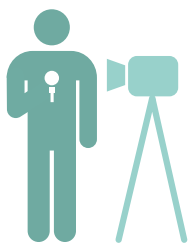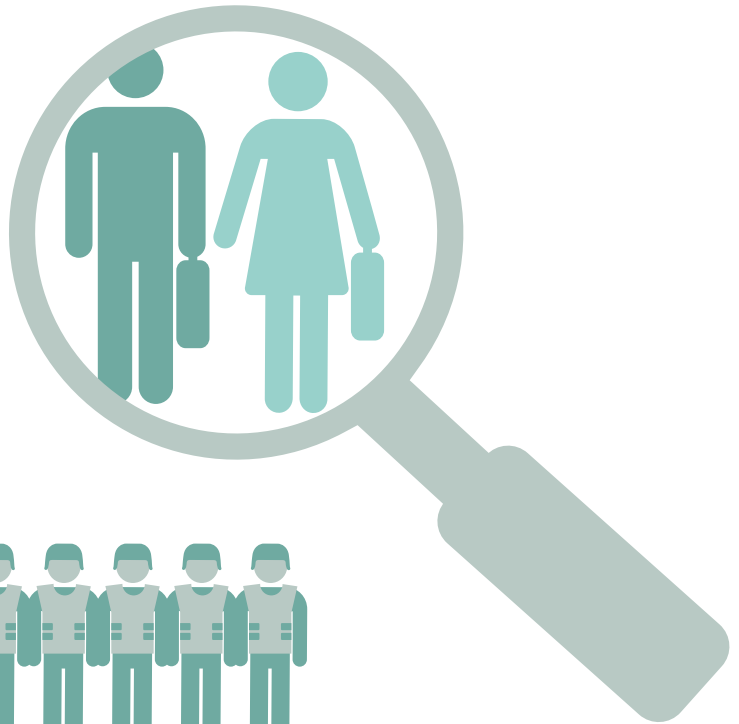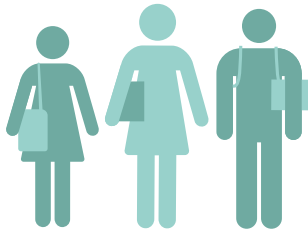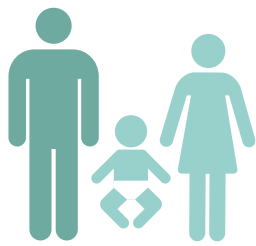# 6 Considering Stakeholder Groups

*"...explore their potential roles in conflict prevention, the risks involved, and what type of preparation or entry point might be helpful to get them on board."*

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6.2　State Actors
6.3　Intergovernmental and International Organisations
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6.5　The Security Sector
6.6　The Private Sector
6.7　Academia
6.8　Donors
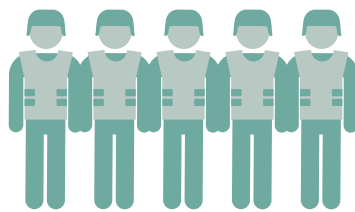
## Introduction

This section gives a basic overview of some of the stakeholder groups that can be considered for participation in an MSP, exploring their potential roles in conflict prevention, the risks involved, and what type of preparation or entry points might be helpful to get them on board. This overview is not an exhaustive one; groups not included here, for example, are armed or other hard-to-reach groups or regulators such as electoral commissions.

See 'Stakeholder Mapping' in the *Conflict Analysis Field Guide.*

When preparing to engage different stakeholder groups in an MSP, keep in mind the **interest of the actor** being targeted, and make explicit how their participation in the process matches and advances their own priorities. Engagement is also more effective when informed by the **institutional realities and constraints** of the targeted actor. Exploring and learning about these together can be built into the process as a way of trust building.

The characteristics of different stakeholder groups are highly influenced by the context. Variables that come into play include the **political context**, in particular the behaviour and openness of the state toward civil society, freedom of expression and the role of the media and private businesses. Secondly, the **level of violence** and the position of the stakeholders in a particular phase of the conflict cycle (pre-, post-conflict, outright crisis), as well as the history of violence, determine what type of engagement is appropriate. The **level of influence and perceptions of external political actors** and donors will indicate to what extent and how to involve international actors and outsiders.[40]

One caveat to bear in mind in any context is the **diversity** *within* all assumed stakeholder groups, since power dynamics and lack of coordination can be as problematic within these groups as among them.

## 6.1 Civil Society

In broad terms, civil society groups are defined by their purpose, their level of organisation, their geographical reach and the context in which they work. Some of the **variations** that distinguish or characterise civil society groups include:

- Interest-driven or advocacy groups—for example trade unions, environmental groups
- Identity-based—for example faith groups, minority groups, women or youth groups
- Technical or service providers—such as health or education NGOs
- Organised (from volunteer-driven to institutionalised with paid staff) or informal (activists such as community leaders, social media users)
- Explicitly neutral (for example humanitarian agencies) or explicitly political (interest and advocacy groups)
- local ('grassroots' or community-based), national, regional, or international scope
- Networks and umbrella groups (also with varying geographical spread).

