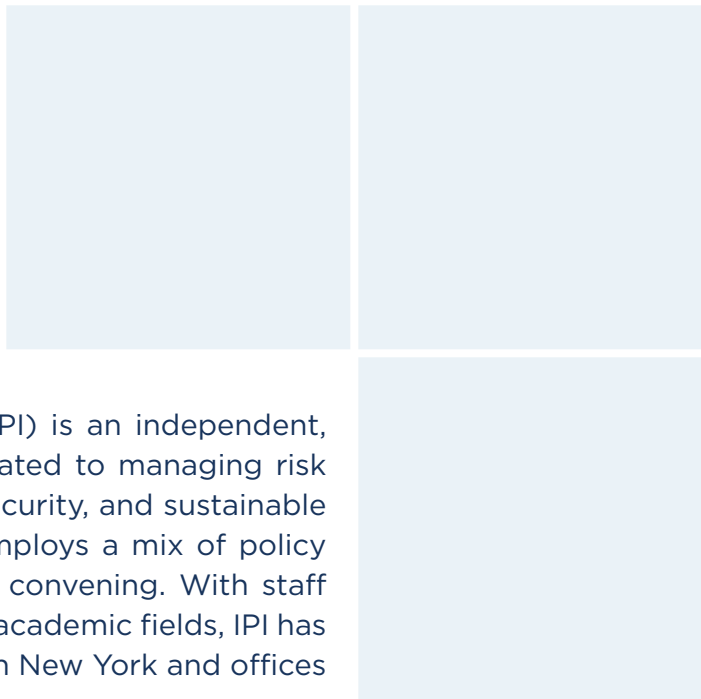
WORKING WITH THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION TO BRING ATTENTION TO PNG IN NEW YORK

The UNCT will not be able to sustain peace in PNG without the necessary international attention and support. Toward that end, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) can serve as a bridge between different parts of the UN system and peacebuilding partners at UN headquarter and in PNG. The PBC can provide a space for advancing a coordinated and coherent approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, sharing good practices between countries, sharing conflict analysis, and coordinating support among a wide range of actors. This forum has been invaluable to other countries as a means to support and sustain attention during a transition period.

The government of PNG should therefore consider working with the PBC to hold a meeting on the country that includes national and local representatives. Alternatively, it could hold a thematic discussion on prevention, which would allow for the sharing of lessons learned and good practices from several country cases. This approach would allow the PBC to demonstrate its value as a constructive forum, paving the way for a country-specific discussion. In the run-up to and after the referendum, the PBC could also share relevant information from such a discussion with the Security Council and keep it abreast of developments. While the PBC does not directly fundraise, it also offers a forum to bring attention to financing needs and engage with donors.

98 United Nations in Papua New Guinea, “UN Common Country Assessment.”

99 UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707–S/2018/43, January 18, 2018, para. 43.



The **INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE** (IPI) is an independent, international not-for-profit think tank dedicated to managing risk and building resilience to promote peace, security, and sustainable development. To achieve its purpose, IPI employs a mix of policy research, strategic analysis, publishing, and convening. With staff from around the world and a broad range of academic fields, IPI has offices facing United Nations headquarters in New York and offices in Vienna and Manama.

www.ipinst.org

www.theglobalobservatory.org



777 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017-3521
USA
TEL +1-212-687-4300
FAX +1-212-983-8246

Freyung 3
1010 Vienna
Austria
TEL +43-1-533-8881
FAX +43-1-533-881-11

51-52 Harbour House
Bahrain Financial Harbour
P.O. Box 1467
Manama, Bahrain
TEL +973-1721-1344