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THE POSITIVE POTENTIAL OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR



University for Peace
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Workshop Report

Joint Training Workshop Public-Private Partnerships in Peacebuilding

The International Rescue Committee

New York, June 22, 2007

Introduction

The purpose of the training workshop, which was convened by the Business Humanitarian Forum, the UN-mandated University for Peace, the U.S. Institute of Peace and the International Rescue Committee, was to sensitize attendees to the mutual benefits of public-private partnerships



The workshop is opened by John Whitehead (center)

especially concerning investment and the creation of companies and jobs that allow people to provide for their families and to build sustainable lives in peace.

in peacebuilding activities, to demonstrate ways in which the public and private sectors can work together in this area, and to discuss techniques to enhance the capabilities of the attendees and their organizations to accomplish this goal. More generally, the partners designed this workshop to emphasize the central role of the private sector in peacebuilding,

The workshop was attended by representatives from the private sector and business associations, members of the UN community, as well as NGOs and other non-profit organizations.

Rationale for the Workshop Design

Members of the four partner organizations formulated together the workshop design, based on several principles.

1. To benefit from the rich experience and knowledge of workshop participants.
2. To allow space for participants' sharing of experience and knowledge using small group settings and plenary Q&A and commentaries.
3. To fuse the unique knowledge and experience of each of the three partner organizations, and impart them to workshop participants.
4. To conduct workshop activities in an interactive, participatory fashion.

Guided by these principles, the workshop started with an overview of the history and literature related to public-private partnerships in peacebuilding. This overview also included a discussion of how such partnerships can operate within a framework of conflict analysis and efforts for peace. This was followed by a session in which participants shared information on their experiences with the challenges and opportunities of cross-sector partnerships.

The morning session continued with a concrete, hands-on presentation on practical aspects of partnership building between partners from different sectors, followed by a case study from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A panel of experts from the private sector, international organizations and an NGO then reflected on their experiences of public-private cooperation using specific case studies from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Uganda, Burundi and Sierra Leone.

The sessions were intended to establish a theoretical and practical knowledge base derived from the contributions of the presenters and the participants. The subsequent session, building on that foundation, consisted of a simulation of a latent conflict situation in which public, private and NGO actors engaged in negotiations related to peacebuilding efforts, followed by a debriefing by the participants on the lessons learned from this role-playing exercise.

The workshop concluded with a wrap-up of the ideas, concepts and suggestions that were generated by participants and presenters.

Key Insights from the Workshop

The workshop proceedings generated an abundance of ideas, concepts, tips and suggestions. This was not surprising given the quality and expertise that was present in the workshop (see list of attendees). The major discussions may be categorized as follows:

1. Emphasis on partnerships and relationships: Participants and presenters emphasized



that successful public-private partnerships are based on nurturing healthy relationships. This usually requires personal contacts between the members of the involved organizations. Their efforts and interaction contribute to reducing prevalent negative stereotypes, and ensure that each partner brings to peacebuilding efforts what they “do best”. Within this category, several

points were emphasized:

- a. There is a growing understanding of the importance of the private sector not only for economic development but also in terms of peacebuilding.
- b. The question of how members of public and private organizations can build bridges was

brought up, and stimulated ideas and suggestions; but the issue clearly deserves further focused discussions and formulations.

c. The need to involve all potential partners, and especially the private sector participant, at an early stage when the partnership is formed.

d. As the success of partnerships usually relies on effective interpersonal relations and charismatic leaders, a concern was expressed as to how organizations can sustain such relationships. This led to an emphasis on:

- Documentation of lessons learned;
- Dissemination of knowledge and experiences;
- Awareness of the particularity of each conflict and of related efforts for peace;
- Understanding that each public-private partnership is unique to the circumstances giving rise to its formation.

2. Guidelines for the Private Sector: Participants and presenters shared several guidelines for how the private sector may contribute to efforts for peace. These included:

a. The private sector can play a role not only in the peacebuilding stage, but also in pre- and during-conflict periods. Accurate assessments of conflicts are needed to guide interventions.

b. The formulation of a strong notion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) must guide the private sector's efforts in order to ensure lasting, consistent effects, keeping in mind that the basic purpose of the private sector is to "do business".

c. Respecting clear company guidelines regarding values and requirements for operations on the ground facilitates decisions as to whether or not to pull out of a country in case of conflict or other difficult situations.

d. The private sector should establish legitimacy, and seek legitimacy from potential partners.

e. The private sector should continuously seek a balance between making a profit and concern for human rights, the environment, economic development and other factors crucial for sustainable peace. CSR plays a major role in striking this balance.

f. The private sector should also pay attention to cultural considerations and sensitivities.

3. Strengths of the Private Sector: The workshop discussion highlighted several of the areas of strength that the private sector brings to peacebuilding efforts. Several participants stated such areas of strength not only represented what the private sector could do, but also what it could model for others, hence introducing effective practices into the operations of their partners. These areas of strength included:

a. The central role of the private sector with regard to peacebuilding lies in its capacity to invest and create jobs; companies thus make it possible for people to provide for their families and to move on with their lives.

b. The private sector uses practices that reflect non-discrimination and inclusion of all members of society. Such practices, prevalent especially among transnational businesses, provide a model of peaceful coexistence for societies divided on ethnic, religious or other grounds. These practices demonstrate the relative importance the private sector gives to economic factors, as opposed to political and other aspects.

c. The private sector continuously uses negotiation and techniques of rational compromise to achieve common interests with various partners and even competitors. This practice, natural to the function of the private sector, is often precisely what conflicting parties need in order to explore possible peaceful resolutions. The private sector can contribute in several ways by providing training in these areas, or, when possible, by contributing to the actual negotiations between parties.

d. The private sector, especially at the national and local levels, usually operates within a network that includes related businesses. These networks can provide a support system for reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts, when other organs of the society have been damaged or disintegrated.

