POLICY*dialogue* BRIEF

The Business Case for Building Resilience and Pursuing Peace

Recommendations for Peacebuilding: Private Sector Engagement and Collaboration

The following recommendations are elaborated on at the end of this brief.

Build a comprehensive knowledge base for the peacebuilding community and the private sector.

- Curate existing frameworks, research, and case studies for private sector consumption, focusing particularly on where this kind of engagement has succeeded and the specific actions the private sector can take.

- Identify and address knowledge gaps within the peacebuilding community by engaging in private sector-related convenings and conferences.

- Invest in analysis of the relationships between the governance levels (e.g., local, state, multinational, global) to understand and mitigate risk and understand all the ways the different levels interact.

Consider strategies and tactics for the peacebuilding field and private sector actors.

- Collaborate across sectors beyond peacebuilding and work to demonstrate how different actors can utilize a resilience lens in their work.

- Set clearly defined, context-specific goals to guide private sector engagement and build partnerships with a variety of actors (e.g., community leaders, civil society).

- Build trust with private sector actors, and treat the private sector as an equal partner in the work rather than simply a source of funding.

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Design messaging specific to engaging small and medium-size enterprises and larger investor markets.

- Communicate peacebuilding efforts in a way that aligns with the value chain, industry, or mission of private sector companies. Private sector actors will likely be more willing to engage if the initiative aligns clearly with their agenda.

- To shift focus to fragile states, the peacebuilding community should demystify and identify risks and break down the specific outcomes and impacts that private sector engagement can have in those contexts.

Research has proven the cost-effectiveness of successful prevention and peacebuilding efforts, demonstrating that prevention is financially more cost effective than response during or after conflict.[1] Yet violence continues to rise, costing the global economy $14.8 trillion in 2017, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). In addition to the devastating human toll large-scale violence takes, this figure demonstrates how it undermines a core pillar of peace and resilience—a sound business environment—making it harder for businesses of all sizes to operate and the prospects for peace that much more elusive. In addition to the need for increased preventive action by governments and civil society, the economic impacts of violence demonstrate there is a strong rationale for robust private sector engagement in peacebuilding and prevention.

Participants in the roundtable "The Business Case for Building Resilience and Pursuing Peace" at the Stanley Foundation's 59th Strategy for Peace Conference discussed how the private sector can be an effective collaborator in preventing violence, as well as the rationale for the moral and economic value to business of being a constructive actor in prevention. Participants considered how the peacebuilding community can engage the private sector in resilience efforts, including the messages, strategies, and tactics that might be most useful in enticing the private sector to this work. Participants also sought to identify where evidence of positive examples of private sector contributions to resilience could be transferred into a broader understanding in both private sector and international policy discourse.

Participants grappled with the following questions: What is the rationale for private sector engagement, and how can existing research be translated for private sector consumption? What are the structural implications of supporting local businesses for peace efforts? How can members of the peacebuilding community be effective partners to private sector actors in this work? And finally, once the private sector is at the table, how can the peacebuilding community guide and inform its actions? This report captures the discussion regarding these questions and more, and it details recommendations identified by participants for working with and messaging to the private sector, including developing a knowledge base and common language, as well as using existing frameworks and research to guide private sector collaboration with the peacebuilding community.

Setting the Stage: Status, Key Evidence, and Rationale for Business Involvement in Peace and Prevention

Conversations regarding private sector engagement in peace reflect diverse perspectives. While some participants perceived the topic to be well developed, others argued that still more is needed to align disparate dialogues and groups. A previous Stanley Foundation roundtable focused on how private sector actors can engage in building resilience and promoting peace—specifically for preventing atrocities and implementing the Responsibility to Protect. In contrast, this roundtable sought to develop the rationale for private sector engagement, including outlining pragmatic approaches to increasing private sector action in preventing violence and strengthening resilience.

Participants mostly agreed that the body of research for making the business case for peace is sufficient and may not benefit from additional broad analysis. Yet there remain knowledge gaps to be filled related to sector- and community-specific needs and actions, and it is the responsibility of the peacebuilding community to curate the relevant research and case studies and institutionalize its findings.

