

# Platforms for Private Sector–Humanitarian Collaboration





# Acknowledgements

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The content and judgements made in this report are solely those of the authors.

## Cover image credits

Left: Hygiene Awareness Creation by HCC Engineers during Bihar (India) Floods  
Right: Disaster response team at a warehouse in Guatemala, DHL



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# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>BCLC</b>	US Chamber of Commerce Business Civic Leadership Centre
<b>BITC</b>	Business in the Community
<b>BPA</b>	Business for Peace Alliance
<b>BSR</b>	Business for Social Responsibility
<b>CNDR</b>	Corporate Network for Disaster Response
<b>CSIS</b>	Center for Strategic and International Studies
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>DEC</b>	Disasters and Emergency Committee
<b>DMA</b>	Disaster Management Alliance
<b>DRN</b>	Disaster Resource Network
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>HFP</b>	Humanitarian Futures Programme, King's College, London
<b>ISDR</b>	UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-governmental Organisation
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>K4K</b>	Kenyans for Kenya
<b>LET</b>	World Economic Forum – Logistics Emergency Team
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>OCHA</b>	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PHT</b>	Pacific Humanitarian Team
<b>PPDRM</b>	Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management
<b>PQMD</b>	Partnerships for Quality Medical Donations
<b>PPP</b>	Public-Private Partnership
<b>PS</b>	Private Sector
<b>SME</b>	Small-Medium Enterprises
<b>SOPAC</b>	Applied Geoscience and Technology Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>US</b>	United States

# Summary

## Introduction

This scoping study explores how ‘platforms’ – in the form of intermediary organisations, networks, alliances and temporary coalitions – support the private sector’s engagement in humanitarian action, from disaster risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness through response, reconstruction and development. This study draws together information on platforms that was previously not available or accessible. It shows that platforms have already made, and have the potential to continue to make, significant contributions to facilitating effective private sector engagement in humanitarian action. At the same time the study raises many questions with regard to the challenges that both the platforms themselves and their members face. There is much that can be gleaned from the work of platforms about how ‘traditional’ (e.g. United Nations ((UN)) agencies), the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, donor governments and international non-governmental organisations and ‘non-traditional’ humanitarian actors (e.g. the private sector, military, diaspora and non-western donors) more broadly can work together.

## Rationale and objectives

The study builds upon previous research by the Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP) King’s College London which examined the existing context of humanitarian-private sector engagement. This research identified platforms as a valuable avenue for addressing challenges that have hindered effective joint engagement to date.

Seven main research areas framed the scoping study:

- 1 Different types of platform models used to promote private sector-humanitarian collaboration, and analysis of the function, characteristics, and success factors of these models;
- 2 How different platforms perceive and define the role of the private sector in humanitarian action and the contributions, comparative advantages and added value the private sector can bring;
- 3 The challenges encountered by platforms in helping to develop private sector-humanitarian partnerships;
- 4 How platforms view the evolving trends and transformations that may affect humanitarian action over the next decade and the opportunities and challenges this will pose to collaboration;
- 5 How platforms engage and link with one another, both horizontally (i.e. across platforms with related remits) and vertically (upwards and downwards between global, regional and national levels);
- 6 How platforms engage with national governments, regional authorities and other actors;
- 7 How platforms understand and measure the effectiveness of their activities and perceive their accountability to different stakeholders.

## Platforms included in the scoping study

Fifteen platforms participated in the research: six global, three regional and seven national.<sup>1</sup>

### Global platforms

- The Aidmatrix Foundation, USA; Fleet Forum, Switzerland; Global Hand, Hong Kong; NetHope, USA; Partnerships for Quality Medical Donations (PQMD), USA; World Economic Forum Logistics Emergency Team (WEF/LET), Switzerland.

### Regional platforms

- Disaster Management Alliance (DMA), USA; Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT), Fiji; Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management (PPDRM), Fiji.

### National platforms

- Business for Peace Alliance (BPA), Sri Lanka; Business in the Community (BITC), UK; CiYuan, China; Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDP), Philippines; Disaster Resource Network (DRN), India; Kenyans for Kenya (K4K), Kenya; US Chamber of Commerce Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC), USA.

## Methodology and terminology

The research was led by HFP with support provided by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited. A senior level Advisory Group consisting of representatives from international humanitarian non-governmental organisations (INGOs), the UN system and the private sector provided financial support and guidance to the HFP for platform selection. While the study was not designed to be a comprehensive research effort on platforms, the 15 platforms in the study represent a sampling of the types of humanitarian-private sector platform models that operate at different levels.

The study consisted of desk-based research of materials (websites, documents provided by the secretariats of the participating platforms and secondary literature on the platforms where available) and 57 interviews with representatives of the platform secretariats and member organisations. For each platform, three interviews were requested: one with a platform secretariat representative; one with a private sector member; and one with a humanitarian member. For some platforms additional interviews were included with donor organisations and with external partners.



The study finds that there is a lack of clarity in the use of the term ‘platform’ and related concepts, including ‘network’, ‘strategic alliance’, ‘consortium’ and ‘partnership’. It was beyond the scope of this study to resolve what these different terms mean or the implications of the lack of common terminology on the work of the platforms. Thus, for the purposes of this study, platforms are defined as intermediary mechanisms which support and promote the contribution and engagement of the private sector in humanitarian action, either engaging in partnership with traditional humanitarian agencies, or as a humanitarian actor in its own right.

The term ‘humanitarian action’ in this study refers not only to relief, but also to a wide spectrum of activities from prevention and DRR through to preparedness, response, recovery, reconstruction and into development. For the purposes of this study, the term ‘private sector’ refers to that part of the economy that is owned and controlled by individuals and organisations through private sector ownership. Herein we also use ‘private sector’ to refer to state owned enterprises under state capitalism, which are created by the government to undertake commercial activities, and commercial activity within the informal sector.

## Findings

This is a scoping study that is intended to be the start of further research and discussion amongst platforms and the wider humanitarian community, leading to an agenda for action on the themes and issues that the study raises. It is important to note that there is considerable diversity between platforms included in this study, in terms of geographic context, scale, purpose and activities, so inevitably not all the findings and the recommendations will be applicable to all platforms. Nine key findings emerged from the research.

### Platforms’ purpose and impact

#### **Platforms emerge to address complex crisis challenges that individual organisations or partnerships are unable to overcome alone.**

For the majority of platforms in this research, a ‘game changing’ disaster was the trigger for the platform’s creation. In some cases the trigger was the recognition by the private sector that its own preparedness and involvement in the crisis response had been *ad hoc* and needed to be more systematic. In other cases it was the recognition that a particular operational challenge or policy issue needed more in-depth attention and emphasis. Faced with a challenge that overwhelms the capacity of an individual organisation, or an INGO-private sector partnership, platforms have emerged to help diverse actors jointly understand the gaps and identify ways to address them. Of the platforms in this study, 47 per cent were established by the private sector, 20 per cent by humanitarian organisations and 33 per cent as either joint initiatives between private sector and humanitarian organisations or, in some cases, with government or the UN system.

#### **Platforms reflect, and can contribute to, a changing concept and dynamic of humanitarian action with a greater focus on disaster risk reduction and preparedness. However, they often struggle to turn this intention into practical action.**

Platforms increasingly see their role as supporting the private sector to engage in humanitarian action in ways that go beyond the response phase. Some platforms are actively engaging in DRR and preparedness. Yet, in many cases platforms face significant challenges translating this intent into practical action and in a way that seeks to span the transition from meeting short-term humanitarian needs to supporting development. Barriers include the fact that many platforms were formed with a response focus, and that it can be difficult to persuade private sector partners to invest in such activities when they do not see humanitarian action as being central to their core business. Other constraints relate to differences in terminology between the private and humanitarian sectors, with different understanding of concepts like vulnerability, resilience and sustainability. Lack of clear funding streams and consistent funding on the part of donors and governments for DRR, preparedness and recovery was also perceived to hamper more sustained progress. Platforms are not always clear on their roles in helping their members to better understand and overcome these barriers.

#### **An added value of platforms is that they can provide a clear access point for the private sector to engage in humanitarian action and they can help overcome common challenges to engagement.**

Platforms were found to add value by helping to address challenges that hinder effective private sector-humanitarian engagement, which may include differences in motives and interests, language and terminology, timescales for engagement, operating methods and decision-making processes. Platforms are perceived to add value in reducing these challenges by increasing the scale of efforts of members. This makes it easier for potential partners, whether government, humanitarian agencies or private sector, to access a number of organisations simultaneously, rather than having to make numerous individual connections. Other ways in which platforms add value is by building relationships and trust, developing and enhancing partnering capacity, reducing competition, conducting advocacy and allowing members to present a united voice.

#### **Platforms struggle to define and measure their impact.**

Most respondents recognised the importance of defining and assessing the impact of platforms’ work. Yet, almost none of the platforms had systematic and clearly articulated ways of doing so. The platforms’ lack of ability to demonstrate the impact of their services constrains their capacity to help members assess their own impact in terms of improving humanitarian outcomes. Further, it constrains platforms’ ability to build an evidence base on how the private sector engages in,

and contributes to, humanitarian action. Undoubtedly, many of the respondents in the study are involved in initiatives to consider issues related to quality, results and impact within their own organisations. It is, however, clear that platforms struggle to apply this to their own planning and activities.

## Success factors and challenges

### **Platforms across different contexts value common success characteristics which allow them to effectively serve their members.**

There were some consistent views on factors that contributed to making platforms successful at fulfilling their functions and being useful to members. These included clarity of purpose, strategic vision, the ability to engage at senior leadership levels in member organisations, clear membership criteria, neutrality, transparency, equity, a culture of going 'the extra mile' and the ability to span different organisational and cultural boundaries.

### **Currently there is no identifiable home or information repository for the learning platforms generate on how they facilitate the private sector's engagement in humanitarian action.**

The study found no common source where information on platforms could be found. There was widespread recognition amongst interviewees that a more systematic approach to pooling of knowledge on what platforms do and on how the private sector's engagement is changing is necessary. Yet, when asked where information on platforms could reside or how to promote better linkages between platforms, most respondents struggled to identify options or existing mechanisms to take this forward. Some suggested national authorities, some multilateral agencies such as the UN. Others felt that some less formal system between platforms themselves (such as online fora or annual exchange meetings at global or regional level) would be appropriate, but these options have not been clearly articulated or promoted by platforms to date.

### **Platforms have a record of inconsistent progress in forging links with governments.**

National level platforms, in particular, recognise the importance of forging links with governments but have inconsistent results in doing so. They reported mixed success in forging strong and sustainable ties with national and local government authorities or gaining recognition for their role and contribution. In different ways, many of the platforms pointed to the significance of the policy or political environment in which the platform operates and how it serves as either an enabling or a constraining force in platforms' abilities to forge strong relationships with governments. The pattern of start/stop engagement from both governments and donors was noted by some platforms. This was felt to be due to such factors as changes in political leaders and the resulting prioritisation of crisis management.

### **Platforms recognise they need to be adaptive, but face common challenges in doing this.**

Not all platforms intend or face a demand from members to become long-term formal entities. For some concluding activities once they have fulfilled the original task is the most appropriate course of action. For example, one of the platforms in this study was envisioned from the start to be a temporary mechanism to mobilise resources for the 2011 Horn of Africa crisis. When its mandate was accomplished, the platform disbanded. For others, however, that have chosen to continue as an entity over the longer-term and that are created to generate more sustained and in depth collaboration, their evolution and change have followed different models and frameworks. Many noted they face challenges around their capacity to be adaptive in an increasingly complex and unpredictable external environment. Common challenges noted include their ability to anticipate 'what might be' and to reconfigure their role in light of a changing context, to secure adequate and consistent funding and, for some, to engage more private sector members in the platform or to forge relationships with a broader set of external actors.

## Platforms in the future

### **Platforms recognise they will have to work in new ways to remain relevant in a futures context.**

HFP has identified ten transformative factors that are likely to characterise the humanitarian environment in the future.<sup>2</sup> Considering the plausibility of these trends, platforms reflected on the functions and roles that they may need to assume in order to serve their members effectively in the future. These included stronger research and analysis, greater and more sophisticated use of technology and social media, greater emphasis on promoting innovation, stronger engagement with other platforms and actors and greater emphasis on their convening role.

## Recommendations

The 15 recommendations are suggestions for how platforms could focus their attention on strengthening the work they do. Recommendations 1-11 are directed at the platforms themselves, while 12-15 are aimed at the wider humanitarian community and donors interested in supporting more effective private sector engagement in humanitarian action. As noted, there is considerable diversity between the platforms, so inevitably not all recommendations will be applicable to all platforms.

## Recommendations for platforms

### **Collaboration**

- Platforms should consider ways that they can more effectively interact and share learning amongst themselves, horizontally (across platforms) and vertically (upwards and downwards between global, regional and national levels).
- Platforms should increase efforts to link with governments to promote the engagement of the private sector in national disaster management frameworks and arrangements. The

way this is approached will vary depending on the specific national or regional context, and platforms will need to consider the policy environment in which they operate.

- Platforms with a core partnering and brokering function should seek to build a more coherent body of knowledge on how to construct successful humanitarian partnerships and promote stronger and more diverse collaboration.
- National and regional level platforms, in particular, should engage with a more diverse membership, including different types of private sector actors. This could include more nationally and regionally based private sector and, where appropriate, small businesses and state owned enterprises.

### **Roles that platforms play**

- Platforms should focus more attention on helping the private sector and humanitarian sector gain a shared understanding of what DRR and preparedness mean and how their work on reducing vulnerability and resilience-building can align more closely.
- Platforms should work to better align their humanitarian activities with development as well as conflict reduction initiatives.
- Platforms should clearly define the purpose of the platform and articulate how it will track impact.

### **The way that platforms function**

- Platforms could usefully consider the success characteristics identified in this study and look at how these factors could be applicable to their own organisational design.
- Platforms should explore ways to address challenges around defining and measuring impact.
- Platforms should investigate new ways of working to fulfil the role that will be demanded of them in a futures context, including convening and facilitating.
- Platforms focused on addressing sectoral and operational challenges should consider how they can support members to identify innovative practices that could help to address future humanitarian challenges.

### **Recommendations for donors and the wider humanitarian community**

- Before looking to start new platforms, donors and other organisations wishing to support more private sector engagement through platforms should determine if and how they can engage with existing platforms and how they could strengthen their capacity.
- Private sector entities looking to begin or increase involvement in humanitarian action should consider whether engagement through platforms, in addition to or instead of individual partnerships with humanitarian agencies, provides a useful way to achieve their aims.

- Support from donors to comprehensively map and research platforms could build a more robust knowledge base on humanitarian-private sector platforms and how they contribute to humanitarian action.
- The humanitarian sector at large should consider how platforms can be instrumental in facilitating the systematic engagement of other ‘non-traditional’ actors beyond the private sector. This includes, for example, the engagement of the military, scientific communities, non-western donors and diaspora.<sup>3</sup>

### **Going forward**

This study has the potential to go far beyond this initial research. A starting place would be to test out the study’s themes and findings in the diverse institutional contexts and continents where the platforms participating in this study operate. These dialogue fora can be designed to generate broader and deeper debate on issues related to the roles and added value of non-traditional humanitarian actors, including the private sector and how it is evolving; on the changing nature of the crisis context and capacity implications for the traditional humanitarian sector; and on platforms of the future. The result of this expanded dialogue should be a future action agenda for a more informed understanding of the role that both platforms and the private sector can play in forging new and innovative solutions to deal with humanitarian crises. Ideally, these dialogue fora will identify options to generate more regular interaction between platforms and to have more accessible information on what they do, particularly at the regional and national levels. The authors welcome comments on the report and look forward to supporting a broader debate around its findings and the recommendations.



