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### Acknowledgements

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## What our partners say

*“Coordination with the private sector for enhanced and effective humanitarian principled responses is CBI’s core strength. CBI has built from its unique value proposition, which includes harnessing coordination with the private sector and its expertise and unique capacities to respond effectively to disasters and complex crises around the world.”*



**Emmanuel N. Nougba**

Chief (Acting), Private Sector Engagement, Diaspora and Innovation Division. Office of Global Policy, Partnerships, Programs and Communications. Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. USAID

*“The private sector is key to the development of a country and should be an essential partner in humanitarian action. It is important to create an enabling environment for the sustainability of private-sector investments in disaster risk management. Partnerships between humanitarian organizations and private-sector networks like PSHP Madagascar are critical in strengthening this.”*



**Isabelle Salabert**

Executive Director, AXIAN Foundation / President, Private Sector Humanitarian Platform Madagascar

## At a glance



### Crisis response and recovery

A category 5 cyclone struck Vanuatu in April, making it the first country in the world to respond to a major cyclone while its borders were closed. The local CBI network, the Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC) helped supply over 1,000 remote coastal households with 35 tonnes of food and NFIs over eight weeks, working with private-sector partners, NGOs and the UN to support the government.

[Read more about CBI Member Networks crisis response and recovery activities on pages 7 and 10-15](#)



### COVID-19

CBI worked closely with the UN system, member networks and other partners to support the health response, strengthen crisis management (preparedness, response and recovery) and address critical economic impacts.

[Read more about CBI's COVID-19 response on pages 9, 10-15 and 17](#)



### Gender, Disaster Management and the Private Sector

CBI launched a new publication on how gender considerations influence private-sector disaster management and how interlinked actions addressing gender, disaster management and the private sector can provide win-win solutions that benefit people, business and society as a whole.

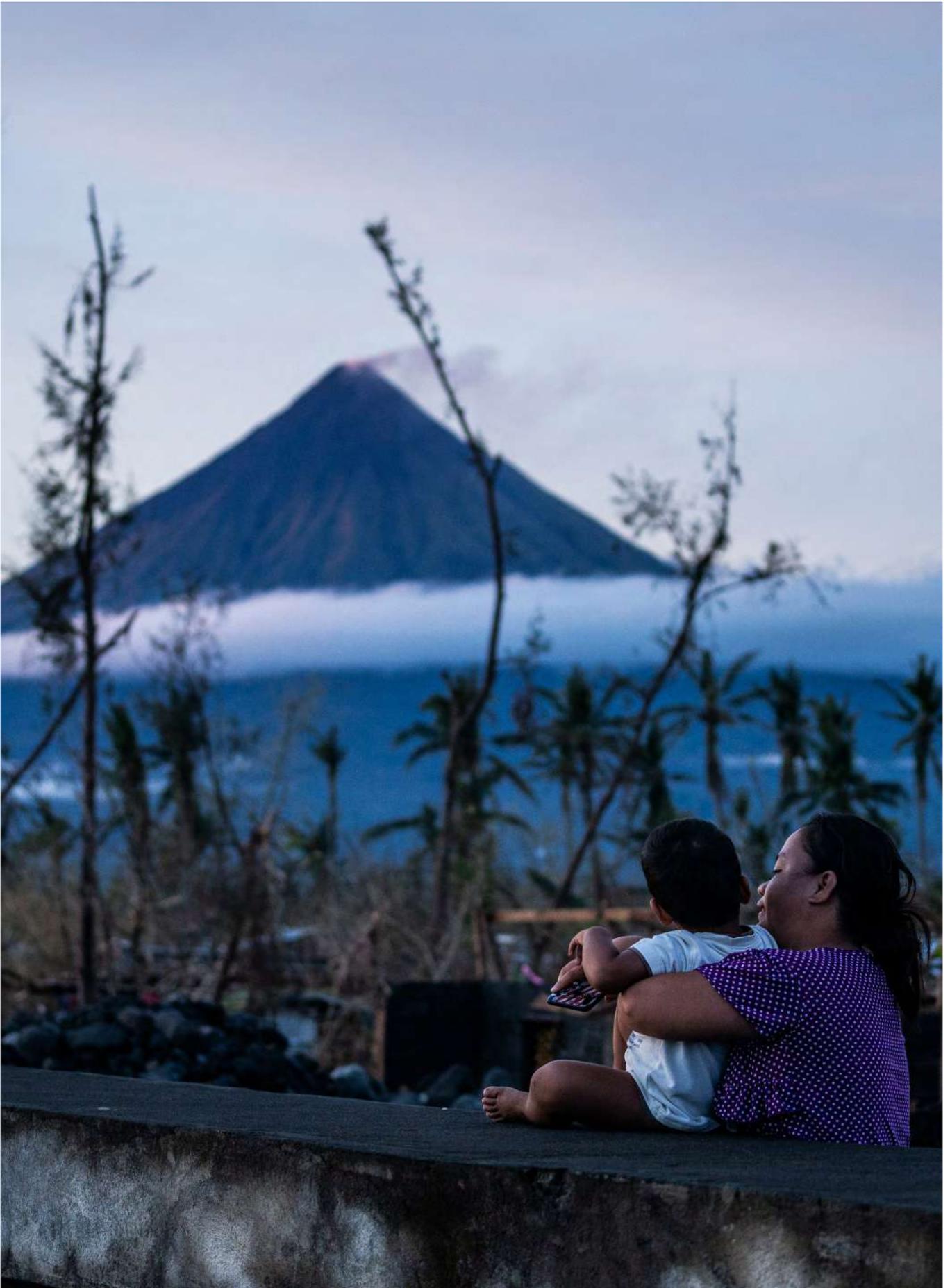
[Read more about addressing knowledge gaps on page 17](#)



### CBI Annual Event

CBI brought its networks and partners together to share experiences, learn from one another and discuss opportunities for collaboration.

[Read more about CBI events on page 18.](#)



**Malinao, Philippines**

Residents of Barangay Baybay in Malinao, Albay, in the Philippines, rummage through what was left of their destroyed homes, a week after Typhoon Goni destroyed most of their village.. *Photo: Martin San Diego/OCHA*

# Foreword



**Marcos Athias Neto**  
Director, Finance Sector  
Hub, United Nations  
Development Programme



**Rein A. Paulsen**  
Acting Director,  
Coordination Division,  
United Nations Office  
for the Coordination of  
Humanitarian Affairs

**This past year has defied all expectations and has been extraordinary in the most difficult way. Some have gone as far as to say that the COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest challenge the world has faced since World War II. Without a doubt, in a context like this, business as usual was not an option. In addition to COVID-19, the world had to also continue to deal with a record-breaking number of disasters and ongoing violence across conflict-affected countries. These resulted in complex, multi-faceted emergencies.**

Development gains – including progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – have come under threat. It is predicted that as many as 150 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2021, reversing decades of progress to eradicate this.<sup>1</sup> According to projections, an additional 168,000 children will die from malnutrition<sup>2</sup> and 72 million children will remain illiterate.<sup>3</sup>

Urgent and effective action is required to address these pressing challenges. Solutions exist. The pandemic has demanded innovative solutions and aligned agendas for improved collaboration across sectors and even between governments, while renewing the focus on the importance of localized action.

