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The Positive Contributions of Businesses in Transformations from War to Peace

Andrea Iff, Rina M. Alluri, Sara Hellmüller

with contributions from
Annina Bürgin, Can Deniz and Damiano Sguaitamatti

swisspeace

swisspeace

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List of acronyms

MNC   Multinational Company

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

CSR   Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract/Zusammenfassung/Résumé

This working paper seeks to extend our understanding of the involvement of businesses in peacebuilding based on the perceptions of *business actors* themselves. The aim of this working paper is therefore to elaborate on a recent study's findings in response to the questions of *if and how Swiss companies are involved in peace processes*. Focusing on a sample of Swiss companies, the findings are based on desk based research and semi-structured interviews, primarily with Corporate Social Responsibility Managers. The empirical findings demonstrate that peace and conflict issues are seldom conceptualized within a business perspective. Most importantly, companies remain unaware of the possibilities and ways in which to engage in peace processes, what their options are and what kind of role they could play. This working paper therefore recommends a continued dialogue between the business and the peacebuilding communities.

Ce working paper a pour objectif d'approfondir notre compréhension de l'implication d'entreprises dans la promotion de la paix. Pour ce faire, il se base sur la perception des *acteurs économiques* eux-mêmes. À partir des résultats d'une étude récente, ce working paper vise à répondre aux questions *si et comment des entreprises suisses sont impliquées dans des processus de paix.* Il se concentre sur un échantillon d'entreprises suisses et se base sur des résultats provenant d'une analyse secondaire et d'entretiens semi-structurés, menés essentiellement avec des managers du domaine de la responsabilité sociale des entreprises. Les données empiriques montrent que la plupart des acteurs économiques incluent rarement des questions de paix et de conflit dans leur perspective commerciale. Qui plus est, les entreprises ignorent tant les moyens et les possibilités de s'engager dans des processus de paix que le rôle qu'elles pourraient y jouer. Le working paper propose en l'occurrence un dialogue soutenu entre les entreprises et les acteurs de la promotion de la paix.

Dieses Working Paper beabsichtigt, unser Verständnis darüber zu vertiefen, inwiefern sich Firmen an der Friedensförderung beteiligen. Grundlage dafür bilden die *Selbsteinschätzungen von Wirtschaftsakteuren*. Ziel des vorliegenden Working Papers ist es deshalb, auf der Basis einer neueren Untersuchung Antworten auf die Fragen zu finden, *ob und wie Schweizer Unternehmen in Friedensprozesse eingebunden sind.* Es beschränkt sich dabei auf eine Auswahl an Schweizer Firmen und baut auf Sekundäranalysen sowie halbstrukturierte Interviews mit Corporate Social Responsibility Managern auf. Die Ergebnisse dieser empirischen Untersuchung zeigen, dass Friedens- und Konfliktthematiken selten mit geschäftlichen Perspektiven in Zusammenhang gebracht werden. Noch entscheidender ist, dass Unternehmen sich weder der Möglichkeiten noch der Art und Weise bewusst sind, wie sie sich in Friedensprozessen engagieren können. Ebenso wenig sind sie sich im Klaren darüber, welche Rolle sie in Friedensprozessen spielen könnten. Das vorliegende Working Paper empfiehlt deshalb einen ständigen Dialog zwischen Unternehmen und friedensfördernden Organisationen.

1 Introduction and literature review[1]

In academic literature, there is limited research on the engagement of multinational businesses in peace processes. Existing peace and conflict research mainly concentrates on how actions of large companies tend to exacerbate violent conflict, with case studies focusing on firms within the extractive industry (see for example Le Billon 2005; David and Gagné 2006). International business literature focuses on questions of why companies stay in conflict contexts or which corporations are the first to enter a post-conflict context (Oetzel, Getz, and Ladek 2007; Getz and Oetzel 2009; Oetzel and Getz 2011). Studies that look into how companies can play a more *positive* role by supporting peace rather than conflict remain rare. Through different research and practice-oriented projects, swisspeace's Business & Peace unit aims at narrowing this gap with both empirical and theoretical insights.

In 2010 swisspeace published a study mandated by the Political Division on Human Security on the role of business actors in mediation processes (Iff et al. 2010). The results of the study demonstrated that private business actors have an important role to play in Track 1 mediation processes, by providing resources, expertise, networks, and by lobbying for peace. At the same time, the study found that local business actors have the potential to play a relevant and active role in lower tracks as mediators and facilitators. The empirical findings of the 2010 study, published as an earlier swisspeace working paper, were mainly based on interviews with *mediators*. This current working paper is based on a study which sought to build on these valuable insights and extend our understanding of the topic through research on the perceptions of *business actors* themselves. As such, this working paper stands alone in its contributions but must also be seen in the context of ongoing work at swisspeace by the Business and Peace team. The aim of this working paper is therefore to elaborate on the recent study's findings in response to the questions of *if and how Swiss companies are involved in peace processes*. Because Switzerland is a country where multinational companies (MNCs) contribute approximately 30 per cent to the Swiss Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Swiss American Chamber of Commerce and Boston Consulting Group 2009), this working paper focuses on a sample of these Swiss companies. The findings are based on desk research and semi-structured interviews with representatives from Swiss MNCs (mainly Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) managers and in some cases the Security Managers). The empirical findings show that peace and conflict issues are seldom conceptualized within a business perspective. Most importantly, companies remain unaware of possibilities and ways to engage in peace processes, what their options are and what kind of role they could envisage. This working paper therefore recommends a continued dialogue between the business and the peacebuilding community.