To be taken seriously as partners in multi-stakeholder initiatives, CSOs must be able to demonstrate their role and added value. Organisations can have unique qualities that make them valuable in an MSP. While a local organisation might have cultural expertise, a larger INGO might bring knowledge from MSPs they have participated in elsewhere.

Useful references

**Aditi N. Hate, Lisa Moore, Dirk Druet:** *"Understanding and Improving Engagement with Civil Society in UN Peacekeeping",* United Nations 2017

**De Weijer, F., and U. Kilnes.** *"Strengthening Civil Society? Reflections on International Engagement in Fragile States."* ECDPM, October 2012.

**Paffenholz, Thania.** *"Civil Society and Peacebuilding – Summary of Results for a Comparative Research Project."* CCDP, 2009.

**Popplewell, Rowan.** *"Civil Society Under Fire: Three Big Questions for Peacebuilders Working with Local Civil Society."* INTRAC Briefing Paper. INTRAC, 2015.

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40 **Paffenholz (2014):** Broadening Participation in Peace Processes: Dilemmas and options for mediators. Mediation Practice Series 4. Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, June 2014

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**BOX 30: DIFFERENT WAYS CSOs CAN BRING VALUE TO AN MSP**

These are just some of the ways an organisation might uniquely contribute and add value to an MSP.

- **Constituencies:** the people or groups the organisation represents, and who they can mobilise or reach out to.
- **Leadership:** at the community level, or in relation to interest groups.
- **Expertise:** technical knowledge, or knowledge of a particular subject.
- **Skills:** for example analytical, or dialogue and mediation skills.
- **Cultural knowledge:** for example knowing specific communities or identity groups, or gender awareness.
- **Network and resources:** an organisation's links to a broader network, or access to relevant political arenas and institutions.
- **Experience:** International NGOs can bring stories and experience from MSPs elsewhere. They also often have links to important donors.

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Civil society is a reflection of broader dynamics in society.[41] Navigating the **diversity** of civil society groups can be a challenge, and where local CSOs are **polarised** along conflict lines the act of including or excluding groups in an initiative can directly affect the conflict and power dynamics. Do No Harm considerations are therefore key when considering civil society participation. The involvement of CSOs can also be affected by **competition**—for visibility, funding and influence—among different groups.

*Kenya case study
Section 8.5*

> *...you will find that different actors have vested interest in the process. Visibility for some stakeholders for instance becomes critical. Many actors need to prove to their immediate constituency that they are engaged and doing something about peaceful elections. So when selecting individuals to represent all stakeholders, there can be a bit of jostling for positions.*
>
> *Florence Mpaayei*

A common criticism is the issue of **representation**: who do CSOs represent and how? Often, this is not addressed and it remains unclear in which capacity they participate (see Section 3.1). A frequent problem is civil society only being represented by an **NGO elite**, professionalised organisations that are familiar with international project language and processes, but which may not be representative of marginalised groups. International NGOs (**INGOs**) involved also run the risk of dominating the process through their access to resources and operational support.

On the other hand, smaller CSOs may lack **capacity to participate** consistently, due to practical and resource issues such as time constraints or staff turnover, or—often in the case of community based groups—insufficient negotiation skills and underlying power issues in relation to other participants. These challenges and how to mitigate them are discussed in Section 3.2.

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**BOX 31: NGOs COME IN ALL STRIPES:**

Here are some examples of how the range of NGOs can be described in the media, reflecting the proliferation of NGOs and the often blurred lines of how they are defined and perceived.

| | |
|---|---|
| **INGO** | International NGO |
| **BINGO** | Big international NGO (also known as Business-friendly NGO) |
| **TANGO** | Technical assistance NGO |
| **RINGO** | Religious NGO |
| **CONGO** | Corporate-organized NGO |
| **DONGO** | Donor-organized NGO |
| **GONGO** | Government-organized NGO (not really an NGO) |
| **PANGO** | Party NGO (set up by a political party, not really an NGO) |
| **Briefcase NGO** | NGO set up only to draw donor funds |
| **CBO** | Community-based organization |

**Source** Dinyar Godrej, 'NGOs – Do They Help?', New Internationalist, 2014.

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41    F. De Weijer and U. Kilnes, *Strengthening Civil Society? Reflections on International Engagement in Fragile States* (ECDPM, October 2012).