Against this backdrop, as we reflect on COVID-19, its impacts and what comes next, we are proud to acknowledge the relevance and achievements of the Connecting Business initiative (CBI). By adapting its work plan for 2020 and redirecting resources, CBI found new ways to continue supporting local private-sector networks, adapting to urgent needs prompted by the pandemic itself and the added complexity it layered onto both new and existing crises.

The role of local actors, including business networks, as critical stakeholders in local responses was further highlighted in 2020 during lockdowns, when international response mechanisms could not be deployed or their capacities were limited.

In this context, CBI Member Networks engaged the private sector in humanitarian activities that were implemented in collaboration with United Nations agencies and governments, sometimes even leading the way when other sectors did not have the capacity to do so.

All CBI Member Networks addressed COVID-19 in 2020, while nine of the networks (Fiji, Haiti, Madagascar, Mexico, Pacific, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Vanuatu) and their partners also responded to 19 other emergencies, including flooding, earthquakes, conflicts, displacement, tropical storms, a fire and a volcanic eruption. Some networks had to deal with two or three crisis responses at the same time. CBI also supported new private-sector networks in crisis management, such as the Global Compact Network Lebanon after the Beirut port explosions.

Many CBI Member Networks were at the table in an official capacity, contributing to national disaster management plans, which earned them recognition in Global Humanitarian Response Plans and other reports. We look forward to building on these achievements of 2020 in the coming years.

This work would not be possible without our donors and partners: the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Boston Consulting Group, the UPS Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development and the United Nations Global Compact. They are unwavering in their commitment to engaging the private sector in disaster preparedness, response and recovery even when navigating change, transitions and challenging environments themselves. We look forward to deepening our ties with our current partners and welcoming new ones as CBI prepares to celebrate its fifth anniversary.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank, "COVID-19 to Add as Many as 150 Million Extreme Poor by 2021," 7 October 2020, [www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/07/covid-19-to-add-as-many-as-150-million-extreme-poor-by-2021](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/07/covid-19-to-add-as-many-as-150-million-extreme-poor-by-2021).

<sup>2</sup> Saskia Osendarp et al., "The Potential Impacts of the Covid-19 Crisis on Maternal and Child Undernutrition in Low and Middle Income Countries," Nature Portfolio, forthcoming, [www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-123716/v1](http://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-123716/v1).

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, "Pandemic Threatens to Push 72 Million More Children into Learning Poverty—World Bank Outlines a New Vision to Ensure That Every Child Learns, Everywhere," 2 December 2020, [www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/12/02/pandemic-threatens-to-push-72-million-more-children-into-learning-poverty-world-bank-outlines-new-vision-to-ensure-that-every-child-learns-everywhere](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/12/02/pandemic-threatens-to-push-72-million-more-children-into-learning-poverty-world-bank-outlines-new-vision-to-ensure-that-every-child-learns-everywhere)

# Facts and figures



CBI is a demand-driven, multi-stakeholder initiative that is transforming the way the private sector engages before, during and after crises. Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, it aims to increase local capacity, build resilience and alleviate human suffering.

## 17 business networks

Seventeen business networks were engaged and supported by the CBI Secretariat

CBI engaged with business networks, helping them build their foundations and strengthening their contributions to disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery. These networks are based in the Bahamas, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Fiji, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mexico, the Pacific, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Vanuatu, Viet Nam and Yemen.

## 4,100 members

CBI Member Networks represent around 4,100 core members from different sectors and have access to more than 40,000 MSMEs.

Member companies represent a vast range of industries including Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Media and Entertainment, Financial Services and Insurance, Transport and Logistics and Housing and Construction.

## Survey results



CBI conducts an annual survey among its Member Networks. In 2020 the results indicated that CBI is valued by its key stakeholders.



### Influence

90 percent of the CBI Member Networks said CBI had a positive or very positive influence on their disaster preparedness and response work.



### Coordination

91 percent of the CBI Member Networks said CBI helped them to coordinate with other United Nations agencies for disaster preparedness, response and recovery.



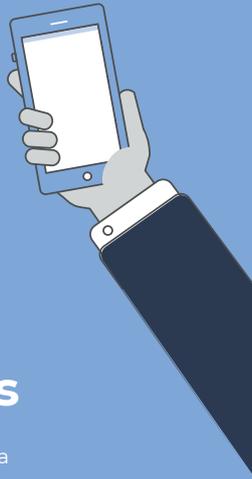
### Peer-to-Peer learning

82 percent of the CBI Member Networks said CBI was successful or very successful at providing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and disseminating good practices.

## Preparedness

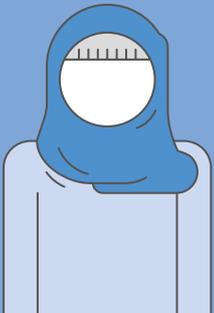
### 3.6 million people reached through early warning activities

CBI Member Networks coordinated via media and telephone service providers to send out early warning messages.



### 28,600 training participants

CBI Member Networks organized over 36 disaster preparedness training activities, reaching over 28,600 participants.



## Recovery

### 13,900 people reached through recovery activities

CBI Member Networks supported people and MSMEs affected by crises through livelihood starter kits, training programmes, cash transfers, situation reports and information, telemedicine and support for community action groups to engage in recovery, among other responses.

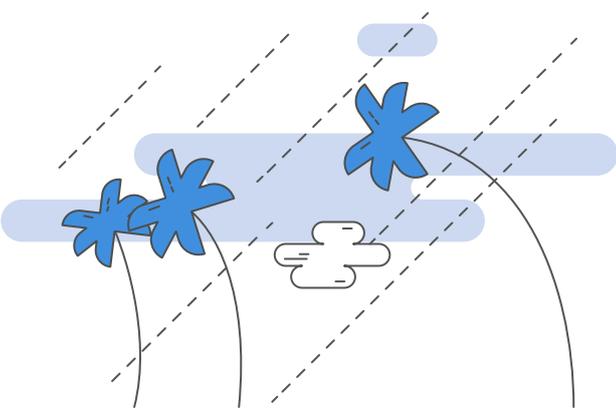


## Response

### All CBI Member Networks responded to COVID-19 crisis

In addition, nine networks responded to 19 other emergencies:

