



Newsletter January-March 2020



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Greetings from the CBI Secretariat

The world is faced with unprecedented challenges as COVID-19 continues to spread – people fall ill, countries close borders and businesses struggle to make the ends meet. The new coronavirus is a shared responsibility that can only be tackled through collaboration. It

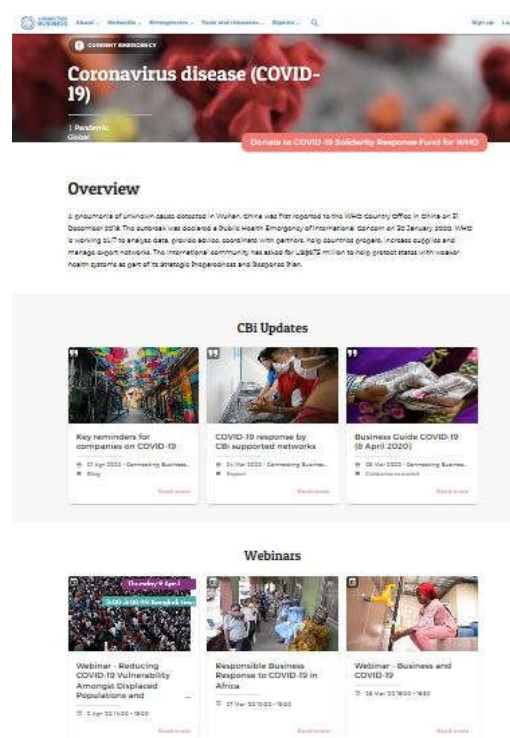
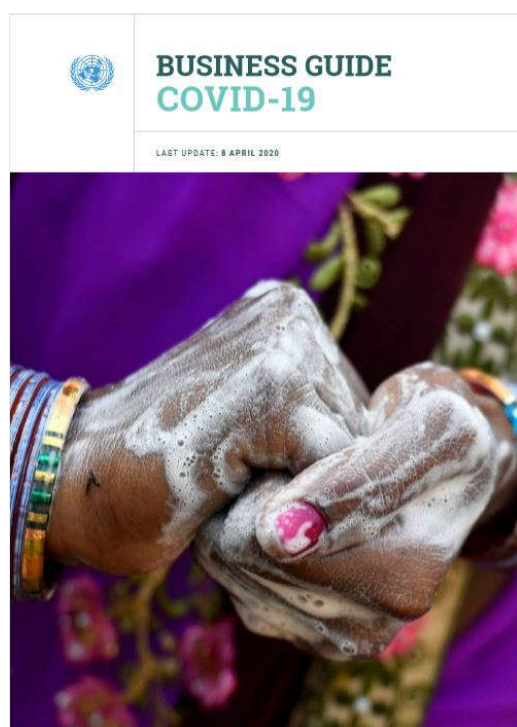
tests our ability to respond, innovate and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances.

The essence of the Connecting Business initiative is disaster management. Hence CBI networks also know how to work in crises. In 2019 alone, 9 networks responded to a total of 31 disasters. Some have specifically addressed health crises such as measles and pneumonic plague epidemics and can now draw on those experiences to plan their response activities to COVID-19.

In this edition of the CBI Newsletter, we highlight what the CBI Secretariat and the networks have done so far. We are committed to doing our best to reduce transmissions, raise awareness and provide guidance, but also acknowledge the great work that people and organizations around the world are doing.

We wish you good health in the weeks and months to come.

CBI resources on COVID-19



The CBI website has a dedicated [emergency page](#) for COVID-19. It compiles information, updates (situation reports), key messages and guidance for the private sector, but can also benefit other stakeholders who are looking to collaborate with companies.

Together with UN colleagues, CBI has co-developed a [UN Business Guide on COVID-19](#) to provide an overview of the crisis and different ways for the private sector to support. The document will be updated regularly as the situation evolves.

CBI has also shared [key reminders](#) for the private sector as they respond to the pandemic.

Visit the CBI emergency page on COVID-19

Member Networks spotlights



Private Sector Humanitarian Platform (PSHP) Madagascar met with WHO and the private sector to discuss COVID-19

The Secretariat is working closely with the CBI networks to engage the private sector in three critical areas: supporting the health response; strengthening crisis management (preparedness, response and recovery); and addressing socio-economic impacts. Through knowledge exchange and good practices, the networks learn what policies and practices have worked in other countries.

For a comprehensive overview of how CBI supported networks are addressing COVID-19, please visit the [CBI website](#).

Cote d'Ivoire

Plateforme humanitaire du secteur privé de Côte d'Ivoire (PHSP Côte d'Ivoire) works closely with the Government and partners such as UNDP, the Red Cross and Institut Pasteur de Côte d'Ivoire. The network has raised awareness among its members of the risks and hygiene practices to ensure people understand the importance of curbing the spread of the virus. They have also informed the Prime Minister of the challenges that the private sector faces due to the COVID-19 pandemic, asking the Government to introduce measures to support companies. PHSP Côte d'Ivoire is also discussing contingency planning and business continuity with the private sector.

