



Organising your business response

To make your business support for International Disaster Relief effective, planning is key.

Here are some guidelines to help facilitate thinking and conversations around your strategy.

The frequency and intensity of disasters will only increase over the coming years.

As a result, their impact is likely to increase and become more evident. Businesses need to be able to respond to these pressures and this is evidenced with 84% of businesses now agreeing that it is important to contribute to International Disaster Relief.

Agreeing the scope and limits of your involvement

Disasters elicit a range of emotions and often people will want to help on some level. We recognise that companies are constantly under pressure to be more efficient and have a range of challenges affecting their ability to respond to International Disaster Relief and Resilience

With that in mind it is key that you identify your scope and limitations when considering an International Disaster Relief and Resilience strategy. This will not only help with identifying your activation criteria but also help justify and communicate the business rationale for not responding in particular cases and at certain times.

Some things to consider are:

- where you will respond
- what types of disaster you will respond to, natural or conflict?
- whether there will be limits on funds or time
- how it will link to your other responsible business priorities

“When you operate on a global scale, there is a disaster every day that is affecting somebody. It is a position that leaves you feeling cold-hearted but the reality is we have to make that call about when do we respond and when do we say, ‘that’s really unfortunate but we can’t respond to that one?’”

Business leader

Activation criteria

Deciding on and communicating what the activation criteria will be for your business response is essential. There is no right answer when deciding on these. They may include whether the disaster is in a country or region you are based, how much media attention there is or whether a state of emergency has been called. It is worth consulting with your humanitarian partner on these to understand what will support them best whilst also aligning with your own business limitation

Potential inclusions in a disaster relief policy

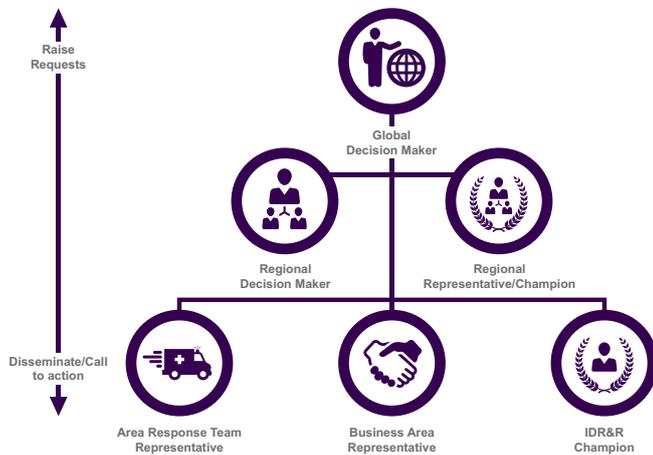
- The kinds of disasters will you respond to
- The scope of your engagement
- The kind of support you will be able to give, in different types of disasters.
- A timeline for the different types of responses the company might offer at different stages of the disaster, and how decisions will be made.
- How emergency response is structured within your company: teams, responsibility, systems and processes, how decisions will be made
- Your humanitarian charity partners: who you currently work with or the types of organisations you would work with and the criteria for selection
- Staff engagement opportunities
- How you can work with customers and suppliers
- How your business can coordinate with the UN, NGOs and other businesses
- Internal and external communications
- Evaluation, learning and reporting
- Key contacts for internal and external stakeholders

Structuring your business response

Having agreed systems within your business will help you to respond quickly and efficiently. You may want to consider the systems and structures you already have in place, such as the business continuity plan. A Disaster Management Policy should set out clearly what the business will do, where, when and how, in response to an international disaster.

It is also important to identify and establish your decision making structure. These may vary dependent on your business structure, the scale of the disaster or the levels of cost involved. To strengthen your policy and strategy it is worth considering having an executive as a champion and potentially incorporating International Disaster Relief and Resilience work in to their job description or objectives.

Nominating champions within the organisation can empower staff and show corporate support. You can consider these at all levels and areas of the business agreeing their roles and responsibilities within the response process.



Engaging stakeholders

Engaging with external stakeholders as well as staff can be an effective way of demonstrating your company values. Building stronger engagement with customers, suppliers, distributors and clients brings not only stronger support to the disaster response but also strong business benefits.

