



Enhancing Collaboration in International Disasters.

Canadian Businesses and Humanitarian Organizations

At a Glance

- This briefing details the findings of a Conference Board of Canada research project that sought to identify ways to enhance collaboration between humanitarian organizations and companies in Canada.
- Traditionally, companies respond only after a disaster of sufficient scale and impact has occurred. Moving beyond these post-event responses will require companies to adopt a more structured and planned engagement in international disaster response. Relationships will need to be developed over time, and with that will come a greater degree of ongoing engagement with humanitarian organizations.
- The Conference Board recommends four key initiatives to enhance collaboration between the sectors.

Executive Summary

The size, complexity, and vast economic and social impacts of international humanitarian disasters are necessitating a change in the way that society responds. Today it is likely that a response to a major international disaster will include all aspects of society at both the local and international levels: businesses, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), diaspora groups, and other actors. Yet, despite the recognition that a new approach to humanitarian response is emerging, relationships between Canadian companies and international disaster relief organizations are limited.

The Conference Board of Canada was engaged by the Humanitarian Coalition of Canada to conduct a research project to identify ways to enhance collaboration between humanitarian organizations and companies in Canada.

The research was conducted through a literature review, a short survey of select corporations in Canada active in their communities and around the world, and a second survey that targeted humanitarian organizations active in international disaster response. In parallel to the survey, workshops were held that explored some of the survey findings and identified opportunities to enhance collaboration between the sectors.

In January 2015, the Conference Board sent a survey to 108 companies with operations in Canada. Companies were selected because of their engagement in previous international disaster response as well as their leadership in community investment in Canada. A separate survey was sent to 14 humanitarian organizations with operations in Canada. Again, the organizations invited to participate represented organizations that have ongoing international disaster response programs.

Humanitarian organizations had expected business motivations—such as access to potential new customers and/or partners, expansion of market share, and access to new markets—to be higher in company rankings.

Survey responses were robust: 34 companies and 10 humanitarian organizations completed the survey. Company respondents included some of Canada’s largest companies and 11 were among Canada’s top 100 companies.

Respondents were asked to identify the main motivations for responding to humanitarian crises. It is interesting to note that both the private sector and the humanitarian sector had very similar top motivations for responding to humanitarian crises. (See Table 1.)

Table 1
Motivations for Engaging in Humanitarian Assistance

	Business	Humanitarian organizations
Top-ranked motivation	Helping people in need	Helping people in need
Second-highest-ranked motivation	Support the society that we operate in (“good citizen”)	Improved response to humanitarian crisis
Third-highest-ranked motivation	Goodwill/good relationships with affected communities	Goodwill/good relationships with affected communities

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Many humanitarian organizations reported surprise that—debunking existing preconceptions—the private sector ranked business motivations such as access to potential new customers and/or partners, expansion of market share, and access to new markets as the lowest-ranked motivations. Humanitarian organizations had expected business motivations to be higher in company rankings.

While recognizing their many contributions, company respondents also noted that they were ineffective when it came to proactive planning for disasters. Companies identified gaps in their approach that included a lack of:

- a dedicated crisis response budget;
- prior planning for responses to humanitarian crises;
- clear spending authorities for responses to international disasters.

Relationships will need to be developed over time, and with that will come a greater degree of ongoing engagement with humanitarian organizations.

It is not surprising that these elements are listed as the areas of organizational weakness, as only 25 per cent of company respondents said that they had a formal plan for international disaster response. Companies do see themselves as being affected by disasters and are aware of the pressures they face from employees and customers to respond to large disasters. Two key barriers will need to be overcome, internally and externally, to move beyond the ad hoc nature of many company responses. Traditionally, companies respond only after a disaster of sufficient scale and impact has occurred that motivates the company to respond “somehow.” The response is often through philanthropic initiatives involving the company’s community investment or foundation budget, employee-matching-donation initiatives, or by providing a way for customers to donate to relief efforts. Far less common are responses such as in-kind contributions of goods, staff time, or expertise. To be successful, timely, and effective, these types of in-kind contributions often require significant planning and preparation prior to a disaster.

Moving beyond these post-event responses will require companies to adopt a much more structured and planned engagement in international disaster response. Relationships will need to be developed over time, and with that will come a greater degree of ongoing engagement with humanitarian organizations. Companies also raised concerns around addressing staff safety, security, and the cost-effectiveness of humanitarian organizations.

All 10 humanitarian organizations that responded to the survey said they wanted stronger collaboration with companies. They recognize the opportunities that enhanced collaboration offers for improving responses to international disasters. However, despite their interest in collaboration, humanitarian organizations reported that they struggle with many of the key aspects of developing relationships with the private sector. In particular, they felt they needed help with:

1. developing relationships with potential private sector partners,
2. communicating the benefits of partnership for the company,

3. talking to prospective partners using the language and terms that businesses use,
4. identifying companies with which there might be an opportunity to collaborate,
5. understanding the benefits of partnership for their organization.