# Section 1: Introduction

This study is about the involvement of the private sector in humanitarian action.<sup>4</sup> It explores the role of ‘platforms’ – intermediary organisations, networks, alliances and temporary coalitions – which have as a core objective the support of more effective private sector engagement in humanitarian action.<sup>5</sup> This ranges from DRR and preparedness through relief and response, recovery, reconstruction and development. The study builds on previous research by HFP and its partners which examined the existing context of humanitarian-private sector engagement, including motives for collaboration. This research identified the potential role of platforms as a valuable avenue in addressing the types of challenges which have hindered effective private sector engagement to date.<sup>6</sup>

The study responds to a gap in awareness and understanding about the role of platforms that was identified in the earlier research, and to growing calls from policy analysts and practitioners (summarised in Section 2) for more of these entities to be developed. It aims to set out clearly the kinds of platforms that currently exist, the functions they fulfil, the characteristics that make them successful and the common challenges they face. In doing so, this study seeks to contribute

to a more informed debate on the ways that platforms can support effective private sector engagement in humanitarian action, and to provide practical guidance to platforms themselves. There is much that can be gleaned from the work of platforms about how ‘traditional’ (e.g. UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, donor governments and international non-governmental organisations) and ‘non-traditional’ humanitarian actors (e.g. the private sector, military, diaspora and non-western donors) more broadly can work together.

## Scope and methodology

The study is built on primary research conducted with 15 platforms, including desk-based research of materials (websites, documents provided by platform secretariats and secondary literature on the platforms where available) and 57 interviews with representatives of platform secretariats and member organisations. For each platform, three interviews were requested: one with a secretariat representative, one with a private sector member and one with a humanitarian member. For some platforms additional interviews were included with donor organisations or external partners. The full list of interviewees can be found in Annex I. In addition, a review of secondary literature was conducted, covering both academic and policy literature.

In the planning stages of this study, more than 40 platforms were identified through the review of secondary literature. The selection of the 15 platforms, from a long list identified through the review of secondary literature, aimed to maximise representation according to a number of criteria, including: geographical scale (global, regional, national), origin (private sector-initiated, humanitarian-initiated, government-initiated), humanitarian focus area (DRR, preparedness, response, recovery) and sector focus area (health, transport and logistics, engineering and construction).

The research was led by the HFP, King’s College, London, with support provided by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited. The study was guided by an Advisory Group consisting of representatives from INGOs, UN Agencies and the private sector. The Advisory Group members, listed in Annex III, provided overall guidance on the scope and direction of the study and the selection of platforms for inclusion. They also provided financial or in-kind support for the study.

## Intended audience

The study is aimed at policy-makers and practitioners from both the humanitarian and private sectors with an interest in increasing the effectiveness of private sector engagement in humanitarian action. In particular, it is hoped it will be of practical use for those involved in the kinds of platforms

**Table 1: Platforms included in the study**

GLOBAL PLATFORMS
The Aidmatrix Foundation, USA
Fleet Forum, Switzerland
Global Hand, Hong Kong
NetHope, USA
Partnerships for Quality Medical Donations (PQMD), USA
World Economic Forum Logistics Emergency Teams (LET), Switzerland
REGIONAL PLATFORMS
Disaster Management Alliance (DMA), Latin America region, USA
Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT), Fiji
Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management (PPDRM), Fiji
NATIONAL PLATFORMS
Business for Peace Alliance (BPA), Sri Lanka
Business in the Community (BITC), UK
CiYuan, China
Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDP), Philippines
Disaster Resource Network (DRN), India
Kenyaans for Kenya (K4K), Kenya
US Chamber of Commerce Business Civic Leadership Centre (BCLC), USA

examined in the study, either as member organisations or representatives of the secretariats. The report draws on academic literature to provide a sound basis for the analysis and to contextualise the study within the continuing and vibrant debates in the policy realm of private sector-humanitarian interaction. However, the emphasis of the study is on practical applications of the findings from this research.

## Structure of the report

The report is organised into five sections. *Section 1: Introduction* describes the aims of the study and the background to the research. *Section 2: Platforms in a Wider Context* sets out some of the key ideas from secondary literature relating to the changing nature of the global crisis landscape, the role of the private sector in humanitarian action and the development of platforms. *Section 3: Architecture of Platforms* presents two conceptual models. A typology shows how platforms are organised and what they do, and a continuum framework illustrates how platforms support different types of private sector engagement in humanitarian action. *Section 4: Current State of Platforms* summarises the key findings from the study, exploring why humanitarian platforms are created, how they contribute to effective private sector engagement, their added value and success characteristics and the common challenges they face. *Section 5: Conclusions and Recommendations* suggests ways that platforms, themselves, and the wider humanitarian community can build on the findings of this study to strengthen the impact of platforms, both now and in the future.

## Key terms and definitions: a multitude of meanings

### What do we mean by platforms?

In the absence of any commonly accepted definition for platforms, HFP therefore understands a platform in this context as an overarching term that refers to any type of mechanism that aims to facilitate the engagement of the private sector in humanitarian action.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for the purposes of this study, HFP defines platforms as intermediary mechanisms which support and promote the engagement of the private sector in humanitarian action, either engaging in partnership with traditional humanitarian agencies, or as humanitarian actors in their own right.

As with the term platform, there is a great deal of ambiguity and overlap in many of the closely related collaboration concepts discussed in this study, including network, strategic alliance, consortium and partnership. As one of the purposes of this study is to explore the different types of models and forms that platforms currently take, this definition does not exclude on the basis of form. Hence, a platform could be a network, a strategic alliance, a coalition, an organisation, a set of principles or guidelines, a temporary coalition, a series of events or online fora. The key defining feature of a platform is that it is a multi-faceted entity that exists to promote

and support engagement. Therefore, a two-way partnership between a humanitarian agency and a private sector entity would not be considered a platform, but an organisation that worked to bring together potential partners would be. Similarly, mechanisms that convene multiple partners to work on joint initiatives would be considered a platform if there is some entity distinct from the individual member organisations coordinating and promoting the multi-way partnership.

Section 3 sets out the ways that the 15 platforms included in this study define themselves through an analysis of their functions and activities. It is, though, beyond the scope of this study to resolve the lack of clarity around what these terms mean and the implications of the lack of common terminology on the work of platforms.

### What do we mean by humanitarian action?

In common with the HFP's previous work, 'humanitarian' is understood here from the perspective of human vulnerability. Humanitarian action in this study therefore refers not only to relief operations but also to a wide spectrum of activities from prevention and DRR through to preparedness, response, recovery, reconstruction and development. Some of the platforms in this study focus only on humanitarian response, while others have a broader development focus but take on specific humanitarian preparedness and response activities as well.

### What do we mean by the private sector?

There is not one universally accepted definition for the term 'private sector'. For the purposes of this study, the term refers to that part of the economy that is owned and controlled by individuals and organisations through private ownership. Herein we also use 'private sector' to refer to state owned enterprises under state capitalism, which are created by the government to undertake commercial activities, and commercial activity within the informal sector.

The private sector delivers products and services across industries and private, public, and social sectors. Important features include private ownership, production driven by markets and competition, and activity driven by private initiative and risk-taking. The private sector is described using a variety of terms varying across the international, national and local level. Types of private sector entities include, but are not limited to, business, company, cooperative, corporation, firm, franchise, partnership, multinational, proprietorship and sole trader.

# Section 2: Platforms in a wider context

This study fits within a broader context of increasing policy and academic attention to the changing humanitarian operating environment and the role the private sector can play in that context. Section 2 sets out some of the relevant issues raised in the literature which provide a useful background to considering the need for and role of platforms.

## An increasingly complex operating environment

There is growing recognition that crisis contexts are becoming increasingly complex. Ben Ramalingam *et al.* (2008:1), for example, describe ‘a world of continuous change’,

facing complex shifts and challenges such as economic and political globalisation, rapid technological innovation and climate change. The transnational nature of global challenges, fast moving environments and challenges which cut across disciplinary and bureaucratic expertise adds to this complexity (Arevalo and Fallon, 2008: 462). HFP (Kent and Burke, 2011: 9) argues that ‘uncertainty, rapid change and complexity will increasingly be the hallmarks of humanitarian crises in the foreseeable future.’ It suggests ten transformational factors and trends that are likely to characterise the future humanitarian operating environment, summarised below in Box 1.

Box 1: Ten transformative humanitarian factors

### Ten transformative humanitarian factors

**GROWING POLITICAL CENTRALITY OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES.** Humanitarian crises are highly significant political events which have moved from the periphery of governmental interests to centre stage. This means that decisions about who provides assistance, and how they provide it, will increasingly be determined by abiding political interests.

**CHANGING TYPES, DIMENSIONS AND DYNAMICS OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES.** Uncertainty, rapid change and complexity will increasingly be the hallmarks of humanitarian crises in the foreseeable future. There will be new types of sudden and slow-onset crisis agents, including technological systems failures, large-scale industrial and chemical collapse, nuclear seepage, water scarcity, pandemics and increasing civil strife.

**POST-WESTERN HEGEMONIC STATES.** A growing number of states around the world – from Indonesia and Myanmar to Zimbabwe – are becoming less and less willing to accept the involvement of Western powers. Whether in global issues concerning climate change or issues around local delivery systems, governments appear less inclined to accept Western bilateral donor advice.

**THE FUTURE ROLE AND DELIVERY OF AID.** The increasing political centrality of crises will change the sorts of activities that will be perceived as needed from the international community. Far greater attention will be given by governments of crisis-affected states to international support that provides technological and innovative practices, and far less interest will be paid to the provision of ‘international aid workers’ and conventional response practices.

**THE VULNERABILITY PERSPECTIVE.** The division between development and humanitarian action will prove conceptually inadequate to meet the complex crises of the future, particularly for governments who increasingly have to be seen to be proactive in anticipating and dealing with crisis threats. From a resilience or vulnerability perspective, humanitarian action will become more comprehensive, incorporating issues such as livelihoods and conservation.

**EXPANDING RANGE OF HUMANITARIAN ACTORS.** A plethora of new actors is contributing to humanitarian action, from the private sector and non-state actors to diaspora groups and

online communities contributing through crowd-sourcing and crowd-funding. While they contribute new capacities and expertise, the expansion of actors also brings significant challenges, and will require new ways of working and collaborating.

#### SUPPLY VERSUS DEMAND DRIVEN RESPONSE.

Humanitarian action will become more demand driven, with recipient governments becoming more outspoken about their preferences and criteria for the acceptance of aid. Governments, as well as potentially or actually affected communities, are likely to be more insistent on quality and effectiveness, and more vocal about the failures of international assistance to deliver against these criteria.

**PROFESSIONALISM AND MANAGERIALISM.** The humanitarian sector has become more professional in many aspects of its work, and recent years have seen several ‘professionalisation’ initiatives emerge. This reflects a developing institutional managerialism that recognises that the humanitarian sector is a ‘competitive industry’ in which, not only NGOs and UN agencies but an increasingly diverse range of actors, seek shares of an expanding but ultimately limited market.

**MULTIPLE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES.** Against the backdrop of the challenges above, the assumption that ‘traditional’ humanitarian principles as independence, impartiality and neutrality are universal is being challenged. Those undertaking humanitarian activities have to be sensitive to differing assumptions about principles in a diverse global and humanitarian community.

**INCREASING ROLE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.** Science and technology can play an increasingly important role in reducing future vulnerability. Those with humanitarian responsibilities will be held accountable more and more for ensuring that their work is appropriately and systematically informed by relevant evolving scientific learning. Humanitarian actors will also be called upon to consider the implications of their emerging two-fold intermediary role, bringing scientific learning to the partners with whom they work, and enabling their concerns to inform scientific research agenda.

Source: Adapted from Kent and Burke 2011

Given this evolving context, traditional humanitarian actors find themselves challenged to find new approaches to ensuring that they have adequate capacity to respond to the changing environment in which they find themselves operating. In particular, the ‘increasing scale of problems such as poverty and environmental degradation over the last decade have proven well beyond the capacity of governments and traditional international organisations, resulting in more multi-stakeholder responses’ (Waddell and Allee, 2004: 1). Considering the US context in particular, Satish Nambisan (2008: 7) sees the ability of governments to work in collaborative arrangements with diverse stakeholders as critical in determining ‘their success in solving the complex social problems that we currently face’. Ramalingam et al. (2008: 1, 8) argue that ‘new challenges are calling for new approaches, new ideas and innovative mechanisms for information exchange, collaboration and decision-making’, and point to the potential role of networks in ‘anticipating and being better prepared for a more complex and ambiguous future’.

## The changing role of the private sector in humanitarian action

The private sector is one of the major players in this new context of collaboration and partnership. “Before the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, response was unbudgeted and collaboration was fragmented” (Kent and Burke, 2011: 19). Yet since then, ‘corporations and aid organisations alike are examining ways in which they can collaborate most fruitfully with one another’ (Thomas and Fritz, 2006: 116). While the motives of private sector involvement in traditionally non-profit sectors, including the humanitarian sector, can be perceived to be controversial, some observers suggest a growing convergence of interests and motives (Brugmann and Paahala, 2007: 80). According to Lukas (2002: 10) ‘a chief factor encouraging these partnerships is that neither side alone can achieve its specific goals; collaboration is unavoidable to solve certain problems’.

That said, until recently, the often longstanding engagement of the private sector in humanitarian action has been ‘largely unscrutinized’ (Johnson, 2009: 225), with research ‘in its infancy’ and suffering from a lack of reliable data (Binder and Witte, 2007: 26). The last two years, however, have seen a flurry of articles, research papers and conferences examining the motives and role of the private sector in humanitarian action (for example: Nelson, 2010; Bridges et al., 2010; Forstater et al., 2010; Kent and Burke, 2011; Roth, 2009; White and Lang, 2012). The field, it seems, is maturing and a more nuanced picture of the humanitarian role and activities of the private sector is beginning to emerge.

As a result of this attention, the definition of the private sector in the context of humanitarian action is being approached in a more differentiated way. In particular, the growing significance of the national private sector and from emerging economies adds a new dimension. The ‘private sector’ in the context of humanitarian action cannot be assumed to refer to

multinational companies headquartered in Western states, as can be the case in discussions within the humanitarian sector. Rather, there is an emerging appreciation that private sector actors differ significantly between the international, regional, national and local levels, including the roles they can play in preparing for and responding to humanitarian crises.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of its engagement, the role of the private sector beyond immediate relief in disasters is starting to be explored, such as the engagement of the private sector in DRR (Roeth, 2009: 7), preparedness (Shupe, 2009: 292), and post-conflict settings (Gerson, 2001: 109). The appreciation of the types of functions that the private sector can play in these humanitarian areas is changing. Yet, while interest in DRR, preparedness and recovery is a growing area of strategic importance that many believe could benefit from private sector engagement, compared to disaster response, challenges to this role expansion have been noted. For a start, the entry points for engaging are not all that clear. Consequently, there are still not clearly defined roles for the private sector that are commonly recognised for DRR, preparedness or, for that matter, recovery. This could reflect the lack of consensus in the international humanitarian system on how to link humanitarianism to issues of social and economic development and sustainability, which has implications for defining the private sector’s role beyond response (Kent and Burke, 2011: 19-20).

The depth and sustainability of private sector involvement, moving beyond *ad hoc* project based interaction, is also increasingly being examined. Jane Nelson (2010: 20-21), for example, calls for greater private sector participation in the dialogue on aid effectiveness, and for more ‘systemic solutions’ between donors and private enterprises. Binder and Witte (2007: 13-16) similarly identify a ‘determined effort to professionalise the practice’ as private sector engagement in humanitarian relief matures, with a trend among private sector towards ‘more strategic and long-term planning, and a recognition of the need for consistent learning’. While many major institutional donors are focusing resources on promoting private sector partnerships in the humanitarian sector, governments, by and large, have not developed systematic, widespread programs to tap business resources or capabilities in the event of a disaster (Raisch et al., 2007: 5). This is clearly still an area requiring more work.