Such evidence includes the IEP's *Business & Peace 2018* report, which found that the economic performance of a country and its levels of peace are mutually reinforcing: as peace increases, so does economic performance and vice versa.[2] A country's level of peacefulness is a strong predictor of future performance on a variety of macroeconomic indicators, including rates of foreign direct investment and inflation, gross domestic product growth, and appreciation of domestic currency. Less-peaceful countries tend to experience economic stagnation, making them more vulnerable to political instability resulting from poverty, unemployment, or inflation, and less able to recover from shocks like a sudden outbreak of violence. Conversely, more-peaceful countries are able to rebound more quickly from these kinds of shocks because of lower rates of unemployment, higher levels of economic activity, and a greater incentive to maintain the current level of peace. Just a 1 percent increase in positive peace, as measured through the Positive Peace Index, is related to a 0.9 percent appreciation of domestic currency in countries outside of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.[3]

The relationship between the private sector and peace can also be illustrated through analysis of the indicators of

positive peace. Positive performance of one such indicator, the acceptance of the rights of others, is linked with greater economic participation of marginalized groups, which increases their purchasing power. Social unrest caused by a lack of acceptance of the rights of others is a key contributing factor to volatility in markets, thus it is in the interest of the private sector to mitigate this issue. The IEP also found that early investment in countries that have the potential to improve in peacefulness will see greater returns on that investment. In fact, returns are up to 8 percent higher in countries with low levels of peace.[4]

In addition to finding evidence that demonstrates significant interplay between peace and the private sector, some research has explored the different ways private sector actors can engage in peacebuilding and the conditions under which they choose to act. In the paper "Business and Peace: Sketching the Terrain," the authors put forth the idea that companies are better positioned to engage directly or indirectly in conflicts in countries where they already operate. Direct interventions, when taken, are usually conducted by large, influential companies that can operate unilaterally. For example, a direct action could include the private sector serving as a neutral party and bringing opposing sides of a conflict together for negotiations. For small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), effective engagement in reducing violence or conflict may be more viable through collaboration and pooling resources or capacities.[5] All businesses can also engage indirectly, through implementing equitable hiring practices or modifying their supply chain.

Furthermore, companies are more likely to engage if they are connected to their host communities and other sectors within the community. Companies with these local relationships have valuable, context-specific knowledge of the conflict and a greater stake in upholding peace and resilience. One study found that companies with deeper knowledge of the conflict context were less likely to pull their investments from fragile contexts, even if the conflict escalated.[6]

Based on these findings and others, participants identified two approaches for rationalizing the private sector's engagement in building resilience and promoting peace: (1) the economic and profit-driven argument for engagement and (2) the moral argument in pursuit of sustainable business practices. Participants discussed the idea that rather than pursuing prevention efforts with just one approach in mind, a blend of the two rationales may be most effective. The goal of private sector engagement in peace and resilience should not necessarily be to create "peace companies," but rather, the peacebuilding community should help private sector actors identify existing activities to promote peace that should be strengthened and identify practices and policies that could be augmented to generate a more enabling environment for peace.[7]

Examples of Current Actions, Frameworks, and Networks

Participants found that leveraging existing networks and platforms is essential to moving forward any positive agenda for business and peace. Before inventing new networks or frameworks for analysis, peacebuilders and prevention actors should consider some approaches and partnerships already undertaken and build on experience and learning from those efforts.

For example, the Fundación Ideas Para La Paz (Ideas for Peace Foundation), based in Colombia, has developed an independent, sustainable platform that allows businesses to approach conflict and risk mitigation through the lens of human rights. Participating companies convene monthly to discuss their internal policies and often publish their own agendas on human rights. The platform has motivated businesses to participate in peace initiatives and allows them to convene and network with one another on these issues.

Additionally, the Buen Vivir Fund of Thousand Currents and its partners seek to transform impact investing by identifying and implementing grassroots-developed lending practices that have proven their effectiveness in some locales through a process similar to participatory grant making. The process includes an assembly of investors and groups with on-the-ground expertise who are given equal decision-making power in allocating resources. Loans are structured to shift risk away from grassroots groups to the investor, who can more easily handle it, and projects are codesigned with the host community, ensuring that the community has a voice in the decision making and implementation.

The PeaceNexus Foundation has developed the Peacebuilding Business Criteria, which can help encourage and guide private sector actors to engage more deeply in peace, beyond corporate social responsibility or compliance. The criteria list six issue areas under which to engage (labor, sourcing, community relations, governance, products, and security), the objectives that should be met, and indicators to guide evaluation.[8] This provides a framework from which businesses can examine their existing structures with a peacebuilding lens.

