
How the Multilateral Development Banks Complement the UN Peacebuilding Architecture in Preventing Conflict and Violence

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Introduction

Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) play a crucial role in supporting global peacebuilding efforts. These institutions provide the financial resources and technical expertise necessary to address the underlying causes of fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) in vulnerable regions. This policy brief aims to examine how MDBs complement the peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations (UN) and what entry points exist for strengthening partnerships towards preventing violence and conflict in the context of the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR). It is based on desk research and expert consultations with four of the MDBs—including the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).

1. UN Peacebuilding Architecture Overview

The UN Peacebuilding Architecture (UNPBA) plays an important role in coordinating international efforts to sustain peace, focusing on conflict prevention, recovery, and long-term development. It comprises three separate, interlinked components: the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), as well as various agencies, funds, and programs that work on this subject matter.¹ Together, these components undertake “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.”²

At the conclusion of the third review of the UNPBA in 2020, twin resolutions [A/RES/75/201](#) (2020)³ and [S/RES/2558 \(2020\)](#)⁴ on the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture called for a further comprehensive review in 2025. The Review consists of two different phases, one informal and one formal. The informal process involved consultations with actors both within and outside the UN, feeding into the [2024 report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#). The secretary-general also asked several eminent persons, selected from relevant current and former members of his senior advisory boards and groups, to submit [a letter](#) to the Secretary-General and member states containing their reflections on the implementation of the resolutions to date on the peacebuilding architecture.⁵ The formal phase began in early 2025, with the goal of conducting an open, inclusive, and consultative intergovernmental process to review the findings and recommendations from the informal phase.⁶ This PBAR is taking place at an opportune time, coming on the heels of the Summit of the Future, in which the Pact for the Future highlighted that establishing a more systematic and strategic partnership between the PBC and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) would help to “mobilize financing for sustaining peace and to help align national development, peacebuilding and prevention approaches.”⁷ It also coincides with the World Bank’s process of developing a new strategy for FCV, as well as the recently launched Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)’s [Framework for](#)

2. Recommendations from the Previous PBARs and Their Relevance to MDBs

The UNPBA has been subject to three reviews since its current format was established in 2005, with the 2025 PBAR being the fourth. The first review took place in 2010 and was mandated by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council to assess the early years of the UNPBA. It highlighted the need for greater coordination, resources, and focus on long-term sustainability in peacebuilding efforts.⁸ In 2015, the “Age of Sustaining Peace,” the second review took place. This emphasized the shift from post-conflict recovery to a more comprehensive, preventive approach to sustaining peace. It called for peacebuilding to be integrated across all phases of conflict, stressing inclusivity and long-term support for national peace efforts.⁹ Finally, in 2020, a third review was conducted, built upon the findings of the previous two reviews and the progress achieved in operationalizing the concept of sustaining peace.

The 2020 PBAR offered several key findings relevant to IFIs, particularly MDBs, about their role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.¹⁰ The secretary-general's report on Sustaining Peace, issued in 2020 (A/74/976-S/2020/773),¹¹ was an important document that outlined progress and challenges in implementing the UN's Sustaining Peace agenda. This built upon the 2016 twin resolutions and the subsequent efforts. The report also underscored the significance of partnerships with IFIs and MDBs in advancing peacebuilding efforts globally. The report emphasized the critical need for leveraging the financial and technical expertise of IFIs and MDBs to advance peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts. It highlighted the importance of integrating peacebuilding perspectives into development planning and emphasized the potential for these institutions to provide crucial resources for sustaining peace, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings. This integration not only aligns MDB development strategies with the UN's peacebuilding objectives but also enhances the long-term sustainability of peace initiatives. In fact, the secretary-general's report specifically referenced the

World Bank's FCV Strategy from 2020–2025 (explored in further detail below) as an example of an approach focused on addressing the root causes of conflict.¹² Finally, the report highlighted the need for more coherent approaches within donor institutions and between donors and IFIs as vital in maintaining the focus on strategic, long-term priorities, particularly in times of crisis.¹³

Upon the completion of the formal phase of the 2020 PBAR, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted new twin resolutions [A/RES/75/201 \(2020\)](#) and [S/RES/2558 \(2020\)](#) on the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. Resolution A/RES/75/201 (2020), passed in the General Assembly, recognized the role of IFIs in peacebuilding, encouraged greater coordination and collaboration, and emphasized the importance of mobilizing financial resources for peacebuilding.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Security Council Resolution, S/RES/2258 (2020) encouraged IFIs and MDBs to support national ownership and capacity building, conduct joint analysis and risk assessments, align their financial strategies with peacebuilding priorities, and encouraged IFIs to coordinate with the PBC and support innovative financing for peacebuilding efforts, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile settings.¹⁵ Both resolutions affirmed the need for stronger collaboration between the UNPBA and IFIs and MDBs to ensure that peacebuilding efforts are well-resourced, effective, and sustainable.

