



# THE ROLE OF KENYA'S PRIVATE SECTOR IN PEACEBUILDING: THE CASE OF THE 2013 ELECTION CYCLE

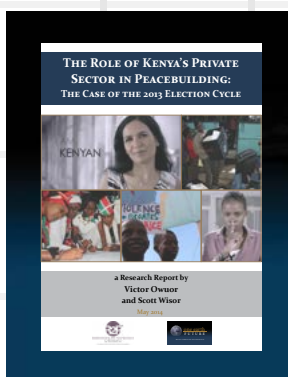


a Policy Brief of One Earth  
Future's Responsibility to  
Protect & Business Project

Kenya's private sector engaged in a peacebuilding campaign surrounding the 2013 elections which can serve as a guide for future policy.

# THE ROLE OF KENYA'S PRIVATE SECTOR IN PEACEBUILDING: THE CASE OF THE 2013 ELECTION CYCLE

A comprehensive review of the range of activities undertaken by the private sector before, during, and immediately after the 2013 elections is the subject of a research report by Victor Owuor and Scott Wisor. The report is a product of the One Earth Future Foundation's R2P (Responsibility to Protect) and Business Project, and the Research and Development Program. The following policy recommendations arise from this report.



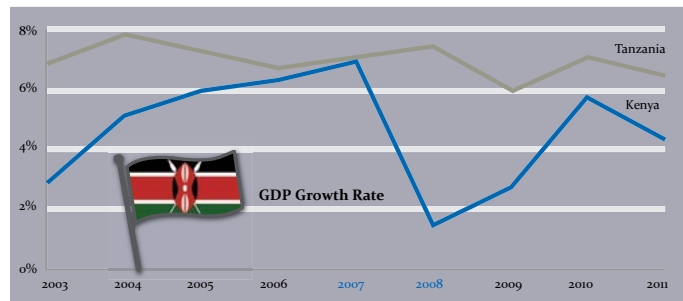
[LINK TO REPORT](#)

Cover: Clockwise from top: "Safaricom and Partners" by textually.org; "Woman and Child Cast Vote" by DEMOSH on Flickr; 2013 Presidential Debates by pbs.org; Mkenya Daima campaign from KEPSA

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Following the disputed presidential election results in 2007–08, widespread violence engulfed Kenya, killing over one thousand people and displacing hundreds of thousands. One in three Kenyans were directly affected by the violence. In 2013, independent observers feared that new elections might produce similar or worse violence. The elections were held, and despite disputes over the final tallies and problems with the polling systems that had recently been put in place, the elections were the most peaceful in Kenya’s history.

A number of factors possibly contributed to the peaceful outcomes of these elections: the devolution of political and economic powers to 47 counties resulting from the enactment of a new constitution in 2010; the looming presence of the International Criminal Court and the then-pending cases against half a dozen prominent Kenyans; ongoing reforms in Kenya’s judiciary; active engagement from civil society, national, and international organizations; a political alliance made between two who had been combatants in 2007–08; and a general agreement among Kenya’s political elite that the events of 2007–08 could not be repeated.



*Post-election violence in 2008 delivered massive economic damage to the country, increasing the private sector’s incentive for peacebuilding*  
data from <http://www.indexmundi.com>

Consistently overlooked in this analysis of the 2013 elections is the role of the Kenyan private sector in promoting peace. The Kenyan private sector undertook a sustained, systematic, and comprehensive peacebuilding campaign that has not previously been documented. A comprehensive report of the range of activities undertaken by the Kenyan private sector before, during, and immediately after the 2013 elections is the subject of an OEF research report titled “The Role of Kenya’s Private Sector in Peace Building: The Case of the 2013 Election Cycle” and released in 2014. This policy brief provides an overview of recommendations arising from this research.

