

Framing a Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Role for the Private Sector

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- Why business and peacebuilding?
- Framing a peacebuilding role for business
- Sharing examples of emerging practices

Why business and peacebuilding?

- Economic causes of war, and ‘war economies’
- Insensitive company conduct can fuel conflict further...
- ...but, informed company choices can mitigate
- Conflict costs for business
- Causes and impacts of violent conflict are complex, requiring collective efforts – including business

Who is meant by 'business'?



- Multinational companies
- Large domestic businesses
- Small and medium enterprises
- Micro-enterprises...even the informal sector

Framing a peacebuilding role for business

Company engagement at 3 levels:



Minimum: Compliance

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- With national rules and regulations
- With international human rights, criminal and humanitarian law?
- → **UN Special Rep for Business and Human Rights** to 'map evolving standards, practices, gaps and trends'
- Currently: lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework of 'dos' and 'don'ts'
- But: voluntary initiatives setting standards – e.g. **UN Global Compact**

Example: extractive industry voluntary initiatives

- Financial relations with the host government: **Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative**
- Relations with armed actors: **Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights**
- Relations with host communities: improved **stakeholder engagement and dialogue**

Necessary: Do no harm

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Even with 100% compliance, company conduct can do harm...

... 'conflict-sensitive business practices' needed, based on:

- 'Conflict-sensitivity' approaches from humanitarian experience
- Better, participatory, conflict analysis
- Identifying two-way risks
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement
- Mitigating steps

Necessary: Do no harm

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“However useful they have been in reforming internal corporate culture and establishing some useful benchmarks, voluntary business initiatives for socially responsible and conflict-sensitive conduct have not coalesced into a cumulative, systemic impact on the ground”

International expert opinion

Desirable: Positive value

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Companies can promote peaceful coexistence in communities...

...e.g. doing business across conflict divides can strengthen positive relationships, generate shared stakes in peace, and promote livelihoods

Desirable: Positive value

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“We need to restore relationships between the Abkhaz and Georgians in Abkhazia. Nothing can do it better than business

”

Local entrepreneur in Gal/i

“On the market we are all Nigerian. It is when I am in my community that I consider my tribe and religion first. The market belongs to everybody.”

Market trader, Northern Nigeria

Desirable: Positive value

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Example: domestic enterprises

- Engaging in cross-conflict dialogues
- Promoting reconciliation in the workplace
- Business links and joint projects across conflict divides
- Diffusing community-level tensions

Successful business initiatives have involved:

- Business awareness of the cost of conflict
- Conflict analysis, and self-reflection
- Identifying clear value-added of business
- Individual leadership and collective action
- Working in partnership with other sectors
- Adapting strategies and evolving over time

In summary

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Company engagement at 3 levels:

