CMC CONFLICT
MANAGEMENT
CONSULTING

Final Evaluation of

the UN Peacebuilding Fund Darfur Programme

Evaluation Report

2nd draft, 10 January 2024

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Abbreviations

CBRMs	Community-Based Reconciliation Mechanisms
CBCPN	Community-based Child Protection Networks
CBPNs	Community-based Protection Networks
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CMC	Conflict Management Consulting
CRCs	Community Reconciliation Committees
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission
HDP nexus	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
IOM	Organization for Migration
IDPs	internally displaced persons
IPs	Implementing Partners
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MADA	Islamic Call Organization
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MoInfra	North Darfur Ministry of Infrastructure
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NRM	Natural Resource Management
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SLAAW	Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid
SPA	Sudanese Professionals' Association
SPF –	Sudanese Police Force
SPLM-N	the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North
STDM	Social Tenure Domain Model
ToC	Theory of Change
TPM	Third-Party Monitoring
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNPBF	UN Peacebuilding Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace, and Security

1. Executive Summary

Introduction/Background

In November 2022, Conflict Management Consulting (CMC) and Sewar Consulting were commissioned for a comprehensive final evaluation of the UN Peacebuilding Fund-supported Darfur Programme. This programme aimed to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in Darfur, focusing on durable solutions, rule of law, basic service delivery, and local peacebuilding initiatives. After several months of delays, due to the outbreak of war in Sudan, the evaluation was finalised in late 2023 and delivered in January 2024.

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to assess the overall contributions of the Darfur Programme to peacebuilding efforts in the region. It seeks to measure the extent to which the programme's initial peacebuilding objectives were achieved and examines its adaptability in response to the evolving challenges in Sudan. Additionally, the evaluation aims to provide key insights to guide UN agencies and other stakeholders in making informed decisions for future peacebuilding investments in Darfur.

Sudan, especially the Darfur region, has faced complex socio-political challenges and ethnic tensions. The situation worsened with the military coup in October 2021, which led to further instability and hindered peacebuilding efforts. The Darfur Programme, designed in late 2019 and started implementation in January 2020, sought to transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, focusing on sustainable solutions to conflict drivers. Despite challenges such as political instability, COVID-19, and recurrent violence, the programme aimed to instil long-term peacebuilding solutions.

The evaluation encountered significant challenges due to the ongoing armed conflict in Sudan, particularly following the outbreak of violence in April 2023. This conflict, involving the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), severely impacted the evaluation process, necessitating a shift to remote data collection methods and an extended evaluation timeline.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a summative approach to assess the overall impact and effectiveness of the Darfur Programme, aligning with its objectives of accountability and learning. The design was driven by a framework adhering to the OECD DAC criteria, focusing on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and ownership. Additionally, PBF-specific criteria like conflict sensitivity, and gender and youth responsiveness were incorporated.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was utilized. This included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), document reviews, and remote sensing data using satellite imagery. The evaluation plan initially proposed a comprehensive field data collection process, but due to the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, it was adapted to emphasize remote data collection methods. While the planned KIIs came close to initial targets due to oversampling and a focus on UN stakeholders, only half of the planned FGDs could be conducted, affecting community-level representation in the data.

Given the challenges of field data collection, remote sensing tools were used to collect satellite data, particularly for assessing agricultural activities in Darfur using NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation

Index) time series analysis. This method provided insights into land use dynamics and agricultural productivity, which are indicators of peace and stability in the region.

The evaluation employed a multi-faceted analytical approach, including meta-analysis of documents, basic qualitative and quantitative analysis, and a modified version of Grounded Theory. This combination of methods ensured a comprehensive understanding of the programme's impact, considering both primary and secondary data sources. The evaluation process involved iterative insight sampling, coding, data saturation, constant comparison, and the application of an analytical framework based on the programme's Theory of Change.

Significant challenges were faced due to the April 2023 conflict, limiting field data collection and altering the operational context for the evaluated projects. The evaluation adapted by increasing remote interviews and virtual discussions, along with extensive secondary data review. However, these limitations affected the depth of community-level insights and the generalizability of the findings.

The evaluation strictly adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent and confidentiality. Quality assurance measures, including data triangulation, were rigorously implemented to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings.

Findings

The findings of the evaluation are organized according to the OECD DAC criteria, providing a thorough analysis of the Darfur Programme's performance in various aspects.

Relevance

The programme aimed to meet local needs and respond to significant shifts, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS, and the military coup in October 2021. It spanned various sectors, addressing key aspects of Darfur's post-conflict recovery. Key findings included:

- Adjustment to Darfur's Circumstances: The programme demonstrated adaptability to Darfur's unique challenges, including political and social upheaval, focusing on social cohesion and basic livelihood needs. However, there were gaps in addressing the full range of local complexities and evolving needs.

- Alignment with Local Needs and Priorities: The programme actively provided services in areas such as legal aid and health, complementing its strong efforts in livelihoods and conflict resolution. Recognizing these contributions, it's noted that further enhancement and broader engagement in the legal aid and health sectors could strengthen the overall impact and address local needs more comprehensively.

- Consideration of Local Context: The programme showed awareness of the local context in its design and implementation but required deeper exploration into how effectively these considerations were embedded in the local culture and social fabric.

- Response to Contextual Shifts: The programme's response to events like COVID-19 and the military coup varied. Some adaptations effectively met new challenges, while others diverted focus from core peacebuilding objectives.

- Security Vacuum Post-UNAMID: The departure of UNAMID created a security vacuum. The programme's strategy to fill this gap through locality-level interventions faced challenges, particularly with the rise in intercommunal violence.

- Humanitarian Needs vs. Peacebuilding: Balancing immediate humanitarian needs with long-term peacebuilding strategies proved challenging. There were concerns that the programme's development interventions did not always align with foundational peacebuilding rationale.

The PBF programme in Darfur had significant relevance in adapting to local needs and contexts. However, its ability to address broader security challenges and maintain long-term peacebuilding in the face of political instability and humanitarian crises was questioned. Future initiatives must integrate these insights to ensure more effective and resilient peacebuilding frameworks.

Effectiveness

The programme has met many of its intended objectives, contributing significantly to local and regional peacebuilding. Key achievements include fostering community reconciliation, capacity building, and effective conflict resolution. However, it faced challenges due to the volatile security situation and logistical constraints, leading to mixed adaptability and uneven effectiveness across different regions. Key findings for the evaluation of effectiveness includes:

- Community Reconciliation and Engagement: The establishment of Community-Based Reconciliation Mechanisms (CBRMs) has been effective in resolving conflicts and fostering unity, particularly with the inclusion of diverse groups, including women and youth.

- Capacity Building and Conflict Resolution: Training and workshops for local partners, community members, and authorities have equipped them with necessary skills for sustainable conflict management, enhancing their ability to handle disputes effectively.

- Infrastructure Development and Service Provision: Infrastructure projects, especially in WASH and education, have broken down social barriers and fostered shared community objectives. The impact in this area, however, has been variable, with some projects facing security and logistical challenges.

- Empowerment of Women and Youth: Initiatives aimed at empowering women and youth have raised awareness of gender issues and provided tools for active peacebuilding participation. The direct impact of these initiatives on peace efforts requires further evaluation.

- Variability Across Localities: The programme's effectiveness has varied across regions. Some areas have seen notable success in fostering community cohesion, while others have faced challenges due to insecurity, limited local government cooperation, and resource constraints.

- Adaptability to Challenges: The programme demonstrated adaptability by engaging staff from the very localities and villages it served, alongside utilizing alternative methods for service delivery. This approach, emphasizing the involvement of community-specific personnel, varied in effectiveness across different regions. However, these adaptations were not uniformly effective across all regions.

- Monitoring and Evaluation Limitations: The programme faced challenges in measuring and reporting on peace indicators, with a reliance on qualitative reporting and a lack of comprehensive quantitative analysis, limiting the ability to assess its full impact.

- Sustainability and Security Concerns: The short duration of the programme and challenges in follow-up, particularly in areas with minimal government cooperation, highlight the need for long-term engagement and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Ongoing security issues have raised concerns about the sustainability of the programme's achievements.

The programme's initial success in areas like conflict reduction and improving local stability has been significantly influenced by broader political and security instability. The resurgence of violence post-April 2023 particularly threatens to undermine progress, potentially nullifying efforts in critical areas such as support for IDP returnees and infrastructure development. This highlights the fragility of peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-prone environments and underscores the necessity of sustained, adaptable strategies that integrate immediate service provision with long-term peacebuilding goals.

Coherence and Coordination

The programme demonstrated commendable efforts in leveraging the unique strengths of various UN agencies and partners, enhancing its effectiveness and relevance. Inclusion of communities in planning and execution phases was a critical success factor. However, the programme faced formidable external challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the resurgence of conflicts, and the military coup in Sudan, which influenced its dynamics significantly. Key findings for the evaluation of coherence and coordination includes:

- Effectiveness of Coordination Mechanisms: While the programme showcased effective coordination initially, challenges emerged in maintaining consistent engagement and active involvement of local communities in decision-making processes.

- Division of Responsibilities: The strategic distribution of roles among UN agencies and partners, based on expertise, contributed to success but faced challenges in achieving true synergy, particularly following external events like the pandemic and the military coup.

- Narrative Shift Post-Coup: The military coup led to a strategic shift in the programme's narrative, focusing on ground-level, community-centric approaches, and distancing from UNITAMS.

- Challenges in Maintaining Coherence: The programme struggled with coherent and coordinated efforts across different implementation levels, challenged by coordinating across diverse stakeholders and evolving political landscapes.

- Role of PBF Seconded Coordinators: The introduction of PBF seconded coordinators within lead UN agencies significantly improved coordination, highlighting the importance of dedicated roles at the ground level from the onset.

- Strategic Challenges Post-Pandemic and Coup: The COVID-19 pandemic initially led to a more agency-centric approach, affecting overall coherence. The coup catalysed improvements in inter-agency collaboration, adapting to the new political landscape, but challenges in achieving an integrated HDP-nexus approach persisted.

The UNPBF Darfur programme, while demonstrating efforts in coordination and collaboration, faced significant challenges due to its complex nature and external changes. The programme's success in certain areas was overshadowed by difficulties in maintaining an integrated approach across agencies and stakeholders.

The role of PBF seconded coordinators was pivotal, suggesting a need for strong coordination from the beginning. The programme's adaptability to external challenges like the pandemic and security issues was crucial but not comprehensive enough to fully counteract the impacts on overall coordination.

Future peacebuilding initiatives can benefit from the lessons learned from the PBF Darfur programme. Strengthening coordination mechanisms, enhancing communication strategies, and maintaining a flexible approach are imperative in managing complex, multi-stakeholder environments in volatile contexts.

Sustainability and Ownership

While aiming to address immediate peacebuilding needs and establish long-term stability through local and national ownership, the programme faced considerable obstacles. The military coup notably undermined national-level ownership strategies, necessitating a shift towards local-level efforts and collaborations. Key findings for Sustainability and Ownership includes:

- Stakeholder Commitment and Collaborative Efforts: The programme fostered strong local community engagement, yet the military coup and political upheavals adversely affected strategies of ownership, leading to challenges in sustaining local stakeholder commitment and identifying resources for continuation.

- Engagement with Diverse Stakeholders: Involvement of a wide array of stakeholders, including the formation of (or reestablished) specialized committees, such as land steering committees and Natural Resource Management (NRM) committees, was significant. However, inclusion of certain communities like nomadic groups and addressing tribal conflicts posed notable challenges.

- Program's Alignment with Peacebuilding Objectives: The programme generally aligned with broader peacebuilding goals but faced limitations in comprehensiveness and depth, further tested by the resurgence of conflict in April 2023.

- Catalytic Impact and Financial Sustainability: Short-term funding and the absence of comprehensive sustainability strategies in initial designs raised concerns about the programme's

lasting impact, especially given the need for ongoing financial support and strategic planning beyond the initial term.

- Sustainability and Exit Strategy: Challenges in implementing a unified sustainability and exit strategy led to varied success in sustaining initiatives, emphasizing the need for robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

- Resurgence of Conflict Post-April 2023: The outbreak of new conflict significantly set back peacebuilding momentum. While illustrating the complex and unpredictable nature of national-level crises, this has raised critical questions about the enduring impact and resilience of the programme's efforts in the targeted localities. Despite the challenges posed by this national upheaval, the programme's strategies in specific areas demonstrated a degree of resilience, albeit varied, in preventing a complete relapse into conflict.

Evaluation of remote sensing data across various villages revealed trends that raise questions about the intersection of development interventions with environmental health and socio-political dynamics. Reduction in vegetation cover and altered land use post-intervention suggest broader environmental challenges, likely exacerbated by political instability.

The PBF programme in Darfur, while demonstrating significant efforts in fostering peace and stability, faced substantial challenges in ensuring sustainable peacebuilding. Political instability, financial constraints, and contextual complexities hindered the achievement of sustainable outcomes. Future peacebuilding initiatives must integrate these lessons, emphasizing adaptable, inclusive, and long-term strategies, particularly in volatile environments like Darfur.

Conflict Sensitivity

The programme aimed to incorporate local dynamics into its strategy and maintain the do-no-harm principle. Despite commendable efforts in involving local communities, challenges and unintended impacts underline the need for continuous adaptation and context monitoring to enhance conflict sensitivity. Key findings for Conflict Sensitivity include:

- Approach and Implementation: The programme employed comprehensive assessments, community engagement, and initiatives for peacebuilding and social cohesion. Training for implementing partners focused on understanding Darfur's socio-political landscape, aiming to navigate potential conflict triggers effectively.

- Adaptability: Demonstrated flexibility in reprogramming activities and expanding target groups in response to changing needs, showing responsiveness to the dynamic nature of conflict-affected environments.

- Challenges: Issues such as service reductions in IDP camps and perceived marginalization in non-targeted villages highlighted the need for careful planning and community consultation to avoid exacerbating conflicts.

- Local Context and Power Dynamics: While the programme considered local context and power dynamics, challenges in predicting and adapting to evolving political and security realities were notable.

- Adherence to Do-No-Harm Principles: Integration of do-no-harm principles was evident, with strategies like training committees for dispute resolution and involving community leaders in decision-making.

- Post-Coup Challenges: The programme navigated complexities of government stakeholder relations post-coup, balancing UN neutrality in a sensitive political environment. The dissolution of key institutions like the Committee to Dismantle the Former Regime post-coup raised concerns about the programme's resilience against diversion and political manipulation.

The PBF-supported programme's commitment to conflict sensitivity was evident in its adherence to principles of doing no harm and contributing to peacebuilding. Despite strengths such as adaptability, community involvement, and training for conflict sensitivity, challenges in service delivery, perceptions of marginalization, and navigating post-coup political complexities underscored the need for continuous adaptation and deeper engagement with local dynamics. The programme's efforts in involving local communities were commendable, yet the challenges and unintended impacts highlight the need for continuous adaptation and context monitoring for improved conflict-sensitivity.

Women and Youth Empowerment

The evaluation of the PBF programme in Darfur highlights its significant contributions to empowering women and youth in peacebuilding, despite facing challenges and areas for improvement. The programme's commitment to gender and youth responsiveness was evident in its design and implementation. Key findings included:

- Inclusivity in Program Design: The programme demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusivity, especially in involving women and youth in peacebuilding activities. However, the initial lack of a gender and youth-specific conflict analysis limited its ability to fully address their unique challenges.

- Empowerment through Participation: Various initiatives, such as cooperatives and committees, saw significant participation from women and youth. These initiatives focused on real empowerment and meaningful involvement, going beyond mere token participation.

- Adaptability to Political Changes: The programme adapted to the changing political context, especially post-coup, recalibrating its strategies to maintain and enhance youth participation in peacebuilding activities.

- Role of Women's Groups: Local women's groups were instrumental in mobilizing and recruiting women for peacebuilding capacity-building programs. They acted as a bridge between the programme and the community, ensuring women's voices and needs were effectively represented.

The PBF programme's focus on women and youth empowerment has been a critical aspect of its peacebuilding efforts in Darfur. While there were notable successes in fostering inclusivity and meaningful participation, the programme also faced challenges that highlighted the need for continuous improvement and adaptation. The lessons learned underscore the importance of incorporating specific gender and youth perspectives in conflict analysis and program design to enhance the effectiveness and impact of peacebuilding initiatives.

Program-level Recommendations

The evaluation of the PBF Programme in Darfur offers several key recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts:

1. Long-Term Funding Strategies: Develop diverse funding sources and frameworks for strategic planning to ensure ongoing support and adaptability to political and environmental changes.

2. Role of Local and National Governments: Strengthen the involvement of local and national governments in peace efforts, with emphasis on training programs to address high staff turnover and maintain institutional knowledge.

3. Context-Sensitive Peacebuilding: Tailor peacebuilding strategies to Darfur's unique landscape, focusing on adaptability, holistic approaches, and deeper aspects like behavioural change and trauma healing.

4. Capacity Building and Empowerment of Local Organizations: Enhance capacity-building programs for local NGOs and partner organizations, focusing on skill development and organizational resilience.

5. Conflict Sensitivity and 'Do No Harm' Principles: This evaluation has highlighted areas where the programme can enhance its conflict sensitivity. Moving forward, a structured approach should be adopted to integrate 'Do No Harm' principles into every aspect of programming. For instance, the programme should develop a checklist or framework to assess the potential impact of each project on social cohesion and adjust project design proactively to avoid negative outcomes.

6. Coordination with HDP-Nexus Strategy: The assessment indicates opportunities for stronger alignment with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach. To this end, the programme should establish a dedicated coordination unit tasked with developing and maintaining partnerships with key UN agencies and stakeholders. This unit would be responsible for identifying synergies, preventing overlaps, and ensuring a cohesive response to peacebuilding challenges.

7. Effective Monitoring and Context Analysis: Implement robust monitoring systems and enhance data collection and analysis, including Third-Party Monitoring and Knowledge Management Systems.

8. Navigating Political Dynamics: Assess strategies to maintain neutrality and impartiality in post-coup Sudan, engaging with diverse political and community stakeholders.

9. Transparency and Accountability: The evaluation suggests that while measures are in place for monitoring fund allocation and utilization, there is room for improvement. The programme should adopt a more robust system of financial checks and balances, including periodic third-party audits, detailed reporting to stakeholders, and a publicly accessible dashboard that tracks fund distribution and programme results.

10. Environmental Sustainability: Integrate peacebuilding with environmental sustainability, considering the impact of ecological changes on socio-political dynamics.

11. Conflict Systems Approach: Complement the Area-Based strategy with a broader conflict systems perspective to address interconnected dynamics and needs.

These recommendations emerge from a comprehensive analysis of the PBF programme's performance in Darfur, taking into account the socio-political complexities and evolving nature of conflicts in the region.

2. Introduction

In November 2022, Conflict Management Consulting (CMC) and Sewar Consulting were commissioned to undertake a comprehensive final evaluation of the UN Peacebuilding Fund-supported Darfur Programme. This evaluation serves as a critical tool for both accountability and learning, aiming to assess the programme's overall contributions to peacebuilding efforts in Darfur. The focus areas include durable solutions, rule of law, basic service delivery, and local peacebuilding initiatives.

The evaluation is designed to measure the extent to which the programme's initial peacebuilding objectives were achieved. It also examines the programme's adaptability to the fluid and complex socio-political landscape of Sudan throughout its implementation phase. The insights gained will guide UN agencies and other key stakeholders in making informed decisions for future peacebuilding investments in the region.

The evaluation faced considerable challenges due to the broader armed conflict in Sudan, particularly the significant outbreak on April 15, 2023, between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This conflict, and the insecurity following, profoundly impacted the evaluation process. It led to disruptions in field data collection and restricted access to information and stakeholders, which are crucial for a thorough assessment. Consequently, the evaluation team had to revise the work plan to prioritize remote data collection methods and extend the evaluation timeline. Despite these constraints, the evaluation strives to provide a comprehensive and impactful assessment, grounded in the available data and the contextual realities of the ongoing conflict in Sudan.

The evaluation aligns with the OECD DAC criteria, encompassing an assessment of the programme's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and coherence, impact, and sustainability. Additionally, it incorporates PBF-specific evaluation criteria, emphasizing questions on whether the programme has been executed in a conflict-sensitive manner, as well as how well the programme incorporated the promotion of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agendas.

The final objectives of this evaluation are twofold: to document lessons learned and to offer actionable recommendations for future peacebuilding endeavours in Sudan. These objectives are particularly pertinent given the rapidly evolving context, marked by political upheavals and ongoing conflicts, which have direct implications for peacebuilding strategies. Accordingly, the evaluation of this programme serves not just as an accountability measure but also as a crucial learning tool. It aims to provide a balanced view of the programme's impact and lessons learned.

The evaluation process commenced with a kick-off call in November 2022 and included initial interviews with UN staff across various locations, including New York, Khartoum, and Darfur. This final evaluation report builds upon the inception report, the first draft of which was submitted to UNDP on December 21, 2022, and received final approval in February 2023.

3. Background (Country Context and Programme Background)

Country Context

Sudan has been a complex tapestry of socio-political challenges, ethnic tensions, and economic struggles. The Darfur region, in particular, has been a crucible for conflict due to a myriad of unresolved issues ranging from governance and resource allocation to ethnic strife. The transitional government, initially led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, aimed to address these issues but was disrupted by a military coup that ousted Hamdok from power on the 25 October 2021. This political upheaval further complicated the already fragile peacebuilding efforts in Sudan.

The coup led to widespread protests and international condemnation, adding another layer of complexity to Sudan's political landscape. The situation was further exacerbated by the outbreak of a new wave of conflict on the 15 April 2023 between the SAF and the paramilitary RSF whose leaders were behind orchestrating the Coup in 2021, which has had devastating consequences.

Mass displacement has significantly impacted Sudan, with the latest data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as of August 20, 2023, showing a staggering 3,601,593 individuals internally displaced across the country. Additionally, the conflict has precipitated mixed cross-border movements, resulting in over 1,040,883 individuals fleeing to neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Libya, Chad, Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. These figures underscore the severe humanitarian implications of the ongoing conflict in the region.[1]

Furthermore, gender-based violence surged in Sudan amidst the conflict, significantly impacting women and girls. The World Health Organization reported on June 20, 2023, that continuous attacks on healthcare facilities have limited access to essential healthcare, especially for women and girls in

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[1] International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2023, August 20). "Sudan — Displacement Situation (18) — 20 August 2023". Retrieved from [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix].

conflict-affected areas like Darfur. This situation is particularly dire for the 2.64 million women and girls of reproductive age who are in urgent need of health assistance. The UN also expressed grave concern over the escalating gender-based violence in Sudan on July 5, 2023.[2,3]

The creation of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and its transition to the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) reflects the evolving approach of international peacekeeping and political missions in Sudan, shaped by the country's complex socio-political landscape.

UNAMID was established in response to the Darfur conflict, which began in 2003 when non-Arab rebels took up arms against the Arab-dominated Sudanese government, accusing it of discrimination and neglect. The conflict led to a severe humanitarian crisis, with widespread atrocities and displacement.

The mission was a unique joint operation between the United Nations and the African Union, authorized in 2007 by UN Security Council Resolution 1769. Its primary objectives were to protect civilians, ensure the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, and contribute to the restoration of security, stability, and justice in Darfur. Throughout its operation, UNAMID faced numerous challenges, including restrictions from the Sudanese government, logistical difficulties, and the complex nature of the conflict in Darfur.

The political landscape in Sudan changed significantly following the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 after months of protests against his rule. This led to a transitional government aimed at leading Sudan to democratic governance.

In response to the new political dynamics, the United Nations established UNITAMS in June 2020 through Security Council Resolution 2524. The mission was designed to support Sudan's political transition, provide assistance in peace negotiations, and help establish sustainable peace across the country. Unlike UNAMID, which was a peacekeeping mission with a significant security component, UNITAMS is more of a political mission focusing on assisting Sudan's transition to democratic governance and supporting peace negotiations.

 UNAMID officially concluded its mandate on December 31, 2020, with a phased withdrawal process. The withdrawal of UNAMID raised concerns about the potential security vacuum in Darfur, given the ongoing tensions and sporadic violence in the region.

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[2] World Health Organization (WHO). (2023, June 20). "Women and girls hit hard by attacks on health in Sudan, UN agencies warn". Retrieved from [WHO News Release].

[3] United Nations News (UN News). (2023, July 5). "UN voices 'shock and condemnation' as gender-based violence soars across Sudan". Retrieved from [UN News].

Since its inception, UNITAMS has faced numerous challenges, including political instability marked by the military coup in October 2021 and subsequent conflicts, hindering its ability to effectively support Sudan's transition.

The evolving context in Sudan, particularly following the military takeover in October 2021, has had significant impacts on international involvement, necessitating adjustments in engagement strategies by various countries and organizations, due to considerable challenges in this politically volatile environment. Criticisms against UNITAMS emerged from multiple fronts. The now military-led transitional council criticized UNITAMS for perceived over-involvement in internal affairs, while international and pro-democracy movements viewed the mission as failing to effectively support the transition to democratic civilian rule and by some even accused of legitimizing the coup. International Think Tanks like the Clingendael Institute reported on the challenges Western nations faced in responding effectively to Sudan's situation, underscoring the difficulties in aligning international efforts with Sudan's complex and changing political landscape.[4] These criticisms highlight the complexities of UNITAMS' mandate amidst external obstacles like the military coup, deep political complications, and hostility from various factions.[5,6]

The military takeover deepened mistrust between military and civilian components within Sudan. The November 21 Agreement, which aimed to resolve the crisis, faced opposition and failed to rebuild trust among key stakeholders. The international community's response to the coup, including the suspension of development assistance, added further pressure on UNITAMS' operations and objectives.[7,8]

As of late 2023, while writing this report, the UN Security Council has decided to end the UNITAMS mission, a decision influenced by the mission's perceived inability to navigate the complex political environment in Sudan effectively. With the closure of UNITAMS, the United Nations Interim Security

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[4] Clingendael Institute - The West's Struggle in Sudan (https://www.clingendael.org/publication/wests-struggle-sudan)

[5] Middle East Monitor - Sudan and the UN intervention, (https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20231207-sudan-and-the-un-intervention/)

[6] Dabanga Sudan - Op-ed: Unwarranted Criticism on UNITAMS, (https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/op-ed-unwarranted-criticism-on-the-united-nations-integrated-transition-assistance-mission-in-sudan-unitams)

[7] UN News - Sudan: Mistrust deepens following military takeover (https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1106912)

[8] Sudan in the News - Sudan diplomatic briefing: Challenges facing UNITAMS, (https://www.sudaninthenews.com/article/sudan-diplomatic-briefing-challenges-facing-unitams-after-the-military-coup-in-sudan)

Force for Abyei (UNISFA) remains the only UN mission in Sudan. UNISFA is primarily focused on maintaining peace in the disputed Abyei region between Sudan and South Sudan.[9]

Programme Background

Development of the joint Darfur Programme was initiated by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) in September 2019, with actual on-the-ground implementation of the projects beginning in January 2020, to assist the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in Darfur, as mandated by Security Council resolution 2429 (2018). This initiative was based on consultations for five projects, carried out between May and August 2019, prior to the formation of the transitional government led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. The development of the PBF programmes for Darfur came after the Security Council requested UNAMID to consolidate the whole-of-system approach to Darfur. This approach focused on peacekeeping and providing sustainable solutions to the drivers of conflict, with a two-pronged strategy to prevent relapse and enable the Government of Sudan, United Nations country team, civil society, and other actors to prepare for the eventual exit of UNAMID.

The transitional government requested funding for Darfur in three priority areas identified in the "Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur" and Security Council resolution 2429 (2018). The overarching programme results framework for the PBF initiative in Darfur, consistently applied across the five projects, can be outlined as follows:

Outcome 1: Durable solutions for the return of IDPs and refugees enabled through peaceful land dispute resolution and sustainable land and natural resource management.

1.1: Building government capacities for resolving land issues and creating Locality Action Plans.

1.2: Planning for durable solutions informs Locality Action Plans.

1.3: Locality-level Land and Natural Resource Management Plans prepared inclusively.

Outcome 2: Good governance established at locality level, enhancing physical security, rule of law, and access to quality basic services.

2.1: Reinforcement of local governance systems.

2.2: Responsive security and justice institutions promoted.

2.3: Increased access to equitable quality basic services.

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[9] JURIST - UN Security Council Votes to End Mission in Sudan – URL: https://www.jurist.org/news/2023/12/un-security-council-votes-to-end-mission-in-sudan-after-disappointing-results-and-rising-violence/

2.4: Capacities of service providers and communities enhanced for inclusive service delivery.

Outcome 3: A culture of peace and rights fostered in Darfur, with active civil society participation in dispute resolution and government accountability.

3.1: Community-based reconciliation mechanisms functioning and linked to state and national peace architecture.

3.2: Civil society mechanisms for protection of women and girls strengthened, with women empowered in public affairs and community peacebuilding.

3.3: Vulnerable children and youth with enhanced capacity for peacebuilding advocacy.

3.4: IDP and returnee communities enhance capacities for rights protection and peacebuilding.

3.5: State-wide civil society capacity building on human rights training and rights-based approaches.

This framework integrates multiple dimensions of peacebuilding, governance, and community development, ensuring a cohesive strategy across Darfur's diverse regions.

The Special Report recognized the possibility of relapse into conflict in Darfur, given that underlying conflict drivers remained largely unaddressed at the time of the report. The report further recognized that the PBF could be a crucial enabler for the transition from UNAMID.

With peace talks having commenced in Juba with the signature, on 11 September 2019, of the Juba Declaration for Confidence-building Procedures and the Preparation for Negotiation between the transitional authorities and the Sudan Revolutionary Front, a new Peace Commission was eventually established in May 2021 to spearhead all peacebuilding efforts at the national level and act as a national counterpart for PBF investments.

Figure 1. The Program's Theory of Change (ToC)
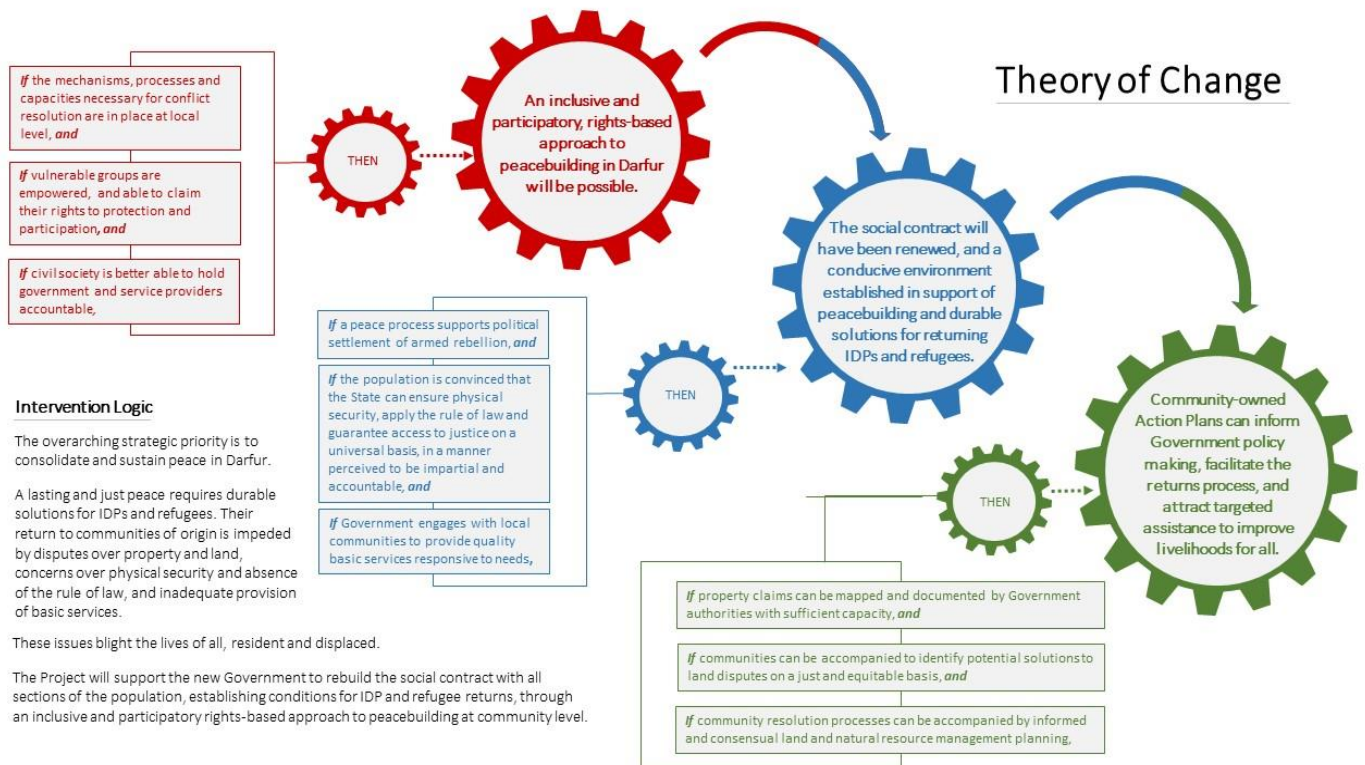
The PBF responded with the "Darfur Programme," consisting of five projects, one for each Darfur state, implemented by six UN agencies with one lead UN agency in each state. The programme was implemented from January 2020 to June 2022. It was designed to adopt an "area-based" approach, whereby conflict hotspot areas were identified and prioritized, and each UN agency would leverage their comparative advantage to target key conflict factors in those locations. The six UN agencies focused on the following specific thematic areas:

- UNDP: Governance, stabilization, and community security.

- UNHCR: Protection, solutions for IDPs and returnees, rule of law.

- UNICEF: Social cohesion, peacebuilding in education, child protection, provision of basic services/WASH.

- FAO: Livelihoods, agriculture, food security, and natural resource management.

- UN-HABITAT: Urban development, land, and property issues.

- IOM: Conduction of baseline surveys.

The program targeted eight localities across the five states, identified during stakeholder consultations co-hosted by the UN and state-level governments. The program's Theory of Change (ToC) (see figure 1) was centred on addressing the possibility of relapse into conflict by enabling the transition from UNAMID.

Throughout its implementation, the program faced numerous challenges, including political instability, COVID-19, and periodic violence, particularly in West Darfur. The October 2021 coup and the onset of armed conflict in April 2023 further complicated the situation, affecting the program's sustainability and long-term impact. Despite these challenges, the program aimed to instil long-term peacebuilding solutions, adapting to the evolving dynamics of the region. . The priority locations and areas for interventions were identified during stakeholder consultations co-hosted by the UN and state-level governments during the design phase of the programme, May – August 2019, with communities themselves identifying the localities in each state that had the most potential for conflict. In total, the programme targeted eight localities across the five states (see figure 2 below).

Throughout its implementation phase, the Darfur Programme encountered multiple challenges that significantly impacted its effectiveness and sustainability. Initially, the weak transition process following the formation of the transitional government led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok presented considerable obstacles. This period was marked by political instability and a fragile governance structure, which hindered the smooth execution of the Programme's initiatives. Additionally, the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 added unprecedented complications, disrupting logistical arrangements and limiting the mobility of implementing agencies, further straining the Programme's resources and timelines.

Figure 2. The Program's Five Projects and Eight Selected Localities
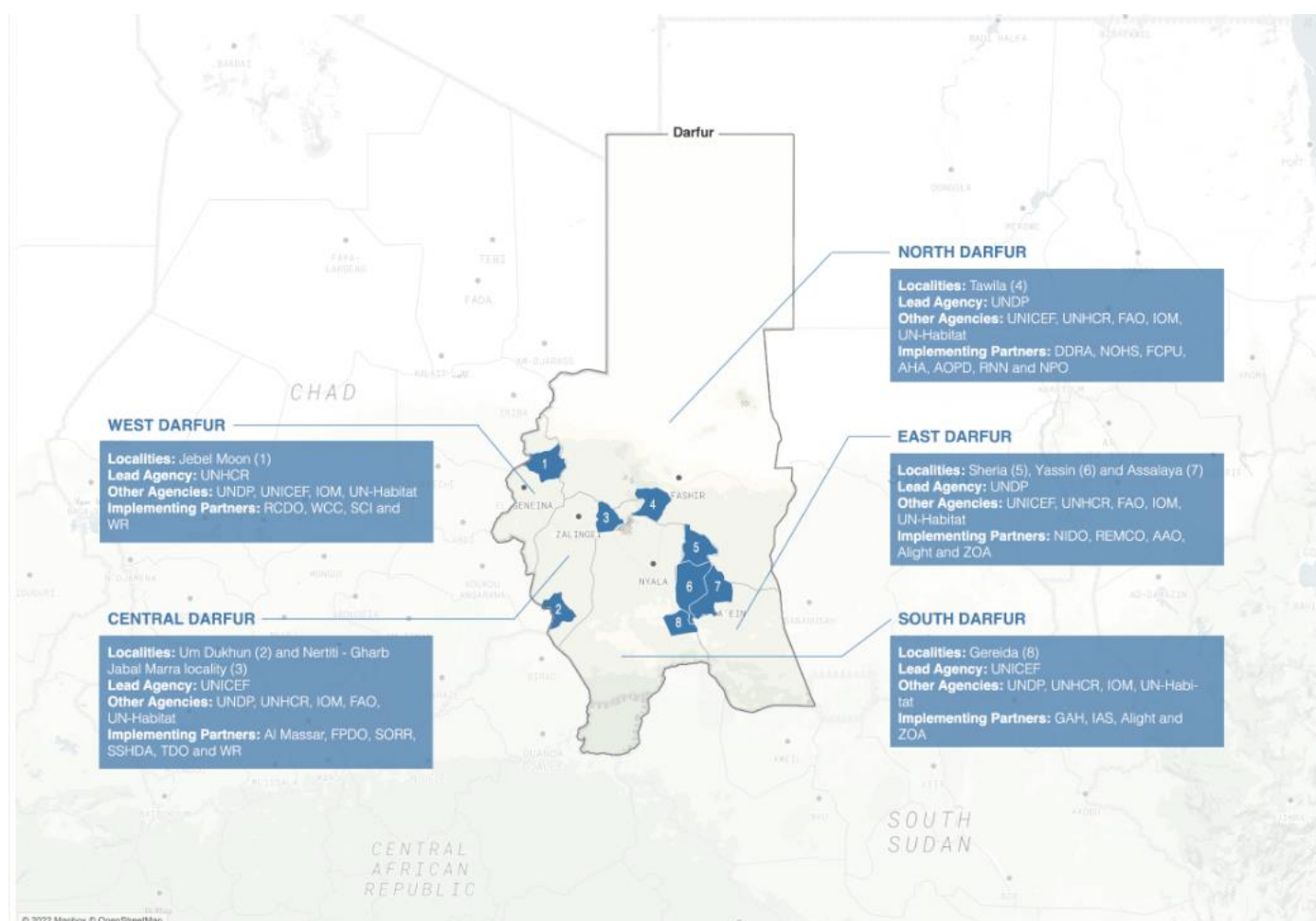
The situation was compounded by periodic flare-ups of violence in various states, most notably in West Darfur, where inter-tribal fighting frequently erupted, particularly around the beginning and end of agricultural seasons. These conflicts not only disrupted local communities and exacerbated displacement but also posed direct challenges to the Programme's peacebuilding and community engagement efforts. The coup in October 2021 further destabilized the region, leading to a heightened state of uncertainty and insecurity, which adversely affected the Programme's operations.

The onset of armed conflict in April 2023 was yet another significant setback that threatened the long-term impact and viability of the peacebuilding efforts initiated by the Programme. While this recent conflict has undoubtedly had a profound negative impact on the envisaged long-term impacts of the program, the Programme had already been grappling with a series of complex challenges throughout its implementation phase. These challenges collectively contributed to the difficulties in achieving sustainable peacebuilding outcomes in Darfur. While the Darfur Programme was designed with adaptability in mind to address the evolving dynamics of the region, its sustainability and evaluability have faced significant challenges, particularly with the outbreak of new conflict in April 2023. The Programme, which officially concluded its activities in June 2022 following a six-month no-cost extension, aimed to instil long-term peacebuilding solutions. However, the resurgence of conflict post-conclusion has raised critical questions about the enduring impact and resilience of these efforts.

This situation presents a unique evaluative challenge. The Programme's effectiveness, initially tailored to a different set of circumstances, must now be reassessed in the context of the drastic shift in the region's stability. This evaluation, therefore, is not only a retrospective assessment of the Programme's impact under its original operational conditions but also a crucial inquiry into how peacebuilding initiatives can be adapted to withstand and address new and emerging challenges in the region. It seeks to provide insights into both the achievements and limitations of the Programme in light of the complex, multifaceted challenges it faced, including the destabilizing effects of the latest conflict. This comprehensive approach is essential to guide future peacebuilding strategies in Darfur, ensuring they are robust enough to adapt to and withstand volatile and unpredictable changes in the region's political and security landscape.

4. Overall evaluation approach and methodology

4.1 Evaluation Design

The evaluation design adopted a summative approach, which was considered the most appropriate given that the Darfur Programme had reached its completion stage. The summative evaluation aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the programme's overall impact, effectiveness, and contributions to peacebuilding efforts in Darfur. This approach was not only aligned with the programme's objectives but also served the dual purpose of accountability and learning for all stakeholders involved.

The evaluation questions and objectives were carefully crafted to assess various aspects of the Darfur Programme, including its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact on targeted communities. Central to this evaluation was also the determination of how well the Programme aligned with the

peacebuilding objectives outlined by the PBF and the operational strategies of UN agencies active in Darfur.

Given the PBF's crucial role in financing and guiding peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-affected regions, the evaluation sought to ascertain whether the Darfur Programme effectively utilized the resources and strategic direction provided by the PBF. Additionally, it examined the Programme's coherence with the activities and goals of UN agencies in Darfur, which are pivotal in implementing peacebuilding and developmental efforts on the ground.

This approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation, focusing on the synergy between the Programme and the broader peacebuilding framework as envisioned by key UN entities directly involved in Darfur. By doing so, the evaluation aims to offer valuable insights into the efficacy of the Programme in contributing to the overall peacebuilding efforts in the region.

The design of this final evaluation was guided by a comprehensive framework that adhered to the OECD DAC criteria for evaluations. This framework was initially outlined in the Inception Report and served as the backbone for the entire evaluation process. The evaluation questions were structured to assess:

1. **Relevance and Appropriateness:** How well did the PBF programme align with the needs of the target communities and the broader peacebuilding objectives in Darfur?

