



BUSINESS
PLAN FOR PEACE



THE MISSING PEACE

Business as the change for good

THE MISSING PEACE: BUSINESS AS THE CHANGE FOR GOOD

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The **cruelty, brutality and chaos** of Ukraine and countless other wars have demonstrated the devastation and cost of uncontrolled military power. The choice before us is between continued and more dangerous conflicts, ultimately destroying the infrastructure of many countries and amplifying human misery, or urgently finding a way of reconciling differences without resorting to war.

It is imperative that we immediately take steps to **insure as far as possible against all future wars**. Building peace has largely been the work of the UN, the OSCE, NGOs and locally-led peacebuilders. These efforts are well-intentioned but are grossly under-funded and under-resourced and consequently have limited impact in the face of global power dynamics and systems that prioritise investment elsewhere.

Building sustainable peace requires design, systematic plans, infrastructure, and investment. **In short, it requires a business plan.** Until now, the expertise of business and the private sector has only rarely been engaged.

What business could bring to the prevention of destructive conflict and the building of peace include **training, strategy, planning, real-time adaptation, and investment**. What business would gain includes improved **community relations and engagement** in developing security, **risk reduction**, and **insurance against physical dangers** to staff, destruction of property and loss of profit. Business would also gain positive public perceptions of their business values, and their purpose (and ultimately improved results) in helping solve the world's greatest challenges.

This short paper offers possibilities and a way forward with concise accounts of:

1. Current costs of war
2. Current funding available for conflict prevention and peace-building
3. How funding is currently administered
4. How conflict and war can be prevented
5. The opportunities for business
6. The future belongs to those who can see it
7. How you can make a difference now
8. What businesses will gain
9. How businesses can make this happen

1. Current costs of war and military operations

In 2020, reported global military expenditure rose to almost \$2 trillion¹, almost twice the amount reported in 2000². The number of countries experiencing protracted crises has doubled to 34 in the last six years.³ Since 2020, there have been over 39 countries with armed conflict. The global economic impact of violence was \$14.96 trillion PPP in 2020, equivalent to 11.6 per cent of global GDP or \$1,942 per person.⁴

These figures show where our global priorities lie and what the world invests in. In return for this investment it should, therefore, not be surprising that resolvable differences are resulting in brutal wars and conflicts, triggering displacement of vast numbers of refugees, a huge and growing global impact of violence⁵, and critical shortages of food and resources, bringing the spectre of widespread famine.

2. Current funding available to conflict prevention and peace building

Peacebuilding systems that exist are underfunded and undervalued, and as the global pandemic impacts the world, they are struggling to be fit for purpose.⁶ The world has changed since the global pandemic, and its impact has highlighted the weaknesses and cracks in international systems, particularly Overseas Development Aid (ODA).⁷ 80 per cent of humanitarian needs are driven by conflict.⁸ Given recent wars and conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, Colombia, Myanmar, DR Congo, and many more countries, the need for humanitarian aid has increased dramatically, growing by an average of 12 per cent per year from 2012-2018.⁹

In response to the increase in violent conflict, humanitarian spending went up by almost 70 per cent between 2012 and 2017, yet this was not reflected in the increase in peacebuilding which was only 25 per cent.¹⁰ While the world calls into question how to build back better, it continues to fund the sticking plaster rather than the roots causes of violent conflict.

The contribution of ODA funds to conflict prevention remains limited to just 1 per cent of foreign aid from governments.¹¹ Some governments, such as the British, are further reducing ODA budgets.¹² There are no figures for philanthropy. During the pandemic, aid for peace and security and peacebuilding decreased by 2 per cent.¹³

If more was invested in preventing war, armed conflict and cycles of violence, and across the spectrum of different actors working in and with fragile contexts, conflict could be mitigated, the humanitarian needs would decrease, and far more funding would become available for building sustainable peace.



3. How funding is currently administered

The politics of foreign policy and assistance, with a strong focus on metrics, results in piecemeal, quick-fix short-term approaches to tackling serious conflict challenges that countries and regions are facing and do not yield sustainable prevention and solutions, due in a large part to the top-down approach of assistance and support. Direct funding support to local civil society in and from countries with high levels of conflict remains less than 2.1 per cent ODA in 2020.¹⁴ This represents a decline from 3.5 per cent in 2016¹⁵ despite efforts and commitments to put civil society to the fore of decisions made for or about the conflicts that they themselves live through and need to endure. Moreover, local peacebuilders receive limited support outside of ODA and philanthropy.