**Conflict or violence** (Haiti), **Drought** (Madagascar), **Earthquakes** (Mexico, Turkey), **Fire** (Madagascar), **Floodings** (Mexico, Philippines, Sri Lanka), **Tropical storms** (Fiji, Haiti, Madagascar, Pacific, Philippines, Vanuatu), **Volcanic eruption** (Philippines)



### 15.5 million people reached through crisis response activities

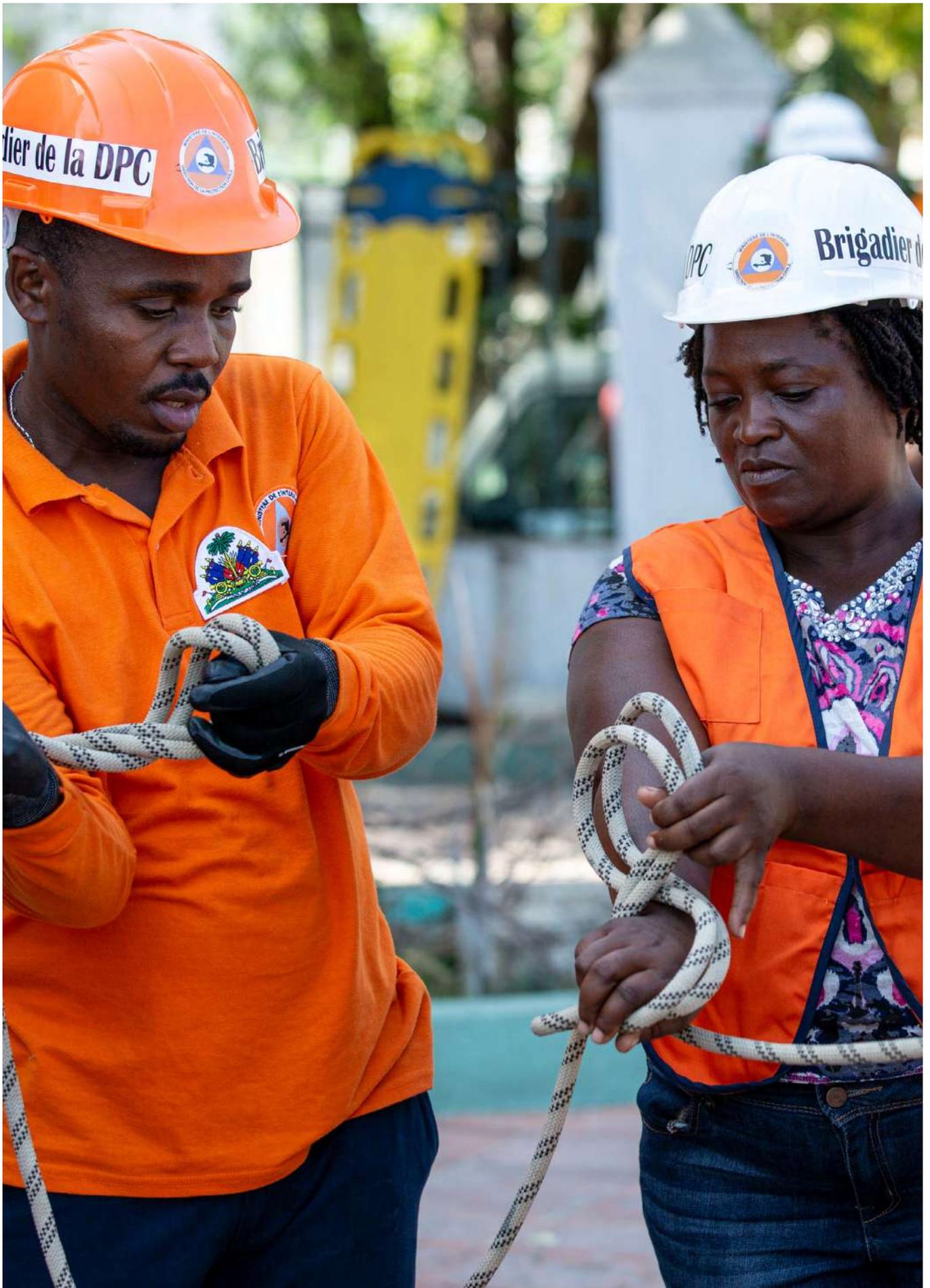
CBI Member Networks reached 14.3 million people through their **COVID-19 response activities** and 1.2 million people through activities responding to **other crises** (e.g., tropical cyclones, earthquakes).

### US\$42.2 million raised

CBI Member Networks raised \$36.8 million for the **response to COVID-19** and \$2.5 million in financial contributions and \$2.9 million in in-kind contributions from their members for other **disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities**.

Source: CBI Member Network Survey 2020, self-reported data

Note: Figures reflect the minimum number of people reached. Some networks did not report on the value of member contributions or people reached.



**Haiti**

Preparedness activities lessen impacts of disasters on vulnerable populations. *Photo: Moliere Solon/UNDP*

# Coordinating private-sector contributions to disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery

*“The knowledge sharing between CBI networks has given the VBRC additional capacity to change lives. Thanks to CBI tools and guidelines, the private sector has a credible voice in disaster response in Vanuatu.”*



**Glen Craig**  
Chairperson, Vanuatu  
Business Resilience Council

*“CBI's support to the Mexican private sector through OCHA, UNDP and CENACED has been instrumental in facilitating coordination between key actors to respond to COVID-19 pandemic in country.”*



**Juan Pablo O'Farrill Duque**  
National Disaster Response Advisor,  
Regional Office for Latin America  
and the Caribbean, OCHA

## Global support

In 2020, the CBI Secretariat supported 17 business networks by helping to build their foundations and strengthening their contributions to disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery. These networks are based in the Bahamas, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Fiji, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mexico, the Pacific, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Vanuatu, Viet Nam and Yemen.

We also worked on specific issues such as gender, innovation and new technologies, private-sector contributions in fragile situations and conflict-affected areas, and the resilience of small- and medium enterprises (SMEs), providing information, raising awareness and building capacities. There is more information on these issues later in the report.

## COVID-19

By the end of 2020, there were 82,299,855 confirmed cases of COVID-19 around the world and 1,801,610 confirmed deaths from the virus. Amidst health and safety measures such as physical distancing, quarantine and lockdowns, many industries suffered from a loss of business, and economies slowed down drastically. Travel restrictions shifted interactions to virtual platforms, while topics such as mental health, and gender-based violence garnered newfound attention.

To adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, CBI provided remote technical support and \$330,000 in direct financial support to private sector networks. As travel restrictions affected plans for country visits and in-person peer-to-peer interactions between networks, one of CBI's main focuses throughout the year was collecting, producing, and disseminating COVID-19 related resources. This work included publishing a business guide on COVID-19 and sharing situational updates on a dedicated emergency web page, raising awareness of safety measures, and building capacities around business continuity planning, resilience and more.