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While the preparation and entry points for engaging diverse civil society actors can emerge naturally through existing contacts and **networks** of the MSP initiators, it is important to also carry out stakeholder analysis (Section 5.2) to address the risks described above. **Specialised** resources and umbrella groups can support the engagement of specific groups such as faith groups, women or youth groups, community-based groups, and so on. Networks can also be helpful as platforms for broader civil society to align insider (MSP participants) and outsider (pressure groups) strategies towards conflict prevention purposes.

## 6.2 State Actors

Just as civil society is a diverse category, it is nearby impossible to generalise about states. They range from effectively functioning bodies that operate in a legally defined and enforceable framework within a well-established democratic tradition, to non-functioning entities where democracy and the rule of law are virtually absent.[42] The **nature of the state** also influences what type of civil society exists in the context, as well as civil society's relationship to the state—which ranges from cooperation or co-optation to outright hostility.

Traditionally, there has been an assumption that states 'own' conflicts, in that they are ultimately responsible for initiating or ending conflicts. In principle, they provide the **legal and justice framework** needed to institutionalise conflict prevention, **regulate economic activity** and the **security sector** to ensure the human security of citizens.[43] CSOs initiating an MSP should therefore consider carefully the consequences of leaving them out of the discussion. At the same time, the rise of non-state actors in conflict has legitimised an increased role for civil society in addressing conflict alongside governments.

In dealing with governments, it is useful to understand the internal dynamics and different roles that various institutions, departments or ministries play in a given context. While their roles and positions may appear to contradict each other, that contradiction is where political entry points can sometimes be found. When considering state actors, there is also an important distinction to make between engaging **politicians** or **civil servants**. Both categories have their advantages and disadvantages.

> *When working to support the Nagorny-Karabakh peace process in the South Caucasus, we realised that the position of different institutions within the government was not really unified. Some departments or ministries were more receptive towards the idea of engagement with civil society than the others. Understanding the reasons for these differences allowed us to better see the complexities of the government's positions in the official negotiations process. This in turn helped us to formulate more nuanced political frameworks for track 2 dialogues between the conflicting sides.*
>
> *Reviewer*

Politicians, such as ministers or parliamentarians can provide **leadership and authority**, and have the potential of direct **legal or policy influence**. In some countries, it is possible to work with a spectrum of political actors through cross-party working groups, or with a politicised target group such as youth wings or women leaders. The **reputational risk** is more pronounced when working with politicians, as is the possibility that they might use the process for short-term **political gain**. Risk assessments and careful management of group consensus become important to counter these risks.

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42   **P. van Tongeren and C. van Empel**, *Joint Action for Prevention: Civil Society and Government Cooperation on Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding* (European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 2007), p. 7.
43   **Schirch**, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*, p. 108.

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**BOX 32: BRINGING DECISION-MAKERS TO THE TABLE**

Direct participation of all parties or stakeholder groups having the authority to make and to implement decisions increases the likelihood of their implementation. On the other hand, in some processes (particularly for citizen input) the direct involvement of the decision-makers might overly influence the process, impede open and honest discussions, and taint the recommendations. In some cases, the regulatory or decision-making agencies are at the table to provide input and reality testing, but do not participate in the consensus decision-making process, especially if the product of negotiations is a recommendation to their agency.

Source **Convening: Organizing Multiparty Stakeholder Negotiations**, p. 6.

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Civil servants can provide a bridge between politicians and the **operational** arm of policies. In this sense, they are the do-ers in governmental departments or local authorities, once a policy has been adopted. They may also be influential as **policy informers** as technical advisors to politicians. When engaging civil servants, it is important to be clear on their individual and institutional mandate. Directly linked to the **mandate** are the possible **bureaucratic** requirements that civil servants may have to comply with to participate in a process, and/or to follow up on commitments. Finally, given the need for comprehensive analysis and strategies in conflict prevention, it may be useful to consider **interagency** working groups across different government departments.

As a starting point for engaging state actors, it is relevant to know which institutional mandates, policy **commitments** and **policy frameworks** could be referred to and built on. It can be helpful to analyse where the government and international actors are already investing resources. Examples of this include the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, the Sustainable Development Goals, or the implementation of key UN Security Council resolutions such as UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Other entry points are international agencies or donors that are working with the government towards such frameworks.

## 6.3 Intergovernmental and International Organisations

**Useful references**

*"Pathways for Peace Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict"* United Nations and World Bank, 2017 and forthcoming

*"Regional Organizations and Peacebuilding – The Role of Civil Society."* Policy Brief. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2014.