2. **Effectiveness:** To what extent did the programme achieve its intended outcomes, especially in the areas of rule of law, durable solutions, and community-level peacebuilding?

3. **Efficiency:** How well were resources utilized to achieve the intended outcomes? Was the programme cost-effective?

4. **Coherence and Coordination:** How well did the programme align with other initiatives, and was there effective coordination among different stakeholders?

5. **Sustainability and Ownership:** To what extent did the programme implement an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy, including promoting national/local ownership, use of national capacity etc.) to support positive changes in peacebuilding after the end of the programme?

In addition to the DAC criteria, the evaluation also incorporated PBF-specific criteria, focusing on:

- **Conflict-Sensitivity:** The implementation and adherence to a conflict-sensitive approach.

- **Gender and Youth Responsiveness:** How well did the programme promote the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), and Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agendas.

The evaluation aimed not only to assess the programme's performance but also to document lessons learned and provide actionable recommendations for future peacebuilding initiatives in Sudan.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was a multi-faceted process that involved both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data were primarily collected through KIIs and FGDs. Quantitative data, on the other hand,

were gathered from financial reports and performance metrics, which include program indicators such as the number of participants in training initiatives, the volume of aid distribution, and other quantifiable impacts of activities tracked by the projects. Additionally, due to the recent outbreak of conflict that made field data collection impossible, geospatial data were collected using remote sensing tools in the form of satellite data.

The tools used for data collection were diverse to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the programme's impact. Semi-structured interview guides were employed for KIIs, and specific guidelines were followed for conducting FGDs. Remote sensing tools were used to collect satellite data, providing valuable insights into the geographical impact of the programme.

Sampling was done using purposive techniques, focusing on stakeholders who had direct involvement or substantial knowledge about the programme. This included UN staff, programme beneficiaries, and implementing partners, among others.

The evaluation design was initially structured to include a comprehensive review of project documents, field visits for data collection, KIIs, and FGDs. However, the outbreak of conflict in Darfur significantly impacted the evaluation process, necessitating adjustments to the original design.

- **Document Review:** An extensive review of project documents, including reports, financial statements, and other relevant materials, was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the programme's implementation and outcomes.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** Initially, the inception report proposed 150 KIIs. Despite the conflict, the team managed to undertake close to the number of KIIs proposed due to oversampling and conducting several more KIIs with UN stakeholders than first anticipated. A full breakdown of the KIIs and FGDs is included in Annex 4.

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** The original plan included 10 FGDs. However, due to the conflict, only 5 FGDs were conducted, significantly limiting the community-level representation in the data. A full breakdown of the KIIs and FGDs is included in Annex 4.

- **Remote Sensing Data:** Given the challenges posed by the conflict, the evaluation shifted towards remote data collection methods. Remote sensing tools in the form of satellite data were employed for selected locations to supplement the limited field data. The methodology for remote sensing is explained further below in section 3.2.1.

- **Remote Follow-Up Interviews:** Additional remote interviews with UN staff and stakeholders were conducted to gain insights into the impact of the current situation.

NDVI Time Series Analysis for Agricultural Activity

In assessing the impact of the UNPBF project in Darfur, we utilized NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index) time series analysis. NDVI time series analysis was utilized to observe changes in land use, particularly in agricultural activities, around selected target villages in Darfur. NDVI serves as a proxy for assessing peace and security by examining land use dynamics, under the premise that stable agricultural activities often indicate a peaceful environment conducive to consistent farming

practices. Conversely, disruptions in these activities may reflect underlying socio-economic distress or the aftermath of conflict.

For accuracy in the Darfur region, NDVI thresholds were adapted to local environmental conditions based on insights from relevant research like Yagoub et al.'s study on vegetation cover change.[10] Copernicus Sentinel-2 satellite imagery was used for detailed vegetation monitoring from 2019 to 2022, capturing annual variations and discerning long-term trends in vegetation. The analysis focused on a 1.5 to 3.5 km radius (depending on village size) around each target village to include immediate agricultural areas.

The data processing phase involved filtering satellite images to concentrate on the peak agricultural season of each year (typically coinciding with the rainy season between June and October) and computing NDVI, applying a threshold of 0.3 to identify areas of agricultural activity. This method provided tangible data on the extent and intensity of agricultural activities near each village.

While NDVI analysis offers valuable insights into agricultural dynamics and land use changes, its limitations must be acknowledged. It does not directly reveal the underlying causes of changes in agricultural activity, such as policy shifts, impact of large-scale agricultural schemes on community marginalization, and conflicts related to pastoralist routes or social conflicts. Additionally, while agriculture is vital in regions like Darfur, types of agricultural activities may vary depending on the specific locality/village and pastoralism is also a critical livelihood for non-farming communities which this approach will not capture. Therefore, NDVI should be complemented with other data sources and methods to fully understand the socio-economic conditions and peace dynamics in Darfur.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this evaluation was conducted using a multi-faceted approach to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the programme's impact and effectiveness. Three main analytical methods were employed:

1. **Meta-Analysis of Documents:** This involved a thorough review of secondary literature, programme reports, financial statements, and existing analyses. This approach helped to contextualize the primary data and provided a baseline for evaluating the programme's achievements against its objectives.

2. **Basic Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis:** Semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Financial and other quantitative data were also subjected to statistical analysis to assess programme efficiency and effectiveness.

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[10] "Investigation of Vegetation Cover Change in Sudan by Using Modis Data" by Yousif Elnour Yagoub et al.

3. **Modified Grounded Theory:** In the evaluation of the UNPBF Darfur Programme, Modified Grounded Theory was applied with a focus on practical insights. The approach included:

   a) **Insight Sampling:** The process of data collection was recursive, allowing the research team to adapt its focus based on emerging insights. This iterative process was crucial for developing a nuanced understanding of the programme's impact.

   b) **Coding:** Data were broken down into component parts and clustered into categories. These categories were then used to develop insights and, where possible, construct theories or draw conclusions.

   c) **Data Saturation:** Some respondents were interviewed multiple times until no new insights or dimensions emerged, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the issues.

   d) **Constant Comparison:** This method involved comparing phenomena that emerged during the interviews and coding them under relevant categories. The iterative process allowed for an ongoing comparison between existing and new interviews, helping to identify common themes and patterns.

   e) **Analytical Framework:** The set of concepts and theories inherent in the programme's Theory of Change (ToC) and other documents served as an initial framework. This helped organize and understand the data collected from various sources.

   - **Remote Sensing Analysis:** NDVI values from satellite data were analysed to understand agricultural dynamics in target villages of Darfur. This analysis helps assess the health and extent of agricultural areas, vital for economic activity and community sustainability. Monitoring NDVI over time reveals trends in land use and the impact of environmental factors and human activities. These insights are crucial in linking agricultural productivity with peace and stability in the region, providing a narrative of change and adaptation.

Qualifications to Grounded Theory

While the evaluation employed grounded theory, it was adapted to include pre-existing analytical frameworks. This was particularly relevant for aligning the evaluation with the DAC criteria such as relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness. These frameworks helped shape the initial approaches and provided clarity to key informants regarding the direction of the research.

The combination of these analytical methods provided a robust and comprehensive understanding of the programme's impact, challenges, and opportunities for future peacebuilding efforts. The use of multiple analytical approaches also helped mitigate some of the limitations faced during data collection, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

4.4 Limitations and Challenges

The evaluation encountered several limitations and challenges that had implications for the depth and breadth of the findings. The most significant challenge was the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, which severely restricted the ability to conduct field visits and collect primary data. This was particularly

limiting for the evaluation as it reduced the opportunity for direct observation and interaction with programme beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

1. **Data Collection:** The conflict halted our field data collection, particularly the FGDs and KIIs with beneficiaries at the community level. This limitation was partially mitigated by shifting towards remote data collection methods.

2. **Changes in Context:** The conflict led to significant changes in the context within which the PBF-supported projects were being implemented. While ongoing local insecurity, notably in West Darfur, was continuedly altering the operational environment for PBF-supported projects, the April 2023 outbreak of conflict have led to considerable impacts on target villages, including population displacement and abandonment.

3. **Evaluability:** The changes in the security situation (particularly post-April 2023) drastically restricted our evaluation team's access, presenting immense challenges in accurately assessing the projects' impact in the local contexts.

4. **Time Frame:** The conflict and the resulting changes to our work plan meant that the evaluation took longer than initially planned. This could have implications for the timeliness of the evaluation findings and their relevance to decision-making processes.

The evaluation adapted to these challenges by employing alternative data collection methods. Remote sensing tools were utilized to gather satellite data, providing valuable information on the longer-term impact of the programme.

The conflict also had implications for the evaluability and sustainability of the programme. While the programme officially concluded before the conflict erupted, the sustainability of its outcomes became a subject of concern. The conflict disrupted the social fabric and governance structures, potentially affecting the long-term impact of the programme.

To mitigate these limitations, the evaluation increased its reliance on KIIs conducted remotely. Virtual Focus Group Discussions were also organized to capture post April 2023 insights from key stakeholders. Additionally, secondary data sources, such as project reports and other research studies as well as the Impact Evaluation of the programme[11], were extensively reviewed to supplement the primary data.

Despite these adaptations, it's important to note that the limitations have implications for the generalizability of the findings. The absence of field data from the community-level mean that some

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[11] International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) (2023). Impact evaluation of the UN Peacebuilding Fund's East Darfur Assalaya-Sheiria-Yassin Triangle of Peace and Coexistence project. [Unpublished manuscript].

nuances and contextual insights may not have been fully captured. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

4.5 Ethical Considerations and Quality Assurance

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the evaluation process. All participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent. Strict measures were in place to ensure the confidentiality and secure storage of data. The evaluation adhered to the ethical guidelines and protocols outlined in the Inception Report.

Quality assurance measures were rigorously implemented to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. This included data triangulation methods, where information from different sources was cross verified.

5. Findings

In the following section, the findings, and responses to the evaluation questions are included. The broader evaluation questions that guided our evaluation and interviews for each of the OECD DAC criteria are repeated *in italics* in the beginning of each sub-section for orientation.

5.1 Relevance

Initially, the programme was highly relevant to the needs of the Darfur region, focusing on peacebuilding, rule of law, and durable solutions for IDPs. However, the political landscape changed dramatically following the October 2021 military-coup, raising questions about the programme's continued relevance as the transitional process and government was derailed.

Main Evaluation Questions Relevance

- *To what extent have the PBF supported projects aligned with the needs, priorities, and context of Sudan and its peace-building efforts?*

- *How relevant and appropriate are the PBF supported programmes in terms of their objectives, design, and implementation?*

- *How relevant are the outputs and outcomes of the PBF supported programmes including in promoting the WPS and YPS agendas?*

Sentiment Analysis of Key Informant Interviews for DAC Criteria Relevance

In assessing the relevance of the programme, a comprehensive sentiment analysis was conducted based on all KII responses related to the DAC criterion of Relevance. The figure 3 below illustrates the sentiment distribution from KIIs regarding the program's relevance. The Y-axis quantifies the number of KII responses expressing positive (green), negative (red), or neutral (blue) sentiments for each identified theme (in the KIIs) on the X-axis. This visualisation helps assess the program's strengths and areas needing attention, as perceived by stakeholders involved in or affected by the program's activities in Darfur.

Figure 3. Sentiment Analysis, Relevance. The colour is sentiment, Green: Positive Sentiment, Red: Negative Sentiment, Blue: Neutral Sentiment. The X-axis represents the Number of KIIs. The Y-axis represents the qualitative aspect of the chart, indicating the different "Topics" or "Themes" associated with the sentiments being analysed.
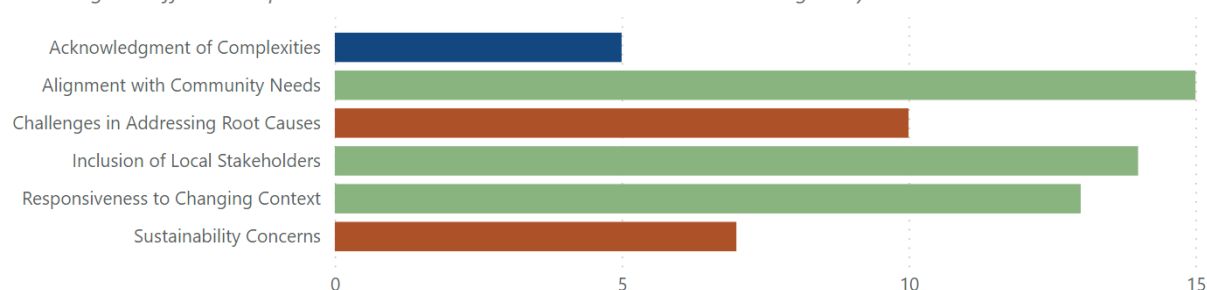
The positive sentiments, as shown in green in Figure 3, predominantly highlight the alignment of the projects with community needs, including critical areas such as water, education, and peacebuilding. The inclusion of local stakeholders and responsiveness to changing contexts were also frequently noted, underscoring the project's commitment to adaptability and community-centric approaches. These positive responses not only affirm the relevance of the initiatives but also reflect the successful engagement with the target communities.

Conversely, the negative sentiments, marked in red, primarily point to challenges in addressing root causes and sustainability concerns. These insights are crucial as they signal areas where the projects could be strengthened to enhance long-term impact and address deeper systemic issues. The presence of these sentiments suggests a need for a more nuanced approach in future project designs, particularly in addressing complex, underlying conflict drivers, and ensuring sustainable outcomes.

Neutral sentiments, represented in blue, are found with KIIs acknowledging the complexities inherent in conflict and peace-building efforts. Rather than indicating indifference, these responses underscore the respondents' nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. It might also suggest that while the project has made efforts to address these complexities, there might be more room for further refinement in program methodologies to ensure a more adaptive and context-sensitive approach is consistently applied. We will dive further into this question in the analysis section below. In summary, the sentiment analysis presented in Figure 3 offers valuable insights into the relevance of the programme. While the positive sentiments affirm the effectiveness of current strategies, the negative and neutral sentiments provide critical feedback for refining approaches and ensuring that interventions remain responsive, sustainable, and deeply attuned to the complex dynamics of the communities the programme aim to target.

Analysis of Relevance

The concept of relevance in the context of the PBF programme in Darfur is multi-faceted, encompassing not just the alignment of programme objectives with local needs but also the programme's adaptability to a rapidly changing environment. In the following we will explore the extent to which the UNPBF supported projects aligned with local needs and priorities, considered the local context, and responded to significant contextual shifts at the national level, including the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in the UN's operational framework, and the military coup of October 2021.

Alignment with Needs, Priorities, and Context of Sudan

The projects, covering a range of sectors from water access and education to land redistribution and agricultural development, appear to have significantly addressed local needs. Local government counterparts highlighted the project's positive impact on communities, particularly in providing essential services and facilitating peaceful coexistence. This was echoed by implementing partners reporting that local leaders and communities saw the initiatives as crucial in restoring social cohesion and providing basic necessities for resettlement and sustainable living.

Additionally, responses from implementing partners and various community-focused organizations reflected the projects' alignment with their peacebuilding plans and priorities. These organizations emphasized the importance of community engagement, which were central to the PBF projects. For example, vocational training activities in East Darfur, aimed at youth engagement, were particularly noted for their strategic approach to addressing conflict-affected demographics and contributing to long-term peacebuilding.

The PBF projects demonstrated a notable capacity to adapt to the complex and evolving circumstances in Darfur. KIIs reflected that these adaptations were mostly aligned with the needs arising from the region's unique challenges.

For instance, a KII highlighted the project's alignment with community needs, particularly through activities evaluated by the Humanitarian Aid Commission and direct interactions with local community leaders. This indicates a responsive approach to the immediate and specific needs of the communities. Another KII emphasized the importance of water source provision in targeted areas to reduce competition and friction, showcasing how the project's objectives were tailored to address critical local issues. Moreover, the focus on changing perceptions among new generations in conflict-affected areas, as pointed out by a respondent, underscores the program's commitment to long-term peacebuilding beyond immediate material needs.

The programme's relevance, as highlighted by one respondent was evident in one of the East Darfur activities' focuses on vocational training for youth. The focus on vocational training for youth, as part of the East Darfur project was a strategic response to engage a demographic deeply affected by conflict. While this serves as one example of how the programme aligned with local needs, the assessment of whether these activities effectively contributed to long-term peacebuilding outcomes will be addressed in later chapters.

Furthermore, the desk review notes suggest that while stakeholder consultation was part of the program's design process, KIIs note that the depth and breadth of these consultations varied depending on various factors. For instance, security constraints in certain areas made it challenging to conduct extensive consultations. In some instances, logistical and operational challenges limited the ability to engage with a wide range of stakeholders.

Specific examples from KIIs highlight instances where local community voices were not adequately represented in the consultation process. In one case, during the design of a community-focused intervention in a remote village, the consultations were primarily conducted with local leaders and elders, overlooking the perspectives of younger community members who had unique insights into the challenges they faced.

Another example from a KII emerged in a region where conflict dynamics were highly localized, and nuances between neighbouring communities played a crucial role. The consultation process in this context focused on broader regional stakeholders but missed the intricate differences and grievances held by specific villages.

These examples underscore the importance of tailoring interventions according to the ground realities. The limited representation of local voices in consultations resulted in gaps in understanding the specific needs and dynamics of communities, which could have been addressed with more comprehensive and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

However, there were also areas where the needs and priorities could have been addressed more effectively. Some respondents indicated that while the projects were beneficial, various voiced needs and priorities like legal aid, post-conflict psychosocial support especially targeted youth and women-focused initiatives, and in general a strengthened focus on social reconstruction focused on rebuilding the human interactions in fragile communities in order for them to function. The identified need for transitional justice and social reconstruction, was recognized by implementing partners and UN staff, however, they also highlight the discrepancy with this and the Darfurian beneficiaries expressing a preference for more direct support, such as cash payments, water access, and food distribution. This discrepancy does not necessarily imply a misalignment but rather highlights the challenge of balancing immediate humanitarian and development aid with long-term peacebuilding efforts. Effective communication of the importance of less tangible aspects of peacebuilding and their integration with immediate support measures is crucial for these efforts to resonate with the local context and be perceived as relevant and beneficial by the beneficiaries.

While the PBF-supported projects demonstrate a significant level of alignment with the needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries, the KIIs also reveal a reluctance to engage with 'soft' peacebuilding components (like dialogue and awareness-raising), suggesting a preference for tangible outcomes over intangible peacebuilding processes when directly asking communities. This poses a challenge for the PBF supported projects: ensuring that infrastructure and service delivery projects are not just ends in themselves, but also effective platforms for deeper social and political engagement. Addressing this challenge involves enhancing community understanding of the importance of these soft components in sustainable peacebuilding and demonstrating their tangible impact on community resilience and conflict resolution.

The evaluation aims to determine the effectiveness of infrastructure-focused interventions within the PBF's overarching peacebuilding strategy. Specifically, it assesses how these tangible projects serve as platforms for deeper social and political engagement, and whether they foster environments conducive to dialogue, strengthen governance, and resolve conflicts in line with the Theory of Change. This analysis will inform a deeper exploration of the program's impact on long-term peacebuilding effectiveness in the following sections.

The programme's relevance is also reflected in its choice of local implementing partners. One KII respondent praised the programme's level of collaboration and communication between stakeholders, as well as commitment to collaborative solutions and local buy-in. This approach was

essential for ensuring that the interventions were not perceived as external impositions but as co-created solutions with genuine local relevance.

While detailed aspects of the program's conflict-sensitive approach are discussed in a later section, it's important to acknowledge here its contribution to the program's overall relevance. In the context of Darfur, where the social and political landscape is complex, the ability to implement interventions without exacerbating tensions is a key indicator of the program's atonement to the local context. By actively avoiding actions that could worsen existing conflicts or spark new ones, the programme demonstrated a profound understanding of the local context.

This careful navigation through the complex landscape of Darfur is a testament to the programme's relevance. It shows an acute awareness of the local dynamics and a commitment to 'do no harm,' which is fundamental in conflict-sensitive programming. The programme's ability to deliver interventions without triggering adverse effects directly contributes to its relevance, as it reflects a tailored approach that is deeply cognizant of the unique challenges and sensitivities of the Darfur context. While the PBF programme's relevance in Darfur encompasses its adaptability to local needs and context, it's also important to recognize its alignment with national peacebuilding efforts. However, this program specifically focused on area-based interventions in targeted localities, distinct from other PBF-funded projects more directly tied to the national-level political transition and the Juba Peace Agreement. We'll highlight how the program's local objectives complemented national peacebuilding frameworks without evaluating it against broader, national-level metrics, which were not its primary focus.

The Programme Amidst Darfur's Dynamic Context and Contextual Shifts in Darfur

The PBF-supported projects in Darfur operated within a complex tapestry of social, political, and economic shifts, marked prominently by the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS, and the military coup of October 2021. The following section seeks to analyse how the PBF program has responded and adjusted to these multifaceted contextual changes, answering to the following evaluation questions:

- *To what extend did the PBF supported state projects and PBF fund itself adjust to the 'exceptional circumstances' in the Darfur region and the constantly evolving circumstances?*

- *To what extent did the PBF program and state supported projects respond (or not) to contextual shifts, including COVID-19, the changing architecture of the UN in Sudan (including the departure of UNAMID and establishment of UNITAMS), and the military coup of October 2021?*

Several KII respondents highlighted the programme's efforts to adapt to the rapidly changing context in Darfur, especially during/after the military coup and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these responses, while timely in some respects, appeared reactive rather than proactive. The programme's ability to foresee and prepare for such drastic changes was limited, as evidenced by the challenges it faced in maintaining momentum during these periods. The desk review further corroborates this, indicating a gap in strategic foresight and contingency planning within the programme. This reactive approach, while understandable given the unpredictability of such events, suggests a need for more robust mechanisms to anticipate and prepare for future crises.

The PBF program in Darfur faced an unprecedented challenge with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which coincided with significant political upheaval, including a military coup. This complex environment necessitated a responsive and adaptable approach from the program. The KIIs and project documents suggest that while the program exhibited a degree of agility in responding to immediate health and economic challenges, there were gaps in its strategic foresight and preparedness for such extensive disruptions. For instance, the PBF's shift towards integrating pandemic awareness within its activities, as mentioned in the 'Monitoring Visit - Tawilla March 2021' document, demonstrated a commendable pivot towards addressing urgent health concerns.

One notable adaptation was the program's emphasis on economic resilience and livelihood adaptation in response to the pandemic-induced economic downturn. The 'PBF Central Darfur End of Project Report 2022' highlighted initiatives such as vocational training for youth and support for local businesses, which were pivotal in mitigating the economic fallout. These efforts were particularly relevant in addressing the immediate needs of communities hit by both the pandemic and ongoing conflict.

However, a concern raised during KIIs, notably by representatives from UNDP and IOM, was whether these short-term economic measures were sufficiently aligned with the long-term peacebuilding objectives of the program. The pandemic's exacerbation of economic hardships had the potential to fuel existing conflicts and generate new tensions, thus challenging the program's foundational goals.

The PBF program demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity, especially by involving women and youth in peacebuilding activities. However, the program faced initial challenges due to the absence of a gender and youth-specific conflict analysis, which limited its ability to fully address the unique needs of these groups. Despite these initial setbacks, the program was proactive in designing gender-sensitive activities and forming committees with significant participation from women and youth, aimed at real empowerment and meaningful involvement.

There were, however, challenges in fully realizing these gender and youth-responsive activities. These challenges were due to a variety of factors, including tribal conflicts, seasonal constraints, and funding limitations, which impeded the complete execution of planned initiatives. Despite these hurdles, the program made notable efforts to tailor its activities to the diverse needs of these groups.

In response to these challenges, the program developed tailored training programs catering specifically to the unique needs of the youth and women. This included vocational skills and income-generating activities aimed at enhancing economic resilience among these demographics. As a result of these tailored initiatives, the program successfully engaged 800 community members, including 320 youths, and facilitated the creation of six women microfinance associations. These associations used microfinance as a tool for peaceful coexistence and empowerment. Additionally, focus group discussions highlighted the program's success in integrating the delivery of social services with a special emphasis on youth engagement and child protection, thereby illustrating a strategic move towards fostering platforms for active community participation.

The 'PBF East Darfur End of Project Report - June 2022' indicated similar challenges. While there were initiatives aimed at empowering women and youth, the lack of a cohesive, long-term strategy meant

that these efforts did not always effectively address the unique challenges faced by these groups, particularly in the context of Darfur's complex social and cultural landscape.

The broader regional impact of the pandemic, as discussed in academic literature like Osman et al. (2021), underscored the importance of integrated health and peacebuilding strategies[12]. The PBF program's response focused primarily on immediate economic and social resilience-building, which was crucial but also indicated a need for a more holistic approach that intertwines health concerns with peacebuilding objectives.

The transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS was a significant juncture for the PBF program. Unlike its response to the COVID-19 crisis, the program's approach to this transition was proactive and strategically conceived. As outlined in the programme and project documents, the program was explicitly designed to fill the gap anticipated with UNAMID's departure. UNAMID's withdrawal left a noticeable gap in the protection of civilians, especially in conflict-affected areas. The mission had played a crucial role in stabilizing regions and providing a semblance of security, which was now under threat.

The PBF program's focus on locality-level interventions was a key aspect of its strategic approach to fill the UNAMID gap. The Theory of Change and the activity proposals analysed in the desk review underscore the program's commitment to addressing specific local needs during the transition. This approach was vital in ensuring that the program effectively filled the void left by UNAMID's withdrawal, particularly in areas of rule of law, durable solutions, and community-level peacebuilding.

The program documents reflect a comprehensive strategy for peacebuilding in Darfur, taking into account the nuances of the region's social and political landscape. However, the KIIs indicate that the program faced challenges related to security and reliance on government forces as a result of the transition. This aspect was particularly relevant in areas where the program's implementation intersected with the evolving security dynamics post-UNAMID. Addressing these challenges was crucial for the program's relevance in its role as "filling the gap" left by UNAMID. This approach focused on addressing locality-level issues, fostering local peacebuilding initiatives, and integrating community needs into the program's design. The area-based approach was relevant as it addressed specific local challenges and dynamics. By focusing on locality-level interventions, the PBF aimed to create sustainable peacebuilding mechanisms tailored to the unique needs of each area.

However, this approach can be critiqued for potentially not being robust enough to address the broader security challenges following UNAMID's departure. Immediately post-UNAMID, there was an uptick in intercommunal violence and tensions. The absence of a robust peacekeeping force was felt in the escalation of conflicts and a decrease in the overall sense of safety among the local population.

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[12] Osman, A., Ibrahim, M., Elsheikh, M., Karrar, K., & Salih, H. (2021). Saving the Fundaments: Impact of a Military Coup on the Sudan Health System.

The area-based approach focusing on local initiatives, while valuable, may have been insufficient to counteract the larger security vacuum and the rise in intercommunal violence observed post-UNAMID.

The KIIs indicate that in some areas, the security situation directly impacted the program's ability to maintain its momentum and achieve its objectives. For example, in regions where government forces had a limited presence or where there were active conflicts, the implementation of PBF projects faced disruptions. These challenges were not merely operational but also affected the program's ability to foster trust and collaboration among local communities, which is vital for successful peacebuilding.

The transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS marked a significant shift in the UN's operational strategy in Sudan. Müller (2020) discusses the unintended consequences of peacekeeping mandates, emphasizing the need for protection of civilians and local staff. This transition phase was a critical juncture for the PBF program, which, according to KII responses, focused on local peacebuilding initiatives and community integration. The program's adaptation, in this case, reveals an acknowledgment of the necessity to fill gaps left by UNAMID's departure and UNITAMS' establishment, underlining the importance of local involvement in peacebuilding[13].

While relevant as a programme addressing local peacebuilding needs, we must question the relevance of the PBF programme as a comprehensive solution to "filling the gap" left by UNAMID in the form of the broader security challenges of the region. The relevance of the PBF funded projects inevitably relied on a complex integrated approach, combining local initiatives with broader security measures headed by government initiatives, which might have been effective in maintaining stability in the region.

The military coup in Sudan in October 2021 introduced a new dimension of challenges for the PBF program in Darfur. This event significantly disrupted the political and security landscape, questioning the program's adaptability and relevance in the face of such sudden upheavals. The coup resulted in the stepping down of Prime Minister Hamdok and threw the country's political transition off track. This upheaval directly impacted the PBF program, as it necessitated a reassessment of partnerships with government entities and the recalibration of project strategies in a now uncertain political environment.

The coup intensified the already mentioned security concerns in Darfur. The PBF's response, as indicated in the KIIs, involved prioritizing community engagement and adapting strategies to navigate the new political reality. This response underscores the program's flexibility and responsiveness to political instability. However, challenges remain in maintaining program objectives amidst changing government priorities and ensuring that peacebuilding efforts align with the evolving political context.

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[13] Müller, T. R. (2020). Protection of Civilians Mandates and 'Collateral Damage' of UN Peacekeeping Missions: Histories of Refugees from Darfur.

One KII respondent pointed out the programme's timely response to immediate conflict drivers, a critical aspect in a region like Darfur, where conflict dynamics can rapidly evolve. The programme's ability to adapt its objectives and activities to address new or intensified conflict drivers was a strong indicator of its relevance. However, this adaptability was tested in the face of the military coup and the ensuing political instability. The programme's struggle to maintain its course during this period raised questions about its resilience and long-term sustainability in the face of major political shifts. In such volatile contexts, the need for programmes to not only adapt but also to anticipate and prepare for potential political upheavals becomes paramount. This failure to sustain long-term peacebuilding efforts in the face of renewed conflict raises questions about the programme's overall strategic planning and resilience.

KIIs expressed concerns about the transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS leaving a security vacuum, which was further deepened by the coup, and a PBF program design not relevant for covering this vacuum without functioning security. The PBF program, while having a strategic approach to fill the UNAMID gap, faced difficulties in addressing the heightened security challenges post-coup. The reliance on government security apparatus became more problematic, especially in areas with limited or contested government presence.

The program's ability to continue its momentum was challenged in localities with active conflicts or limited government presence. KIIs note that implementing activities was relying on whether security could be provided by government forces, which with the increased security challenges led to operational disruptions and changes in localities, as security was a prerogative for implementation.

The PBF program demonstrated a degree of adaptability in responding to the immediate health and economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the military coup demanded a more robust and strategic response, especially in the realms of political engagement and security management. The program's reactive approach to the coup, while understandable given the unpredictability of the event, underscores the need for more dynamic and anticipatory mechanisms in future peacebuilding efforts in Darfur.

It is evident that the PBF program has shown a commendable degree of adaptability and responsiveness to the dynamic context of Darfur. The program's efforts in health crisis management, restructuring peacekeeping efforts, and adapting to political changes are indicative of a proactive and context-aware approach. The focus on community needs and involvement, particularly in addressing land rights issues, livelihood enhancement, and social cohesion, aligns with the foundational objectives of peacebuilding.

While the PBF program in Darfur has demonstrated significant strides in adapting to a rapidly changing environment, the complexity of the region's challenges necessitates continued evolution of strategies and approaches. The integration of health, peacebuilding, and political stability into a cohesive strategy will be paramount in navigating the path forward in Darfur.

Conclusion: Relevance

The relevance of the PBF programme in Darfur is intricately linked to its ability to align with the multifaceted needs of the region and its adaptability to a rapidly changing environment. This analysis

seeks to unpack the extent to which the PBF-supported projects were aptly designed and executed to meet local needs, were contextually appropriate, and how they responded to significant shifts, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition from the UNAMID to the UNITAMS, and the military coup of October 2021.

The PBF projects spanned a gamut of sectors, each addressing critical aspects of Darfur's post-conflict recovery, from enhancing water access and education to facilitating land redistribution and agricultural development. Government counterparts and community leaders acknowledged the projects' significant relevance for delivering essential services and fostering peaceful coexistence. Moreover, the projects' emphasis on community engagement and responsiveness to feedback underscored their alignment with local peacebuilding plans and priorities, such as the strategic vocational training for youth in East Darfur exemplified.

However, this alignment was tested against the backdrop of a military coup and a transition in peacekeeping mandates. The expectation that Darfur was transitioning to a phase where peacebuilding could take root was challenged by the ongoing humanitarian needs and the eruption of new conflicts, which perpetuated cycles of displacement and insecurity. The notion of "filling the gap" left by UNAMID assumed a readiness for peacebuilding that may not have been fully present on the ground, as immediate needs like food security and protection from violence remained pressing. As implementing partners noted, the environment still needed peacekeeping efforts as well as addressing immediate security and humanitarian needs, more than the envisioned "peacebuilding" strategies predicated on stability and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The relevance of the PBF programme was also measured against its sensitivity to the local context, including political, social, and cultural factors that influence peacebuilding efforts. While many projects successfully adapted to changing local dynamics, they occasionally did not account for the broader security vacuum that emerged following UNAMID's withdrawal. This gap presented significant challenges in regions where the absence of a robust peacekeeping presence was acutely felt, leading to a rise in intercommunal violence and a reduction in the overall sense of safety.

The programme's strategy was predicated on a stable trajectory toward peace, which was disrupted by the coup. The recalibration required in the wake of these political upheavals was a testament to the programme's flexibility. Still, it also highlighted a disconnect between the programme's peacebuilding orientation and the immediate, more pressing humanitarian needs and lack of peacekeeping capability from government security forces. This gap was particularly evident in the responses from the KIIs, where there was an expression of concern that the programme's peacebuilding initiatives could not fully materialize in an environment still grappling with the basics of survival, questioning the relevance of the broader relevance of the peacebuilding program ToC.

As the programme endeavoured to "fill the gap" in the post-UNAMID context, its area-based interventions focused on local peacebuilding. While significant, these interventions were not insulated from national-level influences and were dependent on a conducive peacebuilding environment that never was achieved in Darfur and worsened post-UNAMID. The evolving security situation, characterized by sporadic violence and new displacements, questioned the programme's premise of an area ready for peacebuilding as envisaged.

The challenge of transitioning from peacekeeping to peacebuilding was further compounded by the reliance on government counterparts, who themselves were navigating a new political reality post-coup. This reliance called into question the programme's relevance as an able to "filling the gap" and sustaining peace in an environment where the prerequisites for peacebuilding were not fully established.

While the PBF programme in Darfur showed adaptability and alignment with local priorities, its relevance as a comprehensive solution for peacebuilding must be viewed critically. The programme's infrastructure and development activities, though crucial, needed to be part of a larger, more integrated strategy that included immediate humanitarian responses, especially in light of the continued emergence of new conflicts and displacements.

As the programme progressed, the balance between addressing immediate needs and building towards a sustainable peace proved challenging. In the following chapter, the evaluation will consider the extent to which the programme's activities, under the "area-based approach," contributed to peacebuilding outcomes.

Key Findings - Alignment with Needs, Priorities, and Context of Sudan

1. **Adjustment to Darfur's Circumstances:** The PBF projects demonstrated adaptability to Darfur's unique challenges, including the political and social upheaval. KIIs recognized the efforts to address these evolving circumstances, where social cohesion and basic livelihood needs were emphasized. There were, however, gaps in addressing the full range of local complexities and evolving needs.

2. **Alignment with Local Needs and Priorities:** KIIs indicate that the projects largely aligned with local needs, focusing on vital areas such as livelihoods and conflict resolution mechanisms. Efforts to build peace and promote peaceful coexistence were particularly valued. However, some KIIs suggested the need for more extensive engagement in areas like legal aid and health services, indicating a partial misalignment with certain local priorities.

3. **Consideration of Local Context:** The responses suggest an awareness of the local context in project design and implementation, including socio-political dynamics and the needs of vulnerable groups like women and youth. However, the effectiveness of these considerations in truly embedding the projects within the local culture and social fabric requires deeper exploration.

4. **Response to Contextual Shifts:** The program's response to major shifts like COVID-19 and the military coup was noted, yet the impact of these responses varied. While some adaptations were effective, others appeared to divert focus from core peacebuilding objectives, indicating a need for more resilient and foresighted planning.

5. **Security Vacuum Post-UNAMID:** The departure of UNAMID created a security vacuum that the programme sought to fill through locality-level interventions. However, the rise in intercommunal violence post-UNAMID posed significant challenges to the programme's effectiveness in maintaining stability and achieving peacebuilding objectives, questioning the relevance of its strategy as a post-UNAMID answer.

6. **Humanitarian Needs vs. Peacebuilding:** The programme faced challenges in balancing immediate humanitarian needs with long-term peacebuilding strategies. KIIs expressed concerns that the programme's focus on development interventions, at times, did not align with the foundational peacebuilding rationale, especially when immediate humanitarian needs, such as food security and new displacements, were still predominant in the region.

The relevance of the PBF programme in Darfur has been multifaceted, with significant strides in adapting to the local context and needs. However, the programme's ability to address broader security challenges and sustain long-term peacebuilding efforts in the face of political instability and evolving humanitarian crises has been questioned.

5.2 Effectiveness

In this chapter, we delve into the effectiveness of the programme. Effectiveness, in the context of peacebuilding, is a multifaceted concept that encompasses not only the achievement of specific objectives but also the contribution to broader peacebuilding goals and the strategic vision of the PBF. This evaluation seeks to unravel the complexities and nuances of the programme's impact, focusing on how well it has navigated the challenging landscape of peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Our assessment of the programme's effectiveness is guided by the following main evaluation question:

- *To what extent did the PBF supported programme achieve its intended objectives and contribute to the PBFs programme's strategic vision?*

It is important to acknowledge a key limitation encountered in the evaluation process especially affecting the evaluation of effectiveness: the absence of end-line data collection, a challenge faced by all projects with the notable exception of East Darfur, which underwent a comprehensive end-line data collection for the impact evaluation. Consequently, the final reports of the individual projects and this evaluation are not based on complete end-line results but rather draw from a combination of available mid-term data, anecdotal evidence, and qualitative assessments gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and field observations.

Furthermore, the internal designations of 'on track' and 'off track' used in the final reports represent self-assessments made by the project teams. While these assessments provide valuable insights into the teams' perspectives on their progress, they should be understood as subjective measures rather than objective evaluations of the projects' states of advancement.

This limitation underscores the need for cautious interpretation of the reported progress and highlights the necessity for a more robust data collection and monitoring framework, particularly for projects operating in such challenging contexts.

Analysis of Effectiveness

The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)-supported programme aimed to foster peace and stability in conflict-affected regions through various initiatives, including community engagement, capacity building, and infrastructure development. The program's effectiveness in achieving its intended objectives and aligning with the PBF's strategic vision presents a complex scenario where incremental successes are

shadowed by the need for a deeper understanding of how these efforts translate into lasting peacebuilding outcomes.

One of the primary objectives of the PBF-supported programme was to engage communities in peacebuilding activities and enhance their capacity to manage conflicts. The program successfully mobilized numerous community engagement initiatives, capacity building, and infrastructure development projects aimed at fostering peace and stability. The engagement of communities in peacebuilding activities was a notable success, exemplified by services shared across ethnic divides, promoting unity and shared purpose. However, these successes often aligned more with outputs than with outcome-level achievements. The KIIs and project evaluations suggest that while the program fostered a sense of community, the extent to which these initiatives translated into enhanced social cohesion or resilience remains less tangible and inconsistently documented.

A key informant highlighted the perceived success, stating, "We believe that the project achieved part of the desired goals, in the sense that these beneficiaries from different ethnic groups share the same services that we provided to them". This statement underscores the programme's effectiveness in fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among previously divided groups, but the direct impact on improved conflict management, an intended outcome, is less explicit. The provision of basic services, such as WASH facilities, while undeniably a positive output, does not automatically lead to improved conflict management capabilities. The program's results framework presupposed this linkage without adequately detailing the mechanisms through which shared services lead to better conflict management outcomes. It is crucial for future evaluations to dissect the causal chain that connects program activities with peacebuilding outcomes. This may involve tracking how shared service use leads to regular interactions, dialogue, and joint decision-making among different groups, thereby reinforcing social bonds and collaborative conflict resolution practices. It would be beneficial to incorporate a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework that can capture these complex social dynamics and provide more substantial evidence of outcome-level impact.

Infrastructure development aimed at supporting peace efforts showed tangible results, such as the construction of community centers. Yet, the utilization of these infrastructures was impeded by security concerns, a challenge that speaks to the program's struggle in navigating the complex and volatile context of Darfur. Key informants pointed to adaptability as a strength, with local staff recruitment and alternative service delivery methods as strategic responses to these challenges. As one respondent noted, "We hoped to equip this office with equipment such as tables and chairs, but we could not transfer them because the conflict erupted". This reflects the complex interplay between programme objectives and the volatile context – where local conflicts were prone to erupt – in which they were implemented. However, the evidence linking these adaptations to broader peacebuilding impacts requires further substantiation than what is provided in the final project evaluations.

The program's strategic vision encompassed long-term peacebuilding and conflict resolution, a vision that appeared to be partially realized through the creation of dialogue-promoting mechanisms and structures. The KIIs reflect a program responsive to immediate needs while investing in sustainable peace foundations. Still, the KIIs and internal project M&E often conflate the establishment of these mechanisms with their effectiveness, leaving a gap in understanding the program's long-term impact on peacebuilding.

Progress on specific outcome-level peacebuilding results, such as durable solutions and community-level peacebuilding, was reported variably across regions. The impact evaluation, solely focused on East Darfur localities, provided a methodological framework to causally attribute certain outcome-level results to the programme's activities. This allowed for a substantiated understanding of the programme's contributions in areas like conflict resolution among nomadic groups. However, while these findings are crucial, it's important to note that the outcomes and the ability to establish a causal relationship between the program's activities and peacebuilding results were not uniformly experienced or documented across all implementing localities. Key informants provided anecdotes of success in various areas, but a comprehensive, quantitative backing across all regions would be needed to further affirm the programme's contributions to the strategic vision of peace.

KIIs and project final reporting pointed to significant impacts at the community level, with improved trust and cooperation frequently cited. While these anecdotal accounts provide valuable insights into the program's perceived effectiveness, they necessitate further corroboration through longitudinal studies or systematic data collection to confirm sustained impacts. One such exercise was successfully achieved with an Impact Evaluation (independent from the current final evaluation) that offers valuable empirical evidence on various outcomes from the East Darfur "Triangle of Peace and Coexistence" Project.