Haiti

Alliance pour la Gestion des Risques et la Continuité des Activités (AGERCA) met with the Ministry of Health on 19 March as the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported in the country. The Ministry has asked AGERCA to support national efforts and the network now participates in daily meetings with the National Emergency Operation Center. The network has coordinated private sector contributions from the private sector such as internet connection and call minutes for the members of the National Emergency Operations Center and personal protective equipment (PPE) to hospitals. AGERCA and Digicel have set up a free COVID-19 Emergency Call Center through which nurses can respond to questions from the public. The network uses social media and sends out messages through the Emergency Call Center to raise awareness of COVID-19, its implications and critical containment measures. They also send out regular situation reports. AGERCA is also working closely with the American Chamber of Commerce and the Haitian Chamber of Commerce and Industries. They have created a crisis unit to be able to guide the private sector.

Kenya

The Humanitarian Private Sector Partnership Platform for East Africa (HPPP) is raising awareness among its members on the pandemic. Together with UNHCR, they are discussing the impact of COVID-19 on refugee settlements and communities in Kenya. Some HPPP members have also taken action and for example mobile money providers have reduced costs of transactions to encourage cashless modes of payment in response to the President's request.

Madagascar

Private Sector Humanitarian Platform (PSHP) Madagascar initiated a meeting with WHO before any cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed in the country. Over 50 companies participated to learn about the context, receive guidance, exchange know-how and ask questions. The network is working with the National Risk and Disaster Management Office of Madagascar (BNGRC - the operational lead of the Operational Command Center), Ministries (such as the Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Interior and Decentralization), the Municipality of Antananarivo, subnational authorities and UN entities (UNICEF and WHO) to share information, raise awareness and channel private sector contributions. The network has also coordinated contributions such as internet connection for the Operational Command Center, personal protective equipment (PPE), food, water and financial resources. As Madagascar has recently faced pneumonic plague and measles epidemics, PSHP Madagascar members have also been able to share lessons learned in addressing other diseases.

Mexico

The Centro Nacional de Apoyo para Contingencias Epidemiológicas y Desastres (CENACED) has met with the UN, Pan-American Health Organization, Mexican health authorities and other organizations to discuss the situation and possible future scenarios of the COVID-19 transmission in Mexico. Recognizing the limited availability of diagnostic kits, the network has made an effort to identify reliable sources to procure rapid test kits from outside of the country and is exploring the possibility to conduct their own testing and monitoring.

Philippines

The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) response planning focuses on containment measures and the needs of health care workers. PDRF raised 1.5 billion Philippine pesos (approximately US\$30 million) from companies to fund the distribution of grocery vouchers to urban poor residents in the Metro Manila Area (see more [here](#)). Together with partners, PDRF is helping procure essential protective gear for healthcare institutions and disinfectants and ventilators for public hospitals. With the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Admiral Transport, the Department of Labor and Employment, and Phoenix Petroleum Philippines, PDRF has also deployed buses to give transport assistance to healthcare workers. The PDRF managed Emergency Operations Center monitors the situation and sends out advice and guidance to companies.

Sri Lanka

When the epicenter of the crisis was still in China, the Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management Sri Lanka (A-PAD SL) partnered with HSBC, Hongkong Red Cross, Aitken

Spence Cargo and a Sri Lanka based distributor of face masks to arrange the procurement, freight service and distribution of the masks to Wuhan. Later A-PAD SL provided support to the Disaster Management Centre in Sri Lanka to set up a COVID-19 Emergency Call Centre. They are also engaged in a nation-wide social media campaign to raise awareness about personal preventive measures, business continuity, curfew regulations and other critical topics. A-PAD Sri Lanka partnered with supermarket chains to introduce guidelines on shopping etiquette for purchasing when curfew is lifted.

Turkey

The Business for Goals (B4G) platform sends regular Business Briefs to its members to update them on the situation. They recently rolled out a survey to SMEs to better understand how they have been affected and how the network can support them going forward. Of the 780 companies that responded, 54% reported a drop in sales of more than 50% (71% in southeast of the country). The [survey results](#) indicated that 36% of small- and medium-sized enterprises have halted operations due to COVID-19. B4G will also explore advisory services and financing mechanisms to help companies cope with the economic impacts of COVID-19, but also aim to identify opportunities for companies to re-invent or improve their operations.

Vanuatu

The Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC) rolled out nation-wide pandemic business continuity planning materials and ran BCP workshops. The Government's Public Service Commission approached the VBRC to run business continuity trainings for all of the key government ministries. VBRC activated their members via the private sector clusters and has been supporting the National Disaster Management Office cluster groups particularly around logistics and health. The network facilitated the quarantine of people on the last commercial flights into the country at one of the VBRC member resorts. They also arranged donated COVID-19 test kits and medical supplies to be imported from China. The VBRC economic recovery cluster worked with the Government to develop the country's stimulus package for business and employees. They worked with the Department of Labour and the National Superannuation fund to ensure recently unemployed people have access to draw down part of their savings due to the economic loss to families.

