

Date: [xx] June 2024

To: The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office

Subject: Proposed input for the 2025 Comprehensive Review of United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture

Dear Madame/Sir,

Please find below proposed input for the Review of the 2025 UN peacebuilding architecture submitted by a network of civil society organizations based in Global North and Global South under the umbrella of the Basic Income Earth Network (hereafter referred to as BIEN).

In line with elements under the Terms of Reference of this Review, the present proposal stems from a process of engaging with civil society and research organizations with thematic expertise (point 6. vi.); ascribes itself to the 2024 informal process of consultation (point 7. i.); presents the views and analysis of civil society and research organizations in light of the resolutions on the peacebuilding architecture and the recommendations of relevant reports of the Secretary-General (point 7. a.iii.).

The work of BIEN focuses on the consideration of Basic Income (aka universal basic income) as a socio-economic policy tool in communities across the globe. Basic income is a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all usual residents in a given territory on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, basic income has gained prominence and is under discussion in parliaments across the Global North. Policy makers in the Global South are attentive to this debate, given persistent poverty and insecurities sustaining underdevelopment. In recent years, it has also become a topic of discussion in national elections and found in election manifestos. This growing interest is driven by, on the one hand, the efficiency of basic income in decreasing inequalities in parallel to the inadequacies of current social protection systems. And on the other hand, a rights-based question, namely that of what we are promising our citizens.

Since 2021, BIEN has engaged with various United Nations departments, funds and programs on the applicability of basic income as a complementary tool for peacebuilding and development more generally. Specially, this BIEN-UN engagement consisted of:

- a panel at the BIEN Annual Congress of 2021 where UNDP, ILO, UNIDO, UNESCO, ECLAC, ESCWA, the World Bank and IMF spoke in favor of basic income and its potential for these agencies' respective mandates
- an MoU between BIEN and UNDP signed in 2021
- consultations with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General culminating in the recommendation of basic income as an emerging policy tool for conflict prevention in the New Agenda for Peace (see BIEN's [open letter](#) of August 2023 reflecting on this milestone);
- UNDP-BIEN feasibility study for a basic income in Nepal – Report concluded March 2023
- consultations with PBSO in 2024.

As relevant to the commitments made in **Our Common Agenda** and specifically to the recommendations of the **New Agenda for Peace**, where a “temporary universal basic income” is unambiguously referred to, we present below agreement points of this BIEN-UN engagement:

### Operationalizing how to Leave No One Behind

1. Basic Income can complement socio-economic development policies and **imbeds by definition the precept of Leaving no one behind**: Basic income is a cash grant distributed *universally*, i.e. to every *individual* in a community; *unconditionally*, without any behavioral expectations or means-testing; individually, to the person rather than to a household; and *periodically*. It is of *equal and same value* to everyone. These key characteristics distinguish it from other tools, such as cash transfers programs, and are the drivers of its multifaceted impact. It aims to enable every person to meet their basic needs, unconditionally and thereby operationalize through a simple tool how to Leave No One Behind.

### A rich evidence base on basic income’s transformational impact

2. Globally, there have been a multitude of basic income trials: currently there are over 100 ongoing ones. **Pilot results have shown transformational impact on key development indicators in line with the SDG Agenda**: basic income recipients, who were free to spend their cash grant as they saw fit, improved their nutrition, access to sanitation, health and the education of children. Recipients invested their modest basic income in purchasing income-generating assets. Own-account work significantly increased as a result and resilience improved considerably.

3. **Basic income pilots had empowering effects, particularly for women and girls**, for many of whom basic income was a first encounter with unconditional and individual cash. This was transformational in that it changed women’s perception of themselves and that by others: they became household members with an income-generating potential. For example, pilots saw more women entrepreneurs than men, improved girls’ nutrition and education more than that of boys and strengthened intra-family gender relations in the India pilots.

