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THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS A PARTNER AND AN AGENT FOR VIOLENCE REDUCTION

Understanding the current—and the potential—relationship between private sector actors and the efforts to prevent and reduce violence worldwide

PATHFINDERS

| ||||| ||||| ||||| | FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

HOSTED BY THE NYU CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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About the Program

The **Grand Challenge on Halving Global Violence (HGV)** is creating a movement to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals targets for peace. It brings together communities of practice working on different forms of violence in order to highlight interlinkages and amplify impact on the ground. While most international attention concentrates on armed conflicts, evidence shows that it is interpersonal violence, especially interpersonal violence occurring in urban zones, that has the most impact on people's daily lives and has a direct effect on other sustainable development indicators. For this reason, Halving Global Violence largely focuses on interpersonal violence and seeks to better understand how to address it, in part through studies like this.

The movement is spearheaded by the high-level **Halving Global Violence Task Force**, a coalition of world leaders and experts committed to leveraging their knowledge, expertise, and networks to identify and disseminate evidence-based solutions to significantly reduce global violence.

HGV is an initiative of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, a cross-regional impact hub of 46 member states, as well as partners across international organizations, civil society, and the private sector committed to advancing the Sustainable Development Goal targets for peace, justice, inclusion, and equality (SDG16+). Pathfinders is hosted at New York University's Center on International Cooperation.

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Executive Summary

The pivotal role of the private sector in society extends beyond economic contributions. It also influences social dynamics and communities' well-being and cohesion. This report delves into the complex and multifaceted relationship between business entities and local initiatives aimed at preventing and reducing the most serious forms of violence in communities. It presents an analysis of ongoing initiatives, with a focus on exploring the **existing interactions** and **untapped potential** of private sector actors in fostering safer environments, which in turn contributes to ongoing global mobilization efforts¹ to reduce levels of violence by at least 50 percent by the year 2030.

Historically, the responsibility of maintaining communal peace and security has been primarily shouldered by governmental and public institutions. However, the evolving societal landscape has ushered in a paradigm shift, recognizing the private sector's important influence and responsibility in this domain. Most businesses, from small enterprises to multinational corporations, inherently seek stable environments for their operations, which then aligns their interests with the broader societal goals of violence prevention and community safety.

This research examines the varied spectrum of private sector entities, delineating their roles and impacts within different local contexts, with a focus on urban areas. It underscores the dual nature of businesses as both beneficiaries of peaceful environments and potential contributors to enhancing the risks of violence in such environments. Through a series of case studies, the report is primarily concerned with showcasing successful collaborations between the private sector and community initiatives aimed at violence reduction, with a focus on those occurring in urban contexts. These examples serve to illustrate how **businesses can act as catalysts for positive change**, employing their resources, influence, and networks to foster a culture of peace and stability.

Furthermore, the piece proposes a **framework for viewing the private sector as a partner with a vested interest in violence reduction efforts and the halving global violence agenda**, as well as recommendations for engagement and interventions. In doing so, this report aims to streamline collaboration between businesses, governmental bodies, and civil society, ensuring a unified and comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of multiple forms of violence and enhancing community resilience.

Ultimately, this report reevaluates the roles of business in society and underlines the need to further invest in examining the private sector impact on violence reduction. It advocates for an integrated approach where the private sector is recognized as a crucial ally in the quest for peace and security, aligning economic objectives with societal needs. By harnessing the private sector's potential as a partner in violence reduction, **the research contributes to the broader discourse on achieving sustainable peace and advancing the United Nations (UN)'s global development agenda—the 2030 Agenda—for a more peaceful, inclusive, and just world.**

1 Methodology

This report was commissioned to advance the work of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies' high-level Task Force on Halving Global Violence² (HGV) and expand the coalition of actors involved in global mobilization to bring about significant reductions in multiple forms of violence across the world. It complements the Task Force's flagship report, containing a compilation of evidence-based practices and data-driven policies with a positive record of drastically reducing violence globally.

