

ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



Regional Dialogue

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 4 June 2015



WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

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Executive Summary



A one-day regional business dialogue for West Africa was held on 4 June 2015 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire attracting some 75 representatives from the private sector (including multi-national and national enterprises), Non-Governmental Organizations, the United Nations and the Government of Cote d'Ivoire. The event was organized by the Ministry of Solidarity, Family Women and Children, OCHA Private Sector Section in Geneva, OCHA ROWCA and OCHA Cote d'Ivoire, in partnership with the General Confederation of Enterprises of Cote d'Ivoire (GCECI) who hosted the event on their premises.

At the opening session, keynote speakers called for innovative approach to humanitarian action in the region, noting that the unprecedented number of disasters (in particular the Ebola outbreak) as well as ongoing crises such as conflicts, drought and annual floods meant that the private sector engagement was no longer an option but a requirement.

An interactive panel of discussion on "The Ebola Response - Experiences and Lessons Learned" included representatives from the Ebola Private Sector Mobilization Group (EPSMG), NGO, the Ministry of Health and GCECI. At the end of the session, it was established that the private sector in Ebola affected countries had acted with speed and efficiency in their response; success was noted in collecting and disseminating information quickly to employees and the public at large; the important role played by the informal private sector in addressing the Ebola response was recognized; and the value realized from the creation of a centralized private sector platform for coordinating and sharing information on the Ebola response in Cote d'Ivoire was acknowledged as effective. Participants further emphasized the need to involve private sector in preparedness discussion well in advance of an emergency as well as to view them as an equal partner and not solely as a financial provider.

The consultation focused on three thematic areas: (1) Partnering on risk analysis and preparedness planning; (2) Partnering on crisis response and recovery; and (3) Creating an enabling environment for private sector engagement. Main issues that emerged from this session included: sustainable business partnerships should be based on shared values and common interests; the challenges faced by small and medium sized enterprises in engaging with the UN and the humanitarian community; the importance of addressing mistrust between the private sector and humanitarian actors; the need for a central platform to help systemize dialogue between the humanitarian community and the private sector, the need for the UN to streamline its bureaucracy including its due diligence processes; the value of providing visibility to the private sector in its engagement in humanitarian action , as well as communicating the contributions of the private sector effectively to the public; and lastly, the importance in viewing the private sector as a unique set of entities to be addressed in tailored ways rather than as ‘one’ private sector.

The following are some of the key recommendations from the plenary discussion:

- Establish a private sector coordination platform at national level to map out strengths of partners and act as a “one stop” place for the private sector engagement in the event of an emergency i.e. information sharing and joint planning;
- Involve the private sector in emergency planning at a national and regional level to help strengthen coherent approaches in advance of crises;
- Create a regional private sector pooled humanitarian fund to support emergency preparedness and response;
- Launch a West African Charter for Business Engagement, codifying adherence to humanitarian principles and commitment to support emergency preparedness and response through core competencies;
- Collaborate with governments in the West Africa region to revise regulations including tax exemption policies that would encourage the participation of the private sector in humanitarian action.

With regards to commitments, some companies expressed their willingness to collaborate with OCHA and other humanitarian partners by leveraging their communications expertise, for instance utilizing SMSs to disseminate information to the public on cholera and during flood season. Others committed to communicating best case examples of public-private sector partnerships (for example, Price Waterhouse Coopers on the Ebola response), using succinct and simple key messages, in order to encourage partnerships and engagement in the region. They also suggested sharing success stories to inspire the private sector to engage in preparedness and response.

A proposed Road Map of activities and timeframes for follow-up on conclusions has been included in this report.