Member Networks found themselves dealing with complex situations entailing layered crises, with COVID-19 adding a significant challenge to other issues ranging from natural hazards to election-related violence or combinations of such issues. We are proud to say that CBI Member Networks rose to this challenge. Working in collaboration with government entities, United Nations agencies and NGOs, Member Networks and individual member companies repurposed factories to produce personal protection equipment (PPE), conducted awareness-raising campaigns and training programmes on safety measures during the pandemic, supported micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with business continuity planning and digitalization and found ways to support communities through educational programmes and COVID-19 contact tracing, to name but a few examples.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that CBI Member Networks will continue activities around COVID-19, including providing support for MSMEs and companies in general in adjusting to the new normal and ensuring strong private-sector engagement in disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities in this new context.

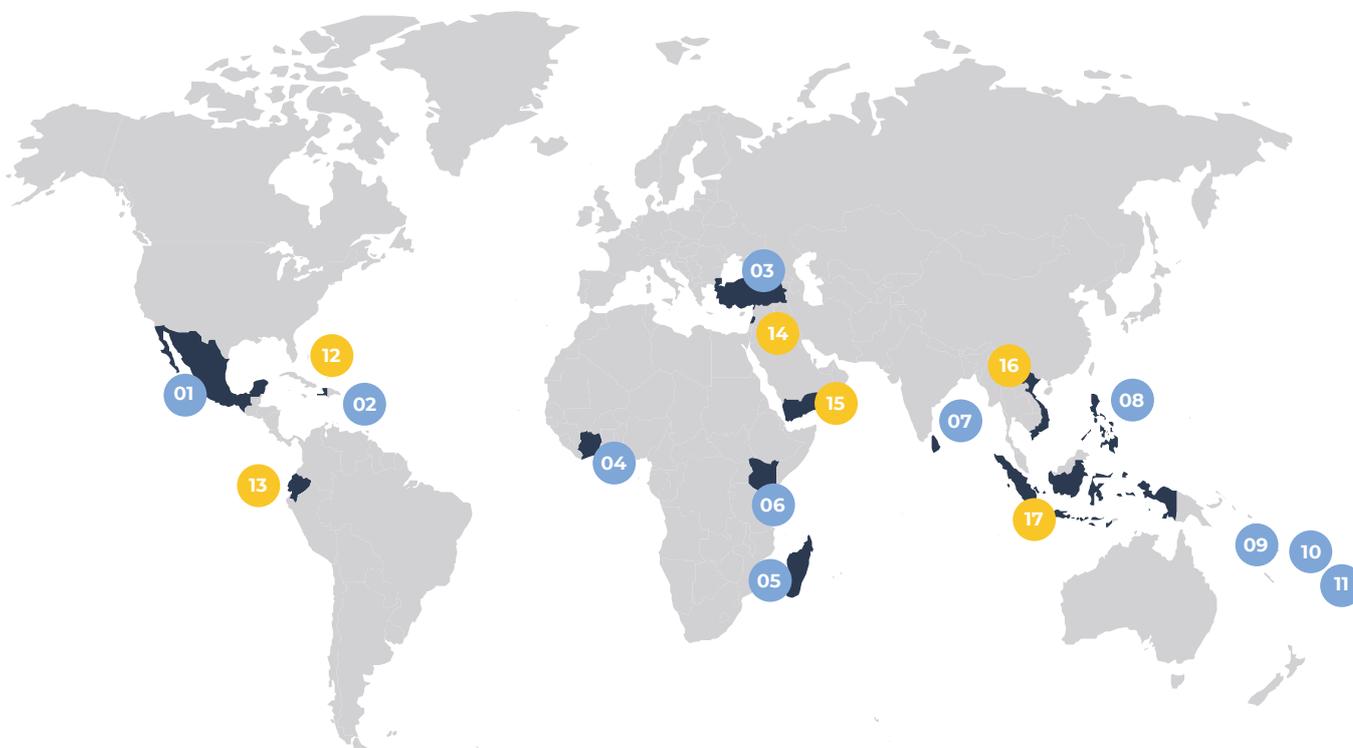
<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization COVID-19 Dashboard, <https://covid19.who.int/>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, "COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health," May 2020, <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/UN-Policy-Brief-COVID-19-and-mental-health.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Webinar series organized by the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth in partnership with WHO and UNICEF, "#CopingWithCOVID", [www.un.org/youthenvoy/2020/04/copingwithcovid-a-webinar-series-on-young-people-and-mental-health/](http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2020/04/copingwithcovid-a-webinar-series-on-young-people-and-mental-health/)

<sup>7</sup> UN Women, "In Focus: Gender Equality Matters in COVID-19 Response", [www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response).

# CBI networks' key activities in 2020



## 01 Mexico

### Centro Nacional de Apoyo para Contingencias Epidemiológicas y Desastres (CENACED)

54 members

In 2020, the Centro Nacional de Apoyo para las Contingencias Epidemiológicas y Desastres (CENACED) responded to COVID-19, floods and an earthquake.

As part of the COVID-19 response, the network organized information-sharing preparedness activities and set up a call centre with a network of volunteer physicians and psychologists to provide psychosocial support. The network also launched a platform in collaboration with OCHA and UNDP, which coordinated COVID-19-related activities. It aimed to strengthen the response in a coordinated manner, and channel aid (especially food assistance and medical supplies) and mitigate the poverty triggered by the COVID-19 crisis. In November, heavy rains from Hurricane Eta affected southern Mexico, particularly the states of Tabasco, Chiapas and Veracruz. This caused floods, triggering landslides which led to 27 casualties and affecting more than 90,000 people. CENACED supported the affected communities in collaboration with ARISE Mexico, providing food and relief items.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/mexico](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/mexico)

## 02 Haiti

### Alliance pour la Gestion des Risques et la Continuité des Activités (AGERCA)

20 members

In 2020, Alliance pour la Gestion des Risques et la Continuité des Activités (AGERCA) responded to COVID-19 and a tropical storm and provided support for people displaced by conflict.

In Haiti, the National Emergency Center was activated in March in response to the COVID-19 crisis and as part of the National Risk and Disaster Management System. AGERCA participated in the coordination meetings and launched its Response Platform of Civil Society Organizations (PROC19), an initiative that has brought together several civil society organizations to address the pandemic. AGERCA and its partners 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. They also conducted a COVID-19 impact survey among SMEs.