Despite having operations and supply chains operating in multiple countries and across borders, the financial and private sector rarely sees itself as an actor contributing to or investing in conflict prevention. Yet, there are numerous examples globally of the impact of the private sector on country conflict dynamics and how it can support and sustain peace.¹⁶

4. How conflict and war can be prevented

Evidence-based literature is now increasingly demonstrating what works to prevent conflict. In September 2017, Dr Scilla Elworthy published *The Business Plan for Peace*.¹⁷ The book shows how 25 tried and tested strategies for preventing war can be scaled up and extended over ten years to avoid violent conflict worldwide. Imagine a world where peaceful solutions are valued and invested in, rather than systems that contribute to violent conflict and war.

From health systems worldwide it is evident that prevention is better than cure. The same is true for conflict systems. If our society does not value conflict transformation and invest in it, then peacebuilding will continue to have negligible impact in preventing conflict. It will focus only on the most difficult of tasks, namely negotiating solutions after the war has broken out, and only after lives have been destroyed and cycles of violence are locked in a never-ending spiral of hate and humiliation.

Supporting stability and lasting peace requires not just more funding but flexible investment and space for ongoing learning and adaptation. There is a lot that the peacebuilding sector can learn from the private sector and vice versa. We need new ways of doing things: a model where shared investment, co-creation and design is developed by a diverse range of actors and organisations have a stake in peace. This needs to be imagined, created, and invested in to prevent future violence. As climate change, global political tensions, competition over resources and wars continue, reimagining solutions to the conflict system



is no longer a nice to have but a must. The old ways of business are no longer serving us; new ways of solving challenges are needed. The way forward is collaboration.

5. The opportunities for business

Preventing destructive conflict requires investment. This is the issue.

Major retailers, resource industries and production are fully international - their chains of supply and distribution span the globe. Businesses can either opt to contribute to solutions and reduce violent conflict in the world or continue to contribute to harm and violence. The private sector has not traditionally seen itself as a force for peace in the world, and is seen by those working for social change as valuing profit over human rights and peace. There are however already existing examples and opportunities for the private sector to become a significant contributor to violence prevention and peace. These include, but are not limited by:

- 1) Bridging divides in polarised societies by carefully facilitating collaborative work with communities through employment creation and creating space for shared interests, and thus meeting local needs. Operations that do not do this risk undermining peace - “there is no middle ground”.¹⁸

Example: Philippines

Datu Paglas¹⁹ municipality in Mindanao, Philippines, was an area of violence and instability. Toto Paglas set up La Frutera banana plantation in 1996. He recognised that conflict in the region was exacerbated when Christians were hired in higher-ranking positions than Muslims. “By also employing Muslims as supervisors, including a former combatant as the most senior supervisor, and instituting practices to help communities overcome suspicions and enmity, he facilitated improved relations in both the workplace and the wider community, central to the municipality’s transformation.”²⁰

- 2) Shaping narratives through media marketing that encourage tolerance and understanding across divides and polarised communities.

Example: India

Brooke Bond created an advert ‘the Taste of Togetherness’ showing a Hindu family locked out of their apartment, a Muslim woman next door invites them in for tea, after hesitation the Hindu family joins and they enjoy the tea together.²¹ This advert for tea was created in a context where there was ongoing religious polarisation and violence.

- 3) Building key relationships across networks that can support negotiation and bridge-building or Track II diplomacy when violence is about to or has broken out.

Example: Ireland

Peace Dividends: In Northern Ireland, local businesses served as both think tanks and lobbying organisations in the peace process. During the Troubles in 1994, the Northern Ireland Confederation of Business Industry (CBI) published a “peace dividend paper,” laying out the economic rationale for peace, which was picked up by the media, and gave new momentum to the peace process. Two years later, the CBI joined forces with other business and trade associations to form the *Group of Seven* to lobby for peace through discussions with political parties, media statements and individual appeals. As the Group’s former chairman the late Sir George Quigley noted, while business cannot build peace alone, the pressure they exerted “made it less easy for the parties to simply walk away”.²²