Additionally, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, provide a framework that helps inform and shape private sector engagement in and support of peacebuilding tenets and efforts. Through the UN Global Compact, SDG 16 has been catalytic in encouraging large companies to report their progress against the goals. For example, Nestle engaged the Ecuadorian government and other key partners on the Ecuador 2030 plan, focusing on combating corruption and its effects on human rights. Nigerian oil and gas producer Oando PLC has made similar commitments with the UN Global Compact around

maintaining strong, inclusive institutions and a robust education sector in the face of Boko Haram violence and the risk of child soldier recruitment.

SMEs have a different but equally important role to play related to SDG 16. Because most SMEs are privately owned and lack the large financial resources of multinational corporations (MNCs), they are less likely to be able to recover from sudden shocks such as an unexpected outbreak of violence or the more frequent occurrences of bribery or extortion. SMEs contribute to SDG 16 through the lens of anticorruption and maintaining strong institutions as a mode of "leveling the playing field" and fostering an enabling environment for business. Engagement in this way also allows SMEs to be responsible partners to MNCs, which often employ them as second- or third-tier supply-chain producers.

When considering current actions and frameworks, as well as a review of the research on this topic, incorporating active community participation is key to the success of private sector engagement in peace and resilience. There was consensus among participants that top-down approaches are not sufficient on their own; rather, it is most effective for local communities to drive conceptualization and decision making around projects. Additionally, how investments are made can often be more important than what is invested in, particularly given that unfair or inequitable investment practices could result in major financial or societal instability for vulnerable communities. One participant suggested that a gradual transfer of ownership of projects from investors to the local community could be an effective way to ensure community involvement while still maintaining a fair distribution of risk.

Engaging the Private Sector: Challenges for the Peacebuilding Field

Exclusive Conversations

Participants agreed there are significant challenges to engaging the private sector on resilience and peace efforts. Participants admitted that conversations around peace and resilience tend to be siloed; there has not been significant progress in leveraging synergies between the peacebuilding community and the private sector. In order to foster greater collaboration and understanding between these two sectors, one suggestion was to convene a series of specific conversations around how the private sector can engage in peace, understanding obstacles to private sector engagement, and the tools that the peacebuilding community can provide in order to facilitate greater private sector involvement.

Furthermore, when cross-sectoral conversations between peace actors and private sector actors do occur, they tend to feature MNCs or large business networks that are already engaged on some level rather than bring in new voices. Who is missing from the discussion? How can private sector entities become more engaged beyond their legal teams and corporate social responsibility mechanisms? There are few opportunities for the private sector and the peacebuilding community to convene together and learn from one another in a shared space. In order to break down divides in understanding, build shared knowledge and language, and align missions and strategies, both communities will need to be more intentional about carving out inclusive spaces for this conversation.

Where Is the Evidence?

All participants agreed that it may not be the best use of resources to launch new research projects or develop new case studies about and frameworks for private sector engagement in peace and resilience. Myriad resources and frameworks already exist related to private sector engagement, but curated libraries that house these learnings do not.

However, there is room to build evidence that demonstrates that private sector actors can engage in prevention and peacebuilding while still generating profits, which is just as important as evidence that demonstrates which actions are most impactful, particularly given that there are many private sector actors who actively profit off of conflict. While there is open demand for this kind of information, the perception during the discussion was that the peacebuilding community's inability to deliver on this demand has hindered opportunities for collaboration across sectors.

Part of the challenge is the need to communicate evidence in a way that resonates with private sector actors. Participants agreed that peacebuilding jargon can be alienating to those outside of the field and can be a significant barrier to building bridges to the private sector. Messages must be crafted in a concise, easily digestible manner. Messengers from the peacebuilding community would also benefit from a greater understanding of the private sector to ensure that messages are targeted effectively.

Generally speaking, participants felt there has been a failure to develop clear messaging around peacebuilding strategies, tactics, and impacts. In some conversations, peace seems "soft," and unaffecting, partly because of the ambiguity surrounding what peace looks like in practical terms. One strategy for mitigating this issue is to instead focus on the tactics or methods used to achieve peace—discussing issues like social cohesion and livelihood creation, which are vital components of a whole system—rather than focusing more broadly on the end goal of peace.

