



Working with humanitarian partners

Working with a humanitarian partner is almost certainly the best way to make sure your contribution is appropriate and reaches the right people.

It provides you with a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience in International Disaster Relief and Resilience.

Having a partner will benefit your strategy immensely, be it working with one or a group of organisations. 80% of businesses now work with a global NGO or charity on disaster relief response.

Responding directly to a disaster

While the most common approach for companies engaging in disaster relief is to partner with a humanitarian agency, or provide support to the wider relief effort, some companies are also playing a role as direct responders providing relief themselves.

If your company is likely to be providing direct assistance, it is important in advance to consult with a humanitarian agency or government, to think through the key issues and develop systems and processes. These may include,

- How to assess and prioritise needs
- How to ensure the most vulnerable groups are included, such as women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities
- Identifying suppliers and procuring relief goods that meet quality standards
- Preparing and stockpiling relief goods
- Allocating roles and training staff
- Supporting and ensuring wellbeing of staff who will be providing immediate assistance
- Identify other businesses to potentially collaborate with and coordinate together.

“It’s about preparedness and working with a partner that is ready and has the expertise to mobilise. We know that there will be a natural disaster, we don’t know when, we don’t know where. What we do know is that through our relationship with our humanitarian partner we, on an ongoing basis, are prepared and providing them with the product which can be used when a disaster strikes”

Business leader
(Business’s Unique Contribution -
International Disaster Relief)

What is a humanitarian aid agency

There are different types of organisations working to deliver assistance in disasters.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are a non-profit organisations that are independent of government. NGOs can be local, national or international.

The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation made up of 193 member states. There are different UN agencies responsible for specific areas. Some of the UN agencies working in disasters include the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Some UN agencies implement programmes directly but most work through NGOs as implementing partners.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is an international federation that is independent, but has a unique role as an auxiliary to government. There are national societies, for example the Philippines Red Cross and the Syrian Red Crescent, supported at global level by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) works specifically in conflict related emergencies.

NGOs, the UN and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement are commonly referred to as the “Three Pillars” of the humanitarian system.

Developing partnerships

Working with a humanitarian partner can help ensure your support is targeted correctly and meets the real needs during and after a disaster. Remember developing a partnership takes time so before engaging with NGOs it may be worth considering the following items. These will ultimately help strengthen your partnership as well as save time for both parties in ensuring a good fit.

Think about your core business focus and how you want this to align e.g. a pharmaceutical company may wish to work with a health organisation. Similarly think about your geographic focus. Would you like to partner with a worldwide organisation or target smaller ones that focus on the regions you work in.

Make decisions on the sort of relationship you would like. This may be an exclusive partnership or perhaps you would like to form a consortium. Consider if you are more likely to run a programme with an organisation or support their work long term on varied disaster relief and resilience projects.

Lastly consider the overheads, costs and risks of the partnership for both you and the humanitarian organisation. Smaller organisations may benefit hugely from your support and will have reduced overheads due to their size, however they may be reliant on your support so ensure time frames and the support structure work for you both.

Humanitarian Principles and quality standards

In most cases you will engage in disaster relief through your partner organisation or provider wider support and relief. However, in some cases you may choose to respond directly and find staff providing relief themselves. This may be because of the nature of your organisation or it may be due to the location of your offices/assets.

If this is the case it is important that you consult with governments or your partners in advance. They will help you to develop processes and coordinate efforts. Here are some of the things to consider in your disaster response. Do remember you will be responsible for ensuring your staff are safe and adhere to the humanitarian guidelines.



Humanitarian Principles & Quality Standards

The key humanitarian principles guide the work of organisations providing humanitarian assistance. They are central to establishing and maintaining access to affected people, whether in a natural disaster or a complex emergency, such as armed conflict. Promoting and ensuring compliance with the principles are essential elements of effective humanitarian co-ordination.

Humanity: Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.

Neutrality: Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Impartiality: Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.

Independence: Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

The key quality standards guiding work in disasters. These have been developed in response to failures in past disaster responses and through learning over many years. They are designed to ensure that people affected by disasters receive appropriate and quality assistance and that they are treated with dignity.

The HYPERLINK "<http://www.sphereproject.org/>" Sphere Standards set out minimum standards for humanitarian assistance in key areas including health; water sanitation and hygiene; food security and nutrition; shelter and non-food items. The Sphere Standards include agreed minimum quality standards for emergencies and also specify that aid must be appropriate to the context and culture. This means that humanitarian agencies may not be able to accept donations if they do not meet minimum quality criteria.

The HYPERLINK "<http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>" Core Humanitarian Standard outlines what good humanitarian action looks like for communities and people affected by crisis, and the staff and organisations involved in a response. Many humanitarian NGO's are members of the CHS Alliance and some have verified the extent to which they are following the Core Humanitarian Standard.

Coordination of disasters

There is an international system for coordination of the response to an international disaster. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) is responsible for coordination. The UN Cluster System brings together key actors in the response in sector specific groups such as education, health, logistics and shelter, to share information, coordinate and plan together. The Clusters will be activated at country level in major disasters, with each cluster led by a designated lead organisation, often in partnership with relevant government agencies. Cluster meetings will be attended by UN agencies, NGOs, government representatives and other actors involved in the response, including private sector. Companies involved directly in the disaster response locally should participate in cluster meetings and share information.



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**. Our 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/>