The insights and case studies in the paper were drawn from desk research and conversations with experts who have contributed to the work of the HGV Task Force. Additional case studies were canvassed from members of Peace in Our Cities (PiOC),³ a network of mayors and partners working to prevent and reduce urban violence.

2 Introduction

Conceptualizing the private sector's role in violence reduction efforts

Today, it is no longer just the state that is concerned and actively working to control violence within its territory. Other stakeholders, including those from the private sector and civil society, have an emerging role and influence in shaping peaceful communities across the world.

In the early 2000s, the establishment of the UN Global Compact⁴ marked a pivotal moment, urging businesses to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies. This signaled a notable shift towards involving the private sector in development agendas, exemplified by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and its emphasis on promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions as articulated in the Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16). This trend represented a move from a passive approach where businesses were primarily asked to "do no harm," to a more active stance where they are expected to contribute positively to peace and stability.

The more activist approach to private sector engagement in promoting peace has gained even more traction in recent years. This shift in perspective recognizes that peace in a community is not merely the domain of any single entity, but a shared responsibility that requires collaboration across all sectors of society. The private sector, which in many cases has significant resources, expertise, and influence, is now considered a crucial partner in efforts to reduce violence and promote stability. This is particularly relevant in areas where state capacity is low, trust in public institutions has eroded, and public resources are limited.

3 Scope and Focus

Understanding the private sector and its role in interpersonal violence reduction

The diversity within the private sector means that it has a variety of tools and approaches at its disposal for contributing to peace and broader societal change, as well as unique limitations when acting alone. While the private sector's engagement in conflict contexts has garnered attention, its role in addressing interpersonal violence remains relatively underexplored.

The focus of this report is looking at the role of the private sector in reducing and preventing interpersonal violence—particularly in an urban context, acknowledging the global urbanization trend, and the role of cities as sites of both violence and innovation. Defined broadly, and for the purpose of this paper, the “private sector” includes for-profit entities owned and operated by private individuals or entities, which is distinct from government enterprises.

The private sector is heterogeneous; companies are very different from each other based on a myriad of factors including, but not limited to, size, capital, sector, types of products and services they sell, operating models, their headquarters' location, the demographics they serve, and market size. Businesses across this spectrum may have varying incentives for engagement in violence reduction efforts, including a desire for a safer operating environment, improved productivity, expanded consumer bases, and long-term operational sustainability. Additionally, through their operations, products, services, and corporate social responsibility initiatives, businesses can contribute to community development and social cohesion, fundamental elements for enduring peace.

However, this expanded role for the private sector does not come without challenges and caveats. **There is a risk of overestimating the ability and willingness of private sector actors to act as agents of peace and violence reduction.** While many businesses may support peace initiatives, many argue that their primary obligation is to their shareholders and stakeholders and includes making profits. This may not always align with the public interest or the needs of affected communities. This misalignment with public interests and community needs underscores the potential limitations of relying solely on private sector actors for peacebuilding and violence reduction efforts.⁵

4 Motivations for Private Sector Engagement

Harnessing existing frameworks and commitments

There are various reasons why companies are motivated to invest in violence reduction. Achim Weinman's "armed violence" framework,⁶ proposed in 2012, offers a comprehensive understanding of the private sector's role, identifying factors that motivate companies to engage in violence reduction efforts. He suggested four factors that can influence companies to take action to reduce violence:

- Potential risk to operations and staff.
- Potential risk to the bottom line or the survival of an investment project.
- Perception of the company boards or CEOs concerning the state or society in which they are based.
- Need for a stable operations environment to allow for long-term sustainability (source).

Weinman went on to further conclude that two types of corporate actors are most likely to engage in those efforts: local small-to-medium-sized enterprises. In most instances, they cannot isolate themselves from violence on their own. In addition, businesses that are highly dependent on specific locational factors—such as the extractive industries, agribusiness, and infrastructure companies—also have important incentives to be deeply engaged in ensuring the community's well-being and safety.

