

International Disaster Relief: Planning and preparation for action



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On the 14 March the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) launched an appeal for **East Africa**. East Africa has battled against both political instability and the effects of climate change for decades. As a result, 16 million people are on the brink of starvation and an entire generation has been affected. The United Nations are now calling this the largest refugee crisis sub-Saharan Africa has had to face with millions of people fleeing South Sudan. Six months ago, DEC also launched an appeal for **Yemen** in order to provide humanitarian assistance to 70% of the population there. Much like Syria, Yemen has faced political instability and warfare. Combined, the people affected by these crises amount to a total greater than the population of Canada.

The public response has been remarkable with £50million raised in just 3 weeks and over £105 million raised for these appeals so far. In 2016 however, according to Swiss Re, there were 327 catastrophes of which 136 were man made. These came at a cost of \$175 billion¹ in insured losses let alone the cost of uninsured losses, the devastation caused to communities and lives lost. Given the current political, economic and environmental issues these disasters are going to increase in scale and incidence. The gap between humanitarian need and the offer available from public donations and government grants will continue to grow. In the last decade businesses have increased their responses to these slow onset disasters. Business in the Community's **Business' Unique Contribution II research** sponsored by UPS, found that 57% of businesses responding to disasters, have responded to a slow onset disaster.

Home

'No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.

you only run for the border when you see the whole city running as well.....'

by **Warsan Shire**

With the frequency and number of disasters increasing, the millions of people affected, and the devastating impacts of these events, much more needs to be done. There is an increasing need for business response. Given the devastating and destabilising effects of these disasters for people, profit and planet, the business case for action is continually reinforced. Given the effects on resources,

supply chains, operations, business continuity, employee and public expectation, the impact is evident. This is borne out by our **recent research** which indicates that **86%** of business agree that addressing international disasters helps to contribute to more stable markets¹.

This paper explores business response to disasters with particular reference to slow onset disasters and offers guidance on business planning and preparation for response to the disaster relief and resilience.

Natural disasters

These can be defined as resulting from the action of the nature that causes significant damage to land and/or living things in the impact vicinity. They can be either:

Rapid onset and include,

earthquakes, floods, plagues, tsunamis etc.,

Slow onset and include,

extreme hot or cold weather temperatures and droughts.

Technological or man-made disasters

These can be defined as disasters caused by humans, and include conflict and wars, famine, displacement of communities or whole populations, industrial and transportation accidents.

Source [Business Unique Contribution \(BITC\)](#)

¹ Business in the Community Research: [Business Unique Contribution II](#)



Source: DFID

Organising your business response:

Attention is most often paid to the rapid onset disasters. The impact of slow onset disasters as the name suggests, takes time to manifest, whether they are the result of climate change or man-made causes. The impact of a slow onset disaster can take years to understand, let alone begin to react and respond to effectively. Millions of people may be displaced for many years, relocating and attempting to build new lives where there is more stability. According to World Bank data as of end-2015, some 6.6 million people have been in exile for over 5 years, rising to over 20 years in some cases.

We have seen how governments have had to react to this challenge in countries such as Pakistan where approximately 300,000 people fled as a result of conflict and instability caused by climate change. Many communities moved to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. Once the area was considered safe, the government in Pakistan created a compensation package in an attempt to encourage those who fled, to return. For many refugees, however, the compensation package was considered inadequate. People were worried that they would be at risk again, if they were to return. They had lost their small holdings, their livelihoods, and the local economies had all but collapsed. Leaving their new homes for uncertainty, and not knowing if they were able to survive and rebuild their lives, was a huge dilemma². This also highlights an



important opportunity for those business looking at long term strategic programmes to help address disaster relief, resilience and rebuilding through community investment.

When [organising your business response](#), business should think long term and plan in advance. Planning and preparation enable the business to consider a holistic response, embracing core skills, competencies, expertise, products and services. It also allows the identification of the right partner/s, and the development of both shared objectives and outcomes.