Future efforts to develop more sustained and in-depth private-humanitarian sector engagement need to take into consideration the types of engagement challenges that have been well articulated (see Table 2), and look at the ways that these barriers are being, or could be, overcome. This means recognising ways that the private sector’s motives are evolving and changing. It also means identifying how its capacity can be brought to bear in delivering high-quality results, making the best use of the comparative advantages of the private sector in a way that augments and complements the existing capabilities within the traditional humanitarian sector. Specifically, there are

calls in the literature for greater attention to coordination and shared learning on the strategies implemented by institutional donors to promote private sector engagement; analysis of business models and financing mechanisms employed by the private sector to address development and humanitarian challenges; efforts to increase the quality and scale of private sector engagement (Jane Nelson, 2010); and greater attention to evaluation and impact assessment of private sector engagement (Binder and Witte, 2007: 52). Others have argued for better information and learning about how the engagement works and what it is achieving, including recommendations for a 'Humanitarian Compact' and stronger monitoring of the private sector operating within the humanitarian sphere (Johnson, 2009: 9,37); better dissemination of best practices and success stories (Roeth, 2009: 29); and 'the development of a space for decision making to define responsibilities and capabilities and for engaging in contentious issues such as the clash between the commercial sector and humanitarian principles' (Kent and Burke, 2011: 23).

Table 2 below provides a summary of the barriers to effective private sector engagement in humanitarian action, drawn from a review of the academic and policy literature. While this list is neither exhaustive nor reflective of all the engagement between humanitarian actors and the private sector, it is a useful starting point for understanding some of the common challenges to effective collaboration.

## Why platforms?

One of the ways that practitioners and analysts have proposed to address some of the gaps discussed above is through 'platforms'—intermediaries that exist to facilitate the systematic involvement of the private sector in humanitarian action. Interview respondents in the HFP study (Kent and Burke, 2011:24, 30) felt that the development of neutral platforms for exchange and information sharing could address some of the major challenges to cross sector collaboration, in particular around decision-making, coherence, partnering capacity and mutual understanding. Respondents noted that at a system-wide level, a number of initiatives have specifically aimed to facilitate this exchange and communication, but did not necessarily bring together the diversity of actors that needed to be at the table. Others felt that ultimately better communication between private-humanitarian sector actors could only really occur in-country or the regional level, but not at the global level. The subsequent discussion meetings<sup>10</sup> called for a mapping of existing platforms at global, regional and national levels, and for identifying ways to make sure platforms and partnerships are anchored in practice and include a mechanism to test collaboration principles and engagement.

This demand for better facilities to support more effective private sector engagement echoes across the disaster management spectrum. A recent Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) study calls for 'more streamlined

**Table 2: Barriers to effective private sector engagement in humanitarian action**

Barriers to effective private sector engagement in humanitarian action <sup>9</sup>	
<b>Information and understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of evidence of the humanitarian impact of collaboration</li> <li>• Much of the private sector is not familiar with the structures and institutions within the humanitarian sector and thus struggles in negotiating the complex environment</li> <li>• Perceived differences in motives and drivers for engagement in humanitarian action</li> <li>• Lack of common language and terminology</li> <li>• Lack of understanding among private sector of the principles and standards that the humanitarian sector seeks to abide by</li> <li>• Lack of clarity and understanding about competencies, entry points for the private sector's engagement, its contribution (financial and in-kind) and areas where the private sector has considerable expertise and added value</li> <li>• Concerns about sharing proprietary information</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural differences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences in how the private and humanitarian sectors measure success, assess impact, as well as their approaches to accountability and visibility</li> <li>• Suspicion and distrust of the motives of the private sector</li> <li>• Perception of humanitarians as lacking effectiveness or aspiring to impractical outcomes</li> <li>• Lack of mutual understanding and trust</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity and resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difference in timescales (e.g. duration of involvement or interest), operating methods (e.g. success measures and accountability mechanisms) and decision-making processes (e.g. different legal entity models and organisational cultures)</li> <li>• Barriers of scale as partnerships are often small scale and ad hoc rather than strategic</li> <li>• Transaction costs in time and resources required to build a partnership</li> <li>• Limited absorption and interface capacity within humanitarian organisations and the private sector for partnering</li> <li>• Imbalance between time and resources that can be committed by humanitarian organisations and private sector counterparts</li> <li>• External factors, such as economic downturns and changing leadership, can jeopardise arrangements</li> <li>• Challenges of coordination with non-traditional actors</li> <li>• Lack of common models or frameworks for collaboration</li> </ul>





Relief work at Leh  
Hindustan Construction Company – Disaster Resource Network, India.

and permanent convening platforms’ to bring together stakeholders including businesses (White and Lang, 2011: 21). UNISDR emphasises the need for ‘institutional homes’ to promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) for DRR (Roeth, 2009: 30). The recent World Economic Forum report on the private sector response in Haiti calls for a commonly accepted ‘clearing house’ to match needs and capabilities for disaster response (Bridges et al., 2011: 4). In a development context, the Harvard Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative calls for more research on ‘different matchmaking, brokerage, and business linkage support mechanisms’ and for ‘mapping’ and analysis of models for corporate engagement in public policy shaping such as collective advocacy platforms’ (CSR Initiative, 2007: 8). Considering networks in particular, Ramalingam has argued for a more systematic approach to understanding and analysing networks (2011: 3), pointing out that ‘surprisingly little has been written on the strategic development and management of networks with the humanitarian sector in mind’ (Ramalingam *et al.*, 2008: 1).

Given these continuing calls for the creation of new platforms, as noted in Section 1, it is surprising to note the high number of entities that already exist to promote and support the engagement of the private sector in humanitarian action. In mapping a small sample of the types of platforms that currently exists, this study aims to provide information not previously available with respect to the current state of platforms. This provides a starting point to better understand the gap between the plethora of platforms that already exist and the continuing call to create more such initiatives. Is the gap due to a lack of accessible information about platforms? Or, is it a result of existing platforms failing to fulfil the functions that are required by their constituents? Rather than more platforms, the call could instead be for better platforms or for more systematised information on the ones that already exist.

# Section 3: The architecture and function of platforms

Because information about platforms is not readily available, two conceptual models were developed to help organise and present the information gathered in this scoping study. These are designed to synthesise the variety of both form and function amongst the different platforms studied, and to illustrate the specific ways that platforms support different forms of private sector engagement in humanitarian action.

The two conceptual models are:

- *Typology of platforms*: an analysis of the types of platforms, which summarises the characteristics of platforms, including their form, purpose, organisational structure, functions and activities;
- *Continuum Framework*:<sup>11</sup> a model to illustrate how platforms can support private sector engagement in humanitarian action, both now and in the future. The continuum describes the types of functions and activities the platform may undertake, depending on its role definition.

Both models are introduced in this section, and further reference is made to both the typology and the continuum framework in discussing the study's findings (Section 4) and conclusions and recommendations (Section 5) of the report.

## Typology of platforms

The platform characteristics outlined in this typology can be used to distinguish different kinds of platform models. The typology can also be used as a tool to assist platforms to map themselves within the platform landscape according to those characteristics listed in Table 3, Figure 1, Table 4 and Figure 2.

## Platform models

Table 3 summarises the defining features of the different platforms studied, with respect to platform origin, membership, purpose, thematic focus, form, geographic coverage and key functions.

Table 3: Types of platform models

Characteristic	Description	Type
Origin	Main initiator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Humanitarian organisations</li> <li>• Private sector</li> <li>• Joint initiative</li> </ul>
	Reason for the platform's creation or taking on humanitarian functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a philanthropic initiative</li> <li>• Response to a specific humanitarian crisis</li> <li>• Response to specific operational challenge</li> <li>• Response to strategic or policy issues</li> </ul>
Purpose	What platforms aim to do in a humanitarian context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable broad, multi-stakeholder collaboration beyond private sector and humanitarian organisations (e.g. with development practitioners or government authorities)</li> <li>• Enhance the capacity of the private sector to contribute to humanitarian action</li> <li>• Promote business continuity/reduce private sector vulnerability to crises</li> <li>• Support greater effectiveness of humanitarian organisations</li> </ul>
Membership	Membership of the platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanitarian organisations only</li> <li>• Joint humanitarian and private sector</li> <li>• Private sector organisations only</li> <li>• Multi-sector (e.g. humanitarian and private sector along with other actors such as academia or government)</li> </ul>
Form	Terminology platforms use to describe their structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alliance</li> <li>• Consortium</li> <li>• Formal / registered organisation</li> <li>• Membership organisation</li> <li>• Network</li> <li>• Platform</li> <li>• Partnership</li> </ul>
Thematic focus	Phase of humanitarian action to which the platforms contribute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention / DRR</li> <li>• Preparedness</li> <li>• Response</li> <li>• Recovery</li> <li>• Reconstruction</li> <li>• Development</li> </ul>
	Types of crises on which platforms work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict only</li> <li>• Natural hazards only</li> <li>• Natural hazards and conflict</li> </ul>
	Industry or sector on which platforms focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering and construction</li> <li>• Information and communication technology (ICT)</li> <li>• Logistics / transport</li> <li>• Pharmaceuticals / health</li> <li>• Open to any sector</li> </ul>
Geographic coverage	Platforms' reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global</li> <li>• Regional</li> <li>• National</li> <li>• Local</li> </ul>

## Origin and form

Of those platforms participating in this study, 47 per cent were established by the private sector, 20 per cent by humanitarian organisations and 33 per cent as joint or multi-sector initiatives between the private sector and humanitarian organisations and, in some cases, government. There were variations across geographical levels: at the national level five out of seven platforms were established by the private sector; at the regional level the three platforms were established by humanitarian organisations; and at the global level four out of six platforms were joint initiatives, one established by a humanitarian organisations and one by the private sector alone.

As noted, although the term platform is used as a collective description of the entities studied there is not a commonly accepted terminology for the different collaboration models or what participation in the different models may mean or require. Representatives of the platform secretariat were all asked what words they used to describe their own organisation or entity. The most common responses were membership organisation, strategic alliance, network and platform. Several platforms used more than one word or used different words during different phases of their evolution.

Figure 1: How the platforms described themselves by frequency of response



## Platforms at different geographical levels

### National level

The seven national level platforms in this study were BCLC, BITC, BPA, CiYuan, CNDR, DRN and K4K. With the exception of K4K (which was initiated after discussions between Safaricom and the Kenyan Red Cross) and CiYuan (which was initiated by the non-profit Business for Social Responsibility ((BSR)) with US State Department funding) all are private sector initiated and supported, and seek to enhance the role of the private sector as a humanitarian actor in its own right. Most provide services for the private sector's own business

continuity and to strengthen its capability to respond as a humanitarian actor.

### Regional level

The regional level platforms in this study, DMA, the PHT and the PPDRM have an important role in building relationships across sectors and at multiple levels: between national governments, linking national governments to regional entities and mechanisms and integrating the private sector to work as a partner with national and regional entities. Since regional platforms generally have a hemispheric focus and the added advantage of having a long-term presence in the region, they can be seen to be the first port of call for information or to serve as an advocate on a particular humanitarian issue or need.

### Global level

Of the global level platforms in the study – the Aidmatrix Foundation, Fleet Forum, Global Hand, LET, NetHope and PQMD – the majority were joint initiatives, one established by humanitarian organisations and one by the private sector alone. Global level platforms were created to help tap into the private sector's expertise to engage as a partner to help resolve specific operational and sectoral challenges, for example in ICT (NetHope), transport and logistics (Fleet Forum, LET), and donations management (the Aidmatrix Foundation, Global Hand, PQMD). Global platforms were also deemed to have an advocacy role but one targeted at their specific thematic issue or focus area.

All platforms are managed by small secretariats, typically of two to eight staff members. Some have more centralised management models while others have virtual models whereby staff are based in different geographic regions and collaborate virtually.

## Types of functions and activities

Table 4 summarises the nine core functions that platforms fulfil, including illustrative activities for each of the functions. It describes the functions and associated activities of the platforms analysed. Each function has a variety of associated activities platforms carried out. Each platform often carried out more than one function to achieve its purpose. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the nine core functions carried out by the platform studied, by geographic level –global, regional or national.

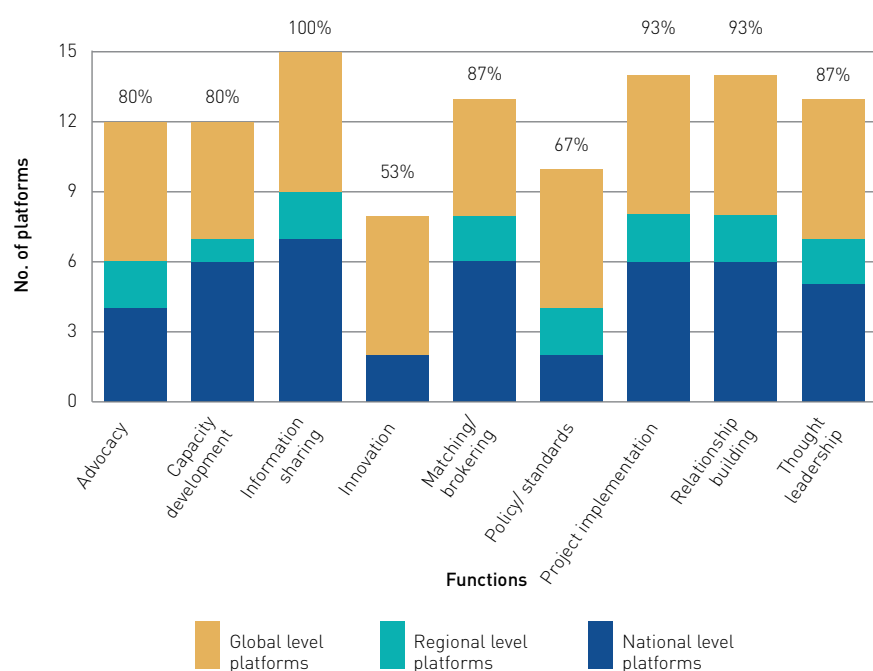
The platforms are particularly active in information sharing, project implementation and relationship-building, with matching and brokering and thought leadership also being common functions. Work around policy standards and innovation was less common although not insignificant. As discussed in the continuum section which follows, while there is consistency in functions carried out by platforms at different geographical levels, the specific activities undertaken will differ depending on the type of private sector engagement that the platform seeks to facilitate.