As we look ahead to the formal phase of the 2025 PBAR, a key focus should be on deepening the partnerships between MDBs and the UNPBA, addressing funding gaps, and further refining approaches to conflict prevention and resilience-building in light of the evolving global context. Indeed, in his report, released in late November 2024, the secretary-general highlighted the role that IFIs and MDBs play as critical “agents for peace,” given their ability to bring large-scale financing to bear in support of nationally led strategies.¹⁶ In December, the letter from the Independent Eminent Persons also highlighted several areas where the PBA should strengthen coordination with IFIs. These included a renewed and more robust dialogue to agree on modalities for improved cooperation and partnership, such as exploring financial support for countries engaging with the PBC to advance their prevention and peacebuilding strategies and partnering with the banks to assist priority countries in addressing the drivers of conflict and instability.¹⁷

3. How Have MDBs Evolved to Address Issues of Violence and Conflict?

MDBs¹⁸ are key players in the International Financial Architecture (IFA), a framework that governs global economic and financial stability. MDBs provide financial support and policy advice for development projects, seeking to address global challenges, including poverty, inequality, and FCV. MDBs undertake this role by applying various operational approaches and instruments, including providing policy-based budget support, investment operations, institutional strengthening, and technical assistance, as well as undertaking diagnostics and analytical products. These can all be tailored to address the root causes and drivers of FCV. Their rich and diverse experience enables them to bring together some of this global knowledge in ways that make it more accessible to client countries.¹⁹ The MDBs collaborate on these issues through the MDB Working Group on FCV, which serves as a forum for exchanging knowledge, aligning policies, and promoting coordinated action. Additionally, each MDB maintains unique mandates and frameworks to support stability, resilience, and long-term development in FCV settings. Each MDB uses its own terminology to describe engagement in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCS). These terminologies and approaches inform the scope of their operations and the types of countries and challenges they address. To understand how MDBs tackle FCV issues, it is essential to examine the components that shape their respective strategies, as their diverse experiences allow them to respond to the complex dynamics of fragility and conflict across different regions.

World Bank Group

The World Bank's work in FCS is framed by its [Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025](#),²⁰ which serves as the primary source for policy guidance on its engagement in these issues. This strategy reflects the Bank's evolving understanding of fragility, recognizing that FCV issues exist on a continuum and require early identification and intervention to prevent countries from sliding into crisis. The first policy guiding the World Bank's work in fragile contexts was

developed in the early 2000s, with the current strategy representing the latest iteration. It focuses on four key pillars: prevention, remaining engaged in active conflict settings, transitioning out of fragility, and mitigating risks in countries with systemic vulnerabilities.²¹

To guide its work, the Bank employs the [Risk and Resilience Assessment](#) (RRA) as a key diagnostic tool. These assess FCV drivers, risks, and resilience capacities, helping to tailor interventions to the specific dynamics of each country. More recently, the Bank has begun undertaking RRAs in countries not on the FCS list, such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, to understand the impact of regional instability, related to cross-border dynamics, and identify opportunities for early action.²² The World Bank has also developed a tailored funding mechanism, known as the [FCV envelope](#),²³ under the [International Development Association](#) (IDA) framework.²⁴ This funding instrument, comprised of three FCS-country allocations, provides additional resources to countries facing FCV, with eligibility based on a matrix of quantitative and qualitative criteria related to risks and opportunities for addressing these.²⁵ For example, one of the three allocations, the Prevention and Resilience Allocation (PRA), serves to provide additional support to countries at risk of falling into high-intensity conflict. However, the eligibility criteria for countries to qualify for a PRA have, in some instances, compromised the effectiveness of the PRA as a tool for supporting upstream prevention. Using the number of conflict-related fatalities as an initial threshold for eligibility has meant that some countries may only be leveraging the PRAs when a crisis has already set in. The Midterm Review of the FCV strategy revealed this very clearly, prompting the World Bank to consider adjustments aimed at introducing more flexibility, including considering an expanded set of contextual data for assessing eligibility.

The [State and Peacebuilding Fund](#) (SPF) remains the Bank's leading global trust fund supporting the implementation of its FCV strategy. It is a key part of the financing architecture laid out in the FCV strategy, working in complementarity with other funding mechanisms.²⁶ The SPF is utilized to pilot or test innovative activities in fragile settings that may have the potential to be replicated or scaled up across the Bank.²⁷

In terms of partnerships, the World Bank has increasingly sought to collaborate with other international actors, including the UN and regional development banks, to strengthen its capacity in FCV settings. These partnerships aim to combine the World Bank's financial and technical resources (as can be found, for example, with the SPF) with the political and social expertise of organizations like the UN to deliver more comprehensive peacebuilding and development interventions as an

implementing partner, especially in contexts of crisis where the Bank may not have a sufficient footprint. In situations of upstream prevention, this collaboration requires further development. The 2020–2025 strategy also encourages collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and local actors to ensure local ownership of peacebuilding efforts.