The Impact Evaluation presents a nuanced view, particularly in the area of women's political participation. It reveals an interesting exploratory finding where a significant number of women in treatment villages reported an increase in their participation in village-level decision-making since the implementation of PBF-supported projects. Although the primary hypothesis regarding women's political participation did not yield statistically significant results after correcting for multiple hypothesis testing, this supplementary finding suggests a positive shift in women's perceptions of their role in decision-making at the village level.

The Impact Evaluation adopts a rigorous methodology, enabling the attribution of specific changes in community dynamics directly to the programme's interventions. This methodological rigor provides compelling evidence of the programme's effectiveness, particularly highlighting the causal relationship between the project implementation and significant outcomes such as the reduction in land conflicts and improved perceptions of peace committees and basic services. These findings, though solely captured in the Impact Evaluation's focus area of East Darfur, are a testament to the positive impact of the programme in fostering peace and enhancing community services in the areas studied.

While the impact evaluation's scope was focused on East Darfur due to specific methodological requirements and resource intensiveness, its success in attributing changes to the programme's interventions sets a significant precedent. It underscores the programme's capacity to lay a solid foundation for sustainable peace efforts and community resilience, as reflected in the measurable progress on individual outcome-level objectives such as durable solutions, rule of law, and community-level peacebuilding.

However, the evaluation also notes variability in the distribution of these positive outcomes, emphasizing that while advancements in certain areas represent significant achievements, they are

not uniformly experienced across all regions. This variability does not diminish the overall success of the programme but highlights the complexity of peacebuilding efforts and the diverse contexts within which these projects operate. The importance of a data-driven approach is reaffirmed, not to downplay the positive outcomes but to accurately map the distribution of these benefits and to ensure that future efforts can be targeted effectively.

The evaluation encourages a continued focus on substantiating outcome-level impacts and distinguishes between the achievement of activities or outputs, such as trainings and workshops, and the attainment of broader outcomes like enhanced resilience or social cohesion. This distinction is crucial for accurately assessing the programme's success and for guiding future peacebuilding initiatives with a data-driven and context-sensitive approach.

In light of these insights, the programme's broader impact across Darfur, while positive, warrants a continued and context-sensitive approach to evaluation. The fluid and unpredictable conflict dynamics in the region pose challenges to measurement and attribution, yet the success in East Darfur offers a valuable model for understanding and demonstrating the programme's contributions to peacebuilding efforts. Drawing on the robust findings from the impact evaluation and contextualizing them within the broader framework of the programme's activities across Darfur, the following section will delve deeper into the progress on the individual outcome-level objectives..

Effectiveness in Outcome-level Results

The programme successfully achieved several immediate results, particularly in the areas of community engagement, capacity building, and infrastructure development. These achievements are significant as they lay the groundwork for more sustainable, long-term peacebuilding efforts.

An example of these achievements is the establishment of community centers and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) facilities, which have played a vital role in bringing together previously conflicting or ethnically diverse groups. These facilities, now shared among different groups, have been instrumental in breaking down ethnic and social barriers, contributing to long-term peace and stability in the region. For instance, in the East Darfur project, specifically in Umm Khairat village, Yassin locality, the establishment of community centers and WASH facilities was reported to be successfully shared among previously conflicting ethnic groups, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. Tangible results were reported at the community level, indicated by increased interaction and tangible benefits. In the South Darfur project, the impact of WASH initiatives was reported to break down ethnic and social barriers, with different groups beginning to share water points.

The programme has notably succeeded in enhancing community resilience and raising awareness about peace and conflict dynamics. This progress is primarily attributed to the focus on training and workshops. These initiatives have effectively equipped community members with the necessary skills to manage conflicts independently and sustainably, thereby strengthening the community's overall capacity for conflict resolution. The project evaluations and KIIs indicate that the programme's focus on training and workshops has been effective, apparent in the enhanced abilities of communities to manage conflicts. This is evidenced by the reported successful resolution of numerous disputes through Community-Based Resolution Mechanisms (CBRMs), with one notable example being the successful conflict resolution in East Darfur's Alfado village.

Several respondents acknowledged the project's positive impact on the community level. One respondent cited community interaction and tangible results (as the examples above exemplify) as markers of the programme's effectiveness. Immediate results in form of infrastructure and activity implementation like trainings and workshops as well as more intermediate results like identified increased community engagement can indeed be indicators of the programme's success, especially in conflict-prone localities, where such achievements are notable. The programme's ability to foster community interaction indeed suggests that it is not just providing material benefits but also contributing to social cohesion, which is a critical factor in long-term peacebuilding.

Whether the PBF-supported projects made progress in achieving outcome-level peacebuilding results despite facing various challenges, the projects adapted effectively and contributed to reducing conflicts, building trust and reconciliation, and enhancing community resilience. Their impact extended beyond immediate results, contributing to broader peacebuilding efforts, and laying the groundwork for sustainable peace in the region. One of the critical challenges in assessing the programme's progress on outcome-level results was the difficulty in measuring and attributing changes directly to the programme's interventions. As one KII respondent pointed out, the fluid and often unpredictable nature of the conflict dynamics in Darfur made it challenging to establish clear causal links between the programme's activities and the observed outcomes. Despite the limitations, the following will assess to what extent we can say that the projects contributed to the program's outcome-level objectives of reducing conflicts, building trust and reconciliation, and enhancing community resilience.

Effectiveness in Achieving Outcome 1: Durable solutions for the return of IDPs and refugees

The programme was designed to facilitate durable solutions for the return of IDPs and refugees and to enhance agricultural productivity through sustainable land and natural resource management. To guide the initial stages of the programme and ensure a targeted approach, comprehensive assessments of the needs and challenges faced by IDPs and returnees were conducted. These assessments, known as durable solutions reports, were particularly focused on Nertiti and Gereida. The insights from these reports were instrumental in formulating targeted locality-level action plans, laying the groundwork for the programme's activities and strategies.

In Nertiti, the baseline study shed light on vital aspects such as security, access to services, and socio-economic challenges for IDPs and the host community. Key findings indicated the paramount importance of safety and security in influencing IDPs' decisions regarding their return or local integration. While there was a relatively better access to water sources and healthcare, significant gaps in education and livelihood opportunities were noted.

The Gereida report echoed similar concerns, with a focus on access to land, livelihoods, and basic services for the IDP returnees. It highlighted that, although most returnees regained access to agricultural land, overarching issues like safety, food insecurity, and limited access to critical services were still prevalent. These insights are pivotal in guiding the development of effective action plans that address the specific needs and challenges in these localities. These plans, prepared inclusively and with a focus on locality-level land and natural resource management, were critical in ensuring that the strategies were tailored to address the specific needs and dynamics of each locality. While

acknowledging the challenges posed by political instability, notably due to the military coup, the programme's efforts in drafting and implementing locality action plans underscore its commitment to creating sustainable and long-term solutions. The success of these initiatives, as noted by the participants in the Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), was marked by the community's acceptance and appreciation of the changes, especially the shift to digital tools for land mapping and registration, which had a direct impact on peacebuilding efforts and land management efficiency.

Following the successful assessments, the projects aimed at facilitating durable solutions for IDPs and refugees encompassed a series of initiatives focusing on sustainable land and natural resource management. This included crucial activities like land registration and GIS training to resolve land disputes and improve agricultural productivity, vital for the resettlement of IDPs. The development of key infrastructure like schools, health centers, and water sources was also integral, aimed at improving living conditions and access to essential services. These efforts were bolstered by a strong emphasis on community engagement and capacity building, ensuring the local relevance and sustainability of solutions.

However, translating these immediate outputs into long-term, durable solutions presented significant challenges. Reports and Key Informant Interviews indicated difficulties in conclusively showing that the program led to a point where IDPs no longer required displacement-linked assistance and could enjoy their rights without discrimination.

The programme's collaboration with UNHABITAT and the North Darfur Ministry of Infrastructure (MoInfra) was a notable example of activities aimed at planning for durable solutions, with a focus on inclusive and participatory approaches that ensured the locality action plans were well-informed and grounded in the realities of the communities they aimed to serve. Despite the challenges posed by political instability, notably due to the military coup, this partnership focused on sketch mapping and training ministry staff in GIS and land mapping, aimed at contributing to outcome 1 and the peaceful resolution of land disputes and improved land management.

The success of these initiatives, as noted in the FGD, was marked by the community's welcome of the changes, particularly the shift to digital tools for land mapping and registration. This transformation facilitated more effective land management, directly impacting peacebuilding efforts. The FGD participants expressed satisfaction with the capacity building provided by UNHABITAT, noting how it enhanced their understanding of land planning and community involvement.

The workshop and subsequent activities played a crucial role in planning for durable solutions. Participants, including government officials and NGO teams, received hands-on training in various aspects of land management and mapping. This training was instrumental in creating detailed digital maps of villages, thereby facilitating better planning for the return and resettlement of IDPs and refugees.

Key achievements included the development of digital maps, the establishment of offices for land registration, and the rehabilitation of an urban planning office in Tawilla. The provision of equipment and tools further strengthened the ministry's capabilities. The FGD participants also noted the desire to extend these initiatives to more villages, highlighting the need for continued support in areas affected by displacement and conflict.

Key outputs of this collaboration that helped progress towards outcome 1 included the capacity building and development of sketch maps as a start to Locality Action Planning. The sketch mapping workshop conducted by UNHABITAT on 24th October 2020 in El Fasher, North Darfur, was pivotal. It brought together participants from the five states of Darfur, focusing on participatory mapping approaches, demarcation using Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) - a concept used in land mapping and land tenure systems designed to represent and manage information about people's rights to land and property, particularly in informal settlements or areas where traditional land ownership systems may not be well-documented or recognized, - and the use of mobile/geographic data collection tools. This initiative directly supported the development of land registration processes in four target villages, a Locality Action Plan for Marar village, and enhancing the state government's ability to address land issues effectively. The sketch mapping workshop in El Fasher, North Darfur, was instrumental in enhancing government capacities at the locality level, leading to the creation of these plans and land registration systems, which are essential for resolving land disputes and planning for the return of IDPs and refugees.

The project's focus on inclusive and participatory approaches was evident in the preparation of locality-level land and natural resource sketch mapping and registration. The use of tools like KOBO for data collection and the involvement of local communities in sketch mapping exercises ensured that the activities were grounded in local realities and needs. This approach ensured that solutions were sustainable and tailored to the specific needs of the communities and contributed good efforts towards output 1.3 focusing on locality-level land and natural resource management plans prepared on an inclusive and participatory basis.

Furthermore, the transition from traditional methods to digital tools in land mapping and registration marked a substantial improvement in land management practices. This shift facilitated better planning and implementation of land and natural resource management plans and registration, contributing to a more stable environment for agricultural activities and job creation. FGD participants noted how the project's focus on resolving land disputes and improving land management practices had a direct impact on agricultural productivity and livelihoods. By ensuring secure land rights and effective land use planning, the project contributes to creating a stable environment conducive to agricultural activities and job creation.

The collaboration between UNHABITAT and the North Darfur Ministry of Infrastructure is a noteworthy example facilitating durable solutions, yet it faced challenges in long-term sustainability and hence also long-term outcomes. Participants in the FGD acknowledged the difficulties in maintaining progress due to limited resources, exacerbated by political instability. They voiced concerns about the inability to fully equip the urban planning office established in Tawila without further support, indicating a need for continued investment and assistance, that the local government did not have access to from state resources. FGD participants highlight how the UN PBF supported project has effectively established the groundwork in form of capacity-building of staff and introducing local communities to the tools of sketch mapping and land registration.

Moreover, FGD participants highlighted the complexity of achieving long-term peace, noting that while the projects have made significant strides, peacebuilding is a gradual process requiring sustained effort. They remarked, "To some extent, the projects have succeeded. But peace takes a lot of steps.

The objective of Peace takes more effort. This is an important first step and example of how to begin." The participant points out how the projects that have begun to show progress also have the potential to serve as model initiatives, exactly as the PBF envisioned, thereby generating wider positive impacts in the realm of peacebuilding. For example, only one village (Marar) was chosen to move from sketchmapping to actual action planning and further implementation of activities under the UN-HABITATs component, also risking other villages feeling left behind if not included in for example the UNHCR locality action planning process. This underscores the need for organizations and local state institutions to enhance coordination and identify the means for a continued and multi-faceted approach to peacebuilding in the region, emphasizing that the initiatives undertaken so far represent just the beginning of a longer journey towards sustainable peace and stability.

Additionally, with the inspiration of UN PBF activities and support from other donors, the UN-HABITAT in collaboration with MoInfa, have prepared the comprehensive Salam Plan, aiming at developing new towns for IDPs that can't "return". However, while the groundwork and human capacity has now been established, there is a lot of way to succeed with this including securing more national-level engagement and resources that can provide not only financing but also security for potential IDP accepting relocation. The FGD participants acknowledge, that the reality still is, that IDPs choose to stay in the camps because this is the only place where basic social services still exists as well as some form of security, indicating that the long-term outcome of "durable solutions", is still far from succeeding and necessitate much more integrated and comprehensive solutions, including stronger national government support providing resources and actual security before any durable solutions for the return of IDPs can take effect.

These critical insights on the need for an integrated approach brings attention to some of the other activities under the UN PBF programme part of the Durable Solutions activities including the provision of basic services (ex. WASH, education). As mentioned above, a critical factor for establishing durable solutions include providing basic social services and security in selected return villages.

Community support projects, such as the construction and rehabilitation of health centres, schools, police posts, and water sources, have been successfully completed in various villages across East Darfur. These infrastructure projects, undertaken by UNHCR, not only provide essential services to the communities but also contribute to creating a conducive environment for the return and resettlement of IDPs and refugees.

The programme's efforts in providing basic services have been integral to achieving durable solutions for IDPs and refugees. Successful implementation of WASH projects and educational initiatives in targeted villages has been a key factor in creating a conducive environment for return and resettlement. These services are essential for improving living conditions, ensuring health and safety, and promoting stability in the region.

Activities in the West Darfur project present examples of activities focused on creating durable solutions for the return of IDPs and refugees, emphasizing the provision of basic services as a key component of this strategy. Activities included:

- The project rehabilitated five schools (Mastriha, Goaz, Mino, Manjura, Seleah), significantly improving access to education for 2443 children (1232 girls, 1232 boys) from host, IDP, and nomadic communities.

- Capacity building of Parent-Teacher Associations on school management, education in emergencies, conflict resolution, and peace messaging enhanced the quality of education and the overall school environment.

- Four new water sources were constructed, and 13 others rehabilitated in Jebel Moon, serving 12500 people (4845 women, 4655 men, 1530 girls, 1470 boys), and improving access to water for all, especially women and school-going children, with reduced queuing time at water sources. Quality of water improved, leading to a reduction in water-related diseases.

- A community-led sanitation program benefitted 15000 people, forming 13 WASH committees with 195 members. These committees were trained in operation, maintenance of services, inclusive water management, and conflict resolution.

In North Darfur, the programme focused on building government capacities for land issue resolution. The target of enhancing 60% of land institutions' capacities was met according to the result framework reporting, with notable progress in arbitration, registration, and sketch mapping. Community engagement in land management was emphasized, but detailed socio-economic outcomes was not reporting due to missing end-line data.

The end-of-project report for West Darfur assess the provision of basic services as having been effective in creating a conducive environment for the return and resettlement of IDPs and refugees. The report presents how the focus on education and WASH services directly improved the living conditions of the communities, contributing to health, safety, and stability in the region. Such efforts are crucial in addressing the socio-economic needs of the returning populations and laying the groundwork for sustainable peace and development.

In the reporting on the result framework for West Darfur, key indicators demonstrated varying levels of success. For instance, the percentage of land institutions with improved arbitration, registration, and sketch mapping capacities reached the target of 60%. Remarkably, 100% of the land conflict cases received by CBRMs were resolved according to the reporting. However, data on socio-economic conditions and community support for displaced persons was not successfully reported. Challenges such as conflict and COVID-19 affected progress and reporting, particularly in the domains of civil documentation and land conflict resolution.

The success of these initiatives in West Darfur reflects a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and development, where basic services provision plays a pivotal role in facilitating durable solutions for IDPs and refugees. The involvement of local communities in these projects, particularly through capacity building and participatory planning, has been instrumental in ensuring the relevance and sustainability of the interventions.

For Central Darfur, significant strides were made in land dispute resolution, with an impressive 89% of land-related cases successfully resolved according to the result framework reporting. This success

is attributed to the establishment and effective functioning of land steering and arbitration committees. The results reflect a strong focus on resolving land disputes and enhancing local capacities for land management. However, as with West Darfur, comprehensive data covering all socio-economic aspects was not successfully reported.

Additionally, the programme's interventions in East Darfur have been noteworthy. The provision of land registration documents to community members in localities like Assalaya, Sheria, and Yassin, with an equal distribution among male and female beneficiaries, has been a significant step towards ensuring land ownership and security. This intervention, led by UNHCR and UNDP, is ongoing and crucial for establishing legal land ownership, which is a fundamental aspect of community stability and development.

East Darfur's report highlights significant community involvement in land management. Land institutions saw a 100% improvement in arbitration committee capacities according to the result framework. The programme made considerable strides in resolving land conflicts, with 74% of land cases resolved successfully. Inclusive stakeholder consultations were a key achievement, contributing to the drafting of land legislation.

Inclusive stakeholder consultations on land reforms, led by UNDP in various localities and at the state level in East Darfur, have been instrumental in drafting land legislation. These consultations, involving a significant number of male and female participants, have been pivotal in ensuring that land reforms are inclusive and consider the needs and perspectives of diverse community members.

The programme has also made significant strides in civil documentation, with UNHCR's efforts leading to the issuance of a substantial number of birth certificates, marriage certificates, and national identity cards. This documentation is crucial for establishing legal identity and accessing rights and services, further supporting the return and integration of IDPs and refugees.

Community support projects, such as the construction and rehabilitation of health centres, schools, police posts, and water sources, have been successfully completed in various villages across East Darfur. These infrastructure projects, undertaken by UNHCR, not only provide essential services to the communities but also contribute to creating a conducive environment for the return and resettlement of IDPs and refugees.

However, the effectiveness of these services and their long-term impact on the communities, especially in the context of political instability and limited resources, remains a critical area. This includes evaluating the extent to which these services meet the needs of returning IDPs and refugees and contribute to the overall goal of creating durable solutions in the region.

The provision of social services played a crucial role in fostering peace and reducing conflicts, as for example divergences arising over water resources. Key Informant Interviews with implementing organizations indicated that the establishment of sufficient water sources substantially mitigated frictions within communities. However, despite these positive outputs, the long-term impact of such activities on achieving durable solutions for IDPs and refugees remains challenging to gauge.

One respondent provided a specific example of the programme's effectiveness by discussing the impact of WASH projects. According to the respondent, different groups are now sharing water points, and children from different ethnic groups are benefitting from the newly constructed schools. This is a significant achievement suggesting that the programme was succeeding in breaking down ethnic and social barriers, thereby contributing to long-term peace and stability in the region.

A significant limitation noted in the end-of-project reports and from KIIs was the lack of consistent follow-up and monitoring. This gap hinders the ability to assess the ongoing effectiveness of the WASH projects and their contribution to the broader goal of community stability and reintegration of IDPs and refugees. Moreover, while reports and most KIIs doesn't cite explicit examples of the compromise of WASH and security projects' effectiveness due to political instability and security concerns many emphasized the general challenge of political and security dynamics on the implementation and effectiveness of these projects. Some KIIs however do mention that they had little trust in the sustainability of implemented projects due to insecurity, underscoring the importance of establishing stable and secure environments as a prerequisite for implementing and sustaining WASH activities.

In many cases, security concerns were the stated reason for the lack of follow-up monitoring. This issue was notably evident during the initial field mission of the final evaluation, which, even before the outbreak of war in April, faced challenges in planning monitoring visits to several locations due to security constraints. This situation presents a telling indicator: if monitoring and evaluation activities face hurdles due to security concerns, it raises significant questions about the feasibility of expecting IDPs to return to these same locations.

This reality points to a broader concern regarding the overall TOC and the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in the region. In many instances, the approach might have been overly optimistic for a region still grappling with unresolved conflict and violence. The assumption that certain areas were ready to transition to peacebuilding and development activities, without fully addressing the underlying security issues, may have overlooked the complexities of the local context while the area-specific approach might still offer the best option for the optimistic outcome expectations.

Moreover, the final reports echoed similar sentiments. They provided an overview of the projects' successes in various sectors but also indicated the difficulties in maintaining these initiatives and gauging their lasting impact. This is particularly evident in areas experiencing political instability and resource limitations, where sustaining the positive outcomes of the projects becomes even more challenging.

Effectiveness in Achieving Outcome 2: Rule of Law and Good Governance

The progress toward achieving Outcome 2, aimed at instituting good governance and strengthening the rule of law at the community level, thereby increasing public confidence in legal systems, was rated as off track in the projects self-assessed final reporting in North and Central Darfur. This outcome was crucial for the program objectives of ensuring freedom of movement, physical security for all citizens, and accessible quality services that all stakeholders feel part of. Despite being rated "off track" by two projects, there have been notable efforts and developments, including:

- **Strengthening the Rule of Law:** The capacity of 634 Sudanese Police Force (SPF) staff, presuctors and judges, including 61 women, was built across various localities in the five states. The training for SPF focused on patrols, intelligence policing, early warning and response, and public order management.

- **Infrastructure Developments:** Several police post was built and some later upgraded to a Police Stations in multiple localities in different states. As an example, in Gildo village, Nertiti Locality, a First Lieutenant Officer was also appointed and a 4X4 vehicle was allocated to the police station/post. This has reportedly acted as a deterrent and helped reduce community conflicts.

- **Community Policing:** In addition to the police training initiatives, specific instances of community policing were reported as key components of the program. In Nertiti Locality, community policing efforts were highlighted by the training of 45 community police volunteers, including 15 women. These volunteers were trained in Gorni, Baldong, and Guildo Tur villages, playing a crucial role in promoting respect for the rule of law and strengthening the bridge between the community and formal police forces. Similarly, in Umdhukun Locality, another group of 45 community police volunteers, including 26 women, received training in collaboration with UNITAMS Police Advisory Unit. This training, which took place in Um Dukhun covering Abjaraldil, Motor, and Al rawayan villages, emphasized the importance of community involvement in policing efforts and reinforced the commitment to maintaining peace and order. These specific instances of community policing training represent targeted efforts to enhance community engagement and support the overarching objectives of the program in establishing a robust foundation for the rule of law and community-driven peace initiatives.

- **Prisons and Reformatory Administration Support:** Significant infrastructure support was provided, including the refurbishment and furnishing of a high offender dormitory and a visiting bay in Nertiti and Um Dukhun.

- **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:** Despite cultural challenges, 6% of women officers were trained to help women in the community feel more comfortable reporting sensitive cases. Additionally, 26 female youth volunteers were recruited to improve women and youth linkage to police services and encourage reporting of cases.

In assessing the effectiveness of achieving Outcome 2 across Central, North, South, East and West Darfur regions, the projects aimed at instituting good governance and the rule of law encountered significant challenges. The projects own final reporting summarises that while there were improvements in the capacity building of police forces, establishment of rule of law infrastructure, and inclusion of women and youth in policing activities, the overall progress toward good governance and public confidence in rule of law remained challenging and in two states "off track". For example, the End of Project Report from Central Darfur indicates that activities under Outcome 2 had little success due to challenges such as limited effectiveness of police training and infrastructure, insufficient resources, and a disconnect between specialized police units and regular forces. These issues impacted the program's capacity to effectively strengthen community resilience and social cohesion as intended.

Similarly, the End of Project Report from North Darfur mentions a range of factors for the lack of effectiveness including ongoing conflicts and a focus on immediate peacekeeping over sustainable law enforcement development which affected the project's ability to fully institute good governance and build confidence in the rule of law at the community level.

Despite efforts in capacity building and infrastructure development, the overall progress was constrained by various factors, including political instability and insufficient end-line data collection due to security issues.

In Central Darfur, progress was made in enhancing security and justice institutions, with the establishment of a police post in Gildo village and significant police personnel training. However, the lack of comprehensive data on community members' perceptions and satisfaction levels with rule of law mechanisms and access to quality basic services indicates a gap in understanding the full impact of the initiatives.

Similarly, in North Darfur, the successful construction of a police post in Tawilla and training of 35 police officers demonstrate efforts to enhance local stability. However, ongoing conflicts limited the extent of these initiatives.

In West Darfur, incomplete data highlights the need for further assessment, especially regarding community perceptions of safety and satisfaction with rule of law mechanisms. Although 105 police personnel received training, and a district court was established in Silea village, the overall effectiveness in achieving good governance and public confidence in the rule of law remains unclear due to the absence of comprehensive end-line data.

South Darfur's end-line data is also pending, with no final data available to assess the impact on community perceptions and satisfaction with rule of law and basic services.

Overall, while there are indications of progress in certain areas, such as police training and the establishment of law enforcement infrastructure, the effectiveness of these efforts towards achieving sustainable good governance and rule of law is limited by external challenges and the lack of comprehensive data. This situation highlights the need for continued focus and support in these regions to overcome the challenges and achieve the desired outcomes.

The durability of solutions is compromised in environments where political turmoil and tribal clashes are the norms, not the exceptions. The creation of stable and secure localities is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of social services, yet this remains a challenging prospect in regions where volatility is a constant disrupter. KIIs and project reports underscore this challenge, acknowledging that the majority of these activities were conducted during the latter stages of the program, including the no-cost extension period, missing the broader alignment with other activities, particularly those aimed at providing durable solutions, which could potentially have led to more substantial and measurable impacts. The late implementation and security concerns also constrained the ability to monitor, evaluate, and follow up effectively.

These external factors undermined the initiatives' long-term success in contributing to durable solutions. The need for stable and secure localities prior to the implementation of social services was

frequently emphasized in the interviews. In volatile environments, even well-planned security measures struggled to maintain peace and security effectively, impacting their ability to contribute meaningfully to the intended outcomes of the programme.

KIIs also reveal that the UNDP's initiative to construct police outposts, faced issues in follow-up and resource allocation. Despite being a collaborative effort with local communities, there has been a lack of continuous monitoring and support, leading to underutilization of these facilities. KIIs mention factors contributing to this underutilization including limited local and sustainable resources for policing, which resulted in a gap between the initial implementation of the programme and its sustainable operationalization. KIIs with IPs and UN staff also indicate that in some cases, police posts have remained unused due to reduced local and government resources for policing, highlighting a disconnect between the programme's implementation and its sustainable operation depending on local government support.

The establishment of female and child protection units in Tawila, as highlighted by KIIs with law enforcement and legal aid personnel, provides a nuanced example of the effectiveness of the UNDP's initiatives in the area of police training and community protection.

These units, developed in collaboration with UNICEF and UNDP, have made significant strides in addressing sensitive legal and social issues. They have undergone comprehensive training that encompasses legal matters, child protection, and gender-based violence. This training was not just about imparting knowledge; it was thought as a transformative process that would equip the units to deal effectively with severe crimes such as rape, domestic violence, and drug-related offenses.

An important aspect of their work, as discussed in the interviews, is the nature of the crimes they handle. According to key informants, there has been a noticeable increase in severe crimes such as rape, domestic violence, and drug-related offenses. This trend reflects the underlying social and economic challenges in these regions. The rise in rape cases and incidents of domestic violence further underscores the critical need for such specialized units. Additionally, the units face the daunting task of dealing with issues like drug smuggling and the possession of dangerous weapons by minors, reflecting the complex social challenges in the region.

The role of PBF-supported projects in this context is noteworthy. The trainings provided were described by KIs as comprehensive, covering vital areas like investigation techniques, psychosocial support, and handling sensitive cases involving children and sexual violence. This approach exemplifies a commitment to enhancing local law enforcement's capacity to address complex social issues, thereby contributing significantly to the broader objectives of peacebuilding and community stability.

Moreover, the emphasis on community involvement and gender-balanced participation in these initiatives illustrates a holistic approach to law enforcement. It's not just about enforcing the law; it's about understanding and being sensitive to the community's needs and dynamics, a crucial factor in ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of such programs.

Despite the robust training, the units faced limitations, particularly in financial capacity, which hampered their ability to conduct consistent awareness sessions and provide necessary support. This gap indicates a requirement for sustained resources and support beyond initial training phases,

emphasizing the need for long-term investment in such initiatives for lasting impact, and point to the lack of local government capacity to continue initial UN efforts in the area.

KIIs also highlight a disconnect between specialized police units and the regular police force as a significant challenge that affects the sustainability of these programs. This disconnect is also evident in the regular police force's expectation of continued UN support, which has inadvertently led to a shortfall in resource commitment from local government authorities according to KIs. Such a gap has manifested in logistical challenges, notably in inadequate transportation for officers to respond to reported cases, a crucial component in ensuring effective law enforcement and community protection.

Addressing the issue of sustainability, it's essential to explore whether there were efforts made to secure government commitments for continued funding, as indefinite reliance on UN resources is not a viable long-term solution. From the KIIs there are indications of such efforts, though they appear to be in nascent stages.

For instance, discussions with local law enforcement officials provided insights into the current state of resource allocation and the challenges therein. These KIIs highlight the need for increased government involvement and commitment to ensure the longevity and effectiveness of these initiatives. The KIIs suggest that while there is recognition of this need among stakeholders, concrete steps toward securing government funding and support are still lacking development.

The situation calls for a strategic approach where UN agencies, in collaboration with local government authorities, work more targeted towards a gradual transition of responsibility and resource allocation. This transition should aim at building the capacity of not just local police forces, but also local governments capacity to take over the funding and management of both local outposts and the specialized units. The fostering of a sense of ownership and responsibility within the local government structures, ensuring they view these units as integral to their law enforcement and peacebuilding efforts rather than as external, UN-dependent entities, seems to have failed based on KIIs.

Hence, there's a need for advocacy and awareness-raising among government officials about the importance and long-term benefits of investing in RoL, like outposts and specialized units. Demonstrating the positive impact of these units on community safety and stability can be a compelling argument for securing local and national government commitment and funding.

While the training provided to police units has improved their handling of specialized cases, the lack of necessary tools and resources has restricted the training's effectiveness at the community level. KIIs have observed crime rates increasing during the program, underscoring the need for additional support and resources to translate training into tangible community benefits.

In conclusion, the progress toward achieving Outcome 2, which focused on instituting good governance and strengthening the rule of law at the community level, encountered significant challenges despite notable efforts and developments. While there were improvements in police force capacity building, infrastructure development, and inclusion of women and youth in policing activities, the overall movement toward good governance and public confidence in the rule of law remained constrained.

KIIs and project reports revealed that the effectiveness of security measures like police posts and specialized training was often limited by the broader context of political instability and ongoing local conflicts. This instability not only hindered the durability of solutions but also underscored the critical need for stable and secure localities before the implementation of social services. The KIIs specifically pointed out issues in the follow-up and resource allocation for UNDP's police outposts initiative, highlighting a disconnect between program implementation and sustainable operation. This gap, coupled with logistical challenges and insufficient local government resources, compromised the initiatives' long-term success in contributing to durable solutions.

Furthermore, the establishment of specialized female and child protection units, despite being a significant step towards addressing sensitive legal and social issues, faced limitations in financial capacity and local government support, hampering their operational effectiveness. This situation emphasized the need for long-term investment and sustained resources for such initiatives. The KIIs also highlighted a disconnect between specialized police units and the regular police force, affecting the sustainability of these programs and underscoring the necessity for increased government involvement and commitment.

Overall, the experiences and insights gathered from KIIs indicate that while there is recognition among stakeholders of the need for government involvement in sustaining these initiatives, concrete steps toward securing government funding and support are still lacking. This gap necessitates a strategic approach where UN agencies collaborate with local government authorities to build local capacity for a gradual transition of responsibility and resource allocation. Advocacy and awareness-raising among government officials about the importance and long-term benefits of investing in rule of law initiatives, like police outposts and specialized units, are crucial.

In essence, the achievements under Outcome 2 highlight the potential effectiveness of targeted interventions in conflict-affected regions. However, ensuring their sustainability through continuous support and resource allocation remains a critical challenge. Addressing this challenge is essential for the long-term success of peacebuilding and law enforcement initiatives, which are pivotal in promoting community stability and good governance in the region.

Effectiveness in Achieving Outcome 3: Nurturing a Culture of Peace and Rights in Darfur

The programme aimed at nurturing a culture of peace and rights in Darfur has demonstrated substantial effectiveness in achieving its objectives, aligning closely with the strategic vision of the PBF. This success is evident in its multifaceted approach, which includes the establishment of community-based reconciliation and protection mechanisms (including CBRMs, CRCs, and CBPNs), the empowerment of women and youth in peacebuilding, and the enhancement of civil society's capacity in human rights advocacy. Key results summarizing the effectiveness in achieving Outcome 3 across different projects, as reported in the result framework included:

- **Community-Based Reconciliation Mechanisms (CBRMs)**: 42 CBRMs were (re)established in localities across the five states. Examples include 4 CBRMs reactivated in North Darfur, reporting to have resolved 13 received cases and 12 CBRMs established in West Darfur handling various intercommunal conflicts.

- **Empowerment Initiatives:** Training in women's rights reached more than 1800 women beneficiaries across the five projects. In addition, women were also actively engaged in the activities like CBRMs, for example in Central Darfur were the 10 CBRMs included 35% women.

- **Civil Society Engagement:** All five projects organized a peace conference with more than 1500 participants attending across Darfur. In addition, the West Darfur project reported 1,350 community members participated in peace initiatives in the form of conflict prevention dialogues, with significant female and youth involvement. All-in-all the five states engaged more than 5000 beneficiaries in meetings or events initiatives like dialogues and conferences.

In North Darfur, the program's effectiveness in nurturing a culture of peace and rights is notable. Key achievements according to the result framework include the reactivation of four CBRMs with 98 community members, including women and youth, resolving all 13 conflict cases they received. Community dialogues and a peacebuilding conference significantly contributed to reducing inter-tribal conflicts in Tawilla, involving various tribes and achieving reduced clashes.

In West Darfur, the progress was marked by the establishment of 12 CBRMs and 6 CBPNs, with a unique focus on including nomads, addressing farmer-nomad disputes. The CBPNs effectively handled numerous protection cases, demonstrating their utility in community needs. The CBCPNs and child- and youth-friendly spaces underscored a commitment to child protection and youth engagement.

Central Darfur's efforts in reactivating 10 CBRMs and resolving 88% of 132 cases were notable, but overall progress towards Outcome 3 was rated "off track" in their self-assessment for the final reporting. This indicates functional individual mechanisms but overarching challenges hindering broader outcome achievements. The success of community dialogues and peacebuilding conferences in reducing inter-tribal conflicts is significant, yet these efforts seem insufficient for a larger-scale impact.

In East Darfur, the program strengthened 11 CBRMs with 220 members, resolving most of the 52 cases received. However, the "off track" rating in their self-assessment for the final reporting, suggests challenges in broader impact and sustainability. Localized successes in conflict resolution were evident, but translating these into wider peace and stability remained a challenge.

According to the projects End-of Project Reporting, the resolution mechanisms across Darfur played a significant role in conflict resolution and promoting a culture of peace and rights in Darfur. The reports highlight the inclusion of diverse groups like youth, women, nomads, farmers and diverse tribes in these mechanisms and detail specific achievements in conflict resolution and community engagement in peacebuilding activities. KIIs provided further insights into these successes, with examples demonstrating the tangible impact of these mechanisms. For instance, a KII respondent recounted a resolved conflict between a shepherd and a farmer in North Darfur, exemplifying the practical application and effectiveness of the CBRMs in de-escalating potential conflicts.

In North Darfur, 9 mechanisms were reported (re)established including four CBRMs, reactivated and established with the collaboration of El Fasher University Center for Peace, involving the participation of 98 community members, including 19 women and 26 youths. These CBRMs successfully resolved all 13 cases they received, achieving a 100% conflict resolution rate. The addressed conflicts

predominantly pertained to land disputes, water resources, robberies, and disagreements between the native administration and IDP camp community leaders.

Community dialogues, inclusive of various tribes, significantly contributed to the functionality of the CBRMs according to the North Darfur report. These dialogues, involving 45 community members, including 15 women and 12 youths, improved tolerance among warring tribes and shaped new approaches to resolving inter-tribal conflicts in Tawilla. A peacebuilding conference, led by the Peace and Development Centre, further exemplified this success, with 203 community members (including 200 men, 3 women, and 50 youths) participating, helping to reduce the frequency of clashes, according to the report.

West Darfur, while not rated as completed was seen as "on track" with the establishment of 12 CBRMs and 6 CBPNs. The inclusion of nomads in CBRMs is noteworthy, addressing farmer-nomad disputes and socio-economic marginalization. The CBPNs' focus on general protection issues and successful referral of numerous cases demonstrates their effectiveness in addressing community needs. The establishment of Community-based Child Protection Networks (CBCPN) and child- and youth-friendly spaces further highlights the program's commitment to child protection and youth engagement.

Similarly, in South Darfur, the CBPNs (focusing on protection) dealt with 983 cases, and CBRMs/CRCs (focusing on conflict resolution) handled 14 reported cases, out of which they resolved 11 conflicts and referred three to the land steering committee, all-in-all increasing community satisfaction with conflict resolution outcomes, highlighted in the end-of-project report from South Darfur. The KIIs further reinforced these findings, with respondents acknowledging the significant role these mechanisms played in reducing conflict incidents and enhancing community resilience, particularly in regions where dialogue and reconciliation were facilitated between conflicting parties.

In Central Darfur, despite reactivating 10 CBRMs involving 100 members and resolving 88% of the 132 cases received, the overall progress towards Outcome 3 was rated "off track" in the end-of-project report. This suggests that while individual mechanisms were functioning and contributing to peacebuilding, there were overarching challenges or deficiencies that hindered the achievements and effectiveness of activities towards the broader outcome. The involvement of 35 women and inclusivity of young women and men in these CBRMs is a positive aspect, reflecting the program's commitment to gender inclusivity and youth participation. The success of community dialogues and peacebuilding conferences in Nertiti locality, leading to signed resolutions and reduced inter-tribal conflicts, is a significant achievement. However, the overall rating indicates that these efforts were not sufficient to fully realize the intended outcome at a larger scale.

In East Darfur, where Outcome 3 was also rated "off track," the program strengthened 11 CBRMs with 220 members, resolving a majority of the 52 cases received. The challenges seemed to lie in the broader impact and sustainability of these efforts. Community dialogues engaging diverse groups and a peacebuilding conference addressing inter-tribal conflicts show the program's efforts to foster inclusive dialogue and peace. However, the off-track rating indicates that more needs to be done to achieve the desired outcome of a sustained culture of peace and rights.

The independent Impact Evaluation conducted in East Darfur delivered promising results, particularly highlighting the effectiveness of initiatives such as land conflict resolution. The evaluation found a

notable decrease in land conflicts and improvements in the community's perception of peace committees and the provision of basic services, achievements that can be causally linked to the program's activities.

While these positive outcomes mark significant progress, the evaluation also observed that these localized successes have yet to translate into a broader, region-wide culture of peace and stability. Although specific aspects of conflict and community needs were effectively addressed, the overarching sense of personal safety and the perceived likelihood of future conflicts did not show significant improvement. The independent Impact Evaluation also stands out as a focused area where data collection was feasible, in contrast to other localities where various security-related obstacles impeded similar data gathering efforts. The targeted nature of the Impact Evaluation means that while it captured significant localized progress, extending these findings to a wider context remains challenging due to the lack of comprehensive data from other areas affected by insecurity.

A critical aspect of these mechanisms' success has been their inclusivity, particularly in terms of youth and women participation. The end-of-project reports and program mapping of mechanisms indicate a significant representation of these groups in the CBRMs, CRCs, and CBPNs, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among them towards peacebuilding efforts. KII respondents echoed this sentiment, noting the empowerment of women through these initiatives, especially in terms of training on women's rights and the establishment of microfinance groups, which sensitized community members on gender issues and promoted active participation of women in public affairs and peacebuilding. Despite these successes, the KIIs also highlighted challenges, such as the need for greater representation of women and youth in decision-making roles within these mechanisms, and the importance of continuous engagement and adaptation to ensure the long-term sustainability of peacebuilding efforts.

Moreover, the creation of a network of CBRMs across localities has marked a significant advancement in conflict resolution, facilitating inter-locality communication and coordination. In, West Darfur, In West Darfur, an example of such network linked 12 CBRMs across various villages, including 43 members (comprising 14 women and 5 youth). KIIs with implementing partners, describe the success of these networks as not only connecting the CBRMs but also aligning them with local police forces, in order to address intercommunal conflict in areas such as the Jebel Moon effectively.

Additionally, a workshop focusing on coordination and information sharing was held in Seleah, involving CBRM members. This event saw the participation of 17 individuals, including 5 women and 7 youth. During this workshop, participants were equipped with laptops and tablets, indicating an emphasis on improving communication and technological capabilities within the network.

The program's investment in CBRM networks highlights its strategic aim for a holistic peacebuilding approach, connecting grassroots initiatives with broader governance and peace strategies. Efforts were made to forge linkages between CBRMs, government police, community policing systems, and state-level peace entities to reinforce this integrated model of peacebuilding. However, the actualization of these linkages encountered various challenges, particularly in coordination with state-level entities. While the intention was to create a seamless interface between local and state mechanisms, practical difficulties often hampered these efforts. These challenges, including

bureaucratic hurdles, political changes, and logistical constraints, will be discussed in greater depth in the chapter on coordination.

The program's establishment of community-based protection networks (CBPNs) and support for protection referral mechanisms in target localities was also a critical element in achieving Outcome 3: Nurturing a Culture of Peace and Rights and linking this to outcome 1 focusing on durable solutions for IDPs.

The CBPNs, designed to enhance the protection of vulnerable communities, particularly IDPs and returnees, played a significant role in identifying and supporting these groups. They ensured that individuals at risk were linked to essential services like legal aid, healthcare, and psychosocial support. This targeted approach was crucial in addressing the immediate needs of the most vulnerable and contributing to a broader sense of security and stability in the community.

Training and capacity building formed the backbone of the CBPNs' effectiveness. Members received comprehensive training on human rights, protection risks, and referral procedures. These trainings equipped them with the necessary skills to respond effectively to the challenges faced by their communities. KIIs revealed that this training was not only practical but also helped in raising the overall awareness about rights and protection within the community.