To this end, as outlined in BITC's recent '[Addressing International Disaster Relief: Guidance for Business](#),' publication sponsored by GSK, it is important to do the following:

- Agree the scope and limits of your involvement
- Structure your business response

- Engage with staff
- Engage with stakeholders

Source: [Guidance for Business: Addressing International Disaster Relief and Resilience](#)

The business response could take years to develop and a strong partnership will be key to ensuring that you provide relevant support in line with the need and have the greatest impact. GSK for example, have developed a **5-year programme** with Save the Children that offers a win:win approach. This strategic global partnership combines the business expertise, resources and influence to help save the lives of one million of the poorest children in the world. With regards to slow onset disasters, in November GSK kick-started Save the Children's Children in 'War Appeal' fundraising appeal launched in the UK's Sunday Times with a £100,000 donation supporting the crises in Iraq, Yemen and Syria. Working closely with Save the Children GSK has provided lifesaving health equipment and supplies to respond to health needs in conflict affected areas.

What your business can contribute:

Slow onset disasters affect entire populations. Millions of people are at risk and in need of humanitarian support. The scale can therefore sometimes seem insurmountable. [Organising your business response](#) and having an International Disaster Relief strategy with policies in place, which clearly outline your policy and process, how you will respond and what your limitations are, will be invaluable. Planning this well in advance of a disaster/s will help ensure that whenever and wherever disaster strikes, you will be prepared to activate your policy and mobilise if appropriate. Defining when, where and how your business will mobilise and identifying what your business can contribute is an essential part of planning and preparation and delivery of your strategy.

According to BITC's recent research, outlined in [Business' Unique Contribution II](#), 76% humanitarian aid agencies believe business support is most effective where it is based on skills, products and services. Taking a holistic approach and using your business skills, expertise, products and services, and working with your humanitarian partner/s, you will be able to develop a comprehensive and relevant offer delivering the greatest impact and reaching the most people. Through consultation with many businesses, in the development of [The Guidance](#), it is recommended through the section on [What your Business Can Contribute](#), that you consider the following areas:

- Which areas of the business could contribute to your response?
- As a business, what your approach to cash giving looks like?
- Whether it is applicable to offer in kind donations for your business
- Identify and ensure what core assets, skills, expertise, products and services etc could be available within your offer
- Whether you can offer any skilled or unskilled volunteers or secondees.

By identifying and focussing on what the business does best, Pearson have been able to design a programme with their partner that supports refugee children. Pearson's focus is on refugee camps and aligns both their core business values and products. The programme has been designed to allow children to transition into education systems once they have reached the destination country, as well as educating them within the camps themselves. The programme is called the **Every Child Learning** programme and aims to help millions of refugee children. Pearson describe the programme as follows:

“For Pearson the partnership will serve as a model for our response to humanitarian crises in the future, providing sustained support for communities after initial media interest may have waned, but the challenge to rebuild communities after major disaster and conflicts remains. Our approach aims to reinforce our commitment to ensuring that the most marginalised have access to high quality learning even when traditional methods of learning are not available.”³



Source: DFID

Long term programmes no doubt have a cost but they provide benefits too for people, profit and planet. Both GSK and Pearson have focussed their humanitarian aid and have each committed to over a £1million in funding. With their partners and through using their products, services and skills, both programmes have had and will have significant impacts on society. Importantly these programmes also bring business benefits. GSK are developing new approaches and Pearson are reaching new markets. Well-constructed disaster relief partnerships and programmes thus provide a win:win through providing mutual benefit, supporting the sustainability of the approach, the strategy and the continued benefits to all parties.

Working with humanitarian partners

Working with humanitarian partners is almost certainly the best way to make sure your contribution is appropriate, reaches the right people, and is coordinated with the wider disaster relief effort.

“It is about preparedness. We know that there will be a disaster, we don't know when and we don't know where. What we do know is that through our relationship with our partner on an ongoing basis, we are prepared and providing them with the product that can be used when a disaster strikes.” -

Business Leader from Business Unique Contribution II.

