

## **Corporate Managers Resolve Local Conflict, Build Peace**

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High-level managers of oil, mining and other multinational corporations increasingly find themselves operating in areas of armed conflict, indigenous cultural disputes, epidemic disease and other kinds of social upheaval. Adjusting to the difficult realities of business in the global marketplace means that corporate managers require conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies when promoting peace as an essential element of successful business operations. To understand what some companies are doing in the area of conflict resolution, once a domain reserved for diplomats, one should consider the record of Bristol-Myers Squibb, BP Amoco and PeaceWorks.

Bristol-Myers Squibb, one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies, recently created the "Secure the Future Program" and has partnered with other organizations and the United Nations to give \$100 million to fight the AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa.

BP Amoco, in networkhip with the United States Agency for International Development, has a \$7 million program to bring food aid to civilians affected by ongoing warfare in Angola.

PeaceWorks, a "not-only-for-profit" gourmet foods company, seeks to defuse conflicts with employment policies that bring culturally and racially diverse people together in volatile areas of the world — the Middle East, South Africa and Southern Mexico.

But there are many approaches businesses can take to promote peacebuilding:

- They can create cross-border initiatives that promote working networkhips on both sides of conflicted borders or ideological divides through increased trade initiatives and joint ventures. They can use methods that incorporate participation and collaborative decision making among stakeholders, and they can foster networkhips among diverse organizations that are familiar with the interests of the conflicted communities.
- They can contribute products such as electricity, telephones, agricultural technology, infrastructure development and new communication technologies such as computers and fax machines. Investment can be used to assist new and existing business growth, promote inward investment, increase public sector support into local businesses and spur economic regeneration. In addition, corporate management can use its expertise in the financial and strategic planning and managerial side of networkhip programs.
- Management should look to promote good government policies that respect human rights, foster local engagement, encourage responsible distribution of public revenues generated by business operations, integrate environmental and social policies for sustainable development, and provide education and training for preventing conflict.

The complexities of corporations working in areas of conflict has led to an initiative from Bennett Freeman, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, to bring oil and mining companies together with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to address human rights, security and other governance issues. Related to this initiative is a U.S./U.K effort to develop a voluntary standard on corporate security arrangements focusing on human rights.

A number of NGOs are intricately involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The Fund for Peace's

'Foreign Policy Roundtable' works toward common goals of conflict prevention by bringing together human rights activists, government leaders and business leaders to build bridges between these communities. The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy is training business leaders in India and Pakistan to help stabilize relations in this unstable region, using case studies from its work in Cyprus and Northern Ireland. In addition, the Council on Economic Priorities, International Alert, and The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum, are preparing a report -- The Business of Peace -- to provide "framework for understanding both the positive and negative roles that business can play in situations of violent conflict."

Other NGOs involved in the issue are Amnesty International, which recently organized 'The Business and Economic Relations Group' to examine business and human rights issues. In addition, Human Rights Watch has also begun to report on how business operations affect human rights.

With more than an estimated 6,000 distinct cultures in the world, and with a tragic history of at least 170 armed conflicts worldwide since the end of the Cold War in 1991, it is becoming increasingly difficult for multi-laterals to remain by-standers to local politics and conflict.

Chairman Mark Moody Stuart recently explained Royal Dutch Shell's new social awareness: "The demands of economics of the environment and of contributing to a just society are all important for a global commercial enterprise to flourish." Managers at BP Amoco recently commissioned an internal audit paper titled, "Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction." This report recommends measures to promote peace such as transparency (publicizing that the company pays taxes to the government); supporting community programs; and adopting security policies such as Amnesty International's Guidelines for Multilateral Companies.

The new phenomenon of business working closely with people involved in, or affected by crisis, promises to change the perception that the private sector is a remote or passive actor in the world of conflict. Just as economic interests can cause wars, they can also be used for peacebuilding. A working economy needs peace.

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