Based on the findings of this research project, The Conference Board of Canada recommends the following to enhance collaboration in international disasters between corporations and humanitarian organizations:

1. A communications and contacts hub be created to house crucial information for international disasters. The hub should contain information on who to contact in the event of a disaster, detail current humanitarian work in the area, provide a location to house research and tools related to cross-sector collaboration, and identify which organizations are active in which parts of the world.
2. A national dialogue be initiated on Canada's impact in the world of international disaster response. This could involve workshops, closed-door sessions, and larger national forums to create greater understanding of Canada's role and contributions to international humanitarian response and to identify opportunities for improvement.
3. Structured post-disaster briefings be held on lessons learned, successes, and accountability on a regular basis as part of engaging with corporations. This could begin with the response to the earthquakes in Nepal.
4. A series of tools and training initiatives be launched to increase awareness and create enhanced opportunities for collaboration between humanitarian organizations and the private sector in Canada.

In order to drive change and foster cross-sector collaboration, we recommend that an organization or group of organizations be tasked to seek funding and deliver the initiatives outlined in the recommendations. Our research clearly showed that the Humanitarian Coalition had an interest and developed capacity in promoting cross-sector collaboration

for Canadian humanitarian organizations (for both its members and non-members). The benefits of the Humanitarian Coalition's existing engagement in this space were evident. As the only legally constituted organization in Canada that brings together leading aid agencies for international disaster responses, the Humanitarian Coalition is well positioned to add the promotion of cross-sector collaboration to its mandate of increasing the impact of Canadian humanitarian responses. It has dedicated staff and experience that could continue to move this initiative forward and appears well suited to put into operation some of the above recommendations. The Conference Board of Canada therefore recommends that the Humanitarian Coalition be mandated by its members to promote the connections between humanitarian organizations and businesses in Canada for disaster response.

Canada's multicultural society, strong engagement in the global economy, and tradition of welcoming people from all corners of the world means that humanitarian disasters that occur anywhere in the world will have a Canadian connection. Enhancing the opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and planning will support more effective responses to international disasters.

Introduction

Natural and man-made disasters are increasingly having tremendous impacts on lives lost and the global economy. Swiss Re has estimated that the total economic losses from disaster events in 2014 were US\$113 billion.¹ This number reflects the fact that in 2014, relatively few major disasters took place. The World Bank has estimated that single disasters, such as the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami, have alone cost more than the 2014 global total.

The size, complexity, and vast economic and social impacts of these disasters are forcing a change in the way that society responds. Today it is likely that a response to a major international disaster will include all aspects of society at both the local and international levels: businesses, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), diaspora groups, and other actors. The increasingly globalized nature of companies, supply chains, and communities means that disasters halfway around the world have local impacts in Canada. Canada is not isolated from global disasters. Canadians want to contribute personally and they want to see the organizations they work for and buy from contribute to disaster relief.

However, today relationships between Canadian companies and international disaster relief organizations are limited. For example, a 2013 Conference Board of Canada study found that only \$1.8 million of the \$710 million (less than a quarter of a per cent) contributed by corporations as community investment went to international disaster relief.² Although dollars contributed should not be the sole metric to assess the relationship between the sectors, most corporations reported that they do not have plans for how they will contribute to an international disaster, nor do they have clearly defined criteria for how and when their company will respond to international disasters.

1 Swiss Re.

2 Bassett, 32.

Globally, a number of leading corporations and their partners in the humanitarian sector are seeking to move away from a purely reactive approach to disaster response.

As a result, corporate responses to disasters are largely reactive and ad hoc. This results in misallocated efforts, confusion, and frustration, and can leave corporations, their employees, and customers wondering about the impact of the funds they raise and the resources they provide. The lack of planning processes impacts the ability to form ongoing long-term relationships with the humanitarian sector. From a humanitarian perspective, this lack of prior planning results in wasted efforts trying to respond to well-intentioned but poorly timed corporate responses that come in while the organizations are in the middle of a disaster relief program.

Globally, a number of leading corporations and their partners in the humanitarian sector are seeking to move away from a purely reactive approach. They are looking to identify opportunities for collaboration, to better plan for disaster response, and to more clearly understand the myriad ways international disasters affect their organizations.

Canadian corporations have demonstrated a willingness to respond to international and national disasters. An opportunity exists to develop the means and the processes needed to strengthen the response in Canada.

Project Overview

The Conference Board of Canada was engaged by the Humanitarian Coalition to conduct a research project to identify ways to enhance collaboration between humanitarian organizations and companies in Canada. The specific objectives of the project were as follows:

1. Identify the respective capacities, motivations (interests), and limitations of, and barriers to, Canadian humanitarian and business actors for collaboration in humanitarian response.
2. Identify specific opportunities for collaboration between Canadian business and humanitarian organizations that support improved international disaster response capacity.

3. Identify resources and processes that could support effective cross-sector partnerships that improve international humanitarian response. Develop and validate feasible models for effective Canadian cross-sector partnerships.

