



March 2024



PBF Investments in



	TOTAL APPROVED	\$32 M
	CURRENTLY ACTIVE	\$10.4M

Focusing on

- Women, Peace and Security;
- Peace agreement implementation and peace dividends
- Peaceful management of conflicts

Partners



PNG National Government
Autonomous Bougainville Government

PEACEBUILDING CHALLENGES

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a large country in the South Pacific, which is unique in its cultural and ethnic diversity. In 2001, following a decade-long conflict, the National Government and the leaders representing the people of Bougainville (the most eastwards group of islands in Papua New Guinea) signed the Bougainville Peace Agreement. Under the terms of the Agreement, a referendum on the political status of Bougainville was held and credibly and peacefully concluded in December 2019 with 97.7% of votes in support of independence. Bougainville is now in the post-referendum process in an environment where complex challenges remain, including the ultimate political status of Bougainville and the socio-economic development of its people. Another dynamic of violence has been long present in PNG's Highlands Region, relating to tribal conflict, and has intensified in scale through the presence of modern weapons and political competition, further exacerbated by limited social services and perceived socio-economic marginalisation.

THE PBF AND PBC IN ACTION

The PBF's investment in PNG (\$32 million approved since 2015), implemented through the UN Country Team and partners, initially focused on supporting an enabling environment for the 2019 referendum on the political status of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. This support was provided in close partnership with other support from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, including the Asia-Pacific Division, Mediation Support Unit, and Electoral Assistance Division.

In addition, in late 2018, the PBF expanded its support in PNG outside of Bougainville, targeting the conflict-affected Southern Highlands and Hela provinces with a view to mitigating tribal conflict and community grievance in a region that had received little international attention and was beset by insecurity. Following the Secretary-General's approval in 2020 of Papua New Guinea's request for a second period of eligibility to the PBF, the Fund has increased its investment in the Highlands Region and kick-started the Highlands Joint Program (HJP) focusing on two provinces. The HJP was designed to provide multi-thematic UN interventions to make a difference in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding priorities in the targeted provinces. As one of the first and major donors to this high-risk program in the region, the PBF support has enabled the UN to commence this much larger Program and to attract other investments.

In addition, PNG was the first non-PBC Country Configuration Member State which addressed the Commission to discuss its peacebuilding priorities in 2015, following the original declaration of eligibility for PBF support. In October 2019, the Government addressed the Commission again to discuss the preparations for the Bougainville referendum and the peacebuilding plans for the Highlands Region.

■ PBF IMPACT

Enabling a Peaceful Referendum in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville

The PBF support to the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement since 2015 has strengthened the trust and relationship between the National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to jointly work towards the referendum on the future political status of Bougainville and helped to ensure an enabling environment for a peaceful referendum. In particular, the PBF enabled pro-active political dialogue between the two Governments using preventative diplomacy on issues related to the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the referendum, raised awareness on the Agreement through mass awareness campaigns throughout Bougainville, and assisted with community weapons disposal initiatives. The Fund assisted in the signing of the parliamentary partnership agreement between the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives, facilitated through three dedicated consultation meetings in 2021, chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator. Moreover, PBF support helped enhance the role of women and youth in the referendum preparation and conduct, including through targeted information campaigns and fora for dialogue within communities and with political leaders. The investments on women's political empowerment also contributed to the election of five women parliamentarians to the Bougainville Parliament in 2020.

In the post-referendum period, the Fund has supported key high level and parliamentary meetings between the National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, including meetings of the Joint Supervisory Body (JSB), the preeminent inter-governmental decision-making body, and its joint technical team, to find joint resolutions to assist with implementation of the Peace Agreement. This contributed to reaching key agreements, such as the Sharp Agreement in 2021, the Enga Road Map 2021 and the Era Kone Agreement in 2022 to assist the National Government and Autonomous Bougainville Government in determining the future political status of Bougainville. The project also supported development and dissemination of joint key messages through a plethora of channels including almost 500 Bougainville Transition Dialogues on post-referendum process throughout Bougainville. In 2023, the PBF funded a key Joint Supervisory Body meeting on 31 July 2023 that brought together the PNG Prime Minister and the ABG President, and respective members of each Cabinet to drive forward the discussion on the post-referendum dialogue. The project also supported parliamentary women caucus meetings, bringing together teams across the Bougainville House of Representatives and the National parliament and enabling positive exchange between women leaders.

Empowering Local Mediators in the Highlands Region

The PBF has supported the capacity building of selected women, youth and community leaders in peacebuilding and conflict transformation in the Southern Highlands and Hela provinces, contributing to the start-up and implementation of the UN Highlands Joint Program. The support has enabled the inclusive development of 12 Community Peace Plans in the target communities to foster a culture of dialogue and joint action for peace. The Fund has also promoted dialogue among provincial and district stakeholders by establishing networks that include communities, local government, churches, civil society groups, and actors from the development and private sectors. Two provincial and ten district Peace and Development Dialogue Conferences held so far have served as regular platforms for open and collaborative conversations, focusing on the local trajectory of peace and development. The Fund also supported the establishment and operation of local inter-denominational mediation teams. In 2023, five mediation teams led by the Catholic Diocese of Mendi and the United Church were successful in bringing parties involved in 12 conflicts closer and preventing a relapse into violence. The presence of community members, who are neutral and well-informed about the root causes of the conflicts, within the mediation teams has played a crucial role in facilitating constructive dialogue and negotiations between the parties. In combination with mediation efforts, the Fund provided 25 community peacebuilding grants which have created positive and transformative change by strengthening cultural, social, and economic relations between communities recovering from conflict and supporting those impacted by tribal violence. In early 2024, the PBF programming in the Highlands region is undergoing an independent evaluation, and a new program is under design, building on the progress and lessons of the previous investments.