



The Connecting Business initiative submission to the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

March 2021

This paper outlines recommendations from the Connecting Business initiative (CBI)¹ Secretariat to the High-Level Panel on International Displacement with a focus on leveraging private sector contributions to addressing internal displacement (i.e. thematic workstream #5 on private sector engagement). To align with the focus of the High-Level Panel, examples presented cover different contexts such as armed conflict and natural hazards.

1) Recognize the role of local actors, including the local private sector

Referencing the private sector only in the context of listing different stakeholders does not sufficiently recognize the potential of its engagement. Furthermore, its contributions should be recognized beyond financial donations or procurement. Its expertise, experience and connections can complement those of governments and international organizations in addressing the root causes and implications of displacement, including the needs of internally displaced people.

In particular, the role of the local private sector should not be overlooked. These businesses are present before a shock forces people to leave their homes and as an integral part of the societies in which they operate, have an incentive to support affected populations during and after crises. Yet disruptions such as armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations and natural hazards can have a grave impact also on the private sector itself. As facilities or equipment get damaged and supply chains interrupted, people's livelihoods may become compromised. But even with sometimes limited financial resources to donate, local businesses can make meaningful contributions. In fact, they are often among the first responders when a disaster has struck, delivering relief items and providing other lifeline services to affected communities. In 2020, in addition to fighting COVID-19, 9 CBI Member Networks² responded to a total of 19 crises. Among other things, they provided food and non-food items, sent early-warning messages, offered logistics support, conducted damage assessments and helped repair communication lines.

COVID-19 is also changing the humanitarian landscape, as movement restrictions and other mitigation measures make it difficult or impossible for many international organizations to travel and access affected areas. The role of local actors, particularly in humanitarian contexts, is increasing, providing an opportunity also for local businesses to play an even more significant role in the communities in which they operate. For example, after Tropical Cyclone Harold in April 2020, the CBI Member Network in Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC), was among the first stakeholders to arrive and deliver aid to some parts of the island of Espiritu Santo. In addition to helping supply over 35 tons of food and non-food items to 1,000 remote coastal households, the network Secretariat and business members worked with logistics and telecommunications companies to reconnect the islands after the

¹ The Connecting Business initiative (CBI) was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 to strategically engage the private sector before, during and after crises. Co-managed by OCHA and UNDP, it aims to integrate private sector networks into existing disaster management and humanitarian coordination structures. For more information, please visit www.connectingbusiness.org

² CBI Member Networks are business-led platforms that coordinate private sector contributions to disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, response and recovery. They work with the private sector and in partnership with governments, UN entities and civil society to build the resilience of businesses and societies. Currently CBI Member Networks exist in Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, Haiti, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Pacific, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Vanuatu.

cyclone. VBRC also undertook technical damage assessments in 14 of the worst hit villages on the West Coast of Espiritu Santo in the hours and days after the cyclone. To further plan for next steps, they conducted an aerial, ground and marine assessment. On the basis of the assessments, VBRC provided recommendations to the National Disaster Management Office, including on how to access remote settlements. Furthermore, VBRC members helped the Department of Environment conduct their Post Disaster Needs Assessment, calculating the loss and damage to biodiversity and ecosystem services. Later in the year, VBRC and Oxfam joined forces in piloting blockchain technology to provide direct assistance in the form of tap-and-pay cards benefitting vulnerable communities and local businesses.

2) Ensure coordination with the private sector

Recognizing the importance of coordinated action, the Connecting Business initiative calls for the private sector to be integrated into existing structures – be it for example national disaster management mechanisms or the humanitarian coordination architecture. This will help ensure that private sector contributions are aligned with broader efforts to prevent and respond to internal displacement. Establishing mechanisms through which the private sector receives timely information about priorities and needs will help them maximize the impact of their interventions.

Coordinated action will also enable the private sector to contribute as an equal partner, with clear responsibilities supporting local programming. This is well aligned with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the New Way of Working approach that highlight the importance of shared analysis, and collective priority setting, planning and programming to reduce need, risk and vulnerability. For example, the CBI Member Network in the Philippines, the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation, is part of the Humanitarian Country Team and its contributions are recognized alongside humanitarian and development organizations, including in the [COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan for the Philippines](#). Several CBI Member Networks also represent the private sector in committees led by national disaster management authorities. They have contributed to national policies on disaster risk management (for example in Madagascar) and helped develop national guidelines on topics ranging from elections to examinations (for example in Sri Lanka). Some networks are also invited to relevant UN Country Team meetings or UN-led working groups. Furthermore, humanitarian and development organizations regularly reach out to them with specific requests for support. Regardless of the mechanism, the private sector is in a better position to provide solutions to internal displacement when they are included in relevant decision making processes.