The CBPNs also engaged in awareness-raising activities, emphasizing the importance of protecting the rights of vulnerable populations. These activities helped in sensitizing the broader community about the challenges faced by IDPs and returnees, fostering a more inclusive and empathetic community environment. Respondents in the KIIs highlighted how these activities contributed to reducing stigmatization and discrimination against vulnerable groups.

Another critical aspect of the CBPNs was their role in monitoring and reporting. They kept a close eye on the situation of vulnerable groups, reporting any rights violations or protection concerns to relevant authorities. This proactive approach in monitoring and reporting was essential in ensuring timely interventions and support for those in need.

The CBPNs' close collaboration with service providers and local authorities was instrumental in facilitating access to essential services. This collaboration ensured that vulnerable individuals were not only identified but also received the support they needed. KIIs pointed out how this collaboration helped in bridging gaps between the community needs and the services provided by various organizations and government entities.

In terms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the CBPNs played a vital role in promoting dialogue and understanding among different community groups. By engaging in local conflict resolution initiatives, they contributed to reducing tensions and fostering a culture of peace. This aspect of their work was particularly emphasized in the KIIs, where respondents noted the positive impact of these efforts on community cohesion.

However, the effectiveness of these networks was not without challenges. Security concerns and logistical difficulties in conflict-affected areas sometimes impeded their operations. The adaptability

of the program in addressing these challenges was critical in maintaining the effectiveness of the CBPNs.

The establishment of community reconciliation committees (CRCs), with representation from women and youth, has been another significant achievement. These committees, established in villages like Al Fado, Jakhara, Maali, and Shanabla, have been provided with trainings and technical support by UNHCR to carry out intercommunal dialogue, mediation, and dispute resolution. This intervention is crucial for fostering social cohesion and resolving conflicts at the community level.

The establishment of land steering committees, while part of outcome 1 initiatives, as reported by UNDP, has also been a critical development for nurturing a culture of peace and rights in Darfur. These committees are instrumental in improving arbitration, registration, and sketch mapping capacities. This initiative is vital for effective land governance and dispute resolution, contributing to the programme's overall goal of facilitating durable solutions for the return of IDPs and refugees.

Additionally, the establishment of Natural Resource Management (NRM) committees, (while also part of outcome 1 initiatives) as part of the FAO activities in Darfur, has been a pivotal development in Assalaya, Sheria, and Yassin in East and South Darfur, as well as in North Darfur. These committees play a crucial role in jointly planning, using, and managing community initiatives, such as livestock migratory routes, water resources, and veterinary services.

It is important to clarify that the presence of these committees exclusively in East, South, and North Darfur was largely due to resource limitations rather than an assessment that other regions would not benefit from such initiatives. All regions of Darfur would likely see advantages from targeted NRM efforts, and the omission of West and Central Darfur should not suggest that these areas have lesser needs in managing their natural resources. While activities in North Darfur were also successfully completed, they experienced delays due to the eruption of conflict in Tawila. This conflict yet again presents how local conflicts are a significant challenge to the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives, highlighting the need for ongoing adaptation and support in response to changing security dynamics in the region.

The programme's focus on women's empowerment is evident in the training provided on women's rights and the establishment of women microfinance groups. These initiatives have not only sensitized community members on gender issues but have also provided women with the necessary resources and skills to participate actively in public affairs and community peacebuilding. The construction of women's centres further underscores the commitment to institutional capacity building in this area.

The construction of two women's centres in Yassin and Sheria is an example of the programme's focus on women's empowerment. These centres provided space for various activities such as coexistence dialogues, peacebuilding meetings, microfinance savings, and other livelihood initiatives. Additionally, 50 women received training on leadership, women's rights, international and regional treaties (like CEDAW and the African Protocol for women), and legal reforms. These efforts were part of a broader initiative to enhance the capacities of IDP and returnee communities in Darfur, enabling them to secure their rights and engage in sustained peacebuilding.

From KIIs, it is evident that the program has offered substantial support to women, especially those affected by conflict, through the financial assistance and legal consultation services. This support has been instrumental in raising awareness about equality and the right to life, crucial for women's involvement in peacebuilding. However, neither project M&E documents nor KIs have evidence to the specific details on the direct application of these skills and resources in peacebuilding efforts by women challenging the outputs effectiveness.

While KIIs generally attest to the success of these initiatives, they also shed light on challenges faced during implementation and evaluation, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Issues such as security concerns have impacted the full utilization of facilities like women's centres for their intended purposes. One respondent mentioned the successful construction of women centres, that unfortunately faced challenges due to the onset of conflict in the area. Resulting in these centres, intended for various community activities, couldn't be fully utilized as planned due to security concerns. Another respondent noted the challenges in monitoring and evaluation due to security issues, which as well could indicate that the effective use of such infrastructure for peacebuilding purposes is challenged by similar issues.

The establishment of child and youth-friendly centres as safe spaces, along with training in life skills and peacebuilding competencies, highlights the programme's dedication to engaging younger generations in peace initiatives. The provision of small grants to child and youth clubs for localized peacebuilding and advocacy initiatives further empowers young people to contribute actively to peace efforts. A KII respondent from a youth centre expressed how these initiatives have fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among the youth towards peacebuilding efforts.

A significant achievement of the PBF-supported projects was the reduction in conflict incidents in several areas. This was particularly evident in regions where the programme facilitated dialogue and reconciliation between conflicting parties. For instance, a respondent noted, "Since the movement of the Nomads... there were between 20 to 30 murders. In the previous season, a problem occurred... and it was resolved when the members of the committee communicated with each other". This example illustrates the programme's effectiveness in mitigating conflicts and enhancing community resilience.

The training opportunities provided to civil society organizations on human rights-based approaches reflect a significant stride in strengthening civil society's role in policy advocacy and programming. This aspect of the programme is crucial for maintaining a robust civil society capable of representing diverse stakeholders' interests in dispute resolution and holding the government accountable.

Despite these achievements, the programme faced challenges, including localized outbreak of conflicts in areas like Jebel Moon during implementation, which hindered full success and led to further displacements, shifting the focus of interventions. The conflict in Jebel Moon, which significantly affected the programme's implementation and outcomes, began escalating in July 2021. This increase in insecurity was marked by frequent clashes between the Rizeigat Arabs and Misseriya Jebel tribes. The inter-communal tensions, exacerbated by land disputes between pastoralists and farmers during the rainy season, led to armed mobilization and a volatile situation. Despite efforts by

community leaders and state authorities, including the signing of a local peace agreement in late October, the situation remained unstable.

This conflict in Jebel Moon was more influenced by local inter-communal violence rather than national political developments, such as the coup d'état on the 25th of October 2021. The deteriorating security situation began to affect the accessibility of the area around September/October 2021, leading some implementing partners to withdraw their staff from Jebel Moon. Additionally, the violence in Jebel Moon and the neighbouring Sirba locality hampered the ability of UN Agencies to conduct project monitoring visits and coordination meetings with local authorities. By March 2022, the violence had spread to El Geneina and Kerenik localities, causing over 200 fatalities, numerous injuries, and mass displacement.

The program's effectiveness in achieving Outcome 3, which focuses on nurturing a culture of peace and rights in Darfur, is a nuanced subject. While substantial progress has been made in specific areas, aligning with the strategic vision of the PBF, there remain gaps and challenges that suggest the need for more comprehensive strategies to fully realize the program's goals.

The success of the program is evident in several aspects. The establishment of CBRMs and CBPNs played a significant role in addressing local conflicts and promoting a culture of peace and rights within the communities they directly served. Reports and KIIs highlighted the inclusive nature of these mechanisms, bringing together diverse groups including youth, women, nomads, farmers, and various tribes. This inclusivity was crucial in making the mechanisms more representative and effective in conflict resolution and community engagement in peacebuilding activities.

In terms of women's empowerment and youth engagement, the program initiated several meaningful activities. Training on women's rights, the creation of women microfinance groups, and the establishment of women's centers have raised awareness of gender issues and provided tools for women's active participation in public affairs and peacebuilding. While these initiatives mark progress, the direct impact of these tools in peacebuilding efforts is less clearly documented, indicating a potential area for improvement.

Similarly, youth-focused initiatives have empowered young people to contribute actively to peace efforts, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards peacebuilding. However, these achievements are balanced by challenges faced during implementation and evaluation, particularly in conflict-affected areas, which have sometimes impacted the full utilization and effectiveness of these initiatives.

Concerning the wider impact on peacebuilding at the state and national levels, the evidence suggests that while the program has contributed to reducing conflicts and enhancing community capacities in specific areas, attributing these successes to broader national peacebuilding efforts is more complex. The program's impact appears more localized, with significant achievements in individual communities and localities. On the other hand, national developments and the outbreak of war in April 2023, are now overshadowing and potentially undermining the local peacebuilding efforts achieved by the PBF-supported programme. This ongoing conflict and the accompanying instability have likely had a detrimental impact on the achievements of the PBF-supported programme in Darfur. The efforts to establish peace, stability, and a culture of rights within the local communities, as well

as the progress made in terms of reconciliation and conflict resolution, face the risk of being overshadowed or even undone by the broader national conflict and its ramifications in the Darfur region.

While there have been partial successes in achieving specific goals, the overall effectiveness in broader peacebuilding remains less certain. This indicates that while the program made important strides in some areas, there was still room for improvement and a need for ongoing efforts to fully realize its objectives – now post-April 2023 increasingly highlighting the need for continued support and adaptation of strategies to address both local and national dynamics of conflict and peace in Sudan.

Data Collection and Management

The effectiveness of the PBF-supported programme in Darfur can be further understood by examining its data collection methodologies and the comprehensiveness of the data gathered. Effective data collection is crucial for monitoring progress, evaluating impact, and informing future strategies. However, a critical examination, informed by insights from KIIs, reveals significant deficiencies in these areas, particularly in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices.

Firstly, the programme's reliance on primarily qualitative reporting, based on workshops with implementing partners and UN agencies, monitoring visits and consultations with target communities indicates a lack of rigorous quantitative analysis. While the programme indeed incorporated a quantitative impact evaluation, which provided valuable insights and has been referenced in this evaluation, this exercise also highlighted limitations due to insufficient quantitative baseline data for the specific methodological requirements needed for impact evaluation exercises, constraining its scope to few specific localities in East Darfur. Instead, the programme predominantly relied on qualitative reporting through workshops with implementing partners and UN agencies, as well as written reports in templates. KIs also highlight the reporting template's inability to encapsulate in-depth descriptions of project issues, progress, and on-ground realities which have posed significant constraints in accurately assessing the full scope and impact of the projects. The necessity for a balanced approach integrating both qualitative and quantitative data is evident. This balance is crucial for ensuring objectivity and reliability in assessing the programme's impact.

Secondly, KIIs and desk review revealed challenges in the systematic and comprehensive implementation of the program's progress and indicator monitoring. Reporting difficulties were highlighted, stemming from indicators often being misaligned with agencies' operational capacities and the realities of fieldwork. Notably, the complexity of measuring 'peace' as an indicator poses a significant challenge and implementing organization (both UN and IPs) reported finding it difficult to quantify and report on peace indicators due to their abstract nature and the intricacies of operational environments, leading to reluctance or capacity constraints in effectively measuring these nuanced aspects of peacebuilding. This misalignment has significantly impacted the capacity to understand of the programme's impact, failing to capture the complexity and diversity of community responses.

While the program's approach to data collection for Outcome 1, focusing on durable solutions, began with comprehensive baseline reports providing foundational insights into community needs and contexts, there was a lack of continuous follow-up data collection. This gap hindered the ability to track changes and adapt strategies effectively during implementation. Key Informants involved in

community consultations underscored the importance and lack of ongoing data collection to understand community priorities better, respond to evolving priorities, and to observe the direct impacts of project outputs. Continuous data gathering is crucial to accurately measure impact, especially in dynamic environments, ensuring that strategies remain relevant and effective in addressing the complexities and diverse needs of communities.

Another KIs response to what results the project achieved points to the critical aspect of the complexity of measuring and establishing comprehensive M&E, noting that "the projects supported by the Peacebuilding Fund achieved great results, although there were no written and kept statistics to be compared with the results after the peacebuilding projects, the diligent monitoring by the responsible committees showed promising outcomes. For instance, during the previous season, they reported only a single incident of animal encroachment on farmlands. Notably, this issue was effectively addressed and resolved without any loss of life". While direct evidence of long-term outcomes such as enhanced resilience may not be comprehensively documented, there are indications of positive impacts on community cohesion and conflict management capabilities.

A selected review of the monitoring data from an implementing partner on establishments of CRBMs further indicates anomalies that suggest a lack of robust M&E systems. For instance, the IPs monitoring data suggest the establishment of 22 CBRMs in Tawila, North Darfur, with an equal number of members in total. Such a one-to-one ratio of CBRMs to members appears illogical, as effective CBRMs typically comprise multiple members to ensure diverse representation and functionality. This finding could point towards a typographical error in the reporting, rather than a fundamental issue with the IPs' M&E systems. Anomalies such as this highlight the importance of meticulous data management and validation in reporting procedures to ensure the integrity and credibility of M&E processes..

Further, the reported figures for participation in peace initiatives and the gender breakdown of members and participants in dialogue and conferences also present an incomplete picture, thereby undermining the ability to assess the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the reported CBRMs. For example, the disproportionate representation of women (1 women out of 22 members) in reported numbers indicates a possible oversight or underreporting of women's involvement in CBRMs, and doesn't match other project reporting, which is critical for understanding the true inclusivity of peacebuilding efforts.

Moreover, the challenges in qualitative data collection due to security constraints and limited field access have further compromised the depth and breadth of information gathered. A respondent from Tawilla locality mentioned the difficulties in gathering information in areas like Tabera, where gaining community trust took considerable time. This underscores the importance of community-driven data collection as a potential complementary option for agencies to circumvent access and security related challenges.

Although the program focused on collecting gender and youth-related data, its utilization in decision-making was inconsistent. For instance, one respondent from a cooperative project detailed how gender data effectively enhanced women's participation. Yet, such data-driven approaches were not consistently observed across the program. Generally, KIIs point to a general lack of in-depth analysis

and on how this data could be pragmatically utilized, leading to gaps in service delivery and uneven implementation across different projects. The program's emphasis on inclusive data collection was a positive step, but this inclusivity needed to be coupled with a more robust analysis and practical application of data to ensure impactful and relevant interventions.

The emphasis on inclusive data collection, engaging various community members across different ages and genders, is a positive aspect. However, this inclusivity must be matched with a more robust analysis and application of the data to ensure that the programme's interventions are not only well-informed but also impactful and relevant over time.

In conclusion, while the PBF-supported programme has made efforts in data collection, there is a pressing need for a more critical and systematic approach in both quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis. Enhanced M&E practices, incorporating both numerical data and in-depth qualitative insights, are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the programme's impact and for guiding more effective and adaptive project implementation strategies. The insights from KIIs underscore the importance of involving local communities in data collection, ensuring data accuracy, and addressing the challenges in data analysis and application for improved project outcomes.

Challenges and Limitations

The PBF-supported programme, while achieving significant milestones, encountered various challenges that impacted its operations and effectiveness. These challenges ranged from security concerns to logistical difficulties and data collection issues, each presenting unique obstacles to the programme's success.

Many projects encountered logistical and security challenges that hindered their implementation. For example, difficult terrain and insecurity in certain areas made it challenging to conduct activities as planned. Respondents mentioned that a recurrent way to deal with these challenges is by employing local staff from specific target areas and finding alternative ways to deliver services. "In autumn, for example, roads are difficult, the security too also makes the work hard... We employed new people from the areas to cover our needs of the staff".

Security challenges were a recurring theme in the responses from key informants. The fragile security situation in certain areas significantly hindered the programme's ability to implement activities and collect data effectively. As one respondent noted, "There are security challenges because it is fragile, so there will be difficulty in evaluating and implementing activities as well, because there is difficulty in entering the locality with support and police guards". These security issues not only limited access to certain regions but also posed risks to staff and participants, affecting the overall implementation of the programme, but also, as voiced by KIs, risked excluding other vulnerable groups from benefiting from the programme.

An illustrative example of these access challenges, as highlighted in an FGD, involved a Household Survey (HHS) in a community scheduled for sketch mapping. The village, under government control but influenced by youth aligned with the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), restricted access and was uncooperative. They cited their non-signatory status to the peace agreement and disinterest in participating in PBF activities. The non-cooperative stance of the village influenced by youth aligned

with the Sudan SLA can be understood in the context of the Juba Peace Agreement signed in 2020. This agreement aimed to resolve conflicts in Darfur and other regions of Sudan. However, not all factions, including the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) and a wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, were signatories to this deal. Their non-participation in the peace process may influence the willingness of certain communities to engage in initiatives associated with the PBF supported program. This highlights the complexities of implementing such programs in areas with varied allegiances and peace agreement stances. This incident underscores the critical need for assessing community readiness and establishing clear parameters for engagement in conflict-sensitive environments.

Logistical challenges, such as inaccessible roads during certain seasons and fluctuating currency rates, also posed significant hurdles. These issues affected the timely and efficient delivery of programme activities and resources. For instance, difficulties in transportation and communication infrastructure in remote areas impeded the programme's reach and effectiveness.

The programme's monitoring visit reports reveal an interesting insight to specific localities as examples and a M&E success despite significant challenges due to security concerns and limited field access. Despite the success of these visits, KIIs reveal that the projects faced significant challenges in collecting comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data due to security concerns and hence limited field access. These constraints were particularly evident in areas requiring security escorts for monitoring visits, impacting the program's ability to perform in-depth fieldwork in many implementation localities crucial for qualitative insights. Additionally, the scope of quantitative data gathering was affected, posing challenges in measuring peacebuilding outcomes that necessitate a nuanced blend of data types. This situation highlights the complexities of data collection in conflict-sensitive environments and the importance of developing innovative methods to overcome these challenges and accurately evaluate the program's impact on peacebuilding efforts.

Another challenge brought up by respondents was the programme's ability to align activities both within the broader program as well as with other activities in the region, affecting the effectiveness. One respondent, for example, raised questions about why agencies did not have a more coherent approach to peace committees. This is a critical point because the effectiveness of any peacebuilding programme is closely tied to its ability to work in harmony with other initiatives, both governmental and non-governmental. A lack of coherence not only reduces the programme's effectiveness but can also lead to duplication of efforts and a waste of resources. For a more in-depth discussion on this aspect, please refer to the 'Coordination and Coherence' section, where these challenges are explored further based on the data collected.

The evaluation team acknowledges that the logistical and security challenges faced throughout the program have limited the projects' ability to conduct exhaustive outcome-level analysis, which were further intensified by the outbreak of conflict on April 15th, 2023, limiting the reach of this final evaluation as well. However, the successfully completed Impact Assessment provides an exemplar of how, despite such constraints, targeted evaluations can still yield valuable data to inform peacebuilding efforts.

Consequently, our updated assessment must highlight the need for more robust and systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including longitudinal studies and the integration of advanced data collection methodologies. Such approaches are critical for ensuring that the program's contributions to peacebuilding are accurately measured, understood, and sustained over time. This solidifies the understanding that while the program has generated numerous outputs and has had a tangible impact on community engagement, the linkages to broader, long-term peacebuilding outcomes require ongoing and meticulous validation.

Success Factors and Best Practices

The PBF-supported programme, while facing significant challenges, achieved certain objectives thanks to key success factors. These included strong community involvement, effective local government cooperation, and strategic project design. These elements contributed to the programme's effectiveness, although they also sometimes obscured deeper issues. Active local community participation was crucial, instilling a sense of ownership and ensuring alignment with community needs. As one respondent highlighted, "One factor that helped PBF to achieve its objectives was the communities' contribution, engagement, and their sense of belonging to the project we have implemented". However, the programme's impact varied across states and localities, reflecting diverse outcomes and highlighting inconsistencies in reach and inclusivity.

The programme's success demonstrated significant variation across different states and localities, reflecting a complex landscape of outcomes. While initiatives like the collaboration between UNHABITAT and the Ministry of Infrastructure stood out as notable successes, other areas faced substantial challenges. The level of community engagement, pivotal in some regions for fostering a sense of ownership and alignment with community needs, was less effective in others. KIIs and end-of-project reports indicate that deeper engagement with marginalized groups like IDPs was lacking in some localities.

The programme's varied success across different localities is highlighted by specific examples from KIIs and reports. In Jebel Moon, West Darfur, KIIs reveal challenges in community engagement due to security issues and difficulties with cooperation with local leaders. Planned activities like sketch-mapping and land management training for IDP communities were significantly disrupted as a result and minimized the projects reach to and engagement with the community. In contrast, East Darfur showcases a success story where the establishment of a police post, as reported in project documentation, greatly improved local security and fostered effective community-police collaboration. This initiative was well-received by both the police and the community, strengthening their capacity to handle crime and conflict, and contributing positively to local peace efforts. These examples underscore the programme's inconsistent engagement and impact, particularly in reaching and involving marginalized groups.

Effective collaboration with government entities provided necessary support and facilitation for the programme's activities. This cooperation was crucial in areas such as providing security for project staff and beneficiaries in the conflict-affected regions. "One of the success factors is government cooperation, and because the government was providing the missions and project employees with protection...". Government cooperation, crucial for security and facilitation, also presented a double-

edged sword. Dependence on government support in conflict-affected regions raised concerns about the programme's neutrality and its ability to operate independently, especially in politically sensitive environments.

The effectiveness of local government cooperation was inconsistent, heavily influenced by factors such as resource availability and changing political circumstances. In regions like West Darfur, local government collaboration was integral to developing and implementing Land and Natural Resource Management Plans. These plans, crafted through inclusive methods involving various community stakeholders, underscored the potential of effective local-level collaboration.

The effectiveness of local government cooperation within the PBF-supported programme showed variation across different regions, influenced by factors such as resource availability and local political dynamics. In regions like West Darfur, local government collaboration was integral to developing and implementing Land and Natural Resource Management Plans. These plans, crafted through inclusive methods involving various community stakeholders, underscored the potential of effective local-level collaboration.

Notably, in West Darfur, about 65% of disputes brought to CBRMs between farmers and nomads over natural resources were resolved, indicating productive involvement of local governments in conflict resolution. The establishment of CBRMs and their integration into state-level peace architectures further demonstrated the positive impact of local government cooperation.

Capacity-building initiatives for local police, justice officials, and community members in conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding, and legal rights also highlighted the program's collaboration with local authorities. These efforts aimed to enhance local capacities and were indicative of successful partnerships at the local government level.

However, the programme faced challenges in certain areas due to limitations in local government capabilities or resources. For instance, conflicts affected the functionality of rule of law assets, and there were constraints in accessing certain areas, reflecting some limitations in local governance. Additionally, the programme faced substantial challenges in areas with limited local government capabilities or resources. In such regions, KIIs point to the program's short duration hindering the development of sustainable solutions and robust local governance structures. The inability to establish long-term engagement in these areas often resulted in a lack of follow-up and sustainable impact, which will be further elaborated in the chapters on efficiency and sustainability.

It's important to contextualize the challenges faced at the national level. The programme operated in a complex and dynamic environment in Sudan, where national-level government cooperation was constrained by broader political and social factors outside the program's control. These external challenges underscore the necessity for adaptable and context-sensitive approaches in program design and implementation, acknowledging the diverse circumstances encountered in different localities.

The programme's design, which was tailored to address specific local needs and conditions, played a significant role in its success. This approach ensured that the interventions were relevant and effective in the context in which they were implemented. The programme's design was specifically tailored to

address the distinct needs and conditions of each locality. In theory, the program's area-based approach was designed to address the root causes of conflict and instability in a targeted manner. It aimed to go beyond resolving surface-level issues, focusing instead on altering the underlying conditions that foster conflicts. Ideally, this method would ensure that peace-building solutions were sustainable and deeply embedded in the local socio-political fabric.

Despite the program's design emphasizing tailored solutions, the execution and type of activities could easily fall into a pattern of replication across different localities in order to be efficient in terms of resource allocation and time management. KIIs do indeed suggest that the projects may not have fully capitalized on the potential of the area-based strategy to address the unique challenges and opportunities present in each locality. That said, the evaluation broadly finds that the approach ensured that the interventions were largely relevant and effective within their specific contexts. The ability to customize solutions to local challenges played a significant role in the successes of the program.

However, the program's short duration and challenges in follow-up, particularly in areas with limited local- and state-level government cooperation, posed hurdles to achieving long-term effectiveness and sustainability. These insights underscore the importance of considering program duration and follow-up mechanisms in future peacebuilding efforts. The implications of these factors on the overall efficiency and sustainability of the program will be further examined in the respective chapters.

Unexpected Outcomes and Adaptations

The PBF-supported programme experienced several unexpected positive outcomes, which added value to the overall impact of the initiative. These outcomes often emerged from the dynamic and complex environments in which the programme operated, revealing the programme's capacity to generate benefits beyond its initial scope.

One significant outcome, which surpassed initial expectations, was the profound level of unity and cooperation fostered among community members, particularly observable in areas where training and workshops were conducted. A KII respondent noted, "From [the project in Nertiti] we saw an unexpected result, people were united as a result of the training and workshops we provided in peace". The KII pronounce a depth and extent of this solidarity and collective action, suggesting a more substantial impact than initially projected. This highlights how the program not only met but exceeded its objectives in fostering community cohesion and peacebuilding.

Furthermore, KIIs noted that the program, when successful, notably exceeded its objectives in enhancing beneficiary awareness about legal rights and peacebuilding processes. Especially respondents from Central Darfur implementing partners noted that a heightened awareness among beneficiaries, especially among women and marginalized groups, emerged more profoundly than anticipated. Participants gained a deeper understanding of their rights and roles in the peacebuilding process through their active involvement in the program's activities – also activities not specifically targeted this outcome. This underlines the effectiveness of a holistic approach where diverse activities mutually reinforce learning and awareness. However, the KIIs also identified a gap: the need for more focused training and workshops on rights. This suggests that while beneficiaries benefited from the program's diverse activities, there was a missed opportunity for greater alignment with dedicated

training and workshop initiatives on legal and land rights, and personal identification processes. This outcome, while positive, raises questions about the potential for even more impactful learning if the program had strategically aligned these different activity streams.

The programme's ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges and circumstances showcased mixed results, reflecting the complexity of the environments in which it operated. While there were instances of effective adaptation, such as employing local staff and devising alternative service delivery methods in response to security and logistical challenges, these measures were not uniformly successful across all regions. This inconsistency highlights both the program's efforts to build local capacity and the limitations it faced in ensuring continuity and effectiveness of its interventions in more challenging contexts.

The programme displayed considerable adaptability in responding to unforeseen challenges, particularly in devising innovative solutions for operational difficulties. A notable example of this was the program's response to the restrictions in movement and access in conflict-affected areas. When faced with the challenge of transporting essential resources for project activities, the programme devised alternative methods. This included employing localized strategies, such as utilizing local resources and networks for storage and distribution, ensuring that the necessary materials reached the intended beneficiaries despite logistical barriers. However, not all adaptations were successful. For instance, in Umm Dhukun, while there was support extended to the locality's peace architecture, there were instances where resources for infrastructure projects remained unused due to challenges in transportation and the onset of conflict. This included equipment that was purchased but could not be transported to the intended locations, resulting in them being stored and not utilized as planned. Such occurrences highlight the program's challenges in implementing certain activities amidst conflict and logistical constraints.

Additionally, in response to the shifting demographics and needs due to tribal conflicts, especially in areas like Jabal Moon, the program swiftly realigned its focus and resources to address the emerging needs of newly displaced persons. These measures, driven by an on-the-ground understanding of the evolving situation, highlighted the programme's capacity to maintain its effectiveness and relevance in dynamic and challenging environments.

The programme did lead to unexpected positive outcomes, such as enhanced community unity and heightened awareness among beneficiaries. However, these outcomes were sometimes overshadowed by the programme's inability to effectively adapt to significant challenges like security issues and logistical difficulties. The reliance on local staff and alternative service delivery methods, while innovative, also highlighted a lack of robust contingency planning.

Conclusion Effectiveness

The evaluation of the PBF-supported programme under the DAC criteria of effectiveness has revealed a complex and multifaceted impact on peacebuilding efforts in the region. This chapter synthesizes the key findings, reflecting on the programme's achievements, challenges, and the broader implications for future peacebuilding initiatives.

The programme has successfully met many of its intended objectives, significantly contributing to local and regional peacebuilding. Notable achievements include the fostering of community reconciliation, capacity building, and conflict resolution. Initiatives such as community-based reconciliation mechanisms, empowerment of women and youth, and the establishment of community centers and infrastructure projects, have made tangible impacts on the ground. These efforts have facilitated community unity, improved awareness about legal rights, and fostered a sense of shared purpose among diverse groups.

Despite these successes, the programme faced significant challenges, chiefly stemming from the volatile security situation and logistical constraints in conflict-prone areas. The programme's adaptability in the face of these challenges was mixed. While there were instances of innovative problem-solving, such as employing local staff and devising alternative service delivery methods, these adaptations were not uniformly effective across all regions, sometimes leading to unused resources or unmet objectives.

The programme's effectiveness was uneven across different states and localities, reflecting a diversity of outcomes and highlighting inconsistencies in reach and inclusivity. Key limitations included the short duration of the programme and a lack of sustained follow-up, especially in areas with minimal local- and state-level government cooperation. These factors underscore the need for more long-term engagement and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The insights gained from this evaluation point to the need for a more nuanced, region-specific approach in future peacebuilding efforts. It emphasizes the importance of:

- **Integrated Strategies:** Combining initiatives like WASH and security enhancements with other critical social services and capacity-building efforts.

- **Sustained Support and Adaptation:** Recognizing the changing political and security landscapes and adapting strategies accordingly to ensure long-term success and sustainability.

- **Comprehensive Planning:** Addressing not just immediate needs but also embedding these initiatives within a larger, comprehensive strategy considering ongoing security challenges and peacebuilding needs.

In conclusion, the programme's initial promise in areas like conflict reduction and improving local stability has been significantly influenced by the broader context of political and security instability. The resurgence of violence post-April 2023 particularly threatens to undermine the progress made, potentially nullifying efforts in critical areas such as support for IDP returnees and infrastructure development. This situation highlights the fragility of peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-prone environments and underscores the necessity of sustained and adaptable strategies.

The challenges encountered in the implementation and monitoring of these projects, especially in volatile areas, emphasize the need for an adaptable and context-sensitive approach. It is crucial to address not only immediate needs, such as through WASH and infrastructure enhancements, but also to integrate these initiatives into a broader, comprehensive strategy that takes into account ongoing security challenges and the overarching goals of sustained peacebuilding.

The insights from KIIs and final reports advocate for a comprehensive and integrated approach. It is vital to combine initiatives like WASH and security enhancements with other essential social services and capacity-building efforts. Such a holistic approach, supported by consistent monitoring and adapted to the changing political and security landscapes, is essential for ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of these interventions. This integrated strategy should focus on building resilience, fostering community cohesion, and addressing the root causes of conflict to achieve lasting peace in the region.

Key Findings - Effectiveness:

1. **Community Reconciliation and Engagement:** The programme has made significant strides in community reconciliation, with the establishment of for example multiple CBRMs that have successfully resolved conflicts and fostered unity. The inclusion of diverse groups in these mechanisms, including youth and women, has been instrumental in enhancing their effectiveness.

2. **Capacity Building and Conflict Resolution:** Training and workshops aimed at building the capacity of local implementing partners, community members and local authorities in conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding, and legal rights have been effective in equipping participants with the necessary skills for sustainable conflict management.

3. **Infrastructure Development and Service Provision:** Infrastructure projects, particularly those providing essential services such as WASH facilities and schools, have contributed to breaking down social barriers and fostering a sense of shared community objectives. However, the programme's impact in this area varied, with some projects facing challenges due to security concerns and logistical difficulties.

4. **Empowerment of Women and Youth:** The programme has empowered women and youth through targeted training, the creation of microfinance groups, and the establishment of women's centers. These initiatives have raised awareness of gender issues and provided tools for active participation in peacebuilding, although their direct impact on peace efforts requires further documentation.

5. **Variability Across Localities:** The programme's effectiveness has been inconsistent across different regions, with some areas achieving notable success in fostering community cohesion and others facing significant challenges due to insecurity due to reignited local conflicts, limited local government cooperation and resources.

6. **Adaptability to Challenges:** The programme demonstrated adaptability in responding to unforeseen challenges by employing local staff and finding alternative service delivery methods. Nonetheless, the success of these adaptations was not uniform across all regions, sometimes resulting in unmet objectives and unused resources.

7. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The programme faced significant challenges in its M&E practices, particularly in measuring and reporting on peace indicators. The reliance on qualitative reporting and the lack of comprehensive quantitative analysis limited the ability to assess the programme's full impact.

8. **Sustainability Concerns and Security Implications:** The relative short duration of the programme (in relation to outcome expectations) and challenges in follow-up, particularly in areas with minimal local and state government cooperation, underscore the need for more long-term engagement and robust M&E mechanisms to ensure monitoring of impact and sustainability. KIIs highlighted significant concerns about the sustainability of several activities implemented under the programme, particularly due to ongoing security issues. Insecurity emerged as a major factor that not only hindered the implementation of activities but also raised doubts about the long-term viability of the programme's achievements. The potential for recurring conflict and political instability, especially evident in the post-April 2023 period, exacerbates these concerns, threatening to unravel the progress made in community development, peacebuilding, and capacity-building initiatives.

While the PBF-supported programme has contributed to fostering peace and stability in Darfur, the evaluation indicates that ongoing support and adaptation of strategies are crucial to address both local and national dynamics of conflict and peace in Sudan. The programme's initial achievements, particularly in local community engagement and capacity building, are commendable; however, the broader political and security instability presents significant challenges to the sustainability of these efforts. The evaluation underscores the importance of an integrated approach to peacebuilding that combines immediate service provision with long-term strategies to build resilience, foster community cohesion, and address the root causes of conflict.

5.3 Efficiency

This section aims to understand how well the programme utilized its resources in the face of significant challenges and to identify areas for improvement in future initiatives. Evaluation questions related to efficiency were:

- ***How efficiently were resources allocated and utilized in the Darfur Programme?***

    - *How timely was PBF-supported state project implementation (including disbursement of funds, procurement of materials, and conduct of programme activities)?*

    - *To what extent was there effective project and programme management and governance, including strong leadership, clear roles and responsibilities, adequate systems and processes, and regular monitoring and evaluation?*

Analysis of Efficiency

The Darfur Programme, with a budget of USD 20 million and six implementing agencies across five states, represented a comprehensive and ambitious operation. While it aimed to maximize the impact of its resources, the program was confronted with substantial external challenges, including outbreak of local conflicts, a national military coup and the subsequent political instability as well as environmental challenges like the rainy season. These challenges not only necessitated ongoing strategic adjustments but also led to delays in implementation. Consequently, all projects within the programme required no-cost extensions to fulfil their objectives. This underscores the complexity of

executing a large-scale, multi-faceted initiative in a volatile and dynamic environment, highlighting the need for flexible and adaptive project management to navigate such uncertainties.

Efficiency of Resource Allocation

The programme adopted a human resource strategy focused on leveraging local implementing partners to ensure cost-effectiveness and capitalize on local expertise. This approach was instrumental in facilitating smoother project implementation and enhancing community engagement. A key informant underscored the efficiency of this strategy, noting, 'Hiring someone from the region is cost-effective and has a greater impact.' Despite this, the strategy faced challenges, particularly in addressing skill gaps in softer components of peacebuilding among team members of implementing partners. To combat this, the programme initiated targeted capacity-building initiatives aimed at bolstering the skills of local partners, thus maintaining the effectiveness of the human resource strategy throughout the program's duration.

Financial management within the Darfur Programme was characterized by careful budgeting and strategic reallocation of funds in response to changing needs and constraints. The programme's financial resources were managed in line with the respective lead agencies' guidelines, ensuring transparency and accountability. In the assessment of the West Darfur project's budget, the allocation of approximately 14.41% of the total budget to 'Contractual Services' and a notable 46.26% to 'Transfers and Grants to Counterparts' underscores the program's heavy reliance on external entities, such as implementing partners and NGOs, for carrying out a significant portion of its activities. This approach aligns with the program's emphasis on leveraging local expertise for cost-effectiveness, indicating a strategic choice to optimize resource utilization.

KIIs reflect positively on this allocation strategy. The investment in external partners was viewed as highly justified in terms of the outputs and outcomes achieved, indicating cost-effectiveness of the funds spent. External partners, particularly valued for their critical local knowledge and access, significantly contributed to the program's success, a capability the UN agencies alone could not have matched. However, there was a noted requirement for capacity building in integrating Humanitarian-Development-Peace aspects, including peacebuilding, into traditional UN work.

Moreover, the reliance on these external entities provided the program with considerable operational flexibility, a critical factor in the dynamic and challenging environment of West Darfur. This flexibility enabled the program to adapt effectively to unforeseen challenges and changes in the operational context. In terms of building local capacities and fostering sustainable community engagement, the strategy of utilizing external partners contributed positively, underscoring a long-term benefit beyond immediate project outcomes.

Perceptions of resource adequacy varied among KII respondents. While some believed that the available resources were sufficient, others highlighted deficiencies, particularly in human resources. Comments like, "The human resources were not sufficient to implement the project well," underscored these disparities. This variation in views highlights the challenges in evenly distributing resources across the programme's diverse activities. The insights from this report, however, emphasize the importance of strategic financial management in ensuring program efficiency,

especially in terms of leveraging external partnerships for local capacity building and sustainable community engagement.

KIIs indicate that the lack of PBF seconded staff in later stages led to significant challenges. While the program benefitted from the expertise and dedicated focus of staff seconded from the PBF, KIIs note that as these were program-level focused, and not assigned to individual projects, projects struggled to maintain dedicated teams for the PBF projects. These challenges resulted in the integration of PBF activities into regular programs, diluting the specialized focus on peacebuilding objectives and might have been a contributing factor to delays in implementation and a less effective management structure.

Budget "limitations" led to a focus on mandates where agencies knew how to implement efficiently, rather than fully engaging in the intended multi-agency peacebuilding approach. This shift towards a more siloed approach, driven by financial constraints, potentially undermined the programme's overarching goal of integrated, collaborative peacebuilding.

The strategic selection of communities based on "hot spot" criteria further complicated the impact of funding levels. Budget constraints meant that many areas with similar needs were left without support, leading to selective interventions, and raising questions about whether equitable resource distribution was employed. For example, in activities like sketch mapping exercises, only one village was selected for further action due to budget limitations, despite several villages being initially considered.

The Programme's resource allocation required strategic decision-making, typical in large-scale interventions. Prioritizing 'hot spot' areas for funding, based on specific criteria, was a pragmatic approach to utilizing finite resources. However, KIIs often perceived these decisions as stemming from "budget constraints" and "selective interventions." Despite the practicality of prioritizing areas, KIIs voiced the dilemma of selecting as several localities in Darfur could easily meet the 'hot spot' criteria, leading to perceptions of selectiveness. This aspect of resource allocation, influenced by necessity and practical constraints, will be further explored in the conflict-sensitivity chapter.

The political instability and environmental challenges, such as the rainy season, in Darfur necessitated a flexible approach to resource allocation. The programme adapted its strategies, redirecting resources to areas where they were most needed due to changing circumstances. This included pausing certain activities and reallocating resources to more critical interventions or other localities as initially targeted localities became affected by conflicts and displacements, as reported in project documents and KIIs. Such adaptability was essential for maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of the programme, though it also brought into question its efficiency in achieving the broader objectives of peacebuilding in the region. For example, due to security concerns and displacement in target areas, resources were shifted, as seen in the project reports.

Examples of strategic adaptations and efficient (or inefficient utilization of funds was highlighted in several instances by KIIs. First, KIIs pointed out the failure of aligning fund disbursements with operational and seasonal requirements in relation to agriculture related activities. This hampered some activities by financial delays.

Another discussion frequently taken up by KIIs is the selection of project implementation localities and how to think of efficiency. Opting for regions with fewer access challenges, unlike conflict-heavy areas could streamline project execution and reduce logistical complexities. Such approach not only saves costs but could also speed up project delivery. KIIs indeed highlighted this careful trade-off between choosing areas of greatest need, which often have complex access issues, versus areas where implementation is more straightforward but might not address the most critical needs. This suggests a strategic balance is needed, where resources are allocated not just based on urgency but also on feasibility and potential for impact. This balancing act is critical for maximizing efficiency and effectiveness in resource utilization within the programme.

Moreover, addressing potential duplication of activities and enhancing inter-agency collaboration are key aspects mentioned by KIIs when asked about better use of funds. A coherent strategy across different agencies would reduce redundancy, allowing for better resource allocation and avoid wastage. This could be achieved through clear communication channels, joint planning sessions, and shared objectives. As will be discussed in the dedicated chapter on coherence, the programme did not fully capitalize on these opportunities for enhanced coordination, leading to some inefficiencies.

Lastly, KIIs indicated that a closer match between the provided resources and the actual needs on the ground in some instances could be improved, such as appropriate allocation of vehicles and training. This was partially achieved by conducting needs assessments and maintaining flexibility to adapt resource allocation as project requirements evolved, however, some KIIs indicated that this could have been improved.

Project Implementation and Timing

The Darfur Programme's approach to resource allocation and utilization was characterized by strategic human resource management, adaptive financial resource management, and a focus on maximizing efficiency in resource utilization. The programme also demonstrated a strong commitment to timeliness, with detailed schedules drawn up for implementation. However, security challenges in many implementing localities often lead to postponements or even cancellation of activities, including ongoing M&E. As one informant put it, "In terms of timing, we have drawn up a detailed schedule for the implementation of the project, but there is a delay in the regions due to security challenges." Many KIIs mirrored this perspective, noting that security challenges often restricted access to certain localities, impacting the projects' ability to conduct thorough and timely monitoring.

Following the coup, UN-agencies and other organisations operating under a strategic framework linked to the transitional process, found themselves partly paralysed. The sudden political and administrative changes disrupted established ideas and plans, leading to uncertainty and the need for realignment of strategies to overcome the lack or change of national-government priorities and structures as well as the spill this had to local- and state-government partners to the programme. This environment made it challenging for agencies to proceed with their planned activities and strategies, necessitating a shift to adaptive management and inter-agency coordination to continue the program's objectives effectively.

In response to the challenges following the coup, the PBF seconded coordinators played a pivotal role in ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of the programme. They effectively managed adaptive

strategies through inter-agency coordination sessions, which became vital in navigating the complex, evolving landscape. These coordinators were instrumental in guiding the projects forward, ensuring that they progressed in a manner sensitive to the conflicts and changing dynamics. Their efforts in maintaining program momentum despite significant hurdles exemplify the importance of flexible management and strong coordination in crisis situations.