For more information on the West Africa business dialogue and opportunities for private sector engagement in coordinated emergency preparedness and response in West Africa, please contact:

- **Mercy Manyala**, Focal point on Partnerships, OCHA ROWCA: manyalam@un.org
- **Mamissa Mboob**, Private Sector Advisor, Private Sector Section, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Branch, OCHA Geneva: mboobm@un.org

1. Introduction

An increasingly large proportion of the West and Central Africa's population is exposed to extreme vulnerabilities and risks that are interlinked. These range from natural hazards, market volatility, climate change, population growth, rapid urbanization, conflicts, pests, epidemics to limited access to resources and basic services. In 2015, regardless of three consecutive years of improved harvests, an estimated 20 million people in the Sahel (i.e. one in seven) still struggles with food insecurity; 2.6 million of whom have already crossed the emergency crisis threshold. Additionally, at least 1.4 million children suffer from acute malnutrition. Meanwhile, the security situation remains worrisome and continues to be impacted by crises in Libya, northern Mali, northern Nigeria and Central Africa Republic – resulting in an estimated 3.1 million displacements. The ability to operate safely and in a secure environment is quickly diminishing, limiting access to these populations. The Ebola crisis has also exposed the fragility and serious structural weakness in the health sector and continues to pose a major threat to the entire region.

The demand for greater resources is evident with the ever increasing scale of needs as indicated above. The private sector has long been a major contributor to humanitarian action. The growing role of business in crises has vast potential and far-reaching benefits which extend beyond financing. Corporate firms can play a role in strengthening emergency preparedness and response, public fund raising - such as through mobile cash transfer, providing technical expertise, mobilising volunteers, coordinating response and so forth. Still, the potential of private sector collaboration is not yet fully exploited. Models of collaboration that are commercial rather than pro bono, for instance, paying banks to enable cash transfer programmes can be leveraged for emergency response. However, research confirms that although private sector actors have great interest and capacity to collaborate with the international community and national authorities, there is a pressing need to increase incentives and reduce barriers to effective engagement.

Despite the various challenges highlighted above, there is a growing interest by both humanitarian organisations and the private sector to collaborate in emergency response. Humanitarians are eager for diverse sources of funding and innovative approaches, skills and technologies; while companies are looking to improve their corporate image, motivate and retain employees, and break into new markets. Increasingly, rather than just wanting to look good, private companies also see investment in disaster risk reduction as essential for business continuity; and in many cases, it is the private sector - not the humanitarians - taking the first step.¹ There is a business case for the private sector to partner with the humanitarian community. Private sector interests are also vulnerable to natural disaster or the impact of war.

In West Africa, the role of business in humanitarian response has been highlighted in the wake of the Ebola outbreak, which has so far affected more than 27,000 people and killed more than 11,000 in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The private sector firms established a forum to coordinate response, the Ebola Private Sector Mobilisation Group (EPSMG), which grew from an inter-company information

¹ See IRIN: Analysis: What future for private sector involvement in humanitarianism?

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/98641/analysis-what-future-for-private-sector-involvement-in-humanitarianism>

sharing platform to include advocacy for global response to curb the Ebola outbreak. Its principles range from promoting health messages, assisting governments and agencies responding to the outbreak, advocating for broader global efforts, to commitment to long-term recovery and economic development of the region. EPSMG has contributed along those lines - educating employees and communities about Ebola, maintained business operations as is possibly best, and offered direct support on the front line by donating personnel, equipment, building infrastructure and cash.

Collaboration between humanitarians and private sector however needs proper coordination and mutual understanding to maximise the benefits of such partnerships. Businesses do not exist to alleviate human suffering. This is the goal of humanitarian organisations. Too often, aid agencies and major corporations have entered into partnerships without a clear idea of goals, shared and diverging values, and each side's comparative advantage, leading to one-off ventures that have little lasting impact.

The recent emergency (Ebola outbreak) shows that when the private and humanitarian sector collaborate strategically, the swiftness, coverage, and durability of humanitarian aid increases. Reducing the time that takes to deliver humanitarian aid is crucial to saving lives and reducing suffering; reaching affected people in remote areas is fundamental for effective humanitarian aid; and finally, manufacturing more durable materials is a key element because many of the effects from humanitarian crises are long-term and need materials that can resist the damaging effects of time.

This consultation process in West Africa provides a unique opportunity to explore these issues with the businesses in the region, develop recommendations, and demonstrate actions to contribute to a more inclusive and effective model of humanitarian action.

Ahead of the business dialogue, a two and half hour session was conducted the evening of 3 June 2015 to familiarize private sector participants with the guiding principles, basic concepts of humanitarian action and key humanitarian challenges facing Cote d'Ivoire. This session was attended by 25 participants.