The research was conducted through a literature review, a short survey of select corporations in Canada active in their communities and around the world, and a second survey that targeted humanitarian organizations active in international disaster response. The survey was circulated in January 2015 and responses were collected to the end of March 2015.

Following the survey, a series of three workshops was held that explored some of the survey findings and examined opportunities to enhance collaboration between the sectors. Workshops were held in Montréal, Ottawa, and Toronto.

This briefing outlines the findings of the research project. Following a brief overview of the findings, we present a series of recommendations that address gaps identified in Canada. The briefing concludes with some reflections on additional questions about the Canadian responses to international disasters.

Enhancing Collaboration

In January 2015, The Conference Board of Canada sent a survey to a select group of 108 companies with operations in Canada. Companies that were invited to complete this survey were selected because of their engagement in previous international disaster responses as well as their leadership in community investment in Canada. A separate survey was sent to 14 humanitarian organizations with operations in Canada. As with the corporate sector invitations, the humanitarian organizations represented organizations that have ongoing international disaster response programs. The intention of the selection process was to solicit feedback from those organizations that have mature programs and that are most likely to be in a position to engage in a form of collaboration for international disaster response.

Survey responses were robust, as 34 companies and 10 humanitarian organizations took the time to complete the survey. Company respondents included some of Canada's largest companies. Twenty-two respondents are on the FP500 list of Canada's largest companies by revenue and 11 are among Canada's top 100 companies. Respondents comprised a cross-section of Canadian industries, including transportation, energy, mining, retail, and media. The survey was sent to the senior executive responsible for community investment within the company.

Company Responses

Private sector respondents indicated that they had all responded to at least one international humanitarian disaster in the past. The most common international disasters to which the companies had responded were sudden-onset natural disasters, including the following:

- Haitian earthquake (2010)—70 per cent
- Japanese earthquake (2011)—59 per cent
- Philippines Typhoon Haiyan (2013)—59 per cent

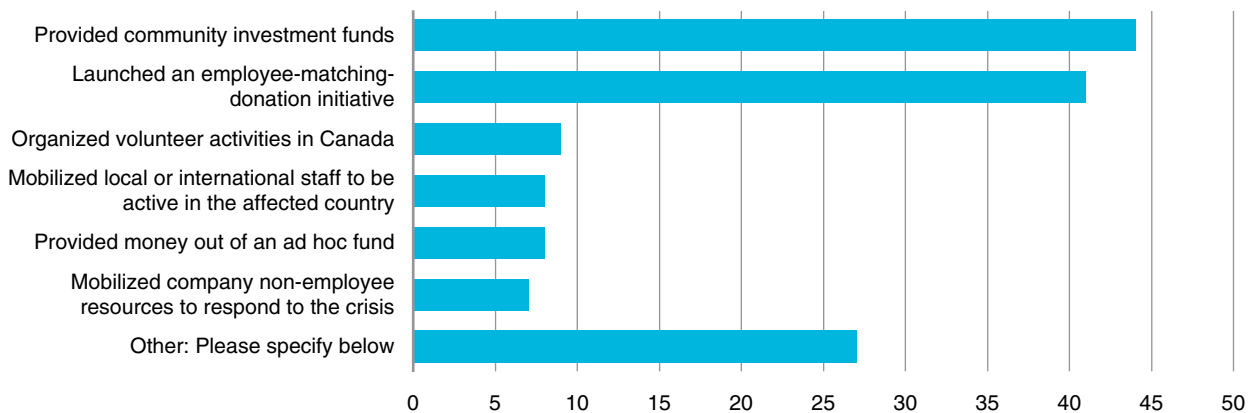
The international humanitarian disasters that had received the lowest levels of engagement were the slower-developing challenges, such as the Syrian refugee crisis of 2013 (9 per cent); the East African drought of 2011 (9 per cent); and the West African Ebola outbreak of 2014 (15 per cent). Although the survey focused on international disaster response, over 70 per cent of the companies chose to indicate that they had responded to a disaster that occurred in Canada, such as the flooding in Alberta in 2013, the Lac Megantic rail disaster of 2013, and other natural disasters such as flooding and ice storms. Sixty-eight per cent of respondents said their company had been directly affected by a natural or man-made disaster.

In discussions, companies noted that there is little distinction made between international and domestic disaster relief within the company. The company determines whether to respond based on an analysis

of each situation and the company’s ability to contribute to the disaster relief. This is an important distinction, as many international humanitarian organizations focus only on disasters outside of Canada.

Company responses to these international disasters were largely grouped with relation to financial support—either from the company’s community investment fund or through its engagement with its employees in a matching donation campaign. Less than 10 per cent of the companies said that they had organized volunteer activities in Canada, mobilized local or international staff in the affected country, or mobilized non-financial resources (such as in-kind contributions) for these disasters. (See Chart 1.)

Chart 1
Most Common Responses to International Disasters
 (percentage of companies)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Other approaches include:

- customer-focused initiatives, including collecting customer donations;
- programs to incentivize customers to donate their rewards points to international disaster relief;

- the waiving of fees related to transactions related to disaster relief;
- initiatives to fast-track the distribution of medicines to combat disease;
- the transportation of goods or individuals to the disaster zone.