**Table 4: Types of functions and activities**

Functions	Activities
<b>Core services the platform provides to achieve its purpose</b>	<b>Specific activities carried out to fulfil the functions</b>
<b>Advocacy / influence on humanitarian needs and challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting members to develop a collective voice</li> <li>• Supporting members to act as a collective voice and to advocate to others inside and outside the platform</li> <li>• Platform advocating to the members</li> <li>• Using platform expertise to support other platforms</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity development for private sector and for humanitarian actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities to understand the broader institutional or enabling environment or context for humanitarian action</li> <li>• Capacity assessment and diagnosis</li> <li>• Organisational strengthening</li> <li>• Partnering capacity enhancement</li> <li>• Toolkits, manuals</li> <li>• Training, orientation</li> </ul>
<b>Information sharing / dissemination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication between members</li> <li>• Conferences</li> <li>• Media work</li> <li>• Online foras</li> <li>• Publicising /sharing the work of the platform with the wider public (website, newsletter)</li> <li>• Sharing best practice</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapting existing technology to humanitarian challenges</li> <li>• Identify and define need</li> <li>• Testing innovations</li> <li>• Scaling up and dissemination</li> </ul>
<b>Matching / brokering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulting with stakeholders to understand their needs, expectations and challenges</li> <li>• Developing understanding in advance of making a pre-partnership agreement</li> <li>• Providing information on organisations</li> <li>• Verification/screening/due diligence</li> <li>• Linking and connecting organisations</li> <li>• Providing referral services external to the platform</li> <li>• Review and evaluation of matching processes</li> <li>• Supporting alliance/ partnership formation</li> <li>• Distributing funds or identifying where funds should go</li> </ul>
<b>Policy / standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness, promotion and dissemination</li> <li>• Developing standards</li> <li>• Implementation strategies</li> <li>• Monitoring for accountability</li> <li>• Policy analysis /review</li> </ul>
<b>Project Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project design support</li> <li>• Advisory services/consultancy</li> <li>• Facilitation of after action reviews for response/projects</li> <li>• Monitoring and tracking results and impact</li> <li>• Providing humanitarian service delivery</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship building (online and face-to-face)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreeing on terms of mutual accountability, transparency, shared risks</li> <li>• Clarifying terminology, vocabulary and expectations between the private sector and humanitarians</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Convening</li> <li>• Encouraging engagement through member participation in platform decision-making</li> <li>• Networking opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Thought leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities of practice</li> <li>• Futures risk scenarios planning</li> <li>• Identifying best practices</li> <li>• Learning and exchange fora</li> <li>• Pilot projects</li> <li>• Research / analysis</li> </ul>



Figure 2: The functions carried out by platforms at different geographic levels



### Advocacy and influence

Twelve of the 15 platforms carried out some activities in this area. The most common activities were acting as a collective external voice for the members (67 per cent), and platforms carrying out an advocacy role to influence the members themselves (33 per cent). Four of the platforms used their expertise to influence the development of other platforms, for example, in sharing technical expertise or providing advice to newly created platforms.

### Capacity development

For most of the platforms (92 per cent of the 12 platforms engaged in this function) their work involved more traditional forms of capacity development in the form of individual or group training or skill enhancement to their members. This included training for engineers from the private sector to work in humanitarian response operations, business continuity and emergency response training for the private sector and training delivered by the private sector for humanitarian agencies in areas of key expertise. Seven of the 12 platforms working in this area produced manuals or toolkits to support their members in humanitarian action, including on subjects such as preparing company response plans, managing donations and promoting vehicle safety. A quarter of the platforms (25 per cent of the 12) did capacity development activities on partnering capacity. However, capacity development activities that reflect an evolving changing concept and approach to capacity development were less commonly cited, for example context analysis, assessing change readiness, capacity assessment, organisational effectiveness interventions, leadership development, or evidence gathering on the impact of their capacity development interventions.

### Information sharing

The dissemination of information, both within the membership and to external audiences, was the most common function of platforms. This included disseminating information on best practice (53 per cent), promoting better communication between members (40 per cent) and holding conferences (27 per cent). Online foras and media work were less common activities.

### Innovation

In comparison to other functions, innovation – the identification, development or implementation of innovation and innovative practices – appeared to be less of a priority for platforms, with only eight of the 15 working in this area. Seven of these eight organisations worked on adapting existing technology to humanitarian challenges, and five had activities around identifying and

defining challenges and the innovations that could address them. Work around testing, scaling up and disseminating innovation was less widespread.

### Matching and brokering

This function focuses on the platform playing a neutral, intermediary role that seeks to link humanitarian organisations and the private sector together, either for joint operations or for the joint provision of financial or in-kind resources. The most common activities were, , researching and providing information on organisations (85 per cent), linking and connecting organisations (92 per cent) and supporting partnership formation (69 per cent). Generally these are transactional activities at the beginning of the collaboration or partnership process.

By comparison, activities designed to strengthen sustained partnerships and relationships through the different stages of collaboration were less common among the platforms studied. These included verification or screening of potential partners (23 per cent), helping organisations to develop common understanding before the partnership began (30 per cent), reviewing and evaluating the matching process (30 per cent) and referring potential matches to organisations or networks outside the platform (38 per cent).

### Policy and standards

Ten of the 15 platforms carried out some work in the area of policy and standards. The most common activities were in developing standards within the platforms (60 per cent), for example on quality medical donations and vehicle safety, and disseminating or promoting of standards to members. This latter involved either those developed by the platform or other bodies such as the Sphere Project or the UN Global Compact (80 per cent). Only three platforms carried out activities around monitoring adherence to standards, and only



one platform had activities designed to assess performance or accountability.

### Project implementation

All but one of the platforms fulfil some form of operational role, that is to say project related activities including frontline humanitarian action. Six of the 14 deliver humanitarian services through the platform, either as actors in their own right or by providing services to humanitarian organisations. This included providing skilled manpower and equipment in areas including engineering, transport and logistics. Six of the 14 platforms provide advisory services to members, and seven carry out monitoring, including tracking financial and-in kind contributions made by the private sector.

### Relationship-building

Relationship-building is an important part of the work of the platforms studied, with 93 per cent carrying out activities in this area. The most common activities were oriented towards building trust by providing networking opportunities, convening member and other organisations and helping organisations to clarify expectations and terminology. Only one of the platforms performed specific activities in helping organisations to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings that occurred in the course of partnerships. Seven of the platforms worked to promote stronger collaboration through encouraging member participation in the decision-making processes of the platform itself.

### Thought leadership

Thought leadership describes the work that platforms do to develop and share research and to identify and analyse best practices and lessons learnt to support the work of their members. While 13 platforms carried out activities under the heading of thought leadership, the most common activities were identifying and analysing best practices (40 per cent) and research and analysis (20 per cent). Only four carried out pilot projects and three had activities around planning for future risks.

## Continuum framework: How platforms support the private sector's engagement

The continuum framework depicts the way platforms in this study and their members view the role of the private sector and the types of services that platforms provide to support their engagement in humanitarian action. It is based on what the platform secretariats and members told us about platforms' purposes and activities, and how they aim to support more effective private sector engagement. The research with the 15 platforms suggested there is a continuum of private sector engagement, from philanthropic to transformative change. Where platforms' positions themselves on this continuum framework, to a large extent, depends on how they define their role which, in turn, dictates the types of services they provide to members and to the wider humanitarian sector.

The continuum is designed to provide platforms with ideas on what different functions and activities they could undertake in executing different roles. It can also help platforms to think

strategically about their purpose and where their added value is in supporting more systematic private sector engagement in humanitarian action. The continuum can also be used to help platforms consider how their role and approach may evolve over time, as platforms themselves continue to develop and as they seek to seek help members 'be fit for purpose.'

Figure 3 positions the platforms in the study within the continuum, based on the interview findings. Table 5 summarises the illustrative functions and types of activities carried out for each of the three roles of platforms in the continuum.

## Three roles of platforms

### Philanthropy

Platforms working in this role primarily support the private sector to donate money or goods and services to humanitarian organisations. In this context, the platforms provide matching or brokering services for goods, services and financial donations. Services may include organisational screening and vetting, linking together donors and recipients, providing guidance to the private sector and to humanitarian actors on what makes a successful donor and recipient relationship and, in some cases, distributing funds and monitoring the performance of the relationship. Platforms increasingly rely on technology and software resources to enhance the matching of need to supply. As well as acting as an intermediary to match donors and recipients, some platforms themselves act as a neutral mechanism for the transfer of funds, with donations being made by the private sector directly to the platform, which then disperses them to humanitarian partners. The platform may or may not follow-up with reports on usage of the funds or in-kind donations.

### Using core competencies and skills

Platforms working in this role support the private sector to contribute the latter's core competencies and skills in a systematic manner in order to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action. This can take the form of the private sector delivering humanitarian services, themselves, or by working in partnership with humanitarian agencies either to augment or build the capacity of humanitarian partners in areas where they have expertise. The overall role of the platforms is to help build a shared understanding of the specific efficiency and effectiveness needs, build shared purpose and help ensure the best allocation or pooling of the capacities and resources of humanitarian and private sector members to meet those needs. Activities carried out by the platform may include supporting joint problem solving on operational challenges for which the private sector platform members have expertise and competencies. They may also support ways that the private sector can more effectively use their skills in a humanitarian context, for example through delivering (or outsourcing to humanitarian training providers) briefings and training on the international humanitarian

system, the realities of humanitarian operations and how to effectively leverage staff volunteering capacity. Some platforms also provide capacity development support to members on partnering and in specific technical areas where private sector members can add value, for example in logistics and supply chain management, vehicle management and construction.

## Transforming humanitarian action

On the transformative side of the continuum, platforms focus on addressing the limitations and gaps that hinder the ability of traditional international humanitarian actors to respond effectively to the kinds of future transformations set out in Section 2. Their role is to help resolve 'wicked problems'<sup>12</sup> to bring about fundamental changes in the way humanitarian action is conceived and delivered. Illustrative activities are various and could include support for creating a national vision and action plan for DRR and climate change which integrates humanitarian, government and private sector understanding of risk, resilience and sustainability. Or, for example, a platform could provide support for developing a set of global norms to integrate the expertise, resources and capacities of non-traditional humanitarian actors, including the private sector, into the international humanitarian system and operational humanitarian activities.

Currently, what humanitarian platforms look like in practice at the transformational end of the continuum and what they do is less certain than the other two categories. Development oriented platforms, overall, are only now starting to make transformative change for complex problem solving a core focus of their work.<sup>13</sup> The Global Compact LEAD Task Force on UN-Business Partnerships (2011) identifies four required characteristics for transformative partnerships. For the

purposes of this study, these characteristics can serve as an illustrative framework for what platforms at this end of the continuum may do: address a systems issue; leverage the core competencies of all partners; involve the appropriate set of stakeholders; and ensure capacity to reach scale and lasting impact.

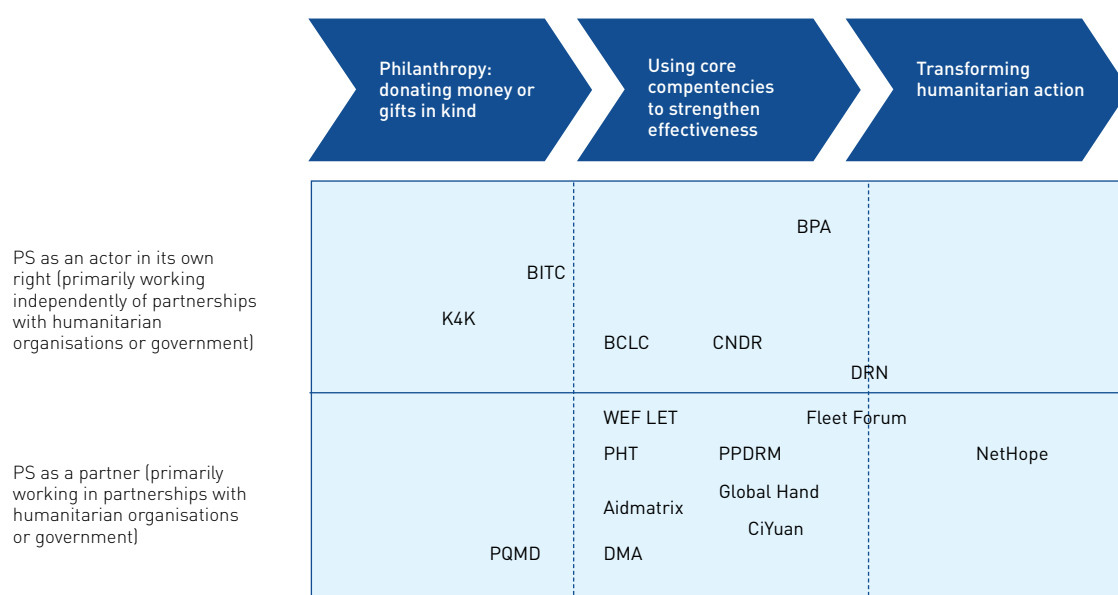
With respect to the engagement of the private sector, platforms working at the transformative end of the continuum can continue to provide services that help the private sector to share its core competencies but more and more with an expanded focus on harnessing and adapting its capacity for research and development, strategic thinking, innovation and innovative practices to develop new or more integrated solutions to complex humanitarian and development challenges.

Finding 9 (see Section 4) further outlines a set of futures-orientated characteristics of platforms as suggested by the interviewees in the study. Platforms envision that in the future they will likely be more of a one-stop or go-to information resource. Platforms see themselves evolving to be resources that help members to tap into the expertise of diverse actors, that fosters and support new forms of cooperation, and that maximises the use of technology to help address humanitarian and sustainability challenges.

## Mapping the 15 platforms along the continuum framework

Based on the information gleaned from interviews and review of documentation, the 15 platforms included in the study have been positioned along what has been referred to as a continuum framework (Figure 3). The placement of the

Figure 3: Continuum framework: How the platforms facilitate private sector engagement in humanitarian action\*



\* The Aidmatrix Foundation, Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC), Business in the Community (BITC), Business for Peace Alliance (BPA), CiYuan, Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR), Disaster Management Alliance (DMA), Disaster Resource Network (DRN, India), Fleet Forum, Global Hand, Kenyans for Kenya (K4K), NetHope, Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT), Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management (PPDRM), Partnerships for Quality Medical Donations (PQMD), World Economic Forum Logistics Emergency Team (LET).

platforms in the continuum represents where they sit currently. In this regard, the continuum makes the distinction between two types of platforms: those which primarily view the private sector as a humanitarian actor in its own right, and those platforms which view the private sector as an actor working in partnership with humanitarian organisations or government. In both cases, the purpose of the private sector engagement is to support effective humanitarian action, either through directly providing humanitarian services or working as a partner to help solve a humanitarian challenge.

The top part of the vertical axis of the continuum positions the private sector as a humanitarian actor in its own right. For the most part, these are platforms that have been established by the private sector. The platforms' role is to help make private sector engagement more effective and more systematic, supporting the private sector to engage directly. Illustrative platform services, noted from the research, can be providing advice and guidance to platform members on relief and recovery planning and delivery practices, advising on employee volunteering schemes, strengthening the business continuity capacity of the private sector or providing support to the private sector to incorporate DRR measures into their CSR development oriented strategies (i.e., risk assessment or contingency planning). Platforms mapped on the lower half of the vertical axis of the continuum view the private sector as a partner to humanitarian actors. These platforms, created with the support of both the private and humanitarian sectors, work to facilitate partnerships between the private sector and more traditional humanitarian actors. They tap into and effectively match the private sector's core competencies to help address operational challenges for different disaster functions such as DRR, preparedness, relief, response and recovery.

It is not the intention of this study to suggest that one set of services is more valuable than another, or that moving along the continuum represents the journey that platforms should undertake. In fact, the three roles of platforms are not mutually distinct or exclusive but, rather, should build upon one another. Platforms may well carry out activities that span different areas of the continuum simultaneously. For example, a platform may continue to meet the demand from its members for philanthropic matching services, while also moving into promoting the exchange of core competencies. A platform may work on relationship-building activities aimed at facilitating the private sector to share its core competencies and expertise with humanitarian organisations, while at the same time working on joint problem solving and the development of innovations to address emerging challenges. The private sector and platforms can equally move along the continuum as they expand and evolve, and this is a pattern demonstrated by several of the platforms studied.

## Illustrative functions and activities platforms undertake based on their role

Table 5 provides illustrative examples of the activities that platforms may carry out, by function, depending on their role. While Table 4 described above set out the general types of functions and activities currently undertaken by platforms, Table 5 illustrates the functions and activities they carry out for private sector engagement specific to the three continuum modes.