While MSPs should strive to be locally led, there are several potential reasons for involving international intergovernmental actors in the process. They can provide an **impartial platform** and hold sufficient **authority** to convene national state- and non-state actors. As bodies that are mandated by their member states, they have a direct link and existing **partnership with governments**, while providing a crucial **link to regional and global** perspectives, policy frameworks and action. In the long-term, intergovernmental agencies can play a role in creating legal norms, deploy preventive diplomacy and mediation support.[44]

In some cases, UN and regional organisations can contribute by **providing a space and legitimacy to CSOs** versus their national governments. This is especially true where political space for CSOs is restricted. Multilateral forums provide the opportunity for CSOs to address issues that they would not be able to table in their own national contexts.[45]

**Regional organisations** are increasingly playing a proactive role in conflict early warning and early response, where the guiding motivation is **regional stability and prosperity**.[46] They are therefore most likely to be involved when initiators can demonstrate that a conflict has (existing or potential) spillover effects at regional level. UN agencies, like-minded state actors from the national context or from other member states can provide openings for their participation. They can also help by demonstrating best practice examples from other regions, showcasing what regional mechanisms are contributing to conflict prevention in practice.

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44   **Schirch**, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning*, p. 109.
45   *Regional Organizations and Peacebuilding – The Role of Civil Society*, Policy Brief (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2014), pp. 16–17.
46   *Regional Organizations and Peacebuilding – The Role of Civil Society.*

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## Example 15:

## Regional organisations and conflict prevention mandates

1. The **African Union**'s Peace and Security Architecture includes structures and decision-making processes related to the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction and development on the continent—including a Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Peace Fund.
2. The Economic Community of West African States, **ECOWAS**, has an institutionalised conflict early warning and early response system—ECOWARN—in formal collaboration with civil society and governments across the region.
3. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations—**ASEAN**—is setting up the ASEAN Institute on Peace and Reconciliation and charter Dispute Settlement Mechanism.
4. The Organization of American States—**OAS**—has a Department of Multi-Dimensional Security focused on the security of peoples in the Americas.
5. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – **OSCE**—has a Conflict Prevention Centre with a network of analysts, and in the case of the High Commissioner for National Minorities, this network is composed by CSOs.

If an organisation does not have an explicit mandate on peace and security, CSOs can be creative in **finding entry points** by framing these issues in one of the areas where the organisation does have a mandate—such as social affairs, development, democracy assistance or other. For example, CSOs in South Asia have been engaging with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation—**SAARC**—under the mandate of promoting people to people interaction in the region.

Regional organisations tend to be heavy on **bureaucracy and protocol**, and like state actors, it is important to be fully aware of the mandate(s) of the department and individual involved. Regional organisations also tend to operate under a **non-interference** policy; therefore, their participation is only likely if accepted by the national government. In other situations, security issues that are sensitive on a national level can be even more sensitive within regional platforms, where the regional organisation is torn between the interests of its member states.[47]

Among international organisations, the **UN system** is a key reference point for conflict prevention efforts, both in terms of the mandate and its presence at local level through regional and national branches. In particular, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Political Affairs (DPA) can be highlighted for their **focus on resilience and Peace Infrastructures**, and network of locally based **Peace and Development Advisors**. These agencies have hands-on experience in supporting MSPs in different contexts. However, depending on the context, other UN bodies or agencies such as the World Bank, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) or the OECD may be more involved locally or have contributions to make in terms of analysis and connections.

Because of their institutional setup, UN and other intergovernmental agencies have an obligation to work with their member states and tend to be beset by internal rules and policies, which can make for **slow decision-making** and involvement. They can also have **limited resources** that are earmarked for specific initiatives. It is therefore better to build relationships with these agencies, where the entry point for collaboration is the capacity support and convening power they can lend to the process.

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47   *Regional Organizations and Peacebuilding – The Role of Civil Society.*

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## 6.4 The Media

**Useful references**

**Bratic, Vladimir, and Lisa Schirch.** *"Why and When to Use the Media for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding."* GPPAC Issue Paper. ECCP, 2007.

**Shank, Michael.** *"Media Training Manual."* GPPAC, 2009.

**Thomas, David.** *"Engaging with the Media Guide."* Advocacy Toolkit. The Sustainable Development Programme and CIVICUS, 2014.

**Mainstream media**, including radio, television or print media, have the potential to play positive roles in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. However, since the media reflect the overall mood in a country, they have also been known to exacerbate or fuel tensions and polarisations. Involving media owners and professionals in MSPs can therefore bring both opportunities and risks. In relation to MSPs for conflict prevention, we focus here on local media representatives rather than international press.

The media can serve as **information provider** and **messenger** of the process to a broader public. They can also act as **watchdog**, by holding the process participants to their commitments once these are in the public domain. Similarly, they can **influence policymakers or public opinion** as they are at the forefront of making sense of events and filtering the information that is disseminated publicly. The editorial decisions of media representatives can ensure that reporting is conflict sensitive, and that diverse opinions and stories related to a conflict are covered, contributing to deconstructing negative images and serving as **bridge builder** or **diplomat** between groups where direct contact is not possible.[48]

Conflict sensitive reporting, or **peace journalism**, can be useful concepts through which to engage the media. However, it is first necessary to understand what drives media interests and their core professional values. The principles of **independent media reporting** and what is perceived as being in the public's interest may be a matter of differing opinions. What is considered newsworthy is also often guided by the **'if it bleeds it leads'** approach, where conflict dynamics are sensationalised.