Despite these strategies, the programme faced challenges in resource allocation and utilization. These included delays in funding disbursement, fluctuating costs due to external factors like Sudanese currency inflation, and the need to balance between short-term needs and long-term goals. The programme responded to these challenges with adaptive management practices, such as flexible budgeting, phased implementation of activities, and, while challenged and not always possible, continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective use of resources as evidenced in the monitoring visits undertaken in some localities.

At the programme level and cross UN-agencies, the programme faced significant challenges in maintaining timeliness and coordination across its various components and locations. The programme's implementation spanned two and a half years, marked by a series of delays and challenges that impacted its efficiency and effectiveness.

While formally starting the same day, the projects in Darfur faced varied start times of activities across states due to local challenges. All five projects requested no-cost extensions. These extensions were needed for various reasons from COVID-19 restrictions to inter-communal violence, the latter notably in West Darfur. These events hindered access, coordination with authorities, and slowed implementation. For example, in West Darfur, a six-month extension was requested due to COVID-19 and violence in El Geneina, affecting activities in Jebel Moon and hindering sustainable handover of peacebuilding initiatives. KIIs point out that these inconsistencies in start times across projects and localities to some extent hindered the programme's ability to achieve a unified and cohesive implementation strategy.

The planning and internal processes of various UN agencies involved in the programme also struggled to align, further complicating the timeliness of implementation. KIIs note that the divergence in focus areas and operational approaches among agencies with different mandates somewhat hindered the development of a unified and cohesive implementation strategy for the programme. This lack of alignment led to a fragmented understanding and approach among agency staff, particularly regarding the programme's hard and soft components. The absence of a cross-cutting consensus on implementation further exacerbated these challenges. For instance, UNHABITAT focuses on land rights and rural programs, while UNHCR concentrates on protection services. This divergence in mandates and operational approaches can lead to fragmented strategies, impacting cross-cutting program's cohesive implementation. KIIs suggest that these aspects often led to a lack of unified approach and strategy in the program's execution. This will be discussed further in the dedicated chapter evaluating coordination among agencies.

The programme's implementation faced significant challenges due to external factors such as security concerns and economic obstacles. Security advisories restricted access to field locations, complicating on-ground operations. The Sudanese financial system presented bottlenecks, notably through

currency inflation and fluctuating exchange rates, which disrupted financial planning and budget management. Banking system limitations further delayed fund disbursement and management, while stringent financial regulations and a politically unstable environment added to the complexities in financial operations, impacting the timely execution of the programme.

The programme's relative short duration (of 2 + 0,5 years of no cost extension), coupled with both anticipated and unanticipated events like the COVID-19 pandemic, added to the complexity of implementation. KIIs pointed to challenges in achieving its complex peacebuilding objectives within this timeframe. Given the depth of social, political, and economic issues involved in such initiatives, a longer period is often required to establish trust, understand local dynamics, and ensure lasting impact. The program's progress was further complicated by unforeseen events like the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for an extended inception phase and a more prolonged commitment to effectively navigate and address the multifaceted challenges in dynamic environments like Darfur. The need for an inception period before implementation was also highlighted by KIIs, along with a longer-term commitment from the fund in order for projects to address unforeseen challenges effectively.

Despite these challenges, the Darfur Programme demonstrated resilience and adaptability. The programme's ability to navigate complex political landscapes, coordinate among multiple agencies, and respond to unforeseen events, while maintaining a focus on its goals, is commendable. However, the insights from the follow-up FGDs underscore the need for improved planning, coordination, and a more consultative approach in future initiatives to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in similar complex environments.

Project Management and Governance

The Darfur Programme's project management and governance efficiency reflects a dynamic performance. Instances of strong leadership were evident, with project managers and coordinators being crucial for maintaining quality and execution standards. The programme exhibited instances of effective leadership, with some IPs noting that specific managers and coordinators played pivotal roles in ensuring quality and implementation. One IP mentioned the presence of a dedicated project manager and a team focused on project activities and quality follow-up, which contributed positively to project outcomes.

However, at the programme level, there were notable inefficiencies. Despite individual project managers being effective, the broader programme leadership faced challenges in efficiently addressing unforeseen issues and ensuring cohesive multi-agency coordination. This was evident in the varied experiences of IPs, with some reporting excellent management, while others pointed out inefficiencies and a lack of effective leadership at higher levels.

The roles and responsibilities of IPs were generally well-defined, with regular training and communication with entities overseeing the projects. However, the effectiveness of these roles varied significantly. One IP highlighted a clear and well-defined agreement with their donor, ensuring clarity in roles and responsibilities. In contrast, other partners experienced challenges in role clarity and execution, leading to inefficiencies and delays in project implementation.

The programme's M&E systems were a critical area of concern in terms of efficiency. While some IPs utilized advanced tools for community feedback and complaints, contributing to responsive and adaptive project implementation, others pointed out the limitations of these systems. KIIs indicated that these differences in capabilities was especially seen between international and national NGOs. International NGOs often have more advanced tools and systems, potentially leading to more effective project implementation and responsiveness. National and local NGOs may face resource and capacity constraints, which can result in limitations within their M&E systems. Additionally, the integration of PBF activities into existing agency projects (as discussed earlier) might also have contributed to a somewhat fragmented and inefficient programme-level M&E system. This fragmentation hindered the ability to assess the overall efficiency of the PBF programme, impacting the efficiency assessment of the programme and resource utilization, and making it challenging to determine how effectively resources were being utilized across the programme.

The evaluation of the Darfur Programme's project management and governance, in the context of DAC Efficiency criteria, while finding examples of effective leadership and well-defined roles, uncovers that the programme as a whole suffered from inconsistencies in management efficiency, coordination among agencies, and the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems. These findings suggest a need for a more integrated approach to leadership and governance, improved clarity and execution of roles and responsibilities, and more robust and proactive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Enhancing these aspects can significantly improve the efficiency and impact of future peacebuilding initiatives in similar contexts.

Conclusion: Efficiency

The Darfur Programme's journey through a landscape marred by political upheaval, environmental challenges, and economic fluctuations presented a rigorous test of its efficiency. The programme's dynamic approach to resource allocation and strategy implementation was pivotal in maintaining relevance and effectiveness amidst these adversities. However, this adaptability also brought to the fore critical questions regarding the programme's efficiency in achieving its broader objectives.

The programme's resource management strategy, characterized by an emphasis on local implementing partners and adaptive financial resource management, was a cornerstone of its operational approach. This strategy ensured cost-efficiency and leveraged local expertise for better community engagement, but also highlighted the need for continuous capacity building to address skill gaps like lacking capacity in comprehensive M&E. Financially, the programme navigated through delays in funding disbursement and fluctuating costs, adopting flexible budgeting, and phased activity implementation. These measures, while necessary, often resulted in a delicate balance between addressing short-term needs and pursuing long-term goals.

The programme aimed to maintain a balance between addressing immediate needs, which was closer to the traditional agency mandates as well as the capacities of local implementing partners, and achieving long-term objectives requested by the PBF programme. The strategies devised were intended to adapt to changing circumstances while still progressing towards the overarching goals of peacebuilding and sustainable development. Despite the intention, the fluctuating context in Darfur, marked by political instability and economic challenges, made it difficult to maintain this balance. The

programme had to pivot frequently to address urgent needs, which may have affected the consistency and focus required for longer-term objectives.

Coordination emerged as a critical factor, with varying degrees of success across different stages of the programme. Initial collaborative efforts showed promise, but challenges such cross-agency coordination, and external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic and military coup led to a more agency-centric approach. This shift impacted the efficiency of coordination and highlighted inefficiencies in the multi-agency approach due to overlapping efforts and a lack of integrated strategy.

The relationship between funding and efficiency was complex. The programme operated within budget constraints, yet informants suggested that additional funding could have bolstered efficiency. This paradox underscores the intricate balance between resource utilization and achieving programmatic objectives, where insufficient funding can lead to inefficiencies and hinder the full realization of programme goals.

In light of these insights, future initiatives in similar contexts should prioritize robust coordination mechanisms, integrate local expertise effectively, and maintain a balance between adaptability and strategic long-term planning. Addressing the funding-efficiency paradox is also vital for the success of such programmes.

Key Findings - Efficiency:

1. **Resource Allocation and Utilization:** The programme leveraged local expertise through partnerships with local implementing partners, which proved cost-effective and facilitated smooth implementation. However, skill gaps in peacebuilding among partner teams necessitated targeted capacity building, impacting efficiency.

2. **Financial Management:** Financial resources were managed with due diligence, adhering to stringent UNDP guidelines. The strategic reallocation of funds in response to the evolving context underscored the programme's financial adaptability, yet budget constraints sometimes led to prioritizing areas based on operational feasibility over greatest need, affecting perceived equity in resource distribution.

3. **Project Implementation and Timing:** Substantial external challenges led to delayed implementation and necessitated no-cost extensions for all projects. While detailed schedules were in place, unforeseen security challenges significantly impacted the timeliness of the programme's execution.

4. **Project and Programme Management:** While the programme benefited from dedicated PBF seconded staff, the project-level management struggled in maintaining focus on peacebuilding objectives. The integration of PBF activities into regular UN programs diluted the specialized peacebuilding focus, contributing to inefficiencies.

5. **Governance and Leadership:** Governance at the individual project level generally demonstrated effectiveness, with instances of strong leadership noted. However, at the programme level, there were challenges in cohesive multi-agency coordination and effective response to unforeseen issues, leading to inefficiencies.

6. **Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:** While some implementing partners utilized advanced tools for community feedback, there was a lack of a consistent and robust programme-level M&E system. This inconsistency impacted the programme's ability to evaluate its efficiency comprehensively.

7. **Strategic Adaptations:** The programme demonstrated adaptability in the face of changing circumstances by redirecting resources to critical interventions and areas. However, this flexibility sometimes led to questions about the efficiency of broader peacebuilding objectives.

8. **Effect of Political and Environmental Challenges:** The security vacuum post-UNAMID and political instability, especially following the coup, and environmental factors such as the rainy season, necessitated strategic adjustments in resource allocation and highlighted the need for programmes to be highly adaptable to maintain relevance.

9. **Perceptions of Resource Adequacy:** KII respondents expressed varied opinions on the sufficiency of resources, with some noting that human resources were insufficient for optimal project implementation, indicating room for improvement in resource allocation.

10. **External Factors Affecting Efficiency:** Security advisories and economic obstacles such as currency inflation posed significant challenges, affecting the timely execution of programme activities and the overall efficiency.

The Darfur Programme's experience offers valuable lessons in managing complex peacebuilding initiatives under challenging conditions. Its adaptability, strategic resource management, and efforts to balance immediate needs with long-term objectives provide a template for future programmes. However, the need for improved planning, coordination, and a consultative approach remains paramount to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in similar complex environments.

5.4 Coherence and Coordination

In the context of the UNPBF Darfur programme, the evaluation of coherence and coordination is pivotal to understanding the effectiveness and impact of the interventions across different states and agencies. This chapter aims to address the main evaluation question and sub-questions:

- *To what extent did recipient UN agencies and implementing partners design and implement the programme in a well-coordinated and coherent manner?*

    o *To what extent did the PBF programme complement existing or previous peacebuilding interventions, including UNAMID State Liaison Functions and other UN or non-UN projects?*

    o *To what extent did the recipient UN agencies and implementing partners coordinated their approaches, strategies and activities with the overarching peacebuilding objectives and priorities of the country/region?*

    o *Were there any challenges or barriers that hindered effective coordination and coherence, and if so, how were they addressed and overcome?*

Delving into these questions, the evaluation aims to comprehensively assess the coordination mechanisms set up to support the implementation of the PBF programme, the extent of complementarity among UN agencies and implementing partners, and the alignment of the PBF programme with existing peacebuilding interventions. It will also evaluate the communication strategies employed by the PBF programme and state projects with various stakeholders and beneficiaries, and how these strategies facilitated or hindered effective coordination and coherence.

Furthermore, the chapter will explore the engagement and collaboration of the PBF supported state projects with local authorities, civil society organizations, the private sector, and regional bodies. This will provide insights into the comprehensive and integrated approach to peacebuilding adopted by the programme.

Finally, the chapter will identify challenges and barriers to effective coordination and coherence, and how these were addressed. It will also examine the synergies created among different actors, including UN agencies, implementing partners, and organizations funded by other donors, active in the targeted communities during and post the PBF programme period.

Analysis

Sentiment Analysis of stakeholder collaboration and coordination

In our evaluation report, we present a sentiment analysis based on KIIs conducted with IPs and Government counterparts in various states and projects. This analysis, illustrated in Figure 4, categorizes the sentiments of the responses into positive, negative, and neutral categories. It's important to note that this analysis reflects *sentiments* at the state and project level and does not necessarily represent programme-level coordination.

For the KII question "To what extent did PBF stakeholders (UN agencies, implementing partners, local authorities, civil society organizations, private sector, and regional bodies) collaborate and coordinate their approaches, strategies, and activities to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to peacebuilding in Sudan?", the evaluation aimed to assess the level of collaboration and coordination among stakeholders.

The analysis revealed that 59% of responses were positive, indicating a general sense of satisfaction with the coordination and collaboration efforts among PBF stakeholders. These positive sentiments were often expressed in terms of effective communication, successful teamwork, and high levels of coordination. For example, one respondent stated, "The collaboration among agencies, including UN-Habitat, native administration, and FAO, was good. All of them have representatives working with us in the ministry." highlighting the perceived effectiveness of collaborative efforts.

Negative sentiments, which constituted 22% of the responses, pointed to specific challenges such as communication gaps, logistical issues, and ineffective management. Additional examples of negative sentiments include remarks like, "There was some uncertainty in the work of the executive committees," and "Many times we had asked for an evaluation meeting to review the steps of implementing the project and discuss the financial aspects and payments that were made, but we did not find any response to our demands," indicating areas that require attention and improvement.

To address these concerns, it is essential for the state-level and locality-level coordination mechanisms (in this context the UN-agency led bodies composed of key stakeholders, including representatives from UN agencies, implementing partners, and possibly local government officials responsible for overseeing and managing the implementation of the project activities) to enhance their operational transparency and responsiveness. This could involve more structured and frequent evaluation meetings, clearer communication of financial aspects, and proactive engagement with all stakeholders to address their concerns. These steps would not only improve the effectiveness of the program but also build trust and confidence among the partners and communities involved. Ensuring that local voices are heard, and their demands are met is crucial for the success of any peacebuilding initiative.

Figure 4. Sentiment analysis of Communication and Collaboration (from KIIs with IPs and Gov.) Green: Positive Sentiment (59%), Red: Negative Sentiment (22%), Blue: Neutral Sentiment (19%). The percentages next to each sentiment category indicate the proportion of that sentiment from the total analysed.
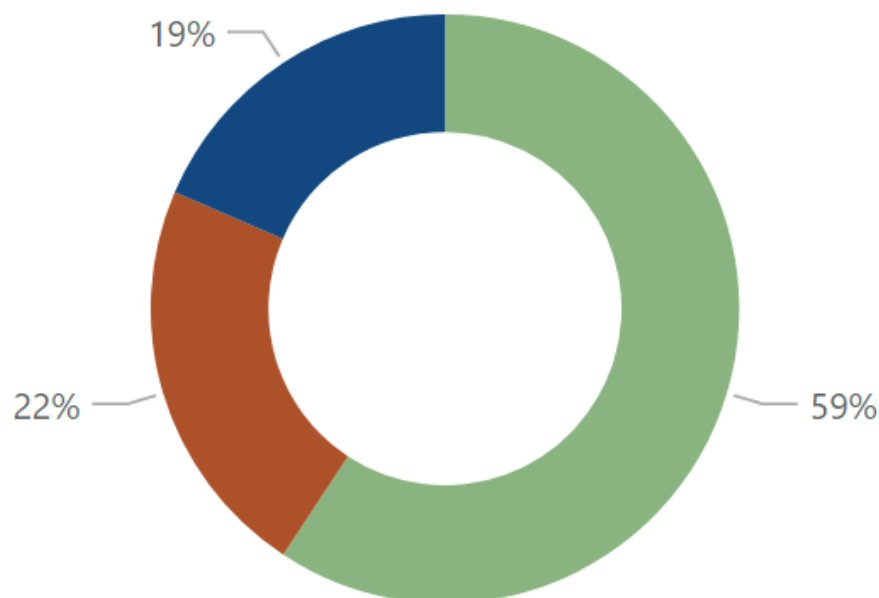
Neutral sentiments, observed in 19% of the instances, typically represented either a lack of strong opinion or a straightforward statement of fact. These responses, such as "I attended one or two of them" and "I don't know," suggest a potential need for further engagement or clarity in certain aspects of the projects. For instance, there might be a gap in understanding the overarching objectives and strategies of the project. Stakeholders, especially those less actively involved, may not have a comprehensive grasp of the project's aims or the methodologies being employed.

There's also a possibility that the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders are not entirely clear. This includes understanding what is expected of the UN agencies, implementing partners, local authorities, and community representatives. A clearer delineation of roles could lead to more effective collaboration and project execution. The decision-making processes within the project might also be an area lacking clarity. This includes how decisions are made regarding priorities, resource distribution, and addressing challenges that arise during project implementation.

Furthermore, there seems to be a need for better awareness regarding the progress and impacts of the project. Regular updates and comprehensive evaluations could help keep all stakeholders informed and engaged. Another area that might require more focus is participation and feedback opportunities. It appears that there might be a need for more interactive channels of communication, where stakeholders can contribute more actively to the projects and offer feedback.

While the overall sentiment towards the coordination and collaboration efforts among PBF stakeholders at the state and project level is predominantly positive, the presence of negative sentiments highlights specific areas of concern. The neutral responses also indicate a need for increased engagement or clarity.

Coordination Mechanisms' Effectiveness

The programme initially set a strong example of the power of effective coordination mechanisms in peacebuilding initiatives. Its success hinged on the seamless collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including UN agencies, implementing partners, local authorities, and civil society organizations, ensuring a comprehensive and integrated strategy for the complex landscape of peacebuilding in Sudan.

A key positive aspect of the programme's coordination mechanisms was the establishment of regular coordination meetings and communication mechanisms within some projects, as indicated by KIIs, crucial for dialogue and decision-making. For instance, Gereida's peacebuilding coordination meetings provided a monthly platform for stakeholders to raise issues in the South Darfur project. Similarly, an East Darfur implementing partner highlighted monthly stakeholder coordination meetings held at the Ministry of Finance, including representatives of UN agencies, implementing partners and local authorities, to discuss the challenges that faced the projects and follow up on implementation monthly. Direct communication mechanisms were also emphasized, as one partner mentioned, "We had a direct communication mechanism with FAO as a donor partner, and FAO in turn had communication mechanisms with the Ministry of Agriculture and Grassland Administration." Where successful, such platforms facilitated dialogue and decision-making processes, with each stakeholder actively contributing to the projects' progression, and were crucial in maintaining a cohesive approach among the diverse stakeholders.

Alternative communication approaches were adopted to overcome challenges posed by poor network coverage. Localized strategies, such as leveraging traditional community gatherings and market days for disseminating information, proved an effective modus operandi in many localities. One of the significant examples was an implementing partners approach to inclusive communication and beneficiary feedback. As highlighted by a KII, the training of community corporals and the provision of phones and tools for feedback represent a proactive effort to engage community members directly. This approach was further complemented by the establishment of complaints boxes, allowing for a diverse range of feedback and evaluations from the community. Such mechanisms ensured that the voices of various stakeholders, especially at the grassroots level, were heard and considered in the decision-making process. These adaptive communication methods not only ensured continuous engagement with the communities but also fostered a sense of ownership and inclusivity among the

beneficiaries. Such examples underscore the importance of context-specific communication strategies in enhancing the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives.

The division of responsibilities among various organizations played a crucial role in enhancing coordination. As indicated in a KII response, the program distinguished between 'soft' and 'hard' components, with different organizations taking responsibility for each. This clear delineation of roles, as exemplified in the case of El Geneina, facilitated high levels of coordination, ensuring that efforts were not duplicated but rather complemented each other. A concrete example of this effective coordination is illustrated by a respondent from an implementing partner. Faced with the potential overlap in tablet distribution in the same operational area that could have caused issues for the implementation, a decision to forgo its distribution to prevent conflicts with beneficiaries was taken. This decision, stemming from strong coordination and communication among partners, demonstrates the program's ability to adapt and respond to on-the-ground realities, thereby maximizing the impact and efficiency of its interventions.

However, several KIs also highlighted shortcomings in coordination mechanisms at various levels. Notably, a respondent emphasized the infrequent nature of meetings after initial workshops, indicating a lapse in sustained coordination efforts. One interviewee noted the effectiveness of having focal points and lead agencies to support coordination, which improved the collection of inputs and compilation of state-level reports. However, challenges in disseminating information at the state level to grassroots communities were identified, indicating a need for better communication strategies.

This gap in regular, active engagement among stakeholders led to concerns about the effectiveness of coordination as what rather happened were mere information dissemination through emails, which made it difficult to effectively coordinate. KIIs also revealed a lack of consistent representation and active involvement of local communities in these decision-making processes. In some instances, community leaders failed to adequately represent or communicate the views of their communities in coordination forums, suggesting a disconnect between grassroots needs and program implementation strategies.

In the early stages of the programme, one of the significant challenges stemmed from the sheer complexity of coordinating across five state-level projects, involving six UN agencies, and numerous other stakeholders ranging from community representatives to government officials. This multifaceted framework necessitated intricate coordination at different levels and across various entities, posing a substantial challenge to the program's coherence and effectiveness.

KIIs highlighted that the initial involvement of government stakeholders in selecting localities and influencing other aspects of the programme was challenging. KIIs indicated that the government stakeholders, especially in the first year, was keen on being a part of critical decision-making processes, such as selecting localities for project implementation. Efforts were made to reconcile the views of the government with those of the communities, aiming for a balanced approach that catered to the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders involved. Regular monthly meetings facilitated by entities like the Ministry of Finance, both at state and locality levels, were instrumental in fostering a platform for collaboration and cost-sharing. These interactions were particularly crucial in navigating through the recurring security challenges and conflicts, which often disrupted planned field missions.

The coordination complexities were exacerbated by the tendency of UN agencies to work in silos. KIIs revealed that this siloed approach by UN agencies posed significant barriers to achieving a cohesive and unified strategy. The absence of a streamlined approach led to duplicated efforts in some instances and gaps in others, thereby impeding the overall impact of the programme.

The coup d'état emerged as a pivotal event in this context. Post-coup, there was a noticeable shift towards enhanced inter-agency coordination by some KIIs ascribed to the initial confusion around the state of the programme in the new context. As such, agencies that had previously maintained a more isolated approach began to engage more actively in the coordination mechanism. This period was marked by an increase in collaborative efforts, not just between UN agencies and their implementing partners but also involving the remaining local government bodies.

The Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) played a particularly notable role during this phase, exerting increased control and influence. KIIs indicated that, earlier, HAC had often exerted significant pressure on UN agencies, compelling them to select local partners, often in a manner that was directive rather than suggestive. This approach, prevalent until 2019, saw a shift when HAC became more flexible, moving towards recommending rather than dictating the choice of organisations. However, post the coup d'état in the second year of the programme, HAC's control and influence increased again. Despite this change, the collaborations continued with the same organisations, indicating a level of consistency in partnerships despite the evolving political landscape.

The challenges of coordinating such a diverse and expansive set of stakeholders highlight the need for a more integrated approach. There is a clear indication from the KIIs that overcoming the barriers of siloed operations and harmonizing the efforts of various UN agencies, local governments, and community representatives are essential for the success of complex, multi-faceted programmes like the one in Darfur. The experience underlines the importance of adaptable and flexible coordination mechanisms capable of effectively managing the dynamics of such a diverse stakeholder environment.

Working in hard-to-reach areas, there were also instances of communication challenges. Respondents note how some community members felt their views were not adequately represented in the coordinating mechanism. In some good examples, these challenges were addressed through traditional methods of communication and by leveraging local knowledge, as seen in the use of market days for community updates in areas with poor network coverage (described above). This adaptive approach ensured that even in the face of obstacles, effective communication was maintained.

The arrival of the PBF-supported Field Coordinators embedded in the three lead UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR), was seen as a critical improvement in coordination efforts. Their presence highlighted the need for more authoritative and ground-level coordination from the onset of the programme. KIIs similarly highlighted how the effectiveness of the coordination mechanism was impacted negatively at the assignment end (in line with initial project timing).

The involvement of the PBF-supported Field Coordinators within the three lead UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR) marked a significant stride in enhancing coordination and effectiveness of the program. Their contributions underscored the value of having robust and authoritative coordination at the ground level from the beginning of the program. This leads to an opportunity for the PBF secretariat to further expand its role beyond funding and monitoring. While the secretariat currently

has a crucial role in these areas, there is a potential for it to more actively facilitate inter-agency collaboration. The successful implementation of projects by individual agencies provides a strong foundation upon which the PBF secretariat can build to promote more integrated, collaborative projects. This approach would not only strengthen cross-agency collaboration but also solidify the implementation of Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus practices. The evaluation team's observations suggest that with increased involvement from the PBF secretariat in fostering collaboration, the program could achieve greater synergies and a more cohesive impact across different initiatives.

External factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and regional security challenges, further complicated coordination efforts. These factors not only disrupted planned activities and meetings but also exposed the limited adaptability of the program's coordination mechanisms to the "unforeseen" challenges arising in the region. The program's response to external challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and regional security issues demonstrated some adaptability. This included a shift to virtual platforms for meetings and coordination when in-person interactions were restricted and adjusting project timelines and activities in response to security challenges. However, these measures, while showing a degree of flexibility, were not comprehensive enough to fully counteract the significant impacts on overall coordination and project progression.

Additionally, the program's approach to leveraging the strengths of various UN agencies and partners, by clearly dividing roles to enhance their comparative advantages, encountered obstacles in achieving coherent and coordinated efforts across different implementation levels. From local to regional stages, there were notable inconsistencies in collaboration and communication strategies. This was particularly evident in the comments from one KII, who pointed out, 'While agencies worked within their specializations, such as FAO focusing on agriculture and UNICEF on education, there often lacked a unified approach, leading to some overlap and gaps.' These issues resulted in disjointed efforts, underlining the need for more integrated communication and collaboration strategies to ensure a cohesive approach across all levels of the program. "In terms of communication strategies within the program, the analysis revealed a complex picture. While mechanisms for information sharing among stakeholders were in place, their effectiveness in reaching all relevant parties, particularly at the grassroots level, was uneven. Traditional communication methods were employed, but external challenges, such as security concerns and pandemic-related restrictions, hindered their effectiveness. This inconsistency in communication contributed to a lack of coherence in program efforts, highlighting the need for more inclusive and flexible communication strategies to ensure that all stakeholders, especially those at the grassroots level, are adequately informed and engaged.

Despite these challenges, the programme's strength remained in the strategic role distribution among UN agencies and partners, based on their areas of expertise. This ensured good management of each peacebuilding aspect, leading to many successful activities and outputs. The individual projects also accomplished good results in engaging local communities and government bodies, ensuring that projects were well-received and tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the areas they aimed to serve.

The PBF programme's engagement with various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and local communities, was a key factor in its comprehensive approach to peacebuilding. This

engagement was facilitated through state and local-level coordination mechanisms, involving all relevant actors. The programme's ability to integrate these diverse perspectives and expertise, as demonstrated in the collaboration with the El Daein University affiliated East Darfur Center for Peace Studies and Research, who played a significant role in capacity building and awareness raising, was also instrumental in achieving a holistic peacebuilding strategy.

While the UNPBF program in Darfur established various coordination and communication mechanisms, the effectiveness of these mechanisms was uneven across different state projects, stakeholder levels and in the face of external challenges. The program demonstrated some successes in establishing platforms for dialogue and decision-making, but these were offset by shortcomings in continuous engagement, inclusive representation, adaptability to external challenges, and consistent inter-agency collaboration. The findings suggest a need for more robust coordination mechanisms that can effectively engage diverse stakeholders, adapt to changing circumstances, and ensure coherent and coordinated efforts across all levels of implementation.

Complementarity and Leveraging Comparative Advantages

The PBF programme in Darfur was ambitiously designed to synergize the efforts of various UN agencies and implementing partners. This strategy was based on the principle that each entity would bring its unique strengths and expertise to the table, creating a collaborative environment conducive to effective peacebuilding. As one respondent noted, "The proper distribution of roles among the UN agencies was the best example of benefiting from their respective comparative advantages." This strategic distribution of roles, with agencies like FAO focusing on agriculture and UNICEF on education and health facilities, ensured that each aspect of the peacebuilding process was handled by those most capable.

The programme also demonstrated a level of complementarity among UN agencies and implementing partners. For example, in the Jabal Moon area, considered a hot conflict zone, an early warning system was established, and reconciliation committees were trained on it. This approach was a testament to the effective coordination and utilization of different advantages of both partners and UN agencies.

There were numerous instances of successful collaboration even extending efforts beyond its direct partners. A notable instance of this broader collaboration was highlighted by one respondent: 'In our network, we've had ongoing meetings with our FAO partners, regularly accessing and exchanging reports, views, and experiences.' Another significant example is the coordination between the FAO and the World Food Program, working together to provide fuel for localities. Such instances underscore the program's ability to engage effectively with a wider array of actors, enhancing the overall impact and reach of its peacebuilding initiatives in the region.

Despite the intentions, the programme often encountered challenges in achieving true synergy. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the military takeover, and the resurgence of local conflicts significantly disrupted the planned collaborative efforts. These events led to a noticeable shift in the operational dynamics of the programme. Agencies began to revert to a more siloed approach, focusing on their individual mandates rather than the collective goal. This shift was not just a strategic realignment but also a response to the rapidly changing on-the-ground realities, which demanded immediate and specialized interventions.

The initial phase of the project saw agencies adopting more siloed approaches, leading to some fragmentation and duplication in peacebuilding efforts. However, a significant shift occurred following the arrival of coordinators and the political coup, marking a turning point towards greater inter-agency collaboration. Despite this progress, challenges persisted. While the move towards collaboration reduced the silo mentality, overlapping activities continued due to time constraints and the urgency of implementation, amplified during the no-cost extension period. Although monthly communication meetings and updates were established as a platform for information sharing and progress tracking, they were not fully effective. A key issue was the inconsistent attendance of different sections or clusters within the same agency at these meetings, leading to a lack of comprehensive oversight and continued inadvertent duplication of efforts. This scenario highlights the complexities of achieving full coherence and coordination in a multi-agency, multi-faceted peacebuilding initiative.

Complementarity with Existing or Previous Peacebuilding Interventions

The PBF programme was initially designed under the assumption of a relatively stable post-UNAMID environment in Sudan. However, the resurgence of conflict in various parts of the country, particularly in Darfur, significantly disrupted this premise. For instance, in the aftermath of UNAMID's withdrawal, driven more by political and financial considerations than the fulfilment of its mandate, any expectations of a peaceful transition, quickly saw the reality of a security and power vacuum, inadvertently escalating tensions and conflicts over resources among armed groups and civilians. These clashes were not just between traditional combatants but often involved communal violence, which was deeply rooted in long-standing grievances and competition over resources. The subsequent introduction of UNITAMS, not conducted with adequate sensitivity to the existing conflict dynamics, further exacerbated these tensions.

This resurgence of conflict had a direct impact on the PBF programme's objectives. Projects aimed at supporting the return or relocation of IDPs were particularly affected. The program was initially predicated on a stable post-UNAMID environment, expecting to support a peaceful transition and facilitate the return of IDPs by creating conducive conditions, such as improving local infrastructure and providing livelihood opportunities. However, the reality on the ground diverged sharply from these expectations. The resurgence of violence, partly triggered by the abrupt withdrawal of UNAMID and the uncoordinated arrival of UNITAMS, led to increased instability. This instability not only made the return of IDPs unfeasible but also contributed to the rise in new IDP cases, as more individuals were displaced due to the renewed clashes.

Furthermore, these developments impeded the Agencies' ability to interact effectively with communities and authorities, complicating program implementation and operations. The PBF programme had to navigate this complex, rapidly evolving situation, where its initial objectives and planned interventions were continuously challenged by the changing security dynamics and the unintended consequences of the transition from UNAMID to UNITAMS.

The military coup in Sudan added another layer of complexity to the PBF programme's operational environment. The coup caused a significant shift in the political and security dynamics, leading to changes in government policies and strategies that directly impacted the programme's objectives. This necessitated a reassessment of the PBF's wider strategies, particularly in areas like governance and

democratic transitions, which were greatly affected by the new military-led government's differing priorities.

Furthermore, the situation of IDPs in Darfur presented a significant challenge relative to the programme's objective of facilitating their return or relocation. Not only did the existing IDPs opt to remain in the camps due to ongoing safety concerns, but these camps also experienced an influx of new IDPs due to renewed conflicts and environmental crises like droughts. Interestingly, KIIs suggested that the better general services available in the camps, including WASH, education, and food supply, made these locations more appealing to IDPs than their less secure and resource-scarce home localities.

Concerns have emerged from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) suggesting that, paradoxically, the program's strategies might be leading to an unintended promotion of service reduction within these camps. The perception that reducing services might indirectly compel IDPs to leave the camps and return to their insecure home areas creates a dilemma. This critique highlights the intricate challenge facing the program in Darfur: the need to balance the provision of essential services and safety within camps against the goal of reducing dependency on these camps. The situation underscores a fundamental conflict in objectives—maintaining safety and adequate living conditions in the camps while also encouraging IDPs to consider returning to their original homes or relocating to more secure areas.

The design and implementation of the PBF programme were characterized by a well-coordinated approach, with a focus on addressing the specific needs of the communities. This was achieved through extensive studies and consultations, ensuring that the activities were coherent and complementary. Project activities included the involvement of communities in every step of the design process, as well as the clear definition of roles among partners, contributed significantly to project successes. However, while engaging local communities through needs assessments etc. respondents also mentioned the missed opportunity of engaging the existing local Resistance Committees more directly and basing some activities on these existing structures and instead focusing on (re)establishing new forms of committees and networks. The Resistance Committees, which has been and are crucial in the grassroots civil society processes across Sudan and are deeply embedded in the local communities, have a profound understanding of the ground realities, and could have played a significant role in the programme's strategy, which however was not designed with this intention of engaging these.

While the programme actively involved community-based resolution/reconciliation/peace committees, which have been integral in grassroots civil society processes across Sudan, the resistance committees — representing a different facet of grassroots engagement and possessing deep local insights — were not a primary focus of the programme. Integrating these committees, known for their profound understanding of local realities, could have potentially enhanced the programme's strategy and impact, especially in navigating complex community dynamics.

Another aspect of the lack of complementarity and coherence is found in the noticeable shift in the narrative surrounding the PBF programme following the military coup in Sudan. Respondents indicated that the programme began actively to distance itself from the activities and approaches of

UNITAMS. This shift was not merely a strategic realignment but also a response to the changing political landscape. The military coup had altered the power dynamics and the operational environment in Sudan, necessitating a re-evaluation of how international peacebuilding efforts were perceived and conducted.

The PBF programme, conscious of the evolving political landscape post-coup, strategically positioned itself as distinct from UNITAMS. KIIs point out that this distinction was not just a matter of operational necessity but a response to the complex political dynamics following the coup. The PBF programme's emphasis on strong stakeholder coordination, as evidenced by regular coordination meetings and effective communication mechanisms with UN agencies, implementing partners, and local communities, underlined its commitment to a more ground-level, community-centric approach. This approach was crucial in maintaining the programme's effectiveness and relevance, especially considering the potential suspicion or resistance from the new military-led government towards international interventions associated with high-level political support and peace processes, the primary focus of UNITAMS. The programme's flexibility in adapting to unexpected incidents like conflicts and displacements, and its conscious effort to engage with local-level community networks, further distinguished its role and function from that of UNITAMS. Feedback from KIIs highlights the programme's efforts to remain responsive and adaptable to the shifting political and security landscape, ensuring that its initiatives were not impeded by the broader geopolitical shifts in the region.

This change in narrative and approach had a cascading effect on the activities of the UN agencies involved in the PBF programme. With the challenges increasing, agencies increasingly reverted to their traditional mandates and areas of expertise. This shift was a pragmatic response to the new operational realities, where a more cohesive and integrated approach, as initially envisioned, became challenging to sustain. Instead, the focus of UN agencies moved towards individual projects and mandates, rather than a collective, coherent strategy. This change was evident in the way agencies prioritized their interventions, often aligning more closely with their core areas of expertise and less with the broader, integrated objectives of the PBF programme, even if it meant less coordination and coherence with other UN efforts.

Conclusion Coherence and Coordination

In summarizing the evaluation of coherence and coordination within the UNPBF Darfur programme, it becomes evident that the landscape of collaboration, while marked by commendable efforts, faced significant complexities. The strategic role distribution among various UN agencies and partners, leveraging their unique strengths, stood out as a key success factor. The program's inclusive approach, involving communities in the planning and execution phases, further enhanced its effectiveness and relevance.

The program, however, navigated through a series of formidable external challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic, the resurgence of conflicts, and notably the military coup in Sudan, significantly influenced the dynamics of the program. While COVID-19 initially led to fragmentation in efforts and pushed agencies into more siloed approaches, the coup rather catalysed improvements in coordination

among agencies, noted by KIIs that identified a notable shift towards better inter-agency collaboration, adapting to the new political landscape and uncertainties.

A crucial element in this improved coordination was the introduction of PBF seconded coordinators within the lead UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR). Their presence marked a significant improvement in the program's coordination efforts. These coordinators played a pivotal role in bridging communication gaps, facilitating collaboration, and ensuring a more grounded and cohesive approach to the implementation of the program. The effectiveness of these coordinators, as indicated in the KIIs, underscores the importance of having dedicated, authoritative roles at the ground level from the onset of such programs.

Despite these advancements, challenges persisted in maintaining consistent coordination and effective communication across all levels of implementation. The program sometimes struggled with sustained engagement and inclusive representation, leading to gaps in achieving a cohesive strategy.

Looking ahead, the experiences and lessons learned from the PBF Darfur programme are invaluable for future peacebuilding initiatives. Strengthening coordination mechanisms, enhancing communication strategies to effectively engage all stakeholders, and maintaining a flexible approach in the face of unpredicted challenges are imperative. The role of dedicated coordinators, as exemplified by the PBF seconded coordinators, highlights the need for authoritative, on-the-ground coordination from the beginning of such programs. The program's adaptability in response to external challenges and its capacity to evolve its coordination mechanisms provide key insights for managing complex, multi-stakeholder environments in politically and socially volatile contexts.

In conclusion, the UNPBF Darfur programme offers a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in coordinating multi-agency peacebuilding efforts. It reflects the potential and challenges of such endeavours, emphasizing the need for continuous adaptation and evolution in strategies to achieve effective coherence and coordination in peacebuilding efforts.

Key Findings - Coherence and Coordination:

1. **Effectiveness of Coordination Mechanisms:** The programme initially showcased effective coordination mechanisms, with regular meetings and communication channels within some projects. Traditional communication methods were also adapted to local contexts, enhancing engagement with communities. However, challenges were noted in maintaining consistent engagement and active involvement of local communities in decision-making processes.

2. **Division of Responsibilities:** The strategic role distribution among UN agencies and partners, based on their areas of expertise, contributed to the program's success, but faced challenges in achieving true synergy, especially following external events like the COVID-19 pandemic and military coup.

3. **Narrative Shift Post-Coup:** Following the military coup, there was a noticeable shift in the program's narrative and approach, with a strategic distancing from UNITAMS and a focus on ground-level, community-centric approaches.

4. **Challenges in Coherence and Coordination:** The program faced difficulties in maintaining coherent and coordinated efforts across different implementation levels. While individual projects achieved success in engaging local communities and government bodies, the overall coherence and coordination of the program were challenged by the complexity of coordinating across diverse stakeholders and the evolving political landscape.

5. **Role of PBF Seconded Coordinators:** The introduction of PBF seconded coordinators within the lead UN agencies marked a significant improvement in the program's coordination efforts, emphasizing the importance of having dedicated roles at the ground level from the onset.

6. **Strategic Challenges:** Despite the program's strategic approach to leveraging the strengths of various UN agencies and partners, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a more agency-centric approach, affecting the overall coherence of the program. While the military coup to some extent resulted in UN-agencies need for improved coordinated efforts in order to responding to challenges, KIIs suggest that the problem from UN-agency siloes continued to be an issue to achieve an integrated HDP-nexus approach across agencies.

The UNPBF Darfur program, while demonstrating commendable efforts in coordination and collaboration, encountered significant challenges due to the complex nature of its implementation and the external political and environmental changes. The program's success in certain areas was overshadowed by difficulties in maintaining an integrated approach across different agencies and stakeholders.

The role of PBF seconded coordinators was pivotal in enhancing coordination, suggesting a need for strong, authoritative coordination from the beginning of such programs. The program's adaptability in response to external challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and regional security issues, was crucial, though not comprehensive enough to fully counteract the impacts on overall coordination.

Looking ahead, the lessons learned from the PBF Darfur program underline the importance of strengthening coordination mechanisms, enhancing communication strategies, and maintaining a flexible approach in the face of unpredicted challenges. The program's experiences provide valuable insights for managing complex, multi-stakeholder environments in politically and socially volatile contexts, emphasizing the need for continuous adaptation and evolution in strategies to achieve effective coherence and coordination in peacebuilding efforts. We will get further into these aspects in the dedicated chapter on lessons-learned and recommendations.

5.5 Sustainability and Ownership

In the realm of peacebuilding, the sustainability of initiatives and the ownership by local and national stakeholders are pivotal for the long-term success and resilience of conflict-affected communities. The PBF programme in Darfur, presents a unique case study in this regard. This chapter delves into the critical aspects of sustainability and ownership within the programme, exploring how these elements were integrated into the peacebuilding efforts and their impact on the communities and stakeholders involved.

The UNPBF programme in Darfur was designed with a vision to not only address immediate peacebuilding needs but also to lay a foundation for enduring peace and stability. This vision necessitated a strategic approach that emphasized local and national ownership, capacity building, and the development of sustainable peacebuilding mechanisms. The programme's commitment to these principles is reflected in its design and implementation strategies, which aimed to empower local communities and institutions, ensuring that the benefits of peacebuilding efforts would continue beyond the programme's lifespan.