In response to Tropical Storm Laura in August, AGERCA sent out more than two million early warning text messages, provided phone credit to the National Emergency Operations Center to facilitate communications between departments and liaised with telecommunications companies to ensure their networks were active in the affected areas. It also

combined information on hurricane preparedness with COVID-19 messages to raise awareness of the dual threat. In September, AGERCA organized a disaster risk reduction workshop for over 100 young people.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/haiti](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/haiti)

### 03 Turkey

#### Business for Goals (B4G) platform

40,000 members

The Business for Goals (B4G) platform in Turkey is comprised of UNDP Turkey, the Turkish Industry and Business Association (Türk Sanayicileri ve İş İnsanları Derneği or TÜSİAD) and the Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (Türk Girişim ve İş Dünyası Konfederasyonu or TÜRKNONFED), which responded to COVID-19 and two earthquakes.

Immediately after the Elazığ Earthquake on 24 January 2020, B4G conducted a field visit, and post-disaster situation analysis reports were prepared. Furthermore, sets of proposals about workplace enhancements were formed to be evaluated during TÜSİAD and TÜRKNONFED's Executive Board meetings.

The network organized various webinars and online sessions to identify and respond to the needs of local businesses that have been affected by COVID-19. B4G also conducted field surveys and impact assessments in March, May, September and December. These surveys and assessments sought to understand how businesses have been affected by the pandemic and helped establish the business outlook for 2021. UNDP also launched a tool to help businesses consider and manage the human rights impacts of their operations: "Human Rights Due Diligence and COVID-19: Rapid Self-Assessment for Business". Originally created by UNDP and B+HR Asia, B4G adjusted this self-assessment tool to the context of Turkey in collaboration with the ILO, UNDP, and Global Compact to make it more understandable and applicable for businesses in Turkey.

B4G is also creating a list of trusted PPE manufacturers in Turkey to help match them with global buyers. With the support of the Government of Japan and in cooperation with UNDP and the Directorate General of Regional Development Agencies at the Ministry of Industry and Technology, B4G organized capacity-building activities for 3,000 unemployed young people from sectors defined as fragile (e.g., food, tourism, logistics, machinery, textiles, and the automobile industry).

On 30 October, an earthquake with a magnitude of Mw 6.9 occurred in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of Izmir. The earthquake was felt in the entire Aegean and Marmara regions. While the response was internal, with no external humanitarian assistance being requested, B4G and TÜRKNONFED immediately mobilized a team for rapid damage and needs assessment. This released situational reports that consolidated information on affected businesses, based on sector-specific damage assessment. As part of their earthquake recovery activities, the network conducted a Business Resilience Training Programme for 29 SMEs located in Izmir to increase their resilience to disasters and enhance their know-how on economic recovery. TÜRKNONFED and TÜSİAD organized three workshops in collaboration with SEDEFED and B4G to bring together the leading representatives of the five critical sectors (logistics, energy, communication, agriculture/food and finance/insurance) to combine their scenarios and measurements and generate a road map for earthquake preparedness.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/turkey](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/turkey)

*"As the Covid pandemic and disasters affected countries and businesses deeply across the world, we strived to learn from the disaster risk reduction experience of business associations, the private sector and international platforms such as CBI. Through the comparative perspectives provided by this network and by adapting existing crisis management tools, we can tackle problems quickly using efficient tools and policies."*



**Arda Batu**

Secretary General, Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (TÜRKNONFED)

## 04 Côte d'Ivoire

### Plateforme Humanitaire du Secteur Privé de Côte d'Ivoire (PHSP Côte d'Ivoire)

100 members

In 2020, the Private-Sector Humanitarian Platform of Côte d'Ivoire responded to COVID-19 by raising awareness among its members of the risks of the virus to ensure that people understood the importance of curbing its spread and of hygiene practices to achieve this. It also coordinated financial and in-kind contributions from member companies and worked with partners including the Red Cross to deliver these to affected populations. PHSP Côte d'Ivoire also provided donations to organizations such as the Coalition of Businesses of Côte d'Ivoire for the Fight Against HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis and Cancer (CECI) and the Institute of Cardiology of Abidjan.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/cote-d-ivoire](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/cote-d-ivoire)

## 05 Madagascar

### Plateforme Humanitaire du Secteur Privé de Madagascar (PSHP Madagascar)

52 members

In 2020, the Private Sector Humanitarian Platform of Madagascar responded to COVID-19, a cyclone, a drought and a fire. The platform conducted a survey and organized an online workshop to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Malagasy companies. Together with partners, it developed and distributed Corona Boky, an illustrated book for children to raise awareness of COVID-19 and measures to mitigate it. It also distributed solar radios and educational kits in rural areas to enable families to tune in to COVID-19-related news and children to follow courses provided by the Ministry of Education.

PSHP Madagascar coordinated contributions from the private sector, such as internet connections for the Operational Command Center, PPE, food, water, financial resources and emergency logistics. It also worked closely with the Ministry of Transport<sup>8</sup> to launch a COVID-19 contact-tracing system at one of the country's main bus stations, with the possibility of expanding this to the entire network of ground transportation, ports and airports.

The network responded to Tropical Cyclone Belna, which made landfall in December 2019, by working closely with the subnational bureau of disaster risk management and partners to provide water, sanitation and hygiene support, fibre optic connections and other supplies. In response to the fire, PSHP Madagascar mobilized its member companies to provide food and shelter in partnership with the National Bureau of Disaster Management.

Seven districts were classified as being at crisis level due to the drought in the south of Madagascar, prompting acute food insecurity. PSHP Madagascar, provided a water supply to the population of the Marolinta community through its member companies and in collaboration with the NGO MEDAIR.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/madagascar](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/madagascar)

## 06 Kenya and East Africa

### East Africa Humanitarian Private Sector Partnership Network (HPPP)

20 members

The East Africa Humanitarian Private Sector Partnership Network responded to COVID-19 in 2020. Network members distributed PPE and provided support for communities through relief packages and cash transfers.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/east-africa](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/east-africa)

## 07 Sri Lanka

### Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management - Sri Lanka (A-PAD SL)

700+ members

The Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management Sri Lanka (A-PAD SL) responded to COVID-19, two floods and continued recovery efforts for the 2019 Easter Sunday attack.

A-PAD Sri Lanka coordinated private-sector contributions in support of the Government's efforts to control the COVID-19 situation. For example, it gave the Disaster Management Centre in Sri Lanka support with setting up a COVID-19 Emergency Call Centre and provided health care essentials and food rations for front-line workers, communities and the health sector. A-PAD SL also engaged in a nationwide social media campaign to raise awareness about personal preventive measures, business continuity, curfew regulations and other critical topics.

With funding from HSBC, A-PAD Sri Lanka procured and distributed PPE to front-line health care workers as part of the COVID-19 response. These items were produced by domestic manufacturers that have been hit hard by the economic fallout of the pandemic. The initiative also aimed to supply this PPE on the international market.

