

APEXAH GLOBAL

www.apexah.com

Policy | Projects | Research | Partnerships

August 2017

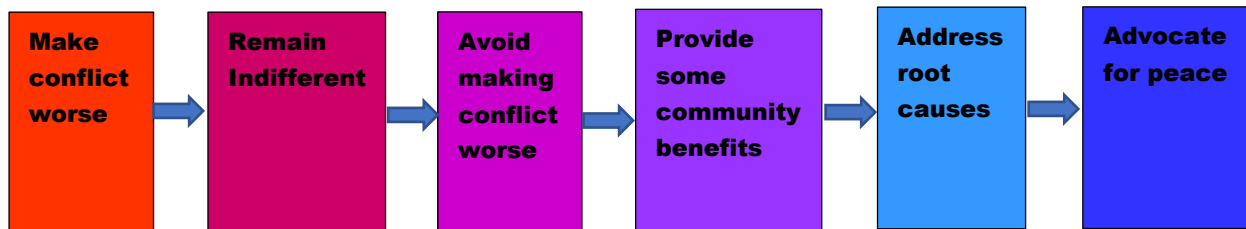
FRAMEWORK

The Business-Peace Engagement Spectrum – A Framework for Change

Danura Miriyagalla, PhD¹

The Spectrum of Engagement

Businesses engage with conflict contexts in six different ways that can be placed along a spectrum. Understanding the nature of their engagement lies at the heart of strategizing ways to promote peace while ensuring that businesses remain viable.



Shade 1: Make conflict worse

At the negative end, some businesses consciously make conflicts worse by promoting a violence led economy by diverting funds to autocratic governments or rebel groups to ease the transfer of natural resources. The de-stability created by increasing conflict within an overall economy further reduces employment prospects for youth and facilitates monopolistic and opaque business practices that further fuel the conflict. Examples of business working hand in glove with conflict are seen in regions rich in mineral or natural resources.

Shade 2: Remain indifferent

Many small businesses in conflict affected regions are indifferent to the conflict. Neither do they perceive that their business activities support conflict nor do they actively seek to mitigate the problems. This indifference is also seen in inter-ethnic conflicts among leaders of large businesses that belong to the majority ethnic group.

Shade 3: Avoid making conflict worse

This group of businesses are conscious of the roles that they can play to mitigate conflict. While they do not actively seek to make positive change, they hold the principles of ‘do no harm’ as being

¹ Danura Miriyagalla is the Strategic Lead of Apexah Global. He is a specialist on the links among investment, employment, health and peace. He can be contacted on danura@apexah.com.

important and seek to ensure that their reputations remain strong. Large businesses, especially those that are being closely watched by third party stakeholders, including NGOs and governments, that promote global principles on conflict prevention and social responsibility are key examples of these businesses.

Shade 4: Provide community benefits

Some businesses seek to provide community benefits while engaging in their businesses. Large businesses may even allocate a separate corporate social responsibility budget to support the provision of such goods and services. Delivery of humanitarian support such as food or medicines during times of crisis may further express their connection with the community that lives around their businesses. Other companies may develop social responsibility projects that help to meet community needs or help gain the trust of the community.

Shade 5: Address root causes

Addressing root causes lies at the heart of peace-building through business engagement. Companies that seek to address critical issues such as wage discrimination and youth unemployment may place these goals as part of their business plans. They may also seek to ensure that community skills are developed support the local economy through the diversification of community supply linkages.

Shade 6: Advocate for peace

Finally, at the most positive end of the spectrum, some businesses may directly engage in peace advocacy. This is often done through participation in Business Member Organisations that provide the platform for collective advocacy to prevent individual targeting of businesses by conflict actors.

Promoting Change

Efforts to support businesses to improve their peace promotion practices need to take into deep consideration the interactions that take place among six core factors - the context, interests of stakeholders, incentives for profit making and peacebuilding, networks with the other businesses and community, values of business owners and ability of entrepreneurs to manage risks.