African Development Bank (AfDB)

The AfDB has developed a comprehensive and flexible approach to addressing fragility through its current strategic framework, “[Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa](#),” which spans from 2022 to 2026.²⁸ This strategy is the AfDB’s third major policy guidance in this area. The overarching goal of the 2022–2026 framework is to tackle the root causes of conflict and fragility, while scaling up investment in crisis prevention across Africa. The thematic focus includes addressing climate change, youth unemployment, governance deficits, and regional instability—factors that are critical to promoting resilience in Africa. The Strategy describes how the Bank will adapt its operations and instruments to tackle the root causes of conflict and fragility, recognizing the need to scale up investment in crisis prevention.²⁹

A critical tool guiding the AfDB’s work in fragile and conflict-affected settings is the [Country Resilience and Fragility Assessment \(CRFA\) Tool](#).³⁰ This diagnostic tool measures capacities and pressures across seven key dimensions in all Regional Member Countries (RMCs), providing an evidence-based understanding of fragility and resilience in each context. The seven dimensions are inclusive politics, security, justice, economic and social inclusiveness, social cohesion, regional spillover effects, and climate/environmental impacts. The CRFA tool ensures that its assessments are holistic, enabling the AfDB to adapt its operations to the specific needs of each RMC. Anchored in its prevention agenda, this approach allows for the anticipation of risks and the identification of opportunities for building resilience.

In terms of financing, the AfDB has tailored its resources to support fragile contexts. The African Development Fund (ADF) is one of the concessional windows available to the AfDB. Though not specifically targeted to FCAS, the ADF contributes to economic and social development in the least developed African countries and counts nearly half of its client countries as fragile states.³¹ It also actively contributes to regional platforms that address interconnected drivers of fragility, such as the Horn of Africa Initiative, the Sahel Alliance, and the Regional Stabilization Facility for the Lake Chad Basin. Through these platforms, the AfDB

engages in multi-sectoral, durable, and multifaceted regional programs, recognizing that many drivers of fragility—including climate change and youth unemployment—require cross-border and regional responses. Partnerships are central to the Bank's approach and represent one of the six guiding principles of the 2022–2026 policy framework. The AfDB supports a holistic approach to partnerships, as advocated across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding (HDP) nexus, which enables the joining of expertise to address complex crises more effectively.

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

The ADB addresses FCAS and small island developing states (SIDS) through its Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations and Small Island Developing States Approach (2021–2025).³² This policy informs ADB's scope of engagement, emphasizing the need to adapt development interventions to the specific challenges of fragility, conflict, and vulnerability. Notably, the ADB has chosen to bring both FCAS and SIDS together into a single approach. This policy is part of ADB's broader 2030 Strategy objectives to improve the effectiveness of ADB assistance and development outcomes in FCAS and SIDS contexts, as well as in areas of fragility and poverty at the subnational level.³³ Although ADB does not engage in direct peacebuilding, it has tried to adopt a “peace lens” in post-conflict recovery settings by undertaking a pilot of this approach in Nepal.³⁴

A key diagnostic tool used by ADB in these contexts is the Fragility and Resilience Assessment (FRA), which was introduced to enhance the Bank's understanding of the underlying drivers of fragility and resilience at the national, regional, and local levels. These assessments inform the design and implementation of projects, ensuring that interventions are context-specific and aim to mitigate risks before they escalate.³⁵

In terms of funding mechanisms, the ADB does not offer a specific funding envelope for fragile and conflict-affected states. However, it uses tailored financial instruments under its broader financing mechanisms, providing additional support through concessional lending and grants for eligible countries, especially for SIDS and fragile settings where regular financing terms may not be applicable. One such mechanism includes the Asian Development Fund, which provides grants to ADB's lower-income developing member countries for activities that promote poverty reduction and improve the quality of life in the poorer countries of the Asia-Pacific region.³⁶

Partnerships are central to ADB's work in fragile contexts. ADB's collaboration with UN Country Teams and other international organizations is context-dependent. In more fragile states, such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, ADB works closely with the UN as an implementing partner. On the ground, ADB's team collaborates with civil society organizations and NGOs to strengthen local capacities and ensure the relevance of its projects.

Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)

The IsDB operates under its Fragility and Resilience Policy (2019) to set standards and the strategic direction in addressing fragility and conflict in its member countries.³⁷ This includes an emphasis on strengthening institutions, building resilience, and contributing to social cohesion and sustainable development.

For countries identified as fragile or conflict-affected, IsDB conducts a [Fragility and Resilience Risk Analysis](#) (FRRRA), which analyzes risks, assesses drivers, and guides a development strategy that addresses the potential sources of fragility and identifies opportunities to strengthen institutions and build resilience. Their approach is centered on local capacity building and civil society-led interventions, with a strong emphasis on preventing fragility through policy dialogue. To improve its impact, the Bank is developing specific metrics and tools for evaluating preventive efforts, modeled on its frameworks for climate change and gender equality. This allows for a more structured and measurable approach to the prevention of conflict and fragility.

In terms of funding mechanisms, IsDB supports its member countries through grants and concessional financing, with a particular focus on fragile states. For example, it incorporates provisions for refugee inclusion in its recovery and reconstruction programs, particularly in countries such as Uganda and Jordan, which host large refugee populations. By incorporating components that specifically address the needs of refugees, IsDB ensures that its development strategies are holistic and responsive to the challenges faced by both host communities and displaced populations.