The list is not exhaustive, and not all would be relevant to platforms at different levels. Rather, the list is intended to help platforms to understand and self-assess what their involvement and contribution could be in any one of the three dimensions of the continuum. The functions platforms undertake to support members may be the same across the three areas of the grid, but the specific activities the function provides will differ. The activities listed draw on the interviews and documentation review, together with additional input from the research team and secondary sources. Particularly in the third area of the continuum, where platforms are only starting to engage, the illustrative activities draw on areas that the interviewees felt should be priorities for the platforms in the future, and suggestions from the authors based on previous research in future crisis trends and organisational capacity.

**Table 5: Illustrative activities that platforms fulfil along the continuum framework**

	Philanthropy	Using core competencies	Transforming the humanitarian system
Function	Activities	Activities	Activities
<b>Advocacy and influencing</b>	Encouraging organisations to donate appropriately.  Supporting understanding of public relations needs and expectations.	Promoting partnering principles and standards.  Promoting the adoption of best practices and new skills.	Providing incentives to stimulate change (e.g. new structures and ways of working, collaborative problem solving).  Advocacy materials and promotional activities for multi-stakeholder engagement for complex humanitarian problem solving.  Advocacy for joint engagement for vulnerability reduction and resilience-building.
<b>Capacity development</b>	Training, aids and guidance on donation practices.	Training on how to transfer private sector skills in a humanitarian context.  Orientation for humanitarian agencies for working effectively with the private sector.	Context analysis studies.  Change readiness assessments.  Advisory services to define and map a change process.  Member training, advisory and facilitation services for multi-stakeholder change processes for complex problem solving.  Network analysis, development and strengthening.
<b>Information sharing</b>	Disseminating information to support better practice.  Facilitating communication between members on brand management and public relations priorities.	Sharing best practice on approaches (e.g. partnership, business continuity planning).  Facilitating substantive discussion between members (e.g. accountability to affected populations, integrating DRR into CSR approaches).	Fostering a culture of open information sharing and joint knowledge creation, based on networked intelligence.  Codifying knowledge on how multi-stakeholder partnerships contribute to improving humanitarian action.  Exchange fora with other platforms.
<b>Innovation</b>	Identifying and implementing innovative practices to support more efficient donations (e.g. use of social media and mobile phone technologies).	Adapting and applying private sector innovations to humanitarian contexts.  Adapting humanitarian innovation to private sector contexts.  Innovative practices to improve efficiency.  Exchange fora on innovative practices.  Developing innovative approaches to measuring performance and impact (e.g. partnership scorecards).	Joint development and implementation of innovations to address emerging challenges (e.g. use of science and technology to address complex future threats).  Establishing new structures (e.g. collaborative networks of actors or government, civil society and private sector engagement for innovation).  Introducing innovative methods of matching (e.g. crowd sourcing and algorithmic matching) and networking.
<b>Matching/brokering</b>	Identifying and linking partners.  Clarifying expectations and motives.	Stakeholder and resource mapping of partners.  Clarifying expectations, motives, roles and responsibilities.  Supporting partnership agreements, governance mechanisms and reviews.  Partnership brokering training.	Stakeholder and resource mapping and analysis.  Guidance and processes to assist traditional and non-traditional humanitarian actors assess and define comparative advantage and assign value-added and clear entry points for complex crisis situations.  Advisory and review services to assess and leverage core competencies.  Partnership brokering training and advisory services.
<b>Policy/standards</b>	Development and dissemination of standards of donation and volunteer practices.  Monitoring and reviewing donor and recipient behaviour.	Promotion of quality standards in technical areas to strengthen capacity of humanitarian organisations.  Promotion of humanitarian standards to guide and regulate activities of the private sector in humanitarian contexts.	Development of new or shared standards (e.g. information management, beneficiary accountability).  Facilitating discussion on the accommodation and coherence of diverse humanitarian principles and standards.
<b>Project implementation</b>	Conducting reviews and evaluations of matches.  Tracking donations and contributions.	Delivering humanitarian services.  Review and analysis of collaboration costs and benefits (e.g. financial, personal and institutional).	Support for the design and implementation of change oriented strategies.  Developing or scaling-up joint or pilot projects to address future threats and opportunities.  Support for the creation of pilot projects to test out new collaboration or implementation structures, governance mechanisms.
<b>Relationship-building</b>	Building understanding of needs and expectations.  Helping appropriate organisations to find one another and assess their 'fit' to work together.	Review of the drivers and challenges for engagement.  Joint private sector-humanitarian fora to identify new collaborative opportunities to achieve mutually beneficial results.	Building links and relationships between different types of stakeholders – military, diaspora, government, local private sector, etc.  Learning and exchange services on collaboration for systems and social change.
<b>Thought leadership</b>	Identifying and sharing best practice on donation practices.	Identifying and sharing best practices on partnership and collaboration.  Developing and scaling-up pilot projects.	Research and analysis on global trends and future risk scenarios.  Scenarios and horizon scanning exercises.

# Section 4: Findings and analysis

This section presents nine core findings from the study, presented under three sub-headings: findings related to the purpose and impact of platforms; findings related to success factors and challenges; and findings related to how the platforms anticipate that they may evolve in the future.

## Purpose and impact

### **1. Platforms emerge to address complex crisis challenges that individual organisations or partnerships are unable to overcome alone.**

Platforms arise as a result of an extraordinary occurrence, something that jolts organisations and communities out of their normal operating procedures and repertoires. Faced with a challenge that overwhelms the capacity of an individual organisation, or individual NGO-private sector partnership, platforms have emerged to help non-traditional humanitarian actors understand the gaps and identify ways to address them.

The trigger for the majority of platforms was a specific “game changing” disaster. DRN India emerged in response to members’ experiences in the 2001 Gujarat earthquake. The Aidmatrix Foundation was initiated in response to the Balkans War in 2000, BITC began providing disaster preparedness and response advice to members following the 2004 Asian Tsunami, K4K developed in response to the 2011-2012 Horn of Africa drought crisis, BCLC’s Disaster Programme was created following Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and CiYuan developed after the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008. Some of these platforms are temporary, convening organisations for a defined timeframe to address the needs of a specific crisis. For example K4K, was created as a mechanism to mobilise financial donations for relief and response to the drought crisis. For others, including DRN India and CNDR Philippines (1990), the trigger was the recognition by the private sector that its own preparedness and involvement in the crisis response had been *ad hoc* and needed to be systematised. This prompted a realisation that a new and lasting mechanism was needed to help fill the gaps.

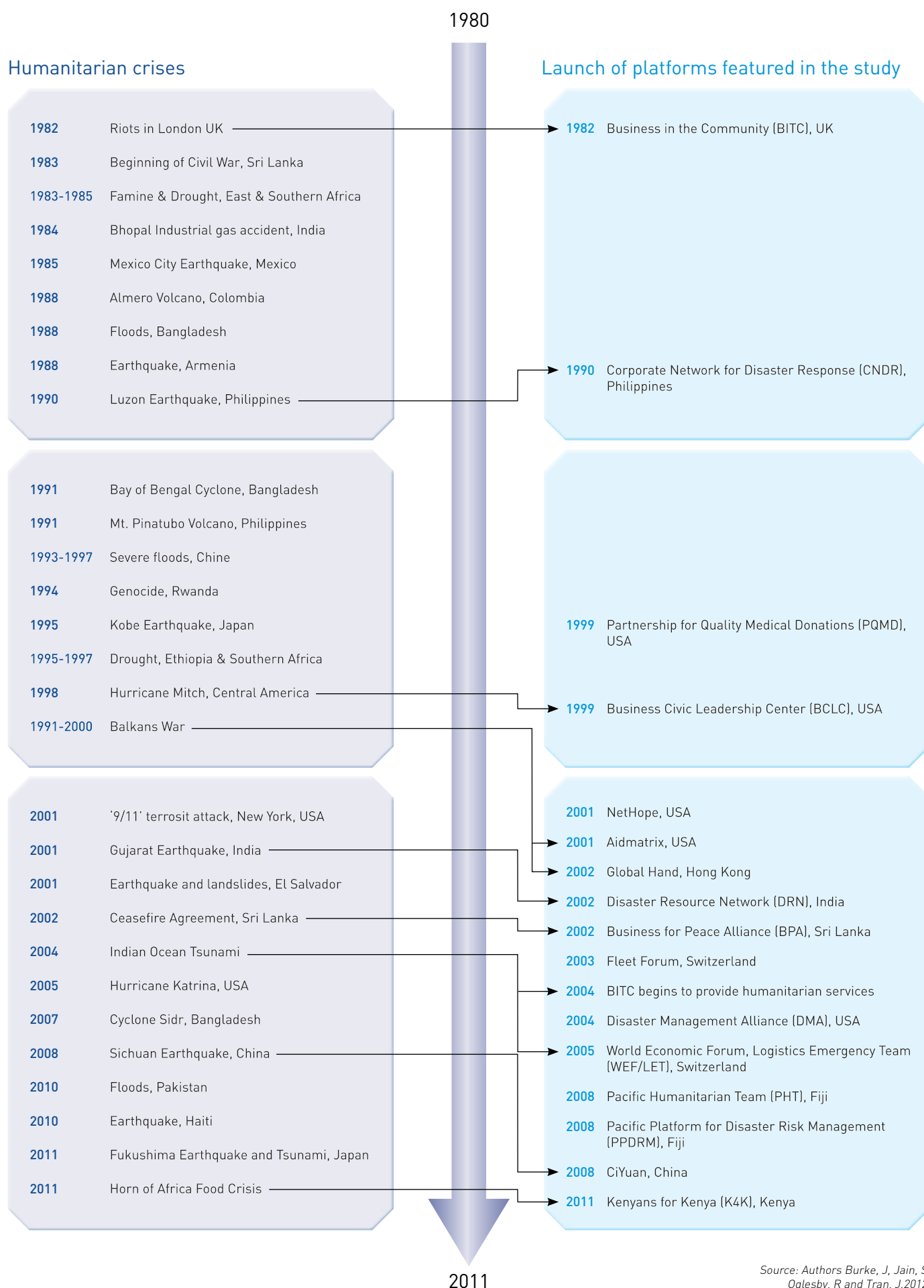
For other platforms the challenge that exceeded individual capacity was, rather than a specific crisis, a particular operational or policy issue. For example, Fleet Forum (2004) was originally established by three humanitarian organisations that faced similar challenges in vehicle management. NetHope (2001) was set up to help address a common need of large INGOs for better access to ICT services to ensure efficient delivery of relief services. PQMD (1996) emerged as an informal alliance between voluntary organisations and the pharmaceutical and medical private sector to address common challenges around new policy and critical media coverage of

poor quality medical donations. The Aidmatrix Foundation was established with an initial focus on the adaptation of supply chain technology to support the non – profit sector in its efforts to improve supply chain management in emergency response, which has since expanded to other aspects of humanitarian response. The Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) was created in 2008 as a result of the 2005 UN Humanitarian Reform process to better coordinate the preparedness planning and response work of the UN system with its external partners and with national governments.

This timeline illustrates the creation of the 15 platforms included in the study against a background of key events in the wider humanitarian sector. As discussed in Finding 1 above, the creation of many of the platforms was related to a specific humanitarian crisis. While there is a clear expansion of platforms since 2000, it is important to note that there are similar entities dating back to the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 4: Timeline showing establishment of platforms and key humanitarian events 1980-2011



## 2. Platforms reflect, and can contribute to, a changing concept and dynamic of humanitarian action with a greater focus on disaster risk reduction and preparedness. However, they often struggle to turn this intention into practical action.

Platforms increasingly see their role as supporting the private sector to engage in the humanitarian sphere in ways that go beyond the response phase. Reflecting wider shifts in the development and humanitarian sectors, many platforms recognise the need to better integrate DRR, preparedness and recovery into their activities, as illustrated in Figure 5 below.

*'Recognising that every dollar spent in disaster preparedness saves us four or six dollars later, it is important for business to advocate for greater support in preparedness to government.'*

(Secretariat representative)

In fact, some platforms are already actively engaging in DRR or preparedness activities. For example, CNDR facilitates the private sector to engage directly with local government and civil society on community based disaster risk management programmes and to integrate DRR into private sector members' development oriented CSR strategies.

conversant with the private sector's work and added value in resilience-building or sustainability and how that could apply to addressing humanitarian challenges.

*'While the platform recognises that preparedness and DRR need to be given a greater focus, it can be difficult to persuade some of the private sector members to make this investment.'*

(Secretariat representative)

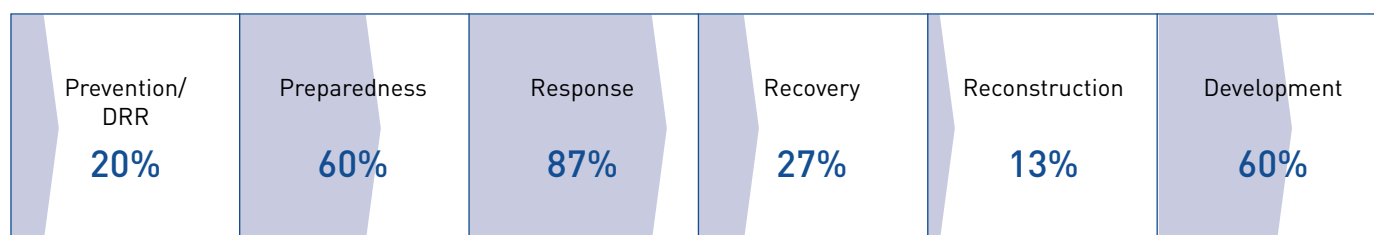
This was felt to be particularly difficult for those within the private sector whose engagement in humanitarian action has been relatively recent or who do not view humanitarian action as being central to their core business.

*'It is very difficult to keep people interested in and focused on disaster preparedness after a disaster has occurred'. People go back to work and it is hard to get them to focus on preparedness and mitigation.'*

(Secretariat representative)

Others cited the lack of consistent funding on the part of donors and governments for DRR, preparedness and recovery as a barrier to more sustained progress.

Figure 5: Platforms' involvement in different phases of humanitarian action



With DRR as its primary focus, the PPDRM, for example, allows for a comprehensive forum for exchange and sharing of experiences within the Pacific, in relation to policy and operational aspects of DRR, disaster management and the link to climate change adaptation. The participation of the PHT and the PPDRM in the study is part of their own broader efforts to understand how they can best engage with the private sector for DRR and for preparedness and response.

Yet in many cases, platforms face significant challenges in moving from recognising the need to engage in preparedness and DRR to translating this into practical action, in ways that seek to span the transition from meeting short-term humanitarian needs to supporting development. There are several barriers which make it difficult for platforms to effectively engage in DRR and preparedness activities, including the fact that many were formed with a crisis response focus. Further, platforms may not be all that

*'The lack of institutionalisation and leadership for this issue within the business sector, at different levels, and on the part of governments makes it hard to assess progress—so it stays opportunistic with a lot of reinventing the wheel due to the lack of a long-term strategy for how to systematically tap into the private sector's resources or track the changes in its engagement and its progress.'*

(Secretariat representative)

For those platforms whose mandate extends into development, the link between a platform's humanitarian activities and these other work streams is often not clearly made. Some attributed this to the lack of policy and incentives for more joined-up thinking and approaches to disasters and development. Further, as noted in Section 2, the distinct role and entry points for the private sector to engage, beyond response, are still unclear.

### 3. An added value of platforms is that they provide a clear access point for the private sector to engage in humanitarian action and to help overcome common challenges to engagement.