2. Welcoming remarks and presentations

Mr. Babacar Cisse, the United Nations Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator for Cote d'Ivoire, welcomed participants and provided a brief highlight of the humanitarian situation in Cote d'Ivoire. Despite its significant advance towards transition and recovery, the humanitarian landscape in the country remained shaky. In particular with regards to the insecurity situation on the border with Liberia, which continues to contribute to the high number of IDPs in the country (currently 300,000)? He congratulated the private sector for their immense contribution in the fight against Ebola outbreak, mostly through telecommunication – i.e. dissemination of information and public education. He called for an open and frank discussion to identify opportunities between humanitarian actors and the private sector, noting that these discussions will eventually feed into the World Humanitarian Summit scheduled for the first quarter of 2016, which aimed at re-shaping the future of humanitarian action.

Mr. Pierre Magne, Administrator General Confederation of Enterprises of Cote d'Ivoire, noted that the business community was increasingly interested in working with humanitarian actors. He pointed out some of the areas where in the recent times their network had contributed to humanitarian action in Cote d'Ivoire; these included on prevention of Ebola outbreak, support to dissemination of messages during the flood season and cholera period etc. He hoped that the discussion from the consultation would help strengthen partnerships with the government, local actors and humanitarian stakeholders to ensure effectiveness in preparedness and response actions. He called on the government to consider putting in place incentives that would draw private sector to carry out development in disaster-prone areas, eventually contributing to improved livelihoods and economic status of the most vulnerable.

Professor Edmee Mansilla, Deputy Chief of Cabinet Minister of Solidarity, Family, Women and Children, recognized the need to engage the private sector in humanitarian action, noting that the unprecedented number of disasters and conflict in the region meant that private sector engagement was no longer an option but a requirement. She noted the willingness of the Government of Cote d'Ivoire to strengthen partnership between business and humanitarian actors and called for some clear recommendations that would foster their engagement.

Ms. Allegra Baiocchi, Regional Representative for OCHA Regional Office for West and Central Africa, presented the agenda and provided a brief background on some of the events that had taken place in the lead to this business consultation i.e. the Regional World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) consultation for West and Central Africa held in 2014 and Ebola event of February 2015?. She concluded with emphasis on the need to build a culture of partnership before a disaster struck.

Ms. Mamissa Mboob, Private Sector Advisor, OCHA Geneva delivered an overview of the global private sector engagement, drawing attention to OCHA's roles and a case for business collaboration in humanitarian action. She also noted a few examples of already established partnerships with DHL, Vantage Partners, Erickson and IKEA.

"The United Nations and business need each other. We need their innovation, their initiative, their technological prowess. But business also needs the United Nations. In a very real sense, the work of the United Nations can be viewed as seeking to create the ideal enabling environment within which business can thrive." Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

3. Panel of Discussion

The Ebola Response - Experiences and Lessons Learned



A panel of discussion facilitated by Mr. Whitsun Theophilus Ade-Cole (UNMEER) and composed of the Sierra Leonian Ebola Private Sector Mobilization Group (EPSMG) chapter representative Mr. Oluniyi Robbin-Coker, also Chair of Import and Export Promotion Agency, Ms. Beatrice Coly – International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Ms. Marie-Josephe Bitty, Director of Health, Environment and Health, Cote d'Ivoire, Ms. Rita Indat, Deputy Head of Private Sector Ebola Communication Group in Cote d'Ivoire, Mr. Tobias Beal and Ms. Sunita Saligram, Price Waterhouse Coopers, and Mr. Agenor Koffi, Executive Secretary General Confederation of Enterprises Coalition reviewed lessons learned from the involvement of business enterprises in the Ebola outbreak response. The focus was on the value added from established coordination platforms, engagement with government and humanitarian-led processes and lessons drawn so far.

Key outcomes from this session included:

- The outbreak triggered an unprecedented coalition between the UN, NGOs, governments, communities and the private sector. Many businesses have risen to the occasion by committing funds, supplies, equipment and expertise to the Ebola response. This contribution will remain critical as the outbreak is brought under control and affected countries move into a recovery phase, where restarting the stalled economies will be imperative. However, businesses are also

making it clear that their contributions should not be perceived of as simply an afterthought by other responders. Businesses can and should be treated as strategic partners at the initial stage of response; they are not simply sources of cash and assets.