Partnerships are also central to IsDB's strategy. IsDB actively seeks to collaborate with other MDBs and international organizations such as the UN. These collaborations often involve joint analytics, capacity development, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected regions. The IsDB has participated in joint assessments and capacity-building efforts with other MDBs,

such as the World Bank and AfDB, and is interested in expanding these collaborations further.

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

The IDB has introduced its [Framework to Support Populations in Situations of Fragility, Conflict, and Criminal Violence \(2024-2027\)](#) to address the rising levels of instability and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).³⁸ This framework builds on the IDB's long-standing commitment to promoting economic development and social inclusion by recognizing that fragility and violence are major impediments to progress. The strategy highlights the need for targeted, context-specific interventions that account for the root causes of violence, such as organized crime, inequality, and weak institutional governance. It is designed to be adaptable, allowing the IDB to respond more effectively to rapidly changing security environments. One of its key features is the focus on criminal violence, which is prevalent in many urban areas of the region and presents unique challenges compared to traditional conflict settings.

To inform its interventions, the IDB conducts a [Country Development Challenges](#) (CDC) analysis. These assessments provide a comprehensive evaluation of the socio-economic, political, and institutional conditions of member countries, focusing on key challenges such as fragility, violence, inequality, and governance weaknesses.

In terms of funding mechanisms, the IDB provides both grants and concessional financing to support countries with high levels of fragility and violence. The Bank focuses on enabling governments to strengthen law enforcement and judicial systems, implement community-based violence prevention programs, and bolster institutional resilience. The eligibility criteria for funding are determined by the specific fragility and violence-related risks faced by the country, ensuring that resources are allocated to the areas of greatest need.

The framework also fosters partnerships and coordination with other regional actors and international organizations, ensuring a comprehensive approach to building resilience and promoting stability across the LAC region. By funding governments, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organizations to implement projects, the IDB ensures that its interventions are context-specific and aligned with broader efforts to build resilience and promote stability throughout the LAC region.

4. How Can There Be Greater Complementarity Between MDBs and the UNPBA?

Greater complementarity between MDBs and the UNPBA is not only beneficial but increasingly essential for effective prevention and peacebuilding. Both organizations recognize the value of working together, combining their unique strengths to address complex crises more holistically. MDBs bring financial resources, technical expertise, and long-term development strategies, while the UN offers deep experience in peacebuilding, has a widespread field presence, and the ability to operate in crisis settings where MDBs may have limited access, as well as broad local convening capabilities. The desire to collaborate is clear, as outlined in reports such as the joint “Pathways for Peace”³⁹ by the UN and the World Bank, as well as multiple UN secretary-general reports, including the most recent 2024 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

In its 2024 Annual Programme of Work, the PBC sought to pursue opportunities for stronger engagement with the IFIs, including the MDBs, stressing the importance of visits to headquarters and regular engagement.⁴⁰ The PBC has periodically held meetings with the World Bank, the most recent one taking place in March 2023.⁴¹ In this meeting, the chair of the PBC called for the Commission to “strengthen strategic collaboration and complementarity between the UN and the World Bank, with joint analysis as a starting point for enhanced alignment and synergies.” The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have a standing invitation to all meetings of the PBC,⁴² underlining the importance of their mandate to peacebuilding and prevention. The other MDBs have been included in specific discussions and have collaborated with PBSO, although this has been on an ad-hoc basis. In fact, as recently as January 17, 2025, the PBC held a meeting on the IDB’s Framework for Supporting Populations in Situations of Fragility, Conflict and Criminal Violence. This exchange enabled the IDB to identify potential entry points for deeper engagement and support with countries in the region that have engaged with the PBC, while also allowing member states of the PBC to exchange insights with the IDB on peacebuilding practices, opportunities, and challenges.⁴³ This is exactly the sort of engagement between the MDBs and the UNPBA that should be encouraged and pursued on a more regular basis. That being said,

several constraints limit effective engagement between the PBC and the IFIs and MDBs. These include the compatibility of structure, format, and approach in contrast to the mandate and institutional arrangements of the IFIs and MDBs. A separate report by NYU's Center on International Cooperation (CIC) elaborates on these challenges.⁴⁴

Another example of ongoing collaboration between the UNPBA and MDBs is the Partnership Facility with the World Bank Group. In 2017, the UN and the World Bank agreed on the Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations to enhance their collaboration in addressing the root causes and drivers of instability in member countries. The 2022 joint monitoring report illustrates that the Facility has enabled liaison and advisory support to approximately 50 country contexts, as well as facilitated information sharing and knowledge management.⁴⁵ The Partnership Facility—formerly known as the [Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership Facility](#)—is now a facility within the PBF dedicated to advancing partnerships between the UN and the World Bank at the field level. It supports UN field capacity to engage in Bank processes, including the RRA and the eligibility processes of the PRA and TAA. This Facility serves as a UN instrument that provides small grant financing for UN-World Bank partnership activities in the areas of joint data and analysis, as well as developing joint frameworks/priorities and seed funding for joint implementation.⁴⁶ Since its establishment, the Partnership Facility has approved a total of 46 grants at the country, regional, and global levels aimed at consolidating UN-IFI partnership for national prevention and peacebuilding priorities.⁴⁷

