

Private Sector Engagement in Disease Outbreaks and Multi-hazard Scenario Planning

27 April 2021; 13:00 – 13:45 CET

Session Summary

Given the complexity and systemic nature of the pandemic, it is imperative that the private sector be considered critical partners in emergency preparedness and response planning initiatives. As COVID-19 is forcing development and humanitarian actors around the world to change the way we prepare for and respond to crises, the private sector can play a significant role in managing the level of uncertainty and complexity of future humanitarian crises and emergencies. Opportunities for the private sector to contribute to emergency preparedness, response and recovery can come in the form of direct assistance to affected areas, disaster preparedness and business continuity strategies for the workplace, utilizing technical expertise and innovation, and establishing corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. As CBI aims to transform and improve collective private sector action before, during and after emergencies, we aim to showcase the multi-tiered response efforts of our member networks that have experienced simultaneous disaster events in 2020 and build on these experiences as we improve current approaches in multi-hazard scenario planning.

The session facilitated an exchange of good practices and lessons learned on how CBI networks in Vanuatu, Haiti and Turkey responded to simultaneous emergencies during COVID-19. The speakers shared practical examples of how the Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC), the Alliance pour la Gestion des Risques et la Continuité des Activités (AGERCA) and the Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (Türkonfed) worked with their respective municipal and national government counterparts, with UN agencies and civil-society organisations during Tropical Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu, Tropical Storm Laura in Haiti, and the Elazığ and Izmir earthquake events in Turkey. As the speakers also represent business chambers and associations, they highlighted the need to continuously promote better coordination and joint-activities with the government and humanitarian actors, and to also engage small and medium-sized businesses in disaster preparedness activities.

Session Speakers:

Moderator: Rein Andre Paulsen, Director, Coordination Division, OCHA

Panelists:

- Glen Craig – Chairperson, Vanuatu Business Resilience Council
- Fania Joseph – Executive Director, Alliance pour la Gestion des Risques et la Continuité des Activités (AGERCA)

- Arda Batu – Secretary General, Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (TÜRKONFED)

Summary of the Discussion

Glen Craig, Director, Chairperson, Vanuatu Business Resilience Council

Vanuatu was and continues to be one of the few countries with no confirmed community transmission of COVID-19—with only a few cases recorded up until recently. Glen reflected on their experience during Tropical Cyclone Harold under border closures as they were the first country to respond to a devastating cyclone (Category 5) during the pandemic. The Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC) was mobilized immediately and they activated their cluster system. In contrast with other emergencies, local civil society organizations and responders were more involved in this response given that international assistance was not possible because of the border closure. He mentioned how they realized that they needed to be more prepared for this kind of scenario and how the private sector needed to play a more active role to support the current local disaster management capacity.

Glen further reflected on the impact of COVID-19 on response capacities of both international and local actors—emphasizing the long-term impact of the pandemic on resource capacities of humanitarian actors. This is related to his key point on how national disaster management organizations (NDMOs) and the private sector need to work together better, particularly in situations like Tropical Cyclone Harold where international response capacity is limited or not possible.

Fania Joseph, Executive Director, Alliance pour la Gestion des Risques et la Continuité des Activités (AGERCA)

AGERCA supports the government National Emergency Center of Operation in Haiti by coordinating private sector efforts during emergencies. For Hurricane Laura and COVID-19, AGERCA supported the National Emergency Center of Operation by opening two (2) lines for the facilitation of communication throughout the hurricane season with free telephone communication, as well as free and unlimited internet connection. They also distributed credit on the telephone of the various agents in the sector. She also shared how in several occasions, AGERCA helped in sending more than 3 million text messages to the population's cellular devices to support early warning and preparedness measures during emergencies.

Fania further shared how AGERCA promotes private sector engagement in humanitarian action by identifying companies, in particular its members, that can help in resource mobilization for humanitarian actions. In addition, she also shared how they continue to help promote awareness on the humanitarian principles and coordination mechanism among AGERCA's member companies. During crises, they coordinate the intervention of the private sector with the General Direction of Civil Protection.

As part of her sharing on the lessons learned on handling simultaneous emergencies, Fania mentioned that the challenges or constraints that the private sector experience in engaging in humanitarian action include, among others, the lack of an awareness campaign aimed at making the private sector more involved in humanitarian mechanisms and the need for regular engagement in simulation exercises. However, there are also significant opportunities for public-private partnership in humanitarian action which include the existence of the private sector alliance in disaster risk reduction via AGERCA to work within the National Risk and Disaster Management System. This ensures a more multi-agency and multi-sectoral coordination mechanism which can help enhance the way we deal with multi-risk scenarios.

Arda Batu, Secretary General, Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (TÜRKONFED)

Arda reflected on lessons learned during the Elazığ and Izmir earthquake and how TÜRKONFED, as a confederation of businesses and as a non-partisan actor, helps promote the engagement of the private sector in disaster risk management. He emphasized how they support local humanitarian actions by focusing on business and local economic recovery. He highlighted the need to continuously promote disaster risk awareness amongst enterprises (both large, and small-, medium-sized enterprises) given the urgency of the matter and the critical role of the business community in the quick restoration of local economic activities. Coordination between different industries and sectors is still important and the promotion of dialogue between these sectors is crucial—particularly in preparation for large-scale disasters such as a major earthquake.

Arda further shared how coordination between different local actors can benefit from sharing information (e.g., needs and damage assessment) just as how they shared situational reports during the Izmir earthquake. Effective coordination between different businesses and sectoral leaders and supporting the relevant local government authorities provide opportunities for business confederations like TÜRKONFED to assess the most appropriate way to contribute to the quick restoration of local economic activities.

Key Points

The session facilitated sharing of lessons learned from the CBI networks in Vanuatu, Haiti and Turkey which focused on the following:

- Partnerships with local business networks (e.g., local chambers, business federation, private sector platforms) can help make response efforts more systematic. Government, UN agencies and humanitarian and development actors should work with the private sector. The business community is an integral part of the local community.
- Coordination and engagement with the local and national disaster management organizations should be strengthened. The border closures highlighted the need to reflect on the current local capacity of countries—particularly on how the private sector served

as the first responders in the case of Vanuatu during Tropical Cyclone Harold. The private sector has the potential to help address gaps in resource allocation and distribution.

- While there is already a significant improvement in terms of awareness on disaster risk management, the business community still needs to internalise and act on disaster risk reduction and preparedness. Multi-stakeholder and multi-hazard contingency planning can be enhanced through the promotion of early warning system among enterprises and the inclusion of the private sector representatives in simulation exercises.
- Build on a localisation policy. Focus on in-country resources and expertise, and transition to an in-country response. Involve private sector in national disaster risk management mechanisms and facilitate sectoral cluster crisis units. These sectoral units can serve as platforms for sharing of real-time and useful disaster risk information. Also, maintain an active register of businesses for resource and capacity inventory.
- There is a need to change the mindset from competition to cooperation within private and public sectors. Cooperative and concerted efforts can help engage small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in disaster risk reduction and preparedness.

Follow-up activities / next steps

- CBi to explore activities to help advocate for more joint-planning activities between the government, humanitarian and private sectors and to help refine contingency planning processes;
- CBi to help promote risk-informed processes that actively involve private sector actors at relevant global, regional and national disaster risk management mechanisms and frameworks; and,
- Capture and share the practical examples and lessons learned – such as those discussed during the session – to help us collectively move towards a multi-stakeholder and multi-hazard contingency planning process. A detailed summary of the session discussion is available on the CBi website, [here](#).

Link to the recording

<https://www.connectingbusiness.org/CBi-annual-event-HNPW-2021>