Insights from KII respondents underscore the multifaceted nature of sustainability in peacebuilding efforts, with respondents highlighting the necessity of embedding sustainable structures and practices within the fabric of local communities, emphasizing the role of capacity building and community ownership in ensuring the longevity of peace initiatives. Other KIIs draws attention to the critical aspect of financial sustainability, suggesting that the programme's impact is intrinsically linked to its funding model. This perspective calls for exploring diverse funding avenues, including partnerships and income-generating activities, to maintain financial stability. Furthermore, one respondent brought to light the significance of aligning interventions with the local context, advocating for a deeper understanding and adaptation to local needs and conditions to enhance sustainability.

This chapter aims to evaluate the extent to which the UNPBF programme in Darfur succeeded in implementing an effective sustainability and exit strategy. It scrutinizes the programme's efforts in promoting national and local ownership, utilizing national capacities, and ensuring that the positive changes initiated by the programme are sustained after its conclusion. This evaluation is crucial for understanding the programme's long-term impact and for informing future peacebuilding initiatives.

The central evaluation questions guiding this section is:

- ***To what extent did the programme implement an appropriate sustainability and exit strategy (including promoting national/local ownership, use of national capacity etc.) to support positive changes in peacebuilding after the end of the programme?***

    o *How strong is the commitment of the Government, communities, and other stakeholders to sustain the results of the programme and continuing initiatives, including with regards to women and youth participation?*

    o *To what extent did the PBF supported state projects successfully address the root causes and drivers of conflict in the target areas, and contribute to preventing relapse into conflict?*

    o *Was the PBF programme financially and/or programmatically catalytic?*

Understanding the dynamics of sustainability and ownership in peacebuilding is essential for the creation of resilient and self-sustaining peace processes. This chapter not only assesses the effectiveness of the UNPBF programme in these areas but also contributes valuable insights for the broader field of peacebuilding, particularly in complex and fluid conflict environments like Darfur.

Analysis of Sustainability and Ownership

Stakeholder Commitment and Collaborative Efforts

The commitment levels of the government, communities, and other stakeholders in sustaining the programme's results were significant. Implementing Partners Key Informant Interviews revealed a strong engagement of local communities and stakeholders in the decision-making and implementation processes. This involvement was critical in fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the peacebuilding activities.

Initially, the establishment of a Joint UN-Government Steering Committee was a strategic move to ensure government ownership and effective coordination. This committee, including key ministries and UN agencies, was meant to guide the programme, blending national insight with international expertise. However, the unforeseen military coup dramatically altered this landscape, significantly undermining the effectiveness of this national-level ownership strategy.

The military coup however had a profound impact on the programme, as seen earlier, and effectively also severing many of the established ties and ownership strategies at the national level. This unexpected turn of events left the programme largely isolated from national government ownership, further complicated by UNITAMS' continued narrative of a transitional process, which barely existed post-coup, leaving the programme with minimal opportunities for promoting Khartoum-level ownership. Despite the challenges at the central government level, the concept of national ownership within the programme persisted robustly at state and locality levels. These levels of engagement provided a foundation for sustaining the programme's objectives despite the political upheaval more centrally in Khartoum.

In response to these challenges, the programme pivoted to focus more on local-level ownership efforts in individual projects by engaging with local government bodies that were still operational and willing to cooperate. A prime example of this was the collaboration between UNHABITAT and the North Darfur Ministry of Agriculture. This collaboration, focusing on capacity building in the use of GIS for land-planning research and community needs assessments, demonstrated some resilience and ability to adapt to the changing political landscape. This training was crucial for relocation activities of IDPs, aiming for durable solutions. The effectiveness of this training is encapsulated in the statement, "Now we have a very strong team that can work anywhere, data collection, mapping. They are well-trained. We can depend on them for any work and mapping." It underscores the importance of local-level engagements in sustaining peacebuilding efforts, especially when national-level support is compromised.

Other parts of the PBF programme also recognized the importance of engaging a wide array of stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of its peacebuilding efforts. This engagement extended beyond government agencies to include local communities, local police, NGOs, and other relevant groups. A key strategy used by various projects was the engagement and formation of specialized committees, which were instrumental in addressing the specific needs and dynamics of different communities.

These committees were tailored to tackle unique local issues, ensuring that the initiatives were not only relevant but also responsive to the distinct challenges faced by each community. For instance, in areas where land and water resources were a point of contention, the programme established

committees that specifically focused on these issues. The composition of these committees was carefully considered to include representatives from various community groups, thereby fostering a sense of inclusivity and collective responsibility.

One of the significant challenges faced by the programme was securing the involvement of nomadic communities, particularly in water and land committees. Historically, in Darfur, there have been tensions between nomadic and farming communities, primarily revolving around access to and control over natural resources like water and land. These tensions often escalated into conflicts, making the involvement of nomads in peacebuilding initiatives both crucial and complex.

To address this, the projects employed various strategies. One respondent noted the importance of building trust with the nomadic communities through continuous engagement and dialogue. This inclusion was not merely symbolic but aimed at ensuring that the voices and perspectives of the nomadic communities were heard and considered in decision-making processes. Understanding their unique lifestyle, needs, and concerns was pivotal in designing interventions that were both practical and acceptable to them. Another respondent mentions how they struggled to include nomadic representatives in the water and land committees as they had little trust in such mechanisms, and that their representation was essential for mitigating the historical conflicts over resources and foster a more collaborative approach to resource management.

Project documents also showcase how projects worked on raising awareness among all stakeholders about the importance of peaceful coexistence and shared resource management. This involved organizing workshops and training sessions that emphasized conflict resolution, negotiation skills, and the benefits of cooperation.

The programme's sustainability and exit strategy, as reflected in the KII responses, showed a mixed level of effectiveness. This issue was evident in the project documents, which contained none or vague evidence of such strategies, and were an issue repeatedly noted in KIIs. While there were efforts to promote national and local ownership, such as forming peace and community protection committees, building government capacities in locality planning and training cooperatives in management and self-reliance, these initiatives faced challenges in continuity and effectiveness. The lack of a unified exit strategy across partners and the reliance on community education and ownership mechanisms varied in success. Some respondents noted the formation of specialized community committees trained in operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation, which are continuing their work effectively. However, others pointed out the absence of a link between partners in project implementation stages, affecting sustainability and exit. Recognizing this shortcoming, the PBF Secretariat has since mandated a separate, detailed sustainability strategy and exit planning template for future projects, indicating a need for more careful planning in initial project designs to ensure long-term sustainability and success.

The programme encountered several challenges in promoting national and local ownership of peacebuilding activities. Conflict and interest issues, the transient nature of certain community members, and the frequent changes in government staff were cited as significant obstacles. Despite these challenges, some positive steps were taken, such as training communities in conflict resolution and engaging them in decision-making processes. However, the lack of a comprehensive and unified approach to these challenges was evident.

The programme's alignment with broader peacebuilding objectives in Darfur was generally seen as positive. Respondents acknowledging that the programme's strategies were consistent with the peacebuilding goals in the region, including addressing conflict root causes, promoting reconciliation, and strengthening governance. However, there were concerns about the programme's scope and depth. While it contributed to overarching objectives, its comprehensiveness in tackling all aspects of these broad goals was not fully realized. This suggests a need for more thorough coverage and deeper engagement in certain areas to fully meet these peacebuilding objectives.

The programme's approach to involving local communities and stakeholders in decision-making and implementation processes was one of its stronger aspects. The KIIs indicated a high level of community involvement from the project's inception, with community leaders and local government playing significant roles in implementation. This involvement was crucial in ensuring that the projects were accepted and supported by the communities. However, challenges such as securing the involvement of nomads and addressing tribal conflicts were noted.

Catalytic Impact and Capacity Building

The PBF is predicated on the principle of creating a catalytic impact both financially and programmatically with its interventions. This concept involves initiating projects that, despite their short-term nature, are expected to trigger longer-lasting peacebuilding processes. The underlying assumption is that these initial investments will galvanize further resources, commitment, and actions from local, national, and international stakeholders, thereby creating a sustainable peacebuilding momentum.

In the context of the Darfur programme, assessing the effectiveness of the PBF's approach in achieving a catalytic impact is crucial. This evaluation must consider the complex socio-political landscape of Darfur, marked by protracted conflict, deep-rooted grievances, and a challenging transition phase.

The programme demonstrated a notable catalytic impact of peacebuilding approaches at a programmatic level. This is evident in projects like those by FAO and the Ministry of Infrastructure in North Darfur, which showcased innovative approaches to locality replanning for IDP returns. KIIs reinforced this observation, indicating a change in the way implementing organizations, including government bodies and local NGOs with little previous peacebuilding experience, approached projects. There was a marked shift towards more inclusive community involvement and conflict sensitivity as well as understanding of the important of workshops in for example conflict resolution. These examples highlight the program's success in fostering new, more effective peacebuilding methodologies and influencing broader peacebuilding strategies within the more traditional developments and humanitarian assistance projects in the region.

An important aspect of the catalytic impact is also its influence on subsequent peacebuilding initiatives. For instance, a UNICEF/WFP social cohesion project funded by KfW has been a noteworthy example mentioned by respondents. While this was a notable example, the evaluation team found that rather than examples of catalytic impacts in form of new initiatives and funding, there was a persistent worry from stakeholders and Implementing Partners for the inability to identify new funding after the PBF programme to sustain and expand upon initial successes. A notable example includes the collaborative efforts by FAO and the Ministry of Infrastructure in North Darfur, aiming to

extend their successful locality replanning for IDP returns, hindered by a lack of follow-up funding. Similarly, IPs expressed frustration regarding the sustainability of crucial infrastructure projects such as police outposts and water reservoirs (hafeers), and the continuation of specialized services like child protection units in police departments and trained GIS staff in government offices. These cases underscore a critical need for ongoing financial support and strategic planning beyond the project's initial term, to ensure lasting impact and sustainability of the peacebuilding efforts. Incorporating lessons from the PBF programme can shape and inspire future peacebuilding efforts and KIIs noted the need of strengthening the PBF programme's role in fostering a foundation for ongoing peacebuilding work, encouraging new investments and strategies tailored to Darfur's unique context.

Additionally, this also points to the critical challenge in peacebuilding efforts: the need for a conducive and stable environment to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions. The final responsibility of maintaining the results of activities largely falls on local and national governments and communities, however, KIIs agreed that the level of peace and stability were largely insufficient for the success of many initiatives' sustainability. While this also underlines the limitations of what external agencies can achieve, emphasizing the crucial role of local and national stakeholders in sustaining peacebuilding efforts, it also points to the need for establishing conducive spaces for peace as well as functioning government bodies to secure these environments in order to give local communities a chance for sustainable peace.

The programme's reliance on short-term funding and interventions revealed a significant gap in achieving a lasting catalytic impact. Many stakeholders and respondents indicated the necessity for continued and expanded funding, suggesting that the initial interventions did not sufficiently stimulate further peacebuilding investments or actions.

The programme's focus on "short-term" projects appeared misaligned with the intricate and enduring nature of peacebuilding required in Darfur. The region's entrenched conflicts and the psycho-social needs of its population necessitate a more sustained and comprehensive approach, extending beyond the scope of typical PBF interventions 2–3-year durations.

The programme heavily leaned on narratives of transitional processes, such as IDP returns and the assumption of programme continuation by local and national governments. This approach, conceived during a period marked by considerable momentum and optimism in Sudan's political transition, failed to account for the new realities on the ground post-UNAMID and the military coup, including the destabilizing effects of political upheavals and the ongoing governance and security challenges.

The challenge posed by the coup and the failing transitional process in Darfur significantly influenced the approach of UN agencies. Faced with a context that seemed to require peacekeeping more than peacebuilding, agencies often reverted to 'what-they-know' – traditional social-development projects. While these projects were layered with thorough needs assessments and included elements like training WASH committees in conflict resolution, there was a noticeable lack of follow-up after project implementation. Several respondents expressed concerns about the longevity and sustainable impact of such projects, questioning whether these initiatives truly addressed the deeper, more complex aspects of peacebuilding in Darfur. As one respondent noted: "The PBF comes and puts peace on top of civil services. It is important to build the basic human needs of schools and water projects. But with

one attack people leave these places, it's not a way forward for peace." KIIs and desk research also revealed that there was little proof of follow-up after project implementation and several respondents shared concerns about the longevity of activities and projects.

The programme's sustainability and long-term impact have been significantly tested by the post-coup environment. The initial design, while relevant at the time, did not sufficiently anticipate the drastic political shifts that occurred. This oversight highlights the need for more robust contingency planning and strategic foresight in programme design, especially in regions prone to political instability.

A former regional governor and peacebuilding expert, who has extensive governance experience in Darfur, shed light on critical sustainability challenges. This expert, speaking from a position of deep understanding of the region's dynamics, emphasized the pitfalls of implementing peacebuilding projects without adequately adapting them to the unique context of Darfur. He pointed out that projects designed elsewhere and copied to Darfur misses the unique cultural, social, and political dynamics, leading to ineffective or counterproductive outcomes and more often than now will fail to achieve their intended impact, underscoring a significant sustainability issue.

Furthermore, this expert highlighted the pervasive issue of corruption, particularly in project implementations similar to the Darfur programme, which undermines the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts. He stressed that without addressing these systemic challenges, including the absence of law and justice, peacebuilding initiatives might inadvertently increase crimes and violence, thereby hindering sustainable peace.

The expert also underscored the need for a more nuanced approach to peacebuilding that includes a focus on behavioural change and trauma healing. He criticized the repetitive nature of UN projects – including PBF-supported projects under evaluation of which he had been a stakeholder in during his time as governor – for their repetitive nature and lack of emphasis on these critical aspects, which are essential for achieving long-lasting peace. This perspective is vital for designing peacebuilding programs that are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable in the long run.

The capacity building of local organizations and institutions was a critical component of the programme, with varied outcomes. While some local NGOs received training that enhanced their reporting and proposal writing skills, others noted a lack of capacity-building programs for local partner organizations. The sustainability of these efforts was questioned, with some respondents pointing out the cessation of activities post-project and the short duration of the project as obstacles to achieving long-term goals.

A notable concern raised by respondents is the frequent change in both government personnel as well as agencies and implementing partner organizations. This turnover is not merely a matter of replacing individuals; it often leads to shifts in policy direction, priorities, and approaches. Such changes can disrupt the momentum of ongoing projects, leading to delays and a potential re-evaluation of established strategies. The impact of this turnover extends beyond administrative disruptions; it erodes the institutional memory and continuity that are crucial for the long-term success of peacebuilding efforts. KIIs highlighted those frequent changes in government personnel and within implementing partner organizations posed a challenge to sustaining the developed skills and knowledge. This turnover rate disrupted the momentum of ongoing projects and diluted the impact

of the training and capacity building efforts, as new personnel often required re-training. This constant cycle of training new staff not only strained the programme's resources but also impacted the continuity and effectiveness of the peacebuilding initiatives. Therefore, addressing the issue of high staff turnover is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability and efficacy of capacity-building efforts within such programmes.

Moreover, the inconsistency brought about by frequent staff changes can undermine the trust and confidence of local communities and partners in the programme. Building and maintaining relationships is a cornerstone of effective peacebuilding, and the disruption caused by changing personnel can hinder the development of these crucial bonds.

Several respondents also highlighted how the programme's financial sustainability is a pivotal factor in achieving a lasting catalytic impact, with several critiquing the reliance on short-term funding, noting its incompatibility with the prolonged nature of peacebuilding in Darfur. Both KIIs from implementing partners and government agencies underscored the need for more varied and enduring funding models to ensure continuous peace efforts.

One of the key issues raised was the PBF's approach to funding, which primarily benefits larger organizations like UN agencies and international NGOs, leaving limited space for local organizations. This approach has implications for the sustainability and effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts. Local peacebuilders, being the first responders to conflict and holding the most expertise in identifying root causes of violence, need adequate funding for their work that allows for their joint ownership over the peacebuilding process. While the PBF project in Darfur did focus on engaging local implementing partners, the question arises whether the need for UN agencies as intermediaries might still stifle the growth and potential of local organizations.

The program's reliance on short-term funding cycles is another point of critique voiced by KIIs across stakeholder-levels. While the PBF adheres to global guidelines for project timelines, this approach may not align well with the long-term nature of peacebuilding required in places like Darfur. The focus on short-term projects can hinder the development of sustainable peacebuilding mechanisms that address deeper, systemic issues, as well as potentially hinder local ownership and sustainability, especially in complex, evolving crises, as we saw in the Darfur programme. The focus on project-based, short-term success compels local actors to continuously seek funding, diverting attention from long-term peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, stringent donor requirements can constrain innovation and overlook the indirect costs essential for running non-profit initiatives. These dynamics not only impact the efficiency of peacebuilding efforts but also strain donor-civil society relationships, impeding the development of authentic local ownership and long-term peace sustainability. Thus, there's a need for more diverse and sustainable funding models that can support the continuity of peace efforts.

The outbreak of new nation-wide conflict in April 2023 quickly triggered down to localized conflict-outbreaks in Darfur and have meant a significant setback to the peacebuilding momentum that the PBF programme aimed to catalyse. This development is a stark reminder of the volatile nature of the region and the challenges inherent in sustaining peace in such a context. The resurgence of conflict not only undermines the progress made but also casts doubt on the effectiveness of the peacebuilding strategies employed by the programme.

In light of these new conflicts, it is challenging to ascertain the extent to which the PBF programme's efforts had any positive influence in the areas where the programme was implemented, and if these localities were less affected by the nationwide war's trickle-down effects. While the programme had made strides in involving local communities, building capacities, and aligning with peacebuilding objectives, it's clear that these measures, despite their value, were not comprehensive enough to counter the broader humanitarian challenges following UNAMID's withdrawal. The escalated violence in Darfur post-April 2023 underscores the limitations of the programme, highlighting the need for more extensive, strategically integrated peacebuilding efforts to address the deep-rooted causes of conflict in the region.

Conclusion: Sustainability and Ownership

The evaluation of the PBF programme in Darfur highlights several critical aspects in the realm of sustainability and ownership. While the programme aimed to address immediate peacebuilding needs and lay a foundation for long-term stability through local and national ownership, capacity building, and sustainable mechanisms, it encountered significant challenges. The unforeseen political upheaval, notably the military coup, undermined the strategy of national-level ownership, compelling the programme to rely solely on local-level efforts and ownership. These efforts included collaborations like that between UNHABITAT and the North Darfur Ministry of Agriculture, which focused on capacity building in e.g., GIS and data collection for land-planning and community needs assessments.

The programme's approach to stakeholder engagement and capacity building was significant, forming specialized committees and training initiatives for operation and maintenance. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives was compromised by high staff turnover and varying commitment levels among stakeholders. A notable gap was observed in the programme's financial sustainability, largely due to its reliance on short-term funding and the absence of comprehensive sustainability strategies in initial project designs. This led to the PBF Secretariat's mandate for future projects to include a separate sustainability and exit planning template.

In terms of alignment with broader peacebuilding objectives, the programme was generally successful but faced limitations in comprehensiveness and depth. The resurgence of conflict in April 2023 further tested the programme's strategies, underscoring the limitations of its approach in the face of large-scale humanitarian challenges. The insights from key informants and recent developments call for a critical reflection on the peacebuilding approach in Darfur, emphasizing the need for holistic, adaptable, and context-sensitive strategies. Future initiatives must integrate these insights to create more effective and resilient peacebuilding frameworks, capable of addressing the unique dynamics and complexities of regions like Darfur.

Reflecting on the programme's approach, the need for more holistic, adaptable, and context-sensitive strategies in future peacebuilding efforts becomes clear. While the programme demonstrated a catalytic impact on peacebuilding methodologies and influenced broader strategies, there was a persistent concern among stakeholders and implementing partners regarding the identification of new funding sources to sustain and expand initial successes. Examples like the collaboration between FAO and the Ministry of Infrastructure in North Darfur, aiming to extend successful locality replanning

for IDP returns, were hindered by a lack of follow-up funding. This highlighted the need for ongoing financial support and strategic planning beyond the project's initial term.

In summary, the PBF programme in Darfur faced significant challenges in achieving sustainable peacebuilding, impacted by political instability, financial constraints, and contextual complexities. The lessons learned underscore the importance of adaptable, inclusive, and long-term strategies in peacebuilding efforts, particularly in volatile and complex environments like Darfur. Future initiatives must integrate these insights to create more effective and resilient peacebuilding frameworks.

Key Findings - Sustainability and Ownership:

1. **Stakeholder Commitment and Collaborative Efforts:** The program showed strong engagement of local communities and stakeholders, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment. However, the military coup significantly affected ownership strategies, while focusing more on local-level ownership efforts, also made it difficult for these local stakeholders to identify mainly financial resources for taking over efforts. Besides the challenges of political upheavals, the transient nature of government staff also faced a challenge. Frequent changes in government personnel and within implementing partner organizations posed challenges to maintaining developed skills and knowledge, affecting the continuity and effectiveness of the peacebuilding initiatives.

2. **Engagement with Diverse Stakeholders:** The program involved a wide array of stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, and government bodies, and formed specialized committees to address local issues effectively. However, the inclusion of nomadic communities and addressing tribal conflicts were notable challenges.

3. **Program's Alignment with Peacebuilding Objectives:** The program generally aligned with broader peacebuilding objectives in Darfur, but its comprehensiveness and depth in tackling these goals were questioned.

4. **Catalytic Impact and Financial Sustainability Concerns:** While the program was planned for two-years (plus 6-month extension) the many individual projects' activities was more often characterized by short-term funding for interventions which raised concerns about their lasting catalytic impact mostly by implementing partners. This can be seen both as a result of the challenges with local and government stakeholders' incapability of taking ownership, but also point towards the lack of a coherent integrated approach, if only one or few activities were implemented in one locality, making it look "short-term". It also points to the challenges of instigating a catalytic effect as KIIs points out the need for ongoing financial support and strategic planning beyond the project's initial term.

5. **Sustainability and Exit Strategy:** The program faced challenges in implementing a unified and effective sustainability and exit strategy, leading to varied success in sustaining peace initiatives. The Darfur Programme, under the UNPBF, confronted significant challenges in formulating and executing a coherent sustainability and exit strategy, which led to inconsistent success across its peacebuilding initiatives. This complexity arose from a combination of factors inherent in the programme's design, the dynamic socio-political environment of Darfur, and the nature of peacebuilding interventions.

6. **Resurgence of Conflict Post-April 2023:** The outbreak of new nation-wide conflict quickly trickled down to ignite more local conflict drivers in Darfur and significantly set back any peacebuilding momentum the program might had instigated, questioning the effectiveness of the program's strategies and its ability to fill the vacuum post-UNAMID and prevent a relapse into conflict.

5.6 Impact Case Studies with Remote Sensing

This chapter delves into a series of impact case studies centred on remote sensing data analysis, with a particular focus on the NDVI measurements in targeted villages. These case studies are crucial in evaluating the success of the programme in achieving its outcome objectives, such as enhancing rule of law and providing durable solutions for the return of IDPs.

Remote sensing, especially through NDVI analysis, offers an objective and quantifiable method to assess changes in vegetation cover over time. This is particularly relevant in the context of assessing the programme's impact on environmental conditions, which can be indicative of broader socio-economic and security dynamics in the targeted areas. For instance, improvements in vegetation cover might reflect positive developments in community stability and livelihoods, while negative changes could signal ongoing challenges or emerging conflicts.

Each case study in this chapter focuses on a specific village, detailing the interventions carried out and analysing the corresponding NDVI data from 2019 to 2023. By correlating this data with the programme's activities, the case studies aim to provide insights into the effectiveness of these interventions. They serve as a starting point for discussion and further investigation, rather than definitive conclusions about the programme's impact.

In selecting the case studies for this chapter, a strategic approach was adopted to ensure a comprehensive and insightful evaluation of the programme's impact. The chosen target villages represent locations where a confluence of activities, spearheaded by various United Nations agencies, were implemented. These activities encompass a range of interventions, including but not limited to sketch mapping, village planning, and other community-focused initiatives.

Case Study: Jiljilak Village

Jiljilak, a village in West Darfur's Jebel Moon locality, was selected for this case study due to its representation of a multifaceted approach to peacebuilding and development. The village has been the focus of several interventions by various UN agencies during the PBF programme, encompassing a range of activities from community reconciliation and protection networks to infrastructure development and environmental sustainability. Program Interventions in Jiljilak included:

1. **Community Reconciliation Committees (CRC) and Community-Based Protection Networks (CBPNs):** Established by UNHCR, these committees included representation from women and youth. They were provided with training and technical support to facilitate intercommunal dialogue, mediation, and dispute resolution. The CRCs and CBPNs were instrumental in providing early warning information to UNHCR, supporting humanitarian response operations through IDPs needs.

2. **Community-Based Protection Networks:** Also established by UNHCR, these networks aimed to enhance local capacities for self-protection, particularly focusing on vulnerable groups.

3. **Land Demarcation and Certification:** Undertaken by UNHABITAT, this activity involved planning, mapping, and analysis to demarcate and certify village land, crucial for preventing land disputes and fostering community stability.

4. **Land Registration and Arbitration Committees:** The project established steering committees in Jiljilak and neighbouring villages like Arafa and Aburemail for land registration, aiding returnees in registering their farmlands. Additionally, four arbitration committees were established in these villages, receiving training on conflict resolution and gender issues. These committees played a role in resolving many land-related disputes, but the conflict impeded communication and hampered data collection efforts.

5. **Peace Conferences:** Organized by UNDP, these conferences engaged community members in various peace initiatives, promoting dialogue and understanding among diverse groups.

6. **Infrastructure Development:** This included the rehabilitation of police posts as part of the program's efforts to enhance rule of law and community safety, and the construction/upgrading of school classrooms by UNHCR, and the construction of water sources (dams and hand pumps) by FAO and UNICEF, aimed at improving community infrastructure and services.

7. **WASH Committees:** Established and trained by UNICEF, these committees focused on conflict resolution and peacebuilding, alongside managing water, sanitation, and hygiene needs.

Remote Sensing Data Analysis:

The remote sensing data analysis, particularly the NDVI analysis, used to assess environmental changes in Jiljilak from 2019 to 2023, indicates a worrying trend. The significant decrease in vegetation cover, with a 66.59% reduction, suggests potential environmental degradation and socio-economic difficulties in the village. This decline could imply issues like reduced agricultural productivity, loss of livelihoods, or increased resource competition, which could exacerbate tensions and threaten the peace and security of the community. These findings call for a deeper investigation into the underlying causes and consideration of remedial measures.

Figure 5. Change in NDVI over time in Jiljilak village, WD. Top left: vegetated land 2021, top right: vegetated land 2023, bottom: NDVI time series graph.
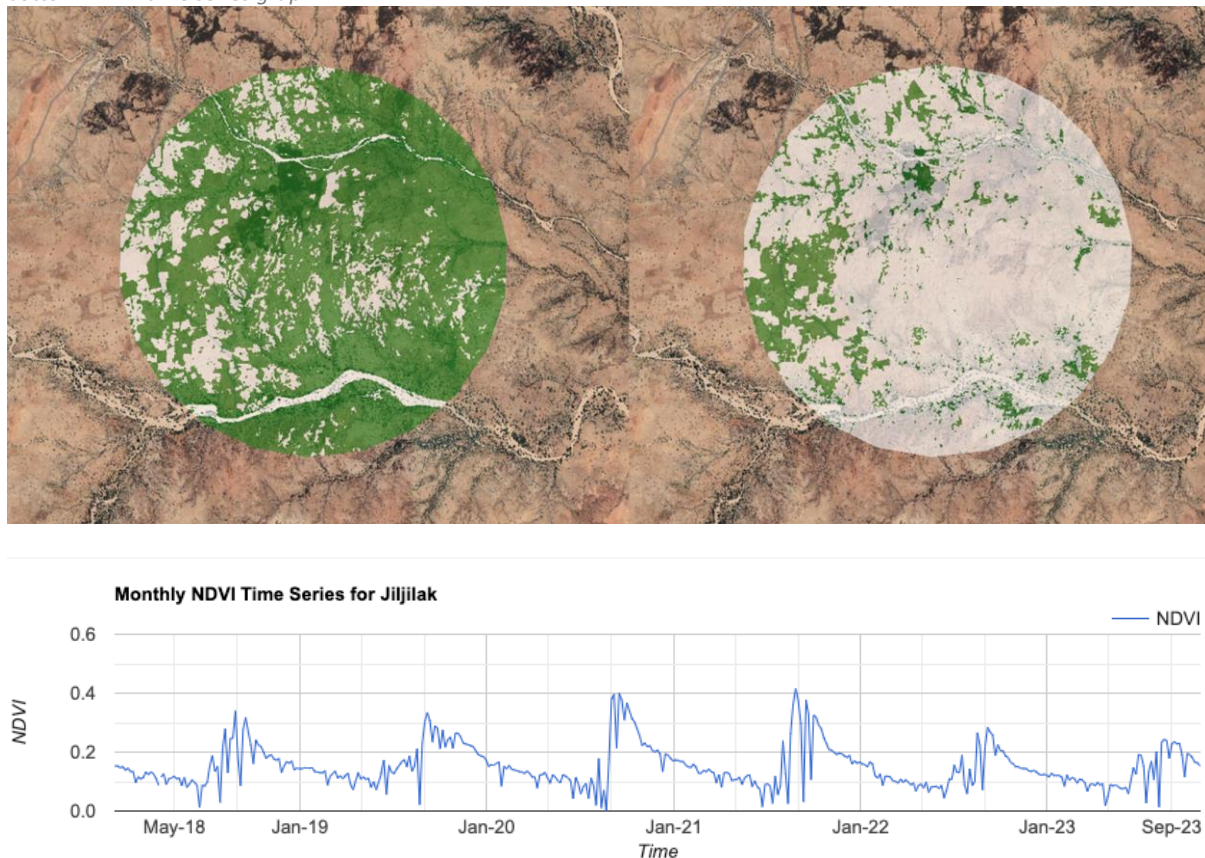
The significant decrease in vegetation cover in Jiljilak, as shown by the NDVI analysis, aligns with the historical context of violence in the area. The Jebel Moon region, including Jiljilak, experienced substantial conflict starting in 2021, escalating in 2022. According to OCHA[14], Jiljilak was directly impacted by violence in March 2022, leading to renewed displacement. This context likely disrupted land use and agricultural activities, contributing to the observed reduction in vegetation cover. The correlation suggests that the conflict and resultant displacement had a tangible impact on environmental conditions and land use in Jiljilak.

The situation in Jiljilak, as evidenced by the NDVI data, desk review of project reporting and from the OCHA report, reflects the complex interplay of environmental, socio-economic, and conflict dynamics. Key activities like land registration, development of a police outpost, and the establishment of

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[14] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2022, March 14). Sudan: Inter-communal Conflict in Jebel Moon, West Darfur - Flash Update No. 03. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-inter-communal-conflict-jebel-moon-west-darfur-flash-update-no-03-14-march-2022.

arbitration committees faced significant hurdles due to the ongoing conflict. The halt in farmland registration and difficulties in effective functioning of arbitration committees due to disrupted communication, as highlighted in project reports, likely contributed to unregulated land use and decreased agricultural productivity. This disruption in land management and cultivation practices, exacerbated by the conflict, aligns with the NDVI analysis showing a marked decrease in vegetation cover. This scenario underscores the limitations of peacebuilding interventions in the face of such disruptions, raising questions about the resilience of these initiatives against the backdrop of escalating conflict and its cascading effects on community stability and environmental sustainability.

It's important to note that the remote sensing analysis has limitations and cannot definitively attribute changes in NDVI to specific programme interventions successes or failures. However, it serves as a critical point for triangulating project and external data from desk review as well as for input to the discussion on overall peacebuilding outcomes from qualitative data. The decrease in vegetation cover, juxtaposed with the programme's activities, suggests a need for a deeper investigation into the interplay between environmental sustainability, community development, and peacebuilding efforts.

The Jiljilak case study also highlights the importance of integrating environmental considerations into peacebuilding and development programs. The findings from the NDVI analysis, combined with the qualitative data on programme interventions, highlight the need for a holistic approach that addresses both human and environmental aspects of peace and development. This case study underscores the limitations of peacebuilding interventions in the face of ongoing conflict and its cascading effects on community stability and environmental sustainability. As such, it serves as a valuable lesson for future programme planning and implementation, emphasizing the need for continuous monitoring and adaptive strategies to ensure sustainable and peaceful development in target communities.

Case Study: Thur Village

Thur, located in Central Darfur's Nertiti region, was selected for this case study to evaluate the impact of various peacebuilding and development interventions under the PBF programme. The village has been a focal point for activities ranging from infrastructure development to community-based peace and reconciliation efforts. Program Interventions in Thur included:

1. **Community Center Construction (UNHCR):** A community centre was constructed to serve as a hub for various community activities and meetings, fostering a sense of community cohesion.

2. **Land Title Registration (UNHCR):** Efforts were made to provide community members with registered land titles, a crucial step in ensuring land rights and reducing potential land-related conflicts.

3. **Community Reconciliation Committees (CRC) (UNHCR):** CRCs were established, including women and youth, to facilitate intercommunal dialogue, mediation, and dispute resolution.

4. **Community-Based Protection Networks (UNICEF):** These networks aimed to strengthen local capacities for self-protection and support vulnerable groups within the community.

5. **Community-Based Resolution Mechanisms (CBRM) (UNDP):** Establishment of CBRMs to provide platforms for resolving local disputes and fostering community harmony.

6. **Land Demarcation and Certification (UNHABITAT):** This activity involved planning, mapping, and analysis to demarcate and certify village land.

7. **School Rehabilitation (UNICEF):** Rehabilitation of schools to improve access to education, particularly for out-of-school children.

8. **Stakeholder Consultations on Land Reforms (UNDP):** Conducting inclusive consultations to draft land legislation, promoting fair and equitable land use policies.

9. **Women Microfinance Groups (UNDP):** Establishment of microfinance groups for women, aimed at empowering them economically and promoting gender equality.

Remote Sensing Data Analysis:

The NDVI analysis for Thur village showed a significant decrease in vegetation cover between 2021 and 2023, with a 38.76% reduction as seen in figure 6 below. This decline in vegetation could be indicative of various environmental and socio-economic factors impacting the village.

Figure 6. NDVI monthly tie-series for Thur village
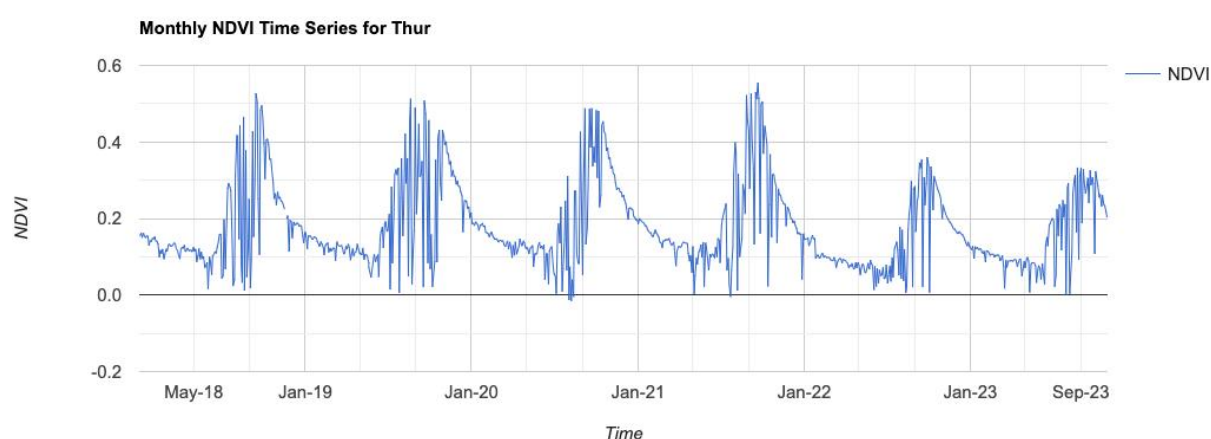
The notable decrease in vegetation cover prompts an examination of the programme's interventions, especially land title registration and land demarcation. This trend might indicate a shift from agricultural use, possibly due to the new land ownership structures. However, without community interviews, it's challenging to directly correlate these changes with the programme's activities. The decrease could be influenced by a range of factors, including environmental, economic, or social dynamics. For future programming, it is advisable to undertake further investigation to understand the full context and implications of these land use changes in target villages.

The NDVI data, while not directly indicative of the success or failure of programme interventions, offers a unique lens to evaluate the programme's impact on the village's environmental sustainability. This aspect is particularly relevant given the programme's objectives of promoting rule of law and durable solutions for the return of IDPs. The environmental health of the village is a critical factor in ensuring sustainable return and resettlement of IDPs.

The decline in vegetation cover highlighted by the NDVI data could pose challenges for sustainable development in the village. It brings into question the long-term viability of the community's natural

resources, which are fundamental for livelihoods, especially in agrarian societies. Moreover, environmental degradation can play a dual role as both a cause and a consequence of conflict. In regions like Darfur, where resource scarcity can intensify tensions, a decrease in vegetation could potentially hinder peacebuilding efforts. It's crucial to understand how these environmental changes interact with the local dynamics of peace and security.

Additionally, the NDVI findings prompt a broader discussion on community resilience and adaptation strategies in the face of environmental changes. It is important to explore how the community is adapting to these changes and whether there are local practices or programme interventions that are effectively mitigating these environmental challenges. This exploration is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of the community's response to environmental shifts and for formulating strategies that bolster resilience and sustainable development in the region.

Case Study: Al-Awazil Village

In Al-Awazil, the programme's activities included comprehensive village sketch mapping activities, including focus on outlining agricultural areas. This planning was guided by a sketch map developed as part of the programme's interventions, aiming to optimize land use for agricultural purposes and enhance the village's overall development as presented in figure 7 below.

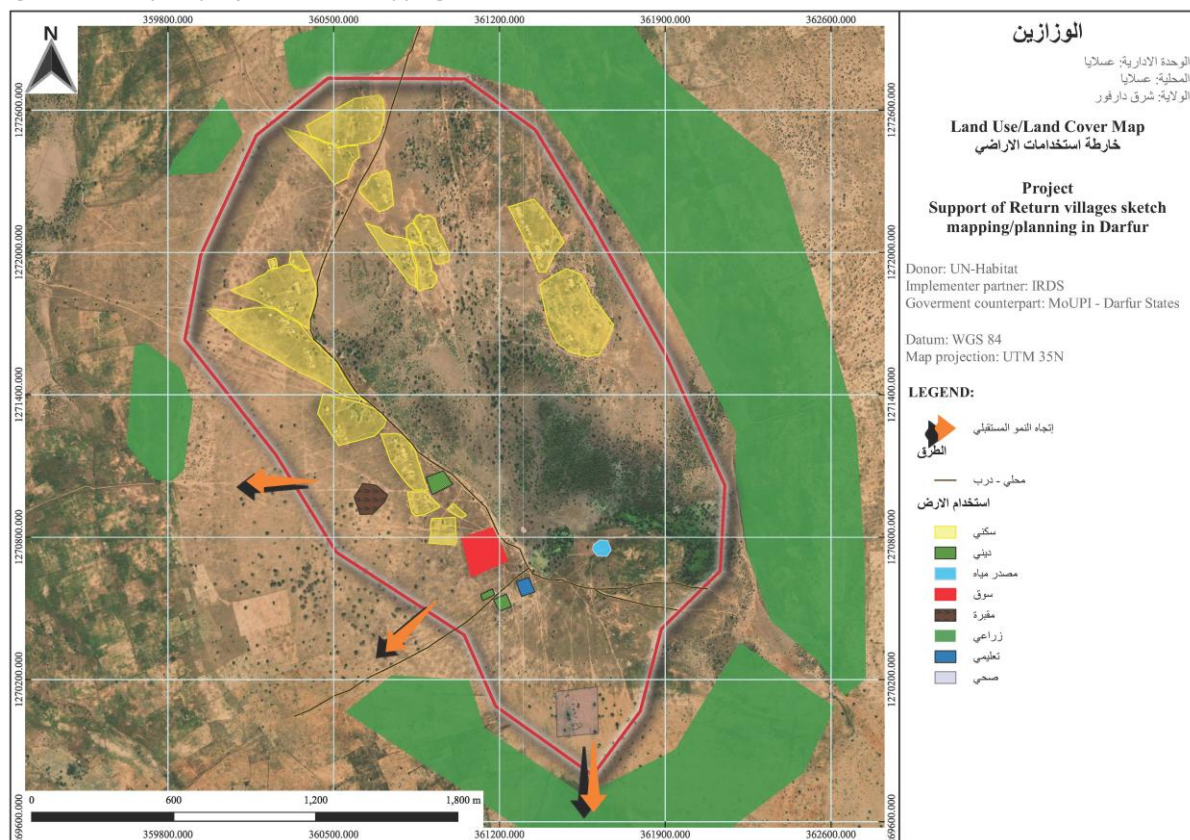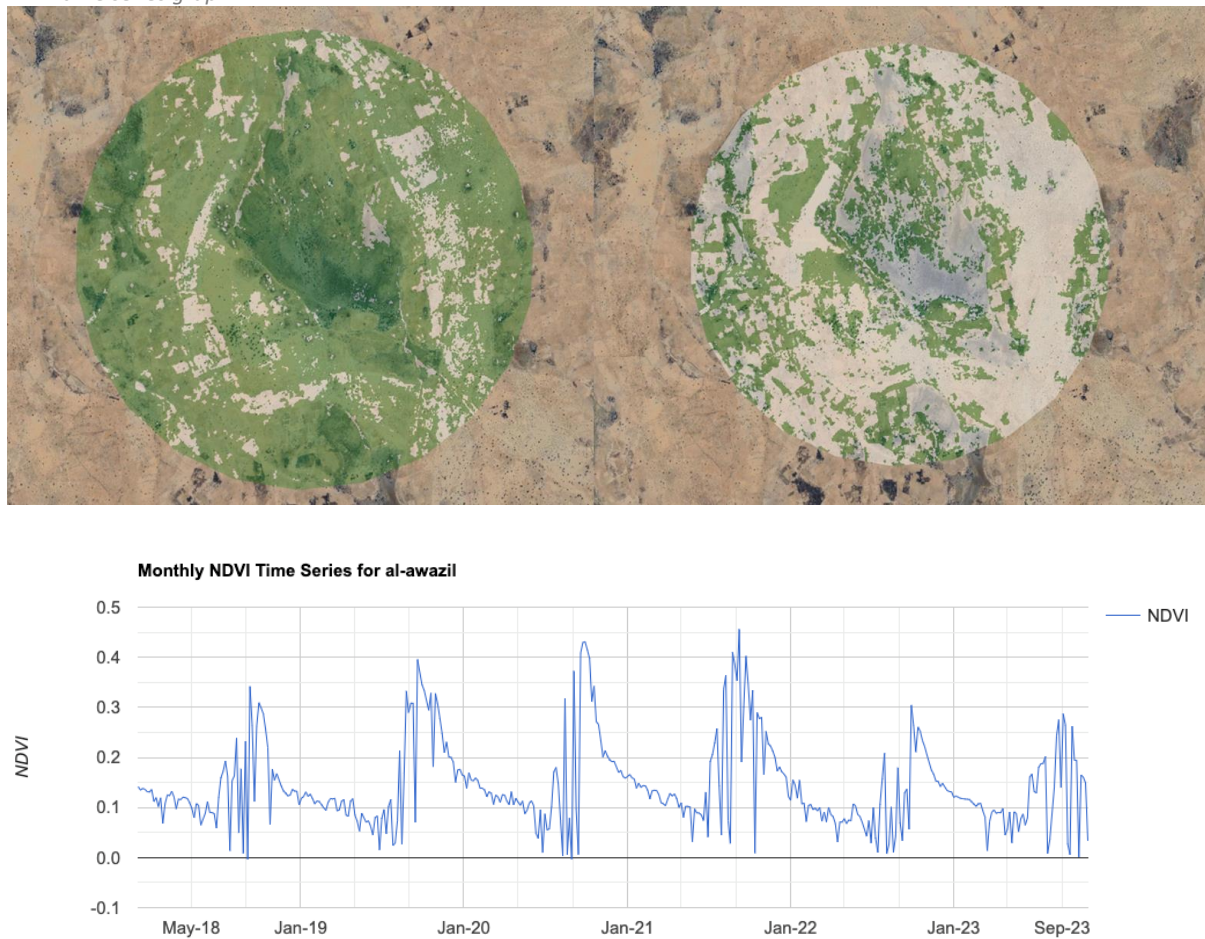*Figure 7. Activity output from Sketch Mapping.*

Figure 8. Change in NDVI over time in Al-awazil village. Top left: vegetated land 2021, top right: vegetated land 2023, bottom: NDVI time series graph.