In terms of funding, the PBF serves as a catalytic fund under the authority of the UN secretary-general. The PBF has collaborated with MDBs to promote peacebuilding objectives in fragile contexts. For example, in The Gambia, the PBF supported political dialogue and key reform processes, including the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission and the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC). At the same time, the World Bank provided enhanced support to the government through the Turn Around Allocation. The UN PBSO then facilitated UN support for the Gambian government's implementation of its Turn Around Strategy.⁴⁸ For the PBF to be an effective catalytic fund, there is a need for forward linkages with other larger funding streams from MDBs, bilateral donors, and other philanthropies. This has not been the case in most of the projects funded by the PBF. MDBs have also coordinated their funding mechanisms with the UN. In many cases, the World Bank's IDA funds are deployed in coordination

with the UN to support peacebuilding and development projects in these regions, ensuring a joint approach to tackling the root causes of conflict.⁴⁹

In addition to these ongoing efforts,⁵⁰ and to enhance complementarity between MDBs and the UNPBA, several further areas need to be strengthened.

Messaging and policy dialogue

High-level joint messaging and policy dialogue between the UN and MDBs is crucial to amplifying peacebuilding efforts and influencing the global agenda. While platforms like the PBC in New York provide opportunities for MDB representatives to engage, further efforts are needed to maintain a more structured dialogue at the highest levels. This can be achieved through the respective presidents of the MDBs and the UN secretary-general making joint visits and issuing joint statements on specific country contexts, with a commitment to collaboration. Another level of engagement would include regular interaction between the boards of various MDBs and the Permanent Representatives who are members of the PBC. Management of the MDBs could also periodically engage with the PBC on their frameworks and approaches towards supporting nationally led prevention strategies. In his 2024 report, the UN secretary-general also recommended the use of the PBC as a platform to support member states' progress on their nationally owned and led peacebuilding, sustaining peace and prevention efforts, focusing on facilitating regular, evidence-based exchanges among member states, the UN entities, civil society, IFIs, and regional and sub-regional organizations.⁵¹

Joint messaging can also have a powerful impact. By aligning on key messages, the UN and MDBs can raise visibility on fragile situations, influence donor behavior, and trigger actions from international partners. For example, PBC meetings, such as the March 2024 discussion on Mauritania, brought together PBC leadership and World Bank representatives, creating space for the exchange of information and drawing attention to the situation.⁵² Similar opportunities for joint messaging could arise through more formalized dialogue mechanisms, such as annual visits between MDB headquarters and the UN. The success of decades-long high-level dialogues, such as those between the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Bretton Woods Institutions, demonstrates the value of such exchanges.

At the country level, feedback loops and continuous communication are essential to sustaining joint messaging. Regular exchanges of strategic documents, such as the MDBs' FCV strategies and the various peacebuilding frameworks from UN agencies, would promote more integrated approaches. Sharing diagnostic tools,

such as MDBs' RRAs and the UN's Common Country Analyses (CCA), would provide a more holistic view of fragile contexts and help reduce duplication of efforts.

Formalized exchanges and joint field visits to fragile and conflict-affected states would further strengthen policy dialogue by allowing MDB and UN leadership to engage directly with national governments and civil society on the best way to effectively integrate preventive measures into development programs. Joint visits, such as the 2013 trip to the Great Lakes region by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, exemplify the impact of multilateral cooperation in fragile contexts.⁵³ Similarly, when the PBC conducted a visit to the Central African Republic (CAR) in February 2020, the chair of the PBC met with World Bank representatives, signaling their commitment to supporting peacebuilding in a context of post-conflict recovery.⁵⁴ Valuable experiences from the field and national prevention strategies could be shared at the PBC or during the World Bank's Fragility Forum. These forums provide valuable platforms for sharing lessons, exchanging good practices, and addressing challenges unique to fragile environments.

Knowledge management

To enhance complementarity between the UN and MDBs, strengthening knowledge management is essential. A critical first step is developing a shared understanding of key terminologies and metrics for peacebuilding and prevention. While the UN and the various MDBs recognize the importance of these approaches, they differ in their interpretations. For example, the World Bank has employed a modular approach focused on mitigating risks to stability and development in a designated set of FCV countries. The AfDB, on the other hand, views fragility as a spectrum rather than a binary classification, enabling a more flexible and nuanced approach that considers the varying degrees of fragility across different contexts. This terminology reflects the MDBs' differentiated approach towards these countries by addressing the unique challenges they face. In addition, some of the MDBs have leaned towards referring to resilience rather than fragility to avoid the stigma associated with being labeled as fragile, a label that can impact a country's credit ratings and investment prospects.

Bridging these differences is necessary for closer collaboration. A common normative understanding of FCV would allow both the UN and MDBs to align their strategies, ensuring their interventions are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The contextual specificity of the drivers of FCV means that approaches may differ even if the objectives are similar. Without this, efforts can be

fragmented, resulting in overlapping or inconsistent interventions. Building the case for prevention within the UN has also not always been easy. Prevention of fragility, violence, and conflict should be viewed as a universal goal, not limited to a few countries. Developing metrics for what constitutes prevention and how to measure it would greatly contribute to the collaboration between the UN and MDBs.