Ten years ago, the issue of new actors in transformations from war to peace was taken up in the literature. In addition to civil society, non-state armed groups have also been seen as relevant actors in transformation processes. In line with this, a new discourse within some international organizations like the World Bank or the UN emerged including the potential contributions of the *private sector* in preventing, settling and transforming conflicts (Haufler 2001; Switzer et al. 2004; Wenger and Möckli 2003). These publications have put forward normative statements as well as a few practical examples of private companies' *positive* contributions to peacebuilding.

The publication "The Business of Peace" was one of the first of its kind discussing a spectrum of real and potential options for corporations to support peace (Nelson 2000). Since then, more examples of corporate engagement in conflict resolution have become known and the number of practical initiatives in this field has increased: Killick, Srikantha, and Gündüz (2005) and Banfield, Güdüz, and Killick (2006) look at the overall contribution to peacebuilding, our study (Iff et al. 2010) as well as Tripathi and Gündüz (2008) looked at the role of business in mediation processes; others take an economic recovery approach (for example Bray 2009) analyzing specific sectors and their opportunities and challenges. The majority of the literature focuses on the extractive industries, given its relevance in conflict and post-conflict societies. The literature that addresses positive contributions is however mainly based on a regulatory approach, discussing different initiatives and processes that try to enhance the responsibility and accountability of these actors through voluntary regulatory measures. Thus, in addition to the developments in peace and conflict studies towards engaging with the question of private companies in peace promotion, there was also a change in the business community, which is illustrated by concepts such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and (global) governance. Systematic links between business support to peace and the debates on CSR and governance have, however, hardly been established (Jamali and Mirshak 2010 are the main exception here).

In summary, there has been a readiness to embrace private sector actors as players in conflict management, however mainly from a normative perspective and with only limited empirical support. Furthermore, only very rarely are business actors directly involved in these studies, they are rather the objects of the studies, even within the international business literature. Thus, through directly engaging business actors and asking them about the institutional relevance of peace and conflict within their management structure, this working paper takes an approach that is rare in the literature.

This working paper starts from two key assumptions that are established and agreed by most of the scholars in this area, but not most business people: The first is that the mere presence of a business in a conflict context places the company in a situation where its activities become intertwined in conflict (see also Oetzel et al. 2009; Zandvliet 2011). Companies in fragile contexts are exposed to a complexity of challenges which often go beyond their area of work and their core business, for example: injustice, inequality and discrimination, local or regional power imbalances and group competition for power and resources. A company is thus always part of this context and it has intended or unintended impacts on it.[2] The second assumption is that the intended and unintended effects of business can have a *positive* influence on a post-conflict situation or a peace process. Empirical evidence to support this assumption is yet to be established in academic literature. However, apart from this working paper, there are other publications that start to do so (Feil, Fischer, and Haidvogl 2008; Oetzel et al. 2009; Joras 2009).

The working paper is divided into three parts: The first part discusses results from a desk based research analysis on the activities of companies in conflict contexts and their peacebuilding relevance. The second part of the study presents interview findings on how companies perceive and react to peace and conflict issues. The interviews were conducted from June 2010 to March 2011. The third and final part concludes with recommendations of how to engage with business on this topic and ways forward.

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[2] This approach is not based on an advocacy-oriented thinking that seeks to hold companies accountable. It is to be understood as a disclosure of our epistemological thinking and thus the underlying assumptions of our study. Taking this approach, we also assume that 'staying out of the conflict' or being apolitical is rarely possible.

2 Methodological and empirical challenges

As indicated above, our approach to including businesses directly and including their perspectives as well as their internalization of certain issues within their management structure, is rare in the literature. This is not surprising, given the sensitivity of the issue. Today, businesses are confronted with a wide array of 'shaming and blaming' NGOs that control what they are doing, on the one hand in the North, but much more so in the South, where regulatory institutions are either not established or not entrenched. Thus, the research process was peppered with difficulties.

The aim was first to take conflict regions as the starting point, finding out which Swiss companies are active there and then conduct interviews. However, the first challenge was to find out which Swiss business actors are present in the compiled list of post-conflict countries. There is no register of Swiss companies that are active in specific world regions, and even if there were, trade associations or similar organizations would not respond positively to this request because they do not make their lists of members public. This is why we decided to change the approach and start with the companies themselves and not countries. Thus, a list of 30 large Swiss companies from different sectors was established. Because of previous research, we were aware that it is difficult to get in contact with multinational companies on a topic as sensitive as peace processes. Again, we had envisaged using official channels to establish contact, however, as the following graph 1 shows, the return rate was not good. Thus, we finally decided to concentrate on only 10 companies from different sectors and thus reduce the initial number intended.