- The global community can no longer rely on responding to disasters or public emergencies in silos. Rather, these responses require a cross-sector approach that involves the UN, governments, civil society and the private sector. This kind of approach will help avoid duplications, monitor and ensure accountability for response.
- The creation of a platform for information sharing and exchange (Ebola Private Sector Mobilization Group – EPSMG) enabled quick mobilisation of resources. Likewise, in Cote d’Ivoire, it was helpful to have a centralized platform for information sharing and coordination. This platform played a significant role in the development and dissemination of Ebola messages. As a result, the public was not overwhelmed with different messages from different source, which contributed to efficiency and public trust.
- Partnerships have developed extraordinarily quickly in this crisis, leveraging the complementary capacities of the public and private sectors and highlighting how great challenges can be addressed when interests converge.
- Businesses in affected countries played and continue to play a crucial role in response efforts in the face of economic pressures. One of the most important contributions major businesses made to fight Ebola was to maintain operations in the region, in the process protecting livelihoods and ensuring quick recovery to the economy, which remained active.
- Many of the collaborations underway are laying the groundwork for integrated strengthening of health systems, markets, and society. A range of social mobilisation tools have been developed to help advance awareness-raising, speed up Ebola response and prevent further transmission of the disease these include: Ebola Apps, use of text message and setting up of Ebola call centres. Such tools can be easily adopted during other epidemics such as cholera, which is prevalent in the region.
- The role of informal private sector in the fight against Ebola should be recognized. In Sierra Leone for instance, the “okada riders” played an important role in delivery of messages or support to swab collection in difficult to access areas. Quite often, we target more established multinational business with less focus on small and medium enterprises which presents a huge share of business and has potential to contribute to humanitarian action.
- There is a call to ensure that national response mechanisms include private sector at the initial stage as they might have better competence in terms of technological expertise, staff or materials.
- Lessons currently being learned through public-private collaboration to fight Ebola can be leveraged in the long term to strengthen overall public-private collaboration in the health space, particularly when it comes to galvanizing businesses to take a more proactive role in health promotion, prevention and care for employees. Businesses have experienced first-hand how employees look to them to provide health advice and services in a crisis.

4. Group discussion sessions

| Themes | Session objective | Key Discussion questions |
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| 1. Partnering on Risk Analysis and Preparedness planning | Gather private sector perspectives on how to better engage them in preparedness planning and coordination at national level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the private sector contribute to a better understanding of risks and support strengthening early warning systems in the region? • How can the private sector contribute to common risk analysis and preparedness planning? • What strengths do the private sector have that humanitarian organizations can better make use of to support preparedness work? • What needs to be done to encourage private sector engagement in preparedness? |
| <p>Conclusions and recommendations:</p> <p>The private sector expressed interest in engaging during the preparedness phase in particular at the community level; with support to the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of risks; risk assessment, prioritization of risks, and scenario building to ensure that everyone knows their roles and are able to anticipate crises when they occur. • Contribute to sensitization of the risks i.e. by issuing alert messages, disseminating knowledge, practices and data on risks • Invest in Early Warning Systems for communication and infrastructure that mitigate risks i.e. support to community EWS for monitoring floods etc. <p>The private sector also recognized some areas of strength from which the humanitarian organizations could better make use of in preparedness efforts as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation and technological expertise – for instance satellite imageries and use of clear/simplified standard operating procedures for ensuring adherence during emergencies; • Quick deployment/availability of material, human and financial resources; • Logistic arrangements including warehouse management and distribution chain of supplies, which can be essential for dissemination of alert messages. <p>It was further noted that the following should be done to encourage the private sector to engage more in preparedness activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train the private sector on multi-hazard risks to have a shared understanding with humanitarian actors • Create a coordination platform that will encourage private sector to share information and encourage joint plans on preparedness actions • Strengthen partnership between humanitarian and private sectors by signing a code of conduct to facilitate this cooperation. • Set up a committee/confederation of private sectors that will work on quality, safety and environment issues • Ensure private sector contributes to the National Disaster Risk Reduction platforms | | |
| 2. Partnering on Crisis Response | Gather private sector perspectives on how to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what way is the private sector currently engaging in humanitarian action in the region? What lessons can we |