Developing joint knowledge platforms has been demonstrated as a useful way for MDBs and the UN to collaborate. The Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC) is an example of a collaborative initiative between the World Bank and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) that exemplifies how institutionalized knowledge-sharing platforms can benefit both organizations. By pooling resources, expertise, and data, the JDC exemplifies how partnerships can enhance understanding and action in complex conflict-affected contexts.⁵⁵ Jointly developing research products on specific conflict or fragility challenges would improve understanding of the unique dynamics in each context.

Additionally, fostering a community of practice would lead to ongoing contributions to the knowledge and literature that informs prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Collaborative research would not only be useful in shaping proposed solutions to help countries address their own prevention and peacebuilding objectives but also enable UN and MDB staff to feel confident in moving forward with innovative approaches. Such a community would also provide a space for continuous learning, encouraging staff at both organizations to confidently pursue integrated, innovative solutions. Allowing this community of practice to evolve also provides the space to bring in other actors, such as academics, civil society, and the private sector, to help inform this work.

Overall, enhancing knowledge management requires a more deliberate effort to harmonize language, sharing and contributing to each other's diagnostics, undertaking joint knowledge production initiatives, and establishing joint knowledge platforms. Ultimately, this will enable both the UN and MDBs to operate from a complementary foundation and understanding when addressing fragility and peacebuilding. Without this, joint and complementary action has the potential to be fragmented.

Joint and complementary action

Practical, on-the-ground collaboration is beneficial, especially in areas where the MDBs, UN agencies, governments, and civil society can leverage their comparative advantages and capacities. By working together, these actors can provide

comprehensive solutions that tackle the root causes of conflict and fragility from multiple angles, such as humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding assistance, or the HDP nexus. All the MDBs have identified the need to build mission-driven collaboration with the UN and other MDBs, as well as other international and local organizations. For example, in contexts where the MDBs are unable to operate due to their authorizing environment, some have been able to implement projects using third-party actors such as the UN or international NGOs.

Joint programs between the UN and MDBs offer a powerful way to align peacebuilding, development, and conflict prevention initiatives. By working together, both entities can pool financial resources, technical expertise, and operational capacity to create more comprehensive and impactful solutions for fragile and conflict-affected settings. Furthermore, the sequencing of programs is crucial to ensuring that projects supported by the UN and MDBs build on one another and are effectively scaled over time. **This approach enables a smoother transition from short-term crisis response programs to long-term development efforts.**

It is also important to note that the UN's extensive field presence and infrastructure in conflict-affected and fragile settings provide MDBs with a critical entry point for implementing programs in these challenging environments. The UN is often able to maintain operations in areas where MDBs, due to their mandates or risk-averse policies, may find it more difficult to engage directly.

One of the main challenges of collaboration between the MDBs and the UN is navigating the complexity of multiple UN agencies, funds, and programs, some of which have overlapping mandates and activities. At the country level, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) system has the potential to provide a one-stop solution for MDB engagement with the UN Country Team. The UNRC and the RC's Office can serve as a platform where MDB country leadership engages to initiate joint analytical products, share analytical work, gather feedback, and request information from the UN system. Where the RC system is working effectively and efficiently as the development coordination mechanism of the UN in the country, this can greatly reduce the transaction costs associated with collaboration by streamlining information flow and the process. Coordination between the UNRC system and the IFIs was also noted in the Independent Eminent Persons report for this PBAR.⁵⁶ Collaboration should not be misconstrued as merely holding meetings; it should be about achieving outcomes that contribute to addressing FCV.⁵⁷

Supporting the development of nationally and regionally led prevention strategies⁵⁸

Another promising area for enhanced partnership between the UN and MDBs is support for the development of nationally and regionally led prevention strategies. A national prevention strategy is a system of efforts to address the causes of violence. In order to address the causes of violence, prevention can be conceptualized as any effort undertaken to address risk and protective factors for violence.⁵⁹ Most countries have some form of violence prevention strategy, although it may not be labeled as such (examples include crime prevention strategies or strategies addressing the prevention of violent extremism).⁶⁰ The concept of developing a national prevention strategy serves to strengthen existing efforts to identify and address risk factors for violence. Such national prevention strategies are essential for peacebuilding, as they focus on mitigating the risk and protective factors for violence—such as political instability, social unrest, inequality, and weak governance systems—while promoting sustainable development and resilience. To be effective, national prevention strategies should incorporate local components, ensuring that context-specific risks and vulnerabilities from the community level up are identified and addressed. Locally owned approaches foster greater community engagement, trust, and accountability, ensuring that prevention efforts are grounded in the realities of those most affected by violence. At the same time, such strategies must be evidence-based, as engaging communities without ensuring that their diagnostic is based on evidence might not allow for an effective identification of risk and protective factors.