There are a number of ways to do this from, volunteering, cause related marketing, match funding, donate buttons on the company website or training and support for suppliers and distributors.

Engaging staff

It is important to engage with staff and stakeholders from policy initiation through to reporting on relief activities. According to International Disaster Relief: Business' Unique Contribution II 75% of companies reported employees as one of the most important triggers for mobilising a response. Sharing your approach can also develop cooperation and collaboration in turn building stronger relationships.

Top tips on internal communications

- **Disaster management policy:** share the scope of engagement and the criteria for when the company will respond.
- **When a disaster strikes:** provide an update to staff as soon as possible. If a decision has not yet been made about whether or how to respond, it is advisable to get a holding message out. This could make clear that the company is reviewing information and deciding
- **When a decision has been taken:** about whether, and how, the company will respond, share this with staff, referring to the Disaster Management Policy to help explain the decision.
- **Communicating a decision not to respond:** there can be pressure from staff to

respond immediately. If the company has decided to engage later in the response, providing examples of the kinds of things you may do, or have done in previously may help employees to understand. If the company has decided not to provide support this needs to be communicated carefully.

- **Keep providing updates:** communicate throughout the response to bring it to life for staff. This could include photos, films, case studies, quotes from staff and/or from humanitarian partners.
- **Share the results with staff:** tell people what was achieved and what the impact was of the company's contribution.
- **Specific groups:** as well as all-staff communications, there may be specific groups that require bespoke updates. Consider the different information that would be needed for different stakeholders, and the most appropriate way of doing this for your company.

Challenging questions for decision makers

Each disaster is different, and it will be up to the Disaster Committee or other decision making body within the company to decide on the most appropriate response. Based on the experience of companies with a long history of responding to disasters, these are some of the challenging questions these decision makers could ask themselves:

Do we have enough information about the disaster and the needs to launch a response?

The information available in the media or in initial assessments is often uncertain and may not contain much detail.

Is there a need for an initial response? Perhaps a cash donation? Or can you wait to make decisions about further support when more information is available?

Is there really a need for us to get involved?

Are we best placed to offer the kind of support needed?

Are there other companies, perhaps geographically closer to the disaster location, who could provide similar support more easily, in which case is there support or advice that we can provide to them?

Do humanitarian partners really want us to get involved: for example, is there capacity on flights and the ability to accommodate additional expatriate responders?

Please note: Sometimes doing nothing or waiting to decide can be the most appropriate decision, even if there is pressure from staff or customers to get involved immediately.

What is the best way for us to support?

Is it useful for us to get involved in responding directly

on the ground or are there other ways we could contribute more effectively, such as fundraising, or providing remote support?

What is the rationale for the response?

Is it purely a philanthropic response, or is there also a more sustainable business rationale?

For example, staff or customer engagement, building new markets, building skills and expertise, raising brand profile?

This may well influence the type, scale and length of the company's engagement so it is advisable to be clear about this from the beginning and to be as open as possible with humanitarian partners so that they can plan and know what your expectations are likely to be.

Do we have the necessary information on risks to the company and can we be confident that these risks can be managed?

This can include security risks to staff involved in the response, risks to the assets being deployed, reputational risks etc.

What is the exit strategy?

It is essential to think about both your entry and your exit strategy from the outset. Some disasters are likely to have a long term requirement for support in rebuilding. Protracted crises such as drought, make it necessary for the company to consider how it will know when their job is done.

The end point may be determined by a set period of time, a set budget, or an assessment of when the need for support reduces, and if so, who and how will you decide?

It is important that the decision makers consider these things in an exit strategy, and have a plan for how to communicate this to internal and external stakeholders.

Did you know? Every year we highlight and award some of the amazing work in the international disaster relief and resilience field through the **UPS International Disaster Relief Award supported by UK Department for International Development**.  winners and runners up showcase some of the diverse and outstanding examples of what can be achieved.

Further reading: Read **Guidance for Business: Addressing International Disaster Relief and Resilience** for more information on how to maximise your International Disaster Relief and Resilience strategy.

For more information: If you would like to learn more about the International Campaign or our work in International Disaster Relief visit our website for more information: <http://www.bitc.org.uk/international/>