When attempting to engage or work with the media, it is crucial to understand **the people behind the outlets**. The perspectives of those who run the media shape the stories that are covered. Journalists have opinions and beliefs based on their experiences. Media owners have economic interests; they want to sell their stories and programmes to a public who will buy their newspapers or watch their programmes. Increasing corporate control over media in some countries also plays a role in controlling the types of stories that are covered and the way stories are framed.

**Social media** has changed how news is shaped and how journalists work. Not every influential media outlet or personality has a large institution behind it—for instance, many journalists may work for several publications while also running a blog or website in their own name. Social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, also provide **entry points for engaging** media representatives as opinion shapers, while online searches can help identify their areas of specialism.[49]

Ideally, trust can be built with media professionals by establishing a **relationship** over a longer period. For instance, in some contexts, civil society has provided training or facilitated dialogue between motivated media professionals as a peacebuilding measure. It is also possible to approach media owners and professionals such as journalists in their personal capacity, as people who have personally witnessed the costs of violence or whose own country is at risk.

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48   **Vladimir Bratic and Lisa Schirch**, *Why and When to Use the Media for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding*, GPPAC Issue Paper (The Hague: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, December 2007).

49   **David Thomas**, *Engaging with the Media Guide* (The Sustainable Development Programme and CIVICUS, May 2014), p. 7.

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**Example 16:**

## Engaging the media in Ghana during 2012 elections

WANEP engaged with the media before and during elections through various election-related activities that it organised. Through these engagements, WANEP appealed to the media to report objectively on issues that had the potential of generating violence. WANEP was regularly invited by the media to share perspectives on contentious issues that arose as a result of disputes emanating from the electoral process. In 2008, as part of the call on the media to contribute to a violence-free election, WANEP was asked by the Public Agenda (a local print media) to organise a training workshop with focus on "Media Practice in Ghana and Efforts towards Peaceful and Non-violent Elections in 2008?" The workshop brought together all the major media organisations in Ghana. This paved the way for continued media contact during the 2012 general elections.

**Source** West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

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It is especially important to be clear on **confidentiality** agreements from the outset when engaging media representatives. If shared at the wrong time, the exposure of sensitive issues in the public domain can undermine the process or halt it altogether.

## 6.5 Security Sector

The UN defines the security sector as "the structures, institutions and personnel responsible for the management, provision and oversight of security in a country".[50] As such, it comprises a broad range of actors, including national armies and military, national or community police, and their political overseers in the form of the Ministries of Defence and Justice. National security actors tend to have a primary focus on **national security**, concerned with protecting a country's borders and territory and maintaining internal stability, law and order. In some cases, this mandate has some overlap with human security. In some contexts, international peacekeeping missions are also a part of the picture, ensuring protection of civilians or pursuing stability mandates.

Ultimately, security sector actors are an essential component in safeguarding people's **physical security** and in implementing the **Rule of Law**. Security forces are often the first port of call in conflict early warning systems, and in times of crisis have a role in ensuring the **protection of civilians**. Due to their direct experience of the realities of violent conflict, security sector actors are sometimes known to have a personal motivation for peace.

However, in some contexts, engagement with the security sector is a sensitive matter, especially where army and police have been a **source of insecurity** due to human rights breaches, corruption, politicisation or abuse of power. The concept of civilian oversight does not always translate into practice, and associating with the security sector can pose **reputational** and direct physical **risks** in the context. Nevertheless, whether the security sector is a conflict driver or simply inefficient, engagement is one avenue of communicating and unpacking the expectations towards people-centred security.

Some commonalities among different **military** actors include the highly **hierarchical** command structures and **doctrines** that define their mandate. Any engagement must in one way or another relate to this mandate and take into account the command structure. Because of their national security focus, security forces may have a different assessment of what the causes of conflict are and the strategies to address them. They can have a limited understanding of **how to relate to civil society**, as most guidelines on civil-military engagement tend to mainly relate to humanitarian organisations and agencies. Differences in terminology and operational approach between civilians and military actors can cause a **lack of understanding** and stereotyping in this engagement.