The NDVI data for Al-Awazil shows a significant decrease in vegetation cover between 2021 and 2023, with a 59.24% reduction, as seen in figure 8 above. This drastic change raises questions about the effectiveness and impact of the programme's interventions. Given the programme's focus on sketch mapping and agricultural area planning, such a substantial decline in vegetation cover could be indicative of various underlying challenges and factors.

Firstly, the reduction in vegetation cover may point to implementation challenges in the planned agricultural activities. It raises questions about the adequacy of resource allocation, the degree of community engagement, and the effectiveness of the strategies employed. External influences, such as logistical or operational constraints, might have also played a role in hindering the successful execution of these agricultural plans.

Moreover, the role of external environmental factors cannot be overlooked. Climate variability and other ecological changes could have significantly contributed to this decrease in vegetation. These factors, often beyond the control of program interventions, can profoundly influence land use patterns and agricultural productivity. Additionally, socio-economic dynamics, such as shifts in the local economy or changes in community priorities, might have impacted how land is utilized in Al-Awazil.

The influence of sketch mapping on these changes is also a critical consideration. The programme's efforts in planning and demarcating agricultural areas, as outlined in the sketch map, were intended to optimize land use for agricultural purposes. However, the actual impact of these interventions on land use practices remains uncertain without direct feedback from the community or additional corroborative data. This gap highlights the need for a more holistic approach in assessing the outcomes of such interventions, considering both the intended objectives and the actual on-ground realities.

In summary, the NDVI data for Al-Awazil underscores the complexity of environmental changes and their multifaceted causes. It calls for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between programme interventions, environmental factors, and socio-economic dynamics. This understanding is crucial for refining future strategies and ensuring that development efforts align more closely with the environmental and socio-economic needs of the community.

Conclusion: Remote-sensing impact analysis

The evaluation of remote sensing data across various villages in the programme area has revealed insightful trends and raised important questions about the intersection of development interventions, environmental health, and socio-political dynamics.

Across all ten villages studied, a common pattern emerged: reduced vegetation cover and altered land use post-intervention. This trend suggests a broader external environmental impact beyond the individual village level. Combined with the 2021 coup, the results points towards a complex interplay of external environmental challenges and socio-political instability, which may have impeded the programme's success.

In the presented case-study villages, a significant reduction in vegetation cover was observed. This trend, consistent across further 7 target villages that was included in the remote sensing analysis, and suggests an overarching environmental challenge, potentially linked to land degradation and drought conditions. These environmental factors likely exacerbated the difficulties in achieving sustainable development and peacebuilding objectives. The timing of these changes, particularly after the 2021 coup, aligns with a period of increased political instability, further complicating the programme's implementation and effectiveness.

While the potential environmental impact of the programme's interventions, such as land title registration, community infrastructure projects, and agricultural planning, cannot be entirely ruled out, for example by potentially altering land management practices or introducing new farming techniques that may take years to show their ecological effects, these activities were not evidenced to have any effect towards the observed environmental changes. Instead, the data suggests that the programme had to navigate a challenging landscape marked by environmental degradation and political upheaval. This context likely presented significant hurdles, making it more difficult for the programme to achieve its intended outcomes.

In Marar Village, the decline in farmed areas despite UNHABITAT's planning efforts brings to light the complex relationship between program actions and environmental elements like drought. This case exemplifies how development strategies might overlook external factors, leading to unintended

consequences on the ground. The situation calls for development programs to adopt more integrated approaches that consider environmental sustainability from the outset, ensuring that planning and implementation are resilient and responsive to both human and ecological needs.

The lack of collaboration among UN agencies in Marar, especially given UNHABITAT's extensive involvement, is a point of reflection. It suggests a missed opportunity for a more holistic approach to development and peacebuilding. UNHABITAT's focus on land demarcation and planning is undoubtedly crucial, but its impact can be significantly enhanced when combined with interventions from other agencies that address different aspects of community resilience and environmental sustainability.

For instance, collaboration with agencies specializing in agricultural development could have provided critical support in adapting farming practices to changing environmental conditions. Similarly, partnerships with organizations focused on water resource management could have mitigated the impacts of drought, ensuring more sustainable use of land resources. This multi-agency approach not only broadens the scope of interventions but also allows for a more nuanced response to the complex challenges faced by communities like Marar.

The situation in Marar highlights a broader lesson for development programs: the importance of integrating environmental sustainability into the core of planning and implementation. In an era where climate change and environmental degradation pose significant threats, development initiatives must be designed with a keen awareness of their environmental impact. This involves not only minimizing potential negative effects but also actively contributing to environmental resilience.

Moreover, the case of Marar emphasizes the need for enhanced coordination and collaboration among different UN agencies and other stakeholders. Such collaboration can ensure that various aspects of community development – from land rights and infrastructure to agriculture and water management – are addressed in a cohesive and comprehensive manner. This integrated approach is vital for building resilient communities that can withstand environmental challenges and contribute to sustainable peace and development.

In conclusion, the remote sensing analysis underscores the importance of considering external environmental and political factors in the evaluation of development and peacebuilding programs. The decline in vegetation cover across the target villages post-2021 points to the need for programme adaptation and resilience in the face of environmental challenges and political instability. It highlights the necessity of integrating environmental sustainability into the core of such programs, ensuring they are equipped to respond to and withstand external shocks, thereby contributing more effectively to the long-term health and stability of the communities they aim to support.

5.7 Conflict-Sensitivity

In evaluating the extent to which PBF-supported projects in Darfur incorporate conflict sensitivity principles, we will evaluate the programs approach based on the following evaluation question:

- *To what extent did the PBF supported state projects ensure that project activities were implemented in a manner that respected the principles of do-no-harm and reduced the risk of conflict?*

For the evaluation of conflict-sensitivity approaches, it's essential to assess how they align with the 'Do No Harm' and 'Do Good' principles:

- **Do No Harm:** Projects need to be evaluated on whether their activities minimize potential harm. This involves assessing if they inadvertently feed into existing conflicts or create new tensions, especially in sensitive areas like resource allocation or intergroup relations.

- **Do Good:** Projects should be analysed for their contributions to enhancing social cohesion and peacebuilding. This can be seen in initiatives that foster community dialogue, promote inclusive decision-making, or address root causes of conflict.

By understanding the interaction of project activities with the local context and adapting strategies accordingly, the projects can be evaluated on their effectiveness in not only achieving development goals but also in contributing to peace and social resilience.

Analysis of Conflict-Sensitivity

Approach and Implementation of Conflict-Sensitivity

While no specific approach to conflict-sensitivity was outlined in project documents and strategies, projects did outline strategies that align with the principles of conflict sensitivity. These included:

- Comprehensive Assessments and Data-Driven Approaches: The projects utilized comprehensive assessments and data-driven approaches to understand and respond to local needs and dynamics. This methodology is critical in conflict-sensitive programming as it ensures that interventions are based on actual, on-ground realities, thereby reducing the risk of exacerbating existing tensions.

- Community Engagement in Planning and Decision-Making: Engaging communities in planning and decision-making processes was a key strategy. This inclusive approach not only ensured the relevance of interventions but also fostered local ownership, a critical aspect of sustaining peace and development efforts.

- Initiatives for Peacebuilding, Social Cohesion, and Dispute Resolution: Specific initiatives aimed at peacebuilding, promoting social cohesion, and resolving disputes were part of the projects. Such initiatives are integral to conflict sensitivity as they directly address the underlying issues that can lead to conflict.

- Focus on Vulnerable Groups: Efforts were made to minimize harm and enhance the capacity of vulnerable groups, including IDPs, women, and youth. This focus is crucial in conflict-sensitive approaches, as these groups are often the most affected in conflict situations.

These strategies part of project plans demonstrate an awareness of the need to respect local dynamics and contribute positively to peace and social resilience, which is inherent parts of a conflict-sensitive approach.

A critical part of the program's approach was funding and implementing trainings targeted implementing partners on conflict sensitivity. These trainings, implemented in all five states of Darfur, focused on conflict sensitivity and were crucial in ensuring that future conflicts were not inadvertently created or exacerbated. Training sessions covered key aspects of understanding and navigating the complex socio-political landscape of Darfur, emphasizing the importance of considering local dynamics, historical grievances, and the various factors contributing to conflict in the region. By equipping local implementing partners with this knowledge and skill set, the PBF aimed to enhance the capacity of these partners to not only implement projects effectively but also to do so in a manner that is sensitive to the potential triggers and drivers of conflict.

This focus on conflict sensitivity training underscores the recognition by the PBF of the importance of a deep, nuanced understanding of local contexts in peacebuilding and development efforts. Such training is instrumental in ensuring that development interventions are not only effective but also contribute positively to the stability and peace in the region, without igniting new tensions or aggravating existing ones.

KIIs provided further insights on how the projects addressed conflict sensitivity. One key aspect highlighted by respondents was the emphasis on awareness and training, as seen in workshops on women's rights and online courses on conflict sensitivity. This focus demonstrates a commitment to equipping local communities and partners with the necessary tools and knowledge to understand and engage with conflict-sensitive issues effectively.

Another significant insight from the KIIs was the projects' dedication to community inclusion and decision-making also evident in project documents and reports. This approach aimed to ensure that interventions were not only contextually relevant but also inclusive, thus minimizing potential harm and fostering a sense of ownership among local communities.

Adaptability in project implementation was another crucial finding. The projects displayed flexibility, such as reprogramming activities and expanding target groups, to respond to urgent needs and maintain conflict sensitivity. This adaptability highlights the projects' responsiveness to the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of conflict-affected environments.

Conflict Sensitivity Challenges

However, the KIIs also brought to light challenges such as service reductions in IDP camps (including WASH, education, and food supply) and perceptions of marginalization in some villages. First, the reduction of services in IDP camps was mentioned as a challenge and aspect of the conflict sensitivity discussion within projects. Service reductions in these camps create pressures on the communities, especially where new arrivals are concerned. This is a critical aspect of conflict sensitivity, as inadequate services in these camps can exacerbate tensions among the arriving IDPs and the existing population. Such scenarios demand a nuanced approach in project planning and implementation,

ensuring the needs of both the existing and incoming IDP populations are adequately addressed to prevent potential conflict escalation.

Another challenge highlighted is the focusing on selected hot-spot villages for interventions. This targeted strategy, while aimed at addressing the most conflict-prone areas, inadvertently created perceptions of inequality among other communities. By concentrating resources and efforts on specific villages, there was a risk of fuelling a sense of neglect or favouritism in non-targeted areas. Such perceptions could potentially exacerbate existing tensions or give rise to new conflicts, counteracting the overall goal of promoting peace and stability.

In the high-risk and volatile context of the programme, monitoring and mitigating risks were challenging. Security issues impeded data collection and affected project implementation. Conflicts between villages over resource allocation underscored the need for careful planning and community consultation. The role of government bodies in coordination and monitoring was crucial, though challenges in inter-agency coordination were noted.

Some KIIs also raised the challenge of training initiatives in peacebuilding and skills development, especially for women and youth, while beneficial, raised concerns about their ability to address the deeper, underlying causes of conflict. This points to the necessity of integrating these capacity-building efforts into a more comprehensive strategy that tackles the root issues driving conflict to ensure effective and sustainable peacebuilding.

The KIIs also revealed concerns about the depth of training initiatives in peacebuilding and skills development. While beneficial, especially for women and youth, these programs might only offer surface-level solutions and fail to address deeper conflict causes like ethnic tensions or historical grievances. This challenge links to conflict sensitivity principles of 'Do No Harm' and 'Do Good' as focusing solely on superficial issues without tackling root causes could inadvertently prolong existing conflicts or miss opportunities for positive impact. Therefore, it's crucial to integrate these capacity-building efforts into broader strategies that address fundamental conflict drivers for sustainable peacebuilding.

The KIIs additionally indicated that disputes over land rights and resource access, particularly affecting IDPs in reclaiming their lands, pose a significant challenge to the conflict sensitivity of the PBF-supported programs. The dissolution of the Committee to Dismantle the Former Regime following the coup, and the reinstatement of entities like the Islamic Call Organization (MADA), added complexity to this challenge.

The loss of the Committee to Dismantle the Former Regime, a key institution aimed at addressing systemic issues linked to the former regime, critically affected the equitable management of land rights and resources. Its absence was feared to lead to the re-emergence of previously addressed practices, thus influencing the dynamics of land disputes and resource allocation. In conflict-sensitive programming, managing land disputes is crucial as they are often a primary source of tension and conflict, particularly in post-conflict settings.

Furthermore, the reinstatement of organizations like MADA could be perceived as a regression in efforts to establish transparent and equitable governance. According to respondents, this change

raised concerns about the potential diversion or political manipulation of development aid, a risk that directly contradicts the principles of conflict sensitivity. When aid is diverted or manipulated, it not only fails to reach its intended beneficiaries but can also worsen existing tensions or foster new conflicts.

Therefore, the challenge lies in ensuring that PBF-supported projects navigate these complex dynamics effectively. This requires not only understanding the historical and political context of land disputes in Darfur but also implementing strategies that ensure equitable and transparent management of resources. Such strategies are essential to minimize the risk of exacerbating existing conflicts or creating new ones, thereby adhering to the principles of 'Do No Harm' and 'Do Good' inherent in conflict-sensitive approaches.

At a higher-level, several KIIs raised concerns about the difficulties post-coup of the program's government stakeholder relations.

In a conflict-sensitivity view, the programme and projects had to manage claims of being consolidating the coup by continuing cooperation with government counterparts, while on the other hand also had to manage the xenophobic and Western-phobic discourse arising against the UN fuelled by pro-military protesters. These concerns raised by KIIs are rooted in a broader context of how international interventions were perceived in Sudan, especially following the military coup. While such criticisms were mainly directed at UNITAMS, KIIs highlighted, that similar issues trickled down to the program and individual projects.

On one hand, international organizations, epitomized by UNITAMS, faced criticism from pro-military demonstrators who accused the UN of undue intervention in Sudan's political crisis, demanding its expulsion. This perspective reflects a general scepticism towards external involvement in Sudan's internal affairs and highlights the potential risks for international peacebuilding initiatives, including the PBF Darfur Programme, of being perceived as taking sides in a politically sensitive environment .

On the other hand, pro-democracy groups, like the Sudanese Professionals' Association (SPA), expressed strong objections to UNITAMS' efforts, criticizing it for not explicitly condemning the military coup and accusing it of failing to safeguard Sudan's transition to democracy. This reaction illustrates concerns that continued engagement with the military-led government by international missions could be seen as legitimizing the post-coup regime. The SPA's refusal to engage with UNITAMS underscores the delicate balance required in these interventions to avoid being perceived as supporting the military regime while still aiming to facilitate democratic transition and/or build peace.

For the PBF-supported projects in Darfur, navigating this complex environment is a critical aspect of maintaining conflict sensitivity. The risk is twofold: on one side, there's the danger of being perceived as consolidating the coup regime by continuing to operate post-coup, especially if the projects are seen as aligning with or supporting the military-led government. When asked, KIIs agree that the programme navigated this issue well (re)focusing more strongly on local-government cooperation. Completely distancing from governmental collaboration would have undermined the projects' effectiveness and sustainability, given the local government's significant role in the programme goals as well as in the areas where these projects operate. However, some KIIs did criticize the choice of not

including neighbourhood-based Resistance Committees as key local institutions to cooperate with, reflecting the higher-level critique of UNITAMS not properly demanding the inclusion of civil society in peace negotiations at state-level.

This situation demanded a nuanced approach that acknowledges the sensitivities of different stakeholders while striving to achieve peacebuilding and development objectives. In the context of the Darfur Programme, the continuity of cooperation with the now military-led government after the coup needed a clear distinction from more community-focused approaches. The potential risk, as seen with UNITAMS, was that continued collaboration could be perceived as an implicit endorsement of the coup regime, thereby affecting the conflict sensitivity of the programme. The projects had to ensure that their strategies and activities do not inadvertently reinforce contentious power structures or compromise principles of neutrality and impartiality in a complex and conflict-affected region like Darfur. KIIs largely agreed, that this had been a critical and complex task that the programme all things considered did well in its approach to conflict sensitivity.

Local Context and Power Dynamics

According to KII respondents, the programme considered local context and power dynamics in its design and implementation, but the political and security reality made it difficult to predict or adopt programs to prevent projects from the variables that are constantly evolving. A respondent stated, "Yes, they certainly took into consideration the local context and the changes in authority, but the political and security reality makes it difficult to predict or adopt programs to prevent projects from the variables that are constantly evolving, especially in the Darfur region." Community leaders played a crucial role in any need, even if it changed, ensuring that interventions did not exacerbate existing conflicts or create new ones.

To prevent exacerbating existing conflicts or creating new ones, the programme involved community leaders and stakeholders in decision-making. A respondent highlighted, "By consulting and sitting with community leaders and engaging beneficiaries and stakeholders in decision-making processes, as well as through a conflict-sensitive approach, the results have been good throughout the implementation period and until the exit." Engaging communities ensured that interventions were aligned with their needs and reduced the likelihood of disputes.

In FGD sessions, it was emphasized that local communities and relevant stakeholders were significantly involved in the design and implementation processes. A respondent stated, "Peacebuilding committees, as an example of involving local communities in the project, played an important role in linking stakeholders to the project at all stages." This involvement was crucial in building local ownership and preventing unintended consequences. Peacebuilding committees, as an example, played an important role in linking stakeholders to the project at all stages.

Despite these efforts, challenges and unintended negative impacts arose. An example mentioned by respondents emerged in the Quz region, where the programme faced a complex situation following a murder incident in a community. This event triggered a series of interventions by various committees, each attempting to resolve the conflict. However, these interventions led to complications rather than solutions. Multiple committees, formed with different mandates and perspectives, intervened simultaneously, leading to a lack of coordination and clarity in the conflict resolution process. This

situation was further exacerbated by the diverse interests and approaches of these committees. The lack of a unified strategy and the overlapping responsibilities of these committees resulted in confusion among the local community and stakeholders, ultimately hindering effective conflict resolution.

Another example was in the Asalaya region, where the programme encountered a significant challenge due to land use conflicts between shepherds and farmers. This conflict was rooted in the traditional practices of land use and the changing environmental and socio-economic conditions in the region. Shepherds, following their seasonal migratory routes, often found their paths intersecting with farmlands, leading to friction with the farmers. The situation was aggravated by environmental factors such as drought and land degradation, which put additional pressure on both farmers and pastoralists.

The programme's activities had to be keenly aware of and capable of mitigating such conflicts. For instance, if the programme inadvertently demarcated new farmland that encroached upon traditional migratory routes, it could have escalated existing tensions or created new conflicts. Therefore, the intervention needed to be carefully planned and executed to avoid exacerbating the situation.

In the Asalaya region, for example, this long-standing issue was evident when farmers extended their cultivation into areas typically used as migratory routes by pastoralists, leading to direct confrontations. The programme's demarcation efforts aimed to provide a structured approach to this issue. To specifically address the conflict in Asalaya, a local solution was sought: the village mayor relinquished his own agricultural lands to create a buffer zone. This action helped in preventing direct contact and potential conflicts between the two groups, reflecting the need for localized and context-specific solutions in addressing these complex land use disputes.

Such interventions highlight the programme's recognition of the need for targeted, adaptable strategies in conflict-sensitive programming, especially in areas where land use patterns are deeply embedded in the socio-economic fabric of the community. It also underscored the importance of involving local leaders and community members in decision-making processes, as their understanding of local dynamics and their ability to negotiate and mediate conflicts are crucial for the success of such interventions.

These examples from the Quz and Asalaya regions illustrate the complexities and challenges faced by the programme in conflict-sensitive interventions. They underscore the importance of coordinated approaches, clear communication, and the involvement of local communities and leaders in conflict resolution processes. Addressing such conflicts requires not only immediate interventions but also a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and a commitment to developing long-term, sustainable solutions that are sensitive to the needs and practices of all stakeholders involved.

Adherence to Do-No-Harm Principles

In evaluating the integration of do-no-harm principles, it becomes evident that these were more than just guidelines; they were integral to the programme's ethos. Project documents and KII respondents clearly shows that throughout the project lifecycle, from planning to implementation, careful consideration was given to ensure that actions did not exacerbate existing tensions or create new

conflicts. This approach was particularly crucial in areas with complex ethnic and political landscapes. Though often impacted by security or environmental constraints, regular assessments and feedback mechanisms were employed to monitor the impact of activities and make necessary adjustments, reflecting a dynamic and responsive approach to conflict sensitivity.

Regarding the do-no-harm principle and conflict risk mitigation, one respondent mentioned, "This principle has been observed through broad community participation and non-exclusion approaches for all parties in society, consultation with all stakeholders, consideration of not harming in any way and making the community the first decision-maker." Training committees to resolve disputes and involving community leaders in decision-making were key strategies to uphold this principle.

The adherence to the do-no-harm principle might also have played a role in shaping the programme's interactions with UNITAMS and the local resistance committees. In the context of the evolving political landscape post-coup, organizations within the PBF programme exercised caution in aligning with UNITAMS. This cautious approach was rooted in the do-no-harm ethos, aiming to avoid actions that could inadvertently escalate tensions or be perceived as partisan in the highly sensitive political environment. Similarly, the assumed decision to not directly engage with resistance committees could be influenced by this principle. While these committees were integral to grassroots civil society processes, direct engagement could have risked unintended consequences, such as exacerbating existing conflicts or creating new ones, and hindering direct cooperation with the government bodies. This careful navigation, while limiting in some respects, was a reflection of the programme's commitment to ensuring that its interventions did not contribute to conflict dynamics, adhering to the core tenet of doing no harm in complex peacebuilding contexts.

The adherence to the do-no-harm principle, while foundational to the programme's approach, also presented inherent dilemmas. This principle necessitated a delicate balance between taking effective action and avoiding unintended negative consequences in a highly volatile environment. The programme's cautious stance in its interactions with for example local Resistance Committees exemplifies this challenge. While this approach was crucial to maintain neutrality and prevent exacerbating tensions, it also meant navigating complex trade-offs, such as potentially missing opportunities for deeper engagement with key grassroots actors and taking impactful decisions about aligning with high-level peace talks as part of UNITAMS. These dilemmas highlight the intricate nature of applying the do-no-harm principle in practice, where decisions often involve weighing immediate benefits against the risk of long-term harm.

Context and Conflict-Sensitivity Monitoring

The programme had a strategy of context monitoring, which was crucial in understanding the dynamic and often volatile environments in which it operated and ensure conflict-sensitivity. Such a system often aims to track the unintended impacts of interventions and to adapt strategies in real-time to the changing circumstances on the ground. The monitoring process involved collecting data on various aspects of the local context, including social, political, and economic conditions, as well as security situations. This data was intended to inform decision-making and ensure that interventions remained relevant and effective.

One of the primary challenges in context monitoring was the security situation in the regions of intervention. As areas was selected according to the hot-spot approach, it was often contexts where conflicts were prevalent, and security concerns often hindered the ability to collect accurate and timely data. Field staff and monitoring teams reported that they often faced difficulties in accessing certain areas, leading to gaps in data and a lack of comprehensive understanding of the local context.

Another significant challenge was the coordination gaps between various stakeholders involved in the monitoring process. Different agencies and committees, each with their own methodologies and priorities, often worked in silos. This lack of coordination led to inconsistencies in data collection and analysis, making it difficult to form a cohesive understanding of the impacts of interventions.

To address these challenges, there was a clear need for improvements in data collection methods. This included adopting more robust and secure ways to gather data in conflict-affected areas, using technology to overcome physical access barriers, and ensuring that data collection tools were sensitive to the local context and dynamics.

Improving stakeholder engagement also seems crucial. This would include fostering better coordination among different agencies and committees involved in the monitoring process. By creating platforms for regular communication and data sharing, the programme could ensure a more unified approach to context monitoring. Engaging local communities in the monitoring process would be equally important, as their insights and experiences provide valuable information that cannot be captured through traditional data collection methods.

The ongoing process of context monitoring in the programme was a critical component in ensuring that interventions were responsive to the changing context and conflict sensitive. However, the challenges of security issues and coordination gaps significantly impacted its effectiveness. Addressing these challenges will require a more concerted effort to improve data collection methods and enhance stakeholder engagement. By doing so, future programs could better track unintended impacts and adapt its strategies to effectively respond to the complex realities of conflict-affected regions.

Conclusion Conflict-Sensitivity

In conclusion, the Darfur Programme's conflict-sensitive approach, while innovative, faced significant challenges in adapting to the rapidly evolving conflict landscape. The insights from KII respondents and FGD sessions suggest the need for more nuanced strategies, better coordination, and a deeper understanding of local dynamics to enhance the effectiveness of conflict-sensitive programming in such complex environments. The programme's efforts in involving local communities, and considering the do-no-harm principle, were commendable, yet the challenges and unintended impacts highlight the need for continuous adaptation and context monitoring for improved conflict-sensitivity.

Several KII respondents highlighted the dissolution of key institutions, like the Committee to Dismantle the Former Regime, raising concerns about the programme's resilience against diversion and political manipulation. The example of the Committee, which was established to dismantle the remnants of the former regime, pointed towards the fear that its dissolution after the coup could have resulted in a vacuum, allowing for the re-emergence of these structures and spilling down to Darfur level governance as well impacting the project. This would directly impact the Darfur Programme's projects,

as they are designed to target conflict hotspots and rely on stable institutions to mitigate diversion and political manipulation.

Key Findings - Conflict-Sensitivity:

1. **Approach and Implementation:** While no specific conflict-sensitivity approach was outlined in project documents, strategies such as comprehensive assessments, community engagement, and initiatives for peacebuilding and social cohesion were employed. Inclusive approaches involving communities in planning and decision-making were emphasized, fostering local ownership, and minimizing the risk of exacerbating tensions. Training for implementing partners on conflict sensitivity was another key aspect of the program, focusing on understanding the complex socio-political landscape of Darfur and navigating potential conflict triggers. These strategies aimed to respect local dynamics and contribute positively to peace and social resilience.

2. **Adaptability:** Projects displayed flexibility in reprogramming activities and expanding target groups in response to changing needs, demonstrating responsiveness to the dynamic nature of conflict-affected environments.

3. **Challenges:** Service reductions in IDP camps and perceptions of marginalization in non-targeted villages were identified as challenges. These issues highlighted the need for careful planning and community consultation to prevent exacerbating existing conflicts or creating new ones.

4. **Local Context and Power Dynamics:** The program considered local context and power dynamics, but challenges in predicting and adapting to constantly evolving political and security realities were noted. Community leaders played a crucial role in ensuring interventions did not exacerbate conflicts.

5. **Adherence to Do-No-Harm Principles:** The program integrated do-no-harm principles, ensuring actions did not feed into conflicts. Training committees to resolve disputes and involving community leaders in decision-making were key strategies.

6. **Post-Coup Challenges:** Post-coup, the program navigated complexities of government stakeholder relations, balancing UN neutrality in a sensitive political environment. The program's cautious approach in interactions post-coup, while maintaining neutrality, might have limited opportunities for deeper engagement with grassroots actors. The dissolution of key institutions post-coup raised concerns about the program's resilience against diversion and political manipulation.

The PBF-supported program in Darfur demonstrated a commitment to conflict sensitivity, employing strategies that aligned with the principles of doing no harm and contributing to peacebuilding. The program's adaptability, community involvement, and focus on training for conflict sensitivity were notable strengths. However, challenges such as service reductions in IDP camps, perceptions of marginalization, and difficulties in navigating post-coup political complexities underscored the need for continuous adaptation and deeper engagement with local dynamics.

5.8 Gender and Youth Responsiveness

This section of the evaluation report focuses on the PBF programme's effectiveness in addressing the specific peacebuilding needs and priorities of women and youth. The key evaluation questions guiding this analysis are:

- ***To what extent did the programme result in the empowerment of women and youth, and increase their meaningful participation in PBF-supported decision-making structures?***

  o *To what extent was gender and youth perspective integrated into the design and implementation of the PBF supported state projects?*

  o *To what extent did the programme result in the empowerment of women and youth, and the increased meaningful participation of women and young people (including young women) in PBF-supported decision-making structures?*

These questions have guided our analysis of the programme's effectiveness in integrating gender and youth considerations into its peacebuilding efforts. They also help in assessing the programme's responsiveness to evolving challenges and its ability to foster inclusive participation in peacebuilding processes.

Analysis of Gender and Youth Responsiveness

Program Design and Initial Challenges

PBF programme demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing the specific peacebuilding needs and priorities of women and youth. The programme's approach was inclusive, prioritizing the involvement of women and youth in project activities like the various established committees.

However, a key respondent pointed out a significant limitation at the outset: the absence of a gender and youth-specific conflict analysis. This oversight in the programme's initial design potentially limited its ability to fully understand and address the unique challenges and needs of these groups in the context of peacebuilding. A targeted conflict analysis could have provided essential insights into the societal dynamics affecting women and youth, thereby informing more effective strategies.

Regarding women represented in the programme, a KII respondent highlighted that already at the programme stakeholder level, they had an initial challenge of too few women, especially from the local government counterparts. This issue was addressed by appointing female employees from government agencies, resolving the representation issue at the local government level, though women still seemed underrepresented in this specific context.

KII respondents noted how projects and their implementation were informed by the needs and priorities of women and youth, identified through direct consultations during activities. Representatives from these groups played a crucial role in determining their specific needs, ensuring that the project interventions were responsive and relevant. For instance, the establishment of cooperatives with significant female participation and the inclusion of women and youth in peace committees and decision-making positions were key initiatives.

These efforts were not limited to token participation but aimed at real empowerment and meaningful involvement. According to KIIs, this was evident in projects' efforts to ensure their influence within these roles. The involvement of women and youth was designed to be influential and consequential, actively engaging them in decision-making processes and valuing their inputs in project outcomes. This method of engagement secured their voices genuinely influenced the course of peacebuilding activities.

Empowerment and Participation Initiatives

Specific initiatives implemented to address the peacebuilding needs of these groups included organizing cultural events, forming community forums for discussing priorities, and establishing follow-up committees. Training programs were tailored to the diverse needs of the youth, some focusing on vocational skills like telephone maintenance, while others emphasized income-generating activities for women, such as food processing and nursing.

The program made significant strides in women's empowerment and youth inclusion. Women's access to peacebuilding initiatives, participation in the peace process, and sensitization on women's rights, including international and regional treaties like CEDAW, have been crucial. Notably, 800 community members, all women (including 320 youths), were engaged in these initiatives, further strengthened by the creation of six women microfinance associations. These associations, comprising 200 women (including 87 young women), used microfinance as a tool for peaceful coexistence and empowerment.

In FGDs, participants mentioned that the programme focused on integrated delivery of social services, such as WASH and education, with special emphasis on youth engagement and child protection. These initiatives were not just about skill development but also about creating platforms for active participation in community development.

The political context, including the revolution and the departure of UNAMID, had a significant impact on youth participation in committees. The programme was largely successful in recognizing the impending changes in the political landscape and its potential impact on youth participation in peacebuilding activities, and its approach ensured their continued involvement. The departure of UNAMID, in particular, created a vacuum in leadership and security, which affected the dynamics of youth engagement. However, KIIs largely agree that the projects succeeded in recognized the importance of youth involvement in project activities and processes.

Further insights from FGDs revealed that youth engagement platforms were established, enhancing the programme's reach and impact. For instance, initiatives allowed young men to participate in reconciliation processes traditionally reserved for older men. In terms of education, women's groups played a pivotal role in recruiting girls, reflecting the programme's commitment to gender inclusivity.

In an FGD it was noted how local women's groups were instrumental in mobilizing and recruiting women for various programme initiatives. These groups undertook significant efforts to engage more women in peacebuilding capacity-building programs and essentially conducted community outreach to identify potential female participants, emphasizing the importance of their involvement in peacebuilding processes. By doing so, they helped to overcome traditional barriers, that often restricted women's participation in such activities. The involvement of women's groups in programme

activities also ensured that the content was relevant and accessible to women, taking into account their unique perspectives and experiences.

Moreover, the women's groups served as a bridge between the programme and the community, ensuring that the voices and needs of women were heard and addressed. They advocated for the inclusion of topics particularly relevant to women in peacebuilding, such as gender-based violence prevention and women's rights. A KII respondent noted how women who participated in committees and trainings on conflict resolution etc. often became active agents of change in their communities, and how they applied the skills and knowledge gained to mediate conflicts, lead community development projects, and advocate for women's rights and inclusion in decision-making processes.

The involvement of women and youth in peacebuilding initiatives and decision-making processes was substantial. The programme ensured that a specific percentage of women and youth were included in all committees from the project's inception. This approach was not just about meeting quotas but about ensuring that these groups had a voice in the decisions that affected their lives. The programme's activities were designed to be gender-sensitive, with some initiatives exclusively targeting women or youth, thereby acknowledging, and addressing their unique needs.

In terms of integrating the gender and youth perspective into the design and implementation of state projects, the programme was proactive. Committees were formed with equal representation of men and women, and the selection of trainees for various programs was left to local communities, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and diversity. This approach was crucial in overcoming social obstacles and ensuring equality in participation.

Adapting to Political Changes and Challenges

However, the programme faced challenges in implementing gender and youth-responsive activities. Issues such as tribal conflicts, seasonal constraints, and funding limitations impacted the full realization of some projects. Despite these challenges, the programme made significant strides in empowering women and youth, particularly in decision-making structures. Women, some for the first time, found opportunities to participate in community development and awareness-raising meetings, marking a clear shift towards gender equality and empowerment.

The programme's response to new obstacles in promoting gender equality during implementation was dynamic. It involved raising awareness, training in gender balance and participation, and celebrating international days like International Women's Day to connect women to global movements. The programme's flexibility in adapting to local contexts and needs was a key strength.

In conclusion, the PBF programme, through its various initiatives and inclusive approach, significantly contributed to the empowerment of women and youth in peacebuilding efforts. While there were challenges and areas for improvement, the programme's commitment to gender and youth responsiveness was evident in its design, implementation, and the meaningful participation it fostered among these crucial groups in the peacebuilding process.

Key Findings – Women and Youth Empowerment

1. **Inclusivity in Program Design:** The PBF programme demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusivity, particularly in involving women and youth in peacebuilding activities. However, the initial absence of a gender and youth-specific conflict analysis was a significant oversight, limiting the programme's ability to fully address the unique challenges faced by these groups.

2. **Empowerment through Participation:** The programme successfully established various initiatives, such as cooperatives and committees, with significant participation from women and youth. These initiatives went beyond token participation, focusing on real empowerment and meaningful involvement.

3. **Adaptability to Political Changes:** The programme showed adaptability in responding to the changing political context, such as post-coup. The programme recalibrated its strategies to maintain and enhance youth participation in peacebuilding activities.

4. **Role of Women's Groups:** Local women's groups played a crucial role in mobilizing and recruiting women for peacebuilding capacity-building programs. They served as a bridge between the programme and the community, ensuring that women's voices and needs were heard and addressed.

6. Conclusions

The programme, tasked with ambitious outcome-level objectives, embarked on a mission to navigate, and mitigate the multi-dimensional challenges of peacebuilding in a region beset by prolonged conflict. This comprehensive conclusion draws upon extensive data from the report, follow-up interviews with UN agencies, and emerging themes, offering a detailed analysis of the programme's impacts, challenges, and the path forward.

Comprehensive Impact Aligned with Outcome-Level Objectives

The PBF's initiatives, marked by a strategic alignment with key objectives, aimed to enhance social cohesion, conflict sensitivity, and sustainable peace. This alignment was manifested through a broad spectrum of interventions including legal aid, infrastructure development, and social services. The programme's success in providing civil documentation and improving access to basic infrastructure by UNDP, and engaging youth in peace processes by UNICEF, marked significant strides towards these objectives. The collective contributions of UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, IOM and UN Habitat were instrumental in reducing the drivers of conflict and enhancing community resilience.

- The PBF initiatives were strategically designed to promote social cohesion, enhance conflict sensitivity, and ensure sustainable peace. Efforts ranged from legal assistance and infrastructure development to social services, significantly contributing to reducing conflict drivers and fostering community resilience.

- Noteworthy successes included civil documentation provision by UNHCR, infrastructure improvements by UNDP, youth engagement in peace processes by UNICEF, and land dispute resolution efforts by UN Habitat.

Addressing the Root Causes of Conflict

The PBF's strategy in Darfur, centered on addressing the root causes of conflict, especially land disputes, demonstrated an insightful understanding of the region's socio-political complexities. Targeting these specific issues was crucial, given their role as primary conflict drivers, and was a significant step towards sustainable peace and stability.

However, the PBF's approach of focusing on selected conflict hotspots, while practical in terms of resource management, brought about certain challenges. It's essential to recognize that strategic targeting of resources is an inherent part of project planning, especially in complex environments like Darfur. Yet, this focused approach, though resource-efficient, risked overlooking the intricate web of broader conflict dynamics, possibly contributing to perceptions of inequality among communities. This situation underscores the need for a delicate balance between targeted interventions and addressing the wider spectrum of conflict dynamics.

Challenges and Adaptability in Implementation

The programme confronted numerous challenges, including bureaucratic complexities, and heightened security issues in the wake of the 25 October 2021 coup. These challenges demanded an adaptable and responsive approach. The programme's adaptability, albeit with varying degrees of success, was a testament to its commitment to navigate the volatile political and security landscape of Darfur. However, these challenges also highlighted areas for improvement in project design and practical implementation, pointing to the need for greater flexibility and contextual sensitivity in peacebuilding efforts.

The escalation of violence during the programme period, in particularly in West Darfur and the power struggles at the national level required a more nuanced understanding and response. The PBF's approach seemed to lack a comprehensive analysis of these dynamics, potentially missing different aspects of the conflict in various regions.

Strategic Funding Allocation and Program Adaptability

The programme, while marked by its adaptability and resilience in the face of complex challenges, encountered critical feedback from KIIs regarding a perceived underfunding for fully implementing peacebuilding activities. Despite the overall substantial budget, stakeholders expressed concerns that the allocation strategy led to some projects receiving insufficient resources, hindering their full potential and impact in terms of sustainable peacebuilding. This feedback points to a potential need for a re-evaluation of the funding allocation strategy to ensure that resources are not only substantial but also equitably and strategically distributed across various initiatives as well as finding areas where coordination and joint efforts can be relevant.

Sustainability and Community Empowerment

The PBF's commitment to sustainability and community empowerment was evident in its efforts. Initiatives fostering community ownership, gender balance, and environmental sensitivity were key. The establishment of peace committees and technical teams in land offices exemplified this commitment, showing a strong drive towards community-driven development and long-lasting peace. The involvement of women in all components of the project and the emphasis on local stakeholder engagement were pivotal in ensuring the interventions were not only effective but also sustainable.

Coordination and Coherence Concerns

A critical area of concern was the coordination and coherence of programme activities at various levels. The lack of synchrony between states and agencies, as well as the insufficient inclusion of local implementing partners and community groups in coordination mechanisms, pointed to missed opportunities for creating synergistic peacebuilding efforts. The establishment of peace committees and technical teams in field offices exemplified a commitment to community-driven development and long-lasting peace. This lack of coherence could also have led to overlooking the interconnectedness of conflicts across different regions and communities.

Assessment of Strategic Approaches and Impact

The PBF's strategic focus on specific conflict hotspots, while effective in addressing immediate needs, was critiqued for potentially overlooking broader conflict dynamics and contributing to perceptions of inequality. This approach, though pragmatic, may have inadvertently neglected underlying causes of the conflict, calling for a more holistic strategy (elaborated in the recommendations below). The programme's success in providing civil documentation, improving access to basic infrastructure, and engaging youth in peace processes marked significant strides towards these objectives.

While the PBF faced significant challenges, its initiatives in Darfur have provided crucial lessons for peacebuilding. The importance of a nuanced, inclusive, and adaptable approach in conflict-affected regions is clear.