MDBs can play a critical role in addressing risk and protective factors through their work. Risk factors such as climate-related shocks, transboundary natural resource management tensions, transboundary criminal activities, and migration due to mass displacements of people are often exogenous and require regional approaches that complement national strategies. MDBs need to be aware of these dynamics when developing regional programs. For example, MDBs can help mitigate the impacts of these factors by adopting a more conflict and fragility-sensitive lens when designing programs aimed towards promoting inclusive economic growth and fostering regional trade and cooperation. Protective factors, such as strong governance, social cohesion, and robust institutional frameworks, could also inform MDB programs that focus on building capacities at both national and regional levels.

In regional prevention strategies, MDBs can be particularly effective at promoting initiatives that foster cooperation between neighboring countries, addressing shared risks such as environmental degradation, cross-border criminal networks, or migration pressures. By aligning regional development goals with national prevention efforts, MDBs can ensure that local and regional challenges are considered in tandem, thereby increasing the effectiveness of both approaches. MDBs, in collaboration with the UN, can enable this by working more closely together at a strategic level. This can be achieved by undertaking complementary or joint diagnostics, needs assessment, and plans, as well as co-convening relevant actors at the national and regional levels. By aligning regional-level strategies with national risk assessments, MDBs and the UN can ensure that both local and regional factors are considered in the design and implementation of programs and that the broader systemic challenges that contribute to conflict, violence, and instability are addressed.

Finally, to ensure that peacebuilding projects remain conflict-sensitive and responsive to local needs, it is important to improve monitoring and evaluation processes. In some cases, this could even include jointly developing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes. The World Bank's FCV Strategy includes M&E tools to assess the effects of its projects on fragility and resilience, but more needs to be done to align these frameworks with the peacebuilding frameworks used by other stakeholders. Jointly developing these M&E tools will allow collaborating institutions to track the impact of their programs and adjust strategies accordingly.

Financing

As noted by the secretary-general in his recent report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, scaling up prevention and peacebuilding will also require scaling up financing for these efforts. There is an opportunity to make the case for national prevention strategies as the framework for investing in nationally-led efforts towards prevention and peacebuilding. The UN and the MDBs need to work in a more collaborative way to not only harness efforts towards mobilizing financing for these national efforts but also leverage the resources they have within their respective mandates. One way to achieve this is by building greater synergy between the MDB financing envelopes dedicated to FCV and the PBF managed by the UN. For example, the PBF was conceptualized as a catalytic fund that provides financing to joint UN initiatives aimed at promoting peacebuilding opportunities. The Fund also seeks to invest in interventions that others may not be comfortable financing due to perceived risks.

However, the impact of the PBF would be mostly realized if there were forward linkages to larger, more sustainable sources of funding, such as those from MDBs or bilateral donors. This limitation constrains the scalability of successful projects, particularly when they require larger, long-term investments that go beyond the capacity of the PBF.⁶¹ For this to be possible, country teams submitting proposals to the PBF must engage with MDBs at the country level well before submitting their proposals. This will ensure alignment between the objectives of what the PBF will fund and the broader framework of support by the MDBs in the respective country. There are also other options for financing peacebuilding efforts that are carried out through other parts of the UN, including the agencies, funds, and programs. However, coordination and collaboration on these, even within the UN, have not always been realized. Finding complementarity among all these funding streams at the country level would help ensure that scarce financial resources are utilized efficiently to achieve the greatest impact.

The PBC can play a key role in supporting the process of identifying these complementarities by inviting the PBF and other UN agencies, funds, and programs to present all peacebuilding-related projects in their pipelines to the PBC at the inception stage. By showcasing these projects early, the PBC could provide donors and MDBs with critical information about the potential impact of these initiatives and highlight opportunities for scaling up. This early presentation might create an opportunity for donors and MDBs to identify projects they could co-finance. On the other hand, the PBC can be utilized by member states to showcase their national prevention strategies and encourage the MDBs to establish a system that allows for greater investment in upstream prevention. Additionally, the PBC could evolve into a platform where donors, MDBs, bilateral agencies, and foundations come together to announce new funding streams and engage more directly with member states.⁶²

5. Recommendations:

To build stronger collaboration and complementarity between MDBs and the UN in prevention and peacebuilding, the following recommendations are suggested to facilitate the following:

- **Enhance policy dialogues and joint messaging:**
 - Establish more structured, high-level dialogue at two levels, between presidents and senior management of the MDBs and the UN secretary-general, as well as other senior UN staff. A second layer involves engagement between the Executive Directors and senior management of the MDBs, as well as the Permanent Representative members of the PBC, to amplify peacebuilding efforts and influence global agendas.
 - Align joint messaging on fragile contexts to raise visibility, influence donor behavior, and drive international action, using high-level forums such as the PBC and the Annual Meetings of the respective MDBs, as well as other more thematically relevant forums organized by the respective MDBs. This could also be complemented by high-level visits from UN officials and PBC members to MDB headquarters, as well as joint visits to specific countries.