## RESEARCH SUMMARY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The full report draws on a systematic review of the publicly available scholarly and popular literature on private sector peacebuilding, and equally importantly, on a series of key interviews conducted in Kenya between October 2013 and January 2014. Information was obtained from a wide spectrum of mainly Kenyan-owned business interests, including those representing trade associations and small-, medium-, and large-scale enterprises. Based on these interviews, ten activities that private sector actors engaged in were identified.

- **Sponsoring candidates in opposing camps**, thereby ensuring access to all of the major candidates and parties seeking presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial, parliamentary, and county assembly seats.
- **Public communication** activities centering around the message of peace, the most visible of which was the three-phased “Mkenya Daima” campaign, an initiative of the umbrella business organization the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA). Mkenya Daima loosely translates in Kiswahili as “My Kenya Forever.”
- **Media sensitization** on responsible reporting offered to journalists and the media houses from which they operate.
- **Legislative advocacy** from KEPSA for high-priority areas with direct implications for peace building.

- **Peace commitments and charters** signed by political candidates and government officials.
- **Preventing incitement**; telecommunications providers, of whom Safaricom was the most notable, blocked bulk hate messages sent via SMS.
- **Sponsoring of presidential debates** and of the Nairobi gubernatorial debates.
- **Private diplomacy** undertaken by prominent business leaders who had direct access to key candidates.
- **Actively maintaining neutrality** in normal business operations, including advertising.
- **Risk mitigation strategies**, especially the introduction and uptake of novel insurance coverage for unforeseen acts in the political realm.



Still from a Safaricom video to its employees

The successful prevention of violence in the 2013 elections suggests that these activities were valuable, and that the kind of systemic engagement that the various business bodies and companies, civil society, and government did in the lead-up to the 2013 elections can be valuable.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ***The private sector should be treated as a resource for prevention of election-related violence.***  
The latent presence of private sector influence of political actors is often overlooked. The study has shown that the private sector has understood that a style conducive to constructive engagement is essential to exerting influence, especially as many political actors have private sector interests and rely on other members of the sector for political support.
- ***A clear demonstration of the potential impact of violence can motivate private sector actors.***  
The violence associated with 2007/08 was a clear motivator in encouraging private sector support for peacebuilding. Private sector actors in other areas affected by conflict may be prepared to engage in prevention activities, when they are aware of the potential impact of not engaging in these activities.
- ***The power of private sector actors is considerably enhanced both when the private sector acts in a collective and coordinated fashion, and when it works with other spheres of society.***  
Structures such as an official emergency response policy and structures, enhanced information sharing by various actors, and a strong umbrella business organization need to be in place in order to support local business initiatives that must of necessity strive for public service and professionalism—traits which are also expected to diffuse into future candidates for political office.
- ***Private sector actors may be valuable in their role as neutral convenors and networks.***  
The common interests of the private-sector actors, especially those interests that are conducive to well-functioning business operations, allow for neutral territory on which individuals and groups with other political disagreements may find common ground. Towards this end, other countries should enable environments that promote the formation of forums or working structures similar to KEPSA. These structures advance a plethora of business interests including the conduction of peaceful elections.

One Earth Future's R2P (Responsibility to Protect) Project focuses specifically on the role of the business sector in responding to and preventing atrocity crimes. This focus is the essence of R2P. OEF believes that it is fundamentally in the interest of the business sector to support the development and implementation of R2P.



One Earth Future Foundation was founded in 2007 with the goal of supporting research and practice in the area of peace and governance. OEF believes that a world beyond war can be achieved by the development of new and effective systems of cooperation, coordination, and decision making. We believe that business and civil society have important roles to play in filling governance gaps in partnership with states. When state, business, and civil society coordinate their efforts, they can achieve effective, equitable solutions to global problems.

The OEF policy brief series provides distillations of research lessons into practical recommendations for policy and practice.



**ONE EARTH FUTURE FOUNDATION**

**525 Zang Street**

**Broomfield, CO 80021 USA**

**[www.oneearthfuture.org](http://www.oneearthfuture.org)**