Platforms add value by helping to address the kinds of challenges, long identified in the literature on the rise of the private sector as a humanitarian actor, that hinder effective engagement between the private sector and traditional humanitarian actors (see Table 2 in Section 2). The platforms in this study cover a range of contexts, purposes and forms, and their members range from large multinational companies and INGOs to representatives of small businesses and local civil society. Despite this, there were consistent views across the interviewees about the added value that platforms offer over and above what individual organisations could achieve, either operating alone or in bilateral partnerships. The most common of these were:

- **Increasing the scale of efforts.**

Working together can lead to larger scale, and more sustained impacts than organisations could achieve working individually. Platforms also make it easier for potential partners (whether government, humanitarian agencies or private sector) to access a number of organisations simultaneously, rather than having to make numerous individual connections;

- **Building relationships and trust, and providing a “safe space” for dialogue.**

*‘What we bring to the table is the fact that we bring people to the table.’*

(Secretariat representative)

Across all the platforms, building trust was deemed to be a critical role of the platforms through exchange and dialogue fora, providing regular opportunities for platform members to interact and network with one another and to share best practices as well as areas of interest and concern. Joint training and meetings were also deemed to be instrumental to building trust. Technology was seen to be an essential complement to the face-to-face elements of the platforms’ relationship-building work. However, platforms in this study did not refer to explicit relationship building models or frameworks that guided their work or strategies, for either their virtual or face-to-face collaboration work;

- **Reducing competition**

Platforms represent a change in thinking about how to address both humanitarian and development challenges, going beyond individual boundaries and mandates towards engagement models that promote broader collaboration in ways that may not traditionally have occurred. Faced with extraordinary situations, platforms provide a neutral space that facilitates the coming together of competitors who may not normally cohere within or across industries and

sectors, forming a collaborative effort that is greater than the sum of its parts. For example, collaboration between LET members to meet requests for logistical assistance in emergencies from the UN Logistics Cluster has seen UPS staff unloading TNT planes, in line with the members’ commitment to the “bigger picture”.

Through K4K<sup>15</sup> international accounting firms worked together to monitor and audit financial contributions made to the platform. On the humanitarian side, too, a sector where competition between NGOs is not unknown, major INGOs have worked in close collaboration, with platforms such as Fleet Forum and NetHope playing bridging roles to facilitate this engagement. Even for those platforms which exist only as temporary or fixed term entities, the relationships built through the period of transcending competition can form part of future resilience measures within the country or region in question, and can facilitate collaboration in the event of future crises;

- **Developing and enhancing partnering capacity**

Platforms such as Global Hand, PQMD and CiYuan have brokering, matching and partnership development as core foci of their mission and work. Depending on the context and the platform’s purpose, this can take the form of a wide range of activities, with the platform acting as a neutral, trusted third party that: helps traditional and non-traditional humanitarian actors clarify expectations and strategic fit for collaboration; brokers projects, joint agreements and governance arrangements; provides a clearinghouse to match humanitarian demand with private sector supply; provides partnering capacity skills training; leverages additional resources from the partners or other stakeholders; facilitates partnership review and evaluation; and assists with internal and external communications on performance and impact;

- **Conducting advocacy, and allowing members to present a united voice**

PQMD was formed to have a broader voice against a backdrop of negative press coverage about the alleged poor quality of medical donations in humanitarian aid. NetHope was described as a means for members to come together and speak with one voice. BPA allows members to lend the collective weight of advocacy to lobbying national authorities, even on issues that do not directly affect all members.

*‘We bring together and link up private sector, civil society and governments with advocacy for efficiency for disaster relief but with a soft touch.’*

(Secretariat representative)

#### 4. Platforms struggle to define and measure their impact.

Most respondents recognised the importance of defining and assessing the impact of the platforms' work. However, almost none of the platforms had systematic and clearly articulated ways of doing this.

*'We don't assess impact. That's the honest answer and we know we should.'*

(Secretariat representative)

There were significant challenges in assessing the impact of platforms. These include judging the intangible impacts of activities such as relationship-building, identifying and attributing impact on collaborative ventures and separating and assessing impact at multiple levels involving the platform itself, member organisations and the communities.

Many respondents identified indicators focussing on the platforms themselves, like increasing membership, membership retention, increasing funding or expansion of the portfolio of activities as the areas where the platform's success could be judged. There was less acknowledgement of the need to consider the platforms' impacts upon members or the communities targeted by the aid members provide. Some platforms spoke of anecdotal evidence of positive impact, but had so far been unable to document or measure it. This suggests a lack of clarity about who the ultimate target audience is for the platforms activities, and, thus, where the impact should be assessed.

The difficulty of demonstrating impact and value from shared initiatives has been identified as a key challenge in private sector-humanitarian engagement. For example, there continue to be calls to better track and understand the private sector's contribution to humanitarian action (financial as well as in-kind).<sup>16</sup> The platforms' lack of ability to demonstrate the impact of their services constrains their ability to help their members assess their own impact in terms of improved humanitarian outcomes. It also potentially makes it difficult for platforms to make an effective case for continued support to members and funders, or to successfully attract new membership in what is likely to become an increasingly crowded marketplace.

Clearly, the importance of and challenges around better defining and measuring impact are not new issues, either for the humanitarian sector or the private sector. Undoubtedly, many of the respondents in the study will be involved in initiatives to consider issues related to quality, results and impact within their own organisations. It is, however, clear that platforms struggle to apply this to their own planning and activities.

#### Success factors and challenges

#### 5. Platforms across different contexts value common success characteristics which allow them to effectively serve their members.

The platforms in this study exist in a broad range of contexts which determine their purpose, functions and members, so it is therefore not possible or useful to prescribe one list of things any individual platform must to do achieve success. There were, however, some consistent views on factors that contributed to making platforms successful at fulfilling their functions and being useful to members. These can be roughly grouped into three areas: the purpose and structure of the platform; the ethos of the platform; and the role and performance of the platform secretariat.

##### The purpose and structure of the platform

- **Clarity of purpose/strategic vision:**

The purpose of the majority of the platforms can be grouped into two broad themes: (40 per cent) existed primarily to enhance the private sector's capacity to contribute to humanitarian action, and (40 per cent) reported that they sought to support greater efficiency and effectiveness in humanitarian organisations. The remaining platforms worked on reducing private sector vulnerability to crises and strengthening business continuity, or enabling collaboration with wider stakeholders beyond the private sector and humanitarian organisations;

Platform secretariats and members felt it was important for the platform to have a clear articulation of purpose. This was seen as helping members to understand how they can engage with and benefit from the platform, and how the platform is distinct from other entities. Further, it helped it to attract new members. Some noted that an explicitly articulated purpose helped to prevent the dependence on a particular individual and gave the platform a sense of professionalism;

- **Ability to engage at senior leadership level in member organisations:**

The ability of the platform to engage the support of senior decision-makers within its member organisations was highly valued, along with providing the space for leaders to engage with one another through the platform. Having high level buy-in and engagement was seen as increasing the potential to spread involvement and build ownership within the member organisations. The importance of ownership, buy-in and influence applies at the sector-wide level as well as within individual organisations. Fleet Forum, for example, attributed its success in part to the inclusion of high profile, well respected and market leading organisations, from both the humanitarian and private sectors, within its membership and board;



- **The platform's agenda is larger than individual organisational needs or concerns:**

Platforms acknowledge they need to demonstrate that they understand the individual agendas of their member organisations, including their day to day concerns and needs. However, they also recognise that they have to be able to connect the dots and enlarge individual horizons to forge a larger vision and agenda;

*'The platform needs to set larger objectives that subsume individual organisational needs and priorities, making sure that through standards and guidance members and other external actors operate in a way that is consistent.'*

(Humanitarian representative)

- **Clear membership criteria:**

Over half (53 per cent) of the platforms had a mixed membership of private sector and humanitarian organisations, (27 per cent) had private sector only membership and (20 per cent) a mixed membership which included wider stakeholders such as government and academia. Despite the different membership models amongst the platforms studied, the importance of clarity about membership criteria was frequently identified as a success factor.

Some platforms, particularly those whose members came together to provide a service to the humanitarian community, such as the LET, have an exclusive membership with new members being invited to join to meet additional

needs as they arise. For those platforms with more exclusive membership models, success is achieved through keeping tight controls on the organisations permitted to join. This model is used to ensure that all members were working members and had high-quality contributions, thereby avoiding free loading by organisations joining to enjoy the reputational benefits of membership without contributing to the work.

Others had a more open membership model with participation from diverse organisations (or in some case any organisation within a particular sector or area of expertise) per cent Aidmatrix Foundation, for example, counts some 40,000 agencies in its network, many of whom have emergency management and disaster response roles, and seek to leverage technology to improve their humanitarian service delivery capability. For these platforms, actively working to link members as well as expand membership is a way of strengthening the platforms' outreach and impact.

Regardless of the model, ensuring that organisations are clear on what is expected of them as platform members is important.

*'There needs to be clearer rules of engagement' for members...we need to clearly know what involvement means and what we are expected to contribute.'*

(Humanitarian representative)



Practical session on building temporary toilets  
Hindustan Construction Company – Disaster Resource Network, India.



Some platforms set out codes of conduct or standards to which members are expected to sign up. Other elements noted to be important with respect to members include having strategies for membership retention, for exclusion of inappropriate members and for recruiting and integrating new members. The research did not reveal any consistent practices across platforms in how fully they operationalised these elements.

### The ethos of the platform

- **Neutrality, Transparency and Equity:**

All the platforms in the study acknowledged their role in building trust and relationships, with characteristics like neutrality, transparency and equity being raised as significant in achieving this. With respect to neutrality, it was felt that members need to perceive that the platforms operate independently of the agenda of any one member or group. Several of the platforms struggled, or had done so earlier in their development, with the implications of being too closely associated—through financial support, or location of the secretariat—with any single one powerful organisation, either humanitarian or private sector. Platforms have taken a range of approaches to address these concerns. For example, Fleet Forum has taken the decision to become an independent organisation, the LET has a rotating Chair and DRN India is considering locating the secretariat within an external third party organisation such as the Construction Confederation of India.

Platforms need to demonstrate transparent ways of working and of decision-making to their members.

*'The gradual process of learning to be transparent with one another had been critical for the success of the platform.'*

(Secretariat representative)

This process had been facilitated by the decision to openly share information between members while maintaining strict confidentiality outside the platform.

Building equity between members was noted to be a key to successful collaboration, particularly among those platforms with functions around joint service delivery, joint advocacy or building partnering capacity. Several platforms have mechanisms built into their structures and ways of working to promote equity, for example, allowing all members to have a board level voting right. Others require support from a minimum level of members to initiate new project or assign responsibility for distinct management areas of the platform to different members.

### The performance of the platform secretariat

- **Strong leadership within secretariat:**

The importance of strong leadership, particularly in the early stages of a platform's creation, was frequently cited as a significant factor in the platforms' success. Characteristics

associated with an effective leader or leadership included 'visionary', the personal ability to enthuse and persuade others to join, to create an environment for partnering and collaboration, be a good networker and to bring dialogue and inquiry to problem-solving. Some platforms had a close affiliation, at least in the early stages, with a stronger parent organisation or dynamic leader who could fulfil these functions;

- **Culture of 'going the extra mile':**

Nearly all of the platforms in this study noted the importance of building a 'culture of excellence', 'going the extra mile' or 'staying one step ahead of the members.'

*'What the platform does has to be of the highest calibre. On top of its core abilities, there needs to be passion for what you do.'*

(Secretariat representative)

For others, this was described as 'professionalism' in dealings with members, and how well the platform is perceived to deliver the services or products that meet members' needs. Platforms are not something that members are obliged to participate in; considering the often high degree of time and resources required of members, the 'private sector is always asking -what's in it for me?'

- **Ability to navigate successfully in different cultures:**

The cultural gulf between humanitarian agencies and the private sector was identified by almost all interviewees as a barrier to effective engagement. Nearly all platforms referred to their role in assisting the two sectors to reduce these barriers with respect to different geographies, cultures and languages, and in terms of scale, from large multinational companies to small and medium enterprises. For many, the ability of platforms to span boundaries and to help members to do so, within and between the two sectors was seen as an important determinant of success. Some saw this function to be part of their brokering and relationship-building role. A wide range of approaches were noted including networking fora and annual meetings, linking member organisations to one another and peer-to-peer support relationships.

## 6. Currently there is no identifiable home or information repository for the learning platforms generate on how they facilitate the private sector's engagement in humanitarian action.

The research team found no common source where information on platforms could be found (even basic information such as which platforms exist). There was widespread recognition amongst interviewees that a more organised approach to pooling of knowledge on what platforms do and on how the private sector's engagement is changing is necessary. Yet, when asked where information on platforms could reside or how to promote better linkages between platforms and to better capture the learning they generate, most struggled to identify options or mechanisms to take this forward. Some suggested national authorities, some multilateral agencies such as UNISDR and UNOCHA. Other felt that some less formal system between platforms themselves (such as online fora or annual exchange meetings at a global or regional level) would be appropriate, but these options have not been clearly articulated or promoted by platforms to date.

Interaction between platforms, which could support knowledge sharing, is rare. This is not to say there are not some examples. DRN India is part of the wider framework of the World Economic Forum's Disaster Resource Partnership, which allows it to connect upwards with the global network and sideways with other national networks in Mexico and Indonesia, while CiYuan is linked with the US-based BSR. Some of the global platforms are beginning to develop regional or national versions, for example, NetHope's regional chapters and the Aidmatrix Foundation's and Fleet Forum's recent moves to develop national level activities in India.

In terms of horizontal interaction, DRN India has engaged with the newly created DRN Indonesia network, both to provide support and advice, and because it presents an opportunity for Indian members to forge new, potentially commercially valuable linkages with government authorities in Indonesia. Global Hand has made efforts to engage with other networks and groups to facilitate referral of unused offers. It, along with the Aidmatrix Foundation, have also shared the expertise and technology gained from their own activities to support the development of new platforms such as the UN's [business.un.org](https://business.un.org) website. However, these examples were the exception rather than the rule, and many interviewees saw that greater exchange of learning between different geographical contexts would be valuable.

## 7. Platforms have a record of inconsistent progress in forging links with governments.

Platforms in this study, particularly those at the national level, reported mixed success in forging strong ties with national and local government authorities or gaining recognition for their role and contribution. Beyond this too, platforms

perceive that they are a means for organisations to engage with a diverse range of actors, not only humanitarian agencies, private sector and governments, but also regional organisations, humanitarian umbrella mechanisms e.g. the UN Cluster System, as well as bilateral donors, multilateral bodies and even the media.

Several respondents on the humanitarian and private sector sides described how they struggled to identify appropriate partners. Others saw that platforms provide an easy way to access organisations they sought to work with.

*'Developing linkages with the government through the platform was a great advantage for companies—individual members would not be able to get easy access to government officials, so the network can facilitate these linkages for all the members.'*

[Secretariat representative]

Many individual examples were presented of platforms engaging with government authorities. CNDR, for example, links the private sector with local government for collaboration on community-based disaster risk management programmes. DRN India supports its members to gain access to Government officials while BCLC provides liaison between the private sector, the US Government and US state emergency management structures and programmes. The PPDRM, as a regional platform, seeks to support national governments and others to harmonise their approaches to DRR. Those national level platforms seeking to broaden their efforts in DRR and preparedness noted the need to do this in tandem with existing national mechanisms and government priorities for managing risk. It remains to be seen how platforms and governments can work together to take this forward.

In different ways, many of the platforms pointed to the significance of the policy or political environment in which the platform operated. For some, national authorities were seen to provide significant support and could be important collaborating partners in supporting humanitarian action. For other platforms, national authorities have the potential to restrict platforms' activities, for example, in the area of policy advocacy or participation of the platform or the private sector in national disaster planning mechanisms. Others identified the increasing potential for pressure from national authorities on the private sector to play a stronger role in humanitarian response, in order to help governments reduce reliance on external international assistance. The pattern of stop/start engagement from both governments and donors was noted by some platforms. This was felt to be due to factors such as changes in political leaders and the resulting prioritisation of crisis management.