Company respondents reported that they felt their company's responses were most effective with regard to their own operations, including having clear lines of accountability, knowing the company's strengths and potential contributions, and having a rapid response plan for humanitarian disasters. However, company respondents said they were ineffective when it came to being proactive in planning for disasters. The responses that received the lowest scores on effectiveness were:

- having a dedicated crisis response budget;
- planning for their response to humanitarian crises;
- having clear spending guidelines for responses to international disasters.

It is not surprising that these elements are listed as the areas of organizational weakness, as they would only be in place with a structured response to humanitarian crises. Only 25 per cent of the company respondents said they had a formal plan for international disaster response. Key elements of a formal plan for disaster response include:

- management structures and spending guidelines to inform decision-making;
- a detailed communications plan to get the word out about the company's response to its employees, customers, and other stakeholders;
- a dedicated portion of the community investment budget;
- a rapid response plan for the first 24 hours of a crisis;
- the identification of company resources and in-kind contributions that could be made.

The remaining three-quarters of company respondents that do not have a plan indicated that the top two reasons they did not were because 1) there was a belief within the company that it would "rally around" any crisis that is sufficiently large and 2) their company's operations were

A key business concern is the need for companies to have improved lines of communication with humanitarian organizations.

only in Canada. These barriers to creating a formal plan are important in the context of enhancing collaboration, since they effectively limit the opportunities for proactive engagement that is necessary for longer-term relationship-building. Company respondents also identified a number of barriers to enhanced private sector engagement in international disasters. The top five barriers were:

1. concerns about the ability to ensure staff safety and security;
2. concerns about cost-effectiveness;
3. logistical challenges/access to reach those affected;
4. concerns about PR/brand and reputation challenges;
5. uncertainly and lack of clarity on what the organization can do to help.

Yet despite these barriers, survey responses indicated that there is an appetite to improve the engagement of companies in international disaster responses. Companies do see themselves as being affected by disasters and are aware of the pressures on them from their employees and customers to respond to large disasters. When asked what humanitarian organizations could do to improve business responses to humanitarian crises, it became clear that a key business concern is the need for companies to have improved lines of communication with humanitarian organizations. Company respondents highlighted that they often do not know who to contact within the humanitarian world prior to and during humanitarian crises. They expressed a desire for humanitarian organizations to more clearly and concisely inform the private sector about what is needed in the crisis response.

Private sector respondents also highlighted the need for the impact of their activities in disaster-affected communities to be shared in a way that they could communicate this information back to their employees and customers following a humanitarian response.

Despite the desire to be more engaged and to have a better sense of the impact they have had, corporations must also turn their attention to their own internal processes and procedures. Unless companies invest the time and effort in developing a plan for how and when they will respond to humanitarian crises, they will be unable to move beyond

the ad hoc nature of many company responses. Only through advance planning can companies establish the strong relationships with the humanitarian sector that could lead to increased effectiveness and better communication of the outcomes of humanitarian response. It is clear that companies will need to change their internal planning process to allow for meaningful engagement with the humanitarian community.

We now turn to the key findings from the survey of humanitarian organizations.

Humanitarian Organization Responses

All 10 humanitarian organizations that responded to the survey said they wanted stronger collaboration with companies. While they recognize the opportunities for enhanced engagement in international disaster responses, they also expressed a number of concerns about the costs and risks associated with a closer relationship with corporations.

Just over half of the humanitarian organizations reported that they had ongoing partnerships or collaborations with companies. For these organizations, the benefits of the partnership are principally financial (to solicit funds) and reputational (to build brand and communications outreach). The lowest-rated potential benefit for humanitarian organizations from a partnership is access to on-the-ground expertise and experience.

Despite the significant interest in collaboration, humanitarian organizations reported that they struggle with many of the key aspects of developing relationships with the private sector. (See Chart 2.) They felt they needed the most help in the areas of:

1. developing relationships with potential private sector partners;
2. communicating the benefits of partnership for the company;
3. talking to prospective partners using the language and terms that businesses use;
4. identifying companies with which there might be an opportunity to collaborate;
5. understanding the benefits of partnership for their organization.

Chart 2

Self-Assessed Effectiveness of Humanitarian Organizations

(rating on a scale of 1 to 5)*



*where 1 = very weak and 5 = very strong level of effectiveness
 Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Canadian humanitarian organizations noted that partnerships with private sector organizations are often challenging to develop and maintain. While some large humanitarian organizations have individuals who are responsible for building and maintaining partnerships, many Canadian organizations do not have positions dedicated to these relationships. In discussion, some participants expressed a concern over the cost in terms of time and effort that building collaboration requires. Despite these concerns, humanitarian organizations remained optimistic that with the right partner, there would be significant opportunities for the organization to improve its response to international disasters.