4. Pilots also showed improved social cohesion and solidaristic practices. The Namibia pilot led to a 42% decrease in the general crime rate and visits to neighbors and interaction among villagers resumed. In the India pilots, joint decision making in the community followed the introduction of the basic income: pilot participants consulted each other on how to spend their grant best and decided to pool their individual basic income to fund local livelihood projects deemed of interest to the community. **This evidence of cooperation, solidarity, and joint decision making strengthened social cohesion.**

5. Basic income trials in Brazil, India and Kenya reported a **multiplier effect of 2.6 times**, meaning an unprecedented efficiency rate of the impact of a \$1 injection of cash in the form of a basic income. The initial value of a basic income multiplies as the cash changes hands within the local economy. **Basic income’s feedback effects also increase return of investments in education, health and other essential sectors** given overall better nutritional, health and educational attainment of individuals able to meet their basic needs thanks to a basic income. **An instrument which can solidify the impact of international aid, a basic income is thus an investment in the communities where the UN operates and is commensurate with a context of limited donor funding.**

### Significance for UN operations

6. Notably, the observed gains in key development indicators took place organically, i.e. pilot administrators did not prompt recipients to spend the basic income in any particular way. Recipients first chose to meet their primary needs falling under the humanitarian umbrella (food, health, shelter, education)

followed by their development needs for improved livelihood. Stronger social cohesion followed as a result. **A basic income has thus the potential to bridge the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.** It can be a simple tool to ‘turn local’ and implement community-driven development programs that aim to place the communities at the center of implementation modalities. A basic income would thus serve to empower individuals and grant them agency to build the societies they strive for.

**7. The boost to local economic growth and alternative livelihoods offered by a basic income can help break the system sustaining violence and contributes to conflict prevention.** Furthermore, while we know what destroys social cohesion, a systematic approach to rebuilding it is generally lacking. **Strengthening social cohesion, as evidenced by basic income pilots, may thus be a key specific advantage of this instrument for peacebuilding operations.**

**8.** Provided as a ‘**peace dividend**’ to the population, a basic income can translate the sense that everyone ought to ‘benefit from peace’ and encourage an inclusive sense of national identity. A rights-based approach to a peace dividend enabling people to meet their basic needs can be catalytic in a society recovering from violence, trauma, sectarianism, and repression. In this sense, **a basic income can help prepare the ground for social justice.**

Based on this evidence of basic income’s impact on key SDGs, we are leading work on its application as a peacebuilding tool in the following settings:

- A feasibility and design of a pilot project in Iraq for UNIDO complementing agro-processing activities for refugees and IDPs completed in May 2021. Project is seeking funding.
- A feasibility study in cooperation with UNDP in Nepal in support of the local government: “Feasibility Analysis of Basic Income for women in Nepal - March 2023
- Ongoing consultations with local institutions in Ukraine and Palestine, reflecting our engagement in countries at the forefront of global consideration resulting in two reports: ‘Ukraine Dividends’: An Emergency Basic Income for Ukraine, October 2023 and ‘Recovery Dividends’: An Emergency Basic Income for Palestine, February 2024

We strongly believe this BIEN-UN consultative process and its agreements are particularly timely ahead of the 2024 Summit of the Future. Given the transformative impact basic income has had in consistently uplifting communities from deprivation and restoring their livelihoods, this tool speaks directly to the aims of this Summit. Deployed as a peacebuilding and development instrument, a basic income can:

- Contribute to how we deliver a better present and safeguard the future
- Mend eroded trust and demonstrate that international cooperation can effectively tackle current challenges;
- Present tools on “how” to cooperate better to deliver on the set aspiration and goals;
- Accelerate efforts to meet our existing international commitments and take concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Taking stock of and building on this multi-stakeholder BIEN-UN engagement and looking ahead, we propose the following seven steps be considered as inputs for the 2025 peacebuilding Review:

1. In operationalizing one of the recommendations of the New Agenda for Peace, we invite Member States to recommend that PBSO considers basic income as an innovative policy tool for its peacebuilding support operations. This is based on BI’s advantages of efficiency in a context of limited funding and for its potential in promoting “resilience and social cohesion and break the cycle of violence” as referenced in the New Agenda for Peace.

2. To do so, one recommendation would be to start with two or three pilot locations in countries under the purview of the Peacebuilding Commission. The choice of countries to be selected for the pilot projects rests within PBSO, resorting to consultation with Member States and thematic experts as needed. Partnering for such a pilot with a UN technical agency can also be considered when a complementary approach is relevant; UNIDO could be one such organization given its 2021 explorative work on basic income in Iraq.
3. Funding for basic income pilots can come from the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility of the Peacebuilding Fund. Such pilots would run ideally for 24 months with a ballpark budget of \$1 million per country, in line with the Funds' project timeline and funding size.
4. The aim of PBSO implementing basic income pilots is to illustrate, building on existing evidence-base, to national authorities what this tool can achieve in their local context of post-conflict settings. Beyond the peacebuilding phase supported by PBSO and UN entities more generally, it would be the purview of Member States whether they resort to a basic income scheme based on what PBSO pilots have shown. The pilot phase is thus intended to demonstrate at a minimal cost to national authorities the possibilities of this policy tool. UN and PBSO lead on such innovative pilots become thus key for what may otherwise be considered a bold proposal. A pilot will also enable a true cost estimate based on assessing the multiplier and feedback effects of this policy which can create up to 2.6 times its value. The potential of more effective international aid is significant in the context of scarce donor funding.
5. As part of PBSO's mandate for political accompaniment and advocacy and by resorting to the Peacebuilding Impact Hub, offer a consultative process to Member States interested in exploring this policy in their national contexts as a complementary tool to reconciliation, reparations, transitory justice, among other peacebuilding efforts for conflict prevention and sustaining peace.
6. As part of PBSO's mandate as a bridging entity among principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations, offer the auspices of PBSO for an inter-agency platform to discuss the applicability of basic income as a peacebuilding and development tool across the mandates of different UN funds, agencies and programs.
7. Announcement of PBSO's consideration of this innovative tool at the Summit of the Future, including reference in the Pact of the Future of basic income contribution to the following aims:
  - Reaffirming commitments to the 2030 SDGs Agenda and to leave no one behind
  - Putting a stronger focus on addressing root causes and underlying drivers and enablers of violence and strengthening resilience
  - Reaffirming that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing and that all human rights, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner
  - Reaffirm collective commitment under the women and peace and security agenda.

As the leads of [xx number of] organizations and BIEN affiliates, we represent the largest global network of researchers and practitioners on basic income, signatory of this proposal, we have seen firsthand the transformative effects of basic income in the communities where we work. Given the global challenges we

face in the foreseeable future and in line with the crucial commitments made by the Secretary-General in Our Common Agenda culminating in the upcoming Summit of the Future, we owe it to current generations living in deprivation and future ones at risk to do so, to live better. We owe it to the vulnerable and future-deprived populations to provide them with a helping hand to lift themselves out of poverty. The flexibility of unconditional cash gives people the freedom to do so. We know basic income works and the evidence is unanimous for us to consider this instrument more systematically in our peacebuilding and development efforts.


While trusting the vulnerable with unconditional cash may seem like a bold proposal, we are at a time where we do not have much to lose. Basic income trials have shown time and again that vulnerable populations do spend cash wisely on their priorities and those of their families. At the end of the day, the justification of a basic income is one of social justice: each person deserves to live in dignity with basic economic security to meet their basic needs. Short of this, a fairer and more peaceful world is unlikely. Affordability will inevitably be a question of setting priorities.

Basic income is grounded on everything we stand for as it rallies the three principles the Secretary-General heralds as the essence of a more peaceful global order: trust, solidarity and universality. We hope that this proposal along with the rich global evidence on basic income presents a building ground for the political will to do things differently. Let our commitments and actions reflect that we, as policy makers, still believe that a better future is possible for everyone.

BIEN remains at the disposal of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, PBSO, UN agencies, funds and programs, and Special Political Missions for any advice or consultation. BIEN is the largest network of practitioners with unique expertise in basic income implementation and a global presence through its regional hubs in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America.

Please accept, Madame/Sir our distinguished wishes,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Basic Income Earth Network:



Chair, Sarath Davala, PhD



Co-Chair, Hilde Latour



Secretary, Diana Bashur, MA

Co-signatories:

[add list of signatory affiliates + logos]