The skills that business brings to the table

It is now urgent to marry the learnings from the private sector and peacebuilding sector to find sustainable solutions and seek opportunities to reimagine and co-design new ways of working with local peacebuilders and learning from each other. Successful businesses focus on testing, learning and adaptation to meet the needs of customer segments to maximise profit. The same approach is increasingly being called for and needs to be applied to how conflict transformation and peacebuilding is funded. Best practice in peacebuilding and conflict transformation focuses on learning and adapting to each unique conflict context while building on what works. Businesses have platforms for real-time learning, data-capturing and adaptation. Adaptive and iterative approaches are evidenced to demonstrate results, focusing on the ‘how’, not just the ‘what’. Imagine the possibilities if the strengths of these two sectors came together for good.

The private sector can build peace not only by what they do but by how they show up and how they operate. Conflict transformation needs to be invested in through internal operations and processes as well as through external-facing efforts such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Unilever’s approach to shifting internal structures to support inclusion and diversity starts from a ‘get our own house in order first approach’.²³

The skills of conflict transformation are now evident and used by companies worldwide:

1. listening to understand the point of view of all people impacted by their operations;
2. identifying the needs of all stakeholders and finding new solutions to meet those needs;
3. standing for values such as human-centered approaches and collaboration;
4. using emotions such as fear or anger as a fuel for transformation, not confrontation;
5. ‘connecting not correcting’; identifying potential problems before they arise.

All of these can contribute to understanding and responding to conflicts, and building peace while still serving the interests of companies and the end result of profit.

‘Profits should come not from creating the world’s problems, but from solving them’.

- Paul Polman, former Unilever CEO

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16

Signs of recognising the importance of contributing to positive, sustainable peace are increasing, and one example concerns Sustainable Development Goal 16. The focus of SDG 16 is on justice and strengthening institutions, the elimination of all forms of violence against vulnerable groups, and the promotion and resolution of conflict through dialogue, negotiation and diplomacy.²⁴ Businesses and investors increasingly recognise the importance of the SDGs; however, SDG 16 remains the least reported and is consistently underfunded.²⁵ Since the key supply chain risks²⁶ for businesses are conflict and human rights issues, it would make sense to support SDG 16 in every possible way.

Investment in conflict prevention in areas of operation can²⁷:

- 1) build community relations,
- 2) mitigate risk and loss of profits,
- 3) contribute to sustainable solutions for SDG16,
- 4) support competitive advantage for a business in a world where corporations are increasingly judged as to how they are contributing to solving the world’s problems²⁸
- 5) create valuable learning between sectors.

- 6) Strengthen the relationship between consumers and suppliers and subsequent returns.

Example: Kenya

The post election violence in Kenya in December 2007 and January 2008 cost well over a thousand lives, displaced over half a million people and cost billions of pounds in damaged property, ruined businesses and economic contraction. As a result, the **Kenyan Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA)** was set up to make sure it would never happen again. KEPSA comprised over 100,000 members, who cooperated closely with civil society, spearheading a three-phased public communication campaign, garnering support for peaceful elections, as well as funding peace forums, preventing incitement, disseminating conciliation narratives, negotiating privately with political leaders, and organising presidential debates. As a direct result of its work the election of 2017 was called free and fair by the European Union Observer team, there was no destruction of property or interruption of business, no one was displaced and only sixteen deaths were attributed to election-related violence. The cost was just over half a million pounds.²⁹

Useful recommendations are now emerging, such as the *UN Guidance on Responsible Business in Conflict Areas*³⁰ and the *UN Global Compact*. Moreover, there is growing evidence that the presence of business actors in mediation and negotiation positively correlates with peace progress.³¹

6. The future belongs to those who can see it

*I believe that the nature and characteristics of contemporary conflict suggest the need for concepts and approaches that go beyond traditional statist diplomacy. Building peace in today's conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure across the levels of society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources of reconciliation from within that society.*³²

- John Paul Lederach, Leading expert on Peacebuilding

One of the strategies that the **Business Plan for Peace** puts forward is that of **Infrastructures for Peace**; pioneered under the Peace Accords in South Africa by Nelson Mandela when he came out of jail in 1989. Established to avoid civil war before elections could be called in 1994, this infrastructure became known as the national programme of Peace Councils. Since the success of this model in supporting up to, during and immediately after, a transfer of political power, there has been replication with adaptation in a number of

countries, for example, in Kenya, Nigeria, and Myanmar with mixed results, and implemented under different names. Increasingly, this model has become known as Infrastructures for Peace and is constantly being revisited and adapted against learning on success and failures.