In addition to the elements listed above, an overarching challenge for these collaborations is the difficulty establishing meaningful relationships between the sectors prior to an emergency. Between crises is the

best time to establish relationships and share information, but that is often the most difficult time for the private sector to turn its attention toward potential future disasters and the company's responses to them. It is challenging for community investment officers to respond meaningfully to humanitarian organizations when they do not have the appropriate processes in place to guide a company's potential response to humanitarian disasters. Beyond philanthropy, it is conceivably even more complicated to initiate an operations-level discussion about emergency preparedness.

Different Organizational Purposes, Overlapping Motivations

Despite the differences in organizational structures and mandates, it is striking that both corporations and humanitarian organizations list similar motivations for engaging in international disaster response. Both types of organizations reported shared top motivations for engaging in international disaster response efforts. Both listed their top motivations as helping people in need and goodwill/good relationships with affected communities. (See Table 2.)

Table 2
Motivations for Engaging in Humanitarian Assistance

	Business	Humanitarian organizations
Top-ranked motivation	Helping people in need	Helping people in need
Second-highest-ranked motivation	Support the society that we operate in ("good citizen")	Improved response to humanitarian crisis
Third-highest-ranked motivation	Goodwill/good relationships with affected communities	Goodwill/good relationships with affected communities

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

In follow-up consultations, some humanitarian organizations expressed surprise that the private sector-ranked business motivations at the bottom of its list. Despite the perspective that corporations are always

Despite the differences in organizational structures and mandates, it is striking that both corporations and humanitarian organizations list similar motivations for engaging in international disaster response.

looking for a business angle from their engagements, corporations placed traditional business reasons such as access to new geographies, new market share, new customers, and increased profits at the bottom of their list of motivations for international disaster response. It is possible that the top motivations reported by corporations would have been different had the survey respondents not been primarily from the community investment sector. While it is highly likely that individuals from across a company would have different motivations for engaging, the community investment officer is likely the most connected to the primary corporate motivations for engaging in the community. Key directions for community investment are often established with the strong input of the CEO and senior executives within the organization. The overlapping primary motivations for organizations to engage in humanitarian response indicate that there is strong potential for collaboration based on a mutual desire to help people in need. The low ranking of business motivations by the private sector indicates that some of the skepticism and concern from humanitarian organizations around the expected profit motivation of private sector actors in humanitarian response is ill-founded. This perception suggests a barrier that humanitarian organizations may need to overcome if they are to pursue greater engagement with the private sector

Following this short overview of the survey findings, we provide a series of recommendations to enhance collaboration.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: A Centralized Hub Be Created for International Disaster Response

Participants in this research project indicated that one of the biggest weaknesses in responding to international disasters today is lack of awareness about who to contact in the event of a disaster. Businesses reported that they often did not know who to contact at humanitarian organizations to determine how they might be able to help in response to disasters. For their part, humanitarian organizations said that in the midst

of a disaster, they cannot dedicate the time and effort to seeking out and building relationships with private sector partners. Such relationships work best when they are established prior to a disaster.

Humanitarian organizations also shared anecdotal stories of receiving in-kind contributions that, while given with the best of intentions, were often not what was needed during the disaster. Processing these misaligned contributions took time, effort, and resources that could otherwise have been put to better use. A centralized information hub could address this gap and provide a central location for information in international disaster response. One example would be for the hub to identify the typical goods and services required in response to different international disasters to help guide corporate contributions.

A model for this type of initiative is available through the U.S. Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI) (www.cidi.org/). CIDI has been in operation since 1988, and the website provides numerous tools to support organizations and individuals in response to international humanitarian disasters. There is currently no centralized hub of this type in Canada. Key questions that remain unanswered in the research conducted for this project include who will fund this information hub and which organizations will be able to access and benefit from it.

The Conference Board of Canada recommendation:

The Conference Board of Canada recommends that a communications and contacts hub be created to house crucial information for international disasters. The hub should contain information on who to contact in the event of a disaster, detail current humanitarian work in the area, provide a location to house research and tools related to cross-sector collaboration, and identify which organizations are active in which parts of the world.

Recommendation 2: A National Dialogue Be Held on Canada's Impact in the World of International Disaster Response

While survey participants felt there was significant goodwill for international disaster responses from Canadians, there remains much misunderstanding around how Canadian organizations, communities, and companies are responding. In discussions, representatives from companies and the humanitarian sector reported that they were not aware of the contributions that other Canadian organizations were making.

The humanitarian sector should work to more effectively communicate the Canadian contributions to disaster relief. These should include stories on impacts and focus on the immediate and long-term impacts and outcomes from Canadian involvement, engagement, and collaboration. While highlighting success and impacts is an important element of this dialogue, it should also include opportunities to learn from previous responses to ensure that mistakes are not repeated. To the extent possible, the audience for this national dialogue should include humanitarian organizations, government representatives, and representatives of the private sector. Each of these sectors has an important role to play in humanitarian response, and the dialogue should ensure that representatives from each sector are appropriately and effectively engaged.