Relevance in the Post-Coup Context

The post-coup political shifts raised questions about the relevance of the PBF's focus, particularly concerning the return of IDPs and durable solutions, but also the programme's outcome objectives seemed close to impossible with its focus on transferring ownership to national- and local government institutions, that, if they even existed, were ill equipped both in terms of human and financial resources and civil societal trust. The escalation of violence and changing dynamics necessitated a reassessment of the programme's strategies to ensure they remained aligned with the evolving context.

The programme's ability to continue operations amidst the volatile political environment following the 25 October 2021 coup is a testament to its commitment and flexibility. However, the evolving political reality also imposed a need for heightened political astuteness and strategic recalibration. While the programme's continuity during this period showcases its resilience, it also brings to light the intricate balance required in international peacebuilding efforts to adapt effectively to political changes without inadvertently giving rise to perceptions that could compromise the programme's neutrality and objectives.

The feedback from most respondents indicates that the programme was continuously perceived by communities as linked with the national-level peacebuilding efforts, necessitating persistent explanations not to be perceived as legitimizing the coup-led government. This feedback underscores the programme's need for a cautious approach in maintaining its peacebuilding mandate while navigating the complex political dynamics. Nonetheless, the situation highlights the importance of continuous re-evaluation and sensitivity to the perceptions of the programme's actions. It emphasizes the need for peacebuilding efforts to be not only adaptable and responsive but also acutely aware of

the broader political implications of their continuity and engagement strategies in conflict-affected environments.

The evaluation team's observations indicate that the PBF programme's response to the post-coup political shifts, particularly in relation to the revived revolution seeking the reinstatement of the transitional process, while adaptive at project level, may not have been adequately responsive or aligned with the evolving situation at programme-level. This situation emerged as a foundational element of the PBF's raison d'être. The perceived absence of a recalibrated approach to these significant political changes suggests a potential disconnect from the changing needs and dynamics of the environment.

Continuing operations without notable adjustments, in this context, could be seen as a lack of responsiveness and flexibility. This approach, characterized by a business-as-usual stance amidst a drastically altered political landscape, raises questions about the programme's effectiveness in contributing to peacebuilding under the new circumstances. The foundational assumptions of the programme's existence, which were closely tied to the transitional government and its processes, seemed to have shifted dramatically.

In a worst-case scenario, this continuity without significant recalibration or re-evaluation amidst the new political reality could be perceived as a form of tacit acceptance or even legitimization of the coup-led government. Such a situation would highlight the critical need for political astuteness and responsiveness in environments affected by conflict and political fluidity. The PBF's approach in this context underscores the complex challenges faced by international peacebuilding efforts in adapting to sudden and significant political changes.

7. Program-level Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Develop long-term funding strategies to sustain and expand the initial successes of the PBF program.

1.1 Develop long-term funding strategies to sustain and expand the initial successes of the PBF program. It's essential to focus on creating diversified funding sources, including international donors and local entities, to secure ongoing financial support.

1.2 Establish frameworks for strategic planning beyond the project's initial term. This should incorporate lessons learned from the PBF program to inspire future peacebuilding efforts, with a particular emphasis on adaptability to changing political and environmental landscapes.

1.3 Advocate for varied and enduring funding models to support continuous peace efforts. Aim to align project timelines with the long-term nature of peacebuilding required in Darfur (Section 7.7).

Rationale: This recommendation emerges from the evaluation findings, which indicated that while the PBF program in Darfur achieved notable successes in its initial phases, its long-term impact is jeopardized by uncertain and somewhat short-term funding for some activities/localities. The report underscores the need for a sustainable financial model that can support and amplify the early achievements of the program over a more extended period.

Discussion: The critical importance of establishing long-term funding strategies for peacebuilding initiatives, like the PBF program in Darfur, cannot be overstated. The sustainability and expansion of these efforts hinge on a solid financial foundation that extends beyond short-term grants and donations going towards e.g. individual outputs. This need for financial longevity is highlighted in the work of Keane and Ommundsen (2015), which emphasizes the essential role of sustainable funding in the success of peacebuilding initiatives, particularly in post-conflict contexts like Darfur[15]. They advocate for innovative partnerships and funding models that extend beyond traditional donor-recipient dynamics, suggesting a multidimensional approach involving various stakeholders, something that was lacking in the PBF-program, not least because of the coup, leaving any national government efforts to support financially out.

The insights from Cassin and Zyla (2023) suggest a significant shift in the approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, moving towards more pragmatic and locally driven strategies[16]. This evolution is critical for the PBF program in Darfur, where the complexities of the socio-political environment demand a nuanced understanding of peacebuilding. The traditional models of peacekeeping, often characterized by a top-down approach driven by external actors, may not fully address the unique challenges and dynamics present in Darfur. Instead, a shift towards empowering local actors and communities is crucial. Something that the PBF-program had an extensive focus on achieving.

However, this new paradigm also emphasizes the need for the PBF program to develop funding strategies that do more than just secure resources; they must also foster local ownership and engagement. The goal should be to create a sense of investment and involvement among local stakeholders, ensuring that peacebuilding efforts are rooted in the needs and perspectives of those directly affected by the conflict. By doing so, the program can ensure more sustainable and effective outcomes. This approach necessitates moving away from conventional, rigid funding models towards more inclusive and flexible frameworks. These frameworks should facilitate collaboration between international donors, local governments, civil society organizations, and community groups, ensuring that each stakeholder has a voice in how peacebuilding initiatives are financed and implemented. While the PBF-program was successful in identifying local needs and perspectives, the evaluation finds no strategies for linking this to strategies for continued financing and sustainability of implemented activities.

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[15] Keane, R., & Ommundsen, T. (2015). Money Matters: Addressing the Financial Sustainability of Security Sector Reform. Money Matters: Addressing the Financial Sustainability of Security Sector Reform

[16] Cassin, K., & Zyla, B. (2023). UN Reforms for an Era of Pragmatic Peacekeeping. Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 17, 294-312. UN Reforms for an Era of Pragmatic Peacekeeping

The adaptive nature of peacebuilding, as discussed by Randazzo and Torrent (2020)[17], further reinforces the need for flexible and responsive funding strategies, as also identified as a need for the PBF-programme, and sheds light on the adaptive nature of peacebuilding in complex and dynamic post-conflict settings like Darfur. Their insights on complexity-sensitive peacebuilding are particularly relevant for the PBF program's financial strategies. In an environment where socio-political conditions are continually evolving and the outcomes of peacebuilding efforts are uncertain, funding models must be capable of adapting to these changes. This adaptability is essential not only for responding to immediate needs but also for anticipating future challenges and opportunities.

Adaptive funding strategies should be designed to be responsive to the ground realities of Darfur, capable of adjusting to shifts in political dynamics, social structures, and community needs. Such strategies would allow for a more fluid allocation of resources, ensuring that funding can be directed to where it is most needed, when it is most needed. This approach requires a departure from traditional funding mechanisms that are often rigid and bound by predetermined objectives and timelines. Instead, a more responsive and flexible funding model would allow the PBF program to pivot its strategies in response to emerging challenges and opportunities, ensuring that peacebuilding efforts remain relevant and effective over time. To operationalize this adaptive funding approach, the PBF program should consider the following actionable steps:

- Dynamic Reallocation of Resources: Establish mechanisms for regular reassessment of project priorities and outcomes, enabling swift reallocation of resources to areas or initiatives that demonstrate immediate need or higher potential for impact. This involves setting aside a contingency fund that can be mobilized quickly in response to emerging challenges or opportunities.

- Engagement with Diverse Funding Sources: Diversify the funding base by actively seeking partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including international donors, local organizations, the private sector, and innovative financing mechanisms such as social impact bonds or endowments. This diversification will not only provide financial stability but also bring varied perspectives and expertise to the peacebuilding efforts.

- Capacity Building for Financial Adaptability: Invest in building the financial management capacity of local implementing partners to ensure they can effectively manage and adapt funding in response to changing circumstances. This includes training in agile budgeting, financial forecasting, and risk management.

- Regular Monitoring and Feedback Loops: Implement robust monitoring and evaluation systems that provide real-time feedback on the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives. Use

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[17] Randazzo, E., & Torrent, I. (2020). Reframing agency in complexity-sensitive peacebuilding. Security Dialogue, 52, 3-20. Reframing agency in complexity-sensitive peacebuilding

these insights to inform and adjust funding decisions, ensuring that investments are yielding the desired peacebuilding outcomes.

In light of these insights and the report's findings, the PBF program in Darfur should focus on developing a multi-faceted funding strategy that incorporates a mix of international donors, local stakeholders, private sector partnerships, and possibly innovative funding mechanisms like social impact bonds or endowments – when the environment are ripe for these mechanisms. This strategy should be designed to ensure not just the continuity of the program but also its adaptability and relevance to the specific needs and challenges of peacebuilding in Darfur.

In conclusion, the development of a robust, diversified, and long-term funding strategy is crucial for the sustainability and expansion of the PBF program in Darfur. Such a strategy should be based on the principles of modern peacebuilding, which emphasize local involvement, adaptability, and a deep understanding of the socio-political context.

Recommendation 2: Enhance the role of local and national governments in maintaining and expanding the results of peacebuilding activities.

2.1 Enhance the role of local and national governments in maintaining and expanding the results of peacebuilding activities. It's crucial to foster partnerships between UN agencies, local governments, and community organizations for effective and sustainable peace initiatives.

2.2 Implement training programs for local government personnel to address high staff turnover and maintain institutional memory in peacebuilding efforts.

Rationale: As noted in the evaluation, a high staff turnover in local institutions, not least local government bodies, poses a significant challenge to the continuity and effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts in the context of Darfur. Training programs are vital to building the capacity of local government personnel, thereby ensuring the preservation of institutional memory and the sustainability of peace initiatives.

Detailed Discussion: The high turnover of staff in local government bodies can lead to a loss of institutional knowledge and expertise, which is detrimental to the continuity of peacebuilding efforts. Training programs for local government personnel can mitigate this challenge. These programs should focus on building the skills and knowledge necessary for effective peacebuilding, such as conflict resolution, community engagement, and project management.

Moreover, these training programs should be designed to foster a deep understanding of the principles of peacebuilding, including conflict sensitivity, inclusivity, and adaptability, as discussed by

Randazzo and Torrent (2020)[18]. By equipping local government personnel with the tools and knowledge to navigate the complexities of peacebuilding in Darfur, these training programs can enhance the overall effectiveness of peace initiatives and ensure that they are sustainable in the long term.

Acknowledging the challenges posed by the recent military coup in Sudan and its impact on the PBF program in Darfur, it's essential to revisit and strengthen the program's approach to local government involvement and institutional knowledge maintenance, especially considering the existing successful engagement with academia and research institutions.

The military coup has necessitated a re-evaluation of the PBF program's strategies, particularly in maintaining neutrality while engaging with national and local government entities. In light of this, the program's pivot to working closely with academic and research institutions for training programs has been a strategic and effective response. These institutions have played a crucial role in providing training and building capacity, tailored to the unique needs and contexts of the region. Their involvement has not only brought expertise and contextual knowledge to the forefront but also contributed to a sense of ownership and relevance within the local communities.

Given this backdrop, a key recommendation for the PBF program would be to institutionalize its relationship with these academic and research institutions. This formalization can ensure a sustained and structured approach to capacity building and knowledge sharing, even in the face of political instability. Institutionalizing this relationship would mean establishing formal agreements or memorandums of understanding that clearly outline the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of both the PBF program and the academic institutions. It would also involve setting up regular channels of communication, joint planning sessions, and collaborative decision-making processes.

This institutionalized partnership could serve as a model for maintaining neutrality and effectiveness in peacebuilding efforts. By anchoring the training and capacity-building activities within the realm of academia and research, the program can navigate the complexities of working with government entities post-coup, ensuring that its efforts do not align with any political factions. This approach can also foster a more evidence-based and research-driven methodology in peacebuilding, enhancing the program's credibility and impact.

Moreover, solidifying ties with academic institutions can also address the issue of high staff turnover and loss of institutional memory. These institutions can become repositories of knowledge, where information, best practices, and lessons learned are systematically documented and made accessible for future reference. They can also play a crucial role in ongoing research efforts, continuously

[18] Randazzo, E., & Torrent, I. (2020). Reframing agency in complexity-sensitive peacebuilding. Security Dialogue, 52, 3-20. Reframing agency in complexity-sensitive peacebuilding

assessing the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategies and providing data-driven insights for course corrections and future planning.

Randazzo and Torrent's work sheds light on the significance of embracing complexity in peacebuilding efforts. They argue that peacebuilding contexts are invariably complex and require adaptive and responsive strategies. This perspective is especially relevant in the Sudanese context, where the political landscape has been significantly altered by the military coup, impacting the dynamics of peacebuilding. Their research emphasizes the importance of non-linear, context-sensitive approaches, which aligns well with the PBF program's need to adapt to the changing political environment in Darfur. Incorporating these principles into the PBF program involves several key aspects:

1. Embracing Complexity in Training Programs: Training programs developed in collaboration with academic institutions should not only focus on traditional peacebuilding skills but also on understanding and navigating the complexities of the local socio-political environment. This includes training local government personnel and peacebuilders in complexity theory and its application in conflict and post-conflict settings. It's about equipping them with the tools to understand and respond to the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of their work.

2. Research-Driven Approach to Peacebuilding: Randazzo and Torrent's emphasis on adaptive peacebuilding resonates with the need for a research-driven approach. Academic and research institutions, with their expertise in data collection, analysis, and interpretation, can play a crucial role in continually assessing the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategies. They can help in identifying emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities, thus enabling the PBF program to make informed and timely adjustments to its strategies.

3. Institutionalizing Collaborative Research: By formalizing its relationship with academic institutions, the PBF program can institutionalize a system of collaborative research. This partnership can lead to the development of joint research projects that focus on understanding the complexities of the Darfur region, the impact of political changes on peacebuilding efforts, and the effectiveness of various strategies. Such research can provide valuable insights for policy formulation and program implementation.

4. Building Capacity for Complexity-Sensitive Peacebuilding: The collaboration between the PBF program and academic institutions can also focus on building local capacity for complexity-sensitive peacebuilding. This means training local actors not just in conflict resolution and management, but also in understanding the complex interplay of various factors that influence peace and conflict in Darfur. This approach recognizes that peacebuilding is not a linear process and requires a deep understanding of the local context, stakeholders, and dynamics.

Recommendation 3: Further Develop Context-Sensitive and Adaptable Peacebuilding Strategies Tailored to Darfur's Unique Landscape

3.1 Develop peacebuilding strategies that are adaptable, holistic, and context-sensitive, considering Darfur's unique socio-political landscape (Section 5.7, 7.4).

3.2 Focus on addressing the deeper, more complex aspects of peacebuilding in the region, including behavioral change and trauma healing (Section 5.8).

Rationale: The rationale for advocating context-sensitive and adaptable peacebuilding strategies in Darfur, as indicated in the evaluation report, stems from the unique and multifaceted nature of conflicts in the region (Sections 5.7 and 7.4). Darfur's history of conflict, characterized by ethnic tensions, political instability, and socio-economic disparities, demands a peacebuilding approach that is attuned to these diverse and evolving factors. A rigid, one-size-fits-all strategy is unlikely to be effective in such a complex environment. While not claiming that this was the case for the PBF-program, a nuanced understanding of the local context, including cultural, social, and political dynamics, is essential to design and implement peacebuilding initiatives that are both relevant and sustainable.

Discussion: The need for context-sensitive and adaptable peacebuilding strategies in Darfur arises from the region's unique socio-political complexities and the dynamic nature of its conflicts. While the PBF program initially incorporated elements of such strategies, the lack of continuous monitoring and adaptation has been a limiting factor, minimizing the ongoing effectiveness of these efforts. This calls for a more robust approach, informed by both academic research and on-the-ground realities.

The research by Randazzo and Torrent (2020)[19] on complexity-sensitive peacebuilding is particularly relevant here. They emphasize the importance of adaptable and responsive strategies in peacebuilding, which is crucial in an environment like Darfur where socio-political conditions are continually evolving. Their work suggests that peacebuilding efforts must be flexible enough to adapt to sudden political shifts, such as the recent military coup in Sudan, and the changing needs of communities.

Moreover, the insights from Cassin and Zyla (2023)[20] on pragmatic peacekeeping also align with the need for context-sensitive approaches. They advocate for peacebuilding that is less directive and more attuned to local contexts, emphasizing the importance of empowering local actors and understanding the socio-political dynamics specific to each region.

The initial phase of the PBF program in Darfur incorporated context-sensitive and adaptable peacebuilding strategies, with regular monitoring, field visits, and community consultations forming an integral part of the program's approach. These efforts played a pivotal role in ensuring that peacebuilding initiatives were grounded in the realities of the region and responsive to the needs of

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[19] Randazzo, E., & Torrent, I. (2020). Reframing agency in complexity-sensitive peacebuilding. Security Dialogue, 52, 3-20. Reframing agency in complexity-sensitive peacebuilding

[20] Cassin, K., & Zyla, B. (2023). UN Reforms for an Era of Pragmatic Peacekeeping. Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 17, 294-312. UN Reforms for an Era of Pragmatic Peacekeeping

the communities. However, the evaluation indicates that while these mechanisms were in place, they were foremost limited by various challenges in many cases not allowing for implementation. In addition, mechanisms could be enhanced to ensure a more in-depth, systematic, and actionable understanding of the program's impact and the complex dynamics of the region.

Continuous and nuanced monitoring is crucial for not only understanding the immediate impact of peacebuilding efforts but also for identifying underlying trends, emerging challenges, and evolving community needs. Strengthening this aspect of the program could involve:

- Enhancing Data Analysis: Developing more sophisticated data analysis techniques to delve deeper into the qualitative and quantitative data collected during monitoring. This could provide richer insights into the complex socio-political dynamics of Darfur and the nuanced impact of various initiatives.

- Expanding Feedback Mechanisms: Establishing more extensive and structured channels for community input, ensuring that feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders is systematically captured and analysed. This could involve regular community forums, stakeholder surveys, and feedback mechanisms integrated into all program activities.

- Dynamic Adjustment of Strategies: Creating a framework for rapid response and adjustment of strategies based on the insights gained from continuous monitoring and community feedback. This would involve not only regular internal reviews but also creating a culture of adaptability where strategies can be pivoted in real-time in response to new developments or feedback.

- Building Local Capacities for Monitoring: Investing in building the capacity of local partners and communities to carry out effective monitoring and evaluation. This could involve training local teams in data collection and analysis, ensuring that monitoring efforts are deeply rooted in the local context and sustainable beyond the life of the program.

While the PBF program has made commendable efforts in monitoring and community engagement, there is room for strengthening these mechanisms to ensure a more profound and actionable understanding of the program's impact and the dynamics of Darfur. A more robust approach to monitoring and evaluation, coupled with an adaptive strategy framework, would significantly enhance the program's ability to navigate the complexities of peacebuilding in the region and achieve long-lasting impact..

Addressing the deeper aspects of peacebuilding, such as behavioural change and trauma healing, is also crucial. The PBF program did show a commitment to addressing behavioural change and trauma healing, as evidenced by its efforts such as the establishment of Community-based Child Protection Networks (CBCPN) and child- and youth-friendly spaces. These initiatives signify an understanding of the deep-seated psychological impacts of conflict on younger generations and the importance of creating safe and supportive environments for healing and growth. However, there's a need to deepen and expand these efforts to encompass a broader range of trauma healing and behavioural change strategies, informed by relevant research and practices.

Understanding and addressing the impact of trauma is crucial in post-conflict settings like Darfur. Research have revealed how trauma can fundamentally alter individual behaviour and brain function. His findings suggest that effective trauma healing often requires approaches beyond traditional talk therapy, including body-based therapies that allow individuals to process and release traumatic memories. This holistic approach to trauma care is particularly important in Darfur, where the population has experienced extensive violence and upheaval.

Community-based approaches to trauma healing, as advocated by experts in conflict transformation following the work of Lederach (1997)[21], are especially relevant in collective societies. These approaches, which include group therapy sessions, storytelling, and the incorporation of traditional healing practices, can create a shared space for healing, fostering a sense of community solidarity. This is in line with Lederach's emphasis on rebuilding social fabrics and transforming relationships in post-conflict environments.

The PBF program's existing initiatives, like the CBCPN and youth-friendly spaces, are steps in the right direction. They demonstrate an awareness of the need to protect and engage children and youth, who are particularly vulnerable in conflict situations. Building on these, there's room to integrate more comprehensive peace education programs. These programs, aimed at fostering skills like empathy, conflict resolution, and critical thinking, can be instrumental in promoting long-term behavioural change. By incorporating Galtung's concept of positive peace, which focuses on social justice and harmony, these educational programs can contribute to nurturing a culture of peace among the younger generations in Darfur.

Furthermore, it's important to recognize that trauma healing and behavioural change are ongoing processes requiring continuous support and engagement. Regular community sessions, follow-up activities, and the involvement of local leaders and members in designing and implementing these programs can enhance their relevance and effectiveness. This sustained approach ensures that the interventions have a lasting impact and address the evolving needs of the community.

In summary, for the PBF program in Darfur to effectively address its unique challenges, it must deepen its commitment to context-sensitive and adaptable peacebuilding strategies. This involves not only designing flexible and locally attuned strategies but also establishing robust mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Such an approach, informed by academic research and grounded in the realities of Darfur, is essential for ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts in the region.

Recommendation 4: Enhance Capacity Building and Empowerment of Local Organizations

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[21] John Paul Lederach, Building Peace, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997)

4.1 Enhance capacity-building programs for local NGOs and partner organizations, focusing on skill development and organizational resilience (Section 7.5).

4.2 Encourage the involvement and empowerment of local peacebuilders, ensuring they have the necessary resources and ownership over the peacebuilding process (Section 7.6).

Rationale: The rationale for enhancing capacity building and empowerment of local organizations in the PBF program in Darfur is grounded in the understanding that local NGOs and peacebuilders are pivotal to the success and sustainability of peace initiatives. As detailed in the evaluation (Sections 7.5 and 7.6), these local entities possess unique insights into the community dynamics and are best positioned to drive meaningful change within their social contexts. However, their effectiveness is often limited by a lack of resources, skills, and organizational resilience. Therefore, strengthening their capacities and ensuring their active involvement and ownership in peacebuilding processes is crucial.

Discussion: Enhancing capacity-building programs for local NGOs and partner organizations is a critical step towards creating a robust peacebuilding infrastructure in Darfur. These programs need to focus on a wide array of skills that are essential for effective and sustainable peacebuilding efforts. This includes project management, conflict resolution, fundraising, advocacy, and strategic planning. By equipping local organizations with these skills, the PBF program not only enhances their operational capabilities but also strengthens their resilience, enabling them to navigate and adapt to the challenging and dynamic environment in Darfur.

Furthermore, the empowerment of local peacebuilders is central to the success of peace initiatives. Empowerment in this context goes beyond providing resources; it involves actively involving local peacebuilders in decision-making processes and ensuring they have substantial ownership over the peacebuilding activities. This can be achieved by creating platforms for dialogue and collaboration, where local peacebuilders can share their insights, participate in shaping peacebuilding strategies, and lead community-based initiatives. Such involvement ensures that peacebuilding efforts are grounded in the realities of the local context and are more likely to be embraced by the community.

The research by Mohamad et al. (2023) emphasizes the role of resilience in conflict management, highlighting how resilient individuals can overcome negative attitudes when confronted with difficulty. This insight is particularly relevant to the context of Darfur, where local organizations often face numerous challenges. By integrating resilience training into capacity-building programs, the PBF program can empower these organizations not just to withstand adversities but to transform challenges into opportunities for growth and positive change.

Furthermore, the work of Daou et al. (2019) on intellectual capital and resilience in torn societies underscores the importance of developing human, organizational, and external capital. This approach aligns with the need to equip local NGOs with a broad range of skills and resources. It suggests that strengthening these aspects can enhance the resilience capabilities of local organizations, allowing them to continue their vital work during turbulent times.

Additionally, the concept of reciprocal empowerment, as explored by Kim (2021) in the context of peacebuilding, is highly relevant. This concept involves sharing lessons and experiences between local peacebuilders in a way that is mutually beneficial and non-hierarchical. Applying this to the Darfur

context, the PBF program can facilitate platforms where local organizations can exchange knowledge and best practices, learn from each other's experiences, and collaboratively develop strategies that are tailored to their specific needs and challenges.

Empowerment of local peacebuilders extends beyond the provision of resources; it is about meaningful involvement in the peacebuilding process. This involves creating spaces for local peacebuilders to contribute to decision-making, shape strategies, and lead initiatives. Such participatory approaches ensure that peacebuilding efforts resonate with the local communities and are more likely to be sustainable and effective.

The PBF program's approach to capacity building and empowerment should be highly contextualized, taking into consideration the unique challenges and needs of local organizations and peacebuilders in Darfur. This tailored approach should be flexible enough to adapt to the evolving situation in the region and should include mechanisms for continuous feedback and engagement with local stakeholders.

In summary, the recommendation to enhance capacity building and empowerment of local organizations in the PBF program in Darfur is founded on the need to strengthen the local infrastructure for peacebuilding. By investing in the skills, resilience, and empowerment of local NGOs and peacebuilders, the program can build a more effective, sustainable, and locally driven peacebuilding framework.

Recommendation 5: Incorporate Conflict Sensitivity and Do-No-Harm Principles

5.1 Strengthen the integration of conflict sensitivity and 'Do No Harm' principles in all aspects of program planning and implementation. Regularly assess and adapt strategies to minimize potential harm and enhance social cohesion and peacebuilding (Section 7.8).

Rationale: This recommendation stems from the need, as identified in the evaluation (Section 7.8), to ensure that the PBF program in Darfur conducts its activities in a way that minimizes potential harm and maximizes benefits to the community. The 'Do No Harm' principle and conflict sensitivity are critical in peacebuilding, as they guide organizations to be aware of and responsive to the complex dynamics of the conflict-affected areas in which they operate. The application of these principles is crucial to prevent inadvertently exacerbating tensions or contributing to conflict dynamics.

Discussion: Incorporating conflict sensitivity and 'Do No Harm' principles requires a comprehensive approach to program planning and implementation in Darfur. This involves a thorough understanding of the context, continuous assessment of the impact of interventions, and a readiness to adapt strategies as necessary. By integrating these principles, the PBF program can ensure that its activities are not only effective in achieving peacebuilding objectives but also respectful of the complex and often delicate socio-political environment in Darfur.

Conflict sensitivity involves being aware of the relationships between the program's actions and the context in which it operates. This means understanding how interventions might interact with the conflict dynamics and taking steps to mitigate any negative impacts. For example, when planning development projects or community activities, the program must consider how these might affect

power balances, resource allocation, or social cohesion within the community. This awareness guides the program to design interventions that contribute positively to peacebuilding and avoid exacerbating existing tensions.

The 'Do No Harm' approach emphasizes the importance of avoiding unintended negative consequences of interventions. It requires a careful analysis of the potential impacts of each activity, not just in terms of immediate outcomes but also in terms of longer-term implications for peace and conflict in the region. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms are essential to monitor the effects of the program's interventions and to make necessary adjustments. This might involve consulting with a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities, civil society organizations, and conflict experts, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential impacts of the program's actions.

Moreover, the application of these principles is not a one-time effort but a continuous process that needs to be integrated into every aspect of the program's work. This includes training staff on conflict sensitivity and the 'Do No Harm' approach, incorporating these principles into project design and evaluation frameworks, and establishing systems for regular monitoring and adaptation of strategies.

In conclusion, the incorporation of conflict sensitivity and 'Do No Harm' principles is essential for the PBF program in Darfur to ensure that its peacebuilding efforts are responsible, effective, and contribute to sustainable peace. By embedding these principles into all aspects of program planning and implementation, the program can navigate the complexities of the Darfur context, minimize potential harm, and maximize the positive impacts of its interventions.

Recommendation 6: Enhance Coordination among UN Agencies and Stakeholders with HDP-Nexus Informed Strategy

6.1 Foster a collaborative approach among different UN agencies and stakeholders for a comprehensive response to peacebuilding challenges. Prioritize joint initiatives that address various aspects of community development (Section 7.9).

6.2 Explicit integration of HDP-Nexus practices and strategy and make it inform collaboration and coordination.

Rationale: The need for enhanced coordination among various UN agencies and stakeholders, as highlighted in the evaluation (Section 7.9), acknowledges the partial success of existing collaborative approaches and joint assessments in the PBF program in Darfur. However, these efforts have not been consistently successful throughout the program's duration. The recommendation to strengthen this coordination and effectively implement a Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus approach stems from this observed inconsistency. The HDP-Nexus approach, integrating humanitarian aid, development assistance, and peacebuilding, is crucial in conflict-affected areas like Darfur to address the multifaceted challenges of sustainable community development and peacebuilding.

Discussion: While the PBF program in Darfur has made strides in conducting joint assessments and fostering a collaborative approach among UN agencies and stakeholders, the effectiveness of these

efforts has varied. There have been instances of successful collaboration, but overall, the program has faced challenges in maintaining a consistent and cohesive approach throughout its implementation.

Enhancing coordination requires not only the continuation of these initial efforts but also a more strategic and sustained approach to collaboration. This involves creating robust frameworks for communication and joint planning that extend beyond ad hoc collaborations. Regular, structured meetings, shared platforms for data and resource exchange, and joint decision-making processes are critical components of this enhanced coordination.

The partial success of the existing collaborative approach underscores the need for a more systematic integration of the HDP-Nexus approach. This holistic strategy should be ingrained in all aspects of the program, ensuring that humanitarian aid, development projects, and peacebuilding efforts are not only aligned but are actively working together to achieve common goals. For instance, humanitarian initiatives that provide immediate relief should be designed with an eye towards long-term development and peacebuilding outcomes, such as community resilience and social cohesion.

To address the challenges faced in previous collaborative efforts, the program should focus on identifying and overcoming the barriers to effective coordination. This may involve addressing issues related to communication, resource allocation, or differing priorities among agencies and stakeholders. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities, along with mechanisms for accountability and feedback, can help in mitigating these challenges.

Furthermore, the program should continue to conduct joint assessments but with an increased emphasis on using the findings to inform and adapt strategies in a more dynamic and responsive manner. This requires a commitment to ongoing evaluation and a willingness to adjust course based on the evolving needs and circumstances in Darfur.

In conclusion, the recommendation to enhance coordination among UN agencies and stakeholders through an HDP-Nexus informed strategy acknowledges the successes and challenges faced by the PBF program in Darfur. By building on the successes and learning from the challenges, the program can develop a more effective, sustainable, and cohesive approach to peacebuilding and community development.

Recommendation 7: Implement Effective Monitoring and Context Analysis

7.1 Develop robust monitoring systems to track the impacts of interventions and adapt strategies to the dynamic environment in Darfur (Section 7.10).

7.2 Enhance data collection and analysis for a cohesive understanding of local contexts and the effectiveness of interventions (Section 7.11).

7.3 Implement TPM and Knowledge Management Systems to enhance M&E as well as coordination and communication.

Rationale: Based on the findings in the evaluation (Sections 7.10 and 7.11), this recommendation emphasizes the importance of developing robust monitoring systems and enhancing data collection and analysis in the PBF program in Darfur. While the PBF program did conduct various activities such

as monitoring visits and baseline data collection, these efforts have not been fully integrated into an effective monitoring framework. The recommendation is to enhance these monitoring and context analysis activities by incorporating Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) and Knowledge Management Systems. These additions are aimed at not only improving the effectiveness of M&E but also serving as tools for enhanced coordination among stakeholders.

Discussion: Developing robust monitoring systems is crucial for the PBF program to track the impacts of its interventions systematically. This involves setting up mechanisms that can continually assess the outcomes of various peacebuilding activities. These monitoring systems should be capable of capturing both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a holistic view of the program's effectiveness. Quantitative data might include metrics such as the number of participants in training programs or the amount of aid distributed, while qualitative data could provide insights into the experiences and perceptions of beneficiaries.

Effective monitoring also requires the program to be responsive to the findings. This means that the program should not only collect data but also use it to inform and adapt its strategies. For example, if monitoring reveals that certain approaches are not yielding the desired outcomes, the program should be prepared to pivot and explore alternative strategies. This adaptive approach ensures that the program remains relevant and effective in the constantly changing context of Darfur.

Enhancing data collection and analysis is equally important for a cohesive understanding of local contexts. This goes beyond merely gathering information; it involves analysing the data to extract meaningful insights that can guide the program's strategies. Data analysis should focus on identifying patterns, trends, and underlying causes that can inform more effective interventions. For instance, if data analysis reveals specific areas or groups that are particularly vulnerable or underserved, the program can tailor its interventions to better meet these needs.

The PBF program's existing efforts in data collection were valuable for understanding the local context and the impact of interventions. However, to optimize the benefits of these activities, they need to be part of a more structured and comprehensive monitoring framework. Implementing TPM can provide an objective and impartial perspective on the program's activities and outcomes. TPM involves engaging external parties to conduct monitoring and evaluations, offering an unbiased assessment that can complement internal M&E efforts. This approach can enhance the credibility of the program's monitoring efforts and provide valuable insights for strategy adaptation.

Incorporating Knowledge Management Systems is another crucial step towards improving the program's monitoring and evaluation capabilities. These systems can serve as repositories for all data collected through various methods, ensuring that information is systematically organized, easily accessible, and usable for decision-making. Knowledge management involves not only storing data but also analysing and sharing it effectively. This can lead to better informed strategies, as decisions are based on a comprehensive understanding of accumulated knowledge and insights.

Knowledge Management Systems can facilitate enhanced coordination among different stakeholders. By providing a platform for sharing information, insights, and best practices, these systems can help align the efforts of various entities involved in the PBF program. This can lead to more cohesive and

integrated peacebuilding initiatives, as stakeholders have access to the same information and can work towards shared objectives.

Moreover, the program should strive to further integrate local knowledge and perspectives into its data collection and analysis processes. As proved by the program, engaging with local communities, stakeholders, and experts can provide valuable context-specific insights that are not always evident from quantitative data alone.

The recommendation to implement effective monitoring and context analysis in the PBF program in Darfur, supplemented with TPM and Knowledge Management Systems, addresses the need for a more structured and effective approach to monitoring. These enhancements not only improve the program's ability to assess and adapt its interventions but also serve as tools for better coordination and information sharing among stakeholders.

In summary, the recommendation to implement effective monitoring and context analysis in the PBF program in Darfur is foundational for understanding the impact of interventions and the complexities of the local environment. By developing robust monitoring systems and enhancing data collection and analysis, the program can ensure that its strategies are data-driven, contextually informed, and adaptable to the evolving needs of Darfur.

Recommendation 8: Assess How to Navigate Political Dynamics While Maintaining Neutrality

8.1 Assess how to navigate a political landscape like the post-coup Sudan, and how to maintain neutrality and impartiality in peacebuilding efforts without risking showcasing indifference.

8.2 Engage with a broad range of political and community stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and avoid perceptions of favouritism or alignment with specific political entities (Section 7.12).

Rationale: The political landscape, especially following the coup in Sudan, placed the program in a precarious position regarding maintaining neutrality. On one hand, neutrality might be misconstrued as indifference or in worst case tacit acceptance of the coup. On the other, engagement with certain groups, such as the Neighbourhood Resistance Committees, could be perceived as taking a political stance. The crucial task is to navigate these dynamics carefully, ensuring impartiality and inclusivity in all peacebuilding efforts.

Discussion: Navigating the political dynamics in post-coup Sudan while maintaining neutrality is a delicate balance. The PBF program's approach must be strategically designed to avoid any perceptions of bias or alignment with specific political entities. This requires a nuanced understanding of the political landscape and the various stakeholders involved in it.

The concept of neutrality in this context extends beyond non-alignment with political factions; it also encompasses an active and balanced engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. This means not only avoiding actions that could be interpreted as supporting one side but also actively demonstrating impartiality through inclusive and diverse engagements. The program should aim to create spaces where voices from different political and community groups are heard and considered. This inclusive approach can help dispel any notions of favouritism and reinforce the program's commitment to neutrality.

Moreover, the program's neutrality should be communicated clearly and consistently to all stakeholders. Transparency in actions and decisions is key to building trust and credibility. Clear communication about the program's goals, strategies, and principles can help mitigate misunderstandings about its stance and intentions.

The challenges faced in the post-coup environment also highlight the need for continuous context analysis and adaptability. The political situation in Sudan is fluid, and the program must be prepared to adapt its strategies in response to new developments. This might involve re-evaluating engagement strategies, revising program objectives, or altering implementation methods to align with the changing context, as seen with the post-coup revision of how to cooperate with government stakeholders.

Addressing the concern that neutrality might be perceived as indifference or acceptance of the coup requires a proactive approach. The program should articulate its stance on supporting the transitional process towards democracy, while maintaining neutrality, requiring a strategic and multifaceted approach. By actively supporting democratic initiatives, engaging inclusively with various stakeholders, communicating transparently, and being adaptable to changes, the PBF program would effectively be able to navigate the complex political dynamics in Darfur and contribute to a peaceful and democratic transition, rather than keeping a neutrality position reflecting indifference to political developments. Additionally, the program should ensure that its actions and interventions do not inadvertently support or legitimize any political entities that go against its principles of impartiality and inclusivity.

Navigating the political dynamics in Darfur post-coup requires a careful, strategic approach that upholds neutrality while actively engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders. This involves inclusive engagements, clear communication, continuous context analysis, and a proactive stance on maintaining neutrality. By adhering to these principles, the PBF program can navigate the complex political landscape effectively and maintain the integrity of its peacebuilding efforts.

Recommendation 9: Integrate Peacebuilding with Environmental Sustainability

Rationale: The evaluation of remote sensing data across various villages, including Jiljilak, Thur, Al-Awazil, and Marar, has revealed a significant relationship between development interventions, environmental health, and socio-political dynamics. The shift in vegetation covers post-2021 coup, potentially connected to land degradation and drought conditions, highlights the interplay between environmental factors and political instability. This interplay impacts the program's implementation and efficacy, underscoring the need to integrate peacebuilding efforts with environmental sustainability.

Discussion: Integrating peacebuilding with environmental sustainability is essential for addressing the challenges at the nexus of ecological changes and socio-political unrest. The PBF program must ensure that its strategies are resilient to environmental changes and support both peacebuilding and ecological preservation. This involves implementing development projects that are environmentally sound and socially sensitive, contributing to a stable and sustainable peace.

Development projects should consider the environmental impact and aim to preserve ecological integrity. This could include initiatives focused on sustainable natural resource management,

environmental conservation, and climate change adaptation. By aligning peacebuilding efforts with environmental sustainability, the program can address underlying factors that contribute to conflict, such as resource scarcity and environmental degradation.

Furthermore, community involvement in environmental initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards natural resources, contributing to both environmental preservation and social cohesion. The program should also consider the potential impact of environmental changes on socio-political dynamics and adapt its strategies accordingly.

The integration of peacebuilding with environmental sustainability is a strategic approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of ecological health and socio-political stability. By adopting environmentally sustainable practices in peacebuilding efforts, the PBF program in Darfur can contribute to the overall resilience and stability of the region.

Recommendation 10: Integrate a Conflict Systems Approach in Addition to the Area-Based Strategy

Rationale: The recommendation to integrate a conflict systems approach alongside the existing Area-Based or "Hot-Spot Villages" strategy in the PBF program in Darfur is based on the realization that solely focusing on selected hot-spot villages may not fully address the broader and interconnected dynamics of conflict in the region. This integration aims to complement the targeted approach with a broader perspective that acknowledges the complexity of conflicts and the needs of various affected communities, thereby reducing perceptions of inequality and addressing the root causes of conflict more comprehensively, and underscores the need for a delicate balance between targeted interventions and addressing the wider spectrum of conflict dynamics.

Discussion: While the focus on hot-spot villages has enabled targeted interventions in areas with acute conflict, this approach could benefit from being complemented by a conflict systems perspective. The conflict systems approach offers a more holistic understanding of conflict dynamics, extending beyond the confines of specific hot spots to consider the broader socio-political context.

Integrating this approach involves analysing the interconnectedness of conflicts across different villages and regions, identifying how issues in one area might impact or be influenced by situations in another. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the systemic drivers of conflict, such as socio-economic disparities, governance issues, and historical grievances. By combining this broad perspective with the targeted interventions in hot-spot villages, the PBF program can ensure that its efforts are both focused and comprehensive.

The program could integrate several strategies into its approach. First, conducting regular, comprehensive conflict analysis across all regions, including those not directly targeted, is crucial. This would provide a broader understanding of the interplay between different conflict dynamics, ensuring that interventions in specific areas do not inadvertently aggravate tensions elsewhere.

Incorporating a conflict systems approach also means engaging a wider array of stakeholders, including those from communities that may not be designated as hot spots but are still affected by the overarching conflict dynamics. This inclusive strategy ensures that interventions are responsive to

the diverse needs and perspectives across the region, fostering a sense of fairness and community ownership.

Moreover, community engagement needs to be inclusive and transparent, encompassing a wide range of stakeholders, even from non-targeted areas. Such inclusivity can offer diverse insights and assist in grasping the broader implications of the program's interventions. Additionally, adopting an adaptive program management style that allows for modifications based on ongoing monitoring and feedback can make the program more responsive to evolving conflict dynamics and community needs.

Open communication about the program's objectives, the reasons behind selecting certain areas, and the limitations imposed by resource constraints is also vital. Such transparency can help manage expectations and mitigate perceptions of inequality. Lastly, coordinating with other initiatives and stakeholders in the region to create synergies can address broader conflict dynamics more comprehensively. Pooling resources and sharing knowledge with other initiatives can lead to a more integrated approach to peacebuilding.

Additionally, integrating a conflict systems approach would involve designing interventions that are interconnected and address various aspects of the conflict. For example, initiatives focused on economic development in hot-spot villages could be linked with broader peacebuilding efforts like governance reform or social cohesion programs in surrounding areas. This interconnected strategy ensures a more effective and sustainable impact.

Through these strategies, the PBF can refine its impact, ensuring that while its targeted interventions effectively address specific issues, the broader conflict dynamics are simultaneously considered. Integrating a conflict systems approach in addition to the focused "Hot-Spot Villages" strategy is a strategic enhancement for the PBF program in Darfur. This dual approach allows for targeted interventions in areas of acute need while also addressing the wider, systemic factors contributing to conflict, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable peacebuilding outcomes.

8. Annexes

- Annex 1. TOR

- Annex 2. Inception Report, including evaluation matrix and data collection tools.

- Annex 3. List of Supporting Documents Reviewed

- Annex 4: Overview of KIIs and FGDs Collected