## 8. Platforms recognise that they need to be adaptive, but face common challenges in doing this.

Existing as they do to meet specific market demands from their members, platforms are dynamic and evolving entities which, though not linear, can be seen as developing over phases, moving from early stage and start-up to larger scale organisations. Not all platforms intend or face a demand from members to become long-term formal entities. For some, concluding activities once they have fulfilled their original mandate may be the most appropriate course of action. K4K, for example, sees itself as a temporary initiative. One secretariat representative of another platform indicated that the initiative (including the platform and brand) would continue beyond the end of the platform's initial funding. Another defined the platform's success as being able to eventually cease operations because the issues they worked on would be mainstreamed into the work of its member organisations.

For some platforms, the initial event or challenge that leads to their creation is a trigger which leads to more sustained and in-depth collaboration. These platforms noted the need to be flexible and meet the evolving needs of their members, including providing new services and/or addressing more sector-wide issues, such as how to improve coherence and harmonisation.

*'Fleet Forum was founded as an annual conference but over the years it grew into a platform where both humanitarians and the private sector, together with academia, come together to see what is needed and identify ways that the members can add value.'*

(Secretariat representative)

Global Hand has similarly evolved from 'GH.1', focused on philanthropic giving; to 'GH.2', focused on helping private sector members to share core competencies, skills and expertise; and now, increasingly, into 'GH.3'. This latest incarnation involves brokering relationships which includes for-profit activities which have a transformative social benefit, such as fair trade initiatives or bottom-of-the pyramid products.

Another way platforms evolve is by expanding into activities aimed at creating sustainable partnerships and collaboration amongst members. PQMD, for example, is giving more prominence and emphasis to the relationship, capacity and partnership-building dimension of its work. It is hosting workshops, building relationships across platforms and inviting members and non-members to learn from their experience. As one interviewee explained, 'PQMD is being proactive in helping organisations that do not have the expertise to develop their work.' Others that have developed into more permanent entities spoke of the need to attract new members and boost the number of members actively engaging in the platforms activities. However, given that the majority

of platforms have small secretariats, many commented on their limited capability to assume new roles and functions, particularly for introducing new technologies and trends analysis that require specialised expertise.

There were common challenges around adaptiveness and sustainability that platforms reported, specifically with relation to recent global financial marketplace instability and its impact on securing adequate and consistent funding or, for some, retaining or engaging more private sector members in the platform. Securing adequate and consistent funding was a concern raised by platforms supported by external donors as well as those funded through member contributions. Several platforms were considering introducing new funding models, including providing paid-for services or introducing mandatory membership fees. However, those whose members are small organisations reported that they could only expect limited financial support from their membership, particularly in light of today's financial volatility. Some considered adopting more collaborative models of operation to ensure the sustainability of their activities and the platform itself. For example, following the loss of donor funding as international priorities shift towards development in Sri Lanka, BPA has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, a large and well resourced national body, which will host the platform and allow for greater collaboration on projects.

## Platforms in the future

### 9. Platforms recognise they will have to work in new ways to remain relevant in a futures context.

As outlined in Section 2, there are a number of transformational factors and trends that may affect international attitudes and approaches to humanitarian action. The interviews reflected many of these trends, in particular the increasing frequency and complexity of crises, the increasing politicisation of crises and the assertiveness of national authorities. Against this changing context, there were some consistent reflections on behalf of interviewees on the functions and roles that platforms will increasingly have to focus upon if they are to continue to effectively serve their members.

These characteristics of 'futures-orientated' platforms include:

- **Stronger information, research and analysis role:** Platforms increasingly see their future role to be the go-to resource for information, research and analysis on issues their members will have to address, including future humanitarian trends. The PPDRM, for example, sees an important future role for the platform as anticipating how global and regional trends will impact and influence the political will and resource availability for DRR. CNDR also sees itself as becoming a source of timely and relevant information on threats, both known and uncertain,

to support better advocacy on DRR and preparedness. Promoting transparency and information flows is seen as being part of this role;

- **Greater and smarter use of technology and social media:**

The opportunities presented by technology and social media were identified by several platforms. These included making the platforms' operations more effective, for example by facilitating virtual offices (a model used by NetHope and Fleet Forum) and through the use of social media to support advocacy activities and communication with members. Some platforms also referred to the potential of social media and new technologies to support platforms' innovative capacities, for example, in allowing crowd-sourcing of ideas and enabling the platform to draw upon a broader coalition of partners. These approaches were also felt to be important in facilitating new types of engagement to address emerging challenges, based on the concept of transparent and networked intelligence, particularly where knowledge is socially distributed across a diverse network of collaborating communities;

- **Greater emphasis on promoting innovation:**

Supporting members to identify and access innovation and innovative practices is deemed to be an important added value of platforms in the future. This was thought to include piloting, adapting, scaling-up, disseminating and measuring the impact of innovation and innovative practices from the private and humanitarian sectors that can be leveraged for humanitarian action. It is also likely to include facilitating the collaboration that can lead to innovations developed jointly by private sector and humanitarian agencies working together to address humanitarian challenges;

- **Stronger engagement with other platforms and actors:**

This will clearly be context specific, but there was widespread recognition that platforms will need to collaborate more fully with other platforms. This includes platforms that do humanitarian or development work, as well as national authorities and other types of private sector entities, and non-traditional actors such as diaspora groups;

- **Trend towards localisation:**

Many platforms acknowledged the increasing importance of strengthening the regional, national or sub-national focus within platforms' work. This is based on a gaining awareness of the importance of geographic and cultural specificity and of local context and governments' related expectations that local actors should increasingly play a greater role in humanitarian action. Examples include global platforms such as NetHope that has developed national and regional chapters; regional platforms such

as DMA that support individuals to take leadership roles to champion local, sustained action, and, platforms such as BPA that has built the capacity of local chambers of commerce and develops activities at the sub-national level;

- **Greater importance given to the platform's convening role:**

When thinking about the future role that the platforms would be likely to play, several interviewees envisioned having more of a convening and facilitating role, serving as a mechanism for addressing system-wide issues that cut across different sectors and actors, be they strategic, operational or issues that bring both together. For example, in the face of member demands for platforms to provide information and analysis on emerging trends, many secretariats do not have the staff, resources or expertise to carry out this research and analysis in-house. Rather, they envisioned that their role could be to act as a convener that brought together expertise and information, including science and technology, government and the academic world to provide insights and analyses not normally available to individual members.

# Section 5: Conclusions and recommendations

While this study has looked at a relatively limited number of platforms it has drawn together information on platforms that was not previously easily accessible. It presents a snapshot of what platforms working at different levels currently do, how they do it and analyses some of the success factors and challenges that help and hinder them in conducting their activities. It shows that platforms have already made, and have the potential to continue to make, significant contributions to facilitating effective private sector engagement in humanitarian action. They work to reduce some of the important barriers which have hampered engagement between the private sector and humanitarian organisations. They amplify the contribution that the private sector can make and help develop an informed understanding of the role that the private sector can play and its specific contribution. They are playing a role in promoting learning and helping organisations, both private sector and humanitarian, to apply the lessons learned from previous instances of collaboration. They have proved successful at tapping the expertise of the private sector in ways that enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action and ultimately improve humanitarian outcomes.

Yet, there remains a large and diverse number of platforms that have not been addressed in this study and it is hoped that this report can form the basis of further investigation. At the regional and national levels in particular, the authors are aware that the examples selected for study provide only a limited sample of the many creative and exciting initiatives which are operating, often in isolation of or under the radar of the international humanitarian system.

Further, there remains much to be done to address the challenges and difficulties faced by the platforms themselves and their members in promoting effective private sector engagement in improving humanitarian action. There is also much that can be learned from the work of platforms about how traditional and non-traditional humanitarian actors can work together, learning which could have important applications for engaging with other types of non-traditional actors, for example the diaspora, non-western donors and members of the scientific community.

## Recommendations

As noted above, this is a scoping study intended as the start of a discussion amongst the platforms and the wider humanitarian community. The 15 recommendations put forward here are presented in that context. Recommendations 1–11 are suggestions for areas where the platform secretariats and their members could focus their attention on strengthening the work that platforms do.

Recommendations 12–15 are directed at the wider humanitarian community, including donors and humanitarian organisations as well as the private sector. There is considerable diversity between the platforms included in this study, in terms of geographic context, scale, purpose and activities, so inevitably not all the recommendations will be applicable to all platforms. It is for individual platforms to decide if, and how, these broad suggestions could be applied to their own work.

## Recommendations for platforms

### Collaboration

- 1 Platforms should consider ways that they can more effectively interact and share their good practices and learning horizontally (across platforms) and vertically (upwards and downwards with those operating at different levels), towards building a better understanding of what a 'good' platform looks like. This could include exchange with more development-oriented platforms.
- 2 Platforms at the national level in particular should increase their efforts to link with governments to promote the interaction of the private sector in national disaster management frameworks and arrangements. The way this is approached will vary depending on the specific national or regional context, and platforms will need to consider the policy environment in which they operate.
- 3 Platforms with a core partnering, brokering and convening function should seek to build a more coherent body of knowledge on how to construct successful humanitarian partnerships and seek to promote stronger and more diverse collaboration.
- 4 National and regional level platforms, in particular, should engage with a more diverse membership, including different types of private sector actors. This should include more regionally and nationally based private sector and, where appropriate, small businesses and state owned enterprises.

### Roles that platforms play

- 5 Platforms should focus more attention on helping the private and humanitarian sectors gain a shared understanding of what DRR and preparedness means and how their respective work on vulnerability-reduction and resilience-building can align more closely.



- 6 Platforms should work to better align their humanitarian activities with both development and conflict prevention initiatives.
- 7 Platforms should self-assess their role, function and activities using the typology and the continuum framework (Section 3) to help them identify strengths and areas for improvement in supporting more systematic private sector engagement in humanitarian action.

### The ways that platforms function

- 8 Platforms could usefully consider the success characteristics identified in this study (Section 4) and look at how these factors could be applicable to their own organisational design.
- 9 Platforms should explore ways to address challenges around defining and measuring their impact. Towards this end, greater effort could be made by platforms to tap into the private sector's expertise for benchmarking and performance measurement and accountability or to link to on-going results initiatives within both the development and the humanitarian sector.<sup>17</sup>
- 10 Platforms should investigate new ways of working to fulfil the role that will be demanded of them in a futures context, including facilitating and convening.
- 11 Platforms focused on addressing operational humanitarian challenges should consider how they can support members' to identify relevant innovations and innovative practices (from the private or humanitarian sector) to address future humanitarian challenges.

### Recommendations for donors, the private sector and the wider humanitarian community

- 12 Before looking to start new platforms, donors and other organisations wishing to support more private sector engagement through platforms should determine if and how they can engage with existing platforms and how they could strengthen their capacity.
- 13 Private sector actors looking to begin or increase their engagement in humanitarian action should consider whether engagement through platforms, in addition to or instead of, individual partnerships with humanitarian actors provides a way to achieve their aims.
- 14 Support from donors to map and comprehensively research more platforms could build a more coherent and informed knowledge base on humanitarian-private sector platforms and how they could contribute to more effective humanitarian action.

- 15 The humanitarian sector at large should consider how non-traditional humanitarian actors such as the private sector, military, new donors, scientific communities and diaspora can help the sector address the types of capacity challenges it will face in the future for humanitarian action.

### Beyond the scope of this study

A starting place to take this debate forward is to test out the study's themes, findings and conceptual frameworks in the diverse contexts and continents where the platforms participating in this study operate. These dialogue fora can be designed to generate a broader and deeper debate on issues related to the changing nature of the crisis context, what it means to be a non-traditional humanitarian actor, how the private sector's role is evolving, and platforms fit for the future. The result of this expanded dialogue should be a more informed understanding of the role that both platforms and the private sector can play in forging new and innovative solutions to deal with humanitarian action in the broadest sense. Ideally, these fora will identify options to generate more regular interaction between platforms and to have more accessible information on what they do, particularly at regional and national levels. The authors welcome comments on the report and look forward to supporting a broader debate around its findings and recommendations.

# Annex I: List of interviewees

## Platform secretariats

- Sue Adkins, International Programmes Director, Business in the Community (BITC), UK
- Louis Alexander, Senior Programs Director, Pan American Development Foundation/ Disaster Management Alliance (DMA), USA
- Brook Avory, Program Manager, CiYuan, China
- Hilda Cleofe, Executive Director, Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR), Philippines
- Suresh deMel, Immediate Past Chairman, Business for Peace Alliance, Sri Lanka
- Sean Doherty, Head of Supply Chain & Transport Industry, World Economic Forum, Logistics Emergency Team, Switzerland
- Paul Jansen, Executive Director, Fleet Forum, Switzerland
- Clare Jenkinson, International Programme Manager, Business in the Community (BITC), UK
- Adam Lane, Manager, Advisory Services, (BSR), China
- Gerald McSwiggan, Director, Disaster Assistance & Recovery Programme, Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC), USA
- Peter Muller, Regional Disaster Response Advisor, Pacific United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs/Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT), Fiji
- Rosemary Mutunkei, CSR Manager for African Countries, Kenya Red Cross Society, Kenya (K4K)
- Gisli Olafsson, Emergency Response Director, NetHope, Switzerland
- Sanda Ojiambo, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, Safaricom, Kenya (K4K)
- Jeremy Prepiscus, Managing Director, (BSR), China
- Shikha Shabditia, Manager, Disaster Resource Network (DRN), India
- Mosese Sikivou, Deputy Director, Disaster Risk Reduction Programme (PPDRM), SOPAC Division, SPC, Fiji
- Ben Solanky, Global Hand, UK
- Keith Thode, Chief Operating Officer, The Aidmatrix Foundation, Inc., USA
- Rose Van Steijn, Programme Manager, Fleet Forum, Switzerland
- Ana Marie Vidal, Program Coordinator, Disaster Management Alliance (DMA), USA
- Lori Warrens, Executive Director, Partnerships for Quality Medical Donations (PQMD), USA

## Private sector

- Marian Al Foudery, SVP, Marketing, Communications & Corporate Social Responsibility, China
- Akhtar Badash, Community Affairs Program, Microsoft, USA
- Juan Carlos Hernandez, Director, American Chamber of Commerce-Honduras
- Frank Clary, Global Lead for CSR, GCA Transformation, Agility, Hong Kong-China
- Richard Ellis, Director, CSR, Alliance Boots, UK
- Jennifer Farrington, Director, Social Investing, BD Medical, USA

- Jen Janice Mohamed, Programme Manager, Supporting WFP Operations, TNT, Netherlands.
- Kelly Lau, Access to Sport, Nike-China
- Eduardo Martinez, Director of the UPS Foundation, USA
- Pelle Maschoreck, VP Sales Management, Bukkehave, Denmark
- Jens Munch Lund, Lead Group Advisor, CSR Group Sustainability, MAERSK, Denmark
- Omar Ramirez, Manager, Merck, Colombia
- Niyati Sareen, General Manager, Corporate Social Responsibility, Hindustan Construction Company, India
- Pratarp Singh, President, Fiji Institution of Engineers, Fiji
- Azmi Thassim, President, Chamber of Commerce –Business for Peace Alliance, Sri Lanka