Figure 1: Response and follow-up patterns of 30 companies
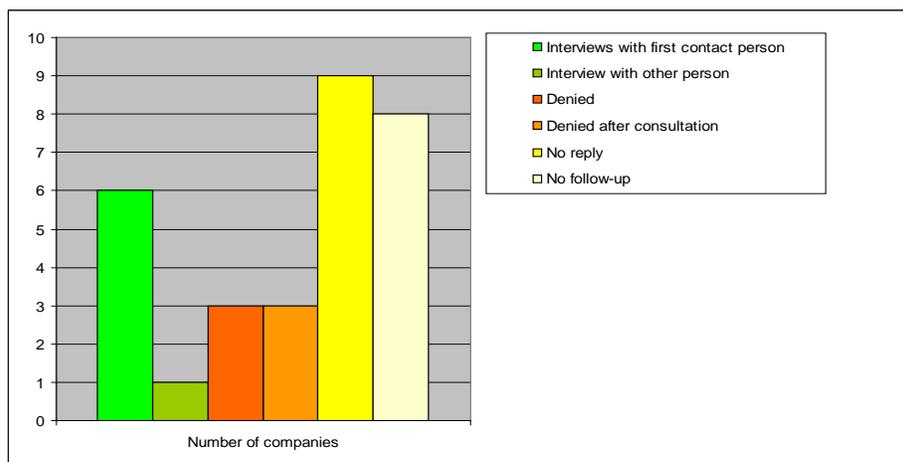
There are three interesting insights when analyzing the return rate process of the interview requests; these remain however interpretations. First, six out of the 30 companies reacted quite promptly to the request and were happy to give an interview following the first letter. It seems that these companies had already been faced with such questions, and were aware of the discussions that are going on in international organizations (like John Ruggie's framework). Second, with regards to those companies who showed no interest in the process only three companies stated openly that they are not interested in giving an interview. Another three companies first had internal discussions and then, after we followed up on the initial request, they declined. In yet another case, the first contact person declined but another company member was willing to talk to us. Third, most companies simply did not reply; even if there was a follow up by e-mail or telephone.

There are different interpretations possible of these patterns. One possible interpretation is that the companies are simply not interested in these questions. Another is that they fear reputational risk and that responses could have a 'shaming and blaming' consequence. A further issue is the image of swisspeace, mainly the possibility that

companies don't see our organization as a research foundation but rather as an advocacy NGO. Furthermore, as research on this topic is scarce, it was maybe also not understood what we mean by research and what kind of methodology and approach we would apply. Such insights from the interaction process with the companies are highly relevant for any further engagement with companies.

Thus, finally, 10 companies were included in the analysis. For the study we gathered mainly grey literature and conducted interviews. However, in the end, only 8 interviews were possible and one company did not allow us to use the information gathered in the process (see table 1). We conducted interviews mainly with those responsible for CSR, sometimes with representatives from the foundations of these big companies and once with the person responsible for security who took part in the interview. The information will not be linked to individual companies or interview partners, but remains anonymous (referred to as companies A-J).

Table 1: List of interviews

Company	Function	Interview
A	Corporate Responsibility	12.07.10
B	Corporate Responsibility	08.07.10
	Foundation	
C	Corporate Responsibility	09.11.10
D	Foundation	10.05.11
E	Corporate Responsibility	16.08.10
F	Security	28.07.10
	Corporate Responsibility	
G	Corporate Responsibility	03.01.11
H	Corporate Responsibility	03.05.11 (not allowed to use data)
	Risk	
I	Interview denied after internal discussion	-
J	Interview denied after internal discussion	-

We proceeded in three steps for the analysis. First, we investigated in how many conflict or post-conflict countries these companies are active, and thus established if this topic is even relevant for their business activities. For this, we used the categorization of the Heildeberg Institute for International Conflict Research as well as data from the official websites of the companies, sometimes added to by interview data if not available.

Second, based on the annual reports on CSR activities of the different corporations, we developed a table of activities (see table in appendix) that shows the different ways in which companies have contributed to peacebuilding, albeit mostly indirectly.

Third, we completed this data with the interview data from semi-structured interviews that we conducted with 7 of the companies. This data was mainly relevant in order to understand the way in which businesses conceptualize (or rather do not conceptualize) peace and conflict within their management structure. The interview data was analyzed alongside four main blocks of questions: (A) Are there activities in conflict countries? (B) Has the company contributed to a peace building process? (C) How are CSR activities linked to peace processes? (D) What are the potentials and challenges of involving businesses in peacebuilding processes? The data from this stage was analyzed through an interpretative approach collecting the different opinions of the ten interviewees and summarizing them.

Regarding the desk based part of this research process (steps 1 and 2) we again encountered difficulties connected to doing research in this field: (1) There is very little information on the inclusion of companies in peace processes that is accessible through desk based research. (2) If there is information available, it stems from advocacy

organizations that follow a 'shaming and blaming' approach and that by definition report the negative impact that companies have had on a conflict. (3) If companies include issues of peace and conflict in their management, they include the impact of conflict on their operations, and not the impact of their operations on conflict in their assessment. A report that also aimed at looking into this issue and commissioned by the Swedish Council for Industries faced similar problems and finally took a similar approach to this study (Andersson, Evers, and Sjöstedt 2011).