To support education, A-PAD SL provided materials for students who did not have access to online resources and devised the National Guidelines for Conduct of Examinations in Emergencies in partnership with the Ministry of Defence, the Disaster Management Centre and the Department of Examinations. It also helped draft the

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the contact-tracing project in Madagascar, see "Gare routière d'Andohatapenaka: la gestion des passagers bientôt informatisée", Newsmada, 26 September 2020, [www.newsmada.com/2020/09/26/gare-routiere-dandohatapenaka-la-gestion-des-passagers-bientot-informatisee/](http://www.newsmada.com/2020/09/26/gare-routiere-dandohatapenaka-la-gestion-des-passagers-bientot-informatisee/)

national guidelines and operation plans for conducting elections during intersecting disasters. In response to the Southwest Monsoon and related flooding, A-PAD SL sent out early warning messages, provided health and evacuation guidelines and distributed PPE and non-food items to affected areas.

In April 2020, one year after the Easter Sunday bombings, the A-PAD SL team made phone calls as part of a listening activity to provide psychosocial support to affected families. These calls enabled people to express their feelings and emotions while the team offered words of encouragement to help them get through these difficult times.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/srilanka](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/srilanka)

## 08 Philippines

### Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) 61 members

In 2020, the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) responded to COVID-19, two typhoons, flooding and a volcanic eruption. As part of the COVID-19 response, PDRF and its members provided PPE for hospitals, supported health care logistics and capacity-building and provided accommodation and ready-to-eat meals for front-line and health care workers. Through Project Ugnayan, they also collectively raised the equivalent of \$35 million to fund the distribution of grocery vouchers to 14.2 million people in poor communities in the Greater Manila Area. Moreover,

through Project Pag-Asa, PDRF and its partner organizations supported 77 hospitals and institutions and increased the pandemic management capacities of over 2,100 health workers. In addition, PDRF launched the [SIKAP platform](#), an online business hub, to help MSMEs respond to and recover from COVID-19.

The network also responded to a triple crisis in November: COVID-19 and Typhoons Goni and Vamco. PDRF lead the private-sector response, working closely with the Government, the United Nations and other humanitarian actors and visiting affected areas to assess and respond to damage. They deployed vehicles, medical supplies, drinking water, ready-to-eat meals, call and charging booths, relief packs and a team of engineers to restore communications in typhoon-hit areas. Beyond this, PDRF had 17 of its 60 active member companies on confirmed heightened alert status, coordinated at least 14 rescue operations and helped to rescue 67 individuals. The PDRF Emergency Operations Center monitored the situation and shared warnings and daily situational reports to its members. This was assisted by the Hazard and Disaster Analysis for Business Resilience (HANDA), a disaster information management platform based on geographic information system (GIS) mapping.

In addition to crisis response activities, the network reached 7,500 people through its business continuity activities, over 18,300 people via disaster risk reduction activities, supported 400 women microretailers in early recovery and provided policy recommendations on how to bolster MSMEs by navigating paths towards recovery and resilience and identifying gaps in these processes.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/philippines](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/philippines)



**Malinao, Philippines**  
Residents of Barangay Baybay in Malinao, Albay, in the Philippines, rummage through what was left of their destroyed homes, a week after Typhoon Goni destroyed most of their village.  
*Photo: Martin San Diego/OCHA*

***“The strength of the private sector is that it is well-integrated into society and can support local peacebuilding initiatives. Through platforms such as A-PAD and CBI, the government can collaborate with the private sector to effectively respond to a crisis.”***



**Firzan Hashim**

Country Director, Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management, Sri Lanka

***“Our key role is to help businesses be prepared for disasters through Business Continuity Plan (BCP) training. Business continuity is essential and we can help train & build stronger networks. But there is an even greater need for an integrated public and private domestic preparedness strategy where the private sector also takes responsibility for protecting life and ensuring security. FBDR can play a critical role to support public sector efforts in responding to disasters by having strategies in place to build disaster resilient businesses and livelihoods.”***



**Michael Spencer**

Chairperson, Fiji Business Disaster Resilience Council

## 09 Vanuatu

### Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC)

2,800 members

In 2020, the Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC) responded to COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold.

On 5 April 2020, Tropical Cyclone Harold – a category 5 cyclone – struck land in Vanuatu, which became the first country to respond to a major cyclone while pandemic border closures were in place. The cyclone affected the livelihoods and homes of more than 100,000 people across the northern islands (in a country with a population of around 300,000). VBRC led the relief efforts by activating its cluster system to ensure effective coordination with the Government, the United Nations and NGOs. This included deploying the telecommunications teams to reconnect the islands after the cyclone and the shipping and logistics teams for relief and recovery efforts.

VBRC undertook detailed technical damage assessments in the worst-hit villages and conducted aerial, ground and marine assessments to provide the NDMO with recommendations on accessing remote settlements and organizing the logistics of immediate response items. VBRC also supplied over 35 tons of food and non-food items to 1,000 remote coastal households.<sup>9</sup> After the cyclone, the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce (VCCI) and Vanuatu Business Resilience Council (VBRC) designed a project to provide support for local women business owners to accelerate economic recovery in their communities. The VCCI was awarded a UN Women’s Peace & Humanitarian Fund Grant to fund this program, which is called Project Phoenix and began to be implemented in January 2021. It focuses on accelerating economic recovery by providing targeted business and leadership capacity-building to local women business owners who in turn will lead the recovery of their communities.

Later, VBRC and Oxfam partnered to benefit vulnerable communities and support local businesses affected by multiple disasters including the tropical cyclone, COVID-19 and ash fall from Yasur Volcanoe in the south. The Oxfam Unblocked Cash project uses blockchain technology to provide tap-and-pay cards to provide direct assistance to families recovering from disasters or acute financial distress. The cards can be “loaded” with money and function like a debit card, allowing families to buy food, medicine, clothes, other emergency supplies and hardware for rebuilding destroyed homes. The initiative stemmed from an effort to shift the delivery model for humanitarian assistance away from goods and cash, through a market-friendly approach that gives beneficiaries more dignity and flexibility to purchase exactly what they prioritize for their recovery and includes local stores in the value chain, thus strengthening business recovery at the same time.<sup>10</sup>

[www.connectingbusiness.org/vanuatu](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/vanuatu)

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see Ted Regencia, “Coronavirus Lockdown Hobbles Vanuatu Cyclone Recovery Effort”, Al Jazeera, 13 May 2020, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/5/13/coronavirus-lockdown-hobbles-vanuatu-cyclone-recovery-effort](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/5/13/coronavirus-lockdown-hobbles-vanuatu-cyclone-recovery-effort)

<sup>10</sup> For more information, see “Vanuatu Pioneers Digital Cash as Disaster Relief”, Connecting Business initiative, 7 November 2020, [www.connectingbusiness.org/news-VBRC-digital-cash-as-disaster-relief](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/news-VBRC-digital-cash-as-disaster-relief)

## 10 Fiji

### Fiji Business Disaster Resilience Council (FBDRRC) 300 members

The Fiji Business Disaster Resilience Council (FBDRRC) dealt with COVID-19 and a cyclone in 2020.