50   **The United Nations Secretary-General**, *'Report of the Secretary-General for SSR* (A/62/659)', 2008.

| BOX 33: KEY DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN CIVILIANS AND MILITARY | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **CIVILIANS** | **MILITARY** |
| **Organisational structure and culture** | Less structured, more informal | More structured, more formal |
| **Assessment and planning** | Participatory research with local communities; shared analysis | Often classified intelligence and internal analysis |
| **Stated goals and objectives** | Human Security | National security and (in some cases) human security |
| **Theories of change** | Based mostly on social science | Based mostly on military science, and application of force as a means for change |
| **Operational** | International Humanitarian Law principle of distinction: requiring impartiality and independence to enable acceptance by local communities and armed groups; safety of beneficiaries | Comprehensive and integrated approach including 'deconfliction'[51] cooperation, and integration. |

Adapted from source **Schirch**, 2015.

Unlike the military, **police** are usually civilians and have **non-combatant** status under international law, except in some conflict or post-conflict contexts where there may be international Stability Police Units deployed from states that have a gendarme or paramilitary model of policing. The police mandate is generally to keep the peace and enforce **criminal law**, protecting life and property. Policing models around the world vary from decentralised to single national police forces. They are also characterised by their legal powers, by how the use of force is regulated and by how accountable they are to local or national authorities, governance institutions and communities.[52]

Useful entry points for engaging with the security sector range from policy or programme frameworks to specific functions and institutions specialised in managing civil-military or community relations. For instance, from a programme perspective **Security Sector Reform** commitments can provide openings for a dialogue with security sector actors at different levels. For military and police forces, Civil-Military Interaction and Cooperation **(CIMIC) officers or** police **community liaisons** have specific functions to engage with broader society, albeit as part of a specific mandate. Another avenue is **defence academies or training centres**, where civil society organisations can play a role in sharing peacebuilding principles or in developing conflict early warning and early response systems.

## 6.6 The Private Sector

Businesses often carry a **negative connotation** in relation to conflict, in particular those connected to the extractive industries (oil, mining and natural gas companies) due to associations with illicit trade that fund armed groups, or their effect on different groups' access to a country's resources. Business in general tends to **adapt to conflict situations**, which can lead to the development of a certain type of economy that incorporates the effects of war and instability. Local businesses often mirror conflict dynamics, where structural links between business and social class, or other root causes, may contribute to conflict drivers.

On the other hand, a thriving economy can contribute to stability and peace. Businesses are needed to promote and enable **peace dividends**—the benefits of a prosperous stable society such as livelihoods and financial stability. An important distinction here is that between international

**Useful references**

**Ballentine, Karen,** and Virginia Haufler. *"Enabling Economies of Peace: Public Policy for Conflict-Sensitive Business."* UN Global Compact, 2009.

**Bardouille, Dost, Chloe Berwind-Dart, and Anita Ernsterfer.** *"Business for Peace: Understanding and Assessing Corporate Contributions to Peace."* CDA, 2014.

*"The Costs of War Project,"* 2011. http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/about.

51 Military term for keeping units or missions apart to reduce the likelihood of so-called friendly fire
52 **Alan Ryan and Marc Rurcell**, *Same Space – Different Mandates: International Edition* (Australian. Civil-Military Centre and the Australian Council for International Development, May 2015), pp. 25–28.

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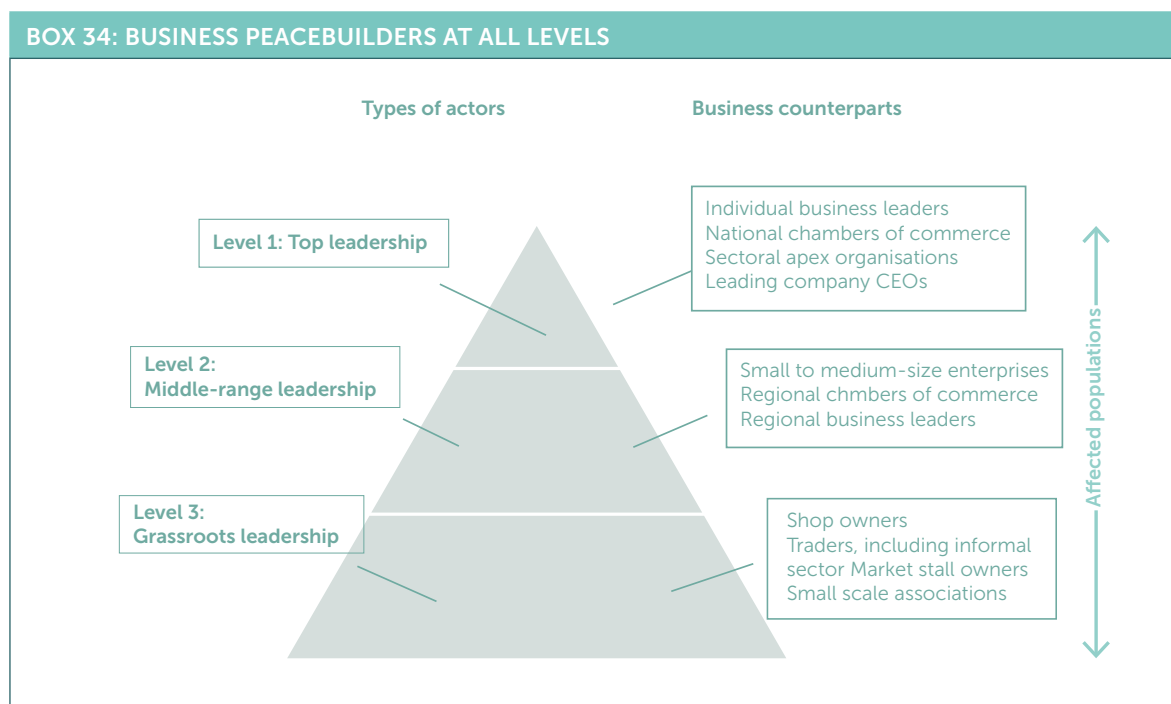6.6  **The Private Sector**
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businesses (Transnational Corporations, or TNCs) that answer to foreign management, and local businesses that are locally owned, run and staffed. For locally owned MSPs, it is the **local businesses** and their representatives at different levels that are most relevant. In scenarios where TNCs are directly linked to conflict dynamics, higher-level lobby and advocacy directed at these corporations may be part of actions taken.[53]