This national dialogue could seek to address some of the gaps that exist between humanitarian organizations and corporations. The research project identified a number of these gaps, including misperceptions around corporate motivations for contributing to disaster relief, barriers in communication and language between the sectors, and challenges in establishing and maintaining the long-term relationships needed for enhanced collaboration. This lack of a common language reduces the ability of both types of organization to identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration. In addition, the lack of comfort with crucial

A national dialogue on Canada's impact on international disaster response should provide multiple avenues for engagement.

business concepts such as profit and return on investment could lead the humanitarian sector to reject potential opportunities for collaboration without fully assessing their potential value.

To address this concern, the dialogue could include focused and specific workshops to increase the levels of comfort and ease in engagement between humanitarian organizations and corporations. These workshops should target the senior leadership of humanitarian organizations who will be responsible for building and strengthening collaboration with the private sector.

Given the blurry line many corporations reported concerning their responses to disasters in Canada and internationally, the discussions could also feature lessons in corporate–NGO collaboration from responses to Canadian natural disasters. The goal of the broader dialogue would be to reinforce the strengths of Canadian responses and identify areas where improvements can be found. These discussions should explore the Canadian contributions from different angles and feature a discussion of the contributions by humanitarian organizations, the private sector, and governments. The dialogue could be structured as a series of roundtables or events, allowing stakeholders to engage with one another on an ongoing basis. This would serve to build awareness and relationships to support future collaboration. This initiative should have two objectives: 1) to highlight and raise awareness of the impact of Canadian responses to international humanitarian disasters and 2) to identify ways to improve future responses.

This national dialogue on Canada's impact on international disaster response should provide multiple avenues for dialogue of varying levels of intensity with regard to time and effort across the country to allow for a wide range of engagements. Potential forums for this discussion could include:

- panels on cross-sector collaboration on Canadian and international humanitarian conferences;
- communications initiatives to draw attention to and celebrate Canadian contributions;

- cross-sector workshops and training sessions;
- sector-specific workshops;
- identifying opportunities to engage in industry association events;
- cross-Canada meetings one-on-one or involving multiple organizations;
- cross-sector breakfast and networking events.

The Conference Board of Canada recommendation:

The Conference Board of Canada recommends that a national dialogue be initiated on strengthening and recognizing Canada's impact in the world of international disaster response. This dialogue could involve workshops, dialogue sessions, and larger national forums to create greater understanding of Canada's role and contributions to international humanitarian response and to strengthen opportunities for future responses. The target audience for this national dialogue would be fourfold: 1) humanitarian organizations, 2) corporations, 3) governments, and 4) the media (and, through them, Canadians).

Recommendation 3: Structured Post-Disaster Briefings Be Held

Another important gap noted was that both businesses and humanitarian organizations have few opportunities to stop and reflect on what went well and what didn't during a disaster response. Companies reported that it is difficult to get the information they need and expect around how their contributions to international disaster response have been used and what the impacts have been. While accountability for resources provided is an important motivator here, it isn't the only reason companies are seeking to understand where their money went.

Companies reported that they had difficulty determining whether and how their contributions made an impact. For many companies, engaging their resources, their employees, and their companies in a response to an international disaster is a major corporate initiative. Once the

company has decided to become invested, a link is formed between the company and the communities affected. Comments provided in the survey illustrate the challenge facing companies:

“Help us realize we made an impact. At some level. That’s never truly felt, in my experience.”

“We would prefer to take a longer term view on the initial crisis until the country or region is able to fend for themselves.”

Humanitarian organizations reported that from their perspective there should be better opportunities to share lessons learned—what worked and what could be improved. Interestingly, humanitarian organizations also indicated that they felt companies were missing opportunities to leverage the impacts that their contributions had had. In contrast to a cynical “greenwashing” perspective, humanitarian organizations were keen to have the successes of Canadian responses to international disasters shared by companies with their employees, customers, and suppliers.

The Conference Board of Canada recommendation:

The Conference Board of Canada recommends that structured post-disaster briefings on lessons learned, successes, and accountability be held after major disasters and as a regular part of engaging with corporations. This could begin with the response to the earthquakes in Nepal.

Recommendation 4: That Tools Be Provided to Support Collaboration

In their responses to the survey and in discussion, humanitarian organizations said that they experienced a number of barriers in creating more effective relationships with private sector organizations. These included concerns about knowing who to partner with, knowing what effective partnerships looked like, and being unsure of the benefits of partnership to the organization. The following tools and training will help to address this area of concern.

Many companies have difficulty overcoming their company's resistance to take a more formal approach to planning for international disaster response.

Tool 1: A Guide to Partnership

A guide to partnership should be created that outlines what effective partnerships between humanitarian organizations and businesses look like. What are the elements of an effective partnership? What are the benefits? What commitments are expected from businesses and NGOs? Why do partnerships need to be created ahead of time? How can corporations plan to have clear lines of spending authority to respond quickly to a disaster? What would be involved in a framework to guide decision-making on responding to a disaster? The guide could include key questions to ask about their own organization and the potential partner when seeking to establish partnerships. This document could draw extensively on similar guides developed by the United Nations, other countries, and large international humanitarian organizations. The emphasis would be to draw from the established research and customize as needed for Canada.