For the categorization of the activities of businesses we use a working definition of peacebuilding as: the attempt to encourage the development of the structural conditions, attitudes and modes of political behavior that may permit peaceful, stable and ultimately social and economic development. We based this on the peacebuilding palette established by Smith (2004) which takes into account four different areas of activities: the political framework, reconciliation and justice, socio-economic foundations and security. We categorized the different CSR activities alongside these four areas of activities. Then, based on the obtained data, we changed this categorization to better show and distinguish the activities of businesses in peacebuilding processes and ended up with seven categories (see table X): Support of peace negotiations, education, awareness and training, promoting good governance and human rights, reconstruction and infrastructure development, reconciliation, philanthropy and security. Two of the categories remained the same: security and reconciliation. However, we divided the category of 'political framework' into 'support for peace negotiations' mainly alongside the definition in our previous study (Iff et al. 2010) and 'promoting good governance and human rights'. Furthermore, we divided the category socio-economic foundations into 'education, awareness, training' and 'reconstruction, infrastructure development'. We added one category of 'philanthropy'.

Table 2: Inductive process of categories of peacebuilding for business activities

	Smith (2004)	Business-related categories
Peacebuilding categories	1. Security 2. Reconciliation and justice 3. Political framework 4. Socio-economic foundations	1. Security 2. Reconciliation 3. Support for peace negotiations 4. Education, awareness and training 5. Promoting good governance and human rights 6. Reconstruction and infrastructure development 7. Philanthropy

3   Activities of 10 Swiss MNEs in conflict situations

Before listing the conflict-affected countries in which the Swiss MNCs are active, it is important to stress that business people themselves would often not term the country of operations 'conflict-affected'. This is why in multi-stakeholder dialogues (between businesses, governments and civil society, for example the Kimberly Process or the Voluntary Initiative on Business & Human Rights), one of the issues is how do different actors define conflict? Thus, while Colombia is defined as a high-intensity conflict country by almost all conflict transformation scholars, businesses would not agree to this, saying that Colombia has established institutions and a stable business environment. The following categorization of countries is thus based on a conflict-transformation perspective, and does not correspond always to categorizations that are established by risk management companies like Control Riks or Maplecroft that businesses would use.

A multinational company is defined as an organization that controls and operates business establishments in at least two countries (Caves 1982). All of the 10 companies analyzed in this working paper have operations in 19 to 140 countries and employ between 10'000 and 280'000 people. The sample of companies is a mix of different sectors including commodities, mining, finances, and pharmaceuticals. Multinational companies are active within very different (post-) conflict environments. Table 1 gives an overview of the specific *high-risk* zones in which the ten companies are active based on information on their websites and from the interviews. This empirical data was gathered between June 2010 and March 2011 so some classifications have changed since then, Syria being a case in point. High-risk countries have been defined as those countries that appear in the Conflict Barometer of the University of Heidelberg[3] as having a low, medium or high-intensity conflict.

Within all categories of low, medium and high intensity conflict countries, the countries in which the ten companies have the most operations are: South Africa (8 companies), Colombia (7 companies) and the Philippines (6 companies). However, it is relevant to also look at the ranking *within* the three categories: In the high intensity conflict countries Colombia is on the top, followed by Mexico and Nigeria (see graph 1). In the medium intensity conflict countries most companies do business in South Africa and the Philippines. In the low intensity conflict countries Sri Lanka is the one where most companies do business. This is relevant because within all high-risk countries, it is South Africa as a medium-intensity and Colombia as a high-intensity conflict country where most Swiss MNCs are doing business.

Table 3: Swiss multinationals and high-risk countries (including low, medium and high-intensity conflict)

Company	High-risk country (Conflict Barometer Heidelberg University)
Company A	Algeria, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Indonesia, Iraq (indirect engagement), Kenya, Libya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Southern Philippines and Venezuela
Company B	Colombia, Israel, Lebanon, Peru, Russia, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey
Company C	Colombia, Egypt, Iran, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, and South Africa
Company D	Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Guinea, Indonesia, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Thailand
Company E	Angola, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Syria and Tunisia
Company F	Bangladesh, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Syria, Tunisia, Uzbekistan and Yemen
Company G	Algeria, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Colombia, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Thailand and Uzbekistan
Company H	South Africa
Company I	Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Lebanon, the Philippines, and South Africa
Company J	Colombia, Dominican Republic, Peru, Philippines and South Africa

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[3] See the Conflict Barometer Data for 2009: http://hiik.de/de/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2010.pdf

Given the presence of Swiss MNCs in conflict-affected countries, it is interesting that almost none of the ten companies address the issue of conflict (or peace) specifically. Activities in these conflict countries are discussed in the companies within a risk, security and CSR management framework. This approach is mainly oriented as a precaution to secure the safety and security of the company personnel and infrastructure, but also in terms of protecting the reputation of the company from risk. It does not place an emphasis on understanding how company activities may impact on peace and conflict issues or vice versa.