In recent decades, there has been a **notable shift in perspective regarding the role of businesses in peace and development efforts**. This shift has catalyzed the emergence of international frameworks and regulatory tools aimed at engaging the private sector in violence reduction efforts. They include initiatives such as the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers,⁷ the Guiding Principles for Businesses and Human Rights⁸, or the Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.⁹ There are also national-level instruments that call for the private sector to engage in violence reduction efforts. For example, the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide¹⁰ in South Africa has a specific call to the private sector to participate in tackling this issue. However, the implementation and effectiveness of these frameworks remain the subject of contention.

Furthermore, toolkits have been developed to guide companies in violence reduction and prevention efforts. These range from holistic violence reduction and prevention tools with the private sector as one of the many actors who can take action, such as the Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices¹¹ to targeted resources like such as How Can Business Tackle Gender-Based Violence in the World of Work: A Toolkit for Action.¹² Such resources not only change the narrative around violence but also provide actionable principles for companies to follow.

This shift in perspective, followed by positive cases of the private sector engaging in violence reduction, has not been free of challenges and instances of claimed intentions and actions being in conflict by some companies. This will be examined in Chapter 7. Such challenges underscore the importance of ongoing monitoring, assessment, and refinement of instruments, frameworks, and regulations to ensure that companies genuinely contribute to peace and violence reduction globally. Therefore, while this report primarily focuses on practical case studies showcasing pragmatic private sector actions for peace and violence reduction, it also emphasizes the need to frame pitches for private sector involvement around the motivations derived from existing frameworks and commitments. By aligning initiatives with established principles and regulations, **advocates can appeal to the self-interest and compliance-oriented nature of businesses**, fostering more meaningful and impactful engagement in violence reduction efforts.

5 Private Sector Initiatives in Violence Reduction

Methods of engagement and case studies

The existing interventions outlined in this chapter encompass the myriad of ways that the private sector can take action to prevent and reduce multiple forms of violence. The comprehensive literature review illustrates that interventions are often targeted at different populations. For example, businesses can provide an intervention for their employees specifically, or they can expand the focus to the community where these employees live. They can also choose to support programs targeting the communities around them. Furthermore, businesses can take different approaches to addressing violence: some of them focus on responding to violence after the fact or providing support to violence survivors, instead of violence reduction/prevention specifically. Actions and interventions that have been taken up by businesses include, but are not limited to:

- Changing societal norms and behaviors of their employees and the communities around them.
- Partnering with public or private efforts and programs.
- Providing funding to governmental (or non-governmental) violence prevention programs.
- Providing jobs, specifically to at-risk populations (e.g., former gang members).
- Providing information and raising awareness among their employees and surrounding communities.
- Working with communities to prioritize their safety and development, specifically for those highly dependent on specific locational factors.
- Providing paid and job-protected leave policies.¹³
- Adhering to/complying with international norms and frameworks.

More comprehensive impact evaluations are needed to fully understand the effectiveness of private-sector interventions. However, presented below is a sample of some successful private-sector initiatives with a goal to reduce violence.

5.1 Direct interventions

The initiatives highlighted below illustrate the diverse ways in which the private sector can directly intervene in violence reduction through, for example, community programs or educational initiatives, and contribute significantly to societal well-being. Each approach, whether focused on prevention, rehabilitation, or reintegration, highlights the private sector's unique ability to leverage resources, expertise, and community engagement in the fight against violence.

Kering Foundation¹⁴ is an exemplary model of how private entities can provide support to address the cycle of violence, particularly domestic and gender-based violence. Established in 2008, the Foundation operates in six countries, collaborating with local organizations to support survivors and implement prevention programs. A notable aspect of their approach is the focus on changing gender norms and attitudes, especially among young men and boys, an initiative that directly addresses the root causes of violence. The Foundation also engages Kering employees in these initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to internal and external community improvement. Although their impact studies are not publicly available, the ongoing efforts suggest a continuous commitment to evaluation and improvement.

Grupo Calvo¹⁵ in El Salvador offers a remarkable example of how employment can serve as a powerful tool for social reintegration. The company initiated a reinsertion program targeting former gang members. By providing these individuals with job opportunities and training, Grupo Calvo not only helped them reintegrate into society but also demonstrated the potential for rehabilitated individuals to excel and contribute positively to the workplace. The success of this program is reflected in the increased productivity and upward mobility of former gang members within the company.