4. The Challenges Ahead: While participants and presenters recognized the potential of elaborating on public-private partnerships, they acknowledged the challenges facing such partnerships. These include:

a. There exist some negative perceptions among the private and public sectors, international organizations, and NGOs about each other's motives, competency and mode of operation. This leads at times to a reduced trust, which hinders the ability to build healthy relationships.

b. The role of the informal sector and how to deal with issues such as illegality, corruption, over-regulation, etc. This was also discussed in the context of guidelines for activities in failing states.

- c. For extractive industries, operating in conflict regions, the above-ground risks to their businesses are often more serious than those of extracting resources from underground. Hence, there is a need to establish and maintain good relations with local organizations, while being aware of complicity issues.
- d. The role of the private sector, which often includes financial contributions to development and post-conflict reconstruction, may be ambivalent regarding issues of social justice, which are usually among the sources of the conflict. In such cases, the private sector contributions may not yield expected dividends, or may even be regarded with suspicion as efforts to reinforce an unjust status quo. This is especially the case in societies that are developing from non-market to market economies; in such situations the private sector can sometimes be a hindrance to reconstruction and social development.
- e. The complexity of conflict sources and issues, and post-conflict priorities, makes decisions for public-private interventions equally complex. Decision makers need to be continuously attune to the fluid situations typical of conflict, as well as changing needs and priorities.
- f. The expansion of the role of the private sector in areas such as security during times of conflict poses serious questions from legal, ethical and social perspectives. This subject requires further focused discussions in various settings.
- g. The ways in which businesses in conflict countries can influence governments or other local partners to adopt socially responsible and transparent policies.

Outcomes

Judging from the feedback received in the evaluation forms and discussions with participants, the meeting satisfactorily fulfilled the expectations of the attending representatives.

Of the 13 evaluation sheets that were handed back, 83.3 % rated the quality of the overall workshop program as satisfactory / very satisfactory. The same percentage of participants felt that the main objective of the workshop, to sensitize attendees to the mutual benefits of public-private partnerships in peacebuilding activities, was achieved / very much achieved. And 90% of participants agreed that the workshop demonstrated ways in which the public and private sectors can work together in a successful / very successful manner.

Comments from the participants included the notion of having gained knowledge and insight regarding the building of cross-sector partnerships and networking with organizations involved in post-conflict countries. Some attendees mentioned future plans to seek private sector

partnerships for on-the-ground projects. One participant asked the partner organizations whether it would be possible to summarize the various guidelines for public-private cooperation in a document.

Almost all participants agreed that future workshops should be held over two or more days, given the dense program.



Next Steps

Following the feedback received from the event in New York, the project partners will discuss ways to further improve the format and substance of the workshop. The partners are currently considering locations where future workshops could be organized. Consultations will be held with UN agencies and other organizations on how best to adapt the workshop program for use in specific countries / regions.

The partners are also considering a web-based e-learning program on this subject for use in remote locations.

Annex I: List of Attendees and their Organisations

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Annex II: Workshop Agenda

Public-Private Partnerships in Peacebuilding Joint Training Workshop in New York June 22, 2007

- 8:30 – 9:00 **Registration**
- 9:00 – 9:15 **Welcome** by the Honorable John C. Whitehead,
Chairman Emeritus, International Rescue Committee
Introduction by Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun,
Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the United Nations
- 9:15 – 10:00 **Introductions, presentation on framework and common language**
by workshop moderator Dr. Amr Abdalla, Professor and Vice-Rector for
Academic Affairs, University for Peace
- 10:00 – 10:15 **Coffee break**
- 10:15 – 10:45 **Breakout group discussions** of peacebuilding experiences/problems
for brief presentations on main lessons learned
- 10:45 – 11:15 **Group presentations** based on specific experiences followed by
discussion
- 11:15 – 12:15 **“Building partnerships”**
- Presentation by Ms. Emily Talmon-l’Armée, Head of Operations,
Business Humanitarian Forum
 - Presentation by Mr. Paul Hollesen, Manager Community Relations and
Social Development , AngloGold Ashanti
- 12:15 – 1:15 **Buffet lunch**
- 1:15 – 3:00 **Facilitated interactive panel presentations** followed by Q&A
Moderator:
- Mr. Adam Greene,
Vice-President Labor Affairs and Corporate Responsibility, USCIB
- Panelists:
- Dr. Randall Gossen,
Vice-President for Safety, Environment and Social Responsibility,
Nexen Inc.;
 - Mr. Eloho Otobo,
Deputy Head, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office;
 - Mr. Benjamin Herzberg,
Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, The World Bank;
 - Ms. Rachel Locke,
Technical Advisor, Private Sector Linkages, Economic Recovery and
Development Unit, International Rescue Committee
- 3:00 – 3:15 **Role playing exercise** presented by Ms. Nina Sughrue,
Senior Program Officer, United States Institute of Peace
- 3:15 – 4:15 **Role playing exercise:** building partnerships
- 4:15 – 5:00 **Debriefing reports** on role playing exercise outcomes
- 5:00 – 5:30 **Summary and evaluation** – “Bringing it all together”

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