Figure 2: Number of Swiss MNCs active in high-intensity conflict countries
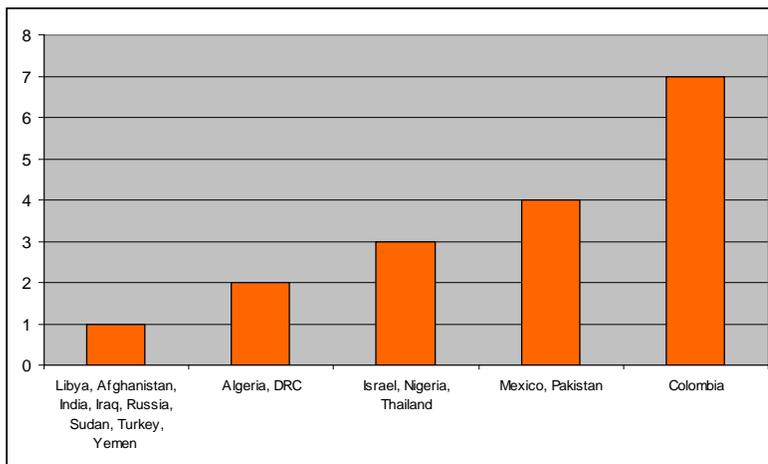
Apart from having their own (conflict) risk management, most of the corporations rely on international risk management data and operate with business specific 'exclusion' lists of countries and/or business partners. None of the companies have an official policy that outlines under what circumstances and through which activities they would intervene in escalating conflicts or provide support for peace efforts. Most of the companies consider support to peace processes as too politicized. Thus, companies interpret *conflicts* with regards to the risk they pose for their business activities (see also Zandvliet 2011) and *peace* is not a concept that is discussed in the companies at all.

At the same time, without framing the activities in a conflict transformation or peacebuilding perspective, companies implement activities that could be relevant for such issues. Or as Zandvliet (2011, 360) describes it: "A close look at how companies operate within countries that are in, or just coming out of, conflict reveals that many international companies are, in reality, already involved in conflict transformation practices. However, companies do not view their actions in terms of peace and conflict". The following section addresses how ongoing company activities could be framed as peacebuilding relevant activities.

3.1 CSR activities: contributions to peacebuilding?

Even though we took mainly CSR reports as the source of this analysis of activities in peacebuilding, it is important to stress that neither peacemaking nor peacebuilding as such are conceptualized within the CSR (or risk and security management framework) of the companies. Even though most of the activities can be categorized in one or the other field, companies themselves do not link their activities to the prevention of conflict. Thus, while many of the company activities may indirectly contribute to peacebuilding, according to the seven categories, this is an unintentional result as none of the companies have declared peacebuilding as a specific objective.

Given this, it is interesting to see in which of the categories most of the companies are active (shown in the 3rd column in table 2). Almost all companies are active in reconstruction and infrastructure development, promoting education, training and awareness and promoting good governance and human rights. However, the two areas of reconciliation and security are not fields that are strongly indirectly supported by companies. Interestingly, and in contrast to the earlier study on mediation processes, Swiss MNCs are not indirectly active in mediation and negotiation processes. In the following, the different categories of peacebuilding and the respective activities of the companies are discussed.

Table 4: Peacebuilding categories

Category	Description	Active firms in samples
Reconstruction and infrastructure development	Physical construction economic reconstruction, disaster relief, sustainable resource management	10
Promoting education, training, awareness	School curriculum development, capacity building, on the job training	9
Promoting good governance and human rights	Supporting internal and international guidelines and codes of conduct, analysis of role and impact in conflict contexts, risk assessments	9
Reconciliation	Promoting multi-stakeholder dialogues, bridge building activities	2
Security	Humanitarian mine action disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants, providing training for ex-guerilla or ex-soldiers	2
Supporting peace negotiations	Through in-kind contributions, as mediators/intermediaries, lobbying	0
(Philanthropy)	(Charity events, donations, fundraising, volunteer activities)	(8)

Reconstruction and infrastructure development

The different initiatives in this category demonstrate that companies tend to support activities related to the construction of schools and/or other community based infrastructure, in microfinance or in disaster relief. It can be argued that these projects contribute to economic development, poverty alleviation and access to infrastructure and services in post-conflict areas, which also support peacebuilding overall. However, company involvement in areas where the state is expected to be the main service provider is increasingly criticized for lacking accountability and conflict sensitive approaches (Ruggie 2009; Seck 2008).

Promoting education, awareness, and training

Most of the companies that were interviewed have organized and financed different kinds of training activities. They range from vocational training for farmers to human rights trainings for security providers. We argue that training might support peace processes with additional knowledge and empowerment of the people involved. However, the two main training activities that can be directly linked to peacebuilding are the ones from a company supporting the establishment of 'Peace Schools' together with other actors, and the training of security providers in human rights. Human rights training for security providers is especially relevant in post-conflict situations, and is interlinked with the next category.

Promoting good governance and human rights

Nine out of the ten companies are active in the UN Global Compact that helps to ensure commitment towards human rights standards and practices. In addition, four companies have developed partnerships with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Such engagement demonstrates an interest in tackling humanitarian issues, despite the fact that the majority of the projects are more related to environmental disaster

management than to conflict management. Three companies are active in the sphere of humanitarian aid, namely food and water delivery, food security and disaster relief.

Today, most of the bigger companies are aware of the topic of human rights and business due to the Ruggie Process (see box below). However, while many companies stress their commitment to ensuring respect for human rights, the size, variety in sector and geographical diversity of these multinational companies make it difficult to have oversight mechanisms for all the branches, subsidiaries and holdings. Further, this renders it challenging to ensure compliance mechanisms within the companies own regulations.[4] The ongoing Campaign for Corporate Justice but also other literature (see, for example, Engle 2004; Paust 2002) show the challenges that companies face when exposed to both company-community conflicts, as well as countries experiencing violent conflict. Further, it highlights how many of the ten companies have faced allegations from NGOs in committing human rights violations despite having internal human rights policies.