Read more about how CBI networks are responding to COVID-19

Tropical Cyclone Harold



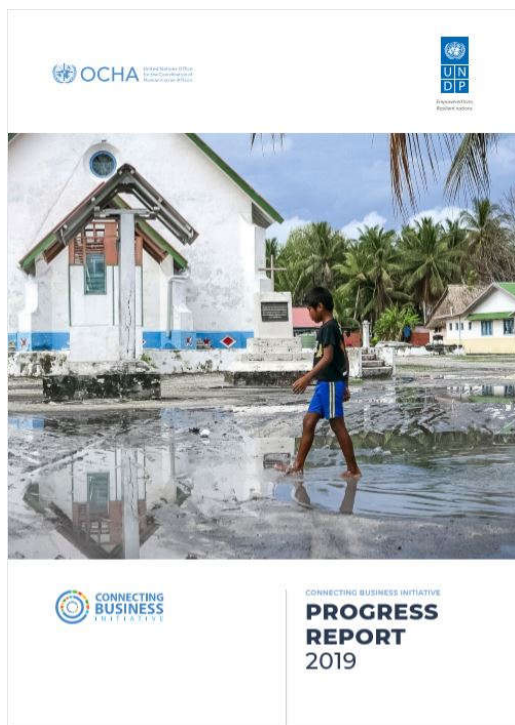
Photo credit: Vanuatu Business Resilience Council

On 6 April, Vanuatu was hit by a category 5 tropical cyclone Harold with sustained winds of more than 200 km/h. The storm then reached Fiji and is cutting a path through the Pacific while the region is already on high alert for the outbreak of the new coronavirus. CBi networks in Fiji and Vanuatu, as well as the regional Pacific network are all taking action. For example, the Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC) has been responding to the tropical cyclone while under pandemic lock-down conditions. The network activated its preparedness measures, including the telecommunications teams to reconnect the islands after the cyclone, as well as shipping and logistics for relief and recovery efforts. They also conducted an aerial, ground and marine assessment to further plan the next steps. Initial estimates indicate 25% of the domestic shipping fleet was severely damaged or grounded. In certain places 100% of houses are severely impacted.

Learn more about private sector response to Tropical Cyclone Harold

Fresh from the press

The CBi Progress Report 2019 is now available. It highlights the main achievements of the initiative and the CBi supported private sector networks, provides an overview of the annual survey results and presents a way forward. Learn more about the response to 31 disasters,



support to 19 private sector networks and much more.

Read the CBI Progress Report 2019

Upcoming webinars

UN Global Compact Special Academy Series

COVID-19: How Business Can Support Women in Times of Crisis

Tuesday 14 April | 10:00 a.m. EST

From immediate relief efforts to longer-term recovery strategies, all sectors of society, including business, have a responsibility to ensure actions taken to combat COVID-19 are responsive to the unique and unequal impacts on women. This special Academy session will cover steps business can take to respect and support the rights and lives of women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic. Register [here](#).

Gender Equality in the Business Sector Series

COVID-19: For unprecedented times private sector extraordinary measures

Wednesday 15 April | 10:00 a.m. EST

This webinar, hosted by UNDP's Business for Gender Equality Programme, Business Call to Action and the Connecting Business initiative, in partnership with the International Finance Corporation, will provide an opportunity participants to discuss the challenges and measures for companies to protect their employees and supply chains and ensure their well-being in these times of distress. For more information and link to register, please see [here](#).

Recent events and webinars



CBi supported networks at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week in Geneva

Business and COVID-19 – webinar

Business Fights Poverty hosted a live webinar on 26 March with McKinsey, UNDP and the Connecting Business initiative to deep-dive into the impacts, and what action businesses can take, particularly to support those who are most vulnerable in their value chains and in the communities in which they operate. To access the video recording and other materials, please visit [our website](#).

Responsible Business Response to COVID-19 in Africa – webinar

The UN Global Compact organized a webinar on 27 March to discuss how business in Africa should be implementing the Ten Principles in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Connecting Business initiative (CBI) will share insights and lessons learned from different parts of the world that could be applied also in Africa. The materials and recording are available [here](#).

CBI Annual Event 2020

The sixth Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW) was convened in Geneva, Switzerland from 3-7 February 2020. The [CBI Annual Event](#) was organized during the same week, on Tuesday 4 February and focused on two themes: disaster management in the 2020s and community resilience through business continuity and risk transfer.



The success of the Connecting Business initiative to date would not be possible without the support of Global Resource and Programme Partners—namely in alphabetical order: Boston Consulting Group, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, European Union (EU) Enhanced Response Capacity, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, United Nations Global Compact, USAID's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance and The UPS Foundation—which provide financial and in-kind contributions, expertise and guidance, as well as strategic leadership to the initiative.

Get engaged!

Join our online community and meet CBI networks around the world

Join us online

Support WHO by donating to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund

Donate to WHO

Find the information and guidance for businesses on COVID-19

Visit CBI website