The domestic private sector covers all levels of society. Umbrella groups such as chambers of commerce or business associations are useful entry points towards a more collective involvement. Businesses tend to have strong **networks** and linkages to different segments of society, and in some cases, their economic agenda is perceived as relatively **impartial** in the midst of other political conflict dynamics. Big businesses may use their **influence** to lobby for peace at the political level, whereas small or micro businesses have a reach at grassroots levels of society. Business leaders in small towns or villages are often **de facto community leaders**, whereas women are often effective mediators and initiators at micro-finance levels.[54]

MSPs can tap into the relevant capacities of private sector partners, ranging from the **practical skills** (logistical or administrative) to the high-level **policy engagement** (lobby and political connections), or use their reach to **mobilise society,** for example through publicity campaigns. Business initiatives can contribute **resources** to peacebuilding action plans or facilitate economic activities **across conflict divides**.

See the Kenya case study in Section 8.5 for examples of private sector involvement in conflict prevention.



BOX 34: BUSINESS PEACEBUILDERS AT ALL LEVELS

Types of actors

Business counterparts

Level 1: Top leadership

Individual business leaders
National chambers of commerce
Sectoral apex organisations
Leading company CEOs

Level 2:
Middle-range leadership

Small to medium-size enterprises
Regional chmbers of commerce
Regional business leaders

Level 3:
Grassroots leadership

Shop owners
Traders, including informal
sector Market stall owners
Small scale associations

Affected populations

**Adapted from source**  Local Business, Local Peace: The Peacebuilding Potential of the Domestic Private Sector – Executive Summary (International Alert, 2006).

The main incentive for such involvement is the premise that conflict is bad for business, since the **costs of conflict** often affect trading and businesses the hardest. Thus, to engage private sector actors, it is helpful to present the evidence of cost of conflict and how this impacts on business interests. For local business men and women, there is also the moral and personal imperative to contribute to the greater good of one's own society.

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53  **Nick Killick, V. S. Srikantha and Canan Gündüz**, *The Role of Local Business in Peacebuilding* (Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2005), p. 7.
54  **Killick, Srikantha and Gündüz**, p. 7; **Jessica Banfield, Canan Gündüz and Nick Killick**, *Local Business, Local Peace: The Peacebuilding Potential of the Domestic Private Sector* (International Alert, 2006), p. 7.

6. Considering Stakeholder Groups

6.1    Civil Society
6.2    State Actors
6.3    Intergovernmental and International Organisations
6.4    The Media

6.5    The Security Sector
6.6    **The Private Sector**
6.7    **Academia**
6.8    Donors

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**BOX 35: MAKING THE CASE—COST OF CONFLICT**

For most local private sectors, business in a conflict zone is more a matter of survival than growth. The chaos and uncertainty brought on by conflict is characterised by:
- Destruction of infrastructure.
- Loss of skilled workforce.
- Reduction or collapse of foreign investment.
- Heightened security and insurance costs.
- Loss of markets.
- Diminished support from the government.
- Closed borders or broken business ties that undermine trade.

Source **Killick, Srikantha and Gündüz**, p. 4.

The legitimacy of private sector involvement might be challenged if negative perceptions and **mistrust** exist in society, for example due to corruption or economic self-interest. One way of addressing such issues in the long term is to support businesses in conducting self-assessments and, where relevant, adopt **conflict-sensitive practices** and **corporate social responsibility** policies. Some political contexts are less conducive to involving the private sector as partners, for example where the independence of local businesses is restricted.

## 6.7 Academia

**Useful references**

*"University for Peace,"* www.upeace.org/.

Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (CPPF) of the Social Science Research Council

Rethinking Research Partnerships: Discussion Guide and Toolkit (Christian Aid, Open University, 2017) https://rethinkingresearch-partnerships.com

While often associated with the civil society category, it is worth considering academia as a specific stakeholder group, with its own characteristics that can be useful for MSPs and peacebuilding processes. **Universities, think tanks** and **research centres** with programmes dedicated to peace, security and development issues are multiplying in all parts of the world. Not only are they researching, teaching and documenting peacebuilding processes, academics are often directly involved as practitioners in such processes.

To build ownership and ensure sustainability of the process, **local** academic institutions should be the first port of call where possible. Internationally recognised experts and institutions may be sourced from regional or global **academic networks**, and can work alongside local counterparts to build capacity in the process, where needed. Exceptions to this rule may be required where an outsider is more likely to be trusted by all local parties.

Given their evidence-based, scientific approach, academics may in some cases be perceived as impartial and less threatening as **conveners** to a broad range of otherwise politicised actors. Their input and support to context and conflict **analysis** as well as **methodologies** can add to the quality and thus credibility of the process. In addition, they can support participants in **making the case** for peace, whether it is by supplying data about the cost of conflict, or relating to broader trends and developments.

Some academics are equipped with facilitation and mediation **skills** and have hands-on experience of dialogue processes. Once the process is underway, academic actors can also support the **reflection and evaluation** on progress, barriers and outcomes, and are well placed to **document and share** lessons learned. The opportunity to study, understand and publish case study materials on an MSP in the making can be a key motivation for academics to take part in the first place. It is therefore important to be clear on **expectations and confidentiality** agreements from the outset.

6. Considering Stakeholder Groups

6.1 Civil Society
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6.6 The Private Sector
**6.7 Academia**
**6.8 Donors**

> ## Example 17:
>
> ## Academic conveners as a safe space for dialogue
>
> In the TACE process for Cuba-USA dialogue, the process was framed as a series of academic workshops, which was politically more acceptable and non-threatening for both sides to engage in. It also made it easier for the participants on both sides to physically meet, since official policy and visa regulations would restrict diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

When including academics as key participants in the process, it is wise to balance academic versus practical approaches, and be mindful not to alienate other participants with the use of **jargon** or overly academic language. This can affect the power dynamics in often hidden ways and can affect the level of participation and confidence of others (see Section 3.2).

## 6.8 Donors

**Useful references**

*"The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: The Role of Funders in Conflict."* Peace and Security Funders Group, 2014.

*"Peace and Security Funding Index"*

A category that cuts across several stakeholder groups, donors can represent governments, civil society, charitable foundations or private businesses. Nevertheless, it is useful to consider the role of these actors in their capacity as donors, and how their involvement may affect the process.

Donors can be more likely to commit to **funding** a process long-term if they are involved and part of the process. Therefore, in addition to justifying how the MSP is meeting both a locally identified need and the donor's priorities, consider what strategic role the donor agency could play. For instance, donor agencies can contribute their own **conflict analysis data** as well as their **overview** of other peacebuilding efforts and actors. Depending on what type of agency they are, they may also have useful **connections and policy insights** that can be vital to ensure the sustainability of the MSP.

Government donors of northern, high-income countries[55] usually have their own aid agencies that are part of or linked to ministries or departments of foreign affairs, and as such are informed by politically endorsed strategic plans. They will also have **bilateral agreements** with governments and regional organisations in conflict-affected regions, in many cases linked to **global policy frameworks** mentioned in Section 6.2 on State Actors. A case for such actors to lend their support must usually relate to these broader frameworks.

Non-governmental donors, such as foundations or INGOs will also have their own strategic priorities, but can be more flexible since they are not subject to the same level of political scrutiny. In turn, they may have their own set **advocacy agendas** in their home countries or at global levels, and rely on the commitment of a supporter base—generally high-income countries in the Global North—for donations. While this can contribute to a greater reach of a local conflict prevention agenda (for example where international trade patterns or foreign interference affect conflict dynamics), their involvement and contribution in MSPs could also be influenced by this agenda.

Any involvement of donors in the agenda setting or discussions of an MSP must be considered carefully to avoid it affecting **power** dynamics and **ownership** as discussed in Section 3. As the sustainability of the MSP is directly related to both ownership and the availability of resources, one of the most constructive contributions that a key donor can make is to **mobilise other donors and resources**. So-called 'basket funds' or joint funding frameworks, where various donors contribute and coordinate their support in discussion with recipients, can establish a more responsive and equal partnership than conventional project approaches.

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55    The countries we are referring to are generally, though not always, in the Global North, and are usually high-income countries. In some publications they might be referred to as the West; while they represent a political reality, most of these terms are problematic and open for criticism.