## Humanitarian sector

- Mark Aldrich, Operations Manager, World in Need, USA
- Mabel Apostol, Program Manager, Community Based Disaster Risk Management Programme, Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR), Philippines
- Patricia E. Bacuros, Director, Gift-In-Kind Development & Humanitarian Programmes & Disaster Response, Project Hope, USA
- Xin Fu Yu, Senior Program Manager, Pro-bono Program, Huizeren Volunteer Development Center, China
- Kathy Fulton, Director of Operations, American Logistics Aid Network (ALAN), USA
- Brendan Gormley, Chief Executive, Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), UK
- David Hebblethwaite, Water Manager Advisor, SOPAC Division, SPC, Fiji
- Rui Lopes, Chief Information Officer, Save the Children, UK
- Jock Menzies, President, American Logistics Aid Network (ALAN), USA
- Tim Moyle, Global Fleet Manager, Oxfam, UK
- Matteo Perrone, Logistics Officer-Global Logistics Support Cell, UN World Food Programme
- Angelika Planitz, Sub-Regional Coordinator, Pacific, UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, Fiji
- Tanjai Sen, Executive Director, RedR, India
- Peter Sinclair, Water Resource Advisor, SOPAC Division, SPC, Fiji
- Zubin Zaman, Humanitarian Manager, Oxfam, India
- Yan Zhai, Board Chairman, Beijing Huizeren Volunteer Development Center, China

## Donors

- Stephanie Berchtold, Logistics, ECHO, Belgium
- Tim Callaghan, Senior Advisor, US Agency for International Development –Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, Costa Rica

## Other

- Ollie Davidson, BCLC Consultant, USA
- Robert Lee, Consultant, USA

# Annex II: Platform overview and contact information

Platform	Mission – Purpose	Link
<b>The Aidmatrix Foundation</b>	Leverage innovation solutions from industry and apply them to the non-profit world for humanitarian relief: 'Right aid to the Right People at the Right Time.'	<a href="http://www.aidmatrix.org">www.aidmatrix.org</a>
<b>Business in the Community (BITC)</b>	Act as a bridge between business and community, mobilising and supporting the engagement of CSR and sustainability. Following the 2004 Asian tsunami BITC and Haiti earthquake 2010, BITC, working in collaboration with the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), developed guidelines for the private sector for funds and in-kind donations.	<a href="http://www.bitc.org">www.bitc.org</a>
<b>Business Civic Leadership Centre (BCLC)</b>	As an affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce, BCLC helps businesses communicate and collaborate with each other and with the non-profit and government sectors to make disaster relief, recovery and reconstruction activities more effective.	<a href="http://www.bclc.uschamber.com">www.bclc.uschamber.com</a>
<b>Business for Peace Alliance (BPA)</b>	Initiative of the regional chambers of commerce, Sri Lanka, to support the rebuilding a stable and prosperous small and medium-enterprise (SME) sector to bring about long-term regional sustainable socio-economic development and a durable peace.	<a href="http://www.bpa-srilanka.com">www.bpa-srilanka.com</a>
<b>CiYuan</b>	Launched by Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) in 2010, the CiYuan initiative builds cross-sector partnerships to enhance the value of social investment in China.	<a href="http://www.bsr.org">www.bsr.org</a>
<b>Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR)</b>	Provides a means for the business community in the Philippines to collaborate and engage in disaster prevention, preparedness and response with core activities in: business continuity planning, community based disaster risk management and enhancing the capacity of the private sector to respond to disasters.	<a href="http://www.cndr.org">www.cndr.org</a>
<b>Disaster Management Alliance (DMA)</b>	Run by the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), DMA focuses on strengthening the engagement of the private sector in the areas of disaster preparedness and relief in the Latin America region, working through Chambers of Commerce. Core activities include information exchange, matching and brokering relationships and capacity development.	<a href="http://www.planfordisasters.org">www.planfordisasters.org</a>
<b>Disaster Resource Network (DRN), India</b>	Global network of engineering and construction (E&C) companies that provide expertise before, during and after a disaster. With links to the World Economic Forum, the DRN works as a technical partner, supporting humanitarian organisations and government in relief operations. Services include providing training for E&C personnel on disaster response so they are ready to operate in an emergency. DRN India is chaired by HCC CMD, Mr. Ajit Gulabchand.	<a href="http://www.hccindia.com">www.hccindia.com</a>
<b>Fleet Forum</b>	Established by the World Food Programme, International Federation of Red Cross and World Vision International (WFP/IFRC/WVI), Fleet Forum supports efficient and effective humanitarian action by catalysing the professionalization of fleet operations, increasing road safety and security, and improving the environmental impact of fleets. Private sector engagement is with private sector that has a link to the issues that Fleet Forum works on.	<a href="http://www.fleetforum.org">www.fleetforum.org</a>
<b>Global Hand</b>	Established by the Cross Roads Foundation, Hong Kong, Global Hand grew out of the recognition of the need for 'the art of matching' cash and in-kind donations, with a focus on the engagement gaps between the humanitarian and private sector. Core activities include: policy/norms/standard setting, matching/brokering, partnering and capacity development.	<a href="http://www.globalhand.org">www.globalhand.org</a>
<b>Kenya for Kenyans (K4K)</b>	Launched in 2011 in response to the Horn of Africa Crisis by Safaricom and Kenyan Red Cross Society, K4K was a resource mobilisation initiative, July-August, supported by a coalition of private sector firms, media houses and the general public. Funds were directed to the most vulnerable, mainly lactating mothers and school going children. K4K initially sought to raise Ksh500million, which grew to total Ksh278 million, through cash and in-kind donations.	<a href="http://www.kenyans4kenya.org">www.kenyans4kenya.org</a>
<b>World Economic Forum (WEF), Logistics &amp; Emergency Team (LET)</b>	When disaster strikes our job is to mobilize massive assistance and make sure it reaches those in need –fast! Private sector expertise and corporate partnerships are critical to helping save lives. With a focus on the logistics industry the LET seconds individuals from its partners: UPS, TNT, Agility, Maersk and WFP, working as an operational partner to the UN Logistics Cluster.	<a href="http://www.logisticsemergency.org">www.logisticsemergency.org</a>
<b>NetHope</b>	Be a catalyst for collaboration among international humanitarian organisations, using technology to leverage and improve collaboration and networked intelligence. Core service areas: connectivity in times of disasters, field capacity-building, emergency response, shared services and innovation for development.	<a href="http://www.NetHope.org">www.NetHope.org</a>
<b>Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management (PPDRM)</b>	PPDRM serves as a regional forum for the exchange and experience sharing within the Pacific on policy and operational aspects of DRR, risk management and climate change adaptation. PPDRM seeks to harmonise collaboration mechanisms for DRR.	<a href="http://www.pacificdisasternet.org">www.pacificdisasternet.org</a>
<b>Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT)</b>	The PHT, led by the UN Resident Coordinators in Fiji and Samoa, serves as a regional coordination mechanism for UN, NGO, Red Cross and donor Agencies to facilitate wide collaboration for emergency preparedness and response.	<a href="http://www.phtpacific.org">www.phtpacific.org</a>
<b>Partnership for Quality Medical Donations (PQMD)</b>	Alliance of non-profit and corporate organisations committed to bringing measureable health impact to underserved and vulnerable people through active engagement with global partners and local communities. With a focus on the pharmaceutical sector, PQMD facilitates co-ordination in an emergency, is a matchmaker for the private sector, develops medical donations standards, and provides training and education services.	<a href="http://www.pqmd.org">www.pqmd.org</a>

# Annex III: Advisory group members

## Mark Janz

Humanitarian Consultant,  
California, USA

## Michael Klosson

Vice President, Policy & Humanitarian Response  
Save the Children  
Washington, D.C., USA

## Kiki Lawal

Program Officer –Business Partnerships,  
UNISDR  
Geneva, Switzerland

## Graham MacKay

Deputy Humanitarian Director,  
Oxfam GB

## Faye Melly

KPMG International  
London, England

## Rein Paulsen

Senior Director, Humanitarian Quality, Strategy & Policy  
World Vision International  
Geneva, Switzerland

## Jane Smallman

Senior Manager,  
Corporate Citizenship & Diversity  
KPMG International  
London, England

## Julien Temple

Manager,  
Humanitarian Partnership  
Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF  
Geneva, Switzerland

# Annex IV: Interview protocol

## Confidentiality:

Any notes, transcripts and recordings of this interview will be seen only by the research team at the Humanitarian Futures Programme, which includes support from Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited. The information from your interview will inform the report, which will discuss by name the platforms analysed. However, no direct comments or quotes will be attributed to named individuals (we will attribute quotes in the format 'Humanitarian Respondent'). There will be a list of platforms and interviewees at the end of the report. If you have any concerns or queries about your interview or the way your information will be used, please do discuss them with the researcher conducting your interview, or with the study lead: Joanne Burke, Partnerships Manager, Humanitarian Futures Programme (tel: 0207 848 7162, email: [joanne.burke@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:joanne.burke@kcl.ac.uk))

## 1. Affiliation with the platform (donors, humanitarian & private sector only)

ROLE	
What is your role in your organisation?	
What is your affiliation with the platform?	

## 2. Platform model

PURPOSE OF PLATFORM	
What is the purpose of the platform?	
How did the platform originate?	
Why did you get involved with the platform?	
How do you engage with the platform?	

## 3. Validation of platform model

PURPOSE OF PLATFORM	
Geographical coverage (optional)	
Humanitarian focus by crisis phase (optional)	
Humanitarian focus by type (optional)	
How is the platform governed? (optional)	
Form – How would you describe the structure of your platform?	
Which are the main stakeholder groups that are involved in the platform? (optional)	
Why was this model chosen?	
Types of private sector stakeholders/ entities the platform serves/ engages with?	
How is the platform funded? (optional)	



## 4. Role of private sector

DEFINITION & FOCUS	
Why does the platform focus on the private sector? On humanitarian issues?	
What role(s) does the platform see for the private sector?	
What changes have you seen on the part of the private sector and its interest/engagement in humanitarian action?	

## 5. Added value of the platform

FUNCTIONS & SERVICES	
What specific activities does the platform undertake to promote more strategic involvement and alliances of the private sector in humanitarian action:	
What principles/good practices does the platform seek to demonstrate in its role and work with its members?	
How does the platform add value over and above the individual engagement by companies or bilateral partnerships?	
What would you say is the comparative advantage/key strengths of the platform in fulfilling this function?	
How does it measure its impact and effectiveness?	
How does the platform assess the increased involvement of the private sector in humanitarian action?	
Which of the following common barriers to private sector engagement identified in our previous research do you seek to help members overcome?	
What challenges does the platform face in trying to help reduce these barriers? Provide example.	
Do you see any challenges that the platform itself may face in trying to help reduce the barriers noted?	
Would you highlight any other barriers to private sector engagement not listed here?	
How does the platform link to or engage with other platforms?	
How does the platform engage with international organisations (i.e., UN) and governments (i.e., supranational, national, regional, local)?	
Within the humanitarian/private sector that is or should be responsible for disseminating learning across the different platforms?	
Are there services you would like to receive from the platform that it does not currently provide? Why?	

6. Changing humanitarian context

CHANGING HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT	
What do you see as the major trends and transformations that may affect humanitarian action over the next decade (possible future crises, changes in the operating environment, or opportunities for new types of response)?	
Against the background of these changes, how do you see the platform's added role and value changing in the future?	

7. Next steps

CHANGING HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT	
Note any follow-up points identified	
Ask them to send relevant documents if they have not done so	

# Annex V: Supplemental resources

- Anon (n.d.) *Business & International Development: opportunities, responsibilities and expectations, a survey of global opinion leaders in business, civil society and the media*, Harvard, IBLF and Edelman.
- Arevalo, J. and Fallon, F. (2008) 'Assessing corporate responsibility as a contribution to global governance: the case of the UN Global Compact', *Corporate Governance*, 8 (4) pp. 456-470.
- Austin, J. (2000) *The Collaboration Challenge: How Nonprofits and Business Succeed Through Strategic Alliances*, Jossey-Bass.
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# Annex VI: Notes

- 1 Two of the three regional platforms, Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) and Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management PDRM, are based in Fiji. The report refers to the two platforms both independently and jointly.
- 2 Growing political centrality of humanitarian crises, changing types, dimensions and dynamics of humanitarian crises, post-western hegemonic states, the future role and delivery of aid, the vulnerability perspective, expanding range of humanitarian actors, supply versus demand response, professionalism and managerialism, multiple humanitarian principles, increasing role of science and technology, Kent, R., Burke, J., [2011] *Commercial and Humanitarian Engagement in Crisis Contexts: Current Trends and Future Drivers*, Humanitarian Futures Programme.
- 3 The diaspora is used in this report to refer to individuals or groups who identify themselves as part of a community living outside their country of origin.
- 4 For the purposes of this study, the term 'private sector' refers to that part of the economy that is owned and controlled by individuals and organisations through private ownership. Herein we also use 'private sector' to refer to state owned enterprises under state capitalism, which are created by government to undertake commercial activities, and commercial activity within the informal sector. For a fuller discussion of the terminology, see Section 1.
- 5 For the purposes of this study platforms are defined as intermediary mechanisms which support and promote the engagement of the private sector in humanitarian action, either in partnership with traditional humanitarian agencies or as humanitarian actors in their own right.
- 6 Kent, R., Burke, J., [2011] *Commercial and Humanitarian Engagement in Crisis Contexts: Current Trends and Future Drivers*, Humanitarian Futures Programme.
- 7 This corresponds to Binder and Witte (2007) concept of meta-initiatives-systematic collaborations where partners engage in activities that aim to 'systematise and formalise response', such as enhancing coordination, sharing lessons learned, developing standby capacity and taking advantage of economies of scale. It also aligns with James Austin's concept of 'market makers', intermediary service organisations that facilitate the matching process in private sector and non-profit partnerships [2000:44].
- 8 Zaidi, R., Carpenter, S, and Burke, J., [2012] *Commercial-Humanitarian Engagement in the Horn of Africa Crisis: A Scoping Study of the Response in Kenya and Somalia*, Humanitarian Futures Programme.
- 9 Sources: Wassenhove (2006), Thomas and Fritz (2006), Raish et al (2007), Shamir (2004), Utting (2000), Lukas (2002), Binder and Witte (2007), IBL/Harvard n.d., Nelson and Prescott (2005), Bridges et al (2010), Wassenhove et al (2006), Kent and Burke (2011).
- 10 International Business Leader's Forum (IBLF) and HFP Meeting, February 2011, London, attended by 28 professionals from the corporate and humanitarian sectors. One of three discussion groups focused on: Actions to enhance existing platforms, mechanisms and fora.
- 11 The continuum builds on the work of James E. Austin *The Collaboration Challenge* (2000), who conceives of non-profit and business partnerships along a continuum from philanthropic, to transactional, to integrative.
- 12 "A wicked problem" has innumerable causes, is tough to describe, and doesn't have a right answer. Environmental degradation, terrorism and poverty –are classic examples of wicked problems. Not only do conventional processes fail to tackle wicked problems, but they may exacerbate situations by generating undesirable consequences." Camillus, J (2008) *Strategy as a Wicked Problem*, *Harvard Business Review*, May 2008.
- 13 See, for example, The Change Alliance [www.changealliance.org](http://www.changealliance.org); the Collective Leadership Institute [www.collectiveleadership.com](http://www.collectiveleadership.com); Nexus4Change, [www.nexus4change.org](http://www.nexus4change.org)
- 14 For example, Philippines Business for Social Progress (PBSP) 1970; Business Roundtable for Disaster Response, 1972, USA; Business & Industry Council for Emergencies Planning and Preparedness (BICEPP), 1983, USA.
- 15 Zaidi et al (2011), p. 11.
- 16 Global Humanitarian Assistance has recently published a study of the trend towards increasing private funding of humanitarian assistance, see Stoianova, V. (2012) *Private Funding: An Emerging Trend in Humanitarian Donorship*, Global Humanitarian Assistance.
- 17 The Listening Project and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) have grappled with the challenges of extending the conception of humanitarian impact to the communities themselves. Consortia such as the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB) and the Inter-Agency Working Group (IWG) would also face similar challenges of assessing the impact of collaborative ventures. It may also be that there are useful models already in use in the humanitarian or private sectors that platforms could adapt or learn from.







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