3) Leverage the power of collective private sector action

Private sector networks like CBI Member Networks or Global Compact Local Networks offer an entry point for the private sector to contribute to the broader UN agenda, from prevention to humanitarian response and development solutions³, but also enable governments, UN entities, civil society and others to reach several companies at once. These networks can help

³ UNDP in their submission to the UNSG's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement proposes the term "development solutions" instead of "durable solutions", highlighting the importance of nationally owned approaches that recognize IDPs not only as beneficiaries, but as contributors to the economies and societies of the host communities.

the private sector understand the frameworks for internal displacement, navigate the mandates of responsible stakeholders, and align their contributions with others to maximize their positive impact on vulnerable populations. Furthermore, networks can raise awareness and build the capacity of private sector entities – on conflict sensitivity, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian principles and more. Collective private sector engagement can also reduce duplication and increase the impact of private sector contributions. Compared with addressing issues alone, collective private sector action can also lower the risk of engagement, particularly in politically challenging contexts.

4) Scale what already exists and adapt examples to new contexts

Recognizing that the private sector is already taking action to address internal displacement, we should aim to leverage existing examples and explore how they can be adapted to different contexts.

For example, the CBI Member Network in the Philippines, the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), has been supporting internally displaced Maranaos since 2017 when the conflict displaced much of the population in Marawi City and nearby municipalities. Together with partners, PDRF has installed water tanks, mapped out options for restoring regular water supply and provided educational support kits to elementary schools and evacuation centers. Recognizing that income-generating opportunities are critical for longer-term recovery, PDRF and its partners have also implemented interventions around livelihood assistance and post-conflict business recovery. Through the Marawi Entrepreneurs' Forum and Job Fair in 2018, over 3,000 jobs were offered to Maranaos and capacity building sessions on financing and business recovery were organized for local entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Private sector entities and partners have also trained over 100 women on the traditional Langkit weaving and provided mentoring and financial literacy sessions to support their livelihoods.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CBI Member Network in Haiti, Alliance pour la Gestion des Risques et la Continuité des Activités (AGERCA), has worked with partners in communities that were created when displaced people from several municipalities relocated to the outskirts of Port-au-Prince after the 2010 earthquake. To address their needs, the partners have distributed food and hygiene kits, disinfected facilities such as schools and churches, set up handwashing stations in public places and trained people on the importance of COVID-19 mitigation measures.

5) Adopt a holistic view on private sector engagement and look for win-win solutions

Forcibly displaced people, including the internally displaced, can make significant contributions in the host communities in which they reside. They, too, are business-owners, employers, employees and consumers. Therefore in searching for longer-term solutions, internally displaced people should not be seen solely as beneficiaries of aid. The private sector can also support IDPs beyond philanthropic interventions and recognize them as economic actors. Adopting a core business approach – providing financial services and tailoring goods to the needs of internally displaced people, directly hiring IDPs or integrating IDP-owned

businesses in value chains etc. – will provide a natural entry point and thus increase the likelihood of private sector engagement.

In 2020, the CBI Member Network in Turkey, the Business for Goals platform, conducted several impact assessments to identify and respond to the needs of local businesses that were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They learned that Syrian-owned businesses were particularly vulnerable with the entrepreneurs citing disrupted supply chains, trouble making payments, additional care work at home, difficulties in teleworking, and insufficient working capital among some of the challenges. Recognizing that employees and business owners may indeed be among those displaced by any given crisis, the network recognized the importance of exploring ways of enhancing the resilience of particularly micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Scaling up private sector engagement in internal displacement will therefore require stakeholders – governments, UN entities, civil society and the private sector itself – to recognize the multiple reasons and ways for the private sector to support internally displaced people. It means expanding beyond the traditional ways of addressing the topic and acknowledging that in some instances private sector engagement could for example equate to supporting the continuity of IDP-owned businesses or providing access to finance.