Tool 2: A Business Case Analysis Linking Companies in Canada to International Disasters

Most companies in Canada take an ad hoc approach to international disaster response—they wait for a disaster of sufficient magnitude to hit before considering how to respond. This is recognized as an ineffective way to respond, yet many companies said that they have difficulty overcoming their company's resistance to take a more formal approach to planning for international disaster response. There is an opportunity to highlight the business case for a more proactive engagement by companies in international humanitarian response prior to disasters.

This business case could highlight the various ways in which international disasters affect Canadian businesses to overcome the perception that companies that operate only in Canada are not affected. It could include analysis of the benefits of formal planning for the company's response to international humanitarian disasters. Finally, it could provide important information about the humanitarian organizations operating in Canada—their areas of focus, the types of responses they provide, and the principles that guide their decision-making process for responding to international disasters.

Other tools may be identified in the course of development and delivery of the ideas outlined above.

The Conference Board of Canada recommendation:

The Conference Board of Canada recommends that a series of tools and training initiatives be launched to increase awareness and create enhanced opportunities for collaboration between humanitarian organizations and the private sector in Canada.

Observation

In the course of this research project, it became clear that there is a gap in the Canadian international disaster response community. Prior to the launch of the Humanitarian Coalition's project in this area in 2014, there were no ongoing structured efforts to document and strengthen the relationship between humanitarian organizations and the private sector in Canada for emergencies.

As the only legally constituted organization in Canada that brings together leading aid agencies for international disaster fundraising, the Humanitarian Coalition is well positioned to add the promotion of cross-sector collaboration to its mandate of increasing the impact of Canadian humanitarian responses. In the context of this project, the benefits of the Humanitarian Coalition's existing engagement in this space were evident. Significant work could occur in this space. The Humanitarian Coalition has dedicated staff and experience that could continue to move this initiative forward. The Humanitarian Coalition and its members would need to consider to what extent these cross-sector collaboration initiatives would be focused exclusively on its members or provided to the broader humanitarian sector. Other forums for discussion among humanitarian organizations, such as the Humanitarian Response Network, should be engaged in the dialogue to advance this work to create synergies and avoid duplication.

Funding would also need to be found for many of the initiatives. Funding sources to conduct this work could include support from the federal government (such as was secured for the first phase of this cross-sector collaboration initiative). Other sources could include sector associations

(such as in the high-tech or mining sector) as well as private sector partners. While some initiatives (such as the platform) would require comprehensive funding, other aspects of the recommendations (such as the national dialogue) could be funded on an incremental basis depending on the funding identified and the priority placed on various initiatives. In-kind contributions may also be an avenue to advance some of these initiatives (such as an in-kind contribution of time or IT infrastructure for the platform or the co-hosting of workshops and dialogue sessions).

The Conference Board of Canada recommendation:

The Conference Board of Canada recommends that the Humanitarian Coalition be mandated by its members to promote the connections between humanitarian organizations and businesses in Canada for disaster response and that it seek opportunities and funding to further enhance its contributions to its members and the private sector in this regard.

Conclusion

The constant threat of natural and man-made disasters was highlighted over the course of this research project. Coming near the end of the research project, the earthquakes in Nepal underscored in stark detail the need for enhanced collaboration between corporations and the humanitarian sector. While a number of initiatives are under way—such as the research project conducted by the Humanitarian Coalition and others happening globally in the lead-up to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit—survey findings and the discussions conducted as part of this research indicate that much more can be done to understand and create the winning conditions for enhanced cross-sector collaboration in emergencies. The four recommendations outlined in this briefing to enhance collaboration in response to international disasters in Canada are as follows:

1. A centralized information hub be created for international disaster response.

2. A national dialogue be held on Canada's impact in the world of international disaster response.
3. Structured post-disaster briefings be held with corporations.
4. Tools be provided to support cross-sector collaboration.

These recommendations should contribute to an enhanced environment where corporations and humanitarian organizations have greater opportunities to explore and embark upon collaboration. While the research focused on those organizations that are already active in responding to international disasters, the recommendations should also support the engagement of less-engaged organizations. The recommendations focus on greater information, dialogue, and increased opportunities to learn from the successes and challenges of other organizations, which will help experienced organizations as well as organizations that are new to international humanitarian disasters.

Additional Research

During the course of the research, a number of additional areas for research and discussion that were outside of the scope of this project became apparent. These include the following.

1. Investigating the impact of government regulations on international disaster response

One area that has been the subject of considerable effort by corporations and humanitarian organizations in the United States concerns the disincentives for corporate donations to international disasters through regulations and tax structures.³ There has been no similar study in Canada. A study in this area in the U.S. identified a number of tax and regulatory barriers that had implications for the types of partnerships into which U.S. organizations could enter.⁴ Canada may have similar hidden barriers to corporate support for humanitarian

3 Schiedel, 15–16.

4 Ibid., 16.

Moving beyond philanthropy alone was seen by humanitarian organizations as a crucial step in fostering effective cross-sector partnerships.

relief in its tax and regulatory structures. One example provided by a corporate participant is the impact of accounting principles that prevent organizations from budgeting for an event or occurrence that may not happen.