In December 2020, Fiji was hit by category 5 Tropical Cyclone Yasa. As part of its preparedness measures, FBDRRC formed a Viber messaging group for the council and other members of the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation (FCEF) for easy communication. It sent updates and helped disseminate severe weather bulletins and announcements from the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and the Fiji Meteorological Service. FBDRRC held meetings with NDMO and joined their regular briefings to provide updates on the status of FBDRRC members.

FBDRRC also conducted business continuity plan training with USAID Climate Ready in Levuka in January 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic brought severe disruptions to SMEs in Levuka and raised concerns among them. This workshop responded by disseminating information on disaster awareness and preparedness and providing solutions to help overcome the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on businesses.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/fiji](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/fiji)

## 11 Pacific

### Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) 20 members (national private-sector organizations)

The Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) responded to COVID-19 through the Pacific Business Resilience Network (PBRN) and coordinated with the Fiji Business Disaster Resilience Council (FBDRRC) during Tropical Cyclone Yasa in 2020.

The regional network facilitated networking and information sharing via webinars and meetings. From May to August 2020, PIPSO held a joint-webinar series with International Labour Organisation Employers Activities (ILO-ACT/EMP), focusing on issues affecting the business community during the pandemic. With the support of International Labour Organization (ILO), PIPSO compiled a policy guide that included COVID-19 responses by national private sector organisations (NPSOs) in the Pacific region.

PIPSO/PBRN has also conducted business continuity planning workshops and participated in regional-level discussions such as the Pacific Resilience Partnership to promote local humanitarian action in the region.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/pacific](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/pacific)

## Other private sector networks supported by CBI in 2020

### 12 The Bahamas

### 13 Ecuador

### 14 Lebanon

### 15 Yemen

### 16 Viet Nam

### 17 Indonesia

#### Beirut Port explosions

On 4 August, there was a massive explosion at Beirut port, causing widespread casualties and material damage. National and international search and rescue teams and disaster management experts were dispatched to support ongoing emergency efforts. More than 180 people were killed and over 6,500 were injured. Widespread structural damage was reported at the port and in the surrounding commercial and residential neighbourhoods. According to UNDP, a total of 200,000 housing units were affected by the explosions, with an estimated 40,000 buildings damaged. Over 15,000 business establishments – around 50 per cent of all those in Beirut – were also estimated to have been damaged, the majority in the wholesale, retail and hospitality sectors.<sup>11</sup> Hospitals were overwhelmed by casualties, at a time when many intensive care units were already near capacity due to COVID-19. The Government of Lebanon estimated that the explosions left more than 300,000 people homeless in the Greater Beirut Area.<sup>12</sup>

In response to the explosions, OCHA, UN Global Compact, and CBI released the UN Business Guide for the international private sector to support the response and recovery efforts. They also provided technical support for the Global Compact Local Network and organized a session during UN General Assembly week to discuss how to rebuild Beirut.

[www.connectingbusiness.org/beirut-port-explosions](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/beirut-port-explosions)

<sup>11</sup> "Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions Situation Report No. 7", ReliefWeb, 25 August 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-beirut-port-explosions-situation-report-no-7-25-august-2020-enar>

<sup>12</sup> "Beirut Explosion: Tens of Thousands of New Homeless Face Winter Crisis", ReliefWeb, 31 August 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/beirut-explosion-tens-of-thousands-new-homeless-face-winter-crisis>



**Ruzizi Plain, Democratic Republic of the Congo**

New technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, the Internet of Things and blockchain, and innovations in areas of robotics, 3D printing and drone technology are transforming many areas, including disaster risk reduction and disaster management. *Photo: UNDP*

# Addressing knowledge gaps

## COVID-19

Responding to a health crisis was a new area for some of the networks, and COVID-19 was an unprecedented challenge. The CBI Secretariat compiled best practice tools and resources onto a dedicated emergency page, [www.connectingbusiness.org/novel-coronavirus-2019](http://www.connectingbusiness.org/novel-coronavirus-2019)

## Gender, the private sector and disaster management

CBI conducted research and drafted a document that discusses the importance of gender in the private sector and disaster management and the connections between these three fields. This research maps and analyses existing resources and earlier interventions on this topic and presents a number of case studies both from within the Member Networks and from external partners. By identifying gaps, challenges and recommendations for the way forward, the document proposes future steps for CBI to better integrate gender as a cross-cutting theme in its work. The publication is [available here](#).

## Innovation and new technologies

In 2020, CBI launched a partnership with the UNDP [SDG AI Lab](#). The core of this collaboration is a research project on how artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies are being used or could be used in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. The research team is using natural language processing to understand private-sector contributions to disaster management more broadly and looks at the potential of GIS technology for private-sector networks. The primary vision is to improve private sector networks' understanding of the possibilities that digital and AI-based solutions hold and enhance their ability to apply these solutions in the disaster management space. The study will be available in 2021.

***“It is important to develop innovative practices for existing women-owned businesses at the local level. This is particularly relevant when considering the disproportionate effect that climate-related risks have on women, in which their access to insurance and financial products becomes essential for recovery. This is where CBI Member Networks can make a significant contribution, in partnership with UN Women, by identifying local solutions and making them available for systematizing good practices.”***



**Rahel Steinbach**

Programme Specialist, Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, UN Women

# Raising awareness, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and capacity-building

In 2020, CBI hosted its Annual Event and 18 webinars (11 that were open to the public and 7 for CBI Member Networks), raising awareness and facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and capacity-building.

## Global events

### Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week and CBI Annual Event

The sixth Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW) was held from 3 to 7 February 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland. Organized by OCHA and hosted by the Swiss Government, HNPW 2020 was attended by over 2,300 participants from 100 Member States and 450 organizations representing United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, Governments, military and civil protection organizations, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, the private sector and academia. CBI Member Networks represented the private sector at the opening panel and the localization panel. The [CBI Annual Event](#) was organized during HNPW and included two open sessions: “Leveraging private-sector capacities in disaster management in the 2020s” and “Strengthening community resilience through business continuity and risk transfer”, which allowed participants to showcase their work over the past year, share lessons learned and identify further opportunities for collaboration. [Several working sessions](#) were also organized for CBI Member Networks to discuss the updated CBI strategy, share experiences, learn from one another and discover opportunities for collaboration.

