Executive Report
We designed the Venture Peacebuilding Symposium around a number of techniques to bring out new approaches and ideas: structured panel discussions, open spaces where ideas could percolate and evolve, and other innovative methods to help the Venture Peacebuilding field advance as quickly as possible.

Various Symposium speakers articulated the case for the practicality of peace investments and noted that there is now data that supports the case. The Global Peace Index, which uses 23 indicators to assess levels of peace for 99.7 percent of the world’s population, places the possible rate of return at $16 for every $1 put into peacebuilding, especially due to gains in per capita income from lower levels of corruption that are correlated with positive peace.

Moving forward, the Venture Peacebuilding initiative will become the global network for social entrepreneurs, investors, and peacebuilders, to build a new ecosystem of people and companies focused on disrupting systems of violence and building peaceful and resilient communities. Through further applied research, training, tool design, creation of shared metrics, network-building, and other activities, Venture Peacebuilders will lead the movement towards a fundamental shift in how we purposefully build peace, while producing financial returns for investors.

The symposium was sponsored by Creative Associates International, as well as American University, Euromonitor International, Peace and Collaborative Development Network, Strategic Good, Alliance for Peacebuilding, Peace Direct, Impact Hub, PeaceTech Lab, C5 Accelerate, SAP NS2, SkapaTech, and Konesens Development.

The following is an executive brief of the key takeaways compiled from notes and recordings of each session.

**Key Takeaways**

Many innovative ideas surfaced during the 19 panels, Ignite talks, and keynote sessions of the two-day event. Here are what experts said about efforts to build the business case for peace:

**Peacebuilders need to stop making moral arguments.** Peacebuilding efforts have a strong, positive correlation with GDP growth, environmental quality, community resilience, and more. Peacebuilders have a strong financial argument that peace is good for business and vice versa, but the business case is still primarily being made through a moral and/or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) lens. The world needs peace-informed business models that have clear positive cost-benefit results. There are already companies pioneering innovative ways to build peace, strengthen communities, and maintain a healthy bottom line. We should learn from their successes and failures, as well as understand the gaps in knowledge. The goal is to begin to shift some of the USD 2.94 trillion annually spent on armed security to building peace.

**Call to Action:** The peacebuilding world needs to shift from moral arguments to financial ones, and the business world must integrate positive social impact initiatives to their business models. We need to begin by mapping the actors in the innovative finance space to produce compelling case studies and lessons-learned for broad distribution.

**The silo-constrained approach to innovative finance in fragile and conflict-affected communities is inefficient.** Economies in fragile and conflicted-affected systems are complex and constantly changing. Presently peacebuilders, social entrepreneurs, and impact investors function primarily in silos, and the lens that each sector brings to the table limits its view and leads to disregarding important aspects of those economies. Due to these silos, research and innovation by one sector rarely translates to advancement across sectors. Uncoordinated efforts may be less successful and possibly undermine the efforts of other actors.
Call to Action: An ecosystem of peacebuilders, entrepreneurs, and impact investors is essential to collaboratively address the complexity of fragile and conflict-affected areas. We must build, maintain, and grow the networks, as well as iteratively discover and address research gaps.

Systems-change is difficult, but necessary. Peace is a complex phenomenon that requires the transformation of systems rather than focusing on isolated projects or programs. This means targeting human development indicators in addition to breaking down more complex barriers to peace, including power imbalances, corruption, gender inequality, and poor governance structures, among others. Systems change demands the creation of hyperlocal peacebuilding industries that bring together implementers, social businesses, and investors with a stake in the community to coordinate over the long term with shared agendas, shared goals, and shared metrics to truly create sustainable peace.

Call to Action: Venture Peacebuilders must put their energies into market-based solutions to some of the toughest social and environmental problems. Through rigorous design, testing, and iteration focused on systemic positive peace, Venture Peacebuilders can arrive at solutions that spur sustainable change and bring financial gains.

We're speaking different languages. Social entrepreneurs, impact investors, and peacebuilders employ unique terms and definitions to describe their work. Each of these perspectives offers insights, but coordination is difficult without a shared lexicon and understanding of the myriad of peace-related factors at play affecting the business environment, and vice-versa.

Call to Action: We need to craft a lexicon of shared definitions to enable peacebuilders, social entrepreneurs, and impact investors to describe their approaches to building positive peace. While advancing towards that goal, we should ensure that all sectors are educated in the language that others use.

The financial instruments available for innovative financing are varied and complex. Most established companies, startups, and peacebuilding organizations are not fully familiar with the over 15 financial instruments that are used in “innovative finance.” There is even less knowledge about which financial mechanisms fit the needs of a company or organization who wishes to become involved in Venture Peacebuilding. This is especially true for medium-sized businesses and peace ventures, who are too large for microfinance funding and too small for traditional investment, commercial lending, or donor funding.

Call to Action: The Venture Peacebuilding Initiative must produce clear explanations of the nuances of the financial instruments used in innovative finance.

Lack of capacity is the primary hurdle to successful collaboration. Venture Peacebuilding requires new education and training in best practices and lessons learned from the peacebuilding, investing, and entrepreneurial fields. Understanding the complex challenges faced by businesses is not part of peacebuilding trainings, just as the challenges in stabilizing communities and economies are not taught to business leaders or investors. This knowledge is critical to help manage risk, while remaining conflict sensitive.

Call to Action: We need to build special training for investors, social entrepreneurs, and peacebuilders to enhance their ability to effectively collaborate on peace ventures. More specifically, we need to place training on building peace into business plans, building business into peace plans, and defining metrics that measure success.

Venture Peacebuilding needs new metrics. Although there are robust metrics to measure impact of investments on a specific sector (e.g. the impact of agricultural investment on crop yields), these metrics do not measure impact of investments on peacefulness. Long-term systems change requires incorporating a standardized and rigorous monitoring and evaluation process into project planning and execution. In addition, no business venture will single-handedly build peace in a system. Each project must be part of a larger coordinated effort with other actors in the system. As cross-sector collaboration grows, Venture Peacebuilders’ tools and frameworks to measure and evaluate the impact of peace ventures will evolve.

Call to Action: Venture Peacebuilders need metrics to measure the impact of business operations on the peacefulness in a geographic space. We must also help companies build coalitions of actors in the system (public sector, private sector, civil society, etc.) to achieve greater positive impact across the system.
What’s next for Venture Peacebuilding?

Collaboration among those interested to build peace is vital to solving the global needs of our time. Venture Peacebuilding should be part of those efforts. Over the next year and beyond, the Venture Peacebuilding Initiative will:

- Grow the network of passionate peacebuilders, entrepreneurs, impact investors, and others launched at the Venture Peacebuilding Symposium.
- Design the initial training suite and the first version of peace investment impact metrics.
- Define the parameters for peace ventures to be certified as “Venture Peacebuilding” initiatives to ensure visibility and quality control.
- Build partnerships with like-minded institutions and companies to host events and workshops around the world.
- Share resources, contacts, and findings across the Venture Peacebuilding network.

Call to Action: Join Us! Sign up for the Venture Peacebuilding mailing list to connect with the private online network of Venture Peacebuilders. You will have access to resources, experts, and potential collaborative partners.
Sign up for the Venture Peacebuilding mailing list at VenturePeacebuilding.org