2. Understanding the relationship between corporate structures and corporate engagement in humanitarian response

In discussions, a number of humanitarian organizations spoke of an interest in collaboration leading to corporate contributions beyond philanthropic support, exploring the potential of operation-to-operation dialogue. Moving beyond philanthropy alone was seen by humanitarian organizations as a crucial step in fostering effective cross-sector partnerships. The role of the private sector in disaster-affected communities is a key element of the broader research where there is both concern around and interest in the “private sector alternative,” where private sector actors could replace traditional humanitarian actors.⁵

There are significantly different opportunities to partner and engage with corporate partners, depending on their ownership structure and whether they are Canadian multinational corporations (MNCs) or Canadian firms that operate as the Canadian branch of a global multinational. The approach and opportunities for engagement would be different for Canadian MNCs than for Canadian branches, which may have their non-financial response coordinated through global headquarters or the local branch office.

Corporate structures have a significant impact on the types of collaboration that could be pursued. Corporations that do not provide goods or services that are needed in an emergency or that are nationally owned and operate only in Canada are likely to be able to be engaged in collaboration only through a philanthropic lens. However, companies with global operations or that provide goods and services that are crucial in a humanitarian disaster (such as search and rescue, infrastructure,

5 Zyck and Kent, 25.

and communications) may present opportunities for collaboration that go beyond philanthropy and that could yield mutually beneficial deep partnerships. Knowing the corporate structure and the likely collaboration opportunities these structures present in Canada is an important research question as this work progresses.

3. Knowing where Canadian firms are operating in disaster-affected areas

Another element that would support effective collaboration would be the identification and mapping of the large operations of Canadian headquartered firms around the world. This process could help to identify companies with operations in disaster-prone areas and spark a discussion around in-country capacities.

Canada's Increasingly Deep Connections to Humanitarian Disasters

The research project examined the current situation, barriers to, and opportunities for enhanced collaboration in international disasters between corporations and humanitarian organizations. This is an emerging area of practice around the world as international disasters increasingly involve multiple actors from business, government, and the humanitarian sector.

Canada's multicultural society, strong engagement in the global economy, and tradition of welcoming people from all corners of the world mean that humanitarian disasters that occur anywhere in the world will have a Canadian connection. Enhancing the opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and planning will support more effective responses to international disasters.

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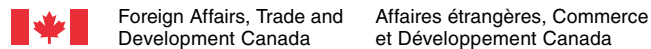
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The findings and conclusions of this briefing are entirely the responsibility of The Conference Board of Canada, not of the project sponsor or any of the reviewers of drafts. Any errors or omissions in fact or interpretation remain the sole responsibility of The Conference Board of Canada.



APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

Organizations That Contributed to the Research Project

Representatives from the following organizations participated in one or more aspects of the research project (survey, dialogue, workshops). The findings and conclusions of this briefing are entirely the responsibility of The Conference Board of Canada, not of the project sponsors or any of the contributors to the research. Any errors or omissions in fact or interpretation remain the sole responsibility of The Conference Board of Canada.

Action Contre la Faim	Canadian Pacific
Aéroport de Montréal	Capital Power
Air Canada Foundation	CARE Canada
Allied BioScience Canada / Kon Terra	CBSR (Canadian Business for Social Responsibility)
Assiniboine Credit Union	CECI
AstraZeneca Canada Inc.	CIBC-
B2Gold Corp.	CIBC Mellon
Best Buy Canada	Civeo Corporation
BNP Paribas	ConocoPhillips Canada
Bombardier Recreational Products	Deloitte Canada
Burnbrae Farms Ltd.	Desjardins Group
Calgary Co-operative Association	Développement international Desjardins
Cameco	Développement et Paix

EDF Energy	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
Ellio	Publicis
Environics	Red Cross
Export Development Canada	Rona Canada
Fluor Canada Ltd.	Royal Bank of Canada
Handicap International	Save the Children Canada
IAMGOLD Corporation	Shoppers Drug Mart
Indigo Books and Music	Société de transport de Montréal
Investors Group	Suncor Energy
JD Irving, Limited	Talisman Energy Inc.
Journalists for Human Rights	Target Canada
Logistique SCI	The Mosaic Company
LoyaltyOne	Toronto Star
Mackenzie Investments Charitable Foundation	UN Global Compact
Maillon Vert	UNICEF Canada
Mastercard Incorporated	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
McKesson Canada	Vermilion Energy Inc.
Merck Canada Inc.	Viterra Inc.
Oxfam Canada	Walmart Canada
Oxfam Québec	WestJet Airlines Ltd.
PayPal	World Food Programme
Pearson Canada Inc.	World Vision Canada
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The Conference Board
of Canada

255 Smyth Road, Ottawa ON

K1H 8M7 Canada

Tel. 613-526-3280

Fax 613-526-4857

Inquiries 1-866-711-2262

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