Regional Infrastructures for Peace proposes new solutions building on lessons learned.³³ To date, national infrastructures have primarily been focused within a country context working with governments as key actors, supporting the nation-state, and rarely including the private sector. Yet, while there is greater growing recognition for locally-driven solutions to shape peacebuilding efforts, the funding and strategic decisions for such actions remain primarily top-down. However, change is coming from the grassroots where the impact of conflict and war is felt most, and where civil society and inter-group relations across regional and global networks are directly disrupting the inefficiency of old systems.³⁴

A new model is needed that tackles the political influences, forces and conflict drivers influencing globally and across regions in today's intra-connected world. The global pandemic accelerated negative peace dynamics and has spotlighted the importance of locally-led solutions.³⁵ Locally-led solutions are increasingly supported by newly connected networks in the virtual space that bring together diverse actors to co-create solutions, creating informal infrastructures for peace that exist with limited or sporadic funding. There is opportunity for the private sector to engage and co-create opportunities for peace with locally-led actors.

As businesses align to purpose, people-centered models, and to fulfilling ESG commitments, in the face of the world's greatest catastrophes, such as climate change, the missing piece is 'peace'. The private sector is an untapped market for preventing conflict prevention worldwide, and tackling the underlying issue to all that we are facing as humans, conflict.

7. How you can make a difference now

Money, time and brains from business, investment, international NGOs and the peacebuilding sectors need to co-create new models of investing in peace. The private sector, investors, and peacebuilders, both international and local, need to join forces and reimagine how to establish funding platforms and partnerships that place, connect and amplify the work of peacebuilders, build infrastructures for peace across regions, and solicit equal partnerships where everyone wins.

As peacebuilding experts, we know that for the best chances of success, funding needs to support:



- 1) **Hybrid models:** led by bottom-up grassroots approaches by local peacebuilders and supported by power-sharing by international actors, including the private sector, who all have a stake in that region.
- 2) **Horizontal, co-funded, co-created models of support:** that build on learning from social impact bonds, community and trust-based philanthropy, and pooled investment³⁶ and adapted to support conflict transformation and peacebuilding.
- 3) **Build on the existing connections across geographic borders and sectors:** to support grassroots, people-led infrastructures for peace.
- 4) **Conflict transformation needs to be mainstreamed** throughout any design, process and operation, and across sectors.
- 5) **Co-created models where all actors are invested** in agreed outcomes, and where updates and learning are shared and documented regularly, rather than through complex bureaucracy.
- 6) **Minimal timeframes of support are essential** - at least 4 years time frame is required with space for reflection and learning.

We'd like to work with you to answer collaboratively, with representatives from across different sectors, the following questions:

- 1) Where funding comes from:
 - a. How to effectively contribute to sustainable peace and address the implicit power dynamics of where funding derives from? How can North-South joint investment be fostered?
 - b. What is needed to increase buy-in into the value of conflict transformation processes by the private sector?
 - c. What are the incentives for the private sector working within and from countries with deep divisions to contribute to peacebuilding?
- 2) How funding is administered:
 - a. What genuine governance and decision-making processes, that challenge existing North-South power dynamics, can be put in place to determine how these funds are used?
 - b. How can administrative processes for funding support work across borders? Are there web-based/cloud-based solutions to support a regional-based model?
- 3) How results and learning is captured:
 - a. How can design and outcomes be jointly determined and measured?
 - b. How can processes of adaptation and learning reduce bureaucracy while placing locally-led peacebuilders as equal partners, who ultimately are impacted by any results?



8. What businesses will gain

Example: H&M

One of the world's largest retailers with over 5,000 stores in over 70 countries and hundreds of thousands of employees, H&M has recognised the value of integrating conflict transformation and peacebuilding into their organisation and communities of operation. Senior leaders and store managers have undertaken ongoing Mighty Heart training, reporting significant improvements in communication, leadership, satisfaction and overall performance. Their MyStore initiative is seeing each outlet contribute to local community initiatives, helping to develop social cohesion and stability in countries across Europe.