- **Strengthen knowledge management, joint diagnostics, and complementarity in analytics:**
 - Develop shared terminologies, metrics, and joint knowledge platforms between MDBs and the UN to facilitate collaboration, improve mutual understanding, and avoid fragmented efforts in fragile contexts. A unified approach to knowledge management and diagnostics can streamline efforts and reduce redundancy between the UN and MDBs.
 - Further enhance continuous communication and feedback loops by sharing strategic documents and diagnostic tools, ensuring more integrated and synchronized approaches to peacebuilding and development.
- **Develop and adopt metrics for measuring prevention outcomes:** It is currently generally agreed that prevention is a difficult concept because it is difficult to measure. The question of how we know we did prevention has no specific answer. While prevention is very context-specific, there is still a need to build a framework that enables the understanding of what prevention entails and how to measure it. This can be designed as a menu of options rather than a boilerplate. Prevention metrics track the success of interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of fragility and preventing crises. Since these metrics do not currently exist, there is an opportunity for the UN and MDBs to collaborate on developing a measurement framework that involves government experts, civil society, think tanks, and academia. This can be one of the outcomes suggested by this UN PBAR.
- **Support countries to implement their nationally owned prevention strategies with local participation:** There's an opportunity to better coordinate efforts between the PBF and respective MDBs' funding instruments, by ensuring that there is engagement and alignment between the UN country teams and the respective MDBs' field offices and ensuring that these are responding to the country's national prevention strategy.
- **Foster regional approaches to address exogenous risk factors of FCV:** Our understanding of the dynamics and threats posed by transboundary risk factors to a country's resilience is expanding. There is a need to consider regional approaches that can help address these challenges directly and indirectly. MDBs, within their agenda of investing in global and regional public goods, play an important role in this regard. The regional platform

presents a valuable opportunity for MDBs to work as a system and extend collaboration to the UN and other regional organizations, ensuring that proposed regional interventions also address these risk factors.

Conclusion

While each MDB has a unique set of approaches and challenges, they share similar objectives—including addressing fragility and promoting resilience—and have a common understanding about the value of collaboration between international partners. Differences exist in their conceptualization of issues, the way they measure impact, engagements in policy dialogue, as well as the nature of their collaboration with other institutions. These nuances reflect the diverse contexts in which these banks operate and their respective institutional mandates.

Enhancing partnerships between MDBs and the UN is critical for advancing global peace and development, particularly in FCV contexts. Through harnessing the potential for joint work, measuring prevention efforts, and enhancing policy dialogues and messaging, MDBs can better engage with the UN's peacebuilding architecture. Donor countries and recipient countries have a role to play in motivating this collaboration by making strong recommendations during the intergovernmental process of the PBAR in 2025. As the PBAR process progresses, these opportunities for joint collaboration must be seized to transform and shape the future of peacebuilding, conflict and violence prevention, and development.

Glossary

AfDB: African Development Bank

ADB: Asian Development Bank

FCAS: Fragile and Conflict Affected States

FCV: Fragility, Conflict, and Violence

IaDB: Inter-American Development Bank

IFA: International Financial Architecture

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IsDB: Islamic Development Bank

MDBs: Multilateral Development Banks

PBAR: Peacebuilding Architecture Review

PBC: Peacebuilding Commission

PBF: Peacebuilding Fund

PBSO: Peacebuilding Support Office

UN: United Nations

UNPBA: United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture

WB: World Bank Group

Endnotes

¹ For the purposes of this policy brief, the analysis focuses primarily on the work of the PBC, PBF, and PBSO. This is the most commonly used definition of the PBA, although some argue it should be broader and encompass all UN activities to some extent.

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https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/a_res_75_201_e.pdf.

⁴ United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2558 (2020)*, Adopted by the Security Council on 21 December 2020. S/RES/2558 (2020).

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¹⁰ For the purposes of this exercise, the findings of the 2020 PBAR are drawn solely from the Secretary-General's report and the twin resolutions.

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¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly. *Resolution 75/201*, Adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2020. A/RES/75/201, December 21, 2020.

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experiencing high-intensity conflict and extremely limited government capacity; and (3) the Turn Around Allocation (TAA), which supports countries emerging from a period of conflict, social/political crisis, or disengagement, where there is a window of opportunity for IDA to either re-engage or intensify support for reforms that can accelerate a transition out of fragility and build resilience. <https://ida.worldbank.org/en/financing/resource-management/fcv-envelope>.

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⁴⁹ World Bank Group. "IDA Overview - Fragility, Conflict, and Violence." March 20, 2023. <https://ida.worldbank.org/en/topics/theme/conflict-and-fragility>.

⁵⁰ Please note, this is not an exhaustive list of all ongoing efforts in the United Nations system, but rather an outline of major efforts undertaken through the PBC, PBF and PBSO.

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⁵⁹ A risk factor is a variable that precedes armed violence and increases the likelihood of its occurrence. A protective factor is a variable that precedes armed violence and decreases the likelihood of its occurrence. For more information on risk and protective factors, see NYU's Center on International Cooperation (CIC)'s blog by Joanne Richards, "Connecting Evidence and Policy for the Prevention of Armed Violence: New Tools for Practitioners and Policymakers;" <https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/connecting-evidence-and-policy-for-the-prevention-of-armed-violence-new-tools-for-practitioners-and-policymakers/>.

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