

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**LATEST RESEARCH BY ONE EARTH FUTURE CONTENDS THAT THE KENYAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY PLAYED AN ESSENTIAL PART IN FACILITATING PEACEFUL ELECTIONS IN 2013, OFFERING A BLUEPRINT FOR PREVENTING FUTURE ELECTORAL VIOLENCE.**

*New report*

- *Identifies the private sector as a politically neutral actor that was an influential resource in preventing election cycle violence;*
- *Demonstrates how the potential impact of violence motivated the private sector to take action on conflict-prevention activities;*
- *Finds that the power of the private sector is enhanced when it acts in a collective and coordinated fashion, and when it works with other spheres of society.*

Nairobi, Thursday 12th June, 2014: A comprehensive account of the range of activities undertaken by the Kenyan private sector to promote peace before, during, and immediately after the 2013 elections is the subject of a new [One Earth Future](#) research report titled “The Role of Kenya’s Private Sector in Peace Building: The Case of the 2013 Election Cycle.”

The report, authored by Dr. Victor Owuor and Dr. Scott Wisor, finds that the Kenyan private sector undertook a sustained, systematic, and comprehensive peacebuilding campaign that has not previously been documented. The full report can be downloaded at <http://www.onearthfuture.org/publications>.

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. Despite disputes over the final tallies and problems with the polling systems, the elections were the most peaceful in Kenya’s history. The lessons learned from activities undertaken by the private sector in preparation for Kenya’s elections offer a blueprint for future activities to help promote peace, and they suggest avenues for other countries struggling with multi-party democracy and electoral violence.

The media are invited to attend the report’s launch at 7:30 AM on Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> June at the Serena Hotel, on Kenyatta Avenue and Processional Way, Nairobi, Kenya. The event, facilitated in partnership with the Kenya Private Sector Alliance, will include a panel discussion with the lead author and several high-level representatives from business, government, and civil society. The launch will present the major findings of the report,

stimulate debate concerning if and how the business sector should engage in peacebuilding, and take questions from the audience.

“Moving forward, our study has shown that business can and should be part of continuing efforts to build institutions that improve transparency in the conducting of public affairs, reduce tensions, and create a more harmonized society, as well as provide an environment that enables the sector to thrive,” says Dr. Owuor.

The report draws on a series of key interviews with leaders from the Kenyan business community, as well as publicly available scholarly and popular literature on private sector peacebuilding, to identify ten activities that contributed to peaceful elections in 2013:

- **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.

The successful prevention of violence in the 2013 elections suggests that these activities were effective, 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.



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For further information on the report, please contact Dr. Victor Owuor at [vowuor@onearthfuture.org](mailto:vowuor@onearthfuture.org). For more information on One Earth Future's Responsibility to Protect and Business program, contact Lee Sorensen at [lsorensen@onearthfuture.org](mailto:lsorensen@onearthfuture.org). For media coordination, contact Caroline Nkirote, at [cmkirote@kepsa.or.ke](mailto:cmkirote@kepsa.or.ke). For inquiries in the United States, contact Jean-Pierre Larroque at [jplarroque@onearthfuture.org](mailto:jplarroque@onearthfuture.org).

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One Earth Future is a private foundation located near Denver, Colorado in the United States, which is committed to multi-stakeholder initiatives to resolve issues related to violent conflict. OEF's Responsibility to Protect and Business program focuses on the role that the private sector can play in responding to and preventing conflict. More information can be found at [www.onearthfuture.org](http://www.onearthfuture.org).