In Caracas, Venezuela, one of the deadliest countries in the world, **Fundación Santa Teresa**¹⁶ stands out for its comprehensive approach to rehabilitation and reintegration. Their Project Alcatraz¹⁷ combines vocational training, psychological support, education, and rugby to rehabilitate and reintegrate criminal gangs. The program's holistic approach addresses multiple aspects of the individuals' lives, facilitating a more sustainable transition to society. Additionally, the project extends its positive influence through a preventative program that teaches values to children through rugby, demonstrating the role private entities can play in violence reduction.

These examples highlight the importance of innovative approaches, the power of employment and rehabilitation, and the need for prevention programs targeting younger generations as promising avenues for private sector involvement in global violence reduction efforts through local action. However, the long-term impact and replicability of these interventions require ongoing evaluation and adaptation to ensure they meet the complex needs of the communities they aim to serve.

5.2 Indirect contributions

The private sector can also leverage its resources, reach, and influence to indirectly shape violence reduction outcomes in the community. One of the most significant ways this can take place is through funding. **Financial contributions from the private sector can support research into violence prevention, fund innovative violence reduction programs, and provide the necessary resources for local organizations to execute their missions effectively.** This funding can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches to violence reduction, filling a critical gap in our understanding of what works. Beyond financial contributions, the private sector can play a crucial role in advocacy and raising awareness. Companies can use their platforms to bring attention to issues of

violence, advocate for policy changes, and promote a culture of non-violence and respect. Their advocacy can lead, for instance, to enhanced legal frameworks, better resource allocation, and more robust community support structures.

In September 2023, the **Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago** (Chicago, Illinois, US), responding to increased levels of violence and crime directly affecting businesses in the city, pledged¹⁸ that businesses would help halve homicides by supporting the newly elected Mayor's approach to reducing violence in the city by focusing on the root causes. While the Civic Committee has not been much involved in public safety, the business sector is concerned by the high levels of crime and violence in the city, which is directly impacting the private sector.¹⁹ As of May 2024, the Civic Committee has raised USD 66 million²⁰ to contribute to the new city initiative that aims to reduce shootings by 50 percent within the next five years.

In 2018, following a series of mass shooting incidents, financial institutions in the United States imposed limits or up their requirements to process the sale of firearms. For instance, **Amalgamated Bank** has a strict policy²¹ of not lending or banking for firearm manufacturers and sellers, while **Bank of America** does not lend to makers of "military-style" rifles.²²

Companies can also leverage their assets, technologies, and networks to support violence prevention initiatives. This could include offering in-kind donations, such as products, services, or expertise, to organizations working in this field. Additionally, companies can use their marketing and communication channels to spread awareness and educate the public about violence prevention. This is particularly effective when companies integrate these messages into their brand identity, reaching a wide audience and modeling positive behavior.

The **Avon Foundation for Women**,²³ for example, is among the leading international organizations that exemplifies how the private sector can make indirect contributions to violence reduction. By raising awareness of violence against women among its network of representatives, employees, customers, and partners, the Avon Foundation extends its reach far beyond its immediate sphere. Additionally, its efforts to fund frontline services and prevention programs at the local level, coupled with its role in convening global leaders to raise awareness illustrate the multifaceted approach businesses can take. The Foundation's work underscores the potential for companies to enact social change, not just within their organizations but across the global community.

Contributions such as the ones made by the Avon Foundation and others, while indirect, are often foundational to the broader efforts needed to reduce violence in all its forms.