It's clear that businesses and the private sector can make a telling and necessary contribution to building sustainable peace around the world. And this type of investment ultimately serves the interests of the businesses that invest as well. **It's a win-win.**

Businesses do not exist in a vacuum and must operate within the context of the world around them. One of the biggest challenges facing global supply chains is the level of fragility and potential for destructive conflict. When businesses operate globally they constantly assess their risk profiles; working to build sustainable peace in their communities of operation can radically **reduce their risk profile** and increase the **long-term security of their staff, clients and suppliers.**

Successful businesses will need to identify and adopt the approaches of the future. More than ever, astute customers, communities and staff are basing their brand affiliations on the compatibility of their values. Listening and understanding cultural sensitivity to find new ways of engage consumers and that also supports the communities or context there in. Taking the brave leap to become an early adopter of conflict investment can make a powerful statement about an organisation's values and mission, fostering satisfaction and loyalty among staff and customers alike.

Similarly, improved relations on a community level can make operations significantly smoother. Think, for example, of the huge cost associated with legal battles over new developments. Pursuing compromise, compassionate communication and inclusive processes from the outset is in everyone's best interests.

Businesses can also benefit from the efficiency and leadership gains of addressing conflict internally, within their own operations. The success of a company is dependent on the success of its people and people from different contexts. By investing in the skills of

communication, purpose-driven leadership, companies will be able to unlock the full potential of their most valuable asset.

Investment in peacebuilding is in business’ best interest

- Responsive risk assessments and risk mitigation against operational interruption or loss of profits
- Competitive advantages in a world where corporations are increasingly judged as to how they are contributing to wider social challenges
- Contribution to and alignment with sustainable solutions for SDG16
- Stronger relationship with consumers and suppliers and subsequent returns.
- Increased agility in response to emerging threats
- Increased security for staff and customers
- Positive statement of values that can bolster brand image across borders
- Engaged employees embracing diversity at its best
- Improved community relations
- Maximised potential of staff through improved leadership and communication
- Forecasting potential impact of engagement; sensitivity to cultural differences
- Reduced risk of attack or involvement in violent conflict
- Reputation as a global leader transforming the world away from violent conflict
- Increased skills and tools to mitigate the world’s complexity and problems

9. How businesses can make this happen...

These are just some of the steps that businesses and the private sector can take to urgently reduce destructive conflict in the world:

Investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invest in infrastructures for peace. ● Support the establishment of vehicles and mechanisms to prevent conflict. ● Establish incentives to divest from weapons production and trade.
Business leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support personnel with the skills of the Mighty Heart to align individual purposes to global solutions for your company.



- Audit your internal strategies, policies, and personnel support to ensure that you are walking the talk of conflict transformation.
- Invest in pensions that are divesting from weapons production
- Lobby for pro-peace solutions.
- Integrate conflict analyses approaches throughout your business and operations to ensure your business is bridging divides.
- Reimagine design brilliance and shape narratives for peace through your social media and marketing campaigns
- Develop CSR funding opportunities to support local peacebuilders.
- Partner with not-for-profits and local peacebuilders to re-imagine new ways of contributing to conflict prevention.
- Build key relationships with national leadership to support negotiations or track II diplomacy before violence breaks out.

The corporate world has embraced social responsibility, ESG investing and purpose-driven industry in recent years. The leaders of tomorrow are the early adopters of this developing landscape. Sustained investment in conflict prevention and transformation is now the Missing Peace.



Peace is everyone's business

For more information or to join us on this journey by investing time, money, wisdom or resources please contact Business Plan for Peace CEO Michelle Arnell at michelle@thebusinessplanforpeace.org

About Business Plan for Peace (BPP)

Founded by Dr Scilla Elworthy, BPP exists to prevent destructive conflict. Our mission is to generate a groundswell of people from all sectors who believe that a world without destructive conflict is possible and necessary, and who consequently are engaged, through inner growth and outer action, in hastening this change. Business Plan for Peace (thebusinessplanforpeace.org) comprises a not-for-profit company *Business Plan for Peace* (11780694) and the Charitable Incorporated Organisation *Plan for Peace* (1189261).

We partner with multinational corporations, educational institutions and locally-led initiatives. We offer expertise, guidance and support to integrate conflict transformation into all that you offer, thus creating new possibilities for the future. If this applies to you, do contact us at contact@thebusinessplanforpeace.org

Endnotes

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