Collective Credibility

According to the IEP's *Global Peace Index 2018*, the world is getting less peaceful—2018 marked the fourth consecutive year in which peace has deteriorated globally.[9] With this sobering statistic and countless images of war and global

humanitarian crises that saturate the media, one can understand why some outside the field could perceive that the peacebuilding community is failing. Participants determined that uncertainty about the collective credibility of the peacebuilding community is a barrier to engaging the private sector in this work. Credibility is a critical component to convincing private sector actors to engage in this space. Unfortunately, many factors impact the peacebuilding community's work (e.g., the political will of state governments) and are not always within this community's scope to change. This is a persistent problem that will require the peacebuilding community (including its funders and influencers) to move away from linear theories of change under which peacebuilders have tended or been expected to operate and communicate in their work.

Building Trust

Finally and perhaps most important to protecting the peacebuilding community's credibility and harnessing better collaboration is working to build trust across sectors. In order to effectively engage private sector actors in this work, the peacebuilding community will need to demonstrate its trustworthiness and willingness to reach across the divide to the private sector. Peacebuilding actors can attend private sector convenings and participate in private sector conversations around impact investing, social capital, and other related topics. This accomplishes two essential objectives: (1) it allows the peacebuilding community to start to build relationships with private sector actors, and (2) it provides the peacebuilding community with much-needed background and perspective on the private sector itself.

It is imperative for the peacebuilding community to approach the private sector as an equal partner in the work rather than as just a possible source for funding. While healthy skepticism is necessary, peacebuilders should also focus on the positive role the private sector can play in building resilience rather than solely the negative role some private sector actors have played in violent conflict. Ultimately, the success of private sector commitment to peace will rest, at least in part, on the network of positive relationships the peacebuilding community can help forge.

Despite these great challenges, the peacebuilding community should not lose sight of the value it can provide to the private sector. Peacebuilders operate in complex systems and can offer their expertise to other sectors. Because peace is a long-term goal, the peacebuilding community can also offer strategic patience to private sector actors, who may be less accustomed to thinking about their actions in the long-term time frames that peacebuilders operate in.

Even more, peacebuilders can offer their connections and networks to others on the ground who can guide and offer consultation to private sector actors who wish to engage in this space. Members of the peacebuilding community can operate as brokers in helping private sector actors build relationships within their host communities, ensuring they have the necessary connections, tools, and expertise to engage in constructive ways.

Outcomes and Recommendations

Because building peace and resilience requires a whole-of-society approach, many different types and sizes of private sector entities, as well as leaders and employees, must be engaged. Each plays a different role depending on its sphere of influence, unique capacities, constituents or stakeholders, and relationships to other industries or leaders.

SMEs, with a large stake in maintaining and building resilience in their communities, are natural partners in this work. Local businesses have established relationships within their communities and a more intimate understanding of the local context.

Business and industry associations provide convening and mobilizing power and have influence with many different business actors, making them key partners in prevention and peacebuilding. Associations provide insight, expertise, and best practices to their members, often setting standards and agendas that affect hundreds of businesses. Because they have sector-specific knowledge, they can also serve as useful learning partners for peacebuilding actors seeking to understand more-technical aspects of business. Additionally, business and industry associations can usually serve as more-neutral voices in dialogues and may have better connections and convening power with regard to state governments.

Large MNCs are also natural partners, particularly given their immense resources and influence. While many MNCs have been criticized for their actual or perceived role in atrocities and violent conflict, large corporations can absolutely help build resilient communities. From managing supply chains in more ethical ways to implementing inclusive hiring practices, MNCs can make large-scale positive impacts within their host communities.

A new area of interest is the role of investment funds and financial markets in peace and resilience. Many investors and capital markets now use environmental, social, and governance (ESG) indicators to evaluate a company's potential growth, productivity, or profit. These ESG indicators link strongly with the IEP's Pillars of Positive Peace and include issues like anticorruption and human rights.[10] Participants noted an interest among investors and analysts to find new ways of using the ESG indicators, making this a particularly useful entry point. In addition, because investors support a range of different businesses and must ensure they support legitimate, rather than illicit, capital, they hold a higher stake in the overall peacefulness of a society. The resulting impact, or influence, of such investor interests can help drive businesses to behave more responsibly.

The following recommendations are intended for nongovernmental and philanthropic entities and practitioners, as well as private sector actors looking to engage in peacebuilding and resilience efforts.