Ruggie Process

John Ruggie was Special Representative of the UN General Secretary on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises from 2005-2011. He was tasked with developing measures to strengthen the human rights performance of the business sector around the world. In 2011, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. These principles stress three pillars: the state's duty to protect human rights; the companies' responsibility to protect human rights; and access to remedy for the local communities. These principles have strongly influenced other processes like the OECD principles on multinational companies, the IFC standards and the European Commission.[5]

Reconciliation

There is a dearth of activities in the column concerned with reconciliation or 'Dealing with the past' issues. This is interesting, especially because in the literature the reintegration of ex-combatants is widely seen as an area where companies could get involved. The two reported activities mainly concern issues of dialogue between stakeholders and the company. At the same time, the discussion on questions of dealing with the past might arise as soon as multinational companies are forced to face their involvement in human rights abuses. In the Ruggie framework this question is discussed in the last of the three pillars.

Security

The security section refers to activities directly related to the physical security of citizens, for instance the state of police forces, the reform of the defence forces or the training of security forces in human rights and crowd management. The two reported activities are both linked to the Voluntary Principles Initiative (see box below).

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[4]   Author's conversation with a company's controller.

[5]   For the OECD guidelines see: http://www.oecd.org/department/0,3355,en_2649_34889_1_1_1_1_1,00.html,
      for the IFC standards see:
      http://www1.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/ifc+sustainability/publications/publications_handbook_pps.

Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR)

In December 2000 the United States and United Kingdom governments, along with a group of extractive companies and non-governmental organizations, agreed on a set of principles to guide companies on security and human rights. The VPSHR provide a short, concise outline of actions which companies should take to assess risks and implement public and private security measures in a manner that respects human rights. In 2007 formal participation criteria were adopted. The principles are organized as a multi-stakeholder process, including governments (Canada, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, UK, US), companies (among them Rio Tinto, Shell, Talisman) and NGOs (among them Amnesty International, The Fund for Peace, and International Alert).

Philanthropy

All companies are involved in philanthropic activities; however these are only displayed in brackets in the table 2, as it is difficult to link them to conflict prevention or peacebuilding. These activities tend to be rather instrumental and related to reputational risk or are part of a public relations strategy. For example, philanthropic CSR activities tend to be *ad hoc* projects or events that may or may not be directly linked to the core business of the company (like a Community Partnership Day). While such activities are relevant for supporting social issues, the activities themselves do not influence company behaviour on a day-to-day basis.

Support of peace negotiations

None of the Swiss companies in our sample indicated that they have supported peace negotiations. As will be discussed later, Swiss MNCs tend to feel that peace and conflict issues appear too politicized for their engagement. Thus, companies do not want to be seen to be connected to such processes. Businesses want to maintain good relationships with different political powers; the ones in power and the ones that might one day come into power.

This finding contrasts with the findings in the earlier study 'Money Makers as Peace Makers', (Iff et al. 2010) where different examples showed how companies have been involved in peace negotiations. We can make assumptions about the reasons behind this contrast: (a) (Swiss) international companies might be more reluctant to be players in peace negotiations, and leave this role to other (local) influential business people; or (b) businesses might be much more involved and active but are not allowed or willing to talk about it.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from the findings and the categorization within the table of CSR activities: Firstly, companies seem to be most 'comfortable' when contributing to technical or material activities linked to reconstruction, good governance and human rights. Thus, they are more inclined to be engaged in peace*building* and not peace*making* activities. Secondly, the activities that companies do in post-conflict contexts are today framed according to Human Rights discourse (Ruggie Process). Peace and conflict discussions are limited to focussing on how they impact on the safety and security of company personnel, infrastructure, assets and ability to continue operations.

4 Reasons for non-involvement

Aside from the involvement of businesses in the above outlined activities in post-conflict countries, several reasons for companies not to engage were mentioned during the interviews. In the following section the two main reasons for non-involvement are discussed: political risk and lack of expertise. All the information, unless otherwise stated, was gathered during the interviews that took place in 2010 and 2011 (see table 2).

4.1 Risks involved: "Peace processes are too unpredictable and too political"

As stated by one company representative, corporations tend to avoid issues that are random or are perceived to not be influenced by human agency. The Swiss MNCs which were part of this study feel that they have neither the capacity nor the opportunity to condemn or engage 'against' violent conflict. Zandvliet (2011, 361) shares our observation: "The misunderstanding among managers about their own role relative to a conflict often leads them to see conflict as a phenomenon over which they have no control, which in turn leads them to feel there is little justification for their involvement in its resolution."

Again, the difference between peace*making* and peace*building* activities become apparent: A company would rather wait and observe a peace process from a distance, as one interviewee said. If it leads to a positive outcome, then the company might take advantage of possibilities to support the process. It is, however, unlikely that a company would engage in the midst of a violent conflict as a mediator, negotiator or advisor. Rather they would engage in building peace through some of the activities that have been mentioned above and that the companies already engage in (promoting human rights, supporting community development, etc.).

The biggest risk appears to be company exposure and the risk that they are perceived as biased or aligned with one or the other conflict party. One company raised the issue of legal immunity that businesses do not have if they become engaged with armed groups. Moreover, concerns were raised about the possibility that a peace process in which a company was engaged in could fail. As a result, the respective company would always be perceived as having been part of the failed process and that would heavily impact on its reputation. Even an indirect participation through advisors on economic issues was considered to be too politically delicate.