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| and Recovery | increase the speed and efficiency in delivery of life-saving assistance at the initial stages of an emergency response as well as towards achieving recovery. | <p>learn to promote further engagement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the private sector contribute to improving the efficiency of the humanitarian operations, particularly given the gap between available resources and current needs? • How can the humanitarian community leverage the capacities, innovative practices, resources and expertise of the private sector to address many of the challenges they face in responding to emerging and deteriorating crises? • How can the private sector support humanitarian and development efforts to build self-reliant and resilient communities – are there success stories we can build on? |
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Conclusions and recommendations:

- As discussed under the Ebola session – it was evident that there are various initiatives involving the private sector partnership in the region, this ranged from the use of telephone in cash transfers, dissemination of messages and support through equipment or financial contributions.
- Participants identified exchange of expertise and optimization of respective added values as key to better partnership rather than concentrating on funding contributions.
- There is need to establish a system capacity evaluation of humanitarian agencies to ensure credibility and facilitation of choice of partner organization by interested business entities
- It was suggested to set up a platform of exchange between businesses and humanitarian actors that brings together leaders of respective existing platforms (private sector and humanitarian actors). These coordination mechanisms must remain flexible enough to avoid addition complexity and bureaucracies.
- Seek commitment of the private sector according to their expertise and field of intervention within the sectoral /cluster structures of coordination.
- Involvement of the private sector at a strategic stage of humanitarian planning within the existing mechanisms (under the Government or humanitarian architecture).
- A call on companies to integrate some humanitarian elements/principles in their business continuity plans
- Implement reciprocal databases NGO / enterprises by listing areas of expertise, existing capacities (ex. warehouse facilities) to facilitate the implementation of win/win partnership.
- Conduct a study to identify ways of involving small and medium-sized businesses in preparedness and humanitarian response.
- Maintain flexibility within the company for the allocation of 'social responsibility' fund - budget decision too centralized at Headquarters.
- Update available to limited duration by specialized human resources firms / experts, during the response but also to support the work of NGOs (audit / IT /)

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| 3. Creating an enabling environment for private sector engagement | Gather private sector perspectives on how the government, humanitarian organization and business could work together to effectively promote multi- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the International humanitarian set-up facilitate private sector engagement in humanitarian action? • How can the humanitarian set-up make itself and its operations more accessible and transparent to potential partners • How can governments create an enabling environment for the private sector to effectively contribute to |
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| | stakeholders partnerships in emergency preparedness and response | humanitarian action? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is needed to establish a systematic dialogue and partnership between the government, humanitarian organizations and the private sector? |
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Conclusions and recommendations:

- Currently, there's no formal framework/architecture which invites the private sector to get involved in humanitarian action in the region; even though nothing objects them to contribute either. It was clear that there is lack of awareness/information and clear communication on the private sector's engagement in humanitarian issues.
- The uniqueness of Ebola experience has shown that there is commitment and a window of opportunity for business engagement in the region. There is need to create 'bridges or gateways' for better configuration between corresponding structures to ensure more exchange of information.
- It was recommended to create a fund managed by the private sector and that can be funded by any willing entities.
- Establish and reform legislative measures to foster the involvement of the private sector through for instance, incentives that will encourage companies to invest more in basic social services
- Support for the government's discussions to reform the law of 1960 (Association) recognized of public utility, with focus on companies that take social action to receive some reduction on tax.
- Create platform (gateways) private sector / government / humanitarian organizations to ensure fluidity in the communication and sharing of information on the humanitarian situation with the private sector.

5. Summary of main findings and the way forward:

Creating platforms for dialogue and coordination

- Businesses expressed an interest in providing support to humanitarian preparedness and response, but called for better guidance from the humanitarian community, including the development of platforms that could be a center for information (“a one-stop shop”) in terms of what is needed from the private sector and opportunities for support – or what was described as private sector “entry points”.
- Humanitarian organizations also called for private sector platforms, such as General Confederation of Enterprises of Cote d’Ivoire (GCECI), to help facilitate engagement with different companies that are interested in supporting humanitarian action.