Knowledge Building

Curate and present existing frameworks, research, and case studies for private sector consumption.

- Leverage existing frameworks for analysis (e.g., IEP Pillars of Positive Peace, Interpeace Frameworks for Assessing Resilience, PeaceNexus Foundation Peace-building Business Criteria, UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes) and curate existing case studies (e.g., International *Alert Local Business, Local Peace*) rather than expending effort and resources creating new case studies and research.

- Highlight SMEs, suppliers, corporations, and investors already engaging in resilience efforts as specific examples of how a prevention and peacebuilding lens can be established in similar institutions.

Identify and address knowledge gaps that exist within the peacebuilding community.

- Attend private sector gatherings (e.g., impact-investing conferences, social enterprise convenings around tech for good summits) to better understand goals and objectives of the private sector and identify any of its knowledge gaps regarding peace, resilience, business, and investing.

Strategies and Tactics

Collaborate across sectors and demonstrate the value of a resilience lens.

- Learn from the ways the climate change community has collaborated with the private sector and determine what is replicable for peacebuilding and resilience efforts.

- Engage across sectors to promote a peacebuilding and resilience agenda through intersectoral conversations in diverse locations, including business schools, to seed the importance of a resilience lens.

Build trust with private sector actors.

- Overcome any barriers of trust through relationship building and meaningful engagement between the private sector and the peacebuilding community.

- Pursue authentic engagements and equal partnerships with the private sector to overcome any hurdles of business actors being seen as only revenue sources and funders.

Set clearly defined, context-specific goals to guide private sector engagement.

- Acknowledge that national governments still bear ultimate responsibility for resilience and prevention.

- Break down peace into specific steps needed for achievable progress, and use those elements (e.g., social cohesion, anticorruption) to guide private sector engagement.

- Build partnerships where collaboration is prioritized, with specific roles for each stakeholder. The private sector may provide funds, expertise, or opportunities; civil society may provide on-the-ground knowledge and tools to work with local communities; and national governments may set the regulatory framework.

Messaging

Design messaging specifically to engage SMEs and larger investor markets.

- To encourage effective private sector engagement in fragile states, identify concrete cases of success and the resulting outcomes and impacts.

- Dispel the notion that the private sector is operating outside the parameters of peacebuilding, and translate linkages between private sector engagement and peace and resilience efforts.

- Describe peacebuilding efforts in ways that align with the value chain, industry, or mission of private sector companies.

Translate and demystify risk for private sector engagement in fragile contexts.

- The private sector's top priority is not to build peace; thus peacebuilders should recognize dominant factors that drive private sector decision making—one of which is risk.

- Financial risk and return on investment are key considerations for businesses, as are legal and public perception factors, when engaging in sensitive or fragile contexts. Develop partnerships to foster cross-sectoral support to measure and mitigate these risks.

Areas for Further Exploration

Explore the role of the media in solving a peace-branding problem.

- In the media, there are few examples of what peace or resilience look like but many images of what conflict and war look like. While shifting this perception will be challenging, the peacebuilding community should engage

with the media to amplify more stories of peace and resilience.

Explore the relationship between the private sector and national governments.

- In many fragile contexts, particularly in postconflict countries where the state is weak, the private sector can play an important mediation role. This role may not be anticipated, so it may be useful to consider how the peacebuilding community can support the private sector if it finds itself occupying that space.

Explore the relationships between local and global.

- More analysis of the relationships between governance levels (e.g., local, national, multinational, global) is necessary to more accurately understand and mitigate risk and understand all the ways these different levels can collaborate.

Conclusion

Peacebuilding actors must commit to strengthening their own understanding of the private sector and building up existing networks that can help bridge any gaps between these two communities. Preexisting private sector and peacebuilding frameworks can be adapted and translated, and caution should be exercised against calls for additional analysis, in order to preserve resources for and promote collaboration on existing research. The peacebuilding community has unique value add for private sector conversations, particularly as they pertain to fragile contexts; thus it is important not to lose sight of the value of intersectoral conversations.

Endnotes

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[5] Jennifer Oetzel et al., "Business and Peace: Sketching the Terrain," *Journal of Business Ethics* (2010), https://docs.wix-static.com/ugd/2d0099_e78b5dce21564fa1a0cdb2d02c0ef089.pdf.

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[10] Ibid.

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