4.2 Lack of information and expertise: "Rather engage in something we know"

Some respondents claimed that they simply lacked the information channels on topics related to peace processes. Most of the companies interviewed use databases that inform them of potential risks related to other companies, individuals or countries. Information from these databases may trigger the formulation of conditions to open a business relationship. In this respect, they are interested in getting conflict information, such as early warning data, so as to adapt products and policies, but not necessarily to engage in a peace process. Their information on conflicts is streamlined along the categories of risk management and not the possibilities of a peaceful engagement. As indicated above, the interviewees were quasi unanimous in saying that the main goal of a company is to be (perceived as) neutral and to secure the possibility to produce and do their 'core business'.

Furthermore, some of the companies are only present in the capitals (e.g. often away from the conflict line) and perceive themselves to be in a bad position to offer any kind of help to the conflict parties that are often on the periphery. Companies see humanitarian and infrastructure projects as the best way to engage in a (post-) conflict situation and the closer these projects are to the core business of the company, the better (e.g. building a dam).

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the companies interviewed do not feel that they have a role to play in supporting peace processes because: a) they fear negative repercussions such as reputational risk or loss of neutral position; and b) they do not see peace as part of their core business or area of expertise. This finding is congruent with what Zandvilet (2011, 360) found in his study: "Companies are unresponsive when approached within a conflict transformation agenda, because conflict transformation is not linked to the business case".

Still, when asked to consider *potential* future engagement, they came up with some ideas, which are summarized below and complemented by the findings of the mediation study (Iff et al. 2010).

5   Potential engagement

Although many companies considered peace processes to be too politicized, they discussed different *potential* entry points to support such processes. In the interviews with representatives from Swiss MNCs, the relevance of continuing business activities in a critical situation was emphasized as well as the possibility of impacting on a situation via good stakeholder relations.

Staying engaged

Business can contribute to peace by doing what they are best at: doing business. An agribusiness company, for instance, sees itself as potentially contributing to food security through products and therefore contributing to peacebuilding through economic development. It could help and prevent potential resource conflicts through the promotion of diversity of agriculture and the creation of employment opportunities.

Direct dialogue with local stakeholders

A company representative mentioned dialogue with local stakeholders through a needs and conflict impact assessment as one strategy. If the result of this needs assessment would be that the communities are suffering due to the consequences of an armed conflict, then the company could decide to support mediation efforts locally (or nationally). Here, it is important to make the distinction between community *engagement* and community *development*. A community engagement plan is more geared towards mitigating the negative impact of the company's own activities and fostering dialogue with the communities, whereas community development can also include dialogue between different communities, where the company is more of a facilitator. In other words, in the former case the company would rather be a party to solving the conflict, and in the latter it would rather act as an intermediary.

It was also proposed that the headquarters could conduct a 'conflict impact assessment' similar to the 'human rights impact assessment'. It was mentioned that the links between human rights violations and conflict could make it even necessary to include conflict mitigation strategies in order to address human rights violations.

Advising on economic issues

A company could contribute to specific clauses of a peace agreement referring to investment and economic development. The company could warn conflict parties and highlight consequences of actions (e.g. loss of employment). Or it could advise governments and mediators on economic issues (security, customs, police, army, trade regulations, etc.). The question would be who is giving advice; as for instance an NGO might question whether a company has the adequate knowledge to advise a government on such matters. The problem of exposure could be solved by the fact that other larger organizations, such as the ILO or FAO, could step in at a certain point in order to avoid publicity of a single business actor.

These examples demonstrate that while companies remain reluctant to get involved and feel that they are often inadequately informed of their possible role in peacebuilding, they also have relevant ideas about how they *could* become more engaged.

While representatives from Swiss MNCs were hesitant to see businesses play a more active role in peacebuilding, the mediators in the 2010 study (Iff et al. 2010, 23) named additional activities where companies could get involved in mediation or peace*making* activities, apart from advising on economic issues. Business people or companies could support a mediation process either directly (in one of the negotiation teams or in a track 2 or 3 process) or through indirect activities. Under these support activities fall financial support of a mediation process or informal contacts with the warring parties through business people. Furthermore, as different examples of business initiatives show, businesses can have an important leverage effect through supporting the peace process or a non-violent

resolution of a conflict through public statements (Iff et al. 2010). The potentials and challenges of this kind of involvement of businesses are described in detail in the above mentioned earlier study.

Concluding, companies say that their mere continuous presence in a post-conflict context is peace-promoting. Also most international business literature views 'staying engaged' as the main contribution of businesses, if their business activities are implemented in a 'responsible' way (Oetzel et al. 2009). We argue however that 'staying engaged' is not enough – it has to be done in a conflict-sensitive way. When stressing the assumptions for this working paper in the introduction we made the statement that business activities in (post-) conflict environments might be neutral, but their *impact* however is never neutral in such circumstances (Zandvliet 2011, 361). This is why staying engaged is important, but only if the engagement is *conflict sensitive*.

6 Preliminary conclusion and ways forward

The analysis of CSR activities and the interviews with Swiss MNCs have shown that even though companies address issues of peacebuilding, they are not framed within a peace and conflict discourse. Rather, companies understand their activities within a community and stakeholder engagement perspective (their footprint area), and some understand it from a human rights perspective (see Ruggie Process in box 1).