#### Public webinars included:

1. [COVID-19 and the private sector](#) (co-hosted with Business Fights Poverty) (26 March)
2. [Responsible business response to COVID-19 in Africa](#) (co-hosted with UN Global Compact) (27 March)
3. [COVID-19 and the private sector: for unprecedented times extraordinary measures](#) (co-hosted with UNDP’s Business for Gender Equality Programme and Business Call to Action) (15 April)
4. [SME impact assessments](#) (19 May)
5. [Preparing and responding to multi-hazard scenarios](#) (26 May)
6. [A multi-stakeholder response to natural disasters during COVID-19](#) (organized during UN Global Compact Leaders Summit) (16 June)
7. [COVID-19 recovery – examples of business contributions](#) (organized during UN Global Compact Leaders Summit) (16 June)
8. [Building Beirut back better: how the private sector can support response and recovery](#) (Co-hosted with UN Global Compact) (22 September)
9. [Gender and the private sector in disaster management](#) (2–3 November)
10. [New technologies](#) (26 November)
11. [Fragility, conflict and COVID-19: a private sector approach](#) (Co-hosted with UN Global Compact) (14 December)

CBI Member Networks and partners also spoke on behalf of the initiative at the [Business Call to Action 10th Annual Forum](#) (24 September), [Stars of COVID-19 Response: Business Success Stories](#) (24 September) and the [Global Humanitarian Policy Forum](#) (9 December), where they participated in two panels: Beyond Health: Political, Socio-Economic and Security Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Coalitions for Success: New Partnerships and Local Frontline Leadership.

#### The webinars for CBI Member Networks included:

1. [COVID-19 response](#) (17 March)
2. [Support for CBI networks](#) (9 April)
3. [Masterclass series on strategic communication during a crisis](#) (30 April–11 June)
4. [COVID-19 response planning](#) (2 June)
5. [Support to CBI networks](#) (28 July)
6. [Community engagement and accountability for private sector networks](#) (17 September)
7. [Support to CBI networks](#) (11 November)

Continuous learning and peer-to-peer exchanges were also facilitated through a Member Network WhatsApp group and MS Teams space.

In 2020, CBI adopted a new operating model to engage some of the CBI Member Networks as knowledge development partners. In June 2020, PDRF became the first official knowledge development partner and helped to collect information about private-sector responses to COVID-19 and prepare situational reports about the CBI Member Networks’ responses.



**Geneva, Switzerland**  
CBI brought its networks and partners together to share experiences, learn from one another and discuss collaboration opportunities at the CBI Annual Event during the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW).

***"In a year marked by the outbreak of a global pandemic alongside other natural and manmade disasters, the Connecting Business Initiative's (CBI) mandate has only gained in importance. Our work with CBI recognizes the role that the business sector can play in limiting disruption and facilitating recovery. It brings critical expertise and coordination on disaster preparedness and recovery to the UN Global Compact and our Local Networks."***



**Lila Karbassi**  
Chief of Programmes,  
United Nations Global Compact

### **CBI and its Member Networks featured in global reports**

CBI and its Member Networks have been highlighted as examples of local good practices in multiple key humanitarian documents. Some examples are listed below.

CBI was mentioned in the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Asia Pacific COVID-19 Brief, "[Business Resilience in the Face of COVID-19](#)", for its work facilitating business-to-business cooperation.

The Haiti and Madagascar networks were featured in the [Global Humanitarian Response Plan \(GHRP\) Progress Report](#) from August. The Philippines network was mentioned in the [Global Humanitarian Response Plan Bi-monthly Highlights](#) for May, and the Sri Lanka network was featured in the [Bi-monthly Highlights](#) for June. The COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan for the Philippines included the private sector (PDRF) in their response. Furthermore, the CBI Member Network in Vanuatu was featured in the [Global Humanitarian Overview 2021](#) by OCHA in the [COVID-19 and Localization](#) section, as an example of the importance of local business networks in the response to the pandemic. The cash transfer programme that was implemented in partnership with Oxfam was also mentioned. The network was also featured in the OCHA article [Cyclones in the Time of COVID-19: Preparing for and Responding to Climate-Related Disasters](#). OCHA's 2020 [in Review](#) also mentions CBI's work in Mexico and Vanuatu.

### **Building partnerships**

A number of partners continued to support the CBI by providing resources, expertise and advice. In 2020, the following organizations supported the initiative at the global level: the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the Boston Consulting Group, the UPS Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development and United Nations Global Compact. At the global level, CBI also contributed to certain UNDRR reports and developed a business guide for COVID-19 in collaboration with the UN Global Compact and WHO. CBI Member Networks leveraged their own partnerships locally, representing 4,100 core members from different sectors and reaching more than 40,000 MSMEs. In addition to working with local UNDP and OCHA offices, CBI collaborated closely with other UN organizations on the ground, such as with UNICEF in Indonesia.

# Looking ahead

*“Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, CBI’s 5-year journey is a terrific testimony to the power of private sector collective action in helping communities and countries meet humanitarian challenges in partnership with their governments and the larger UN and humanitarian sector. Its growing national networks have already touched the lives of millions of people and proven CBI will have even greater impact as it engages more companies in more countries as partners in resilience, disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.”*



**David Young**  
Managing Director & Senior Partner,  
Boston Consulting Group

*“The United Nations has greatly benefited from CBI’s expertise to expand our resilience-building partnership with the business community. This has provided a strategic entry point for the private sector to engage in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness and is the start of a fruitful collaboration with the United Nations.”*



**Gustavo González**  
United Nations Resident Coordinator and  
Humanitarian Coordinator. UN Philippines

**The past year brought the importance of collective and localized private-sector action to the forefront, particularly at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when standard international response mechanisms were unable to be deployed. Other focuses included investing in resilience.**

Against this backdrop and with 2021 deemed a transition year to “the next normal”, CBI will continue to build the capacity of our local networks and focus on supporting the development of new networks to strengthen local resilience and responses.

Embedded in the CBI mission is the challenge of responding to the needs of our local networks as they face the aforementioned shifts and trends. Our workstreams and areas of focus – such as innovation and new technologies, fragile situations and conflict-affected areas, gender, impact measurement and SME resilience, to name but a few – will continue to explore issues and provide support. They will do so by collaborating with existing initiatives and partners whenever possible to feed into our objective of strengthening the resilience of local business networks and their communities. In 2021, CBI will also start to develop a service offer on climate change-related hazards and build private-sector knowledge on accountability to affected populations.

CBI is celebrating its fifth anniversary in 2021, which provides an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved and how far we have come, but is also a chance to start planning for the coming milestones. There will be a strong focus on expansion, as local business networks are at the core of CBI. Through landscape assessments in Africa and Latin America, CBI hopes to engage new partners who will learn from the experiences garnered by others during its first five years of operations and to expand on this work in the coming years.

**Bangladesh**

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration. Promoting coronavirus prevention awareness, distributing hygiene packages and supporting vulnerable people and healthcare systems require contributions from all sectors.

*Photo: Fahad Kaizer/UNDP*

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