5.3 Collaboration with governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

The examples of private sector collaboration with governments and NGOs illustrate a variety of ways in which impact can be driven through collaborative partnerships. These range from implementing workplace-based programs and funding housing initiatives to supporting youth engagement and cultural activities. By combining resources, expertise,

and local knowledge, **these partnerships can create safer, more resilient communities and leverage the unique strengths and resources of each sector.**

The **Free to Grow Program**²⁴ in South Africa was developed by the partnership between the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the South African Parenting Programme Implementers Network (SAPPIN). This initiative, aimed at preventing violence against women and children, demonstrates how workplace-based programs can effectively reduce barriers to participation. By hosting the evidence-based parenting program with Tikketai's at its facilities (an agricultural processing business), the partnership has not only improved family relationships and conflict resolution among employees, but also provided the company with benefits through reduced staff complaints and absenteeism. This example underscores the potential of integrating violence prevention programs into the workplace for broader community impact.

In the City of Escobedo, Mexico the collaboration between municipal authorities and local private developers showcases how partnerships can enhance housing initiatives for domestic violence survivors. With initial funding from international partners and membership in the Peace in Our Cities Network, Escobedo leveraged additional support from private developers to provide renovated homes and comprehensive services to women escaping domestic violence. This partnership provided immediate safety for survivors and also contributed to the long-term stability and resilience of the community.

In the City of Palmira, Colombia, the municipal government engaged with over 300 local businesses to support the "Forging Opportunities" program, aimed at diverting youth from gang involvement. This collaboration highlights the mutual benefits of violence reduction: businesses recognize that a safer city means fewer disruptions to operations, while the community benefits from reduced youth violence and increased opportunities for at-risk individuals. The program's success, demonstrated through a comprehensive evaluation, underscores the importance of private sector involvement in community-based initiatives.

In the City of Bristol, the United Kingdom, the partnership with **Empire Fighting Chance**, the non-profit boxing club, focuses on providing at-risk youth with alternatives to violence. The innovative funding strategy, "3,000 x 300 x 3," seeks to engage the local business community in supporting the expansion of these programs. This approach reflects the collective responsibility and potential impact of local businesses in addressing community challenges, particularly following a series of homicides that heightened the urgency for action.

By combining resources, expertise, and local knowledge, these partnerships have the transformative power to mitigate and address the risk factors of violence in communities.

6 Analysis of Strategies Employed and Outcomes Achieved

Engaging businesses in the violence prevention and reduction work is no small feat. While there is an emerging body of work discussing the role of business in intervening in conflicts mentioned above, there has not been much analysis done to assess the private sector's role in dealing with the violence that most directly affects their employees and consumers: **interpersonal violence**. Above, we have showcased some examples of promising initiatives. Although there are scattered examples of evaluations of specific interventions, there has yet to be an attempt to consolidate a framework for action.

One point that has not been measured, and that could prove a fruitful convergence between business and violence reduction, is the effect that providing a better overall quality of life for employees can have in reducing interpersonal violence. Considering that some of the key messages of the HGV Task Force Flagship Report point to the direct correlations between inequality and violence, and the positive effects of mental health counseling, reduced alcohol-consumption, and access to basic services, it could be a worthwhile endeavor to analyze the effects that better work conditions can have in reducing interpersonal violence—even when there is no direct headline in these efforts to address violence.

Another point that has not been mentioned here, but that is of high interest to this research, is the role of media companies in publicizing a glorified version of militarized masculinities that is directly related to the ownership and utilization of small weapons. The Gender Equality Network on Small Arms Control²⁵ (GENSAC) members have discussed the linkages between conceptions of masculinities and small arms use.²⁶ In partnership with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), we will take this work a step further and discuss militainment, that being the widespread representation of militarized, violent, and armed masculinities in the media as an aspirational identity to young men.

Connected to the role of traditional media, we can also refer to the responsibility of social media companies in preventing the spread of misinformation and hate speech through their products. As it is widely documented,²⁷ these types of discourses can (and have) led to outbursts of violence outside of the virtual space. Although most social media companies have some form of moderation or content-use policy aimed at containing these messages, we have not found any direct measurement of the effectiveness of such policies. We are interested in exploring ways in which we can measure the impact and efficacy of these initiatives in not only reducing the spread of hate speech and misinformation, but preventing any potential outburst of violence related to it.