The study shows that companies are prepared to build up principles, capacities and work for greater justice, however they do not necessarily link these activities to peace writ large. They conduct workshops and support local projects bringing conflict parties together through stakeholder engagement; they work on raising standards in societies where the government is unwilling or unable to do so, but they do not want to go any further. Thus, companies do strongly perceive themselves within the new discourse on business and human rights and follow the arguments and rationales of the organizations concerned with this issue (Ruggie 2009; Logsdon and Wood 2005).

However, companies do not perceive it to be in their direct interest to engage in a peace process. Thus, corporations indirectly contribute on the micro-level (project level), but not on a macro-level (national politics)[6] and they would rather engage in peacebuilding after a peace agreement has been made but not in the peace*making*. This is quite interesting and needs further research, because companies and development organizations together on the other hand argue that they can help to foster development (see for example Switzerland in its development message to the parliament[7]). While development is even a 'business case' for some companies, the topic of peace and conflict seems 'too hot' to also be discussed in a constructive way. Keeping in mind that there are only a few organizations that tried to have a constructive approach in their engagement with business, companies might often just react with a common defense against such issues. Furthermore, in contrast to development, in zones of conflict there is also the question of occurrences of rights violations which could have severe legal consequences, and this is something that companies try to stop and prevent.

Concluding, peace is not on the radar of companies and conflict is conceptualized as it relates to the risk or security assessment of a company. Thus, despite all of the different studies which show the 'shoulds and coulds' of companies in peace processes (Nelson 2000; Banfield, Güdüz, and Killick 2006; Haufler 2001), it seems that these activities remain limited, and if they do take place, it is rather local companies and not MNEs that are engaged in this (see also Joras 2008 and Killick, Srikantha, and Gündüz 2005b).

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[6] This finding supports what has been said in the 2010 study on mediation where the bridging of these two levels was seen as one of the overarching challenges (Iff et al. 2010, 35).

[7] Botschaft über die internationale Zusammenarbeit 2013-2016 vom 15. Februar 2012 (Nr. 12.029).

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Appendix

Table: Categories of Activities

	Support of peace negotiations	Education, awareness, training	Promoting good governance and human rights	Reconstruction & Infrastructure Development	Reconciliation	Philanthropy	Security
1			• Human Rights Training Program; • Global training of security personnel and managers in human rights.	• Building schools (India) • Donating technology to universities (Argentina, Egypt and Turkey); • Supporting rural access to electricity in India and Tanzania.		• Raising funds to support orphans of HIV/AIDS victims; • Delivering food to a soup kitchen in Brazil.	• Drawing up new Group-wide security guidelines based on the VPSHR.
2		• Support of education project (Indonesia) • "Electronic Wallet" Program (Ghana, Rwanda, Colombia).	• Anti-money laundering policy.	• Micro Finance Projects: training of microfinance staff and institutions; • Humanitarian Aid & Disaster Relief Fund.		• Employees participate in voluntary work (e.g. support of habitat); • Foundation activities	
3		• "Zero is possible" training for health and safety.	• Fair trade principles in the supply of vanilla (Madagascar); • Use of Supplier Ethical Data Exchange (SEDEX).	• Building a school (Laos); • Red Cross blood donation • Tree-planting (Mexico).			
4		• "Adopt" a school, reconstruction of parts of the building (Serbia); • Vocational training (Indonesia).	• Employee training on equal opportunities and human rights; • Risk assessments (e.g. child labour, forced labour, freedom of association).	• Construction of dams and clean water projects (Sudan); • Micro Business Development.	• Promotion of dialogues with local communities / stakeholder	• Environmental "clean-up days" (Hungary).	
5		• Supporting peacebuilding training of former guerrilla fighters.	• "Shared value" principle; • Partnership with Danish Institute of Human Rights.	• Financial support to hospitals and organizations in remote communities (Pakistan); • Assistance to victims of natural disasters; • Milk chilling (Sri Lanka & Pakistan).	• Developed workshops to promote reconciliation between.	• Social investments, charitable giving, leading and supporting cultural or welfare initiatives.	

6		• E-learning courses in integrity & compliance	• Partnership with Danish Institute for Human Rights • Dialogue with Amnesty International	• "Sms for life" mobile phones for malaria, in Tanzania • Free Distribution of leprosy, tuberculosis & anti-malarial drugs • Disaster relief programs		• Community Partnership Day, volunteerism at schools, food banks.	
7		• Promotion of Swiss-South African Cooperate Initiative	• Country exclusion policy based on human rights situation	• Disaster relief & reconstruction in Peru, Colombia, Guatemala etc. • Sustainable water projects in Afghanistan, Nepal & Pakistan		• Volunteering & charity programs	
8		• Training in efficient resource management • Vocational training for farmers	• Supply chain screening • "Glocal" Strategy • Improving Indian labour standards	• Rural micro-finance projects • Promotion of sustainable farming practices • Food security programs		• Foundation activities • Support of rural self-help groups in India	
9		• Foundation activities (social issues and education)	• Promotes industry-specific guidelines for controversial issues	• Reconstruction of schools and hospitals/volunteering in Haiti		• Direct cash donations to non-profit partner organizations • Foundation activities	
10		• Human rights trainings with security personnel in Colombia, Philippines, etc.		• School building projects			• Signed the Voluntary Principles on Security & Human rights

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