To build strong partnerships you will need to consider who you would like to work with and how you would like the partnership to work. Through our research we identified some key issues to consider as outlined in [Working with Humanitarian Partners](#) section of *The Guidance* and which include:

- Whether you would like to work with a partner who complements your core business to help your offer be more relevant.
- Whether you would prefer a partnership with a UN agency or an NGO
- The size of the partner you would like to work with. A larger partner organisation may allow you to work on multiple projects or programmes as they can be more flexible. Smaller organisations however are often acting as their delivery arms. Smaller organisations often tend not to have as

many corporate supporters and your partnership can therefore have a significant impact. Some large business prefer to partner with an organisation of a similar size who may have lots of similarly large corporate partners. Others may prefer to partner with a smaller organisation where their partnership has a bigger impact on the organisation.

- Where you may like to work and at what stage within the disaster management cycle you would like to support
- Whether you would like multiple partners or to tackle multiple issues

EY, have developed an innovative refugee programme in Europe alongside other businesses, NGOs, government and academia and which is a finalist entry in **BITC's International Disaster Relief and Resilience Award sponsored by UPS and supported by UK Department for International Development** . This partnership aims to create best practice, understand the impact the migrant crisis has had on communities and countries, and finally help to integrate refugees into their new community. Alongside this EY has run a refugee internship programme. The partnership and programme has helped thousands of refugees but has also created a foundation and knowledge base for other businesses looking at how to respond to the crisis and work with refugees.

From projects to programmes,

Addressing Disaster Relief whether slow or rapid onset disaster etc, the approach can be viewed to through a community investment, a UN Sustainable Development Goals lens, as well as through a specific Disaster Relief and Response lens. Where climate change is affecting the livelihoods of farmers in Kenya and contributing to the crisis in East Africa for example, **Unilever** are helping women with small holdings to grow their business, sustain their crops and ultimately remain a viable supply for Unilever. By considering and coordinating your wider corporate responsibility objectives with your approach to disaster relief and resilience, you can contribute to and help to build sustainable communities that are more resilient and economically stable, thereby supporting the sustainability of your supply and value chain, and business continuity.

There are a number of recent reports that are valuable to consider as you develop and refine your approach to international disaster relief and resilience, community investment, sustainable business models and your approach to sustainability.

The Business and Sustainable Development Commission's **Better Business, Better World** report which provides some excellent insights in to 'hot spots' that will offer returns on investment for businesses. **UN OCHA** produces country reports identifying what is required and when in terms of disaster relief and resilience which are invaluable. These reports together with **Business' Unique Contribution II research** and **Guidance for Business: Addressing International Disaster Relief and Resilience** will support you as you develop your approach to international disaster relief and resilience, community investment, sustainable business models and your approach to sustainability.



By taking a more holistic view, leveraging business core competencies, skills and expertise together with products and services, and moving from individual projects to a programmatic approach, defining a long-term investment plan, will help your business to better respond to those in need. It will also help build more resilient communities, more resilient supply and value chains, more resilient businesses and ultimately build a fairer society and a more sustainable future for all.

We hope this insight paper inspires and challenges you to review your business, humanitarian and environmental case for action. Disasters strike and cause devastation to individuals, to communities, to the environment and to business. The challenges for business continuity, supply chain security and stability of markets in the event of a disaster, are manifold.

Whilst it is impossible to predict where the next disaster will strike, the certainty is that there will be one. The question is, is your business prepared?

We urge you to review the business imperative, develop and refine your International Disaster Relief and Resilience strategy, policy and process now, taking a considered and holistic approach to engagement across the disaster management cycle, and develop from one off projects to sustainable programmes.

In advance of the next disaster, with your policy, process and suite of potential support identified, I encourage you to identify potential humanitarian partners to work with and put collaboration and partnership at the heart of your approach.

For further support and guidance on creating a strategy, identifying your offer and creating partnerships please read the [Addressing International Disaster Relief and Resilience: Guidance for Business](#) publication and the [Business' Unique Contribution II research](#) .

If you have any questions, please contact me Sue Adkins, International Director Business in the Community or the International Campaign on international@bitc.org.uk

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