Promoting sustainable partnerships

- Current partnerships tend to be ad-hoc, with businesses often called upon in the event of a crisis, rather than in advance. The importance of involving business at the early stage of preparedness or initial response was highlighted as key to recognizing their strategic relevance. There were calls for a more pro-active rather than reactive approach in which formal frameworks and modalities for engagement are developed based on “prepositioned agreements.”

Creating an enabling environment

- There is a need to include governments into these discussions as they play a critical role in creating an enabling environment for private sector engagement in charity and relief work. Legislation in some countries makes it difficult for businesses to work with the UN or other entities such as NGOs.
- Bureaucratic rules and multiple due diligence procedures of the UN tend to confuse businesses and create obstacles for establishing effective and sustainable partnerships.

Improving understanding between humanitarian and private sector actors

- There is a need to better define who is being referred to when discussing or engaging the private sector, as different businesses, such as multinational corporations, small and medium size enterprises or corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments, each have different strengths and interests in terms of their engagement in humanitarian action.
- The humanitarian community needs to better clarify what is needed from businesses in terms of leveraging their capacities and support. There are many calls by the humanitarian community for the private sector to do more; yet, little detail on which businesses they are referring to and what exactly they foresee them doing in short, medium and long-term.

Thematic areas of support

- Businesses spoke of the importance of taking advantage of their individual knowledge and expertise in certain thematic areas, such as logistics, due diligence and systems of cost-efficiency. Emergency preparedness was identified as an area where the private sector can offer significant technical support, including in the areas of contingency planning, data collection and analysis, risk assessments and simulation exercises.

6. Proposed Road map for implementation

| No | Activity | Responsible | Timeframe |
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| 1. Improved coordination and information sharing between the government, humanitarian and private sector actors on emergency preparedness and response | | | |
| 1 | Establish a private sector coordination platform at national level to map out strengths of partners and act as a “one stop” place for the private sector engagement in the event of an emergency i.e. information sharing and joint planning; | OCHA to facilitate a study of good practices and ensure regular updates of humanitarian concerns to the private sector community | To be provided regularly using the Private Sector mailing list (twice a year) |
| 2 | Business platforms such as General Confederation of Enterprises of Cote d’Ivoire (GCECI) should seek engagement with humanitarian partners to facilitate relationships with businesses interested in supporting humanitarian action | GCECI agreed to support quarterly briefing on humanitarian situation in Cote d’Ivoire to ensure targeted response through social responsibility programmes OCHA office in Cote d’Ivoire to liaise and support this activity accordingly | Start with twice a year? |
| 2. Promoting sustainable partnerships and strengthened opportunities for partnerships between private sector, government and humanitarian actors | | | |
| 3 | Businesses involved in humanitarian action should document and disseminate best case examples of public-private sector partnerships, using succinct and simple key messages that could be used to further leverage other private sector partnerships; | OCHA to collect and disseminate best case examples | End of 2015 |
| 4 | Create a regional private sector pooled humanitarian fund to support emergency preparedness and response | OCHA to advocate with ECOWAS and support development of such a fund | 2016 |
| 5 | Involve business at the early stage of preparedness or initial response was highlight as key to recognizing their strategic relevance. | OCHA and other humanitarian agencies to share information on minimum preparedness actions (IASC guidelines) with the private sector and ensure their involvement in National or Inter-Agency Contingency Plan processes | Depends on country context. |
| 3. Create an enabling environment for private sector engagement | | | |

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| 6 | Launch a West African Charter for Business Engagement, codifying adherence to humanitarian principles and commitment to support emergency preparedness and response through core competencies | OCHA to advocate with ECOWAS for development of such a charter | 2016 |
| 7 | Collaborate with governments in the West Africa region to revise regulations including tax exemption polices that would encourage the participation of the private sector in humanitarian action. | OCHA, Chambers of Commerce's in West Africa countries | 5-10 years |