7 Challenges and Criticisms of Private Sector Involvement in Violence Reduction

The involvement of the private sector in violence reduction efforts, while beneficial in various aspects outlined above, also faces challenges and criticisms. These concerns primarily revolve around potential conflicts of interest, the sustainability of initiatives, and the complexities involved in measuring impact and accountability.

When businesses engage in violence reduction efforts, their motivations might not always be transparent. One must always ask whether the initiatives are driven by the desire for positive public relations or to influence policy in ways that benefit the company. There have been instances²⁸ in which a company has publicly supported²⁹ responsible capitalism and social purpose in a business, while simultaneously engaging in labor practices or environmental behaviors that undermine the community's cohesion and stability. Moreover, certain private actors, such as private security firms and technology companies producing surveillance tools, have profited³⁰ from violence and instability in communities worldwide in some instances. This dichotomy can lead to skepticism and a lack of trust in the private sector. Moreover, when companies become heavily involved in local governance or community programs, there is a risk that their business interests could unduly influence decisions meant to serve the public good.

The sustainability of private sector-led violence reduction initiatives should also be questioned. Many of these programs rely on continuous funding and support from businesses. However, an economic downturn, shifts in management, or changes in corporate strategy, might leave the program downsized or cut, and as a result, leave communities with reduced or no support. Furthermore, the transient nature of some corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs can lead to temporary or superficial engagements that fail to address the underlying risk factors of violence or provide long-lasting solutions.

Measuring the impact and ensuring the accountability of private sector initiatives in violence reduction pose significant challenges. **Who is responsible for evaluating these programs, and how transparent and rigorous are these evaluations?** International frameworks mentioned above provide guidelines for corporate behavior. For example, strong evidence³¹ shows the positive impact of private military and security companies (PMSCs) in decreasing violence against civilians during and after the end of hostilities when they comply with international norms such as the Montreux Document,³² an intergovernmental agreement promoting the respect of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. Such compliance is motivated³³ by the cost of norm violations—the higher the cost, the higher the compliance levels, and vice versa.

However, compliance, as well as enforcement, by companies can vary widely in different contexts. Without robust mechanisms for measuring outcomes and holding companies accountable, it can be difficult to ascertain the true impact of their efforts. This lack of clarity can lead to overestimations of success or, conversely, failures going unaddressed.

Box 1: Private military and security companies: complying with regulations and frameworks is key to reducing violence

The use of PMSCs is growing fast, especially following the attacks on September 11, 2001, in the US. These companies operate in all contexts, whether conflict-affected, fragile, and/or peaceful contexts by offering a myriad of services. Regulatory efforts of these companies have struggled to keep pace. However, after some tragic violent episodes by private security actors (such as the Nisour Square massacre in Iraq), two international regulatory frameworks were developed: the Montreux Document in 2008 targeted at states, and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers in 2010 targeting companies. These, however, are not enough to regulate the activities of the private security sector—national legal frameworks are also necessary. Furthermore, a UN Open-Ended Group is working to develop an international legal framework to regulate PMSCs.

8 Mechanisms of Private Sector Involvement Going Forward

This initial review of activities and interventions by the private sector to reduce violence suggests some good practices. In light of the heterogeneity within companies, each will engage differently to reduce violence. Therefore, suggested approaches and recommendations need to be closely examined and contextualized prior to implementation by the companies. With this in mind, private sector actors wishing to become more involved in violence reduction, as well as other stakeholders seeking to proactively engage or partner with the private sector or advocate for their greater involvement in violence reduction, might seek to do so through the following preliminary list of methods based on this initial research, which include:

- **Promoting a culture of personal safety and peace in the workplace.** This includes creating conditions in which all employees are aware of the resources available when experiencing violence, and harm, programs to raise awareness about workplace violence and domestic violence and promoting peace and tolerance through workplace activities.
- **Upholding and complying with international norms and frameworks,** such as the "Guiding Principles for Businesses and Human Rights" or the "Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work," which targets businesses to respect and protect human rights and reduce violence.
- **Partnering with other stakeholders when developing and/or implementing violence reduction interventions, such as governmental and non-governmental actors.** It could be that a business joins other stakeholders working on such an initiative, or that the business takes the leadership and invites other stakeholders to be part of their initiative.
- **Establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for all interventions.** These would help assess the impact of the interventions, understand how to effectively implement interventions that reduce violence, and build knowledge for future evidence-based interventions.
- **Sharing good practices and lessons learned from violence reduction interventions' evaluations with other businesses and stakeholders.** These could take place at all levels: locally, nationally, regionally, cross-regionally, or globally. Businesses could also provide spaces and funding for these knowledge exchanges.
- **Funding as part of cross-sector violence reduction strategies.** Pooling funding among businesses in the community, including through voluntary tax, to provide resources to local or subnational violence reduction efforts which have a track record of preventing and reducing violence.
- Hiring and providing professional opportunities to individuals with the lived experience of the justice system and at-risk youth, as well as those who are survivors

of violence. Such practices can both address the root causes of violence, such as a lack of economic opportunity and exclusion. It can further interrupt vicious cycles where those involved with violence are stigmatized and then face a further lack of opportunities.

Conclusion

Charting the Path Forward for Private Sector Engagement in Violence Reduction

The above literature review, case studies, and proposed framework for private sector engagement in violence reduction efforts worldwide point to two important conclusions.

Firstly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the enterprises that often appear to be best situated to reduce violence at the community level are those most dependent³⁴ on the communities where they operate. This includes small-to-medium-sized enterprises or those with specific locational factors like extractive industries, agribusiness, and infrastructure companies. These entities often find themselves most directly impacted by violence and instability, making their engagement in violence reduction initiatives not just beneficial, but necessary for their survival.

Secondly, beyond these community-focused efforts, businesses—particularly large multinationals—are well-positioned to champion violence prevention within their own operations. Though this may seem limited in scope, the sheer size of these companies means even internal efforts can have an outsized impact. Concretely, this can take the form of adopting international codes of conduct regarding labor practices, supply chain management, and environmental standards, as well as promoting a culture of personal safety and peace in the workplace. Specific initiatives can include creating awareness programs about workplace and domestic violence, ensuring employees are aware of available resources and support for those experiencing violence and harm, and fostering an environment of peace and tolerance.

It is also obvious that while progress has been made, there's still much ground to cover in the realm of private sector involvement in reducing violence. There remains the need for a deeper methodological examination of the effectiveness and impact of private sector interventions in violence reduction, particularly in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts across the world. There is also a wide gap in understanding the intersectionality between different forms of violence (e.g., interpersonal violence, gender-based violence, community violence) and how the private sector can address such interconnected issues. In addition, with the emergence of new technologies and digital platforms, we must dedicate space to understanding how they can both exacerbate and mitigate violence and how businesses can leverage these tools responsibly.

It is also important that we put forth additional tailored guidelines and codes of conduct to steer private sector engagement in violence reduction efforts. Such frameworks would ensure that businesses operate ethically and align with fundamental human rights principles. Concretely, we can draw inspiration from the business, human rights, and conflict

frameworks referenced above, as well as the recently created Call to the Private Sector to Advance Democracy in 2023,³⁵ which would delineate specific commitments and strategies for businesses to contribute to violence reduction efforts. These emphasize corporate responsibility, community engagement, and innovation. The Halving Global Violence Task Force could potentially serve as a partner in such efforts to facilitate ongoing dialogue, monitor progress, and support businesses in fulfilling their commitments. By inviting representatives of the private sector to collaborate with our Task Force, including potential supporters, technology firms, insurance and reinsurance companies, and others that have already expressed vested interest in some forms of violence reduction, **we can harness their collective expertise, resources, and influence to forge a path towards safer, more peaceful communities.**

The dual role of the private sector both as a partner and an agent for violence reduction highlights the sector's indispensable contribution to global violence reduction transcending its traditional commercial objectives. By fostering collaboration, ensuring accountability, leveraging resources, and focusing on sustainable practices, the private sector—both companies firmly grounded in the community and large multinationals—can be a valuable partner in creating safer, more peaceful communities.

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